

Growing and Becoming: American Academy of Health Behavior 2007 Presidential Welcome Address

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These remarks were presented at the opening ceremony of the American Academy of Health Behavior (AAHB) annual scientific

conference held in Savannah, GA, March 25-28, 2007 by the outgoing president of The Academy.

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It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Savannah and the 2007 AAHB Annual Meeting. I plan to make a few welcoming remarks, and then introduce Dr Robert McDermott, who will lead our celebration of the 10th anniversary of the founding of The Academy. Following that, Scott Olds will provide a brief overview of the conference schedule, and then Mary Nies will facilitate a panel discussion among past Academy Laureates.

I am sure you are as pleased as I to be in the lovely city of Savannah, particularly at this wonderful time of the year. The Academy takes pride in holding our annual meetings in lovely settings like this one. Many of you will remember last year's meeting on health behavior theory held in beautiful Carmel, Calif. Previous meetings were also held in lovely settings, including Charleston, SC, in 2005; Sedona, Ariz, in 2004; St. Augustine, Fla, in 2003; Napa Valley, Calif, in 2002; and Santa Fe, NM, in 2000. Next year's an-

nual meeting will be held in Mandalay Beach, Calif, just an hour north of Los Angeles and right on the Pacific Ocean. The theme for that meeting is "Addiction: From Cells to Society." The meeting will bring together top addiction researchers to discuss the latest findings on addiction. Because the literature on addiction is vast and the theme is broadly cast, I am confident that all of us will learn a great deal and find much that can be applied to our own research, regardless of topic. The 2009 meeting will be held just down the road from Savannah, in Hilton Head, SC, which promises to be another wonderful venue. The theme has not been determined, but possibilities include advances in research on adherence and research with hard-to-reach populations.

The Academy has now been in existence for 10 years. Membership has grown from the initial hearty band of founding members to about 160 currently, including 21 health behavior researchers who joined since last year's annual meeting. Of all members, 43 have earned the honor of being designated Fellow of the American Academy of Health Behavior. Membership is the lifeline of The Academy, and the success of The Academy depends almost entirely on the energy and enthusiasm of member volunteers. Do recruit your colleagues to join and volunteer to serve in a leadership capacity. Similar to our experience with past meetings, about half of this year's meeting attendees are members and half are not. If you are not

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a member, do consider completing your membership application before you leave.

Several important documents guide The Academy in its activities, the bylaws being the most important of these. The bylaws are in the process of being revised for the first time in the history of The Academy, and when this process is complete, they will be submitted to the membership for approval. Most of the changes are designed to improve functioning or clarify procedures, but there are a few substantive issues that will be identified for your consideration. Also, over the past few years a strategic plan has been developed, largely through the laudable efforts of Drs Randy Black and Karen Liller. Also, under the leadership of The Academy treasurer, Dr Lorraine Wallace, we have developed a revenue generation plan to put The Academy on a better long-term financial footing.

The Academy is governed by a volunteer board of directors and committee chairs. Typically, the board meets by conference call monthly and in person at a midyear meeting and at the end of each annual meeting. The costs of these meetings are borne by the members and not by The Academy. I have been pleased and proud to serve with this year's board and I would like to recognize them now.

David Randy Black, immediate past president, is also a founding member of The Academy. Randy has provided me with sage advice and been a wonderful friend, for which I am greatly indebted and appreciative.

Steve Sussman, president-elect, has really stepped up since joining the board, initially as an appointed committee chair and then as an elected officer. Steve has long been known for his research accomplishments, but only recently have his leadership talents been recognized as well. I look forward to working with Steve on Academy issues over the coming year.

Molly Laflin is currently secretary, but at the end of this meeting becomes the president-elect and in 2008 will become the first female president of The Academy. Molly is a founding member of The Academy and has served The Academy in many ways. No one has been more important to the development and continuity of The Academy as Molly (with the possible exception of Glover). I know that I have greatly relied on Molly for her institutional memory, organizational skill,

thoughtful advice, and friendship.

As Academy treasurer, Lorraine Wallace has established a thoughtful plan for revenue generation and management. Lorraine also coedits the newsletter and managed the abstract review for this meeting. It seems that whenever an important job comes along, Lorraine has been able to step in and get it done, despite her other, substantial professional responsibilities.

The other elected officers are delegates, elected to staggered 3-year terms. Karen Liller completes her term at the end of the meeting, and I wish to thank Karen for her substantial contributions over the years, including her terrific work on the strategic plan. Joan Cowdery (2008) has served mainly as The Academy liaison to the National Health Coalition, which is an increasingly important function as The Academy grows and becomes more prominent nationally. Rita Debate (2009) has done a lot of things for The Academy, including coediting the newsletter and managing abstract reviews. I wish to thank Karen, Joan, and Rita for their good work and advice over the past year.

The Academy leadership also includes 4 appointed council chairs. Cheryl Dye has served capably as chair of marketing and communications. Dennis Thombs is currently the chair of the Resource Development Committee. Be sure to check on The Academy website the 2 white papers that Molly and Dennis are primarily responsible for developing. One of these really excellent papers is on publication ethics, and the other is on doctoral-level research preparation. I highly recommend them to you. David Seal is chair of the Professional Development Committee. David has worked tirelessly in this capacity. One of his great achievements, I believe, is making the roundtables held each morning of the annual meeting really work. I think you will really enjoy meeting colleagues and having good conversations at tomorrow morning's roundtable, so do plan on attending. Also, I wish to acknowledge Robert McDermott, currently membership chair, previously president, and a founding member of The Academy. I have really appreciated Bob's excellent advice on a range of topics and his efficient and effective work on a wide range of Academy responsibilities. Also, I wish also to recognize Mark Kittleson, who is not a member

of the board, but is Academy webmaster and a founding member. Thanks so much for all your good work, Mark.

It has been my pleasure to work with a really talented and dedicated group of leaders. I know I could not have done a good job as president without their help, and I want you to know how hard these good people have worked and how much I appreciate their good efforts. Many other members have contributed in important ways, and I wish to thank them for their service. Last but not least, I wish to thank Lori Marks, AAHB executive director, for

her wonderful work this past year. It is not an easy task to replace Terri Manning, who was executive director since The Academy's inception and institutional member. Lori has done a wonderful job this year, and I greatly appreciate her wide range of abilities and leadership.

Now it is my distinct pleasure to introduce Scott Olds, who has done a magnificent job of organizing this year's annual meeting, bringing together a really top distinguished group of experts on multi-level modeling. Please welcome Scott Olds.