

MINNESOTA CONFERENCE
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
NOVEMBER 3-4



NORTHSTAR ACTIVELY PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH

The Minnesota Conference on Problem Gambling will take place Nov. 3-4 at the Doubletree Hilton in Bloomington. The theme for this year's conference is "Addressing Problem Gambling Through Community Connections." The two-day event will bring together local and national presenters, build on what we know and introduce new concepts and ideas.

The two days will feature three tracks of presentations: one will focus on topics of interest to various counseling professionals, another will feature topics on prevention, and a third will address the issue of recovery for gamblers and families.

The conference will provide CEUs for all the behavioral health and addiction certifications. The full program and online registration will be available at NorthstarProblemGambling.org/conference2016 in July.

There's a good chance you saw billboards, heard radio spots or even saw a television news story about gambling addiction in March. National Problem Gambling Awareness Month (NPGAM) takes place every year during March and Northstar was again an active participant in the effort to raise awareness about gambling addiction.

This year's outreach effort was Northstar's most ambitious to date. The message that hope is available for problem gamblers was everywhere – from television and radio to print ads and social media.

Here are some highlights of this year's outreach efforts:

- Northstar's executive director, Cathie Perrault, appeared locally for extended interviews in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area on KSTP, WCCO and KMSP. The segments were also included on station websites, allowing for broader distribution. She was also interviewed for syndicated radio distribution by the Minnesota News Network.
- A radio commercial was produced that can be heard on Northstar's website at NorthstarProblemGambling.org (then click on News and Publications). The

commercial aired in 28 markets around the state.

- The Minnesota Lottery donated access to digital billboard advertising throughout the Twin Cities for two weeks, helping to expand the campaign's overall reach.
- The Minnesota Indian Gaming Association (MIGA) sponsored radio commercials.
- Exposure to the problem gambling messages in March contributed to a 42 percent increase in the number of calls to the state helpline.
- Nearly 35,000 coffee sleeves were distributed at 15 coffee shops in the Duluth and Minneapolis/St. Paul areas.

In addition to Northstar's efforts in NPGAM, the state of Minnesota also ran a campaign based on the theme of "Have the Conversation." This caused an increased in visits to GetGamblingHelp.com. The combined efforts of the state Problem Gambling Program, Northstar, Project Turnabout, MIGA and the Minnesota Lottery reflect the mission of the Northstar Alliance's multiple constituents working together for a common goal.

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Cathie Perrault
Executive Director
NPGA

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

We thank all our members, donors, volunteers and affiliates who have contributed to our mission.

Become a member today. Visit www.NorthstarProblemGambling.org to join us.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Uncertainty Remains with Daily Fantasy Sports

Last fall's issue of Northern Light focused primarily on the topic of daily fantasy sports (DFS). The onslaught of advertising during the fall football season shined a light on the online gaming industry that set off a slew of debates and legal hearings to determine whether or not DFS is just another form of sports gambling. To this day, there remains no definitive answer that applies across the country.

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) in Washington released a resolution that took no position on whether or not DFS constitutes gambling. However, the resolution pointed out the strong similarities between playing DFS and other forms of online gambling. It recommended that consumer protection language — including mention of time and money limits and impact to one's financial health — be included on all DFS websites and advertising, at a minimum.

Here in Minnesota, a bill was introduced this legislative session that would strengthen the legality of DFS in Minnesota. Northstar worked with lobbyists for Fan Duel and Draft Kings to successfully ensure that the same consumer protection language developed at the national level was inserted into the Minnesota bill. The bill went through the legislature but ultimately did not get passed by the time the session ended on May 23.

This issue will undoubtedly continue to be debated at the national and state level. Both DraftKings and FanDuel have been forced to cease operations for paid games in 12 states after daily fantasy was deemed illegal under state gambling laws. These states include Alabama, Arizona, New York, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, Washington, Texas and Idaho. Stay tuned for further developments.

In the meantime, here's hoping you enjoy the wonderful season of summer in Minnesota.

Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to help those affected by problem gambling in Minnesota. We do this by promoting awareness and understanding of the issue via our website, newsletter, community education programs, sponsorship of the Minnesota State Conference on Problem Gambling, and training of professionals in preventing and treating problem gambling.

Northern Light is funded by a grant from the state of Minnesota. Designer: ESD Graphics. Writer: Bill Stein

PROVIDER

Profile

MARY DAHNERT
MA, LMFT



Mary Dahnert is a marriage and family therapist with Resilience Counseling in Chaska. She's a licensed professional school counselor (grades K-12) in Minnesota, and has experience in special education (grades 1-12) and vocational education (grades 7-12). Northern Light asked Mary about her experience and her approach to treating problem gamblers.

How did you decide to become involved in problem gambling counseling?

I was an educator in public schools and provided vocational counseling to children in grades seven through twelve. I realized that some older adolescents were using casinos as a recreational venue and that it was leading to problems. I researched more about it and realized that gambling addiction affected lifestyle and vocational goals.

