



# VASGW

The Virginia Association  
for Specialists in Group Work

## Officers

President	Dr. Terri Mason <a href="mailto:tamason@fcps.edu">tamason@fcps.edu</a>
Past President	Dr. Tatyana Cottle <a href="mailto:tvottle@fcps.edu">tvottle@fcps.edu</a>
Secretary	Halina Banas-Jones <a href="mailto:banasjonesh@earthlink.net">banasjonesh@earthlink.net</a>
Treasurer	Ellen Bowditch <a href="mailto:Lnlynn57@gmail.com">Lnlynn57@gmail.com</a>

## Committee Chairs

Newsletter	Ellissia Price-Fagin <a href="mailto:pellissia@gmail.com">pellissia@gmail.com</a>
Bylaws	Mary Durgala <a href="mailto:mcdurgala@fcps.edu">mcdurgala@fcps.edu</a>
Technology	Ryann Laden <a href="mailto:ryannladen@gmail.com">ryannladen@gmail.com</a>
Communications	Irene Ward <a href="mailto:iward@learningrx.net">iward@learningrx.net</a>
Advocacy Lavine	Barbara

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**SPRING/SUMMER 2021**

Volume 1

## President's Message

*Dear VASGW members:*

*I hope that you are all continuing to be well and safe during these unprecedented times. We have all learned to adapt to the times and now are beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel as more people get vaccinated.*

*We were able to hold our 2021 conference virtually. It was a great success for a first virtual conference and all the board members learned new technology skills. We had a few hiccups but all in all things went very well and the evaluations were incredibly positive. It is our hope that the 2022 conference (which will be the 45 conference) will be in person but we also hope to have some sessions available virtually.*

*The VASGW board has been continuing to work hard to redo our website and make it more interesting to view and to be able to house helpful resources. This is a work in progress, and we would welcome your ideas and suggestions. Please visit the site at <https://sites.google.com/view/vasgw/home>*

*I hope that you have a good summer. Remember to take time to relax and practice self-care. I find summer a good time to re-energize and get ready for the fall. If you have ideas or suggestions for the newsletter, website, or conference please don't hesitate to contact me.*

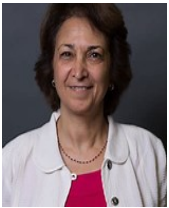
*Regards,  
Dr. Terri Mason, President [tamason@fcps.edu](mailto:tamason@fcps.edu)*

## GROUP-A-RAMA GOES VIRTUAL

The 44<sup>th</sup> annual Group-A-Rama conference was our first **VIRTUAL** conference and it was a learning experience, both technically for Board members and educationally for participants. Sixty professional counselors attended ten workshops April 16, 2021. Feedback was very positive...

- Various presentations addressed groups and programs to help kids develop resilience, empathy, teamwork, and problem-solving skills
- Presenters were informative, passionate, and helpful
- Program development, resources, and interventions were innovative
- Presenters employed creativity and fun to enhance groups and shared new hands-on ideas
- Attendees learned the value of collaboration and networking with other professionals at conference and in work settings
- Participants stated that the conference was very well organized which made the virtual experience workable.

## THE KEYNOTE.... The Power of Resilience and Groups



**Dr. Mary Alvord, Psychologist and Director of Alvord, Baker & Associates, LLC.** Dr. Mary K. Alvord shared specific and evidence-based recommendations on empowering youth to bounce back from the challenges in their lives by increasing confidence, sense of self-mastery, self-control, and applying coping strategies.

## THE BOARD WORKSHOP NOTES....

### **George Mason University “Resilience Badge: How Badging Can Work”**

**Presenter: Lewis E. Forrest II M.Ed.**

*GMU Resilience Badge supports students from orientation through graduation.* Students learn skills for well-being, navigating college life and preparing for the demands of the world of work. They earn badges by participating in fun activities and completing three interactive units. GMU students will feel less stressed, resilient, and supported at GMU. Surprise! Faculty also can participate! Go Mason!

