Summer 26

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Newsletter





Jade Rice, MAS-MFT, LMFT
Blooming Clematis Therapy
Clinical Fellow
AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Jade Rice, LMFT is the current Chair of the Arizona Interest Network of AAMFT. She has volunteered with AIN in various capacities since 2017 and is passionate in her mission of supporting MFTs and systemic thinkers in expanding their knowledge through affordable and accessible trainings.

bloomingclematis.com

chair's letter

Dear Arizona MFTs,

As I sit down to write what will be my final Chair's Letter, I find myself reflecting on the past three years serving as Chair and nearly eight years serving AIN in various volunteer roles. It is truly bittersweet to know that my term will come to an end this December. However, I feel confident in passing the Chair baton to our incoming Chair, Chanelle Johnson.

When I first became involved with the network, I never anticipated the relationships, experiences, and opportunities that would come from volunteering within our professional community. Over the years, I have had the privilege of connecting with therapists across Arizona, collaborating with organizations that support mental health professionals and the communities we serve, and working alongside dedicated volunteers who generously gave their time and energy to strengthen our network.

Together, we have accomplished a great deal. We are preparing to host a state symposium, organized happy hours and networking events, provided both virtual and in-person trainings, participated in charitable initiatives that supported children in need of comfort and hygiene items, and sponsored local and national conferences that elevated the visibility of Arizona's MFT community. Some events exceeded our expectations, while others taught us valuable lessons about what our members need and how our profession continues to evolve. Through it all, I have been grateful for the opportunity to serve.

chair's letter (continued)

At the same time, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge one of our ongoing challenges: sustaining engagement and growing membership. Over the past three years, our leadership team has explored new ideas, formats, and opportunities to connect with Arizona MFTs. While we have seen moments of success, we continue to face the reality that professional organizations depend on the active involvement of their members. Networks like AIN do not exist because of a few dedicated leaders, they exist because professionals choose to invest their time, ideas, and energy into building community together.

As I prepare for my final months as Chair, I am particularly excited about our September Symposium, which will serve as a meaningful culmination of my leadership journey. One of the sessions I am most looking forward to is a 90-minute discussion and Q&A with current leadership and attendees focused on AIN's history, strengths, challenges, and future. We hope this conversation will be both reflective and forward-looking as we consider how to best support Arizona's MFT community in the years ahead.

This conversation is especially important because we are actively seeking new leaders and volunteers to become involved. The sustainability of AIN depends on fresh perspectives, new energy, and individuals who are willing to contribute in ways both large and small. Without incoming volunteers, the reality is that the organization will need to reduce some of the programs, events, and opportunities we currently provide. Our future is not determined by any one Chair or Board, it is determined by the collective commitment of the community we serve.

As I look back, I am proud of what we have built together and grateful for every member, volunteer, presenter, sponsor, and community partner who has contributed along the way. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve. It has been an honor to support this profession and the Arizona MFT community.

I hope to see many of you at the Symposium this September as we celebrate our accomplishments, discuss our future, and continue the important work of strengthening our professional network for generations of MFTs to come.

For the final time...

With gratitude,

Jade Rice, LMFT, Chair of AIN of AAMFT





ACROSS THE YEARS: AN INTERGENERATIONAL GATHERING OF ARIZONA MFTS

DAY 1

9:00 am - 10:30 am	"Systemic Work in a Non-Systemic World" Panel Discussion (1.5 CEs)
10:45 am - 12:00 pm	"Shape the Future of AIN" (No CEs)
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm	"Even the Best Need Support" Presented by Vicki Loyer (1.5 CEs)
3:15 pm - 4:45 pm	"Being an Authentic Clinician" Presented by Shari Short (1.5 CEs)
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm	Networking Happy Hour

HOSTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA | Norton School of Human Ecology

HAPPY HOUR



*PLEASE NOTE: RSVP already included with Tucson Symposium Registration. RSVP is required only for those not already registered for the Symposium.