At the same time that I became interested in learning more about gambling addiction back in 2000, the state was helping to train mental health professionals to work with problem gamblers, so it was good timing. I was a licensed teacher and worked in special education, gravitating toward youth and students at risk for dropping out. There was a lot of family involvement – that's really the bridge to what I do now.

Do you have favored techniques or therapeutic approaches for problem gamblers?

A thorough assessment and appropriate placement is one of the strongest techniques for getting people where they need to be. Family involvement also plays an important role in effectiveness. It gives the gambler a chance to reconnect with family and it helps them to understand the disease of addiction and that it's not as simple as, "Just stop taking the money."

From the very beginning, there has to be an emphasis on an aftercare plan – a plan for staying clean after treatment. As with other addictions, there can be slips and relapses. It's also important to lock down the money so there's no opportunity to gamble and the brain can have a chance to heal.

What has surprised you most about working with problem gamblers?

I've been surprised at the importance of helping families learn how to support their loved one while maintaining necessary boundaries and attending to their own personal well-being. I've also been heartened to see how willing people are to help, whether it's the banker at the local bank or family members. There is a great amount of community goodwill to help the individual.

What do you see as the most important factor in getting people into gambling treatment?

When I see people, they've usually hit the skids and realize they can't do it alone. What's needed to get people into treatment earlier is to know that it's OK to ask for help. People don't have to wait until they've gotten into severe problems. It really goes to education, and on that note I think the work that Russell Herder has done for creating awareness about problem gambling is phenomenal. What's most important is to communicate the idea that there is a solution, a way to get one's life back.

What motivates you?

I really like to help people understand the strengths they already have. Even when people are in the midst of problems and challenges, it's important that they see their strengths – it's a matter of bringing that out.

It's very satisfying to see the amazing changes that occur in an individual over the course of treatment, including physiology. There is so much distorted thinking that comes with addiction. Eventually, there's a moment where their thinking gets very clear and they tell me, "Now it makes sense!" This is very exciting work. It's always wonderful when people stay the course and get their lives back.



Lori's STORY



I learned a lot of tools to deal with my anxiety and depression. I have gained a greater understanding of my gambling addiction.



For me the appeal of gambling was disassociating myself from what was going on in my life. It was an escape.

From what I understand, many people become addicted to gambling after winning a huge jackpot. But that was not the case with me. Sure, I won small jackpots –several \$500 ones and one \$1200 one – but for me the appeal of gambling was disassociating myself from what was going on in my life. It was an escape.

I also wasn't one who was smitten with gambling after the first time I gambled. I first visited a casino when I was 18. I went occasionally on date nights with my husband and a few other times with coworkers. It wasn't until my late 20s when I started gambling with some regularity, and it began to snowball a few years after

that. I think it had a lot to do with the stresses in my life, the environment in which I was raised (I suffered childhood traumas and was adopted), and my husband being bipolar.

By 2011, my life had fallen completely apart. My husband started to confront me about my gambling, which eventually led to our separation. I lost the townhouse I'd shared with my family to foreclosure. I put gambling ahead of my home, my husband, my kids and even food for myself.

I tried various ways to stop gambling. In 2013, I went to Gamblers Anonymous for five months. But that was mainly to get people off my back, though I did see positive changes during those months.



Are problem gamblers usually addicted to other things too?

It is generally accepted that people with one addiction are more at risk of developing another. Some problem gamblers also find they have a problem with alcohol or drugs. This does not, however, mean that if you have a gambling problem you are guaranteed to become addicted to other things. Some problem gamblers never experience any other addiction because no other substance or activity gives them the same feeling as the gambling does. There also appears to be evidence of family patterns regarding dependency, as many problem gamblers report one or both parents had a drinking and or gambling problem.



SUCCESS STORIES WANTED

Personal stories of recovery from gambling addiction are very inspiring, particularly to those who feel helpless in their efforts to overcome the disorder. These "success stories" are among the most important things that we can communicate, and share them regularly in *Northern Light*.

If you or someone you know is in recovery from gambling addiction and would like to share your story anonymously, please contact Bill at steinbill@gmail.com.



I learned that I was not alone in suffering from a gambling addiction, and my peers and I showed invaluable support to one another.

When my work schedule changed, however, I made up excuses as to why I couldn't attend. I also felt I no longer needed to attend since I was getting some financial stability back. And last summer, when I was working at a golf course, I vowed to stop gambling when my job ended for the season, thinking that without money I couldn't gamble. But I still managed to gamble as I found people to lend me money, while an ex-boyfriend fed and housed me.

Last Christmas, I was given \$100 from my in-laws to spend on gifts for my children. But I spent it on gambling. I remember the kids' father placing my name on the gifts to the children. I felt so ashamed and depressed that he once again had to bail me out. During the Christmas party, I didn't talk to anyone and basically got drunk and sat in a corner. I realized that my gambling had gotten completely out of control.

I was feeling severely depressed and suicidal. I called my ex-husband and the kids' grandmother to apologize for my gambling. I wanted to make amends to them, and decided I was better off dead than alive. It's painful to think about it, but I was going to write a letter to my children, explaining why I wouldn't be in their lives.