### **Think On Your Feet! “Utilizing Odyssey of the Mind Activities to Increase Cognitive Flexibility & Creative Problem Solving”, Presenter: Rebecca O’Neil, MSW**

This presentation shows you how to use Odyssey of the Mind to help students problem solve as a group. Students are given situations, materials, or a story for theater to work together to solve a problem or make an event happen. There is no wrong answer. The focus is to get students to use and develop their social skills as they share ideas and work together to produce a product or answer. Rebecca also uses OOTM to help students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and related developmental delays. Fun!

### **“Walk In My Shoes” Program, Presenter: Margaret Behrns, Founder and Creative Director**

Margaret developed an inclusive schools-week program for elementary school-age children as a PTA volunteer. Over the past five years with help from others she has developed this interactive empathy-building program. Students work in groups and work through problems that someone might have with mobility, sight, educational ability, hearing, acceptance, etc. This program has been implemented in more than a dozen FCPS

schools and reached over 10,000 students. Her hope is to further develop the program to be used with high school students. Very innovative way to teach someone to “Walk In Someone Shoes”!

### **A Bullying Prevention Partnership: Collaborating with Parents/Guardians**

**Presenters: Heather Ross and Anaid Shaver**

Heather Ross, School Counseling Specialist in Loudoun County Public Schools and Anaid Shaver, a second-year doctoral student at Virginia Tech’s counselor Education and Supervision program emphasized the importance of keeping parents informed and working collaboratively with students, parents, teachers and administrators to address this issue. They shared information about how to develop a presentation for parents that would educate parents about bullying. They also shared thoughts on the many roles of a bystander and the need to encourage bystanders to **TAKE ACTION**.

### **Social Skills Strategies, Curriculum and Resources to Address the Needs of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Presenter: Arlene Lechner**

Arlene Lechner presented “Social Skills Strategies, Curriculum and Resources to address the needs of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.” Arlene drew upon her experience facilitating social skills groups at the Northern Virginia JCC. She shared a list of 50 social skills with everything from making eye contact to understanding someone else’s perspective. She emphasized that skills should be explicitly taught followed by a lot of practice, patience and prompts until the individual is able to independently demonstrate the skill. Arlene shared a vast variety of curriculums, children’s books, and online resources for teaching social skills.

### **Self-Care for School Counselors and Other Helping Professionals**

**Presenter: Michael Jones**

Michael Jones presented “Self-Care for School Counselors and Other Helping Professionals”. Often school counselors and other helping professionals are so preoccupied with caring for their students and clients that they fail to adequately care for themselves. In instances where the absence of self-care is acute, a school counselor and/or helping professionals’ personal well-being and the effectiveness of their professional practice may suffer. This workshop described self-care, why self-care is important, and how to regularly practice self-care. Mr. Jones shared ideas on a variety of techniques and practices, including acupressure to enhance well-being. Participants were given a Personal Self-Care Plan and encouraged to use it and take the opportunity to develop their own individualized plan for ongoing self-care.

### **New-Bee Group: Welcome to Our Hive, Presenter: Sarah Bustard**

Sarah Bustard is a Professional School Counselor at Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy (K-5) in Alexandria City, Virginia. Sarah presented her New Bee Group: Welcome to Our Hive group intervention for new students at the beginning of the school year. Students are invited to a one-time Welcome Lunch with the counselor with parent permission. If students need additional support, Sarah meets with them in a 6 – 8 weeks Friendship group program based on pre-post survey data and teacher and parent recommendations.

Since sessions are held during lunch, Sarah reads books such as *The Day You Begin*, *First Day Jitters*, *Amelia Bedelia’s First Day of School*, and *How Do Dinosaurs Go to School*. She also uses a number of fun and engaging Ice Breakers and activities such as *Start Your Video*, *Like Me*, *Would You Rather*, *2 Truths and a Lie*, *Thumb ball Question*, *Guess Who*, *Bingo Grid*, *Sharing*, *Virtual Tour of the School*, *Scavenger Hunt for Staff Members*, and handouts to help students get better acquainted with the staff at the school. Highly creative method to move students from New Bees to Hive members!

### **Taking a Virtual Cross-walk: Integrating Academic and School Counseling Standards in Group Work**

**Presenter: Dr. Justin Silvey**

Dr. Silvey introduced counselors to a cross-walk process of identifying appropriate academic and counseling standards, writing measurable objectives, and developing pre-/post-test questions to measure group member progress in meeting standards. He also discussed the role of data to support and advocate their work as a group facilitator. He emphasized that everything counselors do should tie to improving academic achievement.

When developing objectives counselors should start with the academic (Math and Language Arts) standard language and then align counseling standards. Standards drive the activities of the group.

### **Considerations in Setting Up Virtual Groups: From Consent to Termination**

**Presenter: Dr. Justin Silvey**

Dr. Silvey is a counselor educator, author, and a professional school counselor at middle and high school and in virtual settings. He discussed the development of virtual groups and provided insights into ethical guidelines from a virtual perspective. He reframed the steps setting up groups from a virtual viewpoint. He reminded counselors to: 1) review the Counseling Code of Ethics for online counseling, 2) create needs assessments that work online, 3) choose topics based on data and teacher/parent input, 4) screen students, 5) revised consent form for virtual counseling and utilize electronic signatures, 6) set up lessons that foster fun and collaboration (ex. Kahoot, Jamboard)...obtain pre-approval from district for online platforms, 7) find resources that help solve problems, 8) make connections...lean into the camera, listen, etc., 9) monitor progress...pre/post assessments, and 10) plan termination from the beginning...How do you want the student to be different at the end of the group? How will you follow-up with the student? Virtual challenge becomes an opportunity.

### **Using Canva as a Platform to provide Social and Emotional Learning Opportunities for K-8 Students**

**Presenters: Brittany Shirvani, Cheryl Musgrove, and Dr. Justin Silvey**

This group provided on-screen examples of slides for classroom presentations, remote or in person, on computer. Their familiarity with this publishing platform gave them quick access to a diversity of pictures, emojis, public domain images, ability to make and use videos, voice-overs, etc. to make interesting classroom counseling presentations. School districts can buy a package for across the district teamwork, but there is a free version anyone can access. They say Canva is for everyone.

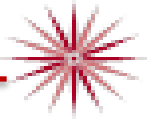
Here are some highlights from the [www.canva](http://www.canva) website:

- Access thousands of high-quality, educational templates for every subject, grade, and ability. From Science and Math, to English, Social Studies and more.
- Discover worksheets, lesson plans, presentations, posters, reports, and more, all ready to share group learning activities with your students for them to complete, individually or collaboratively.
- Students can work together no matter where they are by viewing, editing, and sharing feedback with live comments in real-time.
- Deliver in-person, remote, or hybrid learning. Whatever your class looks like, Canva helps keep connection with your students strong. For students learning remotely, you can create a presentation or lesson, add your voiceover, and send or share directly as a video link.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

**Join the VASGW Group family!** We are looking for new board members who are committed to enhancing group counseling skills among counseling professionals in public and private settings. All Board members must be current members of VCA and VASGW and have an interest in groups and group dynamics. For more information, contact Halina Banas-Jones, Secretary, [banasjonesh@earthlink.net](mailto:banasjonesh@earthlink.net)

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## NEW BOARD OFFICER – TREASURER



**Ellen Bowditch** is a retired Fairfax County Professional School Counselor. She was an elementary school teacher for 8 years in Arkansas, Nebraska, and Virginia. Ellen was a school counselor for 22 years. She spent her last 16 years at Fort Belvoir Elementary located on Fort Belvoir, VA. She loved supporting military children and their families. Ellen enjoyed running Peer Mediation programs for over 18 years. She helped put on Career Fairs, Parent Coffees, taught parenting classes, worked with community leaders on various projects and was the coordinator for an After School Language Program. Ellen's pride and joy was creating an after-school boys club called YMGP- Young Men of Greater Purpose with a board of community leaders to

train a diverse group of boys to learn pride in culture, how to respect self and others, etiquette skills and life skills to be a successful young man. Parents saw positive changes in their sons that would help them in the present and future. Ellen will always find a way to serve her community and encourage good mental health and for all to look for joy in life!

