Bonnie Buchele to Present at
MAGPS Fall Conference

by Reginald Nettles

MAGPS is honored to have Bonnie J. Buchele, Ph D. ABPP, DFAGPA as guest presenter for our Fall, 2008 conference, *Vicissitudes of Trauma in the Group: Little, Big, and Hidden*. The conference will be held Friday evening through early Sunday, November 7, 8, and 9, 2008 at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. All may register at www.magps.org.

Dr. Buchele is co-editor of AGPA’s 2004 Group Interventions for Treatment of Psychological Trauma. She is also co-author of *Fugitives of Incest: A Perspective from Psychoanalysis and Groups* (1987) and several other books, articles, and book chapters about persons who have experienced various types of trauma. Dr. Buchele brings a wealth of experience beginning as a volunteer rape counselor in the 1970’s, prior to becoming a group psychotherapist. She served as Program Director of the Trauma Unit at the Menninger Clinic during the 1990’s, and consultant to the certified group psychotherapists who led groups for traumatized individuals following the events of September 11, 2001 in New York City and Washington, D.C. She is a past President and Distinguished Fellow of the American Group Psychotherapy Association as well as recipient of its 2007 Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Psychotherapy. Today she is Director of the Greater Kansas City Psychoanalytic Institute, is in private practice and is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes.

Dr. Buchele brings a perspective from group theory and practice, psychoanalysis, and trauma. She appreciates the power of group therapy in the treatment of trauma survivors and the special considerations that grow from the recognition of the ubiquity of trauma in contemporary society. As leader of the Fall conference, she will help group clinicians diagnose the presence of trauma in individuals both in preparing them for the group

* Continued on Page 2 *
and for when the effects of trauma emerge unexpectedly in the ongoing group. The immediate, developmental, and characterological aspects of trauma and its treatment will be explored. Plenary sessions will address special problems within both homogeneous and heterogeneous groups including management of dissociation, affect dysregulation, countertransference, re-traumatization, and the impact of trauma manifestations on the group psychotherapist. The conference will include a demonstration group and consideration of a broad range of trauma, i.e. rape, incest, surgery, mass trauma, etc.

The small group experience is a central aspect of the learning experience for MAGPS conferences. This fall Maryetta Andrews-Sachs, Carolyn Angelo and Nina Brown will lead small groups individually. John and Mary Dluhy, Elaine Klionsky and Daniel Turetsky, Thomas Large and Paul Timin, and Venus Masselam and Ivory Roberts-Clarke will co-lead small groups. It is a time honored tradition of MAGPS conferences to have a visiting small group leader from outside the Mid-Atlantic area as part of our conference faculty. This fall Shoshana Ben-Noam, PsyD., of the Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society will serve in this capacity. Dr. Ben-Noam is a newly elected member of the AGPA Board of Directors. She has also recently served as guest editor for two issues of Group: The Journal of the Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society, on Trauma and Group Therapy (December, 2007; 2nd issue in press). Continuing education credits (12.5) will be provided for licensed professional counselors, psychologists and social workers who attend the conference in its entirety. A “Community Meeting” and banquet will be held on Saturday evening.

We have come a long way in understanding the power of the group since those heady days of the group ‘therapy’ movement of the 1970’s. We have also come a long way in understanding trauma and its presence in many, if not most, of the groups we run. The Fall conference will provide a respectful and insightful exploration of both for group clinicians who want to inform themselves of current thinking in this area. The historic Shepherdstown setting is conducive to reflection with many important historic sites, including the Antietam Civil War Battlefield, only 8 miles from the hotel and conference center. Be sure to request the ‘MAGPS Rate’ in registering at the hotel (304 876-7000), prior to the October 7, 2008 hold date.

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**Call for Nominations for MAGPS Board of Directors 2009-2011**

Elected Positions to be filled:

- President-Elect/Conference Chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Membership Chair
- Members-at-Large (4)

Ex Officio Positions to be appointed:

- Student/New Professional Representatives (2)
- Newsletter Editor

All nominees must be members of the MAGPS. Self-nominations are very welcome. If you nominate another, please consult him/her prior to submitting the name. The Nominations Committee will prepare a slate of candidates by November 1, 2008. Election will occur by mail from November 1 through November 20, 2008.