I prayed to God to give me a reason to live and to seek help. As I was driving my son to his grandmother's house one day, an eagle swooped very low toward the front of my car, eventually landing on a branch. I asked my son if he had ever seen something like that before; he said he had not. I took that as a sign from God because that was the day I was going to take my life.

I researched gambling treatment in Minnesota and came upon the Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance website. I read about some of the success stories of people who had gone on to live productive lives after having a gambling addiction. I saw the 800 helpline number and called. I explained that I had no insurance and no money. I was referred to a counselor in Fridley.

I started the 30-day inpatient gambling program at Project Turnabout in Granite Falls on January 25. When I was admitted, I noticed a picture of an eagle flying. It helped me to know I was in the right place.

In those 30 days, I learned a lot of tools to deal with my anxiety and depression. I have gained a greater understanding of my gambling addiction. I learned that I was not alone in suffering from a gambling addiction, and my peers and I showed invaluable support to one another.

To this day, my recovery is going very well. I regularly attend GA meetings, go to Alumni Growth Group at Granite Falls, and live at Crossroads, a residence that provides a supportive environment for those of us who have completed addiction treatment. I recently started a new job, and my future has never looked better.

Northstar Actively Participates in National Problem Gambling Awareness Month

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The effects of National Problem Gambling Awareness Month were felt throughout Minnesota. Clockwise from left: Northstar Executive Director Cathie Perrault appeared on KSTP in Minneapolis; several of the print and television media in which messages about problem gambling were aired; problem gambling spots aired in various locations throughout the state; the billboard message challenged gamblers to think about the cost of their gambling.

RADIO		
Market	Stations	Spots
MSP-STP	12	220
Brainerd	2	112
Duluth	1	48
St. Cloud	2	66
Mankato	2	220
Rochester	5	246
MNN	1	198
Outstate	19	868
Total	44	1978

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1-800-333-HOPE
 Before you lose what
 really matters



New Videos Highlight

RECOVERY FROM GAMBLING ADDICTION

The state of Minnesota, working with advertising and public relations firm Russell-Herder, has created a series of videos designed to share the positive side of recovery from gambling addiction. The videos appear in various places, including at gas station pumps and on phones. The videos can also be viewed online at www.getgamblinghelp.com/stories-of-hope.

The project was dependent on finding recovering gamblers who were willing to talk about their experiences. "It's very helpful to have people who are willing to step up and tell their story about gambling addiction," says Brian Herder, executive creative director at Russell-Herder. "It takes courage for them to do this outside of a safe environment like a Gambler's Anonymous meeting and in front of lights, camera and a full crew."

Seth Bohlken, art director at Russell Herder, played a key role in helping participants feel

comfortable so their stories were shared in a relaxed, conversational manner. The final videos reflect an introspection that's real, relatable and impactful.

"When you think about it, it's really an incredibly generous gift that these people have given," says Brian. "The potential impact that they can have on others is far-reaching and personal."



Watch Livie's Story



Hear how people have started their own conversations.



Watch Keith and Karen's Story

National Conference on Gambling – JULY 15-16



30th National Conference on Problem Gambling

The annual conference of the National Council on Problem Gambling takes place in Tarrytown, New York on July 15-16. The conference includes presentations and programs that provide the latest information on problem gambling prevention, education, treatment, responsible gaming, research and recovery. Attendees will hear from more than 100 engaging, informative and thought-provoking presenters. The conference provides cutting-edge information and extensive networking opportunities to help all stakeholders work toward solutions to

minimize harm. Complete information about the conference can be found at ncpgambling.org.

The two-day pre-conference workshops (July 13-14) provide a great opportunity for hands-on training in a small group environment. Preconference workshop topics include:

- Introductions to gambling and problem gambling
- Evidenced-based therapy
- Peer support
- Cultural considerations in therapy
- Self-care for therapists
- Responsible gaming in New York
- Certification issues
- Problem gambling helpline symposium

The two-day main conference will feature more than 55 high-quality presentations

on:

- Problem gambling prevention, treatment, research and recovery
- Community and culture
- Responsible gaming, regulatory issues, legislation and policy
- Public awareness and outreach

Northstar has some scholarship funds available for Minnesota professionals. If you wish to apply for a scholarship, please email cp@northstarproblemgambling.org, explaining why you would like to attend and how you might apply this learning experience to help problem gamblers in Minnesota. Preference will be given to applicants who have never attended the national conference or have not received a previous scholarship from NPGA. The deadline for applicants is June 21.



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New Office Location

The Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance office has moved. The new location is 1935 West County Road B-2, Suite 420, Roseville, MN 55113. Our phone numbers remain the same.



scan to visit
www.NorthstarProblemGambling.org

Northern Light

NORTHSTAR PROBLEM GAMBLING ALLIANCE

Spring 2016 • Volume Nineteen

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Changing Problem Gambling Behavior through:
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • RESEARCH • ADVOCACY