

***Outgoing President's Message***
2023-24 Recap

Rashunda Miller Reed, PhD, LPC-S,
LMFT-SC, LCA Past President

Hello Colleagues,
I would like to thank you, divisions,
committees, and LCA staff for a
rewarding 2023-24 presidency.

During this time, I was able to accomplish the following:

- Promoted LCA- I enjoy sharing the value of LCA for counselors including posting videos.
- Served members- My greatest accomplishment is serving members. Thanks for your conversations, emails, and choosing LCA as your professional home.
- Collaborated with LCA Staff, Division Leaders, & Committee Chairs on various decisions. You help us stay accountable to members. Ad-hoc committees were implemented. A huge thanks to Dr. Guilbeau, Dr. Fonseca, and Diane Austin for their invaluable support.
- Collaborated with LCA Past Presidents for the Ethical Leadership Panel.
- Implemented Leadership Training-Partnered with Dr. Cook for the first Executive Board Meeting.
- Implemented 2023 Hybrid Conference-There were hiccups along the way. However, I believe a hybrid conference is a viable option in the future with more planning.
- Spoke at LASCA Luncheon- I have so much gratitude for Teneka Fuller and all our school

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Presidential Perspective...**The Superhighway
Between LCA and the
Counseling Professional**

Vicki Guilbeau, PhD, LPC-S, NCC,
NCSC, CCTP, Incoming LCA President



I am thrilled to begin my position as the 2024-25 President of the Louisiana Counseling Association! I believe in the *Superhighway* between LCA and the Counseling Professional. The honor is mine to be your elected leader, and I would like to begin this time by sharing a little with you about our annual conference and my plans for the year.

The theme for the 2024 LCA Conference is *Peace, Love, & Counseling*. Our conference is scheduled to be held October 13-16 this fall in Lake Charles with sessions at the Golden Nugget and other association events at the L'Auberge. Both venues offer nice accommodations on connected properties that include various eatery options, coffee shops, pool hang-outs, and a waterfront boardwalk. I personally invite you to register for the conference as we are planning for an outstanding lineup of presentation topics, learning activities, social/professional events, and keynote speakers. See the LCA website to purchase books authored by our keynote speakers, which you may bring to conference for signing!

Through our conference and beyond, I see LCA as an opportunity for connection, sharing, and professional growth. As I reflected on these ideas, I devel-

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This issue's features ...

- ✎ Felice Gaddis Mini Minutes from the last LCA Board Meeting. Turn to page 4.
- ✎ LCA Government Relations Update, from Dr. Adrienne Trogden. See on page 4.
- ✎ Update on nominations to the LPC Board from Diane Austin on page 7.
- ✎ Last chance to nominate a deserving person for an LCA Award. See Dr. Delgado's article on page 8.
- ✎ Onsite Chair, Dr. Vaughn shares conference details on page 8.
- ✎ 13 Division President share what their divisions have planned for the conference and beyond! See page 9.
- ✎ Eric Odom, By-Laws Chair shares details about proposals on your ballot on page 10.
- ✎ Update from The People's Committee by Nikki Lee on page 18.
- ✎ Photo of most of the 2024-2025 LCA Executive Board on page 19. Look for them at the Fall Conference. Volunteer to work with their teams!
- ✎ Bios of the two candidates for LCA President Elect-Elect-Elect introduced on page 19. Their mission and vision statements begin on page 21.
- ✎ A new "From Me To You" guest editorial by Dr. Mary Mayorga on page 22.
- ✎ Want to become a more active LCA member?! Contact a leader: 2024-25 LCA Leadership Roster on page 27.
- ✎ Deadline for next newsletter on page 28.

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oped my presidential focus to expand on LCA strengths. My targets involve increasing membership, improving connection between LCA leaders and members, and escalating our legislative impact. To increase membership, I am offering a token gift at the conference to each member that invites a new member to join and attend the conference. I have asked LCA leaders to be more communicative with members and, here, I ask all members to reach out to leaders for association needs or to become more involved. Lastly, I have created an ad-hoc committee to entice your participation in the LCA Day at the Capitol in the spring.

Beyond my initiatives, I want to highlight that LCA is Louisiana's flagship counseling organization because of its diverse membership and association perks. Please help to encourage membership around the state by showcasing to others all that LCA offers. Our website is your resource for a de-

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counselors who are on the frontlines all the time for our students!

- Invited Newcomers to LCA Board-We had new members to the LCA Board this year: Jocelyn Brown, Ebony Holliday, Lisa Watley, and Janee Mitchell. I appreciate you saying yes!
- Expanded LCA Board-The Peoples Committee worked hard to craft a diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging statement. Having them on the board demonstrates LCA commitment to a more equitable experience for counselors. Thank you, Nikki Lee and Dr. Keith Wilkerson.
- Adopted 2023-2025 Strategic Plan- Special thanks to Jocelyn Brown, strategic planning chair and her committee, for all their work to

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Presidential Perspective, continued from page 2

scription of LCA, its divisions, and member benefits. As a member, you may utilize the website to join additional divisions, sign up for committees, nominate for LCA awards, learn about becoming an LCA leader (LDMI), read about our legislative work, register for our conference, explore CE opportunities, post to the community, participate in free virtual CE events, locate local LPC networking groups, and vote for the next LCA President in October.

Please ponder:

- ◆ Who could you ask to join LCA?
- ◆ Would you join an LCA committee?
- ◆ Will you attend the LCA Day at the Capitol in the spring to advocate for the counseling profession?

Contact me at vguilbeau@la-counseling.com if I may assist you with your membership. Thank you for being a part of our association! I look forward to a productive 2024-25 in LCA and hope to see you in Lake Charles in October! ☺

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collaborate and craft a relevant strategic plan.

- Expanded LCA Staff- LCA hired a digital media specialist as well as a social media specialist. I am so happy to have them on board. Welcome Ramon and Arkeria.
- Enhanced Technology-LCA heard your concerns about the virtual platform. As such, we made updates to the website and now use Zoom for videoconferencing. LCA's Facebook page is now active. Please interact with LCA on social media. Thanks to the Advisory Council for their support.
- Celebrated Counselor Awareness Month-We honored former members by sharing complimentary Telehealth training. Thirty-seven former members completed the training and 17 decided to renew. Welcome back! Special

Article continues in next column

Fall 2024

Louisiana Lagniappe



thanks to Diane for making this happen.

- Recognized Eleven Organizations- My last presidential initiative was to recognize organizations who support LCA graduate students and PLPC on LCA social media.
- Connected with Community-I connected with the community through several events. First, I attended LCA Day at the capital. I also attended a LPC Board Meeting. Shout out to Dr. Trodgen for her legislative work and representing LCA at board meetings. I also attended the 2023 and 2024 ACA conferences. I was happy to see dozens of members in New Orleans. Next, I presented on Ethical Leadership at the 2024 NASW-LA conference. Lastly, I spoke at LSU and Nicholls Chi Sig Events.
- Witnessed LCA/LSU Partnership for Journal-Dr. Fonseca, Diane Austin, Dr. Dugan, and LSU Staff started the process in 2022-23 and it fully launched.
- Submitted four articles for the Lagniappe- Thanks to Vinetta Frie and her team for their expertise and edits.
- Presented presidential awards focused on leadership, administration, and diversity, included the first Justice Equity Diversity, & Inclusion (JEDI) Award.
- Chaired Four Executive Board Meetings- Learned about Robert's Rules of Order thanks to Dr. Joey Pistorius for trying to keep me on task. I'm still learning.

There is also a list of things that I was not able to accomplish. I will save that for later.

Cheers,

Rashunda Miller Reed, LCA President 2023-2024 ☺



LCA Board Mini Minutes *Felice Gaddis, Past LCA Secretary*

The Louisiana Counseling Association Executive Board held a meeting at South Louisiana Community College on July 19, 2024. The following business was conducted during this meeting. You

will find email addresses on page 27 of this issue if you want additional information from the leaders mentioned in the bullet points below.

- 🌀 **Social Media:** Arkeria Robertson, Assistant Digital Media, reported that engagement is up 30% on social media platforms, and the LCA pages are gaining new followers. Arkeria is planning to introduce Executive Board members, conduct a survey for followers to identify how the LCA Board can better serve its members, and also to share information about the different divisions that members can join.
- 🌀 **Ask the Expert:** Ramon Zelaya, Digital Media Specialist, reported that the Ask the Expert Series occurs monthly on the second Friday of each month from 11:00-12:00 on Zoom. Ramon provides all logistical and technical support and encouraged members to sign up for the first 6 months of 2025.
- 🌀 **Newsletter:** Vinetta Frie, Newsletter Editor, reported that the first submission deadline is August 2 with following deadlines of October 25, 2024, February 2025, and a tentative fourth submission date of May 2025. Division Presidents should include their full name and title, the full division name, and include any upcoming events in the article submission. Division Presidents should prepare 300-400 words while Committee Chairs can write 300

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Government Relations

Initiatives Update

Adrienne Trogden, Ph.D., LAC, CCS, ADS, CFMHE, LPC-S, LCA Advocacy and Government Relations Specialist



It was an incredibly busy legislative session this year! Highlights of the past year are outlined below.

