

Association News



Willie Bo Walker has become one of the most well-known social

workers in Tennessee over his 43-year career through a variety of clinical, academic and executive roles.



Julia M. Watkins' tenure as president of the American University in

Bulgaria from 1993 to 2003 provided the foundation for her national and international leadership roles. From there she spent nearly 10 years as the executive director of CSWE.



Kathryn Wehrmann, president of NASW, provided leadership in

the efforts of the early 1990s to update child welfare services in Romania, which under a dictatorial regime was institution-based, primitive, and often punitive. Her work began when she was the program coordinator for a Romanian Child Welfare Administrative Study (undertaken by Parkland College in Champaign, Ill.).



Kentucky State Rep. Susan Westrom has been a successful

advocate for the citizens of Kentucky for decades. She has sponsored legislation to change the way the state regulates assisted living facilities, provide health services in Kentucky schools, and promote school safety.



Catherine G. Williams worked for the Iowa Department of Human

Services for more than 30 years, where she became the deputy commissioner of the department and was the highest ranking African-American woman for the largest agency in the state government. 🌱

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Association News

CHAPTERS

NASW-Pennsylvania: Laughter Yoga Provides Health Benefits

BY ALISON LAURIO



Everybody enjoys a good laugh, but not everyone knows laughter is good for your health and provides both immediate and long-term benefits.

Many Pennsylvania social workers have tried laughter yoga, and more took part in a Sept. 10 and 11 class in Media, Pa., titled "Laughter Yoga for Health & Happiness."

Alicia Newkam, continuing education specialists for NASW-Pennsylvania, said the chapter approves credits for the program, which they have been doing for a few years.

"It seems interesting and fits within the bylaws in Pennsylvania," she said. "I approve the CEUs. Some attendees who go to the program seem resistant at first, but once they do go, they have nothing but good feedback."

Comments include "appealing" and "transformative," Newkam

said. "They all say they want to pass the health benefits to their clients."

One person wrote he or she learned laughter yoga "because it can help with overall health like high blood pressure and depression."

The chapter has provided CEUs for yoga classes four times this year so far, Newkam said.

"To people who are hesitant to take this class, I'd say it would be beneficial," she said. "I'd say, 'Go for it.'"

Alexa Fong Drubay, laughter yoga master trainer and laughter ambassador, held the September program at her Laughter Studio in Media.

Laughter Yoga is a laughter exercise program developed by cardiologist Dr. Madan Kataria in India, who started the first laughter club in 1995 with his wife and three best friends, Drubay said.

"They started out telling jokes to one another in a park, and within two weeks 40 people had joined," she said.

Now there are more than 16,000 Laughter Yoga clubs in more than 108 countries worldwide, her website states.

"Breathing deeply is great for cellular renewal," Drubay said, adding that when you take deep breaths and engage your diaphragm, it's good for your heart, brain and blood pressure.

People can easily learn to just laugh without being told jokes, and her website notes the body cannot tell the difference between real and fake laughter. The benefits are the same.

Drubay uses "three tools that are very powerful together" — exercise, deep breathing and mindfulness meditation, which she does at the end of her sessions.

"We also use laughter, singing, dancing and play,"

Now there are more than 16,000 Laughter Yoga clubs in more than 108 countries.

she said. "We clap, we stretch, we move around the room. We do a lot of improvised work and people become more joyful in the process."

Extended, deep breathing not only refreshes oxygen in the lungs, it improves mood, boosts immunity, increases well-being, lowers stress hormones and increases feelings of empathy and compassion. It also relieves stress and is an analgesic for pain, Drubay said.

"It's all very positive because laughter unites people," she said. "It transcends borders."

More information is at laughteryogawithalexa.com. 