DAY 2

9:30 am - 11:00 am	"Ethical and Systemic Integration of Spirituality" Presented by Thomas Lewis (1.5 CEs)
11:15 am - 12:45 pm	"When the Cycle Has a Neurologiccal Driver: Working Systemically with ADHD" Presented by Keith Cross (1.5 CEs)
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Lunch
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	"Digital Platforms: Implications for MFTs" Presented by Amy Lemberger (1.5 CEs)

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PRICES

AIN STUDENT MEMBER	FREE
AIN MEMBER	FREE
AAMFT STUDENT MEMBER (NON-AIN STUDENT MEMBER)	$50
AAMFT MEMBER (NON-AIN MEMBER)	$150
NON-MEMBER	$300

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At its heart, this symposium is about continuity, belonging, and stewardship: honoring the clinicians who built this profession, supporting those carrying it now, and intentionally welcoming those who will shape what it becomes.

TRAVEL

We are announcing several ways to get to the Symposium and enjoy your time in Tucson! For financial assistance in arriving and/or registering, enter our gas survey or submit to be a volunteer!
Want to enjoy your time when you arrive? Watch for our soon to be announced hotel and eating guide!

Now Announcing...

AIN is offering gas assistance to attendees for the upcoming Tucson Symposium!

Open to *everyone*, regardless of membership status. Complete the survey below by EOD 8/21 to be entered to win up to $50 in gas assistance. 4 winners to be announced 8/27!

AAMFT NETWORKS
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VOLUNTEER

Symposium Volunteer Needs

01 **Bag stuffers**
2 needed 9/25 530-8p
Help AIN Leadership team prep symposium bags

02 **Event/CE Coordinators**
2 needed 9/26 8a-12p; 2 needed 1p-5p
Assist with set up as needed, microphone monitoring, CE assistance

03 **Event/CE Coordinators**
2 needed 9/26 9a-1p
Assist with set up as needed, microphone monitoring, CE assistance

Volunteers do not need to be MFTs or AIN members
Volunteers will be registered for the event for free

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2026 AIN Team

Leadership Team



Jade Rice
Chair



Chanelle Johnson
Chair Elect



Ryan Johnson
Treasurer



Cece Blum
Secretary

Meet our new volunteer!

Carlee Davis is a Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist at the Arizona Center for Marriage and Family Therapy. A Yuma native, she completed her education at New Mexico State University before relocating to the Phoenix area in 2017. Carlee's therapeutic approach is integrative, drawing on EFT, the Gottman Method, EMDR, and IFS to support individuals, couples, and families. Outside of the office, she enjoys live music, hiking with her 10-year-old cattle dog Lincoln, and giving back to the community through her volunteer work with Delta Gamma, the Phoenix Panhellenic Association, and Special Olympics.

Volunteer Team



Carlee Davis
Newsletter



Laura Tejada
Newsletter



Held Together: The Power of Community

By Chanelle Johnson

Shame tells us to hide. Healing invites us into community.

Recently, I watched nurse, birth educator, and social media influencer Jen Hamilton share a deeply vulnerable video hinting at the end of her marriage. When I heard the news, I was in shock. And in typical parasocial-relationship-fashion, I felt like I knew her, so my heart hurt for her. I rushed to the comments section of her video to learn more details and found hundreds of beautifully crafted words by people extending care, comfort and concern.

Shortly afterward, she deleted her video.

In the days that followed, Jen was silent. But her community was not. Even despite the crickets chirping from Jen's corner of the internet, thousands of people continued to express support in their comments and videos.

Words of encouragement came from people who had been through it before, who encouraged her to remember to take it day by day, who reminded her that she was a strong woman who would make it through. They reminded her that she didn't have to hold it all together perfectly right now, they promised her that it would get better and that she wasn't alone while it wasn't better right now.

But the response from Jen in those early days? Still silence.

And then, something beautiful happened. Jen posted a video and admitted that she disappeared because she felt embarrassed and impulsive for having shared so openly while in the thick of it all. She brought her realness and rawness and was clearly in an insurmountable amount of pain.

Her community's response? Once again, continued and consistent love and support. Jen expressed suprise and gratitude. You mean she didn't have to be perfect and have it all together to be loved by others?

Watching her progression reminded me that shame tells us to hide in our pain while community reminds us to not carry it alone.

