



The Normative Times

The NAFI/NFI Online Newsletter

Coming Soon to an Internet Near You... The New NAFI/NFI Agency Website

Jill DiChiara, Program Development and Marketing Project Manager

The current NAFI/NFI website was created in 2003 as an improvement upon our original site and while our current site is functional and meets most of our needs, technology has come a long way in four years and so has our agency. The time has come for a change that reflects our growth, our strengths and our cutting edge work with adults, youth and families. I am pleased to announce that later this year, an entirely new NAFI/NFI website will be unveiled to our community and the online world!

As this is an extremely large and somewhat daunting task, a committee was put together in early 2007 to see the website redesign process through to fruition. Our first

task was to take a hard look at the current site, making note of both positives and areas in need of improvement.

The Website Redesign Committee is made up of members of each of our NAFI/NFI regions, and to further insure the new site is one that meets the needs of our entire agency, we also put together a survey asking the larger NAFI/NFI community their thoughts on the current site.

What we found is that people want an up-to-date and useful site that is able to grow with the agency and represent who we are and where we are going. Survey respondents also would like to see an updated Intranet

site with increased functionality and new features.

Armed with this feedback, the committee met to develop a mission statement and look at next steps. Our mission is: **To determine and use the most cutting-edge technology to establish a dynamic web presence and a vibrant, functional web community.** Our next step was to divide and conquer.

We created two sub-committees to focus on the varying needs involved with creating both Internet and Intranet sites. Over the past few months, each sub-committee has been meeting regularly to forge ahead with projects and deadlines.

It was also decided that the Internet site, the public face



of NAFI/NFI, will continue to be an inclusive site that represents all of NAFI/NFI under one umbrella. The Intranet, our password protected site, will feature specific pages dedicated to each corp and/or region, allowing for increased information sharing and employee usage.

As for the look of the new site, we are currently meeting with designers and will soon be calling upon NAFI/NFI employees to help us finalize the design of the new www.NAFI.com. Stay tuned for future monthly email updates on this exciting project!

Food For Thought—Reflections on Education

MaryAnne McIntyre, Education Director, NAFI Rhode Island

One of the most challenging assignments I've faced in all my education courses was to define an educated person (actually, it was the ONLY challenging assignment, but I'll leave the issue of teacher training programs for another time). My definition went through weeks of revisions before I was satisfied. It was an important exercise for two reasons.

First, how can you measure success if you're not clear what you're aiming for? Those of us who value the autonomy we have as private school administrators have a huge responsibility to be clear on this question in our own minds, and with others in our programs. After all, our schools reflect the people that run them.

"Education" is a concept, and

concept development is experientially based. Naturally, my definition of an educated person came out of my collective life experiences to that point. (Funny – it was wandering aimlessly around the country during my college years, NOT my traditional catholic school education, that motivated me to be a life long learner). So the second thing this assignment brought into

focus for me is the importance of experience in concept development.

The Normative Approach is very much an experiential treatment philosophy. In keeping a parallel process intact in our communities, we share the experience of living in a pro-social, value based community. We walk the walk with clients. Perhaps this is why it works so

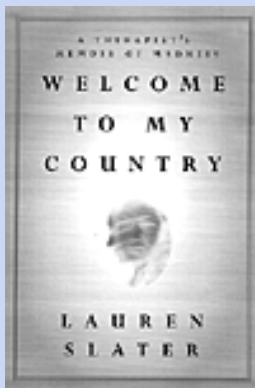
Notes from the Nook—A New Column at the Normative Times

Welcome to the Book Nook, NAFI/NFI's newest regular newsletter column. Dedicated to the pursuit of life long learning, the Book Nook promises to bring you first person reviews of books (and the occasional movie) from your peers at NAFI/NFI that will hopefully be incorporated into your future "must read" list. We are always on the lookout for thought-provoking and inspiring reads, so if you've come across a novel, short story or other book you feel is relevant to our work and worth sharing with the rest of the NAFI/NFI community, please submit the title and a short review to us at jilldichiara@nafi.com. A special thanks to Dawn Farnkoff of NFI MA for volunteering our first employee review. We hope you enjoy this new facet of the Normative Times and look forward to your help in building the Book Nook library in the months to come!!



Welcome to My Country By Lauren Slater

Reviewed by Dawn Farnkoff, Program Director, NFI MA



This book is a masterpiece in its own right. No, it isn't flashy. It isn't a beach read to be made into a movie with Tom Cruise as the lead. It will not be the "feel good" book for the holidays. However, it is a wonderfully insightful and inspiring book to be read by "people in the field" and its lessons are to be taken seriously.

It is a book about a therapist's work as she climbs her way towards her larger professional degree. She also just happens to be a woman who is living with a major affective disorder. It is her ability to LIVE on both sides of the fence that makes this

book, not only intriguing, but useful as a guide to better, more effective day to day practice.

To read words that so cleanly express the very thoughts and feelings you know you have felt day to day and to realize that you are not alone in your understanding of how incredibly amazing psychosis is, is a wonderful gift. Through reading this story, we are able to walk in the shoes of a remarkable therapist, who isn't afraid to share her love for the people she serves. We are given a chance to listen to her experiences; the recollections of her journey with schizophrenics in an acute phase, a sociopath sharing the details of his emotionally and physically abusive ways of maneuvering through his world, and other "social work" opportunities. Surprisingly, this inside look is a treat and probably one most savored by those who

walk a similar path to Slater.

It's all peacefully familiar, yet astoundingly profound. It is written in such a way that brings to light that this is the work we do....the professional lives we lead, the choice we have made in our own navigation through our work lives...and it is utterly mesmerizing.

That is the way I would describe the book "Welcome To My Country". Maybe because in my personal (limited) research, there is very little written from the empathetic and loving perspective of the, "crazy person helper." Perhaps it is that all I read, or have had put in my face, is so cold, matter of fact or outdated that I am ignorant. Never the less, this book is so alive and real...so funny. It also represents that "outside of the box" thinking we try to live by...that I found it be-

yond refreshing. I found it enlightening, motivating, and so full of hope that WE, the "non crazy" can change how we receive the world, that I have adopted it as my bible of sorts. It is my guide book whenever I wonder if I am thinking as I should to bring the world to my clients.... To make sure I am teaching the world about my clients... building bridges and putting perceived realities to the test. Slater enforces the reality that the world has to change, not just the people we work with.

I chose not to go into too much detail of the book's actual story (for that is a treat you should enjoy yourself) but to share with you the empowering feelings I was left with after finishing it. I hope you will all have the opportunity to experience this amazing piece of writing and it will remind you how invaluable the work we do really is.

Notes From All Over—Updates, News and Announcements from the NAFI/NFI Landscape

Connecticut: We are proud to report that the [Dover Road Group Home](#) was highlighted in the New Britain Herald Press, expressing to the community what a wonderful place is for its six extraordinary residents and the many talented and dedicated staff who work there. Congratulations!!

Also, our [2nd annual NAFI CT Golf Classic](#) was held on May 17th at Quarry Ridge Golf Course, in Portland, CT. Thanks to all for your support!

Florida: [Eddie Morgan](#), Program Director for DeFuniak Springs would like to share this letter her recently received from a former program resident, who is now happily married and a father:

Please let me know how I can help these young men. I feel it is my duty to give back. I have a poem I would like for you to read to everyone. Tell them to write this down and recite it every day. The Rose that Grew From Concrete. – Did you hear about the rose that grew from the crack in the concrete? Proving nature's law is wrong it learned to walk without having feet. Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from the concrete when no one else ever cared. You see you wouldn't ask why the rose that grew from the concrete had damaged petals. On the contrary, we would all celebrate its tenacity. We would all love it's will to reach the sun. Well, we are the rose- this is the concrete- and these are my damaged petals. Don't ask why? Thank God!-- Tupac Shakur .

See guys, we all have damaged petals and it's hard from where we all come from to stay focused on our dreams. Don't let this time away keep you down. Improve your skills. Ask questions. Learn from each others mistakes. Everyone has problems. Find out what your problem is and fix it before it too late. This is your life, what are you going to do with it is up to you. This may be your last chance to grow from the concrete.

NFI MA: In recent months, many people have inquired about the NFI MA adult residential program that was devastated by the Danvers explosion on November 22nd. [Patrick Quirk](#), Program Director, shares with us the following update:

On November 22, 2006, the house where the [Crane River Respite](#) operated was heavily damaged by the large chemical explosion that took place in Danvers. For over two months the program was homeless. Fortunately for us, the house formerly used by the Anchorage Girls program was made available to us. With a lot of help from fellow NFI employees, we were able to renovate that house. On February 1st, we moved into our new home in North Beverly. We do not know if it is permanent or if the old site is going to be repaired and we will move back, but for now, like the legend of the Phoenix, [NFI's Adult Respite Program](#) has "risen from the ashes".

Mid-Atlantic: Personnel update! The Mid-Atlantic would like to welcome our new [Regional Director, David Morrison](#), to the NAFI/NFI community. David comes to NAFI with many years of experience work-

ing with youth at risk and we are excited about having him on our team. Since beginning his work with us in March, David has already proved to be a positive addition. Please join us in welcoming David to NAFI!

New York: [Nina Rose](#)

[Fischer](#), Regional Director for NY, shares the following news:

The New York region is teeming with activity! We are proud to announce that Saturday April 14th we had a successful [Professional Parent](#) graduation for 23 newly trained foster parents. Special thanks and congratulations to [Ines Gonzalez](#), Program Director for her excellent leadership and [Beverly Lee](#), Recruitment Coordinator for her magnetic recruitment strategies and engaging training ability. Thanks to the entire team, [Yaromil Fong-Olivares](#), [Tami Wilson](#), [Tracey Corsiglia](#) and welcome to our new Social Worker, [Tanya Rodriguez](#)!

NFI North: [Skiing the Blues Fundraiser a Huge Success!](#)

What a day it was, the snow was freshly fallen and the sky's were blue! Not only that but the music was blue as well, blues that is. This annual fundraiser was a particular success this year as everything came together in a perfect storm of celebration. Many NFI families enjoyed the skiing as well as the après ski with the musical sounds of NFI's own Off Mission Blues Band. A huge thanks goes out to the CFAD committee and all our volunteers for helping to pull this event off.

Rhode Island: Spring is here! There are so many great events during these few months. The NAFI Network had its own

version of "March Madness", our [Basketball Tournament](#) on April 11th at Shea High School. There were over 80 staff and residents representing 12 teams. Also in April we held our Third Annual NAFI Rhode Island Network Conference. A wonderful event as always

Our Annual [New York Trip](#) took place in May and was a great adventure for everyone involved.

We also have four kids that just embarked on a 2 week ["2nd Annual Road to Life Trip"](#). They will cross the United States visiting the National Parks. We hope everyone has a great spring! Jerry Carnevale would like to add...[Go Yankees! Go \(AWAY\) RED SOX](#)

NAFI Corp: [Human Resources Updates!!](#)

Shelly Waldman, Sharon Bogdan and Chris Kilker share the following reminders and information:

[2007 OPEN ENROLLMENT:](#)

The 2007 [Open Enrollment Period](#) for medical, dental and short-term disability coverage is here! Look for detailed information this month. If you know you would like to add, remove or change coverage - effective July 1, 2007 - and you have questions about how to proceed, HR will be happy to assist you now. Open enrollment will last through the end of the month.

[Tuition Reimbursement:](#)

Don't forget that the Agency's [Tuition Reimbursement Program](#) benefit has been increased to \$1500 per fiscal year.! For more details and information on eligibility requirements, please contact Chris Kilker at the Corporate Human Resources Department or your regional HR representative.

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well o affect long term change. Concepts like **respect** and **community** take on new meaning after living them with a consistent value base. Ultimately, every community member walks away with a higher level of self awareness.

I think most people would agree that experiences in education offer opportunities to teach content and skills, to meet diverse developmental needs and learning styles, to teach social and emotional skills, to motivate students by raising more questions, to expand concept development, and to enhance self awareness.

So it seems to me that EXPERIENCE is what bonds

the “treatment” and “education” components of our programs to make them the seamless learning environments that they are. With just a little thought, we can ensure that all the experiences we offer clients, from planning holiday parties, to talent shows, to school field trips, accomplish all of the above. Encouraging reflective writing and processing experiences as a group promote the self awareness that leads to both healing and growth. Finally, people learn when they’re having fun. (the “F” word in the education world!) In closing, I’d like to pass this challenge on to others;

Have you clearly defined “success” for your educa-

tion program?

Should we be measuring success in the same ways public schools do, given our shorter lengths of stay, availability of residential and clinical staff, students with huge gaps in skills and often anti-social values?

Are you taking opportunities in all your activities to teach academic skills, as well as social and emotional ones?

Are your clients (and staff) having fun??? After all, “education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire”.

Coming Next Issue...

We’re sure you’ve heard about it, but what exactly is this **DeFran Information Management and Billing System?** How will it make life easier? How will it affect billing, client reporting, etc? Chris Gagnon, NAFI Comptroller, will share the inside scoop with us.

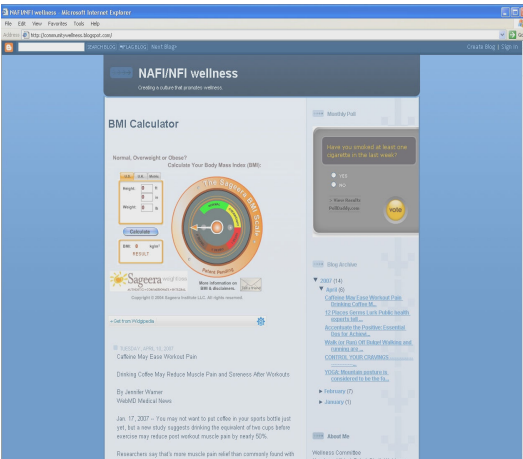
Looking for extra funding to help start an enrichment project at your program? Our next issue will feature an in-depth piece on **NAFI/NFI’s Arts Initiative Fund** and how it can help you bring music, dance and art into your program.

Think you know all there is to know about the **Normative Community Approach?** Think again. The NCA Forums are coming soon to your region!

All this and more in the next Normative Times, hitting the web on August 1st.. Please email jilldichiara@nafi.com with any questions or ideas! *Thanks for reading!!*

The Health and Wellness Initiative By The NAFI/NFI Health and Wellness Committee

In the spirit of continually striving to learn more about ourselves and how we can adopt healthier lifestyles, Dr. Bakal has convened a new committee to look into how all of us at NAFI/NFI can improve our overall health and wellbeing. Scientists have already established the benefits of embracing healthier lifestyles. People who exercise regularly and eat right tend to have fewer illnesses like colds and flus, and have higher quality of life, in terms of greater endurance, fewer aches & pains and longer life expectancy.



We all know from personal experience that eating right, exercising and taking care of one’s health is a big job, and we’d like to help. You can look forward to receiving information and other resources on the NAFI/NFI Wellness blog, an internet site dedicated to helping you find ways to improve your overall health and wellbeing.

<http://communitywellness.blogspot.com/>

Please browse there for more information, surveys, tips and suggestions on how to make time for health & wellness in your daily life. By logging on and reading the blog, you will have the opportunity to share your ideas and opinions with the rest of the Wellness Committee. We look

forward to reading your comments and suggestions and hope this is a positive step towards creating a culture that promotes wellness!