**Please submit all nominations in writing by October 15, 2008 to:**

Robert Schulte, MSW, CGP  
Chair, Nominations Committee  
1204 Prince Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
703-838-1633  
Bobgroup@aol.com
Letter from Lenore

I want to talk about our conferences, of which we have always been exceedingly proud. We are one of the few affiliates that holds two annual conferences, drawing on local, national and international expertise to bring us didactic and experiential training.

If you want to see what topics have been explored back to 1968 and who presented look on page ten in our Directory or our website, www.magps.org. It’s an impressive list. A number of presenters are still making contributions to both MAGPS and AGPA. Beryce MacLennan, our president in 1965, presented on Group Techniques in 1970. Beryce is still an indefatigable conference participant and rarely misses a conference. John Dluhy was both a presenter and president in the early 1980s. Mary Dluhy, a prominent leader in AGPA, co-led us in Social Dreaming. John and Mary Dluhy will be teaming up as small group co-leaders for our Fall 2008 Conference on trauma. George Max Saiger, president in 1993, presented in 1996 with colleagues, and more recently in 2007 with his son, Ira Saiger. Reggie Nettles may be the first President/Elect and overall conference chair to also present as he did in Spring 2007 on multiple-minority identities.

Our Spring and Fall Conferences are chiefly distinguished from each other by venue: Spring is held in the environs of Washington, DC; Fall is spent in a smaller city or town. The difference in venue between the “home” and “away” conferences creates very different experiences. Staying together in the same hotel in the Fall creates an intimate and more cohesive group and invariably a smaller one. Students (and they come in all ages) can make up a third of the Spring conference because they are better poised in their academic year to attend a week-end conference and, for many, it is more affordable. Some long term members love the fresh perspective the students provide while others may feel their experience is diluted by beginners’ participation. Students, though, are the practitioners of tomorrow and the future leaders of our organization.

Psychotherapy, especially group psychotherapy is an apprentice/journeyman/skilled practitioner profession. What I love about MAGPS’ conferences is that, in the AGPA tradition, we leave our professional titles at the door and show up in large and small group meetings with who we are with ourselves and with each other. At our conferences, at some point in time, we may have all been each others’ supervisors, supervisees, therapists and patients. The person leading your group may have been a participant in a group you led before, or one you may lead in the future. It can be intimidating, humbling and empowering as we navigate within and between these boundaries.

Lenore Pomerance
President, MAGPS
Interview with Bonnie Buchele
by Maryetta Andrews-Sachs

M: Today we are going to be talking about your work with trauma and group therapy. When did you first get interested in treating trauma? What is your background in it?

B: In the 70s I was a volunteer rape counselor. I had been a music therapist before graduate school. I loved what I did, and I went to graduate school for my Masters, doing my thesis on the personality factors differentiating people who were raped who did poorly and those who were successfully able to resist. By that time I had done my psychotherapy training at The Menninger Clinic with Otto Kernberg. He was offering training to a few people without traditional credentials and I was fortunate enough to be one of those. About the same time I graduated from that 2 year program. While I was in the middle of my Masters, people began to talk about rape in a different way. Before then at staff meetings people would say “so-and-so eloped overnight, and we think she was molested and raped in a bar. This has happened to her many times before she came back to the hospital.” That was the extent of it. It had happened before; it was expectable, bad judgment – period. I began to see people in consultation in the hospital. I was very fortunate. I was part of the women’s movement doing this because they weren’t speaking to the medical establishment. The predominately male physician group didn’t really understand rape at that time, didn’t know anything about it. But the clinicians at the clinic could see that trauma was happening. The disproportionate number of rape victims with incest histories hooked me up with Ramon Ganzarian with whom I took group psychotherapy training about this same time. He was interested in pursuing Freud’s original theories about child molestation and trauma, and I was interested in bringing my experience with rape under the women’s movement banner into the medical establishment. I had a crusader mentality, perhaps…. and it all came together. My dissertation was on incest, perpetrators, and their treatment, and it’s continued to all kinds of trauma since.

M: I’ve been struck by a number of examples where very experienced therapists working from the “old” models of treatment have re-traumatized people.