Recently, I entered a season of life where I really related to Jen's experience. It seemed that every single area of my life had unraveled to some degree, professionally, personally, emotionally, psychologically - EVERYTHING was affected. I prided myself on "always having it together" (even if it was only a facade), but now? Now, my life had exploded in such a spectacular way. I felt so much shame. How was I supposed to help people as a therapist if I couldn't get my own life together?

I isolated and hid in the dark, dripping in shame.

And then, something important happened. People noticed, even from my hiding spot. My parents and siblings showed up. My closest friends checked in. Family members I hadn't talked to in ages reached out. Colleagues and friends within our beautiful Arizona mental health community extended a hand and a hug. Every single person approached me with tenderness and care.

Holding my breath, I showed them just how deep and ugly my wounds really were. My fearful part expected disgust and more shame. But that is the opposite of what I got. No one ran away, no one shoved me back into the dark. Instead, they shown a light on my wounds so that we could carefully clean them with love,

Continued next page

compassion and kindness. And when I screamed in pain, they held my hand and reminded me I wasn't alone.

For more than forty years, psychology researchers have demonstrated that social support doesn't simply make us feel better - it actually buffers us from the harmful effects of stress. Cohen and Wills' landmark work proposed that supportive relationships protect us during life's most difficult seasons, reducing the psychological impact of adversity.[1]

The importance of community extends beyond emotional comfort. The U.S. Surgeon General has called social connection a public health priority, noting that strong relationships increase the odds of survival by approximately 50%, while prolonged social isolation carries health risks comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes each day.[2]

As marriage and family therapists, we spend our days reminding others that healing happens in relationship. Perhaps we need that reminder ourselves.

Community doesn't require that we have everything together before we arrive. In fact, community is often what helps put us back together.

If you're carrying something heavy, may this be your reminder that reaching out isn't weakness. It's the very thing we encourage our clients to do every day.

Shame says, "Hide." Community says, "Come closer."



1. Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. Psychological Bulletin, 98(2), 310–357. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310

2. Murthy, V. H. (2023). Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf



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2026 Symposium Sponsorship Levels

PRINT SPONSOR $100

- Acknowledgement as a contributor and one insert to be placed in each conference bag given to attendees.
- 15% discount on social media, email, or newsletter ad.

MATERIAL SPONSOR $400

- Acknowledgement as a contributor and one insert to be placed in each conference bag given to attendees.
- 1 social media post about your organization.
- 25% discount on social media, email, or newsletter ad.

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- Acknowledgement as a contributor and one insert to be placed in each conference bag given to attendees.
- 1 free registration for the conference.
- Exhibition Table.
- 1 social media posts about your organization.

STAND OUT SPONSOR $750

- Acknowledgement as a contributor and one insert to be placed in each conference bag given to attendees.
- 2 free registrations for the conference.
- Exhibition Table.
- 1 email blasts about your organization.
- 2 social media posts about your organization.

CO-SPONSOR $1,500

- Acknowledgement as a contributor and one insert to be placed in each conference bag given to attendees.
- Half page newsletter ad.
- 3 free registrations for the conference.
- Exhibition Table.
- 2 email blasts about your organization.
- Logo added to official marketing graphic.
- Once monthly dedicated social post June-Sep about your organization.

APPLY NOW >

Our 'Family Stories': Don't Throw Out the Wisdom with the Publication Date

By Laura Tejada

MFTs like to make the covert overt. I'll go first: I'm old, and I like my readings and music as old as I am. As a graduate student in MFT back in the late Cretaceous Era, I learned that hot-off-the press articles detailing the effectiveness of therapy models didn't help me learn how to actually USE the models. Instead, supposedly outdated works were some that made important shifts in my thinking and practice.

These "golden oldies" became personal favorites because they provided me specific techniques grounded in foundational concepts. I didn't just learn how to use the model, I learned why and how it helped clients. This made me more confident in my skills and empowered me to incorporate these models and ideas with more of my clients. They became part of my clinical identity and I developed a niche as an MFT who enjoys working with couples and families mandated to therapy because of aggression.

As we focus on linking generations of practitioners in this issue of the newsletter, allow me to share some of my favorite older writings in the MFT field. **A word of caution for present-day readers:** Older works can reveal how far we have come as a profession, with antiquated literature reviews and terminology. Skip those and go to the core concepts, where you will find practical ways to put theory into practice. These readings champion systemic therapies and call the attention of the larger mental health profession to the value of MFTs and our work. Think of them as our profession's family stories.

