AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grants for Medical Students, supported by AACAP’s Life Members Fund

The AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grants for Medical Students provides the opportunity for medical students to receive a formal overview of child and adolescent psychiatry, establish mentor relationships with child and adolescent psychiatrists, and experience the AACAP Annual Meeting. Established in 2011 and supported by AACAP’s Life Members Fund, recipients also engage with AACAP Life Members by attending the Life Members Clinical Perspectives and the Life Members Reception and Dinner. Recipients receive up to $1,000 of financial assistance to attend AACAP’s Annual Meeting.

Dhatri Abeyaratne, BA—Yale University
Safiya J. Aijazi, BA, MPH—Loyola University
Mary L. Angly, BS, BSA—Baylor College of Medicine
Chelsea E. Li, BA—Stanford University
Emily Loe, BSN—University of Florida
Kalika Mahato, BS—University of Nebraska Medical Center
Mollie C. Marr, PhD—Oregon Health & Sciences University
Nealie Ngo, MPH—University of Toledo
Joachner Philippe, BS—New York University
Miles Reyes, BS—University of California, Riverside
Alexandra Tamura, BA, BS—University of South Carolina Columbia
Lauren Tronick, BA—University of California San Diego
Sammi Wong, BS—New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine
Allison Zuckerberg, BA—Hackensack Meridian Health
Dear AACAP Life Members Committee,

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to attend the 2022 AACAP Annual Meeting through the Life Members Mentorship Grants for Medical Students. This award offered me the chance to gain in-depth exposure in child and adolescent psychiatry, and will certainly shape the remainder of my training in medicine. Attending the Annual Meeting allowed me to connect with and learn from child and adolescent psychiatrists at all career stages. In particular, hearing from the Life Members about their lifelong accomplishments and unyielding passion for serving children and families was very inspiring. I also appreciated the mentorship I received from trainees and early career psychiatrists, who shared valuable insight into the many pathways and opportunities within child and adolescent psychiatry.

As a current second-year medical student at Yale School of Medicine, I am very excited to bring what I learned from the Annual Meeting to my leadership roles in the Child Psychiatry Interest Group and the Addiction Medicine Collaborative, creating more opportunities to support fellow medical students who are passionate about child and adolescent psychiatry. Having a glimpse into the culture, personality, and ethic of this specialty has confirmed my desire to pursue a career in this field, and I am so grateful to have had this opportunity to build connections within the child and adolescent psychiatry community.

Sincerely,
Dhatri Abeyaratne

M.D. Candidate Class of 2025
Yale School of Medicine
Dear AACAP Life Members Committee,

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for selecting me for the 2022 Life Member Mentorship Grant for Medical Students. I had an unforgettable time in Toronto and learned so much about the field through the several sessions I attended and monitored. I am currently applying to residency programs and heard wonderful advice from so many Life Members throughout the conference, especially at the Meet Life Member Mentors and Life Members Reception and Dinner events. I received great advice about residency programs with strong Child and Adolescent Psychiatry training programs and am so pleased to say that I have interviewed at many of the programs that were recommended to me. In my third year of medical school, I felt overwhelmed with the choice of where my career path would take me. Through the AACAP conference with your support, I am excited to pursue CAP training after meeting such a strong support network of professionals that I truly felt was like family to me. I am so incredibly grateful for the mentorship that I have been seeking and that was lacking at my own institution which, like so many hospitals, faces a child psychiatrist shortage. I am looking forward to attending future AACAP conferences and networking with additional trainees and mentors.

Thank you!

Safiya Aijazi, MS4

Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine
11/02/2022

AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Cynthia Pfeffer, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Life Members Committee:

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for being awarded the Life Members Mentorship Grant for Medical Students. This year was my first time attending AACAP. I am a fourth-year medical student at Baylor College of Medicine applying to psychiatry programs this year. I was very impressed by the size and scope of AACAP. It was wonderful to meet psychiatrists and mental health professionals from across the country (and world!) and from different generations.

