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FSMTA Annual Conference "A Great Success"

By Rebecca J. Razo

The Florida State Massage Therapy Association (FSMTA) held its annual massage therapy convention and trade show June 26-29, at the Hyatt Orlando, in Kissimmee, Fla. According to FSMTA President Michael McGillicuddy, over 2,000 people attended the event.

Although the exhibit hall was open to attendees for a half-day on Thursday, keynote speaker Benny Vaughn, a leader in sports and orthopedic massage, shifted the convention into high gear with his dynamic and inspirational speech, "Nourish Your Potential," at Thursday evening's kick-off dinner.

The exhibit hall opened again early Friday morning, allowing attendees to browse the 100-plus exhibitor booths while an Elvis impersonator, provided by one of the convention's sponsors, BioFreeze/Performance Health, Inc., crooned such classics as "Love Me Tender" and "All Shook Up." In between sets, "Elvis" posed for pictures with convention attendees.

The convention featured a breadth of workshops presented by nationally recognized massage educators, including Bruno Chikly, MD, DO (hon.), who presented Breakthrough in Lymph Drainage Techniques; Alaya Chikly, CMT, who presented Heart-Centered Therapy; Roy Desjarlais, LMT, CST-D, who presented CranioSacral Therapy and its Application to Massage Therapy; Vivian Madison-Mahoney, LMT, who presented Insurance Billing, Procedures, Laws and Rules; and David Dolan, who presented Bio Aquatic Exploration Ocean Therapy.

Other workshop presenters included Dee Ahern, RPT; Dale Alexander, PhD, MA, LMT; Bruce Baltz, LMT; Cary Bayer; Cathy Cohen, LMT; Albert Durso, LMT; Marc Kalmanson, LMT; David Kent, LMT, NCTMB; George Kousaleos, BA, LMT, NCTMB; Thomas Liberto, LMT; Whitney Lowe, NCTMB; Christopher Marks, LMT; Don McCann, MA, LMT, LMHC; Cheryl McGillicuddy; Brett Pace, LMT; Clifford Shooker, DC, DABCN; and Benny Vaughn, LMT.

Eligible attendees received anywhere from two to six continuing education units (CEU) for attending the workshops.

On Saturday evening, Mr.

McGillicuddy warmed the crowd at the closing dinner banquet and awards ceremony by thanking members of the FSMTA for their support. "The FSMTA [convention] is the largest and best in the country," he said.

After dining on mushroom-stuffed chicken, new potatoes and chocolate cake for dessert, dinner guests turned their attention to guest speaker Dale Alexander, whose speech emphasized that touch "bridges space and time," and that "healing comes from within and from the divine."

The awards presentation followed; Michael McGillicuddy presented the Legislator of the Year Award to Florida State Senator Bill Posey in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the massage profession.

Sen. Posey was responsible for helping remove language from a bill that would have been detrimental to the massage profession for insurance reimbursement. "Senator Posey is a friend of massage in [the Brevard County] district," said McGillicuddy. "He and his wife are well liked by the Brevard chapter of the FSMTA."

Sen. Posey graciously accepted the award, noting that fellow award recipients Lynda Solien-Wolfe; FSMTA Vice-President Maureen Gilbert; and Brevard chapter member Donna Buist, all played a role in getting him involved through their ongoing grassroots efforts to educate local legislators on issues affecting the massage profession. Sen. Posey encouraged attendees to get to know their local legislators.

Lynda Solien-Wolfe praised Sen. Posey and his support of the profession. "Senator Posey is down to earth ... [he's] one of us," she said.

Perry Isenberg, vice-president of marketing for BioFreeze/Performance Health, presented the convention's first-ever Humanitarian Award to Aaron L. Mattes. According to Isenberg, the purpose of the Humanitarian Award is to "recognize the contribution of an individual to their community and/or their profession, completely and unselfishly for the benefit of others."



Aaron Mattes displays his Humanitarian Award. Mattes also received a \$500 check to be donated to a charity of his choice. Among myriad other accomplishments, Mattes is the developer of the Active Isolated Stretching Method, which is used for athletes to promote flexibility, prevention, correction and rehabilitation.

Other award winners included: Lynda Solien-Wolfe, Bob Poulin and Chris Davis - President's Award; Albert Durso - State Licensed Massage Therapist Award; Louis Pompei, Mark Zidar and Ron Stephens - Outstanding State Service Award; and Pete Pfannerstill - Outstanding Sports Massage Therapist of the Year.

One of the evening's most exciting and unexpected moments came when Isenberg surprised McGillicuddy with a \$20,000 check from BioFreeze/Performance Health to the FSMTA, in recognition of the association's commitment to the profession.

This year's convention also marks the commencement of the FSMTA Foundation. The Foundation is still in its early stages; however, McGillicuddy noted that its primary goals are to support education and research in the massage profession. In the weeks ahead, the Foundation's executive board will be going over information gathered during the conference to work out many of the details. In the meantime, the Foundation is off to a great start, raising over \$6,000 at a silent auction preceding Saturday's dinner banquet, in which convention sponsors, exhibitors and presenters donated services, supplies and other items.

Overall, "The convention was a great success," said McGillicuddy. "We will start immediately on making next year's convention even better."

The FSMTA was founded in 1939 with 85 charter members. Since then, the association has grown considerably and now has approximately 4,000 members in 19 chapters all over the state.

For more information, visit www.fsmta.org.



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