1. New Leadership in Louisiana

- A. Governor Jeff Landry, all statewide elected officials, and the new legislature class began their term in office on January 8, 2024. During the Organizational Session of the Legislature, House members elected Rep. Phillip DeVillier (R-Eunice) as Speaker of the House and Rep. Mike Johnson (R-Pineville) as Speaker Pro Tem; Senators elected Sen. Cameron Henry (R-Metairie) as President of the Senate and Sen. Regina Barrow (D-Baton Rouge) as President Pro Tem.
- B. On his first day in office, Governor Landry, as expected, called the Legislature into the 1st Extraordinary Session of 2024 (“Special Session”) to address court-ordered redistricting concerns. As part of the “call,” he also included a request to change Louisiana’s election process from a jungle primary to a closed primary and reconsider campaign finance laws, a lofty reform for legislators to consider in only 8 days.
- C. On Monday, January 15th, the Legislature convened the 1st Special Session. They drew a new map to address redistricting concerns, debated the election process, and addressed other concerns, such as the Supreme Court redistricting and elections. The Special kicked off quickly, and legislators moved fast to make some monumental decisions that will have major impact in years to come.
- D. Governor Landry called the legislature into a Second Special Session to address crime, a priority of the Governor throughout his

(Government Relations Initiatives, continued on page 5)

words or less.

- 🔗 **Succession Task Force:** Dr. Christine Ebrahim, Mentoring Institute, stated that LCA's next CEO should be familiar with CACREP standards, state regulations and governance, and should reside in Louisiana. All records will soon be digitized, and should remain in a storage unit, not in the CEO's personal residence. The job description should be approved by the summer of 2025, have job offers and responses received by September 2025, and a start date of October 2025. The motion to accept these recommendations with the exception of the timeline passed.
- 🔗 **PLPC Billing Review:** Dr. Deatrice Green, PLPC Billing Review ad-hoc Committee, reported that there is still uncertainty regarding PLPCs ability to bill for Medicaid reimbursement in some capacity. It is recommended that LPCs continue to bill until this is completely resolved.
- 🔗 **People's Committee:** Nikki Lee, People's Committee, shared the LCA JEDI statement to be presented to members during Conference and on the website. The motion to accept this statement passed.
- 🔗 **Strategic Planning:** The Strategic Planning Committee is working to create a form where questions and updates can be shared with Jocelyn Brown in developing the strategic plan.
- 🔗 **Administrative Council Member-at-Large:** Dr. Bernell Elzey, LSCA, was voted the Council Member-at-Large on the Administrative Council (AC).
- 🔗 **Pay for Conference Staff Assistants:** Dr. Guilbeau stated that the AC will continue the discussion of LCA paying Conference staff so
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campaign. This kept legislators at the Capitol for the latter half of February, wrapping just before they headed into the Regular Session on March 11th.

2. LCA Legislative Activities - Regular Session

- A. The Regular Session began on March 11, 2024. Final adjournment on June 3, 2024 at 6:00pm.
- B. LCA monitored bills throughout the session and worked with other entities.
 - i. See list of bills and outcomes below.
- C. LCA Day at the Capitol
 - i. March 26, 2024
 - ii. LCA members came to the Capitol in Baton Rouge to advocate for counselors. We attended committee hearings, spoke to legislators and educated people on what counselors do.

3. LDH announced that PLPCs will be able to bill Medicaid while working towards full licensure.

- A. Before this policy is fully effective, rule changes and a state plan amendment (SPA) are required. The Notice of Intent of the proposed rule has been posted and can be accessed [here](#). LDH expects publication of the final rule on July 20. If approved by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, implementation is expected to begin on August 1.

4. Advocacy for Medicaid provider rate increases continues.

- A. LCA has been working with a couple of members and other provider associations to advocate for Medicaid rate increases for providers and facilities across the state over the past 2 years.
- B. LDH has continued their systematic review of Medicaid reimbursement rates across the board and will continue to do

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Mini Minutes from LCA Board, continues from page 5

that Austin and Diane no longer have to.

☞ **Membership:** Dr. Guilbeau proposed an incentive to encourage more registrants during Conference called “Invite a Peer to Conference.” Dr. Falterman also suggested offering the college/university with the highest LCA membership two tickets to Conference. Board members are encouraged to utilize their position and offer incentives in efforts to recruit new members to join LCA and attend the conference.

☞ **Bylaws:** Diane reiterated the proposed move of Article 3, Section 6 and Article 9, Section 4 be moved to the Policies and Procedures section to allow for changes to be made without amending the Bylaws. A motion to accept and present this change during the Conference was made and passed. A second motion passed to allow the AC to vote on additional Bylaws changes in the future.

☞ **Conference 2024:** Members are encouraged to register as early as possible for the Conference. Dr. Guilbeau announced that there will be four keynote speakers and a soloist during the Presidential Reception. Dr. Priscilla Delgado, ACAAC President, stated that nominations can be made on the website, and a total of five awards will be given. Door prizes should be given to Dr. Ebrahim as early as possible. The mentoring program will be hosted again by Leadership Development and the Mentoring Task Force, and Dr. Ebrahim will share more information about this at a later date. Limited T-shirts will be available for purchase during the conference but will be available at a discounted price if purchased by 9/15. Any members with information regarding organizations who may be interested in sponsoring the Conference

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Government Relations Initiatives, continues from page 5

so in 3-year increments.

- C. Reminder that professional codes for counselors were among the rates reviewed in the first year
- D. LDH presented their budget on 1/20/23 to the Joint Budget Committee requesting a raise to the Medicaid rates for counselors among others, however, the rate increase did not go through last year.
- E. We are working with LDH and the legislature to get the rate increases into the budget during the coming legislative session.

5. **LDH along with the Medicaid MCOs have been working on a uniform authorization form for CPST/PSR services (MHR programs). We are in the process of reviewing this form and providing feedback.**

6. **Counseling Compact update – work continues.**

- A. Commission is regularly meeting to establish rules for the Compact and build the database.
- B. Anticipating Compact to go live in early 2025.

Please reach out to Dr. Adrienne Trogden, LCA’s Gov’t Relations & Advocacy Specialist, via email: lca-govtrelations@gmail.com with any additional GR concerns. ☞

**See you in
Lake Charles
Oct. 13-16
LCA Annual Fall
Conference?!**



should contact Dr. Pistorius. Drs. Austin and Austin have offered free shipping on their book if purchased on the ACA website and will be signing during the conference. A scholarship of a free Conference registration in exchange for 14 hours of volunteer work is available to students, and Robyn has shared this information via a flyer posted to the website. All students accepted will be notified prior to Conference.

🌀 **Election/Voting 2024:** Dr. Falterman shared some accolades of candidates Dr. Teneka Gash and Dr. Joey Pistorius for the position of President Elect-Elect-Elect. This information on candidates can be found in the Lagniappe each year. Elections will take place electronically through the portal this year during the conference, with more information coming soon.

🌀 **Affiliates:** Dr. Delgado is the new President for the ACACL, and Debbie Lang is the President of LMGCA. A motion was passed to move LMGCA from an affiliate to a division.

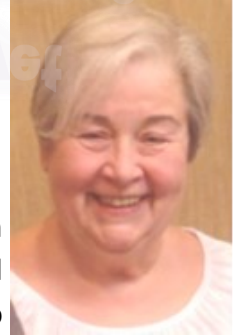
🌀 **SAIGE National Position Statement:** Dr. Le-dora Yerks Birdlow, SAIGE, presented a statement on behalf of SAIGE in response to recent anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. A motion to adopt this statement passed.

🌀 **New Ad-Hoc Committee:** Jocelyn Brown, Strategic Planning, and Felice Gaddis, Secretary, will co-chair an ad-hoc committee to develop a job description for a second Government Relations position, and identify ways to increase attendance during LCA’s Day at the Capitol. 🌀



Nominations for the LPC Board

Diane Austin, LCA Executive Director



One of the responsibilities given to LCA by the Louisiana Mental Health Law is the opportunity to send the governor a list of nominations from which he will appoint members to the LPC Board of Examiners. During 2024 we will have two positions to fill:

1. Citizen-at -Large and
2. LPC

LCA has submitted the following individuals to the governor for his selection of someone to fill the LPC slot on the LPC Board: Eric Dishongh, Asha Gibson, Veronica Douglas Johnson, Chernika Leon, Eddie Millhollon, and Jacquelyn Walther. Each was nominated, vetted and recommended by LCA members.

Kristal Hebert, M.S., QDDP, whose term expires 12/24 could possibly be reappointed by the Governor, as she has only served one term. Just in case, we have also nominated Ashley Thibodeaux for consideration to fill the Citizen-at-Large position. Nakeisha Pierce, M.Ed., LPC-S has served two terms on the LPC Board. Her term expires this month, August 21. This means she has given 8 years to serve our profession. If you would like to know more about Ms. Hebert and/or Ms. Pierce, here is a link ([Board Members | LPC \(lpcboard.org\)](#)) to the LPC Board Member biographies.

Take a few minutes to say thank you to both of them. 🌀





Nominate Your Peers for the LCA Awards: Deadline Approaching!

Dr. Priscilla Delgado, Awards Chair

The conference is right around the corner, and we need your help! The LCA Awards Committee is excited to announce that nominations for our annual awards are open until August 31, 2024. To submit your nominations, simply fill out the Google form available here:

<https://forms.gle/g3eTYjseQiAWj5t6A>.

For more details, visit the LCA website and navigate to "Who We Are," then select "Awards." You'll find descriptions of each award and the nomination links there. Don't forget, we also have a special award for distinguished legislative service.

Take a moment to recognize the outstanding contributions of your peers, colleagues, and yourself. Submit your nominations today! 🌀

Fall Conference Theme:

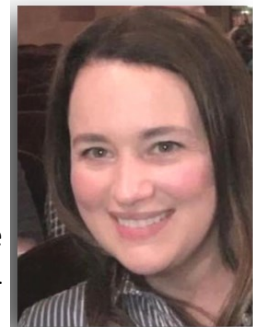


See you in Lake Charles!!

