

# Reflections on a NAADAC Presidency

By Gerard J. Schmidt, MA, LPC, MAC, NAADAC Immediate Past-President

As I sit here thinking about composing my final article as President of NAADAC, I am full of emotions and thoughts. I have to say that these past two years serving as President have gone by quickly and it is hard to believe that by the time this goes to print, I will have turned the position over to the very capable hands of Diane Sevening.

When I reflect on these past two years, it is difficult to point to any one event, meeting, or experience that meant more to me than any other. I was most pleased to have had the opportunity to travel the country meeting and interacting with all of the wonderful addiction treatment professionals involved in a variety of program and services. I was always energized and felt blessed to be in their presence as they described their work and the passion and dedication with which they approached it each and every day.

One particularly unique, fun, and remarkably refreshing experience I had during my tenure was attending the conference held by the Montana Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (MAADAC), NAADAC's Montana affiliate. Attending this conference provided me with an opportunity to get to a part of the country that probably feels forgotten at times because of its location. Having the chance to go there, meet the members, and have the opportunity to train was wonderful. The MAADAC members were so enthused by what they did and so anxious for new information and the time to be able to talk and connect with me as the representative of NAADAC. Malcolm Horn, the Northwest Regional Vice President, has done a magnificent job of organizing and growing the Montana affiliate.

Another set of experiences worth noting were the trainings that were done last year in Maui and Oahu, Hawaii. Again, I had the opportunity to engage with a part of our membership that is separated by distance but certainly not forgotten. NAADAC's Executive Director, Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, and I, along with other trainers, provided trainings for and interacted with individuals from several of the Hawaiian islands and from across the continental United States. The attendees' enthusiasm and desire to learn more about this process, as well as about NAADAC and membership, was energizing and rewarding. These interactions are always so valuable because they give us at NAADAC a chance for direct feedback on their needs and the needs of those they serve that are unique to their region.

Finally, it was exciting being able to visit Jackson, Mississippi,

to represent NAADAC at the Workforce Forum hosted by NAADAC, the Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Services. The organization, involvement, and overall breadth and depth of those in attendance was overwhelming. They had representation from schools of nursing, social work, counseling, and pharmacy, as well as strong attendance from local high school juniors and seniors. The agenda and presentations were hearty and my experience of being able to be an active participant, as well as an attendee, was exciting.

During my tenure I have enjoyed being an active member of a variety of national committees and having the opportunity to represent NAADAC and provide input that reflects the realities of the profession. I must admit, there are times when representing our position can be a tenuous one and can be met with some resistance because as we all know, everyone does not agree or conform to how treatment can and needs to be provided and determining the priorities for care. Rest assured, our voice is being heard and it is making a difference!

My involvement in the ongoing cohorts of the NAADAC Minority Fellowship Program has been incredible. To have the opportunity to work with and mentor these young, and sometimes not so young, students as they prepare themselves through their addiction training and education to enter the profession has been rewarding. I found that while these students look towards us for guidance and answers for direction, I am always enthralled by their energy, thirst, and enthusiasm for knowledge, skills, and experience. I would have to say that based on the quality and caliber of the cohorts, we are in very capable hands going into the future.

There are so many people I need to thank for all of their constant support and commitment to the process over these past few years. I have to start with the wonderful Executive Committee, with whom I am blessed to have worked and shared experiences. Our countless calls, meetings, and conversations have been invaluable. I am always impressed and amazed at the depth of knowledge and skills sitting around the table or on the calls. As a member, you need to know these individuals give countless hours of their own time to lead and direct the work of the organization. I cannot begin to thank them enough.

Words cannot express my gratitude to the staff at the NAADAC office. Their patience with me, as well as their guidance and direction and their willingness to get information to me, has been exceptional. HeidiAnne, Jessica, Ace and my West Virginia girl Donna are all so special to me, and many thanks again.



I want to personally and publically thank Cynthia for all she has done for me during these past two years. I often kidded her that I spend more time talking to her than I do to my wife, Nancy! Our relationship goes back nearly 30 years but working with her in this capacity has shown me such a different side of her. I have always known she was a high energy person but trust me, until you have a chance to sit in this seat, you have no idea! Whether it's an early morning call from the West Coast or a late night call for an emergent issue, she always made herself available. I marvel at not only her energy but the volume of work that she can turn out in such a brief period of time. Thank you, Cynthia, not only for your leadership and the skills you bring us, but more importantly for your friendship and the pleasure of enjoying this ride together.

Finally, to all of you, as members and providers who step up and meet the challenges inherit in this profession: there is no greater satisfaction as your President then having the honor and the privilege of representing such a fine group of professionals. I have traveled throughout the world and met so many wonderful people but none finer than those who are proud to call themselves substance use disorder treatment professionals. We are unique and we all know that *treatment works! Recovery is possible!* Blessings to you all and thank you for all that you do.



*Gerard J. Schmidt, MA, LPC, MAC, is Immediate Past-President of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals and the Chief Operations Officer at Valley HealthCare System in Morgantown, WV. He has served in the mental health and addictions treatment profession for the past 45 years. Publications to Schmidt's credit include several articles on the development of Employee Assistance Programs in rural areas and wellness in the workplace, addictions practice in the residential settings and an overview of addictions practice in the United States. He has edited Treatment Improvement Protocols*

*for CSAT for several years and has been active with the Mid-Atlantic ATTC. Schmidt had served as Chair of the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCCAP) and NAADAC's Public Policy Committee, and as NAADAC's Clinical Affairs Consultant. Awards include the Distinguished Service Award in 2003 and the Senator Harold Hughes Advocate of the Year in 2010. In addition to his national and international work, Schmidt has been active within West Virginia in advocating for and supporting State legislative issues related to addictions and addiction treatment.*



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