Here's a few that were game-changers for me.

- *A Systemic Treatment Approach to Wife-Battering* by David Cook and Anne Franz-Cook, from 1984. Yep, the title was cringy even back when I found it. So is the fossilized literature review. (We have come a long way!) Skip those parts and read the rest. You'll get a practical Bowenian framework for relational treatment of aggression in couples. You'll learn how to leverage differentiation with partners and manage unhelpful coalitions and triangles with extended family, followed by realistic advice on treatment success and managing your expectations as a therapist. (Available in JMFT if you are an AAMFT member.)
- Follow up with Rosen, et al.'s 2003 article, *Negotiated Time-Out: A De-Escalation Tool for Couples*, also in JMFT for AAMFT members. The article provides a collaborative framework for helping couples reduce aggression in their relationship. This framework was adapted at the clinic where I trained for use with families as well. It was a turning point in my career and with the Cook and Franz-Cook article, gave me the tools I needed to be confident in working relationally with anger and aggression. **Caveat**: this article doesn't teach you how to assess if a couple is appropriate for conjoint therapy.
- Take your work with enactments to the next level by reading Butler & Gardner's 2003 article *Adapting Enactments to Couple Reactivity: Five Developmental Stages.* It's available in JMFT for AAMFT members, and will explain how to reduce volatility with enactments and the moves you need to make to help your clients succeed in session. **Bonus:** The process works with families, too!

Continued next page

- *Systemic Treatment of Families Who Abuse*, a 1996 book by Eliana Gil, is still depressingly on-point 30 years after publication because the dynamics of working relationally with clients embedded in the child welfare system have not changed. Gil lays out a framework for doing family and couple therapy with clients mandated to therapy by the child welfare system, from assessing appropriateness for conjoint sessions to structuring reunification therapy. She addresses vicarious trauma in the therapists doing this work, and teaches how to confront our biases about working with parents identified as abusive.

- Diamond's 2005 book chapter *Attachment-Based Family Therapy for Depressed and Anxious Adolescents* (in *Handbook of Clinical Family Therapy*, available in Google Scholar) will teach you how to use a relational framework for family-therapy based treatment with teens with depression and anxiety disorders.. The chapter lays out the 5-tier model clearly, empowering you to adapt it to other presenting concerns. The evidence base and book for this model was published in later years, but this early book chapter is a how-to manual that empowers you to tackle these challenging presenting concerns with a clear approach in mind.

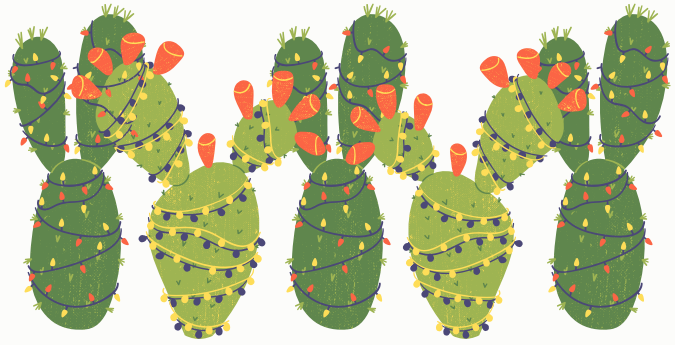
Don't be fooled by publication dates. Older works can inform our present-day practice.

Happy reading!



Laura Tejada, PhD, LMFT, LCPC
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Member Spotlight

Steve LeGendre LMFT

For nearly five decades, Steve LeGendre has helped shape marriage and family therapy in Arizona through clinical practice, leadership, mentorship, and advocacy. Practicing since 1978, Steve has witnessed the profession evolve from a period of establishing its identity and licensure to the MFT community we know today.

Reflecting on those earlier years, Steve described it as “a time of change,” as behavioral health professions worked to more clearly establish their identities and roles.

“With change, there’s always that uncertainty that goes with it,” he reflected.

Steve was part of that change. His involvement included leading as a past president of Arizona’s state chapter of AAMFT, service on the Arizona Board of Behavioral Health Examiners, and advocacy surrounding licensure. His experiences offer an important reminder to newer generations of MFTs that many of the professional structures we now inherit were shaped by those who came before us.

