

# Marriage & Family TODAY!

The Official Newsletter Publication of TAMFC



A Division of the Texas Counseling Association

Volume 3, Issue 1, Fall 2010

## Quarterly Newsletter

### *President's Message*

Hello TAMFC Members!



Wow! TAMFC is currently 257-members strong and growing every month! In addition, we sent eight TAMFC leaders to the TCA Summer Leadership Training Institute in June. I am greatly excited to be working with such a powerful team of devoted and talented leaders. Your TAMFC board meets every month via conference call to plan exciting things for this division. We welcome your ideas, input, and involvement, so please let us know what you need from us!

In September, we sent you, our members, a survey asking about your needs. Many of you said you wanted up-to-date information regarding LMFT issues, CEU workshops, and information about the licensing exam. In response, we are currently working to add a resource list of LMFT exam preparation materials to our TAMFC website. Please send us information about what resources you have found valuable so we can create a helpful resource for all of you. In addition, we are working to create workshops to help you increase the power of your practice and meet those CEU

requirements! Soon, TCA will send out a call for proposals for next year's TCA conference sessions. Please send us ideas regarding what topics you would like TAMFC to address, as each year we submit proposals regarding current marriage and family topics.

The TCA Professional Growth Conference in November was a success for TAMFC on many levels. First, the Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists provided updates regarding the licensure process, recent rule changes, and trends in the practice of marriage and family therapy across the state. The session was well-attended and informative. Second, we had many visitors to our booth in the Exhibit Hall, where we were able to greet current members and recruit new members. Thanks to all of you who stopped by. Last, we hope you enjoyed wonderful food and friends during our co-sponsored reception with TMHCA on Thursday evening. We hope you had a wonderful conference experience!

As recommended by the TCA office, TAMFC is currently in the process of revising our division bylaws. The suggested bylaw revisions will be sent

### Executive Board

**President**  
Jodie Elder

**President-Elect**  
Dr. S. Dean Aslinia

**Secretary**  
Cyndi Matthews

**Division Director**  
Dr. Linda Ball

**Division Senator**  
Dr. Angela Corrigan

**Treasurer**  
Dr. John Teer

**Past-President**  
Dr. Amir Abbassi

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**Public Relations Chair**  
Sarah Monakes

**Legislative Liaison**  
Janet Lewis

**Chapter Liaison**  
Dr. Sean Stokes

**Student Liaison**  
Blessing Dexter

**Emerging Leader**  
Nick Patras

to your for review in January, so be alert to this coming to your email inbox. We will also post them to our website and keep them open for a comment period before finalizing any changes. We welcome your feedback, as this is your division. ☺

It is essential that we as counselors advocate for our profession. The legislature doesn't know what we need unless we tell them! Accordingly, we encourage you to attend the Advocacy Days in the spring. They will be held February 22, March 22, and April 19, in Austin, of course. TAMFC plans to send a board representative each time, and if you wish to attend, please contact me so we can arrange for you to accompany our TAMFC representative that day. Come advocate for marriage and family counselors across the state!



Lastly, I would like to extend a personal invitation for you to become actively involved in TAMFC. You may choose to serve in many ways, as a committee member, committee chair, officer, or executive board member. The Secretary and Legislative Liaison positions will be open for re-election for next year, and nomination ballots will be sent from the TCA office in January. Please consider contributing your skills to help make this division even more outstanding!

Thank you for the honor of serving as your TAMFC President. Together, we are making great things happen for our division and for marriage and family counselors across the state!

Sincerely,

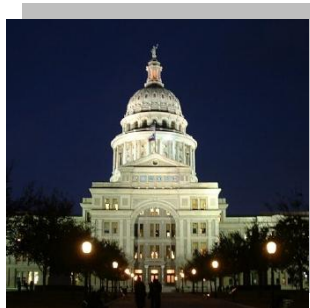
Jodie Elder (Jodie\_elder@hotmail.com)

### *So What is Advocacy all About? By Janet Lewis*

Ask almost any counselor why they are in their field and they will tell you that it is to make a difference. Counselors want to help people bring changes to their lives to make their lives better. As counselors, we want to make sure that there are laws in place that will protect our clients and allow us the freedom and resources to effectively help them.