B: Oh yes, that’s very important. The re-traumatization happens because people don’t understand the countertransference experiences they’re having. Trauma isn’t everything, but when it’s present in the history and the symptomatology and you don’t know it as a clinician, you can inadvertently walk right into things that you don’t understand but are frustrating. Then re-traumatization, the reenactment of the whole thing metaphorically or symbolically, is just right there ripe for the picking.

M: Over time how have you adapted all of this thinking about trauma into your work with groups?

B: Yes. In working with Ramon we began to run a group with incest survivors. At that time many of the people with incest histories were given the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder. The common knowledge at that time was that you should never have more than one or two borderlines in a group as they were too hard to handle. We wanted to treat this population in a homogeneous group so we started a whole group with this diagnosis and with incest histories. The group went on for 15 years. I wouldn’t diagnosis them that way now. It was the trauma response, and the borderline diagnosis was a misdiagnosis. Group is such a powerful, powerful treatment modality for trauma – the capacity of the group to contain, metabolize and provide a very good arena for the working through of all of this is just phenomenal. But when it’s a homogeneous long-term group of people who have experienced a similar kind of trauma, that’s really [very difficult]. I don’t think there was any way at that time to do it any differently because nobody wanted to think about this and nobody wanted to know about it. What has changed over the years? I think short-term or brief therapy groups for people with trauma are probably very helpful, especially shortly after the trauma or in the beginning of an elongated treatment journey. But I always had the thought that probably treatment was best in a heterogeneous group or in combination with an individual process. If the trauma is a very significant contributor to the problems for which they come, that’s probably the best way to go. Now my groups
usually have a few people with trauma histories in them. It works really well when the groups are mature and a long time running: they can really normalize, accept, take the shame away, help resolve so many of the difficulties.

**M:** The group can be the stabilizing function.

**B:** Exactly. One of the things with trauma is the individual undergoes a fragmentation experience. A group provides a wonderful place for various individuals to be able to identify the part objects – thinking object relations - as other members take on roles at different times to help the individual contain all of that and ultimately help integrate it all back into a much more significant, far less fragmented whole. So it makes theoretical sense why a group forum would be a very good place. A major task of the therapist becomes keeping the group safe in the sense of managing, titrating the vicarious traumatization of the people in this group – a whole other ballgame.

**M:** Actually, I wanted to ask you what you would say to beginning therapists about this topic and what would you say to more experienced therapists?

**B:** You have to be open to knowing that it is a terrible narcissistic injury to us when therapy doesn’t work, and you have to be aware that this is the name of the game here. To the beginner, I say to be respectfully persistent about exploring and inquiring and examining the historical pieces of the trauma and the current ramifications. Slowly –that’s the respect part. Piece by piece over time – that’s the persistent part. Never let it out of your mind in the sense of how it fits into the total picture. And knowing that it does damage to you (the therapist). I think that when you are aware of trauma and of course, if you are “early in”, the way it will damage you will catch you off guard. You must take good care of yourself and be aware that this is just an occupational hazard of the work. You need to manage it and how much you expose yourself to it – when you can control that - and do other things to take care of yourself. I would really caution the beginner about that. Again self care is VERY important, but the presence of trauma in someone’s history should be considered but not overemphasized. For the more experienced therapist, you’re never so good that you can’t have [these problems].

**M:** I’ve also been thinking about our soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, that with the large numbers, it seems like a “no-brainer” for me to see more people trained in group theory and in trauma to treat these people.

**B:** I have some interesting thoughts about that. The big understanding for so long was that when somebody is traumatized in childhood the initial trauma, the being overwhelmed, is horrible. Lately I’ve been reading some things that have got me thinking: nothing is ever pure, and one of the things about when there is a childhood trauma, the character development and the personality find detours around things. Compensations, other defenses – the good and the bad news is that they get deeply woven into the character structure. But there are other adaptations, other ways of defending that get developed over time. When an adult is traumatized, there are those that are saying that because it’s happening later in life and personality development is not in such vulnerable stages, what if the result of that could be – and maybe this is what we see in some combat veterans - is that it does stay there unmetabolized and exploding – without as much of the safe detour available. That could be true of lots of adult trauma. I’ve thought about 9/11 that way too. Some people pick up and go on and are able to do wonderful things. But many adults don’t recover. We know that people who have early trauma histories are really much more vulnerable to more serious damage from later traumatic experiences, and I think people who have had generally healthy backgrounds ought to be better equipped to deal in adulthood. On the other hand, there are those people whom you don’t understand - - why did this throw them for such a loop?

