

## Conference Registration Available Soon

Registration is going to be available soon for the National Council on Problem Gambling's 21st Annual Conference on Problem Gambling Prevention, Research, Recovery and Treatment in Kansas City, June 8-10, at the Kansas City Downtown Marriott.

A large number of quality workshop presentations were submitted for consideration by the conference planning committee, according to Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling.

"I'm pleased with the number of quality presentations submitted," Whyte said. "There's going to be a wide range of topics presented."

Keynote speakers and workshops, as well as registration information, will be available soon at [www.888betsoff.org](http://www.888betsoff.org) and at the National Council Web site [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org).



## State Colleges Expand Resources For Problem Gambling Prevention Programs

Gambling on college campuses is nothing new, but a new statewide gambling prevention program is gaining speed and attention as it spreads to all 12 Missouri public college and university campuses.

Developed by the Wellness Resource Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia and Missouri Partners in Prevention (PIP), "Keeping the Score" is a multifaceted program that includes educational workshops for campus leaders – students and faculty – a Web site, awareness materials and presentations to campus organizations.

Kristy Wanner, gambling education coordinator for the University of Missouri-Columbia, said the new gambling prevention program is designed to lead college campuses to establish their own programs.

"We're providing education and a forum to create effective strategies to help prevent problem gambling on campuses," Wanner said. "Our college representatives have been very receptive to learning more about the topic and are using their own approach to reach out to students."

Wanner said gambling prevention became a natural piece of PIP. In 2003, the Wellness Resource Center received a grant from the Port Authority of Kansas City to provide training and coordination of a statewide problem gambling program for college students. Since then the program has expanded to include numerous resources and additional training

throughout the year.

The PIP program now includes brochures, bookmarks, promotional items and a Web site, <http://gambling.missouri.edu>.

"The Web-based stuff is important for the students,"

Wanner said. "It was one of our immediate goals. A lot of our wellness programs are on the Web because that's where students spend much of their time."

Wanner, who is seeking her doctorate degree in health promotion and education at the University of Missouri-Columbia, was named to her position last year. She said, as an athlete, she was aware of gambling at the college level but

didn't comprehend the extent of gambling among college students until she began attending some of the trainings herself and began meeting with students at campus events.

"We attend the resource fair three times a year and hand out problem gambling information to students," Wanner said. "It's amazing how many people say they know someone who needed the information."

"The students are taking the materials," Wanner said. "They are definitely interested in learning more."

Wanner said PIP is now working to help campuses set up teams of students, administrators and faculty to help combat problem gambling on campuses.

"Thanks to the grant, we're able to provide additional training and the resources they need to build their own prevention programs," she said.



## Drug Test Fails, But Missouri Researcher Is Hopeful Stage Set For Additional Tests

While a potential anti-gambling pill failed in the clinical trials, a principal investigator in the national trial said the trial provided a forum for further studies into the use of pharmaceutical treatment for individuals with severe gambling disorders.

In December, Somaxon Pharmaceuticals Inc. from San Diego announced that the clinical trials of oral nalmefene hydrochloride had failed to show a significant difference compared to a placebo.

"While the results in the latest trial were not promising, the fact that we are opening up our treatment armamentarium to the possibility of effective pharmacological treatments for those with severe gambling disorders is extremely exciting," said Renee Cunningham-Williams, visiting associate professor at the Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St. Louis.

Cunningham-Williams served as the St. Louis site principal investigator for two trials involving the drug. Sue Self, director of Life Crisis Services in St. Louis which provides the 888-BetsOff help line, and Janis Ragsdale, also with Life Crisis, participated in the studies as clinical consultants.

During the trials, Cunningham-Williams said she included social workers on her interdisciplinary medical team to



Renee Cunningham-Williams

## Drug Test Fails

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serve as clinical consultants and diagnosticians.

"They were central to the successful implementation of these trials at our site," she said. "I was very fortunate to forge clinical-research partnerships with some of the brightest and hardest-working social workers and gambling treatment providers in our state."

In a prepared statement, Somaxon president and chief executive Ken Cohen said the company will "evaluate the results from these trials before making determinations regarding the future of the nalmefene program."

Cunningham-Williams said additional drug trials, psychosocial intervention and combination therapy studies need to be funded.

"I don't believe there exists a single magic bullet or, in this case, a 'magic pill' for the treatment of mental disorders," Cunningham-Williams said. "Yet, as we learn more about the neurobiological underpinnings of disorders such as pathological gambling, we cannot rule out the potential beneficial effects of drug therapies."

"We need to put commonly held anti-drug therapy biases aside and concentrate our efforts on developing and tailoring evidenced-based treatments of all kinds, including pharmacological, psychosocial, self-help interventions among others, for the treatment of mental health disorders such as pathological gambling," she continued.