Through the programming components of the award, the committee has done a wonderful job of providing avenues for mentorship and for students to meet and interact with more experienced members of the field. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to learn from Life Members and to glean a lot of helpful advice and insight for how to embark on the next stage of my career. Throughout the conference, it was also exciting to learn about new developments in the field from the presenters. It was heartening to learn more about different avenues for practicing child and adolescent psychiatry.

To all of the committee members and Life Members who made this award possible, thank you again for your generosity. I am honored to have been selected and the programming components of the award were a wonderful experience. The opportunity to attend AACAP and to meet and hear from members of the field made me very excited for my future career and for the future of child and adolescent psychiatry.

Sincerely,

Mary Louisa Angly
AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Cynthia Pfeffer, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear AACAP Life Members Committee,

I am a current second-year medical student at Stanford University School of Medicine pursuing an MD/PhD. Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend the 2022 AACAP/CACAP Annual Meeting in Toronto, Canada, as well as for the programming during the conference that allowed me to connect with like-minded peers and amazing mentors. While I may still only be a second-year medical student, this experience has reinforced my desire to enter the field of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, to one day be able to conduct translational research and deliver holistic care to my patients.

Everyone I met was passionate about their work and had nothing but good things to say about their experiences in the training pathway. I was inspired by the stories and talks I heard, and I can tell that psychiatry is entering an exciting era. It was my honor to get to know Dr. Marilyn B. Benoit through her talk and at the Life Members Reception, and I know AACAP is in good hands with people like her at the helm. As a teaching assistant for my school’s psychiatry seminar series, I will be sure to share what I have learned at the meeting with my classmates.

I am excited to get more involved with AACAP and to stay in touch with those I have met at the conference. I have also been referred to several other child and adolescent psychiatrists and plan to reach out to them for their wisdom and guidance. I hope to take advantage of the opportunities offered by AACAP, such as joining a committee and working to publish some of my research in JAACAP Connect. I am looking forward to seeing the Life Members soon in various capacities and attending the meeting next year in New York! Once again, I truly thank the Life Members for sponsoring medical students like me to help us discover the opportunities out there to build our dream careers.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Li
Dr. Benoit and Dr. Pfeffer,

(As well as the Life Member Committee)

Thank you so much for your encouragement and generosity in selecting me as a 2022 AACAP MGMS recipient. I was so excited to be selected, and going to AACAP proved to be an incredible opportunity. I found new friends, mentors, and role models as well as (a few) new career interests. I am looking forward to the day when I can help support young women like myself as they begin their CAP careers.

Sincerely,

Emily Lee
11/28/22

Dear Dr. Benoit, Dr. Pfeffer, and Life Members,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to you for choosing me to be a recipient for the 2022 Life Members Mentorship Grant. This scholarship not only benefited me financially, but also gave me the wonderful opportunity to meet CAP faculty, trainees, and medical students from across the US. Without your assistance, I would not have been able to afford attending this conference. I additionally had the opportunity to present my research in person for the first time in my medical school career. I had an amazing time. As a recipient of this incredible award, I can only hope to continue my education, continuing to explore the wonderful field of child and adolescent psychiatry. As I begin my career in psychiatry, I am not only motivated to make myself, my mentors, and you proud.

Sincerely,
Kalika Mahato

Kalika Mahato she/her
University of Nebraska Medical Center
College of Medicine | Class of 2023
402-319-9444
Dear Drs. Benoit and Pfeffer and Life Members Committee,

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for your support, both to attend the conference and throughout the week. I had an incredible week and that was entirely due to your support.

I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Benoit at the Child Maltreatment and Violence Committee meeting on Tuesday. I was honored to meet someone who has had such an incredible and lasting positive impact on the lives of children exposed to violence and maltreatment. Dr. Benoit, you supported my ideas in the meeting and encouraged me to speak up. You said “hello” to me for the rest of the week, which helped me to feel like a part of the AACAP community. I felt so deeply welcomed and supported by your kindness and greetings.

Dr. Pfeffer, I joined your table at the Meet Life Members at the Annual Meeting event. I plan to be a physician-scientist, so hearing about your path and your research experiences was inspiring. From the moment I walked into the Meet Life Members event, I was welcomed. I appreciated the wisdom and insight from everyone I met.