The logo for this year was created by Gabrielle Cade.

LCA Conference 2024

*Dr. Krystal Vaughn, LPC-S,
Conference Chair*



We're excited to announce the 2024 LCA Annual Conference, themed "PEACE, LOVE, AND COUNSELING," taking place October 13-16, 2024, at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino. Please note that the pre-conference workshops, offering up to 6.0 CE clock hours, will be held virtually on October 5. The IN PERSON conference kicks off at noon on October 13, and concludes at noon on October 16. Mark your calendars for this unique opportunity to grow and connect with fellow professionals in a vibrant setting!

There will be three General Sessions. The General Session on Tuesday 10/15/2024 will be presented by the Dr. Jude Austin and Dr. Julius Austin. Their presentation will be based on their book **Counselor Self-Care**, Second Edition. If you bring your copy of their book, there will be an opportunity to get it autographed at the Fall Conference. If you purchase before September 30 from ACA you may use the free shipping coupon code of FRGNDSH, product code 78197. You will also have an opportunity to meet Dr. Christian Dean, author of **Ladders and Shovels: How to Climb Out of Emotional Holes and Stop Digging Them** and have him autograph your copy; it is available from Amazon. Dr. Dean is one of **SIX** keynote speakers!!

Please note there will be no virtual component to this year's conference. Sessions will be recorded and will be available on the website after the conclusion of the conference. Participants with a full conference registration will be able to access these webinars at no additional costs post conference. The LCA website, <https://www.lacounseling.org/> includes all the information you need to register. I hope to see you there! 🌀

Division President Reports



Exciting Horizons: Join ACAC-L and Make a Difference Dr. Priscilla Delgado, ACAC-L President

Greetings from the Louisiana Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling (ACAC-L)! I

am very honored to be serving as President of ACAC-L and thrilled about the upcoming 2024 LCA conference, where we will have the opportunity to network and create impactful experiences. Over the next year, ACAC-L will be dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for children and adolescents by supporting the growth and development of professional counselors in this crucial field. We are committed to advancing the counseling profession through specialized training tailored to the unique needs of children and adolescents.

This year's conference will feature presentations from several of our division members and invited mental health professionals, offering valuable insights and knowledge. If you're interested in getting involved, consider running for a board position. We currently have several openings and would be excited to welcome new members to our outstanding board. For more information, please contact pdelgado026@gmail.com. I would really love to hear from you!



Together We Thrive

Lisa W. Jackson, LPC-S, LAAOC President

As the 2024 Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) Conference approaches, October 13 – 16, 2024 in Lake Charles, I am eagerly anticipating the opportunity to

come together, share knowledge, and strengthen our professional community. This year's conference promises to be an enriching experience for all attendees, offering a platform for learning, networking, and professional growth.



One of the highlights of the conference will be our annual LAAOC meeting. This gathering is not only a chance to discuss important updates and initiatives within our division but also an opportunity to connect with fellow members. As your current President, I am excited to meet many of you in person and engage in meaningful conversations about our shared goals and challenges.

In the coming year, my focus will be on working collaboratively with our members to strengthen and stabilize our division. Our collective efforts will ensure that we continue to recognize, support, and develop addictions and offender counselors in the state of Louisiana.

I hope this will be a year of growth for LAAOC. I encourage all members to actively participate. If you are not a member of LAAOC and are interested in becoming involved, now is the time. We currently have the following needs for 2024 – 2025:

- Secretary-Treasurer
- Membership committee
- Nominations and Elections Committee
- Bylaws Committee

If you are interested in joining LAAOC or volunteering for one of these opportunities, please let me know by sending an email with information about your interest to me via laaocdivision@yahoo.com. Until next time ...



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Division President Reports, continued from page 9



LACES: Looking Forward to a Fantastic Year!

Dr. Joey Pistorius, LACES President

We have exciting news to share as we enter the new year with renewed energy and purpose. The Louisiana Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (LACES) is embarking on a transformative journey with a comprehensive strategic planning process. Our goal is to enhance our engagement with members and better serve the larger Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) community. This strategic initiative will focus on several key areas: improving how we connect with you, offering more networking opportunities, streamlining our organizational processes for smoother board transitions, and ensuring the continuity of our board programs.

We're thrilled to announce a lineup of events designed to enrich your professional journey. First, we're excited about the supervision and counselor education track at this year's annual LCA conference. This dedicated track will delve into essential topics and provide valuable insights for seasoned professionals and those new to the field. Be sure to look for the LACES track at the LCA conference.

In addition, we are bringing back our monthly Lunch and Learn sessions. These gatherings will offer a fantastic platform for continuing education and networking.

For those interested in supervision, we are hosting two Supervision Connection events. One will take place at the annual LCA conference (Monday, October 14th, 3:30-6:00 p.m.), and another will be held virtually in the spring of 2025. These events are excellent opportunities for supervisors to meet prospective supervisees and graduate students. Keep an eye on the LCA community bulletin board for information on signing up, or reach out to us at online@laces@gmail.com.

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4 Proposed By-Laws Changes Offered for Your Consideration

W. Eric Odom, MHS, LPC-S, Bylaws Chair



The By-Laws changes this year will allow us to make our Policy and Procedures Manual more accurate. Currently, there are four By-Laws that are actually procedures which should more accurately be transferred. You will find these proposed By-Laws changes on the same ballot to select the LCA President Elect-Elect-Elect. The proposed changes include:

Article III, Section 6, Dissolving a Division

This section exists to serve as a process for dissolving a Division when a Division has either been chronically non-compliant in following its policies or when a Division has suffered from lack of member participation. The section that explains how a Division can be dissolved is very clear, though this process has been rarely enforced. **Recommendation:** Move Section 6 of Article III to Policies and Procedures. This would allow us the flexibility to change the process(es) of dissolving a Division with greater ease than a change to the By-Laws would require.

Section 5 of Article III details the situations that could put a Division at risk for being dissolved. We could end this section with a statement that the procedure for dissolving a Division is located in the Policies and Procedures manual.

Article IX, Section 4, Elections

Experiences like COVID and the rapidly changing availability of different technology platforms has allowed us the opportunity to be flexible with how we administer elections for officers. Section 4 ties us to specific methodology for conducting elections where it may serve us better to have the ability to change our methodology based on a particular situation without having to follow the lengthier and less flexible process of changing a By-Law to do so.

(By-Laws Changes, continued on page 11)

Division President Reports, continued from page 10

Looking ahead, we are also planning an engaging one-day workshop in 2025. We'll provide more details as the event approaches, so stay tuned!

We are also pleased to introduce our new board members, who bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to LACES. Dr. E. Francoise Parr-Comeaux was elected as our President-Elect-Elect. With their experience and visionary outlook, Dr. E. Francoise Parr-Comeaux is poised to lead us into an exciting new phase. Dr. Ebony Clifton steps in as our new Treasurer, bringing two years of LACES board experience to assist with our strategic planning. We are also delighted to welcome Susan Pham as our Member-at-Large Graduate Student. Susan will represent our graduate student members and bring valuable insights to the board.

As we look forward to a year of growth and connection, we want to thank you for your continued support and involvement. Let's make this a fantastic year together!



Greetings, LCA Members! *Emma Derstine,* *LACGS President*

LACGS, the Louisiana Association for Graduate Students, is very eager to welcome our new board as we ring in a new semester. Our division remains dedicated to supporting graduate students in the counseling field. Graduate students in counseling are often at the bottom of the professional hierarchy due to their limited clinical experience and ongoing education, which can lead to limited engagement. One of our primary goals for the 2024-2025 term is to enhance member engagement. We are excited to introduce an updated budget and strategic plans aimed at maximizing the benefits of membership and better integrating the graduate student population into our shared professional community. Improved communication, increased events

Article continues in next column

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By-Laws Changes, continues from page 10

Recommendation: All language pertaining to how we establish and vet candidates, frequency of elections, etc. can remain the same in our By-Laws. The language about the *methodology* of how we hold elections (i.e. Section 4) can be moved to Policies and Procedures.

Section 3. MEETINGS

The Executive Board will meet at least two weeks before or after the annual state LCA Conference and at least two other times during the year at the time and place designated by the President. The **Executive Board** may be called into immediate session and/or conduct their business via telephone or electronically (online or video conferencing) at the discretion of the President.

We don't take the idea of removing items from our By-Laws lightly. However, we believe that since these recommendations are procedural in nature, shifting the language in these three instances to Policies and Procedures allows us to be more deft and timely in adapting to a situational need to be able to operate differently than before. We hope that our general membership is in agreement with these recommendations. ∞

Division Presidents' Reports, continued

such as workshops and presentations, and a stronger presence on social media platforms are all part of our strategy to better support you. Fostering graduate student involvement promotes mentorship opportunities, professional development, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for our growth and the future vitality of the counseling profession.

In preparation for the upcoming 2024 LCA Conference, we are planning two presentations designed to engage the actual experience of graduate students in our profession, including topics on navigating supervision and the financial/institutional barriers that students in our field face. This will be an excellent opportunity for networking, learning, and professional development. Your participation and feedback are crucial, and we encourage all

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Louisiana Lagniappe

Division Presidents' Reports, continued from page 11

members to come ready to engage and share their experience/insights.