## Problem Gambling Week Heightens Awareness

The release of public service announcements (PSAs) to promote Missouri's problem-gambling help line, 1-888-BETSOFF (1-888-238-7633), and participation in awareness events will highlight Missouri's role in the fifth annual National Problem Gambling Awareness Week, March 5-11.

The radio and television PSAs are being provided by the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling (MACPG), which is comprised by the Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the Missouri Lottery, the Missouri Gaming Commission, the Missouri Council on Problem Gambling Inc., the Missouri Gaming Association and the Port Authority of Kansas City.

During the national awareness week, communities nationwide are working to raise awareness of the consequences of problem gambling and the resources available for individuals whose gambling is causing disruption in their lives.

In Missouri, in addition to releasing the PSAs, members of the Missouri Alliance will be providing educational displays at various statewide conferences throughout the month including the Partners in Prevention Meeting of the Minds Conference for college students, faculty and administrators and the Pathways to Student Success conference for school administrators and

educators of at-risk students.

"National Problem Gambling Awareness Week is an effort to raise awareness of problem-gambling issues and the availability of treatment throughout the country," said Keith Spare, chairman of the Alliance and president of the Missouri Council on Problem Gambling Concerns Inc.

"Throughout the year, the Alliance promotes the availability of free treatment, but participating in the national effort this week provides us with an opportunity to further educate Missouri residents about problem-gambling issues and that help is just a phone call away," he said.

Free problem gambling treatment for disordered gambling is available in Missouri to problem gamblers and the loved ones of problem gamblers. Information about treatment options in Missouri is available through the 24-hour toll-free problem gambling help line, 1-888-BETSOFF, or visit the Alliance's Web site at [www.888betsoff.org](http://www.888betsoff.org).



## Upcoming Alliance Events

### March 1-3

Meeting of the Minds Conference in Kansas City

### March 4-5

Pathways Conference in Osage Beach

### March 5-11

National Problem Gambling Awareness Week

### March 23-25

Middle School Association Conference in Osage Beach

### March 30-April 1

National Association of Social Workers-Missouri in Osage Beach

### April 3-5

Missouri Association of Drug Court Professionals

## 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](mailto:betsoff@molottery.com) or call (573) 526-7467.

## Federal Legislation Proposed To Support Problem Gambling Prevention, Awareness

Federal legislation is being proposed for a second time to help secure funding for prevention, research and treatment of problem gambling to state non-profit organizations. A House bill, which will provide more than \$71 million during a five-year period for problem gambling programs, is expected to be introduced in mid-February by Democratic Rep. Marty Meehan of Massachusetts.

This is the second time Meehan has introduced the bill, known this year as the Comprehensive Awareness of Problem Gambling Act of 2007.

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) is strongly supporting this bill and is seeking local support from each state, according to Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council.

"Members of Congress are responsive to individuals in their district and state, so this will be a real test of our ability, as the national grassroots advocates for problem gamblers and their families, to communicate a strong and positive message," Whyte said.

According to Whyte, if passed, the federal bill will provide \$14.2 million in grants per year to non-profit and state agencies for the prevention, research and treatment of problem gambling. The bill does not expand, restrict or tax state gambling operations, but will provide support at the state level to help problem gamblers and their families.

For more information about the proposed bill, visit the National Council Web site at: [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org).

## MGA Changes Leaders, Maintains Commitment To Alliance

On Jan. 1, Michael G. Winter took over as the executive director of the Missouri Gaming Association (MGA). He replaces long-time executive director Mike Ryan who retired at the end of 2006.

With Ryan's retirement, the Missouri Gaming Association offices moved to Jefferson City. The MGA will continue to participate in responsible gaming activities and the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling.

Ryan maintains his role in the program committee for the 2007 National Council Conference on Prevention, Research and Treatment of Problem Gambling. He also plans to maintain an active role in the Missouri Alliance.

If you wish to contact the Missouri Gaming Association, the new phone number in Jefferson City is (573) 634-4001 and the fax number is (573) 634-7117. The new mailing address is P.O. Box 305, Jefferson City, Mo., 65102. Winter may be reached at [mike.winter@missouricasinos.org](mailto:mike.winter@missouricasinos.org).



## Stringer Named As New Director Of ADA

Mark Stringer, former interim deputy director of the Missouri Department of Mental Health, has been named the director of the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADA).

According to the January announcement by the department's former interim director, Ron Dittmore, and incoming director Keith Schafer, Stringer will replace Michael Couty, who retired from the department on Jan. 31. Couty recently was named the new director of the juvenile court in Cole County.