For most of us, the House of Representatives, the Senate and legislative sessions were subjects that left us when we sold back our textbooks at our local college bookstore and then bought pizza to celebrate the end of another semester. But while we were getting on with our lives, hundreds of bills were being introduced before the House and Senate in Legislative Sessions. These were bills that affected us and how we lived. They are bills that affect the clients we serve and our ability to adequately assist them.

Anyone can draft a piece of legislation: legislators, lobbyists, advocacy organizations, or state agencies. There are thousands of bills drafted that are sent to committees who will decide whether to amend, reject, table or approve the legislation. Legislators realistically can only pay attention to the issues that are most prominent. It is therefore important to know what bills are sent to which committee and



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the members of that committee. It is also important for those interested in the legislation to speak up and advocate for a particular outcome to a particular bill.

During the upcoming 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Session, a number of bills pertaining to counselors will be brought before the Texas House of Representatives and Senate.

Of interest to the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (TAMFC) are the issues regarding the licensure of Professional Counselors and the inclusion of funding for mental health services. Issues under consideration are the regulatory structure and licensing requirements for LPCs and the supervision of counseling programs by licensed Counselors.

Understanding how the legislative process works and how to communicate with the legislators who are the decision makers for the bills was the subject of the TCA Advocacy Institute that was held during the TCA Conference in November.

TCA Advocacy Institute Speaker, **Joe Gagen**, attorney and CEO of Texas CASA gave practical information and strategies on how to communicate with Legislators so that the bills that affect counselors can be addressed.

### *It's about Relationships*

Being an effective advocate is about forming relationships. Here are a few suggestions for developing relationships with local legislators:

- Attend a fund-raiser to get to know your legislator
- Volunteer in campaign office

- Get to know local staff
- Host a coffee to meet your legislator and for the legislator to get to know constituents
- Legislators appreciate it when we take the time to get their name and title correct. Little gestures like showing interest and sending thank you notes go a very long way in opening the door for the legislator to then listen to your concerns

### *Think buyer-seller*

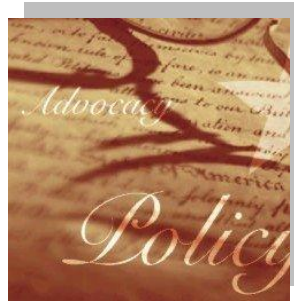
In order to get action on issues of importance it is helpful to view communication with legislators from the perspective of a buyer, in this case the legislator, and a seller, that is you, the advocate. An emphasis on what is important to the buyer is a key component to successful communication in a sales transaction.

### *Provide accurate information*

Make sure that the information you provide is accurate.

Legislators need to be comfortable enough with an issue so that they can defend it to

critics. Misinformation will kill future opportunities to present your position. Legislators often lack expertise in particular area that a bill addresses and the time to fully investigate each issue. There are thousands of bills and legislators cannot read them all. They want good accurate information and will go to experts in the field to give them information in making their



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## **IMPORTANT!!**

New rules adopted by the Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists become effective December 19, 2010. Rules are published in the December 10, 2010, *Texas Register* and can be viewed at <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml>

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decisions. Legislators will also rely on their staff to do a lot of research and therefore advocates that cultivate relationships with legislative staff can influence bills by offering good factual information in support of the advocate's position. A one-page fact sheet is a good strategy to give to a staff member to get to the key issues to be presented regarding the position of an advocate

*Understand what influences a legislator's decision making*

- Like everyone else, legislators are influenced by their core belief system. They will vote in line with their core beliefs and convictions.
- Legislators are influenced by passionate voters. Voter passion can be communicated by personal experience – if you can tell your story and describe how a particular situation has influenced you, this will communicate well to a legislator.
- The economy affects how voters vote and legislators pay attention the impact of the economy in determining how they will vote.
- The media can bring issues to the fore-front that have been long ignored. Getting the media to feature a story that describes how a particular situation needs change highlights information that can be presented to a legislator.
- Opinions of church and civic groups that work together to bring issues to the front line of decision making.