I am honored to introduce our 2024-2025 LACGS Executive Board, a group of dedicated individuals who bring unique qualities and fresh perspectives to our division:

President-Elect: Elyse Arnold

Secretary: Janie Morgan

Treasurer: Caroline Martin

Central Louisiana Regional Representative:

Ashli Savoy-King

South Louisiana Regional Representative:

Baylie Robin

Greater Baton Rouge Louisiana Regional Representative: Vinnie DeAngelo

Greater New Orleans Louisiana Regional Representative: Carrie Davidson

We are still looking for a Northern Louisiana representative, so please get in touch if you are interested in serving! We would love to have representation from more graduate programs across the state in leadership positions. Let's work together to ensure the success of our division and the professional growth of our members. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to LACGS! We look forward to seeing you at conference.



United in Diversity, Together in Differences, United in Purpose!

*Teneka Gash, PhD, PLPC, RSW,
LAMCD President*

I bring you greetings from The Louisiana Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (LAMCD). The mission is to promote a greater un-

derstanding and broader awareness of culturally diverse populations. LAMCD strives to eliminate barriers and foster interest in culturally sensitive counseling, keeping our membership mindful of the state of current multicultural affairs in Louisiana.

As President, it is an honor to serve as an Emerging Leader/Mentor of the Leadership, Development and Mentoring Institute. During the 2023 LCA Conference, I was able to complete the initiative of composing and producing the 2023 LCA Division Mixer. I am looking forward in working with the Division Presidents for the LCA 2024 Conference to continue to produce a mixer that will strive to increase membership, cultivate relationships, allow participants to network, gain insight and meet executive board members/members of each division.

As we venture into the opportunities that 2024 holds, let us remain united in our pursuit of knowledge, personal growth, and community betterment. The strength of LCA lies in the collective efforts of each member, and together, we can achieve greatness!

The Executive Board would like to extend gratitude towards each presenter who will share their contributions during the 2024 LCA Conference, in representation of the LAMCD Track: Supervisees to Supervisors and Mentees to Mentors- Let's Chat!, Counselors, Your Mental Health Matters: Going Beyond the Surface, and Conspiracy of Silence: There's Hope in Hello.

I look forward to seeing each of you at this year's LCA Conference and witnessing the continued success and growth of our LCA community.

If you are interested in joining LAMCD to promote increased knowledge in multiculturalism, please reach out to our designated email: LAMCDivision@gmail.com, as your participation is highly valuable.

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LAMFC: WE ARE DESTINED TO SOAR!

**Dr. Sonja S. Polley,
LAMFC President**

It is with such great pleasure that I greet you! I am humbled and honored to continue to serve as president of the Louisiana Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (LAMFC). I remember the emotions of extreme nervousness, excitement, and joy of initially accepting the position. I've always had a love and passion for healthy family units, with a primary focus on the bond of healthy marriages, that I believe helps to facilitate healthy families. This passion initiated my response to accept the position of LAMFC President. I want to officially and publicly thank Dr. Bryan Canfield. I never shared with him that he helped to bring to surface the leadership interest that was ingrained in me. He was the speaker during my first LAMFC luncheon that I attended. His presence and presentation were captivating and helped to activate me in this prestigious division and association. During the luncheon, Dr. Canfield introduced a phenomenal young lady that was the incoming president, Dr. Tralana Eugene. I was purposeful about getting to know her and attaching my passion to her obvious passion for the division. Dr. Eugene allowed me to work under her tutelage, as a member-at-large. Her main goal for LAMFC, at the time, was to ensure our division had a track to present at LCA Conferences for the Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT) to receive the CEUs needed to advance in their career within the organizational structure of LCA. I didn't realize that her passion and mine would connect and synapse into my position as LAMFC President. High regards to Dr. Eugene.

As LAMFC President, I proudly help carry the torch to make sure that our division is well represented at LCA Conferences with quality presenters that support our MFTs. This year, we chose to have presenters for the pre-conference experience, Oct 5th. They are, Kathryn Steele and Katherine Arnold. Our MFTs will get 6 CEUs total, for

Article continues in next column

these dynamic presentations. Additionally, we have incomparable presenters for the LCA Conference, Oct 13-16th. One of the keynote events that I want to highlight is our LAMFC luncheon. Our presenter will be the incomparable Dr. Christian Dean. Please join us! We are sooooo excited to have all of our great presenters at the conference this year! This experience has been prepared with you in mind. We want you to come out and partake in the delicacies of the LAMFC division.

I close, with an introduction our phenomenal 2024-2025 board members: Past-President, Dr. Tralana Eugene; Treasurer, Donnie Underwood; Secretary, Dr. Rickia Bolden; Members-at-Large, Terri Campesta and Cathyrn Swain. I want to take this time to thank all former board members for their diligent work. I also want to take the time to thank some special consultants, Dr. Matt Morris and Dr. Rashunda Reed. A lot of work has been done. However, there is additional work that's vitally necessary. If you would have a passion for Marriage and Family, we would love to connect with you. Please contact us: lamfc.lca@gmail.com or sspolley@aol.com. Our presence will be at the division mixer for you to meet us, as well!

Please note the change of our LAMFC luncheon in the LCA calendar. Please take a moment during the conference to allow me to greet and connect with you. And finally, if you are a LAMFC member, remember to list us as your primary division when you register for the LCA Conference! Thank you and I look forward to seeing everyone soon!



Hello LASERVIC Members and Those Considering Membership!

Dr. Kelle Falterman, LASERVIC President



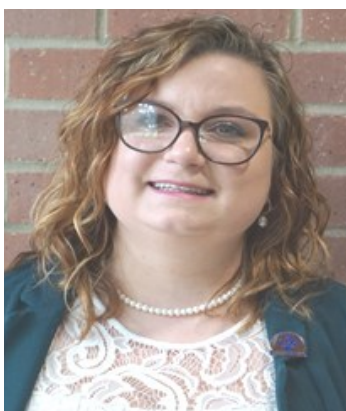
Greetings from the Louisiana Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling (LASERVIC) Division of LCA! The LCA leader-

(Division President Reports, continued on page 14)

Division President Reports, continued from page 13

ship has been hard at work to create a memorable conference experience in Lake Charles, LA this October. We know that there will be excellent presentations and exciting experiences to look forward to during our conference. LASERVIC will host our annual luncheon and prayer service at the 2024 conference. The speaker at this year's luncheon is Dr. Karen Roudkovski, who will be speaking on *Understanding Spiritual Abuse*. This is the title of her newly published book, and is based on her doctoral research, in which she also validated a spiritual abuse assessment to be used with clients and in counseling research. We also have presentations being delivered throughout the conference by LASERVIC members.

As always, if you are not yet a member of the Louisiana Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling (LASERVIC) Division of LCA, we welcome you to join! If you are already a member, we invite you to become actively involved by joining the executive board. Do you have any questions, concerns or are interested in becoming a member and/or officer of LASERVIC? Please feel free to contact me at shepherdsheart23@outlook.com.



LCCA: Quality PD Opportunities and Strategies for Advocacy!

**Kayleigh Underwood,
LCCA President**

Hello everyone! As the new president for LCCA, I just wanted to take a moment to introduce myself and tell you a little bit about me and what LCCA has in store for the upcoming year. I am a full time Counselor and Crisis Coordinator at Southeastern University's Counseling Center in Hammond. I have a BA in Psychology with a minor in French from Southeastern,

a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology with a concentration in Addiction Studies from NSULA, a Master's degree in Counseling with an emphasis on Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Southeastern, and I am ABD with my Doctorate in Counselor Education from UNO. I am an LPC -A. I love working with my college students. I also work at a private practice doing trauma work and brainspotting. I have a mini Australian shepherd named Banjo and a tortoise named Beatrice. This upcoming year, I would like to focus on fostering counselor advocacy. I think it is so important for us and our clients when we are able to advocate for ourselves and our profession. LCCA is excited to offer members a track at the annual LCA Fall Conference in October, a winter, spring AND summer workshop!! Our hopes are to provide quality CEs that are engaging and center on college counseling as well as advocating for ourselves. We are also looking into avenues for networking and connecting members. I look forward to serving y'all as the LCCA president! Please let me know if there is anything that I or LCCA can do for you!"



LCDA, LA Career Development. No report.



You've Been Charged! Let's Go!!

Michelle LaFitte, LCSJ President

Greetings everyone! My name is Michelle LaFitte, and I am thrilled to serve as the President of the Louisiana Counselors for Social Justice Division (LCSJ) from 2024 to 2026. This year, our focus aligns with the conference



theme "Peace, Love, and Counseling," emphasizing our dedication to promoting social harmony. We believe that we all share the responsibility to contribute positively to society. How are you fulfilling this responsibility?

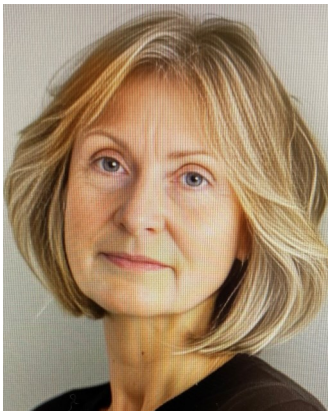
LCSJ is taking concrete steps by providing a platform for concerns to be expressed, identifying areas lacking ac-

(Division President Reports, continued on page 15)

Article continues in next column

cess, and ensuring our accountability. We are creating spaces to closely examine issues of equity and equality, while also critically analyzing oppressive systems and their impact on marginalized individuals. The mission of LCSJ is to advocate for social justice by addressing oppressive power structures and privileges that affect professional counselors and our clients. We aim to drive positive societal change through the professional development of counselors.