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS



**Jamee Lyons** is currently a middle school professional school counselor at Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, Virginia. She began her career as an elementary music teacher, before earning her Masters in School Counseling. In 2005, Ms. Lyons became an elementary school counselor at Laurel Ridge ES, in Fairfax. She spent nine years at the elementary level and transitioned to the middle school level seven years ago. During her time at Robinson, she completed the School Counseling Leadership Cohort and held the position of interim Director of Students Services for Robinson Middle School.



**Ryann Laden** is an elementary professional school counselor at Springfield Estates Elementary in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). She is excited to return to the field after taking time to be at home with her children, all of whom are now students in FCPS. Ryann previously worked at Newington Forest Elementary, Westlawn Elementary, and Centre Ridge Elementary and enjoyed serving on the VASGW board during these years. She recently earned designations as a Trauma and Crisis Management specialist and Anxiety and Stress Management Specialist by the American School Counselor Association and has special interests in resilience, equity, leadership, and mindfulness.

In her free time, Ryann enjoys relaxing with family and friends, reading, gardening, cooking, and learning new things.

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## VCA ADVOCACY REPORT

Virginia became the first Southern state to abolish the death penalty and the first Southern state to officially recognize racism as a public health crisis. This year's bill passage includes these and many other social and racial justice improvements consistent with VCA's advocacy agenda. Read the full report & learn more about the Advocacy Team: [www.vcacounselors.org/page/advocacy/](http://www.vcacounselors.org/page/advocacy/)





**Interstate Counseling Compact**-allows licensed professional counselors to practice across state lines—both in person and virtually—among participating states without the need for multiple state licenses. VCA Board of Directors voted to lobby the Virginia state legislature to pass legislation

for Virginia to sign the Interstate Counseling Compact. Virginia would join two states that have signed it, Georgia, and Maryland. The first ten states that sign the compact will have the benefit of delineating policy for the implementation of the Compact. For more information you can go to: <https://counselingcompact.org/>

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**Virginia Community College (NOVA) Food Pantry**

In the past, as part of our conference, we have asked participants to bring items to donate to the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) food pantry. At this time, due to COVID, they are not able to run the pantry. To help support the NOVA Annandale community, where we have held the conference for the last 40+ years, we donated \$5 of each individual Group-A-Rama registration fee to NOVA for student support. We thank our attendees for their contributions that totaled \$200.



**Virginia Counselors Association Foundation (VCAF)**

The **Virginia Counselor Association Foundation (VCAF)** has supported Counselors in the Commonwealth of Virginia since 1991. The VCA Foundation has focused on leadership development and training as part of their mission. In recognition of the leadership and contributions of its [Founders](#), the VCA Foundation instituted the [VCA Leadership Academy](#) and the Pete Warren [Student Fellows](#) Program to encourage emerging counselor leaders. In an effort to support more counseling initiatives, VCAF also developed the Suzee Leone Grants Program. For over ten years VASGW has donated funds from the annual Group-A-Rama conference to support the Foundation’s commitment to the education and leadership growth of Virginia counselors. This year VASGW donated \$200. In the name of our members and conference attendees. Make your own donation at: [#vcafwhatsyourgift](#)

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## ANNUAL REPORT

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES OF VASGW IN 2020-2021 - Halina Banas-Jones, Secretary

No one could have guessed how this year would turn out. Here are some numbers and descriptions. Don't worry. There is a good ending!

