

2014 PHYSICIAN OF YEAR AWARD

THANK YOU SPEECH BY LOIS KROPLICK, DO, DFAPA

I would like to thank The New York State Osteopathic Medical Society for choosing me to receive this special honor of Physician of the Year.

I am thrilled and touched to be joined tonight by so many family members, friends and colleagues.

Being involved in community groups and helping others have always been passions of mine. As a psychiatrist, my mission has been twofold: to help people change their individual lives and to encourage them to work with others to change their community. Working with family and patient groups in the community has helped me become a better psychiatrist and has enriched my life as a person.

Eighteen years ago, I founded the Mental Health Coalition of Rockland County. What started out as small group of individuals getting together to educate the public about mental illness, turned out to be an extraordinary organization.

The Coalition is a diverse group of mental health professionals, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, family members and patients whose mission is to destigmatize mental illness and promote mental health.

Our message is that mental illness is just like physical illness and that treatment is available. With treatment, there is always hope for recovery. We convey this message through educational programs in high schools, colleges, an annual public forum and walks for parity and for mental wellness. In the past, we have given presentations to various community groups in Rockland County such as the clergy, elementary schools, the police and rotary clubs. We have been honored with several national awards and grants from the American Psychiatric Society and NAMI for our outstanding community work.

I am honored to have in the audience tonight many of the Coalition members who have joined me in doing endless hours of volunteer work to educate the public about mental illness. What we have put together is quite special.

Whenever I attend psychiatric meetings and I describe our mental health coalition, I get reactions of amazement from my colleagues around the country. They are so surprised that there is a community where such diverse groups actually collaborate together to educate the public about mental illness.

I am so proud of the extraordinary group of people who have made these projects successful. Thank you to all my fellow Coalition members for all your years of hard work. You share this award with me!

The Osteopathic philosophy is about treating the whole person. As a DO and a psychiatrist, I embrace this idea. I not only treat individual patients, but by encouraging professionals, family members and patients to work together we are actually treating the whole community. I believe that together we can achieve what we could not do as individuals.

This is demonstrated for the past 18 years at the Coalitions' annual Public Forums. The feeling of excitement is evident that night as the audience is packed with college

students, mental health professionals, family members and patients. The feeling of unity and hope within the community resonates as courageous patients, and family members share their heart wrenching stories of how mental illness has affected them and how treatment has given them hope and strength to change their lives.

Another project that I am so proud of is my work with other professionals during disasters. During 911, I was President of West Hudson Psychiatric Society, our local psychiatric district branch. I organized an emergency meeting of our district branch and arranged for our psychiatrists to give free psychiatric care to all those affected by the tragedy.

In addition, I spent many 12-hour shifts per week for months on Pier 94 in New York City providing emergency care to grieving family members, relief workers and anyone displaced by the attack.

With other professionals, we set up a Family Assistance Center in Rockland County, NY, whose mission was to give information and support to the victims of this tragedy. Again,

this showed how a community worked together to help those affected by disasters.

This speech wouldn't be complete without thanking the people who made tonight possible.

First, special thanks to my husband, Dr. Bruce Levitt, who is also an osteopathic physician, for his unwavering support through out my career. I will always be so grateful to NYCOM. This was the place Bruce and I met. Our first conversations occurred in Osteopathic Principles Lab. We have the honor of being the first couple to get married that met at NYCOM. The truth is without Bruce's unconditional support, I could never have achieved this award. Bruce, there aren't enough words to express how much I appreciate you and love you.

I also want to express a special thank you to my two sons, Evan and Josh Levitt, who continue to give Bruce and I great pride in their accomplishments and are both leaders in their careers. Most important, Bruce and I are so proud of the hard working, smart, caring people they have become today.

I especially want to thank my sister and brother for being here tonight. Tonight's award for the longest commute goes to my sister, Marilyn, who traveled from California for this event. It seems like only yesterday that my sister, who and I were at the Apollo diner in East Meadow, NY when we both came to the decision that we were going to become psychiatrists. It was my sisters' vision of becoming a physician that led me to pursue this path.

I am so proud of my brother, Howard, who is a successful businessman and has given back so much to his community. He is the rock of our family and gives unconditional support to all of us.

I want to express a special thank you and recognition to my entire family, all my friends, and colleagues who have traveled many hours from so many different states to attend this event. I recognize the tremendous effort you made to be here and it is very much appreciated. Your presence here tonight means the world to me!

On this special night, it is impossible not to think about my parents, who are no longer with us. I know they are

looking down on me and are smiling with pride.

Finally, I want to thank my fellow osteopathic physicians and NYCOM (New York College of Osteopathic Medicine). It is a source of great pride to see how far osteopathic medicine has come in New York State.

So as I conclude, I want to thank you for this incredible award that I will cherish the rest of my life.

**LOIS KROPLICK, DO, DFAPA
DISTINGUISHED FELLOW OF
THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION**