



# MOLAP News

The Missouri Bar

Winter 2012



## Director's Notes

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This is my final opportunity to visit with you through this Newsletter. I will be retiring effective March 31, 2012 after seven years with MOLAP. Ms. Anne Chambers of Columbia has been selected as the new Director for the program. She will begin her service March 1, so we will have a month together for a smoother change-over. Ann is a licensed clinical social worker with a good deal of experience working with people with serious mental illness and substance use disorders. She has served as a Board member and is now past President of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work. She comes to MOLAP with a well-deserved reputation for hard work and productivity. We look forward to her service to you and all the members of the Bar.



*Jim Brady, LCSW*

## Lawyer Support Groups

If you are interested in joining a Lawyer Support Group in your area, contact the appropriate person:

St. Louis  
Tom Casey  
(314) 421-0763

Kansas City  
Hugh O'Donnell  
(816) 931-5533

Mid-Missouri  
Julian Ossman  
(573) 636-4120

Southeast  
Peter Statler  
(573) 243-3482

I want to offer a very personal word of thanks to all of you for your cooperation and support in the work of MOLAP. Many of you have taken initiative in dealing face to face with people of concern and making a great difference. There is still much to do, so I encourage each of you to continue in the good work of making lives better through your sharing and service. The MOLAP vision continues: "More Lawyers Better"

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## Save the Dates

The Kansas Lawyers Assistance Program will be hosting a regional Lawyer Assistance Conference in Kansas City on March 30, 2012 at the Marriot Hotel, 45th and Main. Staff and volunteers from several state Lawyer Assistance Programs have been invited. Special guest presenter will be Link Christin, an attorney who is coordinator of the specialty treatment program for lawyers at Hazelden treatment center in Minnesota. Plans will include regional sharing, lunch, and some CLE event. Specific details on the program and registration information will be available as soon as CLE approval is completed. For an update, interested volunteers may contact the KLAP office at 785-368-8275.

The next meeting of the Lawyers Assistance Committee will take place in Jefferson City on May 11, 2012 during Spring Committee Meetings of the Missouri Bar. The LAC will convene at 10:00 am at the Capitol Plaza Hotel. Numerous Committees will meet that day, many of them offering free CLE programs. A complimentary lunch will be served to all attendees. Check [www.MoBar.org](http://www.MoBar.org) for more details on schedules and offerings.

# Wet Feet

By Pat Spataro

I was about seven years old when, during an outside procession from my Catholic grade school to the adjoining church on a rainy day, I suddenly realized my foot was cold and wet. The thinning of the sole of my shoe finally gave way and my sock and foot were now exposed to the harsh elements.

I looked around in hopes that no one noticed the concerned look on my face and my slight limp. This didn't seem normal. I was fairly certain that no one else had a hole in their shoe.

Until that moment, my life seemed charmed. I was the middle child of seven in an Irish Catholic family (a topic for yet more therapeutic writing). Being a large family gave us status in the community. My dad also was the vice president of a large business and this gave us additional status and a level of financial comfort I was now questioning.

The next 10 years turned out to be hellish, and it was only in hindsight that I knew the hole in my shoe was the beginning of the end of my Camelot. The disease of alcoholism crawled methodically and insidiously into my family.

Over time, things progressed from bad to worse. My dad's periods of sobriety grew shorter as his drinking benders intensified in duration and severity. Holidays became nothing more than a darn good reason to drink, and watching Dad fall into the Christmas tree became as much of a tradition as decorating it.

Soon, a week's vacation turned into three weeks – two for drinking and one to sober up enough to go back to work.

The summer I entered high school he lost his job; I was there when his boss came to the house. I recall his words as if it were yesterday... "Sorry Bill, we just can't do this anymore."

## Hoping for help

A year later, the flicker of hope emerged as I stood near the table where all the adults sat doing a classic intervention. I had a straight-on view of my dad's face. I felt sad for him. His hands shook wildly as he wiped the sweat off his face during the meeting.

The intervention worked, and he went off to rehab for 90 days. But, sadly, he began drinking shortly after he was released.

My dad died at the beginning of my senior year of high school.

He was finally freed from his prison, and so was I. The guilt I felt for feeling relieved that it was finally over wasn't the only thing that I took away from my childhood years. I was now, officially, an Adult Child of an Alcoholic (ACOA).

The Alcoholics Anonymous World Service Organization describes the characteristics of an ACOA very succinctly. Thankfully, the organization clarifies that its published statement about ACOA characteristics are a description and not an indictment...luckily for me, I'd have to say "guilty as charged" for most of the things on this list.

Adult children of alcoholic parents tend to:

- Feel isolated and uneasy with people
- Protect ourselves by being people pleasers
- Feel threatened by any criticism
- Become alcoholics or have significant relations with them
- See ourselves as victims
- Have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility

- Focus more on the needs of others than our own
- Feel guilty if we stand up for ourselves rather than giving in to others
- Become addicted to the excitement of dysfunctional relationships
- Fear abandonment enough to do almost anything to avoid it.

You can't change the past, but you can choose how it will influence the present and the future. Fortunately, I did not become an addict.

I am not quite sure why not because the universe had aligned all the necessary elements. I think I was blessed, yes blessed, with the haunting image that my dad's life had become so unmanageable because of alcohol that he couldn't hear me say, "Dad, if you love me, you'll stop drinking." I knew he loved me, so I figured out at a young age that alcohol had stolen his essence and his ability to make choices and his ability to show those he loved deeply that he loved them.

I was determined not to let that happen to me.

### **Taming a tiger**

Most of the other traits I tamed. I managed to finesse some of them into strengths and skills.

I feel many of the ACOA traits I attached to during my childhood experiences have been dealt with, but if truth be told, I still deal with some emotional fallout of having an alcoholic parent.

And this is what's at the very heart of this message...the impact of addictions on children is so far reaching and runs so deep that even after 40 years, it is still not a done deal for me.

If you can't stop drinking, smoking, gambling, etc. even when your child asks you to, please call for information and assistance at 1-800-688-7859.

The mark you leave in the wake of your addiction is indelible.

*Reprinted with permission from Pat Spataro, Director of the Lawyer Assistance Program for the New York State Bar.*

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## **Meditation**

### **"Restless"**

I've heard it a lot the last couple of weeks. "If only the wind weren't blowing, it wouldn't feel so cold." "If it were just 10 degrees warmer, I could take it all right." We always want it different, don't we? If it's 20, we long for 30, if 30, then 40 and on and on. I'm pretty confident that by July we will be wishing it were 10 degrees less, and that the wind were blowing! We are restless!

Are we not restless about other matters as well? If only I had more/less/better clients, if only I had better help, if only my family were.... And so it is that we wish away our present for some imagined future that may or may not arrive. Instead of sitting wishing, I could be changing some things. I could do a few small things right today. Taking care of business in the moment makes me less restless and certainly more productive. Let's not be in any rush to give away today to our restless spirits.

Jim Brady

**MISSOURI LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

A program of The Missouri Bar

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