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Introduction

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Introduction

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I am happy to help bring you this double issue of the *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, which looks at the projects of the Archstone Foundation's Elder Abuse and Neglect Initiative. The impetus for this issue was born out of a desire to share the work of a unique collaborative effort in California. The idea was to describe the work being done by a diverse group of people—some in academics, some in nonprofit organizations, and some in government agencies—to a larger audience in order to stimulate new ideas, promote the replication of promising practices, and communicate lessons learned.

I first became acquainted with the Archstone Foundation when they funded the Vulnerable Adult Specialist Team (VAST) at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), where I direct the Program in Geriatrics. VAST was one of the first teams in the country to make geriatricians and neuropsychologists available for in-home evaluations of clients of Adult Protective Services (APS), the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, and law enforcement. The success of VAST led to additional funding for the nation's first Elder Abuse Forensic Center. Eventually, with ongoing funding and guidance from the Archstone Foundation, and with funding for training, policy, and research efforts from a variety of other sources, the Center of Excellence on Elder Abuse and Neglect was created. The Center has evolved into an important and reliable source of information for professionals in the field of elder mistreatment.

OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

This special edition is designed to show how one state has made progress in addressing elder abuse through the development of innovative multi-disciplinary teams, legal interventions, systems change, and education and training efforts. All of the projects of the Elder Abuse and Neglect Initiative participated in the creation of this issue as authors and contributors. Reviews

of the manuscripts were provided by professionals in the fields of law, social work, medicine, and gerontology.

The issue begins with several short articles that provide context for the remainder. They start with a preface by Joseph Prevratil, President of the Archstone Foundation, which appeals to other funders to take up the cause of elder abuse as part of their funding portfolio. Let us hope that his essay stirs other philanthropists to action on behalf of abuse victims. There then follows an article describing the Archstone Initiative, one on the Center of Excellence on Elder Abuse and Neglect at the University of California, Irvine, and one that describes the independent evaluation of the Initiative, which was conducted by The Measurement Group LLC.

At the heart of this double issue are the articles written by the project leaders. The articles address specific topics such as forensic centers, minimizing financial abuse, and the roles of clinicians and attorneys on interdisciplinary teams. There are also “big picture” articles on how to improve and sustain systems that serve older adult victims, the importance of advocacy and how it may influence policy, and a vision for where we should think about going by the year 2020 when the percentage of people 65 years and older will have risen to 16.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

CONCLUSION

I am deeply grateful to all of the authors of this issue. They devoted time to these articles while still working hard at their day jobs protecting elders and adults with disabilities. I am proud to count them as my colleagues.

I also would like to thank the peer reviewers, all of whom responded with intelligence and alacrity. Their contributions improved the issue. They are Joan Virginia Allen, Esq.; Bonnie Brandl, MSW; Risa Breckman, MSW; Pat Brownell, PhD; Kerry Burnight, PhD; Marie Therese Connolly, Esq.; Mary Counihan, MSW; Jim O'Brien, MD; Pamela Teaster, PhD; and Page Ulrey, Esq.

My heartfelt thanks go to Georgia Anetzberger, PhD, who guided and advised me through this process with patience, good humor, and intelligence.

Years from now when elder abuse has achieved the funding, public awareness, and policies the issue deserves, we may look back on the Archstone Foundation's investment in California's elder abuse prevention community as a turning point not just in the Golden State, but in the nation. All of us, as a community interested in elder mistreatment, must communicate the importance of this issue in a clear and compelling voice. We, as a nation, must act upon a commitment to value our elders whether they are vigorous or frail, lucid or demented, independent or in need of a helping hand. After all, it is what we want for our grandparents, our parents, and ourselves.