

NARSOL's 2022 conference is a wrap

written by Sandy | June 20, 2022



June 17, 18, and 19, at the Sheraton Hotel in Raleigh, North Carolina, close to 200 people gathered, with close to 100 more online, for NARSOL's 14th annual conference. It was, by all accounts, a huge success.

The plenary speakers, from first to last, were excellent.

Chrysanthi Leon told us what she learned from research with people who work with reentry. Stress and burn-out are common, but many who continue in the work consider it to be a religious or moral calling. Dr. Leon said that she learned lessons also: "Cherish the minimal successes in individuals," and "Give people space to be themselves."

Kristen Russell also shared her research findings from her study focused on the consequences of the registry to the partners of registered persons. She found, not surprisingly, high levels of fear, stress, and isolation. Disclosure helps some, as does support and acceptance, with the implication for

advocates being to find ways, not just to provide those things, but to make them a priority.

Glenn Martin drew on something very different than academic research for his presentation. Glenn spent his youthful years in scrapes with the law, culminating in a six-year term as a young adult in New York's prison system. He learned to survive, and he learned this about his fellow prisoners: "Whatever they did to get them there wasn't as important as who they are." He credits his years of early struggles with giving him what he needed to be successful, saying, "Human beings become better in the valley, not on the mountain."

Ira Ellman posited, through a discussion about child pornography sentencing, that animus plays a large part in the harsh federal guidelines for these crimes and actually is a basis for the registry and all of its appendages. He took us through a brief history of how we have come to where we are and an analysis of how this sort of animus operates.

Paul Dubbeling asked the audience what we want our government to do. After agreeing on some basic premises, he led us to what we already know: the sexual offender registry is not effective and the use of it is not good government. He formulated some methodology for talking with policy makers, insisting that they define and explain their objectives and demonstrate effectiveness of proposed laws and policies.

Paul Shannon, in his awards banquet address, brought us through the beginning of our organization to where we are today. While many improvements have been made, Paul reminded us that our nation still experiences harm to all due to our attitudes of hatred toward those with sexual crime convictions. He asked the important question, "Is this really the way we want to live?" and asked the conference attendees specifically, "Who will carry the torch of common sense, fairness, and forgiveness?"

The awards presented at the banquet were all well-deserved.

The Braveheart Award went to **Dr. Chrysanthi Leon**. Excellence in Leadership was awarded to NARSOL board member **Philip Kaso**, while Excellence in Service went to Vivante board member **Jon Cordeiro**. The Hawthorne Award was given to attorney **Eric Tennen**. North Carolina RSOL board member **Mardy Cutchin** was awarded Advocate of the Year, and the Paul E. Shannon Lifetime Achievement Award went to former NARSOL board member, current Vivante board member, essential Conference Committee member **Tamara Jackson**.

As has been our custom for several years, NARSOL awarded a number of means-tested scholarships to individuals who otherwise would be unable to attend, and for the first time this year, we offered academic scholarships to instructors and students working in criminal justice or social service fields.

NARSOL Conference 2022 is over, and it gets five thumbs-up. Plans are already well underway for NARSOL Conference 2023, our fifteenth, in Houston.

We hope to see all of you there.