With the support of Vice President, Dr. Joelle Nixon, Secretary Shemeka Faulk, and all our members, we are committed to the necessary and challenging work that lies ahead.



Building On A Great Foundation

Debbie Lang, LPC-S, NCC, NCSC, LMGCA President

I am deeply humbled to have the privilege of serving as the President of the Louisiana Military Government and Counseling Association (LMGCA) this year. I applaud

Kathy Lammert (LPC-S, LMFT, NCC), the former president who established the LinkedIn platform for LMGCA. This platform serves as a means for professionals to foster their career advancement and explore business prospects with a military focus. Ensuring continuity is essential for establishing a unified and credible business operation for those interested in the military culture. In September, LMGCA will host a training specifically designed for mental health providers who currently work with or are interested in working with veterans, the military, and their families. I aim to deliver valuable and significant professional guidance to individuals involved in the LMGCA division movement within LCA and the helping community. The primary emphasis this year is on "Cultural Humility." Tervalon and Murray-Garcia conducted a study in 1998

Article continues in next column

that resulted in a profound statement that changed the mental health profession: cultural humility is a continuous practice of introspection and education that fosters a willingness to comprehend the experiences and viewpoints of others. For further information on the Zoom meeting, contact Deborah Allsbrook (PhD, LPC-S, NCC), LMGCA treasurer, at info@deborahallsbrook.com or by phone at 504-920-5920.

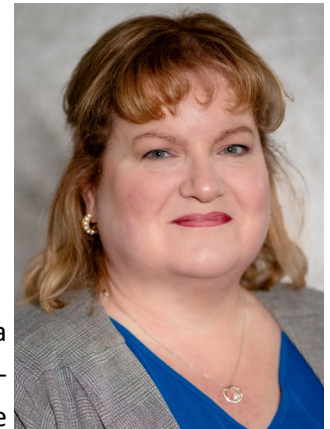
I wish to thank all those who have supported our efforts, such as Robyn Sonnier, LPC-S, NCC, CCTP-11, CMCC, CFRC, a member who represented LMGCA at the 2024-2025 Executive Board meeting.

Please consider leadership positions as we have our elections at the 2024 LCA conference. This is going to be an exciting, productive year! Peace be with you all!



LMHCA: Celebrating LA's Mental Health Counselors

Any Dufrene LMHCA President



Greetings from the Louisiana Mental Health Counselors Association. On behalf of the LMHCA Executive Board, I hope this newsletter finds you well and in anticipation of a great fall! As we begin another busy part of our calendar year, we are excited to share some remarkable updates and opportunities. From celebrating our members' achievements to announcing our upcoming bimonthly webinars, there's plenty to look forward to in the coming weeks.

Annual LMHCA Awards: Nominations are open until August 31, 2024, 5:00 PM CDT, for the following awards:

- **Gloria Bockrath Scholarship:** This scholarship recognizes graduate students who excel academically and demonstrate leadership potential as counsel-

(Division President Reports, continued on page 16)

Division President Reports, continued from page 15

ing students and future licensed clinicians. The nominee must be a master's level student majoring in Clinical Mental health Counseling or Mental Health Counseling, have a 3.0 GPA or higher, and be a member of LCA and LMHCA. Nominate someone: <https://forms.gle/hRDupE7B2AwPRQVH8>

- **Community Service Award:** This is awarded to a recipient who is a PLPC or LPC actively involved in the community and providing community service. To be eligible, the nominee must be a member of both LCA and LMHCA and registered with the LPC board as either an LPC or PLPC. Nominate someone: <https://forms.gle/sJe1ZMfRDvnLVpLh7>
- **Mental Health Counselor of the Year Award:** The recipient of this award will be chosen based on their exceptional commitment to serving the mental health community. The nominee must be an active member of LCA and LMHCA. Nominate someone: <https://forms.gle/vxyHk78HFUqFpBXq6>

Mark Your Calendars: Bimonthly Webinars: In addition to celebrating our members, we're excited to announce that our bimonthly webinars will return. These sessions are designed to inform you about best practices in mental health counseling. We will announce the dates of the webinars in the coming weeks, along with information regarding how to register.

As we celebrate our community's achievements and look forward to these exciting learning opportunities, we want to thank you for your continued support and engagement with LCA and LMHCA. Your participation is what makes our organization thrive, and we are honored to have such a dedicated group of members.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming LMHCA luncheon at the LCA Conference and celebrating more of your achievements in the future. Here's to a productive and inspiring year ahead!

Find us here:: www.lmhca.org; IG: @lmhca; FB: lmhca.

Fueling Minds, Sparking Courage, Igniting Passions

**Bernell Elzey, Jr, Ph.D., LPC, NCC,
LSCA President**



In our roles as school counselors and school counselor educators, we are not just guides; we are catalysts for change, empowerment, and growth. Each day, we have the privilege of shaping the futures of our students, fueling their minds with knowledge, empathy, and inspiration.

As we embark on this journey together, I am deeply honored to step into the role of president for the coming term. With a shared dedication to excellence in education and the holistic development of our students, I am thrilled to introduce our theme for this pivotal year: Fueling Minds, Sparking Courage, and Igniting Passions.

Courage is not merely the absence of fear; it is the strength to confront challenges, embrace vulnerability, and step into the unknown with confidence. As counselors, we have the power to spark courage in our students, helping them navigate life's complexities and emerge stronger and more resilient.

Yet, in order to truly fulfill our mission of guiding and empowering the next generation, we must also invest in our own growth and development. That is why I am committed to increasing professional development opportunities for all counselors across Louisiana. By expanding access to training, workshops, and resources, we can enhance our skills, deepen our understanding, and stay at the forefront of best practices in our field. Together, let us seize every opportunity to sharpen our tools, elevate our practice, and ultimately, better support the diverse needs of our students.

But perhaps most importantly, we have the opportunity to ignite passions within our students—the driving forces that propel them toward their dreams and aspirations. Whether it's through academic pursuits, extracurricular activities, or personal interests, we can fan the flames of curiosity and enthusiasm, fostering a lifelong love of learning and discovery.

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Together, let us embrace this theme not just as words on paper, but as a guiding philosophy that informs our every action and decision. Let us fuel the minds of our students, spark courage in their hearts, and ignite passions that will illuminate their paths to success.

I am excited to collaborate with each of you in the months ahead as we work tirelessly to support the academic, social, and emotional well-being of every student in Louisiana. Together, we can make a difference—one mind, one heart, one passion at a time.



PLCA, Provisional Licensed Counselor Association.
No report.



Our Year Begins

Ledora Yerks-Birdlow, LPC-S, NCC, ACS, M.Ed., Certified Clinical Sexologist, SAIGE-LA President



With immense pride and excitement I bring greetings from the Louisiana Counseling Association's Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities (SAIGE-LA) for 2024-2025. Our division, composed of dedicated counselors and professionals, is committed to serving and advocating for the diverse and vibrant communities that identify as sexual, affectional, intersex, and gender expansive. My vision and goals for our division and the broader Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) will guide our collective efforts to share our commitment to inclusivity, advocacy, and professional development.

Goals for SAIGE-LA Division:

- 1. Advocacy and Outreach:** We will work to increase our advocacy efforts at both the state and national levels, ensuring that the voices of sexual, affectional, intersex, and gender expansive individuals are heard and respected. We aim to collaborate

with other organizations to amplify our message and drive meaningful policy changes.

- 2. Professional Development and Education:** We will offer comprehensive training and professional development opportunities for our members, focusing on the latest research and best practices in working with sexual, affectional, intersex, and gender expansive communities. This includes workshops, webinars, and conferences designed to enhance our skills and knowledge.
- 3. Community Engagement and Support:** We will create and nurture supportive networks within our communities. By organizing events, support groups, and community forums, we aim to foster a sense of belonging and provide necessary resources for individuals and families.
- 4. Visibility and Awareness:** We will strive to increase the visibility and awareness of SAIGE-LA within the LCA and the broader community. Through strategic communication and marketing efforts, we will highlight the importance of our work and the unique challenges faced by the populations we serve.

As members of LCA, we plan to advocate for several concerns that are especially important for our division, including:

- 1. Inclusivity and Diversity:** We will advocate for a more inclusive and diverse LCA, ensuring that all voices are represented and valued. This includes working towards equitable representation in leadership positions and committees.
- 2. Collaborative Efforts:** We will strengthen our collaboration with other divisions within the LCA to address overlapping issues and promote holistic approaches to counseling. By working together, we can better serve the diverse needs of our clients and communities.
- 3. Research and Innovation:** We will encourage and support research initiatives that advance our understanding of sexual, affectional, intersex, and

Article continues in next column

(Division President Reports, continued on page 18)



A Voice for the Voiceless

Nikki Lee and Dr. Keith Wilkerson, The People's Committee Co-Chairs

The People's Committee is responsible for drafting, implementing, and continuing the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) statement for LCA. The JEDI statement is an actionable order meant to embody what our organization represents for all who interact with it and reflects current trends in our society. It was recently approved by the LCA Executive Board and will be presented to the body on the LCA website, by email blast, and at a future LCA conference. We are working to gain approval for CE credits by presenting workshops on JEDI issues in conjunction with other divisions.

This work has been incredibly invaluable with learning the global historical events surrounding discrimination and establishing ways to best implement enhanced practices so everyone can thrive. While it is difficult to evaluate flaws within our systems, there is a special reverence when we all come together despite our differences for the greater good of people. The People's Committee was formed to give voice to the voiceless, create opportunity for those who believed there was none, and I am truly grateful to have been a small part of this since its inception. The JEDI statement is one we will remain diligent with sharpening and implementing as we go along as it is imperative to have representation for all who serve and interact with LCA.

