

Second Annual SE-USA AAGT Regional Conference

“Being A Gestalt Community ... As the Leaves Turn”

October 17-19, 2008, Asheville, North Carolina

CONFERENCE EVALUATION SUMMARY

This is a summary of the Evaluation Forms completed by conference participants and returned to RCP Anne Leibig, on-site continuing education registrar, upon completion of the conference. The numbers in parentheses are the number of people in that category.

Twenty-five participants and presenters from six states gathered at the Gentle Bioenergetics Center, a wonderful retreat house nestled in the Allegheny Forest near Asheville, North Carolina, for the weekend South East USA AAGT Gestalt Conference. AAGT founders: Rachel Brier from Massachusetts, Sylvia Crocker from Wyoming, and Jack Neggerman from Ohio were featured presenters. On the other end of the membership continuum was AAGT's new Interest Group chairperson, Michael Dietrich Chastain, who also represented the newly formed International New Generation Gestalt Interest Group (better known as “INGIG”). The open-minded and eager graduate students in attendance provided an appreciative exchange of ideas and feelings, eager to hear the stories about AAGT's and gestalt therapy's origins.

We followed the AAGT formula for being together – weaving community meetings, process groups, workshops and partying into the brief time from Friday evening until Sunday morning. The three hour afternoon break on Saturday allowed time to do what interested them, hiking, exploring, a nap, shopping, meditating or whatever. Following the rest of Saturday's workshops, Nicholas Emmanuel of the Appalachian Gestalt Training Institute led us to the “Fiddlin' Pig,” for southern food, live blue-grass and the opportunity to clog and flat foot. This replaced the Irish Interest Group which we could not re-create without the “Sacred Shorts of St. Ansel.”

On Sunday morning Dick Overly of the Gentle Bio-Energetics Institute led us in an energy-creating experiential closing. At the final community meeting we read parts of Dan Bloom's presidential address from AAGT in Manchester, England, *"All of us together make this a wonderfully diverse organization of creative people always creating and developing gestalt therapy in new directions – united, with a shared value of mutual respect, and commitment to personal dialogue."*

Following is a summary of the data on the Evaluation Forms collected from 20 participants:

Conference Attendance 25, 20 of whom completed and returned their evaluation forms.

Professional Identity (Note: Parenthetical numbers do not total the number of raters due to multiple occupations) Counselor – LPCC, LPC (5) – NBCC (1); Psychologist (2); Social Worker-LISW, LSW (6); Psychotherapist (3); Mental Health Counselor (1); Gestalt Therapy Trainer/Teacher (2); Graduate Students in Counseling (4); Expressive Arts Therapist (1); Equine Counselor (1)

Specializations (Note: Numbers in parentheses don't total the number of respondents due to multiple specialties) Individual Adults (5); Children (4), Adolescents (4); Couples (6); Families (2); Groups (2); Post-Graduate Training (1), Career Counseling (3), College Counseling Center (1), Generalist (7)

How did you become aware of this conference?

Word of Mouth (5); Employer/Supervisor/Professor/Colleague (3); Brochure/Flyer (1); RCP SE-Regional Contact Person (2); AAGT Web-Site (4); Gestalt Training Program (1)

Are you an AAGT member? Yes (6), No (14)

AAGT Conferences attended? All (2); Nine (1); Six (2); Four (1); One (7); None (7)

Considering attending next International Gestalt Therapy Conference in 2010 in Philadelphia?
Yes (6), No (2), Maybe (5)

Topics that interested you most during this conference

Experiential Gestalt demonstrations; Phenomenology in gestalt therapy; Field theory; Process group experience; Gentle Bioenergetics; Getting to meet and know famous gestalt therapists; Importance of awareness in gestalt work; The use of reflecting teams in supervising counselors; Everything in the workshop was very interesting.

	0 = NOT APPLICABLE	1 = POOR	2 = FAIR	3 = SATISFACTORY	4 = GOOD	5 = EXCELLENT
	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS RATING EACH CATEGORY IS IN PARENTESIS					
Overall Format of Conference	0	1	2	3	4 (9)	5 (11)
My Professional Expectations were Fulfilled	0	1	2	3	4 (6)	5 (14)
Friday Bio-Energetics/Gestalt Workshop	0 (9)	1	2	3 (1)	4 (3)	5 (7)
Friday Evening Opening Session	0	1	2	3	4 (15)	5 (5)
Saturday AM Presentation/Workshop	0	1	2	3 (1)	4 (9)	5 (10)
Saturday PM Presentation/Workshop	0	1	2	3	4 (6)	5 (14)
Process Group Experience	0	1	2	3	4 (5)	5 (15)
Gestalt Philosophy and Theory	0	1	2	3 (6)	4 (9)	5 (5)
Gestalt Practices, Procedures and Processes	0	1	2	3 (2)	4 (4)	5 (14)
Advertising, Marketing & Information	0	1	2	3 (3)	4 (8)	5 (9)
Location/Setting of Conference	0	1	2	3 (4)	4 (6)	5 (10)
Coordination, Registration & Administration	0	1	2	3 (2)	4 (6)	5 (12)
Continuing Education Procedures	0 (7)	1	2	3 (1)	4 (6)	5 (6)
Cost of Conference	0 (2)	1	2	3 (2)	4 (7)	5 (9)
Meeting Rooms & Physical Environment	0	1	2	3 (3)	4 (9)	5 (8)
Hotel Accommodations/Guest Rooms	0 (5)	1	2	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (8)

Identify things you learned at this conference that you hope to use in your work

Awareness of how to create meaningful and substantive CONTACT with clients. How to use your bodily and physical sensations as a guide in therapy. The experience of community. How to use role-play therapeutically. Greater and more precise understanding of phenomenology. The use of imagination in therapy – e.g., “What would you imagine?” and language to use that enhances the therapy process. Gestalt processes with groups and community gatherings. The importance of being authentically present with clients and not afraid to be myself. Concepts related to using reflecting teams and how to use them in supervision. Understanding the importance of and how to use the phenomenological method. More awareness of my own process and the desire to be fully present with my clients. I feel very excited about applying into my work one more process group as a result of the second PG group on Saturday – it was a moving therapeutic experience – I was amazed at the power

in such simple interventions. Jack's enthusiasm for the historical perspective on GT was contagious and I gained a lot of respect for Fritz Perls true contributions to GT. I learned about the founding of AAGT as a means of supporting the associating and advancing of gestalt therapy. Overall, a very good and worthwhile conference. I appreciate your continuing efforts to create these conferences to develop awareness of what is going on inside of us as well as on the outside. Resourcing professional contacts in the Ashville area and finding support.

[Suggestions for future meeting sites and ways to improve future regional conferences](#)

Give support and encouragement for us to bring more of our own practice into the workshops.

Keep the process groups small as it is easier to develop trust in such a brief weekend meeting.

Keep our conferences located in Ashville and at this Gentle Bioenergetics Center; I love Ashville and the Appalachian Gestalt therapists.

More experiential workshops and more live demonstrations of gestalt therapy.

For new people it would help in the opening plenary session to have an introduction to gestalt therapy and how it differs from the most common approaches.

Define the purpose of the process groups before our first session and have the facilitators follow gestalt methodology by keeping them in the "here and now"

Consider a wider outreach in your advertising to reach people within driving distance.

Same time same place next year will be great.