

A Decade Of Hope, Help Alliance Commemorates 10 Years

MISSOURI ALLIANCE
TO CURB PROBLEM GAMBLING

Gary Gonder, *Director of Integrated Services for the Missouri Lottery, Chair, Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling*



Ten years ago, representatives of the Missouri Alliance gathered in Kansas City and St. Louis to formally announce the formation of the first statewide coalition created to build awareness of problem gambling issues and programs available to Missouri residents.

The 1997 event in St. Louis was held at the then home of Life Crisis Services Inc., the provider of the 24-hour problem gambling help line – 888-BETSOFF. Ten years later we are returning to Life Crisis, but this time in their new spacious offices located at 2650 Olive in St. Louis, located within Provident Inc.

Throughout our first 10 years, awareness programs have been created and expanded helping to make Missouri a leader in problem gambling initiatives.

The Alliance is a unique conglomeration of public and private entities, individuals and organizations. The Alliance now has six voting members and several participating members, who assist the Alliance in the planning of various programs and events. The Alliance has no budget, but instead relies on individual members to contribute toward events and awareness programs.

Prior to the creation of the Alliance on Dec. 17, 1997, several problem gambling programs already existed in Missouri.

- A free problem gambling help line was established by the Missouri Riverboat Gaming Association in June 1995;
- Free problem gambling counseling to Missouri residents became available through the Missouri Department of Mental Health in April 1996; and
- The first statewide Disassociated Persons Program (DAP) was created by the Missouri Gaming Commission in October 1996.

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Please Join The Alliance For 10th Anniversary Event

You are cordially invited to attend the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling's 10th anniversary event, "A Decade of Hope and Help."

Dec. 10, 2007, at 1 p.m.
Provident Inc.
2650 Olive St.,
St. Louis, MO 63103

The event will feature two guest speakers:



Renee Cunningham-Williams will speak on Problem Gambling Research. She is a licensed clinical social worker and visiting associate professor at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University. She is one of the few social workers in the nation conducting award-winning epidemiologic and treatment research in pathological gambling and co-occurring disorders. Dr. Cunningham-Williams serves on the Board of Directors for Provident Inc.



Keith Whyte will speak on Future Gambling Issues. He is the executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling, the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families. He has worked on gambling and problem gambling issues for more than eight years and has more than 11 years experience in public policy advocacy. He frequently speaks at national and international conferences and in national broadcast media.

We look forward to you helping us commemorate 10 years of heightening public awareness of problem gambling, developing prevention and education programs and directing problem gamblers and their family members to free help.

For more information about the event, contact Shelly Perez at (573) 526-7467 or by e-mail at perezs@molottery.com.

www.888BETSOFF.org

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While these various programs existed, they lacked congruity and elements of awareness.

When the founding members of the Alliance began meeting together in the first quarter of 1997, none of us could have imagined the impact this small group would have on creating awareness about problem gambling and providing assistance to problem gamblers and their families.

Since 1997, the Missouri Alliance and its members have:

- Created various awareness campaigns that have includes posters, brochures and television and radio public service announcements;
- Created a Web site, www.888betsoff.org;
- Helped to create and secure passage of Senate Bill 902 in 2000, which provides dedicated funding for problem gambling treatment, education and prevention programs;
- Became the first state to recognize a statewide Responsible Gambling Awareness Week; later, the entire month of August was dubbed Responsible Gaming Awareness Month;
- Created an in-school addiction prevention program for middle school-aged youth;
- Created and publishes a quarterly newsletter;
- Helped to create, plan, organize and implement three annual Midwest Conferences on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse. All of these conferences have been hosted in Missouri. The 2008 conference will be held Aug. 13-15 at the Crown Plaza St. Louis-Hotel in Clayton;
- Hosted the 21st Annual Conference on Problem Gambling Prevention, Treatment, Research and Recovery in June 2007. This conference, sponsored by the National Council on Problem Gambling, attracted more than 500 attendees making it the largest national conference on problem gambling to date.

We are very proud of our accomplishments, but we also know there is still much to do. While we are commemorating 10 years of hope and help, we are in the midst of planning for the future.

Proposals For Workshops, Presentations Being Sought For 2008 Conference

Plans are underway for the 2008 Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse Aug. 13-15 at the Crowne Plaza St. Louis-Clayton Hotel in Clayton.

Proposals are being accepted for workshops and poster presentations for the fifth annual conference. All proposals must be submitted by Jan. 21, 2008.

“The Midwest Conference has become a popular conference for presenters and attendees from throughout the country,” said Melissa Stephens, problem gambling program administrator for the Missouri Gaming Commission and a member of the Midwest Conference program committee. “We’ve managed to keep our costs low, and we work hard at attracting the best speakers and presenters in the country. We’re excited about the new opportunities provided by hosting the conference in St. Louis.”

Several Missouri representatives are serving on the conference’s planning and steering committees.

Stephens said in addition to helping to select speakers and presenters, the Missouri representatives have been given the task of planning an optional recreational event.

“The optional event was so popular during the 2007 National Conference on Problem Gambling this past June in Kansas City that we’re busy planning another optional event for the Midwest Conference,” Stephens said. “We think an event like this provides a great chance to socialize in an environment that is unique to the host city.”