Our creation is owed to Keri Satterfield and Viveca Johnson in 2021 following the 2020-2021 LCA Executive Board's participation in workshops with the Overcoming Racism workshops. Our purpose is to ensure all voices in LCA are heard and represented for JEDI issues in perpetuity. We are chaired by myself and Keith Wilkerson. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact either or both of us at our email addresses: NLee@solacechateau.com or Keith.Wilkerson@la.gov. ☞

Division Presidents' Reports, continued from page 17

gender expansive identities. By staying at the forefront of research and innovation, we can provide the highest quality of care and support.

4. **Ethical Practice and Standards:** We will uphold and promote the highest ethical standards in our practice. This includes ongoing education on ethical issues specific to our communities and advocating for policies that protect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

I thank our outgoing president Mrs. Shannon Smith, LPC-S for her dedication to the division. I am excited to continue your legacy through these goals. Together, we can create a more inclusive, supportive, and effective counseling community in Louisiana. I look forward to collaborating with each of you and building a stronger, more vibrant SAIGE-LA division. ☞



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LCA Presidential Candidate Bios

Dr. Rashunda Miller Reed, PhD, LPC-S, LMFT-SC, LCA President 2023-2024, Nominations Chair

As past president, I am pleased to announce the candidacy of two accomplished LCA members, Dr. Teneka Gash and Dr. Joseph Pistorius. In 2027-2028, one of them could represent you as LCA President. Beginning on this page, you will find a brief bio of the candidates. Then starting on page 21, you will find their answers to four questions, traditionally asked of each nominee. For the first time, the election will be conducted exclusively online October 6 to 14 at 5 p.m. The ballot will also include the proposed By-Laws changes, detailed in the article on page 10. [↻](#)



Dr. Teneka Gash

- Teneka Gash, PhD., PLPC, RSW, is an adjunct professor at the University of Holy Cross in New Orleans, Louisiana, and a mental health professional with Positive Transformations Health Services. She has a PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision from the University of

Holy Cross. She also earned a Master of Education in School Counseling from Nicholls State University and a Bachelor of Social Work from Northwestern State University. Furthermore, she is a provisionally licensed professional counselor and holds an ancillary certificate as a

(Dr. Teneka Gash's Bio, continued on page 20)

Dr. Joseph Pistorius

- Joseph Pistorius, Ph.D., LPC-SA, NCC, earned his Master of Arts in Counseling from the University of Holy Cross, specializing in Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling. His clinical practice focuses on individuals and couples. His career includes supervising local university graduate students as a field placement site supervisor and teaching as an adjunct faculty member at Wake Forest University and Loyola University.



- Currently, he serves as the director of a non-profit

(Dr. Joseph Pistorius' Bio, continued on page 20)

Meet the LCA Executive Board 2024-2025



Top row, from the flag, left to right: Kayleigh Underwood, Ledora Yerks-Birdlow, Dr. Taneka Gash, Dr. Sonja Smith Polley, Felice Gaddis, Dr. Keith Wikerson, Dr. Deatrice Green, Nikki Lee, Emma Derstine, Arkeria Robertson, Amy Dufrene, Michelle Lafitte. **Middle row, left to right:** Ramon Zalaya, Dr. Bernell Elzey, Robin Sonnier. **Front row, left to right:** Dr. Priscilla Delgado, Austin White, Diane Austin, Dr. Kelle Falterman, Dr. Vicki Guilbeau, Vinetta Frie, Dr. Christine Ebrahim, Dr. Joey Pistorius, Dr. Tessia Ozene. **Not pictured:** Dr. Rashunda Miller Reed, Eric Odom, Dr. Krystal Vaughn, Dr. Adrienne Trogden, Dr. Erin Dugan, Jamie Doming, Asha Murphy, Aisha Davis Luke, Jocelyn Brown, Dr. Lisa Jackson, Michelle Adam, Debbie Lang, Monique Jones.

Dr. Teneka Gash's Bio, continued from page 19

professional school counselor (LA). Dr. Gash is also a registered social worker and the recipient of the 2022 Louisiana Counseling Association Graduate Student Award.

- Dr. Gash's professional service record is exceptional. She is a frequent volunteer for Chi Sigma Iota, Gamma Chapter of Nicholls State University; Chi Sigma Iota International; and the Louisiana Counseling Association. She is also the current President of the Louisiana Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (LAMCD) and Elementary Vice President of the Louisiana School Counseling Association (LSCA). Likewise, she has also served on the Executive Board of various divisions of the Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) from 2021 to the present, in roles such as Secretary, Baton Rouge Representative, Student Member, and Clinical Mental Health Member-at-Large. In addition, she is a member of the People's Committee and Professional Development Committee of LCA.
- Dr. Gash's commitment to her profession is evident in her extensive service record. In addition to her professional service, Dr. Gash is also a member of several organizations, including the Leadership, Development and Mentoring Institute, where she serves as a mentor. She is also a 2020 AMCD Mentee and 2021 Leadership Fellow of Chi Sigma Iota International. She is a member of Chi Sigma Iota's Leadership, Professional Development and Advocacy Committee and the Nicholls State University Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. Not only that, but she is also a member of the Community Action Network, Bayou Region, and the Order of the Eastern Star, Golden Star Chapter #62.
- Dr. Gash is a dedicated professional who is always willing to go the extra mile. Presentation Experiences include Nicholls State University Graduate Studies, Nicholls State University Chi Sigma Iota, Gamma Chapter Bayou Mental Health Conference, Clark Atlanta University, Louisiana Counseling Association Conferences, SACES, Law and Ethics Conference, US and Irish Conference and the Louisiana Mental Health Association Conference. Her areas of clinical, scholarly, and advocacy interests include social and cultural diversity issues in the school setting, trans-generational traumatic stress among socially ascribed

Dr. Joseph Pistorius' Bio, continued from page 19

counseling agency in New Orleans. Under his leadership, the agency has significantly expanded its services and clinical programs, extending outreach to rural communities beyond metropolitan New Orleans. He has secured external grant funding to enhance support for underserved populations, including establishing a play therapy program offering pro-bono services to children and bilingual counseling services in Spanish and Vietnamese.

- He holds a Doctorate of Philosophy in Counseling Education and Supervision from the University of Holy Cross, where his dissertation, "Supervisor-Initiated Termination of Counselor Supervision Prior to Supervisee Licensure," earned the Sister Keri Burke Outstanding Qualitative Research Award. His leadership journey began in 2019 as a graduate student board member at large in the LACES division of LCA, leading to his current role as president. In 2020, the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors recognized him as an emerging leader. Additionally, he has served as parliamentarian on the executive board of the Louisiana Counseling Association for three years and as exhibitors chair for their annual conference.
- His research interests include supervision, couples counseling, legal and ethical issues in counseling, and termination. He is a frequent presenter, sharing insights from his research and clinical practice at local, national, and international conferences.
- Beyond his professional endeavors, he enjoys reading, gardening, listening to music, and spending cherished time with his wife and seven children. ☺

Dr. Teneka Gash's Bio, continued

groups and communities, crisis intervention, cancer prevention and research.

- Dr. Gash's commitment and innovative work is evident in her collaboration with counselors within our state, as well as regionally and nationally. She is a strong advocate for promoting resilience, strength, and resources within the professional counseling community. Dr. Gash is focused on creating and fostering a positive and supportive environment for counselors. She understands the importance of self-care and is committed to providing counselors with

Article continues in next column

(Dr. Teneka Gash's Bio continued on page 21)



Conversation with the candidates...

My LCA Vision

*Dr. Rashunda Miller Reed, PhD,
LPC-S, LMFT-SC, LCA President 2023-
2024, Nominations Chair*

This year, we have two great candidates who seek to become servant leaders in LCA. Take a look at bios that begin on page 19. This article shares the candidates' goals and visions should you chose to elect one of them. We will start the conversation alphabetically...

Q1. Elaborate how your background and qualifications have brought you to your decision to first become an LCA member, and now seek this leadership position.

Dr. Gash: Based on my background qualification, I am expressing my interest in becoming the 2027-2028 President of the Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA). My desire to seek this leadership position stems from my time as a frequent volunteer within the community and from my experience in the Master of Education School Counseling Program at Nicholls State University.

As a graduate student, I was interested in attending the LCA Conference and its Division workshops. I was also interested in applying for CEU pre-approval of workshops for continuing education clock hours, and in getting involved with Networking Groups. In expressing my desire to enhance myself educationally, as well as develop personally and professionally, I obtained support, mentorship, and supervision from LCA members. Through mentorship, I was provided information about LCA, the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), and the Louisiana Association for Play Therapy (LAPT). I had the opportunity to work with a mentor in developing research and presenting at the Research Symposium. I also applied for a scholarship and served as a Conference Volunteer for the LCA and LAPT Conference.

Being afforded these opportunities, I gained the desire for more and sought a leadership position with the Louisiana Association for Multicultural Counseling and Devel-

Article continues in next column

Fall 2024

Louisiana Lagniappe

opment (LAMCD). In my term as President of LAMCD, National Recognition was approved. I was also awarded the 2022 Louisiana Counseling Association Graduate Student Award at the LCA Conference.

I believe that my experiences and qualifications would make me a valuable asset to LCA. Furthermore, I am passionate about counseling and am committed to promoting the mental health of all Louisianans. I am also eager to learn more about the field of counseling and to network with other professionals. I am confident that I can make a significant contribution to LCA and its mission.