Steve’s clinical career has been equally expansive. He has worked in psychiatric hospitals, outpatient and partial hospitalization programs, residential treatment for children and adolescents, behavioral health agencies, emergency rooms, crisis response, medical hospitals, administration, and private practice. That breadth of experience gave Steve something he considers particularly valuable: “a sense of seeing how the whole mental health system works.”

It also shaped one of his central pieces of advice for other therapists: “Expand your knowledge as much as you can.”

Steve believes working across settings and with people from different circumstances can deepen a therapist’s understanding of the systemic factors affecting mental health. In particular, he reflected on how limited resources can create additional pressures for individuals and families. Having exposure to those realities, he said, “broadens your sense of compassion.”

Finding a Systemic Home

Steve’s connection to MFT began during graduate school, when mentors introduced him to family therapy and systems thinking. At the time, much of the mental health field emphasized more individually focused approaches. Adlerian theory and systemic thinking offered Steve another way of understanding what was happening with the people he served.

“One of the things that happens with us in our training is particularly from a system's point of view,” Steve explained. “It gives you a better understanding and about how all of this stuff mushes together.”

As he began applying systems thinking in hospital and outpatient settings, he saw its value firsthand.

“When I focused in terms of the system, the families, I felt like I was making more of an impact,” he said.

That willingness to consider another perspective has remained part of Steve’s professional philosophy. As he put it, “there’s a value to changing the status quo.”



Steve LeGendre, LMFT, LPC
Owner of Desert Hope Psychotherapy & Part-Time Team Member of Blue Door Psychotherapy

Be our next spotlight!

Member Spotlight



Steve LeGendre LMFT

Stay Hungry and Find Your People

When asked what he would tell someone just beginning their career, Steve described entering the profession as "just the beginning of an adventure or an education."

His advice? "Be hungry."

Steve encourages clinicians to pursue different experiences, continue learning, and seek mentors throughout their careers.

"Mentors are important and different experiences are important," he said. Consultation matters, too. Steve believes therapists need people with whom they can review cases, ask questions, and challenge their own perspectives. As he humorously acknowledged, "It's easy for us to get stuck in our own worldview or delusion."

Steve also spoke openly about burnout. At one point in his career, the demands of his work left him feeling like "just a pile of ashes." Returning to school and learning something entirely new helped rekindle his curiosity.

Alongside continued learning, he emphasized boundaries, support, and self-care. Therapists must remember their own needs even while caring for others. He encouraged therapists to remind themselves, "I'm as important as the people I work with and for."

"I Can Survive"

One of the most revealing moments of our conversation came from a lighter question: If Steve were stranded alone on a deserted island after a plane crash, what two things would he want with him?

His first choice was practical: a knife. It could help him obtain the necessities for survival.

His second choice wasn't an object at all. "I hope I would bring an attitude that is, I can survive," Steve said. "I can do this. I can survive." For Steve, that attitude represents the self-hope that can remain even during difficult circumstances.

Walking Together

Steve's message of resilience is matched by an equally strong belief in community. He believes MFTs must continue advocating for the profession and doing so collectively. Steve illustrated that belief through Tucson's Sabino Canyon. People can walk its miles independently, but there is something different about making the journey alongside others. "What makes it even more doable and more fun is when we walk together."

For Steve, walking together creates "a connection that we make" and a feeling "like we belong, that we matter and somebody cares."

He then posed a question for our profession:
"How do we, as a community, do our Sabino Canyon walk?"

Perhaps that question best captures the legacy Steve continues to offer Arizona MFTs. Keep learning. Remain curious. Find mentors. Care for yourself. Advocate for the profession. And as we navigate whatever changes come next, remember that the journey becomes more doable when we walk it together.

Be our next spotlight!

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Finding Our People

By Carlee Davis

We say we want community. And I think most of us mean it when we say it.

But there's something worth exploring in the gap between wanting community and actually pursuing it, and I think it's a conversation our field is ready to have.

