



NACoA OUT AND ABOUT

Behavioral Health Tomorrow featured an article on cost-effective prevention for children living in addicted families. The article, written by Marion Torchia, Ph.D., NACoA's Director of Communications, carried the message that educational support group programs are relatively inexpensive and demonstrably effective in reducing future addiction.

Sis Wenger, NACoA's Executive Director, addressed 300 judges at a Minnesota Supreme Court conference in St. Paul, MN, in December. Most recently, she spoke in March at the National Student Assistance Conference in New Orleans, LA, and introduced the newly developed *Children's Program Kit*.

Dr. Torchia spoke at the Child Welfare League of America's annual national conference in Washington, DC, in March.

PRESIDENT BUSH APPOINTS SIS WENGER TO COMMISSION

By Stephanie Abbott

Anyone who knows NACoA's Executive Director Sis Wenger will understand what a smart decision President Bush made recently when he appointed her to serve on the White House Advisory Commission on Drug-Free Communities. I suggest her fellow Commissioners better look out because they will be working harder than they are probably used to. In fact, anyone who is on a project with her will find themselves doing some pretty heavy lifting.

The Commission provides input and expertise on the Drug-Free Communities Program, a federal initiative that provides grants, training and other resources to local organizations working to reduce alcohol and drug problems in their communities.

I have known Sis for over 20 years, and I have had to make serious efforts to avoid exerting myself whenever she decides its time for me to do something productive. My attempts to have a slothful and peaceful life are not in the least respected by Ms Wenger. You may wonder why I fall in line. This old friend of mine is hard to say no to.

She is very good at smoothing over others' rough edges, ignoring crankiness in favor of her goal of cooperation. She is excellent at figuring out exactly what are the strengths and weaknesses of every one involved, so she can pull out their best efforts and further the good work.

Part of this achievement is her ceaseless quest for new people who care about the welfare of children of alcoholics, because then we can join them in coalitions. Joining forces extends the effectiveness and reach of all our programs. Her perpetual frustration seems to be that she has more good ideas than she has time or staff to carry out.

She is the first to give credit to the most feeble effort, tactfully encouraging with praise. She seems quite uninterested in her own ego, a rare thing in Washington, but rather steams steadily toward her goals. "I don't care who gets the credit. Can we get it done," she says.

Perfect choice, Mr. President.

VIDEO SHELF

By Stephanie Abbott

New Al-Anon Video

Al-Anon, a support group for those who have or have had an alcoholic in their lives, was recently featured in *The American Medical Review Series*, which is satellite fed to all public broadcasting television stations in the US and Canada.

From that feature came a six-minute video designed to explain Al-Anon to everyone who knows someone affected by another's alcoholism. I believe that includes all of us.

Amazingly, this brief video manages to express, in the words of both a psychiatrist and several Al-Anon members (anonymously), what the program is for and what it sets out to do.

What a viewer takes away is the concept that, with support from others who have experienced some of the same problems, family members who have been focused to their detriment on someone else's disease can learn to take better care of themselves. Considering the time restraints, they do an excellent job.

A longer (15 minutes) video, which has been available for years, *Al-Anon Speaks For Itself*, covers the subject in more depth, and explains enabling as well as self-care, and also includes Alateen.

Al-Anon continues its masterful job of bringing information and support to families and friends of alcoholics. Treatment fads come and go, but this organization stays the course, doing what it does best. Today that includes its work in 115 countries.

For more information, go to www.al-anon.alateen.org