

## Working Together for Music Therapy: An Interview with Jennifer Geiger

*Sandra L. Curtis, PhD, MT-BC, MTA, Vice-President, American Music Therapy Association*

This interview with **Jennifer Geiger, MA, MT-BC** is the second in a series designed to showcase the contributions of some of the many people who are working behind the scenes and in front of the scenes to support music therapy and to support the American Music Therapy Association in its work to support the music therapy profession. It continues to be an honor to spend some time with them as they share their thoughts on what AMTA means to them. Jennifer is a recipient of the Betty Isern Howery Award, which is the highest honor given to WRAMTA members, and the WRAMTA Service Award.

In the interview which follows, Jennifer, a self-employed music therapist and owner of Geiger Consulting Music Therapy Services in Livermore, California, speaks from her experience as a new professional entering into the field and starting her relationship with the American Music Therapy Association from the get-go in 1993. In reading Jennifer's reflections, in combination with those of **Clifford Madsen** in his earlier interview, you may find your thoughts turning, as mine did, to a reflection on your own life's journey in music therapy wherever it has taken you.

Curtis: "You have been a supporter of the AMTA. Could you tell me a little bit about what the AMTA means to you?"

Geiger: "My support of AMTA began with becoming a member in 1993, while I was a still a student. It was a struggle financially to maintain my membership at times throughout the years. But in the field of music therapy, I often felt like I was alone in my community. Being a member of AMTA allowed me to be a part of a community of other music therapists. Sometimes we were like-minded, sometimes we were different but we supported each other in this profession of music therapy. I think what AMTA means to me is support of me as a professional and as a person, as I struggled to be this person called a music therapist."



*Jennifer Geiger, MA, MT-BC*

Curtis: "What kind of ways have you been supporting AMTA yourself? What got you started and why do you continue?"

Geiger: "The easiest and most interesting way for me to support AMTA has been through service. It started when I helped re-create the student organization for Western Region, of NAMT at the time, and went forward from there. Service has been important to me and I've always felt honored to be a part of that in whatever capacity available, whether presenting at conferences or serving on

various committees and task forces, national or regional boards, whatever job was needed at the time. Monetarily, I wasn't able to do a lot of that, maybe \$20 here or there. Though one year, I was asked to co-present an institute at National conference and was pleased to discover that I would be receiving an honorarium. As my

goal of business ownership, in its 2000 opening, was to pay my own way to conferences, I donated that amount back to AMTA. I even suggested that others be given the opportunity to give back if their conference costs were already covered. I remember receiving a thank you note from **Andi Farbman** and being very surprised! I thought what I was doing was no big deal—it just made sense to me to give back to an association that has given so much to me, especially when I had finally achieved my business goal! Since then, AMTA has been on my annual list of organizations to whom I give. I do annual gifting every December to non-profits that mean something to me. It's become a healthy habit. I believe in thanking organizations which have given me so much opportunity and also promoting such organizations so that they can do more to help others."

Curtis: "Why do you think it is important for others to support AMTA?"

Geiger: "It's easier for me to think of why I give, than why others should give, because I don't tend to tell other people what to

do with their money. I've been taught that finances are a personal and private matter. I also know that some people are not members of AMTA because they don't see the value in it. I think a lot of people feel that they pay their membership dues and that ought to be enough. I have yet to come up with a compelling argument why people need to go above and beyond their membership dues. I only know how I feel."

Curtis: "Why do you go above and beyond?"

Geiger: "I go above and beyond my annual dues because I feel that I'm getting value for my membership. I feel that the money I pay only gets me what I receive in terms of publications and being a part of the association. I feel that going above and beyond my dues allows me to give back and to promote furthering the profession of music therapy. I think my dues

are just the basics, they allow me to be a part of AMTA. I think donating above and beyond allows me to promote, support and encourage the association to do more."

Curtis: "Do you have any other thoughts you'd like to share with others?"

Geiger: "When an organization has been meaningful to me and provided me with support and encouragement, I like to use the financial means I'm able to, to give it back. And to say "Thank you."

Curtis: "Nicely put."

In reflecting on Jennifer's words, I am struck by the importance of community and how each of us in our own individual worlds is able to connect through AMTA in a very unique and critical way. We advocate for music therapy in our daily lives, but together within the AMTA we accomplish so much more—we are so much more. Ultimately, it reminds me of the words of Winston Churchill, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." ❖



*Geiger Consulting Music Therapy Services*