**M:** This has been a great beginning to thinking about our MAGPS Fall conference on trauma and group! Thank you so much, Bonnie, and I’ll see you in Oct!

*See the full, unedited interview on the website at www.magps.org.*
Spring 2008 Summary  by Margo London

Our Spring 2008 conference, “Objects of Desire: Sexuality, the Individual, and the Group,” was a lively, intense, and successful two-day event, on a lovely spring weekend, at the Johns Hopkins University campus in Shady Grove, MD.

Guest presenter Morris Nitsun, Ph.D., an excellent speaker with a charming, humorous style, led the three plenary sessions, opening with a brief visual history of erotic art through the ages, before presenting theories from psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and sociology, with the group firmly in focus, to explore sexuality and desire in group psychology. Morris is knowledgeable, thoughtful, accepting, and at ease in his work with desire and sexuality, and our members joined with him for lively dialogue and animated discussions throughout the weekend.

We had a record number of participants – 120, including long-time members of MAGPS and AGPA, faculty from the National Group Psychotherapy Institute, first-time attendees, and graduate students from Johns Hopkins, Catholic, Loyola, and Howard Universities. MAGPS hosted a reception for first-time attendees after the Saturday session and also matched them with Mentors to facilitate their joining into the conference.

Ten small groups met for three sessions of process experiences over the two days, with each group having a mix of seasoned clinicians, newer group therapists, and graduate students. Our guest small group leader was Scott Conkright, Psy.D., from the Atlanta Group Psychotherapy Society. The conference faculty of the thirteen leaders and Morris Nitsun met as a consultation group periodically throughout the conference.

Our conference gathering exuded energy and excitement, in sessions and during breaks, as people met, talked, laughed, explored, and discussed our topics of sexuality and desire. Morris Nitsun later said our MAGPS weekend was one of the best conferences he had participated in, and he was delighted to have shared the weekend with us.
Scholarship Recipient Responds

What a great opportunity it was to be given a chance to go to the Spring MAGPS conference! As a student, schedules and finances have often kept me from similar learning experiences, but this conference, with the scholarship availability and the weekend programming, was very accessible.

This 2008 conference, on sexuality in groups, was a special treat in particular. Right from the opening group session, I knew I was going to learn a lot. I appreciated Dr. Nitsun’s candid speech about how issues around sexual tension and desire for intimacy propel our group work forward. In addition, it was such a gift to be surrounded by other professionals with valuable experience. In these group sessions, I learned just as much from the questions and comments of other conference goers as I did from the key note speaker. My experience in my small group was also invaluable! I think the set up of the MAGPS conference, with the balance between the two formats makes learning extremely accessible and personally relevant. This was certainly my experience. Seeing, in my small group, how concepts from the large lectures and from other lessons I’ve had about groups in general played out in real time is something that not only will further my remaining education, but also my practice, as I continue to work with groups in my future. I also want to emphasize how warm and truly helpful my group mates were. Even though I was new to the organization, I felt encouraged to contribute and supported in my opinions and queries. Overall, I consider my attendance this April quite a gift. Thank you MAGPS!

Elisabeth Marsh, MSW, Catholic University
AGPA in Washington

Wasn’t it a great party??!! We met, we talked, we danced, we dined, we learned, we taught, we even published a guide. It hardly seems possible that 5 months have passed since the AGPA meeting February. The meeting itself went by in a whirl of activity. We felt like proud parents surrounded by family. We are very grateful to all of you who worked with us to prepare for this event, and we hope you felt rewarded for (and by) your efforts. The Mid-Atlantic crew did a phenomenal job in ways that were very visible to the attendees, and in ways that were seen mostly by those behind the scenes. It was all noted, and appreciated, both by us, and by the folks in the AGPA central office. Attendance was nearly 1000 people, so our efforts at publicizing were well worth it. Attendees represented 41 states (and, of course the colony of the District of Columbia). The Mid-Atlantic GPS area was out in force, with 60 registrants from DC, 84 from MD, 60 from VA, and 4 from WV & DE. There were people from 13 mental health disciplines, including 55 counselors, 98 psychiatrists, 250 social workers, and over 300 psychologists. We heard nothing but raves from those who talked to us.