Information about the request for conference workshops and presentations, as well as hotel information, can be found at the Alliance’s Web site, 888betsoff.org.

Upcoming Alliance Events

Dec. 10

Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling 10th Anniversary Event in St. Louis

Feb. 22-24, 2008

Working Women’s Survival Show in St. Louis

www.888BETSOFF.org

Gonder Named Chairman Of Statewide Problem Gambling Coalition

Gary Gonder, director of Integrated Services at the Missouri Lottery, recently was named the chairperson of the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling (Alliance). Gonder assumed the yearlong leadership role in September.

Mike Winter, executive director of the Missouri Gaming Association, was named as the vice chairperson.

Gonder said he is looking forward to furthering the Alliance's mission to educate Missouri residents about the warning signs of problem gambling and where to find help.

"We've got a number of programs we are updating and enhancing this year, including our youth addiction prevention project," Gonder said. "We're also preparing to celebrate our 10th anniversary as an organization. We've accomplished a lot over the past 10 years, and we're looking forward to accomplishing a lot more in the future."

Gonder previously served as the chairman of the Alliance in 2001. He served as the Missouri Lottery's director of communications from 1992 until this year, when he was named the director of Integrated Services at the Missouri Lottery. Gonder was a founding member of the Alliance and has administered many of its awareness and educational programs.



Gary Gonder

Got A Story Idea?

Do you have a story idea for the next *Betsoff Bulletin*, or would you like to write a story for the next issue? There's a lot going on in Missouri concerning problem gambling, and we would like to include as much as possible in the *Bulletin* and on our Web site, so please be sure to pass on any ideas you may have.

To suggest story ideas for the *Bulletin* or the Web site, contact the editor, Shelly Perez, at betsoff@molottery.com, or call (573) 526-7467.

Therapist Gives Back Healing Touch At Conference

If you attended the 2007 National Conference on Problem Gambling Prevention in Kansas City, you may have noticed or even enjoyed a massage by the therapist, Andy Sturdivan, working in the corner of the hotel concourse. He was dispensing a healing touch free of charge to attendees, not because the Kansas City Marriott Downtown included the service as part of the event package, but because he knows first hand the hard work done by addiction treatment professionals. Sturdivan was once a problem gambler.

Sturdivan was always gifted in the art of massage, but he hasn't always been employed as the full-time massage therapist at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown. Previously, he worked for AVIS car rental until health problems forced him to retire in 2003. After suffering two heart attacks, undergoing bypass surgery in 1998 and then being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2001, Andy figured his career was over.

Early retirement sounds like a dream to most people, but it was not a good fit for Sturdivan. Left with nothing to do, he started gambling, which led to more gambling, eventually turning into a problem and ending in bankruptcy. He finally sought help from a treatment professional and found a way to turn his life around.

Friends had always told Sturdivan that he was great at giving back rubs. At parties and gatherings, he would often end up doling out massages throughout the evening. At their encouragement, he decided to enroll at Heritage College and pursue formal training. It always pays to do what you love, and Sturdivan graduated at the top of his class, even winning an award created for him, "The Lamplighter Award," dedicated to graduates who have undertaken a new path in life.

That's certainly true for Sturdivan. Despite all the troubles and setbacks that have plagued him over the last decade, he finds that helping others relieve the stress of life has healing properties for him as well. He says that people don't usually realize how stressed and tight they are, until he gets his hands on them.

"I tell them to give me five minutes, and they usually end up getting a full massage."

If you would like to experience Sturdivan's healing touch, you can find him Monday through Friday at The Club at the Marriott, 200 W. 12th Street in Kansas City, or by appointment at (816) 472-4441.



Andy Sturdivan dispensing a healing touch free of charge to an attendee.

1-888-BETSOFF

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Awareness Materials Available Through Web Site

A variety of problem gambling awareness materials are available for free through the Missouri Alliance, including posters and brochures from the latest Alliance awareness campaign, "Hope for You and Yours."



Visit the Alliance's Web site for more information about items available to order for your business, school or office. All items available through the Alliance are free to Missouri residents and businesses.

Need A Speaker?

The Alliance provides speakers for groups and organizations throughout the state. For more information about the speakers bureau or to arrange a presentation, please call (573) 526-7467 or (573) 526-4080.
All presentations are free of charge.

Want To Receive The *Bulletin*?

In an attempt to streamline costs, the *Betsoff Bulletin* is available through the Alliance's Web site, www.888betsoff.org. We have an e-mail list of individuals who are interested in receiving notification when a new issue is available at the Web site, so please forward your e-mail address to betsoff@molottery.com. If you would prefer to receive a free printed copy of the *Bulletin* through the regular mail service, please let us know by calling (573) 526-7467.

If you received notification by e-mail about this issue, you're already on our e-mail list, but remember to send us updates on any e-mail address changes. In addition, please feel free to forward the link for the newsletter to anyone else who may be interested in reading it.

Thank you for your interest in the *Bulletin*.

Alliance news and event schedules are available on the Web at:

www.888betsoff.org



The Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling's mission is to heighten public awareness for the dangers of problem gambling; develop prevention and education programs for gamblers of all ages; and direct problem gamblers and their families to the 1-888-BETSOFF help line and treatment.