*Use multiple connections.*

It takes about seven contacts before a person remembers you – so build trust

with multiple contacts. In theory, policy makers are proactive but practically they are reactive because of the number of bills to be addressed. Those that speak up will be addressed. Policy makers will assume the constituent is satisfied if they do not speak up.

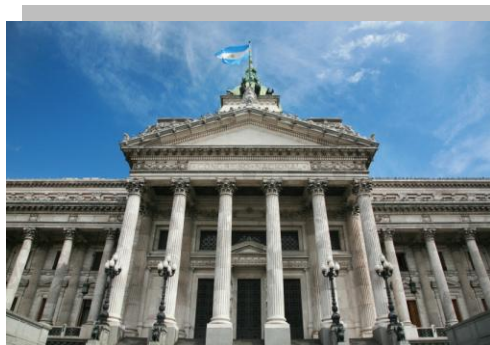
*Creative ways to follow up:*

Remember it takes 7 contacts to be remembered

- Get back with the legislator on some specific information
- Find an article and send it to them
- Send a copy of a newsletter and circle pertinent information
- Take a picture of your group and identify yourself on the back and send a copy

*Participate in TCA Capitol Advocacy Days*

Learn first-hand how to meet and talk with Legislators about key issues affecting counselors by participating in one of the Advocacy Days. You will be guided through the process of presenting your story along with a mentor to decision makers at the capitol.



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Are you a TAMFC member and have some exciting news to announce to the association about yourself, practice, or profession?

Send us an email and we would be happy to place it in our newsletter

Want to be more involved with TAMFC?

Contact us and let us know how you can help

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The upcoming TCA Lobby Days are:

February 22, 2011

March 22, 2011

April 19, 2011



### Agenda for the Capitol Visit

1. Introduce yourself and tell legislator where you live. “I live near...” is a better way to communicate than “I am one of your constituent”
2. State the purpose of your visit
3. Tell your story –problem, the solution and the action

#### Tips:

- Sign the guest book with name and contact information. Staple a business card to a one-page handout outlining your major concerns.
- Know the legislative bill number and when the legislature will vote on your legislation – you can get this information from TCA
- Follow up with a thank you letter. Reiterate your major points and what you are specifically asking for.

### Senator’s Report

By Angela Corrigan, Ph.D.

Each Chapter and Division within TCA elect an officer to serve as Senator. These Senators make up the Texas Counseling Association Senate and meet twice a year, once in June and once in November. Issues that are discussed and voted on within these meetings may be presented as recommendations from the TCA Board of Directors, the TCA staff, or Senate members. Issues are presented, discussed, and motions are carried with a majority vote. Only Senators may vote in these meetings. It is my honor to represent TAMFC and participate in the Senate in accordance with the needs of our Division.

As a TAMFC member, it is your right to contact your TAMFC Board and express your opinion and/or concerns regarding any issue related to this Division or TCA functioning in general. Your opinion makes a difference, as it becomes the foundation from which the TAMFC Senator represents TAMFC within the Senate. Understanding and staying abreast of the issues relevant to TCA and to counselors serving couples and families will allow you to fully maximize the worth of your membership in TAMFC. Your membership alone gives us a voice.

The following issues were addressed in the November Senate meeting.