Dr. Pistorius: As I reflect on my journey toward seeking this leadership position within LCA, I'm reminded of the pivotal moments that have shaped my dedication to serving the counseling profession. It all began during my master's program, where my professors and mentors instilled in me the significance of advocacy and professional development through organizations like LCA. Witnessing their active involvement and unwavering commitment to advancing the field inspired me to join LCA, not merely as a member but as someone eager to contribute meaningfully.

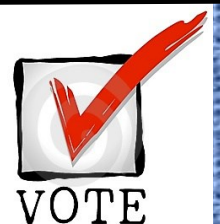
Throughout my doctoral program, my passion for counseling deepened, propelling me to become actively engaged in the LACES division. Serving in various positions on the LACES board, I gained invaluable insights into the multifaceted roles that a board plays in fulfilling an organ-

(My LCA Vision, continued on page 22)

Dr. Teneka Gash's Bio, continued from page 17

the tools and support they need to thrive both personally and professionally. Her work in this area has had a profound impact on countless counselors, helping them to overcome challenges, maintain their well-being, and ultimately provide better care to their clients. 🔄

Online voting only
this year: October 6
to 14 @ 5 p.m.



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ization's mission. These experiences underscored the importance of fostering collaborative relationships and championing the diverse needs of our profession.

My tenure on the LCA executive board further broadened my perspective on the organization's mission and its impact statewide. I learned firsthand the power of a unified voice in effecting positive change for counselors across all communities. Every decision made by the board required careful consideration of its implications for counselors statewide, reinforcing the culture of inclusivity and equity that lies at the heart of LCA's values.

Beyond my involvement in professional associations, I have been deeply committed to serving my local community through a non-profit organization. This hands-on experience has reinforced my belief in the transformative power of service and the importance of giving back.

As I embark on this journey to assume a leadership role within LCA, my motivation remains steadfast—to contribute to the advancement of our profession and to support counselors in their vital work. I am driven by a deep-seated desire to make a meaningful difference and to ensure that our profession continues to thrive and evolve. With a heart for service and a vision for progress, I am ready to leverage my skills and experiences to lead with integrity and dedication.

Q2. To maintain the integrity and economic stability of LCA and counseling as a viable profession, what initiatives would you undertake to educate the public and the Legislature about the importance of LCA?

Dr. Pistorius: I am committed to preserving the integrity and economic stability of our organization and the counseling profession. To address the question of maintaining integrity and economic stability while enhancing public and legislative awareness, I propose the following initiatives:

- Membership Drives in Rural Communities and Areas with Low Membership Representation: It's essential to engage all communities within our state, including

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From Me To You ...

Imaginary Friends and Mental Health

Dr. Mary Mayorga, LPC-S, TX, LPC-MHSP, NCC, CCDS, CART Associate Professor

The logo consists of the letters 'I' and 'F' in a light blue, sans-serif font, positioned vertically within a black square border.

Recently, I had the opportunity to go to the movies. I am a movie buff. I experience enjoyment when I go into the theater, sit down with a large drink and a bag of popcorn. I usually try to find movies that will “tickle” my desire to experience some emotion and then take time to explore, examine, and be curious why I am experiencing the emotion.

I can say that I enjoy movies that delve into the psychological aspect of a person's life, even when the movie is a comedy or is animated. It must have something to do with my profession. I am a counselor.

The movie that I saw recently and enjoyed so much was “IF”. I had read the reviews because I always read the reviews before I go to see a movie. If the review intrigues me then I will go to see if what has been written is truly on the “mark” or not. I believe I am a “frustrated movie reviewer!”

I am not writing to give the movie a review but rather I write because, after seeing the movie I realized that I did not have an imaginary friend and I believe that I lost out by not having one. It also made me curious to explore how having an imaginary friend can be a “plus” for a person.

Let's begin by defining what an imaginary friend is. In Psychology (2024) an imaginary friend can sometimes be referred to as an invisible person. It is a make-believe friend and is considered a creative outlet often experienced in childhood during their early developmental years. There is a role and purpose for having an imaginary friend. Imaginary friends serve a variety of purposes in the life of a child. These purposes provide comfort, companionship, amusement, and emotional support. Children who engage in imaginary play with their imaginary friends

(From Me to You, continued on page 23)



***From Me To You is a guest editorial.**

If you have something you would like to share, please send it to me for consideration at lcanews@outlook.com.

rural areas. By reaching out to underrepresented areas of our state, we can foster inclusivity and ensure that every counselor, regardless of location, has access to the resources and support provided by LCA. This inclusivity strengthens our profession as a whole and broadens our impact across Louisiana. Using creativity, we might be able to incentivize new members to join LCA through discounts, free division memberships for their first year, or conference benefits that might encourage them to stay active.

- **Engagement of Counselor Graduate Students:** Investing in the next generation of counselors is crucial for the long-term sustainability of our organization and profession. By engaging counselor graduate students and teaching them about the importance of professional associations, we not only increase our membership but also cultivate a sense of belonging and commitment early in their careers. These students represent the future leaders of our profession, and their involvement is vital for its continued growth and success. Engagement of counselor graduate students could be achieved by a tour of statewide counselor education programs to meet students at their universities to build relationships and raise awareness of LCA mission, vision, and values. Additionally, a half day or full day dedicated to graduate students at the LCA conference might get students to participate and understand the value of being a member of LCA. Also, we could invite the LCA divisions who are financially solvent to pool funding for scholarships to LCA conference, LCA memberships, or education expenses. This could be a unique way to have participation in the larger LCA organization without incurring the financial commitment of providing scholarships.
- **Promotion of Professional Identity and Community Role:** Emphasizing the professional identity of counselors and the integral role we play in our local communities is essential for advocacy efforts. By showcasing our contributions to state government, we can advocate for policies and resources that prioritize mental health and ensure that counselors have the support they need to make a meaningful impact. This involves highlighting the

(My LCA Vision, continued on page 24)

seem to have the ability to express their emotions more readily.

In researching the available literature, I found articles that indicate it is not uncommon for children to create imaginary friends or companions during their childhood (Elmer, 2020). Having an imaginary friend during childhood is considered a healthy form of childhood play. It is thought that the benefits experienced by a child who engages with an imaginary friend include developing superior social cognition, developing more socially acceptable behavior, boosting creativity, learning better-coping strategies, and increasing their emotional understanding (Newman, 2020).

All of the above benefits can certainly be seen as helpful to the mental health of a child since the development of cognitive, social, and emotional skills may be considered a mainstay in mental health wellness (Santamaria-Garcia, Baez, Gomez, et al, 2020). Without an imaginary friend, a child may experience isolation and lack coping skills to deal with adversity as they are growing, therefore, regardless of cultural background, having an imaginary friend when growing up may be the best adventure that a child has (Nguyen, 2021).

Referencing back to what prompted the writing of this article centers around the fact that imaginary friends are not only for children. It can be recognized that experiencing imaginary friends is common among children, but it also may be necessary for adults to not forget their imaginary friends. While most children do ultimately forget their imaginary friends, it is thought that adults will benefit creatively if they maintain an imaginary friend or companion (Jawar, 2021).

One example of adults who draw on imaginary friends are novelists, who state that their ability to imagine characters gives life to their story that might not be possible if they were not already comfortable with having imaginary friends (Jawar, 2021). Another group of adults who seem to pull on their imaginary abilities are avid readers. A survey conducted at Durham University in the UK (O'Connor, 2017) found that readers kept their fictional characters. Even when they were not reading, the fictional characters influenced their thoughts and reactions.

(From Me to You, continued on page 24)

My LCA Vision, continued from page 23

diverse skill set and expertise that counselors bring to the table, as well as the positive outcomes they achieve in addressing mental health issues and supporting our local communities. One way we can continue to showcase our contributions is by inviting members of the legislature to the LCA conference to show the strength of our community.

- **Unified and Cohesive Advocacy:** Strength lies in unity. By fostering a unified and cohesive profession across the state, we enhance our advocacy efforts and amplify our voice to the Legislature. Collaboration with other counseling organizations and stakeholders enables us to advocate for policies that benefit counselors and the clients we serve. Together, we can promote the advancement of counseling and ensure access to quality mental health care for all Louisianans.
- **Revenue Generation Without Increasing Membership Fees:** Increasing revenue without burdening members with additional fees is essential to sustain our organization's financial health. Exploring alternative revenue streams, such as partnerships, sponsorships, and grant opportunities, can provide additional funding without creating financial barriers for current and future members. By diversifying our revenue sources, we can strengthen our economic stability while maintaining affordability for all members.

As a young counselor, I am deeply committed to carrying on the legacy inherited by those who have advocated before me. I recognize the importance of honoring their contributions while also pushing forward to keep our profession moving in a positive direction. With dedication, passion, and collaboration, I am confident that we can continue to promote the advancement of counseling in Louisiana and ensure that every individual has access to the mental health support they need.

Dr. Gash: In order to maintain the integrity and economic stability of the Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) and the counseling profession as a whole, initiatives will be undertaken to educate the public and Louisiana State Legislature about the importance of the LCA. As a member of Chi Sigma Iota International, I serve on the Leadership and Professional Advocacy Committee. In this role, I

have met with Capitol Associations regarding upcoming hearing dates for Counseling Compact bills that are currently being considered in state legislatures. Membership in Chi Sigma Iota provides individuals with the opportunity to gain information and communicate concerns related to the current rules of the Compact. Maintaining integrity, mentorship, student engagement, public and legisla-

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There is no stigma in having an imaginary friend. The stereotype that sometimes is maintained focuses on the person with an imaginary friend being shy or withdrawn or choosing isolation over human companionship. Taylor and Mottweiler (2008) state that having an imaginary friend is healthy and that imagination is a powerful coping strategy that can lead to increased creativity for both children and adults.