As therapists, we are wired to hold space for others. It's what we do. But somewhere in the rhythm of caseloads, documentation, and the emotional weight of this work, investing in our own professional relationships can quietly slide to the bottom of the list. And I get it. I've been there too.

The good news is that so many of us have already found each other. Most of us are probably part of at least one provider Facebook group. We follow clinicians online who inspire us, push our thinking, or simply remind us we're not doing this alone. That connection is real and it matters. But there's something even more powerful waiting on the other side of the screen. Imagine what becomes possible when we take it past the screen. When a comment turns into a conversation, a conversation turns into a coffee, and a coffee turns into a mentorship relationship or a genuine friendship.

That's the kind of community I think we're all actually hungry for.

When I show up to professional events, what I'm really looking for is someone I can learn from. Someone who sees me as more than a provider who offers EMDR or works with couples. Someone who's curious about who I am as a person and as a clinician, and who might want to stay in contact long after the event ends. I think a lot of us are looking for the same thing, we just don't always say it out loud.

And that's where the real opportunity lives.

Being a community of mental health providers can be so much more than deepening our referral sources, though that's a wonderful byproduct. At its best, it can offer real mentorship, honest guidance, and sometimes, if we're lucky, genuine friendship. Even a much needed distraction from the heaviness of the world we live and work in. It can be the thing that reminds us why we got into this field in the first place.

Generationally, I think we have so much to offer each other. Think about what it means to sit across from someone who has been doing this work for twenty or thirty years. Who has navigated managed care changes, shifts in diagnostic culture, the rise of telehealth, and still shows up for their clients every week. That kind of perspective is invaluable. And on the other side, newer clinicians are entering this field with fresh training, exposure to modalities and research that didn't exist a decade ago, and an openness to talking about things like burnout, boundaries, and their own mental health in ways that are genuinely changing the culture of our profession. When those two groups actually talk to each other, not just coexist in the same field, something really special happens.

The Arizona Interest Network, or AIN, is a space designed for behavioral health providers across career stages to connect, collaborate, and invest in each other and in the future of this field. A place where we show up with intention, with curiosity, and with some accountability for what we're contributing to the room, not just what we're hoping to take from it.

I'd love to know what genuine community looks like for you. So I'll leave you with a few questions to sit with:

- When you show up to professional events, what are you actually hoping to find?
- Who is a colleague who has seen you as more than your modalities or your caseload, and what did that mean to you?
- What would it look like for you to be that person for someone else?
- What would a genuinely productive community in this field feel like for you?

The community is already out there. In a lot of ways, we've already found each other. So let's stop leaving it on the table. Show up to the next AIN event with the intention of making one real connection. Reach out to a colleague you've been meaning to reconnect with. Mentor someone, or ask someone to mentor you. The investment is small. What we stand to gain from each other is anything but.



Carlee Davis, LMFT
https://www.azcenterformft.com/

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Get Involved with the *New* MFT Program!



The University of Arizona recently welcomed the first cohort of **18 students** into its new Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy program in **Fall 2026**!

AS WE CONTINUE TO BUILD AND STRENGTHEN THIS PROGRAM, WE'RE EAGER TO CONNECT WITH LOCAL MFT PROFESSIONALS ABOUT POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH OUR STUDENTS AND SUPPORT OUR PROGRAM'S DEVELOPMENT.

SOME OPPORTUNITIES COULD INCLUDE:

- SUPERVISING CLINICAL PRACTICUMS/HOUSING STUDENT INTERNS AT YOUR PRACTICE SITE
- PARTICIPATING IN PANELS AND NETWORKING EVENTS
- STAYING CONNECTED WITH US TO BE INFORMED OF FUTURE EVENTS AND UPDATES FROM OUR PROGRAM

Learn more!

You can read more about the program, including our curriculum, program objectives, and more, on our website!

PLEASE CONNECT WITH US for more information and ways to get involved!

mft.arizona.edu

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Arizona Interest Network

letter from the newsletter team

We hope you enjoyed this summer edition of the AIN newsletter!

Want to guest write an article, share your favorite therapy-related meme, or share about your experience at a recent AIN event? If so, email us at arizonainterestnetworkaamft@gmail.com!



Stay cool as a cucumber out there!

Chanelle, Carlee & Laura

Be our next spotlight!



Submit an Article!