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www.opeg.org

SPRING EXCHANGE TO FOCUS ON MIXED METHODS

On May 14th, 2010, OPEG will be holding its annual Spring Exchange at the Quest Conference Center in Columbus, Ohio. The event will provide interdisciplinary practitioners with the opportunity to hear expertise on using Mixed Methods in evaluation.

These sorts of evaluations rely upon several paradigms, methodologies, and data analytic techniques. Attendees will have a unique opportunity to hear Dr. Donna M. Mertens, a recognized expert in this area and keynote for the conference (see page 4 for professional bio information).

Several presentations will cover the use of mixed methods in areas like health and education. These projects may be organic and responsive to stakeholder needs,

making designs and analysis increasingly complex.

The Call for Proposals is now available on OPEG's website. Due Friday, March 22, 2010, there are two proposal tracks. Track 1 is related to the conference theme (Mixed Methods in Evaluation), and Track 2 (Evaluation Practice) invites evaluators to share aspects of their work.

Necessary forms and more information can be found on the OPEG website, www.opeg.org

OPEG MEMBER REFLECTIONS— 2009 Fall Conference

By Deb Crawford, OPEG Member and Former Board Member

The 2009 OPEG Fall conference in November, *Evaluators' Toolkit*, had a lot to offer evaluators at different stages of their careers. I attended Jim Altschuld's session on **Prioritizing Needs**. I just wish it could have been longer!

I'm always looking for new ideas to prioritize. According to business performance literature, breakthrough change happens through focusing on a few strategic priorities instead of being all things to all people. This happens so often in human services. Jim emphasized that folks conducting needs assessment often confuse "needs" for "solutions" and combine

the two when prioritizing. For example, hunger is a need and a food pantry is a possible solution. His experience urges us not to collect any new data unless you absolutely have to – as there are plenty of existing data out there. Jim is a co-author for the 2010 Needs Assessment Kit (Sage Publications) *Note: The Spring 2010 conference will be raffling a book from the Needs Assessment Kit!*

I also attended Debbie Zorn's presentation on **Case Studies in Evaluation**. Debbie discussed:

- 1) illustration – intended to be descriptive about a program or policy,

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FALL CONFERENCE (CONT'D)

2) exploration – descriptive but aimed at generating hypotheses for later investigation and 3) critical instance – examining a single instance of unique interest to serve as a critical test of an assertion about a program, policy or strategy. It was very informative and made me think about the use of case studies in a whole new way for my evaluation work.

Deborah Crawford is a long time OPEG member, former OPEG Board Member and has a consulting practice based in Columbus focused on assessment, evaluation, grant writing and planning and supporting her clients in getting the results they want. She can be reached at crawford@columbus.rr.com

Jan Upton and Diane Wright gave a great overview of **Consulting Issues**. Jan and Diane shared some of the key components for both external and internal evaluation planning and some of the unique aspects of each. Diane suggested trying to integrate internal evaluation planning into the organization's overall strategic planning process. And Jan discussed "scope creep", a common problem for external consultants that may be minimized if the evaluation plan and budget are clear and used to facilitate communication with the client, especially around changes in tasks, needs and resources.

As I often do when attending an OPEG event, I came away with several new contacts, new tool ideas and new avenues for learning. The theme of *Evaluators' Toolkit* was so apropos. Other sessions included basic stats, evaluators and planned change, freeware for evaluators and several others. Thank you to the OPEG Board, conference planners and all presenters for the diversity of options and new learning opportunities.

Looking forward to the spring OPEG event – hope to see you all there!

MEMBERSHIP DUES— RENEW ON THE OPEG WEBSITE!

Please remember to keep your OPEG membership dues current. Although we have maintained our 1980 bargain rate—\$30 for professionals and \$20 for students—these fees are critical to our ability to bring in recognized experts.

See the OPEG website, www.peg.org, to join or renew your membership (Membership page) online using the new PayPal and credit card features!

In case you haven't heard the news....OPEG welcomes members from outside OHIO too!!

We have membership from Southern states such as Kentucky, and conference attendees from our neighboring states! There are many events which may be of interest to YOUR COLLEAGUES, so be sure to let them know about OPEG events!

Plan to attend the Annual Conference of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) in *San Antonio, TX* **Wednesday, November 10th through Saturday, November 13th, 2010**

AEA's annual meeting is expected to bring together nearly 3,000 evaluation practitioners and academics. This is an opportunity to gather with colleagues to discuss evaluation trends in the field.

The conference is broken down into Topical Strands that examine the field from various methodologies and issues of interest. AEA provides opportunities to meet evaluation practitioners in other states.

OPEG is an AEA state affiliate
See AEA's website, <http://www.eval.org/>, for more information

OPEG MEMBER PROFILE- DAVID EDELBLUTE

David Edelblute is the Court Administrator for the Probate-Juvenile Division of the Licking County Common Pleas Court. In his position, David is responsible for developing and implementing programs primarily related to juvenile justice and family intervention, as well as providing leadership in fiscal, personnel, and public relations operations for the division.