**Number of Board Meetings – 12.** The last in-person meeting was held on March 10, 2020. Since then, we have had twelve ZOOM Meetings, including our General Membership Meeting on May 4, 2021. Andrea Smith, professional school counselor at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria, Virginia won the 1-year VCA membership door prize.

**Membership of VASGW – 36.** We are actively pursuing new/returning members to join us.

**Number of Board Members – 9.** Board members planned, collaborated, and helped complete the varied tasks on our Annual Group-A-Rama Conference "To Do List" and learned new technology skills for a "virtual" conference on Zoom.

**Newsletter Publication.** Fall and Spring newsletters were created by Editor Ellissia Price-Fagin.

**Officers for 2021-22.** Our elected officers are: President Dr. Terri Mason, Secretary Halina Banas-Jones, and Treasurer Ellen Bowditch. Staying on as Board Members are Mary Durgala, Ellissia Price-Fagin, Irene Ward, Barbara Lavine, and Anita Bruck. We welcome volunteers. Contact Dr. Terri Mason at [tamasonvca@aol.com](mailto:tamasonvca@aol.com)

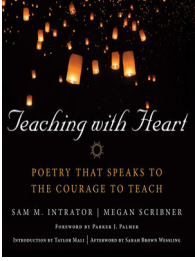
**The Happy Ending.** Our website is up and active. We have two new Board members!

**Our Future.** Two Goals: 1) Present an in-person/hybrid or virtual Group-A-Rama spring of 2022. 2) Boost our membership.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT - Barbara Lavine, Treasurer**

<b>VASGW BUDGET REPORT</b>		<b>July 2020 - July 2021</b>
<b>ITEM</b>	<b>COST</b>	
<b>STARTING BALANCE:</b>		<b>\$10,236.63</b>
<b>INCOME:</b>		
• Group-A-Rama Registration	\$2222.48	
• Membership	130.00	
• NOVA Rental Refund	832.88	
• Liability Insurance Refund	95.00	
• Interest	.85	
<b>SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>\$3,272.21</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>		
• VCA Foundation donation	\$200.00	
• Keynote Honorarium	500.00	
• NOVA Foundation donation	250.00	
• VASGW website	32.99	
• Gifts for President and Secretary	150.00	
• VCA Conference	75.00	
• ASGW Dues	40.00	
• VCA Leadership Conference	50.00	
<b>SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1297.99</b>	
<b>CURRENT BALANCE:</b>		<b>\$12,210.85</b>

## Summer Reading by the Board



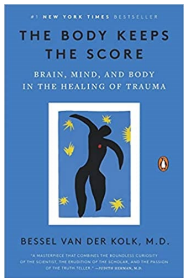
### *Teaching with Heart: Poetry that Speaks to the Courage to Teach*

by Sam M. Intrator and Megan Scribner

Each and every day teachers show up in their classrooms with a relentless sense of optimism. Despite the complicated challenges of schools, they come to and remain in the profession inspired by a conviction that through education they can move individuals and society to a more promising future.

In this book a diverse group of ninety K-12 teachers describe the complex of emotions and experiences of the teaching life – joy, outrage, heartbreak, hope, commitment, and dedication. Each heartfelt commentary is paired with a cherished poem selected by the teacher.

Even though the book was written pre-pandemic, it is a wonderfully inspirational book that should be shared with educators in thanks for their devotion to students both online and in-person.



### *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

by Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.

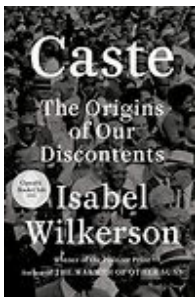
Dr. Van Der Kolk “uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes, both body and brain, compromising sufferers’ capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control and trust. He uses innovative treatments from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama and yoga...that offer different paths to recovery.” He “offers new hope for reclaiming lives.”