So, whether reading or engaged in pretend playing, it behooves everyone from children to adults to maintain an imaginary friend. Having someone to walk with us in this life journey makes maintaining mental health wellness a little bit easier.

Want to know more?

Elmer, J. (2020). What to know about imaginary friends. Healthline Media. Retrieved from <https://www.healthline.com>.


Jawar, M. (2021). Imaginary companions: not just for kids. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychology.today.com>.

Newman, S. (2020). Imaginary friends: harmful or beneficial? *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychology.today.com>.

Nguyen, C. (2021). Imaginary friends help children cope with isolation. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychology.today.com>.

O'Connor, R. (2017). Fictional characters influence us in real life, study reveals. *Independent*. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk.com>.

Santamaria-Garcia, H., et al. (2020). The role of social cognition skills and social determinants of health in predicting symptoms of mental illness. *Transitional Psychiatry*, 10, 165. doi: 10.1038/s41398-020-0852-4.

Taylor, M., & Mottweiler, C. M. (2008). Imaginary companions: pretending they are real but knowing they are not. *American Journal of Play*, 1(1), 47-54. 

Article continues in next column

My LCA Vision, continued from page 24

tive education, and the promotion of initiatives are all part of my vision for the LCA.

Q3. As LCA President of 15 diverse divisions, provide a few short and long term plans for LCA -- addressing the needs of the diverse divisions to insure that each feels their collective voice is heard.

Dr. Gash: As LCA President of 15 diverse divisions, I have a number of short- and long-term goals to ensure that we are effectively addressing the needs of our diverse membership.

One major focus is on advocacy. I want to make sure that each division feels heard and that their concerns are being addressed by the LCA as a whole. This will involve establishing and implementing short- and long-term goals within each division, as well as supporting initiatives that promote collaboration and a sense of community among our members.

I will also prioritize the support of LAMCD, the People's Committee, and the Professional Development Committee. These organizations are essential to our mission of promoting diversity and inclusion in the counseling profession. I believe that by working together, we can create a more welcoming and equitable environment for all counselors.

It is also important to me that the LCA continues to be a leader in multiculturalism. I will work to establish mentorship programs, offer meaningful opportunities for engagement, and recognize the contributions of all cultures. By embracing diversity, we can foster innovation and create a more vibrant and inclusive counseling profession.

Finally, I will develop a continuum of Presidential initiatives that will be carried out from year to year. This will help us to ensure that our goals are being met and that we are making progress in addressing the needs of our diverse membership.

I am excited to work with you all to make the LCA a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization.

Dr. Pistorius: As the Louisiana Counseling Association President overseeing 15 diverse divisions, I recognize the importance of fostering a sense of inclusivity and empowerment among all members. Here are some short and long-term plans aimed at addressing the needs of each division while ensuring that their collective voice is heard:

Short-term Plans:

- **The Division Outreach Campaign:** aims to implement targeted outreach efforts for each division within the association. This initiative will highlight the advantages of active involvement in the organization and offer customized assistance to bolster membership growth and enhance leadership capabilities. Divisions experiencing low membership or possessing smaller boards will be specifically invited to engage in dialogues focused on strategies for expanding their membership and strengthening their leadership structures. This can be achieved by virtual roundtable discussions encouraging leaders to sharing of ideas, best practices, and resources. These discussions will serve as a platform for collaboration and innovation, enabling divisions to learn from each other and find new ways to meet the diverse needs of our membership.
- **Utilizing the existing LCA Mentorship Program:** Intentionally pair incoming presidents-elects from each division with experienced leaders from within the association. This program will provide guidance, support, and encouragement to new division presidents, helping them navigate their roles more effectively and ensuring continuity in leadership development.

Long-term Plans:

- **Policy Development:** Establish a committee dedicated to developing policies and procedures aimed at promoting sustainability and consistency across divisions. By creating standardized practices and guidelines, we can ensure that essential functions are not reinvented with leadership turnover and provide a framework for future leaders to build upon.
- **Leadership Pipeline:** Develop a comprehensive lead-

Article continues in next column




Conference Rebate for Your Division!

Vinetta Frie, Lagniappe Editor

In addition to providing professional development and networking, the LCA Annual Fall Conference is vital for our association's fiscal health ... AND your primary division's, too!! When the conference is done and all the expenses from the event are settled, we consider it a financial success, if there is money left over! That is the textbook definition of profit. When this occurs, LCA splits that profit (amount of money left after all conference expenses) with each of the 16 divisions. Long ago, the LCA Executive Board set the ratio of 75/25 to split with the divisions. 75% is retained by LCA to finance the ongoing business of our association and 25% is divided among the divisions.

When you register for the conference, there is a very important indication you have the opportunity to make: your **primary** division. When you indicate one of LCA's division as your primary membership, you **increase** the share of your that division's rebate!! (I am finally using that ECON class I suffered through as an undergrad in the dark ages at LSU!) If your division had more primary members to register for all or part of the conference, your group was responsible for the conference's financial success. Thus your division is rewarded with a larger share of the profit!


This practice has helped many divisions over the years! It has helped divisions provide services to their members **without** having to raise their dues! A very good thing for your members. It is another way of LCA being a good steward of the financial resources you entrust to us. A profit for any conference is not guaranteed. So, remember when you are registering for the conference always indicate your **primary division!** Doing so will impact your division's share of the profits! Imagine how your division can use your rebate to help your members at no additional cost to them! 

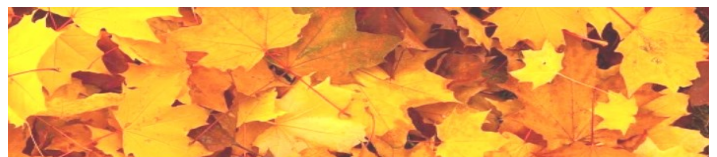
ership pipeline program that identifies and nurtures emerging leaders from within our membership. This program will provide opportunities for mentorship, skill development, and hands-on experience, mentoring future division presidents and ensuring a steady influx of capable leaders to serve the association.

By implementing these short and long-term plans, we can continue to foster the cohesive and supportive environment within LCA, where every division feels empowered to make meaningful contributions and every member's voice is heard and valued.

Q4. During your membership, what is one meaningful contribution you have made to LCA or the LCA Board, specifically?

Dr. Pistorius: Yet, beyond these practical tasks, what I feel truly makes a difference is my genuine passion for serving and my enthusiasm for LCA. Whether it's pitching in with day-to-day administrative work or sharing fresh ideas to move the association forward, I'm dedicated to furthering LCA's mission. My commitment to making a positive and lasting impact on the association and its members is what drives me to serve as a part of the organization's leadership.

Dr. Gash: During membership of LCA, I have provided meaningful contributions to LCA by serving as President of LAMCD and on various executive boards, committees and as a Conference Volunteer. I have provided mentorship to members of LCA, graduate students and have also presented at LCA Conference with conference participants. As a member of the Leadership, Development and Mentoring Institute led by Dr. Christine Ebrahim, I have composed an outline towards implementing a Divisional Mixer for the 2023 LCA Conference. My desire is to complete the task and frontline the event for years to come. The Divisional Mixer would establish connections between executive boards and afford the opportunity for LCA Members to gain insight about each division. 





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Louisiana Lagniappe

The *Louisiana Lagniappe* is the newsletter of the Louisiana Counseling Association, (LCA). LCA is the state branch of the American Counseling Association, (ACA). LCA unites professional counselors from diverse work settings to promote advocacy, collaboration, and networking among its membership for the good of Louisiana's multi-generational clients.

LAGNIAPPE TEAM

Your newsletter is the result of the following editorial team: Diane Austin, Dr. Quintin Gustin, Dr. Christine Ebrahim and Dr. Vicki Guilbeau and Vinetta Frie, Publication Chair.

SUBMISSIONS

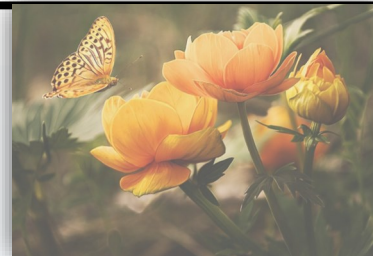
Send all submissions to newsletter editor, Vinetta Frie via her e-mail address: icanews@outlook.com. To assure a speedy response, please include the word *Lagniappe* in the subject line. Electronic submission of photographs via e-mail as a .jpeg or .png file is preferred.


**NEXT NEWSLETTER
SUBMISSION
DEADLINE:
October 25, 2024**


The theme of the next issue is the Fall Conference. It will be posted online in November.



With Heartfelt Thoughts and Prayers



 LCA member James Jenkins, Jr. asks us to join the family and friends the late Dr. House Hall of Bossier City who died earlier this year.

 Remember all LCA Members and their loved ones whose passing has not been reported to us. Their loss is no less important than any mentioned here by name.*

**Please help us to recognize any member's serious illness, grieving, or recent death. Please share the information with either Diane @ ica_austin@bellsouth.net or Vinetta @ icanews@outlook.com. If you have a photo of that member, please share that with us as well. It will help us all remember better. Thank you, in advance.*



This is the logo for this year's Fall Conference, highlighting the 15 LCA Divisions It will appear on the back of the Conference T-Shirt. Gabrielle Cade is the artist.