In short, we are so thankful to you all for your efforts, and proud of all of the accomplishments of the committee, and of MAGPS. We’d like especially to thank Bob Schulte and Lenore Pomerance for their support as the presidents of MAGPS during the tenure of the committee.

We respectfully submit this as the last report of the Local Hosting Committee for the 2008 AGPA Annual Meeting, Passion, Power, and Politics: Dynamic Interplay in Groups.

Molly Donovan
Barry Wepman
Beyond the Threshold

by John Breeskin

My ongoing groups typically run from the beginning of September thru the end of June. My groups meet from 7 to 9 PM once a week. I have experimented with different lengths of group meetings, and the two-hour time block seems just about right. During the summer, I fire my clients, tell them to go away during July and August, and put into practice the good interpersonal skills that they have been developing within the group setting itself. During the first or second week of September, we meet for a grand reunion, bring each other up to date on our summer activities, report on our homework assignments, and make decisions about the upcoming ten-month group therapy cycle. At this point, some clients appropriately terminate, a few clients inappropriately terminate, and some clients switch treatment modalities from group therapy to individual, couple, or family therapy, as their individual situations warrant.

The last group meeting in June is usually a field trip, where the group meets outside of the office. I have done many different things on these occasions. One men's group invited their fathers, both living and symbolic, to a large gathering of men, fathers, wives, siblings, and friends. Each of the men in the group got up in turn, publicly acknowledged his father, and thanked his father for gifts that the father had given. Even if the gift was as small as a sperm donation, this was acknowledged and honored without bitterness or rancor. Most of the fathers wept when they heard what their sons had to say. They had never been publicly honored in that manner before. This intervention was worth, conservatively, for several of my clients, at least six months' worth of weekly psychotherapy.

On one occasion, the group and I rented an upscale bus, complete with every electronic gadget, and trucked up the road to Fallingwater, a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Western Pennsylvania. I have been to the house several times, during all of the seasons of the year, and to me, it has the status of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. The fact that a river runs through the house, and its song can be heard everywhere, makes it pure magic for me. Of course, we had a lengthy group psychotherapy meeting on the trip up. I had invited a dear friend of mine who is a psychodramatist, so we put on a mini-psychodrama as we toolled through the countryside. After the visit to the shrine, we stopped for dinner at one of the excellent local Pennsylvania Dutch restaurants, and of course invited the bus driver to our dinner, where he kept on shaking his head in amazement at what was going on in front of his eyes.

On a memorable occasion, the group and I, as our final meeting, all went out to the Birchmere Club, outside of Washington, DC to hear Joan Baez in a concert. This was pure magic. The show stoppers were “Diamonds and Rust” and “Amazing Grace.”

One more example will suffice. The family of visual artist H. C. Westermann, who suffered severe PTSD (“battle fatigue”, as it was then called) as a result of his WWII experiences, presented an exhibit of his work at the Hirshhorn Museum on the Mall in Washington, DC. The group members dutifully trounced through the exhibit, and talked about it afterwards at great length.

As you can see, there is no one set pattern to any of these graduation exercises, other than the fact that they included different forms of the arts, and my fervid imagination. Who knows what new capers I will dream up in the years to come?

Technically, what does this represent in terms of group process? It is obviously an honorable and memorable termination exercise. It bonds the group members in novel ways. It introduces them to the power of combined activity, in the sense that we are all committed to the action at hand, and most importantly, it creates a bridge between the group therapy room itself and the wide world right beyond the threshold.

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Membership Gets Technical

Things change fast sometimes. In recent months, tremendous progress has been made to exploit technology for the benefit of MAGPS members. I am deeply indebted to Sally Brandel and Rob Williams, MAGPS Secretary and Webmaster, respectively. Together, we’ve worked to find new and better ways to manage society data.

