

CONNECTICUT CONNECTIONS

July 1999

Executive Director's Report

This has been an extremely productive year for state affiliates and the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). It has been essential that we have had a very capable Executive Director, Keith Whyte, at the helm of the NCPG to coordinate the national efforts, especially with regard to providing the National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC) the information it needed to arrive at many of its final recommendations to Congress and the President. I am personally very grateful to Powerhouse Technologies for responding favorably to my request to fund the NCPG Executive Director position for two years. Since we are now entering the second year, the NCPG Fundraising Committee and the rest of the Board of Directors must be able to obtain ongoing funding for the Executive Director position. We need strong NCPG leadership to adequately meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The NGISC solicited recommendations from the NCPG, many of which were included in the NGISC's final recommendations. The NCPG engaged in an extensive democratic process in obtaining recommendations from affiliates and other board members. The recommendations were then distilled by a sub-committee ably chaired by Laura Letson, the Executive Director of the New York Council on Problem Gambling. It is critical for all state affiliates to bring the NGISC recommendations to the attention of state regulators, legislators and various segments of the gaming industry. In Connecticut, we are actively engaged in this process as we believe that now is the time the recommendations have the greatest potential for influencing regulations, legislation and policies and practices.

National Council's Annual Conference

The 13th National Conference on Problem Gambling, co-sponsored by the NCPG and the Michigan Council on Problem Gambling, was held in Detroit, Michigan June 4-6, 1999. With over 450 international participants, the Conference was the most well attended ever! Conference attendees were from various fields relating to problem gambling, including clinicians, researchers, prevention specialists, human services and mental health workers, as well as professionals from the gaming industry and academicians and students.

Marvin Steinberg, who is also Vice President and Secretary of the NCPG, represented the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) on the Board of Directors and the Affiliate Committee and was responsible for developing the track of presentations related to the gaming industry. Susan McLaughlin, Program Coordinator of the CCPG, made two CO-presentations highlighting CCPG's programs (Prevention Planning and Helpline Evaluation) and Marvin Steinberg CO-presented on three topics (Responsible Gaming Programs, Consulting to the Gaming Industry, and Financial Markets Gambling).

Special congratulations to Roynn Lisa Simmons of Connecticut Public Television and Christopher Armentano for receiving an award for their documentary One Last Bet. The CCPG is proud to have provided support in the initial stage of this project.

CCPG Hosts 4th New England Conference on Problem Gambling

On April 29th, the CCPG hosted the 4th Annual New England Conference on Problem Gambling at the Hartford Marriott in Farmington. The title of this year's Conference was "Youth and Families: Gambling with Our Future." The Conference Planning Committee consisted of representatives from five New England states and was chaired by Susan McLaughlin. Over 150 participants from New England and surrounding states attended the Conference.

Thomas Rotunda, Executive Director of the Division of Special Revenue (DOSR) opened the Conference. Keynote speakers were two internationally known experts: Rina Gupta, Ph.D. of McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and Linda Berman, MSW and co-author of *Behind the 8-Ball, A Guide for Families of Gamblers*. The program included breakout sessions on adolescent and elderly populations, engaging the family in treatment, and best practices in prevention. Richard Earle of Greenbranch Enterprises, Inc. was the luncheon speaker, addressing "Using the Media to Promote the Use of Problem Gambling Resources."

There were two plenary panels: Marvin Steinberg moderated "Youth Gambling: How Responsible Are We?" which included Richard Tesler, Casino Manager at Foxwoods Resort Casino; Alan Yandow, Director of the Vermont Lottery; and Jerry Goldstein of the World Institute of Leadership and Learning, who introduced state-of-the-art interactive teaching technology. Susan McLaughlin moderated "Voices in Recovery: The Women's Perspective," which consisted of the following participants: Rosemary Poole, LCSW, of United Community & Family Services; Mary Lou Costanzo, LCSW, NCGC, a Family Therapist; a recovering compulsive gambler; a spouse of a gambler; and an adult child of a gambler.

The Conference Evaluation Summary showed consistently high ratings for Conference objectives and individual sessions. A highlight of the Conference was the presentation of the Thomas N. Cummings Leadership Award for Vision, Courage and Dedication in the Field of Compulsive Gambling to Christopher Armentano of the State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services CGTP. Marvin Steinberg, previous recipient of the Thomas N. Cummings award, made the presentation.

A special feature developed for this Conference was a dinner meeting for representatives from all New England Councils and affiliate organizations. The group committed to convening quarterly to share issues and explore collaborative efforts.

The 5th Annual New England Conference will be hosted by the Rhode Island Council in 2000.

