



# ***In Touch***

*An Official Publication of the Alabama Board of Massage Therapy*

Winter 2007

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Massage Therapy  
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## **Having a Well Balanced Holiday**

With the holidays approaching, the stress builds intensely. There are a few things that hinder us from having a stress free holiday. The kids are out of school, out-of-town guests are arriving, and budgets are no where in site. Holidays seem to always heighten tension with relationships, bring about financial struggle, and causes many physical demands. You are exhausted, you need sleep, and you need more hours in the day.

Ways to de-stress during the holidays include:

- \* Be realistic—We are all human , so do what you can
- \* Stick to a budget—Christmas does not mean go over your budget and spend all you have
- \* Learn to say no—You are only one person and you cannot make every one happy
- \* Plan- Plan—Plan

Massage is a great way to escape all of the chaos. As a massage therapist, I always have clients that really “need my help” around this time of the year. This is also the time of year that as massage therapists, we need to relax as well. The theme for the holiday season is giving and receiving. Have the mind set for the holidays that as you give a massage, you will be sure to receive on.

**April Henderson, *Board Member***

## **Board Members Needed**

The Board currently has two vacancies in its membership. The two consumer positions are open and we need to fill them. These two positions are for individuals not associated with the massage therapy profession but hopefully are consumers of massage therapy. Consumer members provide outside views and opinions on issues the Board handles. Members of the Board do not receive compensation but are reimbursed mileage and per diem. Please contact the Board office if you know someone that would be willing and able to serve in one of these positions. A resume must be available to submit to the Governor's Office in order for an appointment to be made.

## New Massage Licensing Examination Announced

As you may know from the many articles in our trade journals, there is now a Federation of State Massage Boards (FSMTB). This is an organization made up by the licensing Boards of member states and is the type of national structure used by most other medical and health related State Boards. The Federation consists of 22 regulatory agencies from around the country of which the Alabama Board of Massage Therapy is a current member. The original funding for the FSMTB came from a grant from the Association of Bodywork and Massage Professionals. I have been fortunate to be involved and able to observe the development of this organization. I feel the Federation will have significant influence on the improvement of state-to-state regulations and commonality of laws. I think it will also help with tracking therapists with sexual or other violations that would endanger the public.

According to FSMTB website: the mission of the Federation is to support its Member Boards in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public in a safe and effective manner. To carry the mission out, the Federation intends to execute a number of goals such as: facilitate communication among Member Boards; provide education, services and guidance; support the process of developing compatible requirements to facilitate professional mobility; ensure a valid reliable licensing examination for entry-level competence and improve the standards of education, licensure and practice through cooperation with entities that share these objectives.

Early in its inception, the Federation targeted the development of an entry-level exam as of major importance and recently announced its completion. The exam is referred to as the Massage and Bodywork Licensing Exam or MBLEx. The development of this exam required a massive undertaking and was accomplished with such psychometric accuracy

that the Association of Test Publishers selected it as a model testing program. The original survey for the job-task-analysis was sent to over 10,000 Massage Therapists, which 7,646 responded. The results showed amazing consistency among practitioners as to what should be on the exam and in what percentages (the break down is on the FSMTB web site). A group of highly skilled experts and educators in the field were trained and became the item-writers for the exam. Their dedication to the job went above and beyond the call of duty as they wrote and re-wrote each question making sure that it was referenced and cross-referenced. After much analysis and assurance to psychometric protocol the MBLEx has been deemed a highly credible and legally defensible exam.

There has been some opposition to the idea of there being another exam besides those offered by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB). It has been proposed that yet another exam would be confusing. However, the 22 voting State Boards felt they wanted an exam that they owned and had input into. Of the member states, many can already use the MBLEx by the way their statutes are written. For others, such as the case with Alabama, there will need to be changes made to the statutes. For other states, use of the exam will come by the voting approval of that Board. Ultimately, the choice of which exam to use is up to each state. For example, Arkansas has already adopted the MBLEx and requires it of all new licensees no matter what other exams they have taken.

The differences between state laws can cause many problems. The mobility of therapists is often thwarted by the conflicting licensure requirements.

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However, it is part of the FSMTB's mission to assist states in finding as much common ground as possible. It has already hosted three annual meetings that have brought together an ever growing number of states. With each meeting, the issues that face each state has become clearer. State Boards are beginning to communicate and share relevant problems. For example, at the last meeting the consensus on problems faced by most states was unlicensed therapists. Ideas were shared during a round-table discussion on how each state is dealing with the problem. One solution used by Florida and New York is to add an extra \$5.00 to each license, which is used for public service announcements about the problem. With this additional money, they buy billboard space, airtime and have even produced educational videos.

The FSMTB came on the scene with big goals and lots of support from the many stakeholders. If they continue at the pace they have shown so far, I suspect they will play an important role in the future of our profession. One last thing to note from the survey is that we as a profession like what we do. An "astonishing 99% of the respondents agreed with the following states:"

- I am happy to have entered the massage/bodywork/somatic profession.
- I am proud to be in the field of massage/bodywork/somatic therapy.
- I like being a massage/bodywork/somatic practitioner.
- I strongly identify with the massage/bodywork/somatic therapy occupation.
- I am enthusiastic about the massage/bodywork/somatic therapy occupation.

It's nice that our field brings not only pleasure to our clients but to ourselves as well. To learn more about the FSMTB I encourage you to go to their web

site at [www.fsmtb.org](http://www.fsmtb.org). If you have any questions about the FSMTB please contact me at the Board Office or via email at [aaskew@redmountaininstitute.com](mailto:aaskew@redmountaininstitute.com).

### **Arnold Askew, Board Member**



### **Legislative Changes**

The Board will be introducing legislation in the upcoming 2008 Regular Legislative Session. The Board has introduced this legislation in the past and will be working hard in the upcoming session to get it passed. This legislation consists of various "housekeeping" changes that is restricting the Board to carry out it's responsibilities in various areas. Most of these changes have been suggested by the Examiners of Public Accounts. This legislation will be available on the web site around the middle of January. The Board hopes to be successful this year in getting these changes made to the current law. The next Board meeting will be Friday, January 11, 2008 and this legislation will be discussed that day. Please do not hesitate to contact me or a Board member should you have any questions.

## ***Executive Director Notes***

Another year has come and gone and 2007 has ended with progress made towards the ultimate goal of regulating the massage therapy profession. I would like to thank each Board member that is currently serving and volunteering their valuable time to the service of this Board. As you have already been made aware in this newsletter, the Board currently has two vacant consumer positions. Without the participation of these two members, this multiplies the work the remaining five members must provide. The Board not only meets quarterly but holds special meetings in between in Birmingham in order to approve applications and issue licenses. So, the Board actually meets 8 times per year in order to handle the business of the Board and ensure students that have met all the requirements for licensure can obtain their license and get right to work. The Board has successfully collected \$22,500 in Administrative Fines during 2007 and a detail listing of these actions will be posted on the web site in January 2008. The Board's Investigator continues to make random inspections throughout the state of massage establishments to ensure proper licenses have been obtained and to ensure the cleanliness and safety for consumers. He does an excellent job and I wish to thank Mr. James for his great service to this Board as well. Please do not hesitate to contact myself, my staff or any member of the Board should you ever need to discuss any matters pertaining to the Board. I look forward to my continuation of working with you in the next year to come. I wish everyone a Happy and Prosperous New Year!



Keith E. Warren, *Executive Director*

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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