



**SANDPLAY THERAPISTS OF AMERICA  
THE ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING  
BECOMES THE 1<sup>st</sup> STA ASSEMBLY**

Cosponsored by MSTG and STA  
Chanhassen, Minnesota  
October 21-23, 2011

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*Menlo Park, California*

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*"The STA Annual  
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The First STA  
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Society for  
Sandplay Therapy.*

*Photos:  
Chanhassen, Minnesota*

The First STA Assembly in Chanhassen, Minnesota, October 21-23, expanded on the traditional annual members' meeting to provide more training opportunities, including consultation and case presentations, in addition to the required members' meeting. The intent was to provide affordable accessible services and opportunities for certification for associates and candidate members. We hoped that this would be an opportunity for community building, as well as a time to gather and have a good time together.

During the weekend, there were eleven presentations by new certified members and candidate members. Presenters were encouraged to bring cases they were working on for their applications for membership, and all presentations were sponsored by teaching members of STA, who were available for consultation with candidate members beforehand. The level of work that went into these presentations was outstanding, and they represented a diverse picture of the ways sandplay therapy can be offered throughout the country with diverse populations. In addition, there were opportunities for group consultation, individual consultation, candidate interviews. MSTG's Ellen Saul and Stephen Olmsted put on an all-day class on the fundamentals of sandplay therapy, and Barbara Weller gave an encouraging keynote address about making sandplay more affordable and accessible. Sunday morning's interesting and interactive panel discussion covered the challenges ahead for education in sandplay therapy, from



development of new media, to growing regional groups, to increasing the diversity among sandplay therapists and brainstorming ways to make sandplay available in diverse settings and communities.

One of the outstanding moments for me came on Saturday evening, when we began the members' meeting. Before we sat down for dinner, Ellen Saul, representing the Minnesota Sandplay Therapy Group (MSTG) and the Temenos Committee, invited us to stand in a circle around the room-- this was a big circle, as there were 80 people attending! Ellen asked us to look around the room and make eye contact with one another. Standing in a circle, after two days of mingling over presentations and mealtimes and sharing bits of our lives with one another, it felt as though we were all held and holding together this deep, rich and sacred work that we do in the sand. I felt a recognition and a mutual understanding in that moment, as it seemed to capture the purpose and the potential in our gathering.



Tessamarie Capitolo shared the following reflection with me via email which sums it up well: "The Assembly...was a wonderful opportunity in a much smaller setting than the National Conference to truly experience the 'new blood' of the presenters entering our midst. Their work was impressive-- full of both grounded training and love for their



patients and the work of sandplay. It was a great pleasure to have a sense of the work being passed down to the next generations of therapists [offering an opportunity to invite a guest] for this conference was a truly creative idea giving accessibility to many people who could not otherwise attend. It was also wonderful in that small setting to have the space and time to gather in small social groups and just 'hang out'--very valuable time spent."

This was the first STA Assembly, and the STA Board and Regional Council plan to continue the tradition every other spring, so the next one will be in 2013, location to be determined.