Stringer has served as the interim deputy director for the department since July 2006. He is a licensed professional counselor and a nationally certified counselor with more

than 22 years of experience in the mental health and substance abuse fields. Prior to entering state service in 2001, he directed adult and adolescent addiction treatment programs, a psychiatric outpatient clinic, and an inpatient geriatric psychiatry unit.

"Mark has the skills and experience to provide outstanding leadership for the division," Dittmore said in a news release. "He has been a tremendous asset during his time as interim deputy director for the department."



Mark Stringer

## Ameristar CEO, Industry, Philanthropic Leader Dies

Ameristar Casinos Inc. chairman, chief executive officer (CEO) and majority shareholder, Craig H. Neilsen, died on Nov. 19, 2006, at his home in Las Vegas. He was 65.

Neilsen had served as the chairman and CEO of Ameristar since the company's inception in 1993. Under Neilsen's guidance, the company grew to include seven properties in Nevada, Mississippi, Iowa, Missouri and Colorado.

Neilsen led the company in its commitment to responsible gaming.

"For Mr. Neilsen, this was a natural extension of the company's total entertainment experience, encompassing high-quality products, exciting casino action, and outstanding dining, lodging and entertainment options," said Matthew Block, director of Governmental Affairs for Ameristar Casinos Inc. in Kansas City. Block also serves as the chairman of the Missouri Gaming Association's Responsible Gaming Committee.

"His vision was that in all we do, the key word would be 'entertainment,'" Block said. "Mr. Neilsen laid the foundation for Ameristar's continued commitment to responsible gaming, for guests to play casino games as the enjoyable pastime they are meant to be."

Neilsen's estate plan provides for his stock in Ameristar to be transferred to his private foundation, The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, which is primarily focused on spinal cord injury research and treatment.

## Spare Assumes New Role At Truman Medical Center

Keith Spare, chairman of the Missouri Alliance, recently was named as the program director of Truman Medical Center Lakewood Counseling Services (TMC). TMC's Lakewood Counseling Services is an outpatient behavioral health facility with staff that provides individual group and family counseling, as well as psychiatric services such as medication management, psychiatric nursing, case management, crisis stabilization and COMBAT-funded

substance abuse counseling.

Spare's interdisciplinary team consists of psychiatric, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, registered nurses and substance abuse counselors. The program is located in downtown Lee's Summit at 300 S.E. Second Street, Suite 100.



Keith Spare

## Three Key Speakers Will Be Featured At Training Institute

Lia Nower, Ken Winters and Bo Bernhard will be the featured presenters for the compulsive gambling track offered during the Missouri Department of Mental Health's annual Spring Training Institute (STI) May 16-18 at the Tan-Tar-A Resort and Conference Center in Osage Beach. The compulsive gambling track will include 8.5 hours of advanced training topics for certified compulsive gambling counselors.

Nower, Winters and Bernhard will each offer two sessions during the training institute.

Nower, J.D., Ph.D., is an associate professor and director of the Center for Gambling Studies at the Rutgers University School of Social Work. Nower will be presenting the following sessions: "Ethical Issues in the Clinical Management of Problem Gamblers" and "Treating Older Adults: Strategies for Adapting Assessment and Treatment Practices to an Underserved Population."

Winters, Ph.D., is an associate professor and director of the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research at the University of Minnesota Department of Psychiatry. Winters will be presenting the following sessions: "'Gating' Lucky: Using Instruments with Problem Gamblers for Problem Identification and Treatment Referral" and "Youth, Brain Development and Gambling Risk: Intersections on the Developmental Highway."

Finally, Bernhard, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of sociology and director of Gambling Research at the International Gaming Institute within the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Bernhard's presentation, "Pathological Gambling: From the Molecular to the Global – and Back Again" will be covered in two sessions and will offer specific insights on the biological, chemical, psychological and social aspects of problem gambling.

# 1-888-BETSOFF

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## Membership Is Key To A Strong Alliance

Keep informed about what's happening with problem gambling in Missouri and help develop Alliance programs by becoming a participating member of the Alliance.

Any individual or organization interested in promoting and furthering the Alliance's mission to educate Missouri residents on the potential characteristics and dangers of problem and compulsive gambling and promoting the availability of treatment can join the Missouri Alliance as a participating member.

Participating members are encouraged to:

- **Participate in Alliance meetings and events;**
- **Aid in the planning of awareness events; and**
- **Provide input to further expand the Alliance's programs.**

All memberships into the Alliance are free. For more information about becoming a participating member or to join, visit the Alliance's Web site at [www.888BETSOFF.org](http://www.888BETSOFF.org) or call (573) 526-4080.

## 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.