

February, 2006

President's Message

Nancy M. Porambo, MS, NCTMB

A heartfelt **thank you** is extended to all those who attended the rally for massage therapy licensure in Harrisburg on October 16, 2005! I was overwhelmed by the tremendous outpouring of support that was exhibited during the rally. School owners and therapists representing massage therapy organizations from across the state coalesced in a united effort to showcase their support of the bill for licensure. Primary sponsor of the bill, Keith McCall (D), Carbon County, spoke about the journey the bill had made to arrive at the Capitol and assured the attendees that it had tremendous support on the House and Senate level. Dr. Leena Guptha, Director of the massage therapy program at Lehigh Valley College motivated the group with her inspiring words "this bill is for the people"!

After 13 years, the effort to license massage therapists is nearing completion. Poised on the cusp of closure, I'm compelled to reflect on the many faces the bill took to bring it to the form it appears in today. The vision of the original drafters of the bill has never changed; to protect the interests of practicing massage therapists through the state by setting educational standards and bringing the profession to a higher level of professional awareness. Through the process of writing and rewriting the bill, the AMTA Board of Directors had the responsibility of making difficult decisions regarding language. Each decision was weighted with the knowledge that it would affect every student and practicing massage therapists across the state. The goal to share information with members of other organizations was achieved by working with and attending coalition meetings held throughout the state for many years.

Several chapter presidents that preceded me shared a common vision and shepherded the pursuit of licensure during their tenure. We are indebted to the efforts of Cheryl Siniakin, current National AMTA By-Laws Chair, Bob Jantsch, Owner and Director of the Pittsburgh School of Massage and Retta Flagg, Immediate Past President and past Chair of the National House of Delegates and remain grateful for their continued support and commitment. We have carried their vision forward.

As the bill moves through the Professional Licensure Committee and readies itself for a vote, we are positive that our efforts will bear fruit.

Successful passage of this bill will make Pennsylvania the 38th state in the nation to license massage therapy. With licensure, comes the professional recognition massage therapists deserve. According to a recent overview of the massage therapy profession by our national organization, more Americans are incorporating massage therapy into their wellness programs than ever before. Seventy Four percent of Americans polled would suggest massage therapy to others!

Based on the outpouring of support from consumers, massage therapy is destined for continued growth and acceptance. With licensure at hand, we are positioned to receive the recognition worthy of our profession and the endorsement of the public as a mainstay for personal health and wellness. Many thanks to all who have made phone calls and sent letters to their legislators! Together, we can make a difference.