



## Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress on Adult Guardianship

The 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress on Adult Guardianship occurred May 28-30, 2014 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott just outside Washington, DC. USA. This Congress was hosted by the National Guardianship Network (NGN), an alliance of organizations who have an interest in guardianship matters. Nine of the NGN partner organizations provided grants to underwrite the starting costs of the Congress. As was the case for the two previous World Congresses, the event was affiliated with the International Guardianship Network, an informal but active network of individuals around the world who are committed to guardianship issues.

The National Guardianship Association (NGA) assumed responsibility for facilitating the planning and implementation of the event. The planning of the program and other logistical decision-making was the responsibility of a 14-person Planning Committee comprised of: representatives of the NGN organizational partners who provided sponsorship funds, a representative of the Borchard Foundation which provided grant support as well as other individuals from academia, governmental agencies and non-profit organizations who are recognized guardianship authorities.

In addition, an International Advisory Committee of 14 individuals from eleven countries with expertise in guardianship was assembled to provide input on program direction.

A Call for Presentations was communicated via email and on the Congress website ([www.worldcongressguardianship.org](http://www.worldcongressguardianship.org)) to a wide international audience to solicit proposals from individuals who would address topics the Planning Committee suggested around the general theme of **“Promising Practices to Ensure Excellence in Guardianship Around the World.”** The four areas were: Focus on the Individual; Focus on Guardians; Focus on the Courts; and Focus on Decision-Making Options and Standards.

The Planning Committee’s goal was to enable participants to acquire information and ideas they could implement in their own jurisdictions or practices.

The proposals reviewed by the Planning Committee confirmed over 120 submissions that were relevant and important to the Congress mission. To allow as much speaker participation as possible, the committee grouped speakers into panels around a similar theme. To the extent possible, the Planning Committee endeavored to place speakers from multiple countries on each panel to offer comparative perspectives. The selected panelists were then encouraged to collaborate on a common title, time allocation, and subject matter to be presented by each speaker for their session.

The Planning Committee finalized the program, inviting distinguished speakers such as The Hon. Kathy Greenlee, Assistant Secretary for Aging in the US Department of Health and Human Services, and Sharon Lewis, Principal Deputy Administrator, Administration for Community Living, to address the audience in general sessions. Other plenary sessions included a panel on Asian guardianship reform with representation from the People’s Republic of China, Japan, and Hong Kong, as well as a self-advocate for the rights of persons with intellectual disability. The final program, for three very full days, offered four general sessions, 36 breakout sessions, a facilitated roundtable discussion session, and a final plenary session organized to generate feedback from participants on their experience at the Congress.

A total of 120 presenters representing 21 countries across six continents contributed their time and knowledge to the global sharing experience.

Final attendance at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress totaled 373 participants, including 268 from the USA and 105 from 24 other countries. In addition, ten law students and other volunteers from the area served as moderators for the breakout sessions, allowing them to benefit from the program in exchange for their services.

To capture the wealth of information from the presentations, presenters were asked to submit materials a few weeks prior to the Congress. These were organized on a USB drive provided to all attendees as they arrived. Additionally, those materials, and any that were provided late or updated, were placed on the Congress website. All attendees were notified a week ahead of the event of their ability to access and download any of the presentations materials in case they wanted to print copies for use at the event.

Major funding was provided by grants from the Borchard Foundation's Center for Law and Aging and from the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC) Foundation. Both were vital in supporting the costs of participation by individuals from countries outside the USA, especially those who had not been able to participate in previous Congresses. With that financial support, the Planning Committee was able to provide reimbursement of travel and lodging expenses, plus a complimentary registration, to 18 first-time participating individuals, including representatives from countries that have not participated in prior Congresses – Spain, Turkey, Argentina, and Nigeria. No speakers were offered any honoraria, and all those not supported by the grant paid full registration fees to participate.

The grant from the Borchard Foundation included support to capture the information from the presenters in a "compendium" that would have lasting value. As the planning continued, the compendium concept grew into the development of a unique, web-based "International Resource Library on Adult Guardianship." This website will provide a collection of materials relating to adult guardianship that could be shared worldwide – scholarly papers, articles, brochures, training manuals, policy and procedure manuals, case studies, etc. Beginning with the materials from the presenters, the website will continue to offer a place for the gathering of guardianship knowledge from around the world. Solicitation of materials continues through all available communication channels. The Library will be accessible from the ongoing Congress website: [www.worldcongressguardianship.org](http://www.worldcongressguardianship.org)

In addition to the nine NGN organizational sponsors, the Congress was supported by seven other companies and organizations which provided additional funding to support the Congress' expenses. Eight other companies and organizations participated as exhibitors for a fee. NGN sponsors were provided complimentary exhibit space.

The *Journal of International Aging, Law & Policy*, published by Stetson University College of Law, solicited papers from all presenters to be included in their Fall 2014 Edition. This publishing opportunity has been made available to all presenters and to attendees to encourage a wide selection of paper submissions.

Following the conclusion of the Congress, all attendees were asked to provide feedback using a web-based survey model. The comments during the event, and in personal communications, emphasized the tremendous value of interacting and networking with those with similar interests and experiences from other countries. They spoke with almost overwhelming passion about how much the Congress broadened their cultural understanding, the motivation they experienced of problem-solving in new ways, the initiation of ideas for alternate solutions to situational challenges – all of this occurring in three days among an assembly of almost 400 people.

Each of the sessions provided an opportunity for participants to provide feedback through evaluation forms returned at the conclusion of the Congress. These evaluations were required for verification of attendance certificates for Americans who requested them, and to make Continuing Education Credits in guardianship and Continuing Legal Education credits available to those who wanted this opportunity to fulfill credentialing requirements. These individual session evaluations also supported the attendees' appreciation for the variety of sessions and the knowledge and information shared by the presenters.

The 4<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Adult Guardianship has been confirmed for 2016 in Berlin, Germany. As more details about dates and location are available, the information will be posted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress website, which also contains a link to the International Resource Library.