### *What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing*

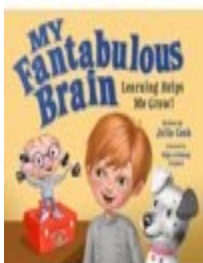
by Oprah Winfrey and Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.

Oprah shares several childhood stories of **trauma** and also mentions **traumatic stories** from her show from other families and children about **childhood abuse** and **neglect**. The book explains how empathy develops, why it is essential both to human happiness and for a functional society, and how it is threatened in a modern world.



### *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

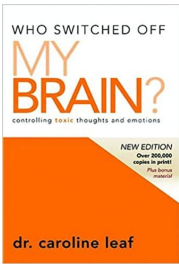
The book describes [racism in the United States](#) as an aspect of a [caste](#) system – a society-wide system of [social stratification](#) characterized by notions such as [hierarchy](#), inclusion and exclusion, and purity. Wilkerson does so by comparing aspects of the experience of American [people of color](#) to the [caste systems of India](#) and [Nazi Germany](#), and she explores the impact of caste on societies shaped by them, and their people.



### *My Fantabulous Brain: Learning Helps Me Grow* by Julia Cook

"Learning doesn't come easy for many children. They struggle with schoolwork, have trouble focusing, and can't make sense of instructions. Oftentimes, these challenges can cause children to internalize their struggles and question their abilities. In My fantabulous brain, Julia Cook helps children understand that everyone needs help sometimes, and there are people who can give us the tools we need to make our brains stronger!"

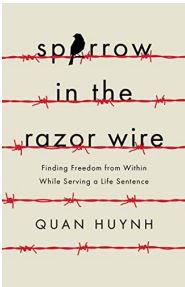




***Who Switched Off My Brain?: Controlling Toxic Thoughts and Emotions***

by Dr. Caroline Leaf

We're living in an epidemic of toxic emotions. Research shows that as much as **87% to 95% of mental and physical illnesses** are a direct result of toxic thinking—proof that our thoughts affect us physically and emotionally. In this book, Dr. Caroline Leaf clearly communicates **13 ways** to detox your thought life and live a life of physical, mental, and emotional wholeness.



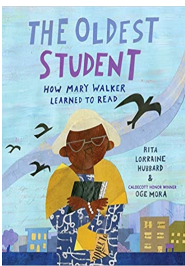
***Sparrow in the Razor Wire: Finding Freedom from Within While Serving a Life Sentence***

by Quan Huynh

In 1999, **Quan Huynh** shot and killed another man in a gang-related incident in Hollywood, California. He received a prison sentence of fifteen years to life in a state that, at the time, did not parole prisoners with life sentences. Behind bars, Quan continued his downward spiral.

This could have been the end of the story for Quan, as it is for many prisoners. But somewhere along the way, he discovered a new path—one that prompted him to commit to self-reflection, truth, and personal responsibility.

*Sparrow in the Razor Wire* is Quan's story of transformation inside a place many see as the end of the road. In his book, he shares the journey of redemption and discovery that led to his ultimate freedom. He found that, no matter the prison, the key to unlocking the door is in each one of us.



***The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read*** by Rita Lorraine Hubbard

Imagine learning to read at the age of 116! Discover the true story of Mary Walker, the nation's oldest student who did just that!

In 1848, Mary Walker was born into slavery. At age 15, she was freed, and by age 20, she was married and had her first child. By age 68, she had worked numerous jobs, including cooking, cleaning, babysitting, and selling sandwiches to raise money for her church. At 114, she was the last remaining member of her family. And at 116, she learned to read. From Rita Lorraine Hubbard comes the inspirational story of Mary Walker (1848-1969), a woman whose long life spanned from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement, and who—with perseverance and dedication—proved that you are never too old to learn.

*Looking Ahead*

VCA Leadership Conference	Virtual	August 27-28, 2021
VCA Convention	Virtua-WHOVA App	November 4-6, 2021
ASGW Biennial Convention	Atlantic Beach, Fl.	February 17-20, 2022