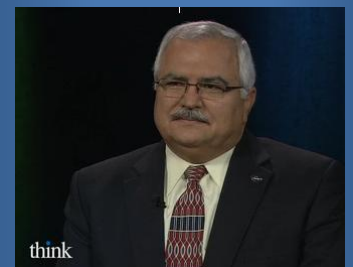
1. The Senate voted to disallow candidates for TCA office to campaign or to access the TCA member mailing list with the purpose of campaigning. The Senate voted to amend the

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Our past-president  
Dr. Amir Abbassi  
was recently  
interviewed on  
THINK! A PBS  
production  
(KERA-Dallas).  
The interview was  
about managing  
family stress  
during the  
holidays.

To watch the  
program click [here](#)



[http://video.kera.org/  
video/1691453927/](http://video.kera.org/video/1691453927/)

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- TCA by-laws to reflect such.
2. It was discussed and encouraged for TCA Divisions and Chapters to participate in 2011 Advocacy by sending their Director, Senator, and Legislative Liaison to Advocacy days in Austin on February 22, March 22, and April 19 .
  3. It was presented that TCA liabilities and equity totalled \$890,115.37 as of June, 2010.
  4. It was reported that TCA Summer Leadership Institute attendance exceeded predictions by 25 attendants. This record attendance left TCA \$25,000.00 over budget allocations. As a result, TCA will limit exposure for future Leadership Institutes through limiting reimbursement and/or modification of the annual budget.
  5. The Senate elected new reviewers for submitted Guidelines articles.
  6. It was expressed that the easiest way for TCA members, Divisions, or Chapters to gain inclusion in the TCA Newsletter is through the "Save the Date" section. Submissions for this section should be 400 words or less and be related to upcoming events for TCA members.
  7. The Senate voted to modify the language used in the School

Counselor legislative platform to more accurately express support of the function and role of Texas School Counselors.

Once again, I'd like to say thank you for the opportunity to represent you in the TCA Senate! Remember to contact your TAMFC Board members with any questions or comments. Your voice counts.

Have a wonderful holiday!



**If you are interested in a topic and would like to inform your professional colleagues about what you know or have found out, submit an article for publication\* in Marriage & Family TODAY!**  
**Submit your articles to:**  
[Dean\\_Aslinia@tamuc.edu](mailto:Dean_Aslinia@tamuc.edu)

**Scholarly articles are welcomed**

**\* Submissions will be reviewed by the Executive Board of TAMFC prior to acceptance of publication**

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President Jodie Elder presented Past-President Amir Abbassi a plaque of appreciation on behalf of the TAMFC board and members for his 3 years of service as president (2007- 2010). She presented him the award at the TCA's 54 Annual Conference in Austin, TX.



*Treasurer's Report*  
By John Teer, Ph.D.

Texas Association of Marriage and Family Counselors  
(A Division of the Texas Counseling Association)

BALANCE SHEET FY 2011  
(July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011)

December 2010 Treasurer's Report  
FY Income and Expenses through October 31, 2010

	<u>October 2010</u>	<u>Total for FY</u>
<b>Income</b>		
Dues	\$ 555.00	\$ 1,880.00
Sales	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Miscellaneous	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 555.00</b>	<b>\$1,880.00</b>
<b>Expense</b>		
Monthly TCA Administrative Fee	\$ 44.40	\$ 150.00
Conference Expense	\$ 30.95	\$ 30.95
Board Meeting	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Awards	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Continuing Education	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Professional services	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 75.35</b>	<b>\$ 181.35</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$479.65</b>	<b>\$1,698.65</b>

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\*TAMFC Cash Balance Available – October 31, 2010 - \$10,401.20

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\*Note: Cash Balance does not reflect any outstanding expenses submitted but not yet paid.  
Total TAMFC Membership through October 31, 2010 – 289 Members  
A List of New Members, Renewed Members and Membership Expirations in October, 2010 has been sent to the TAMFC Membership Chair.

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This newsletter was designed and edited by S. Dean Aslinia, TAMFC President-Elect.

for comments, suggestions and feedback please write to  
Dean\_Aslinia@tamu-commrece.edu

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