Probably the biggest changes involve expanding our use of the Internet to increase visibility and streamline society communication and administration. The email listserv was the first change, allowing individuals to communicate with the membership quickly and easily. Then, our website had a facelift, courtesy of Rob. This winter, we rolled out online forms for membership renewal and conference registrations. Shortly after these debuted, we added the option to use PayPal for dues, donations, and conference fees.

Starting this year, members can choose to go paperless for routine society Communications. This is good for the environment and our overhead. Next up, we’ll be creating a members-only section on the website. An electronic version of the Directory will be available there. Thereafter, we plan to add a find a therapist/find a group feature. This will be a searchable listing showing members’ individual and group offerings.

There are also a number of changes going on behind the scenes. In the wake of the AGPA Annual Meeting, we’ve received a large database of contacts that we can use for marketing and membership recruiting purposes. In the past year, we’ve made substantial changes to our membership database that should help us retain members and track the history of people’s membership status and donations to the Society.

Sally, Rob and I welcome feedback and suggestions from members on MAGPS’ use of technology. I hope to see many of you in real life at the fall conference.

Deborah M. Sinek, Ph.D.
Membership Chair
Washington School of Psychiatry

Group Psychotherapy Training Program
announces the 6th presentation of the

NATIONAL GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY INSTITUTE

The Institute offers a two year program of six intensive group weekends, each focusing on one of the major modern approaches to dynamic group psychotherapy, and each offering multiple opportunities within the faculty/member community for didactic and experiential learning. The Institute participants will explore these perspectives through readings, paper and panel presentations, observation groups, large and small group experiences.

The Institute is a lively forum for the study of groups and group culture. Learning occurs by observing and experiencing the formation of the group, sub-grouping and boundary issues, the role of the therapist, transference, counter-transference, resistance, and acting out. The impact of racial and cultural differences on groups is also explored.

Each conference provides 12 hours of CE credits for psychologists and social workers and 12 hours of CME credits for physicians. The Washington School of Psychiatry has been training group therapists since 1962. The National Group Psychotherapy Institute was established in 1994 with the assistance of a grant from the American Group Psychotherapy Association.

The Institute welcomes registrants for either the entire Institute Series, with assignment to an ongoing small group, or on a per conference basis, with assignment to a small group for that weekend only. Past NGPI participants and graduates of the Group Program are always welcome to return for individual conferences of interest or the entire series.

For more information contact WSP at 202-237-2700 or www.wspdc.org.

The Program

Webs, Tangled & Otherwise: Systems in Group Therapy & Elsewhere
Ayana Watkins-Northern, PhD, CGP
John Thomas, MSW, CGP
Co-Chairs
October 17-18, 2008

Love & Hate in the Group Setting: A Modern Analytic Approach
Ronnie Levine, PhD, CGP, FAGPA
Guest Presenter
Steven Van Wagoner, PhD, CGP, Chair
January 9-10, 2009

The Group & the Other: Where is the Father in Today’s Groups & Society?
Macario Giraldo, PhD, CGP, Chair
April 3-4, 2009

Evolving Subjectivity: Relational Theory & Group Psychotherapy
Molly Donovan, PhD, CGP
Mary Ann Dubner, PhD, CGP
Co-Chairs
October 2-3, 2009

Fostering Regression: The Omnipotent Child Takes Center Stage
Stewart Aledort, MD, CGP, Chair
January 22-23, 2010

Beyond Theory: The Art of Group Psychotherapy
Bob Schulte, MSW, CDP
Leon Paparella, MSW, CGP
Co-Chairs
April 16-17, 2010
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**MAGPS FALL CONFERENCE**

*Vicissitudes of Trauma in the Group: Little, Big, and Hidden*

*with*

Bonnie Buchele, PhD, ABPP, CGP, DFAGPA

**November 7, 8, & 9, 2008**

*Clarion Hotel & Conference Center*

*Shepherdstown, WV*

Register: [www.magps.org](http://www.magps.org)

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**AGPA 2009 ANNUAL MEETING**

*Strong Group Foundations: Building Lasting Communities*

**Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers**

*Chicago, Illinois*

**February 16-21, 2009**