David uses the training he received through his Master's in Human Development and Family Science at The Ohio State University to "maximize our effectiveness, our ability to meet our mission and goals."

Like many OPEG members, he is not a full-time evaluator but he uses its tools to manage and analyze data, to assist with grant writing, and assist other community stakeholders that have similar objectives. "As a juvenile court we have a rich database. A comprehensive understanding



"With dwindling funds, (evaluation) assists us in knowing what do we keep, what are gaps. For example, we do around 2000 drug screens each year. I was able to determine that 15% of our kids (test positive) for marijuana. I could also see where cocaine and methamphetamine peaked over the past five years. Now we're seeing significant measures of prescription drugs. So looking at those trends, I knew where I needed to focus our resources for substance abuse treatment."

of evaluation allows me to track the right data. It also allows me to synthesize data analysis into policy," he said.

As a member of OPEG for four years, David said that he enjoys the networking that OPEG conferences provide along with a broader understanding of the evaluation field in Ohio. When not working, he finds time for skiing, fly fishing, bow hunting, and other outdoor activities.

SAVE THE DATE!!

OPEG will be holding the Fall Workshop on **October 8, 2010** at the Quest Center in Columbus, OH. Look for announcements and check the OPEG website, www.opez.org, for updates.

OPEG BOARD MEMBER TO HOLD HLM WORKSHOP IN CONNECTICUT

OPEG Board Member Ann O'Connell of The Ohio State University will be teaching two Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) workshops this June at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT. **If you attended her OPEG SUMMER WORKSHOP last August**, these extended workshops build on that material.

Each HLM workshop covers organizational and longitudinal (growth curve) data using multilevel modeling. Participants are not required to have prior experience with multilevel modeling, but familiarity with multiple regression as well as SPSS (or SAS) is expected.

We will be using the software HLMv6. Workshop format includes lectures, hands-on computer demonstrations and analyses, and individualized consultations. If you are interested in attending the workshop, please check out: <http://davidakenny.net/datic/datic.hlm.htm>

**MORE ON DR. DONNA
MERTENS...OUR KEYNOTE
FOR THE 2010 SPRING
EXCHANGE**

The keynote speaker of the OPEG Spring Exchange will be Donna M. Mertens, PhD, of Gallaudet University. She will help to frame the mixed methods conference theme and address several aspects of using this approach to conduct evaluations. You could win one of her books at our raffle!

Dr. Mertens brings extensive knowledge and experience as the co-editor of the *Journal of Mixed Methods*. She is also the author of several publications related to educational evaluations with oppressed or marginalized groups and individuals with disabilities. She is a long-time member of OPEG's national affiliate, AEA (American Evaluation Association), and is a former AEA President (1998).

The American Evaluation Association honored Donna M. Mertens with its 2009 Paul F. Lazarsfeld Theory Award. The work and influence of Mertens, a Washington, DC-based educator and author, have been instrumental to the field and community. See Dr. Mertens' website, <http://edf.gallaudet.edu/x3771.xml>, to read more about her contributions to the evaluation field.

AWARD NOMINATIONS

OPEG is currently seeking nominations for its 2010 awards, which will be presented at the upcoming Spring Exchange. OPEG gives out the **Roberta O'Keefe Recognition Award** to active OPEG members for serving and promoting OPEG in an exceptional manner. The **Evaluation Recognition Award** recognizes an individual and/or special body of evaluation work. If you wish to nominate someone for one of the two awards, send the Award Nomination Form (available from the OPEG website), to *Rob Fischer*, fischer@case.edu. Nominations are due by April 9, 2010.

See additional criteria for each award:
<http://www.opeg.org/>

**VOLUNTEER AS AN OPEG
BOARD MEMBER!**

OPEG has 5 **BOARD POSITION** openings. To run for OPEG Treasurer, Secretary, or one of the three At-Large openings, please review the Board Nomination Form on the OPEG website.

****Submit the form to *Rob Fischer*,
fischer@case.edu, by Friday, April 9, 2010****

OPEG is completely managed by volunteers. Serving on the board is a great way to make a difference for the evaluation community in Ohio. Board members plan events and create resources in accord with interests from our OPEG members. We invite you to take advantage of professional networking opportunities on the Board.

Community Research Partners has an upcoming event, *Data Driven: Strategically Using Data to Navigate Challenging Times*, on Thursday, May 13, 2010 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

As with the OPEG Spring Conference, this event is at the Quest Business Center in Columbus. Evaluators have a unique 2-day learning and networking opportunity at the same great location—*Data Driven* followed by OPEG's Spring Exchange!

See CRPs website to register:

<http://communityresearchpartners.org>

**We'd love to hear your ideas for OPEG
Newsletter content. Contact Julianne
Manchester, OPEG Board Member and News-
letter Chair, manchesj@columbus.rr.com.**