Helpline Evaluation Provides Positive Feedback

The two primary goals of this Helpline evaluation were: one, to learn how effective the Helpline is in helping the gambler and/or the significant other access the help that is needed; and two, to assess caller satisfaction with the services received when they called the Helpline. The 100 Helpline calls included in this evaluation were conducted by Susan McLaughlin.

Highlights of the information received were:

- 97% reported it was easy to find the Helpline number.
- 91% of the calls were reported returned within 20 minutes (56% of the calls were returned within five minutes).
- 98% reported that the Helpline staff seemed knowledgeable about the gambling problem.
- 97% reported that the Helpline staff made helpful suggestions.
- 75% reported that they had followed one or more of the suggestions.
- 95% reported being "very satisfied/satisfied" with the overall Helpline service.
- 67% of respondents accessed some kind of gambling related help · 26% reported that the gambler is currently "not gambling at all" and 50% reported that the gambler's current level of gambling is "much less frequent/less frequent".
- 69% of respondents reported that the current negative effects of the gambling problem are "much better/better" and 100% reported they approved of the follow-up evaluation call.

Many callers expressed a great level of appreciation for the quality of the service they received from individual Helpline staff and offered words of praise and encouragement for their efforts.

Annual CCPG Awards Dinner Held

On June 15, 1999, the CCPG held its annual Open House and Awards Dinner. Each year the CCPG recognizes individuals and organizations within Connecticut that make special contributions to public awareness, prevention and treatment of problem gambling. The 1999 award recipients were:

- Glenn Gorelick for his contribution in the development of a national training and educational organization and his creation of innovative media materials.
- Senators Melodie Peters and Alvin Penn for their ongoing commitment to support legislation to fund prevention and treatment programs.
- Bill Ryan for his New York Times article on problem gambling which helped mobilize legislative support for additional funding.
- George F. Wandrak, Director of the Connecticut Lottery Corporation, for his leadership in the creation of the Connecticut Partnership for Responsible Gambling.
- Cronin & Company, Inc. for the development of the public awareness campaign for the Connecticut Partnership for Responsible Gambling.
- Roynn Lisa Simmons and Connecticut Public Television for the documentary One Last Bet.
- Special recognition was also given this year to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation and the Mohegan Tribal Nation for their ongoing financial support and partnership with the CCPG in addressing problem and underage gambling.

Connecticut Partnership for Responsible Gambling Launched

In 1999, the Connecticut Lottery Corporation (CLC) joined with the CCPG and the CGTP to launch the Connecticut Partnership for Responsible Gambling. This partnership began plans to serve as the combined leading resource for information and education on problem and underage gambling for Connecticut residents. The

primary focus will be to communicate guidelines for responsible gambling, the warning signs of problem gambling and the availability of treatment services. The CCPG's Helpline number (1-800-346-6238) is publicized by each of the three agencies separately and collectively in the partnership.

The CLC supported the successful legislative initiative of Senators Kevin Sullivan, Biagio Ciotto, Melodie Peters and Alvin Penn and Representative Andrea Stillman to increase lottery funding for treatment, prevention and research from \$500,000 to \$875,000 in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1999. The lottery funding will increase to \$1.2 million annually beginning July 1, 2000. Especially pleasing to the CCPG is the specification that 25% of these funds will be awarded by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services CGTP through competitive proposals to private non-profit organizations. While the CCPG is eligible to apply for some of this funding, an additional 5% of the funds was specifically earmarked for CCPG programs. In addition to the funding, the CLC agreed to phase out lottery vending machines and to utilize its mobile van as part of the educational effort of the Connecticut Partnership for Responsible Gambling.

New Problem Gambling Awareness Committee Created

The Connecticut Committee for Problem Gambling Awareness was created early in 1999 by the state gaming regulatory body, the DOSR. The primary goal is to begin a dialogue within the gaming industry in Connecticut about responsible gaming practices with special focus on developing a problem gambling educational seminar for gaming supervisors which would provide certification upon completion, with provisions for re-certification every three years. The seminar will highlight identifying signs of problem gambling at the gaming sites and offering assistance to customers when appropriate. Content will differ across the areas of casinos, pari-mutuels and the lottery. Thomas Rotunda Jr., Executive Director of the DOSR, enlisted the assistance of the CCPG and the CGTP to work with other committee members to develop and deliver this program.

To our knowledge, this is the first time a voluntary certification process has been undertaken by all segments of the gaming industry within a state. In addition to the DOSR, CCPG and CGTP, other members of the Committee include the CLC, Foxwoods Resort Casino, Mohegan Sun Casino, Autotote Enterprises (Sports Haven, OTBs), Milford Jai Alai, Plainfield Greyhound Park and Shoreline Star Greyhound Park and Entertainment Complex. Thus far, the only facility to offer this type of educational program for supervisors in Connecticut is the training provided to Foxwoods Resort Casino by the CCPG.