During the research mingle, I connected with researchers from all over the world (Singapore, Canada, and others). Everyone welcomed and included me in the conversation. I was so inspired by the conversation that I skipped out of the room before catching myself and walking more professionally. I felt joy connecting with researchers who share my passion for the science of children’s mental health.

The Life Members Reception and Dinner was a highlight of the week. We had wonderful conversations at our table about everything from theatre to Freud. I connected with one of the Life Members in particular and will be reaching out to visit when I am next in New York City. I also appreciated learning more about the work of the committee and the incredible members. After the dinner, several Life Members joined me at the PrideCAPA party. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I appreciated seeing the support from across AACAP for our community.

I attended phenomenal sessions throughout the week on trauma-informed care, gender-affirming care, the boarding crisis, and policy and advocacy. I benefited from the mentorship provided in the sessions dedicated to medical students and made connections with future colleagues. I chaired my first session (something I never imagined doing as a medical student)! I met with faculty and residents at residency programs I hope to attend and learned about their journeys and dreams.

Attending the conference was an incredible opportunity and I strived to make the most of every moment. After two years of virtual sessions, it was special to see everyone in person. I could not have attended without the support of the Life Members grant. Your gift made my incredible
week possible. I hope that my joy, enthusiasm, and gratitude are evident in this letter. My heart was filled at AACAP. I am so excited to come back. I had a wonderful week and am so grateful for the Life Members’ support.

Thank you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

With deepest gratitude,

Mollie Marr
Dear Drs. Benoit and Pfeffer,

I hope this letter finds you well! My name is Nealie Ngo, and I am currently a fourth-year medical student at the University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences. I wanted to write this letter to say thank you and express my deep gratitude for receiving the AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grants for Medical Students (MGMS). Receiving this award was honestly the only reason I was able to come to Toronto for AACAP this year due to the financial support it provides. I am so happy and grateful that I was able to attend this year’s conference, as it helped cement my desire to go into child and adolescent psychiatry. I met such amazing mentors as well as trainees/students while at the conference, and I made some wonderful memories during AACAP. None of this would have been possible without AACAP and the Grant, so I really hope that your organization understands how much it means for me to both have received the Grant and be able to go to the annual meeting this year. I absolutely LOVED my experience at AACAP this year, and I fully intend on applying for the resident scholarship next year to attend the conference in New York. The structure of the mentorship allowed me to meet other medical students as well as wonderful faculty whom I’ve made strong connections with. AACAP is such a wonderful and warm organization, and I am so happy and grateful to have made memories with you all in Toronto. I hope to see you all in NYC next year.

Thank you again so much—for the Grant, for the memories, and for the opportunities!

Sincerely,

Nealie Ngo
Dear AACAP Life Members Committee:

It has been a few weeks now since I was able to go to AACAP Annual Meeting. It was truly such an awe-inspiring and uplifting experience to be able to meet all the amazing mentors during that week. To be able to speak with such kind, caring, and supportive individuals at distinct stages of their careers—from medical students to Life Members has reaffirmed my desire to be a part of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry community long-term. Moreover, to see the breadth of interests represented at the Annual meeting was truly remarkable. I wish I had the opportunity to see more of all the important work that people are doing across the country and world, but there was only so much that I could do with my time there.

Thank you to the AACAP Life Members Committee for selecting me to receive the grant and all the Life Members I met during the week through the various events supported by the committee. Each and every person I spoke to provided me with such priceless wisdom. Thank you to Dr. Eric Williams and Dr. Marilyn B. Benoit, my mentors as part of the two-day mentorship program, who provided during the meeting. As a Black man of Caribbean descent, it meant a lot for me to see myself represented in diverse ways by both of them and to know that AACAP values diversity, equity, and inclusion so deeply to have such diverse arrays of mentors for students, residents, and trainees. I know this is only the first of many AACAP meetings I will attend and look forward to more opportunities to be part of such an inspirational community of physicians.

Sincerely,

Joachner “Josh” Philippe
November 1st, 2022

To: AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Cynthia Pfeffer, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Hello Dr. Benoit, Dr. Pfeffer, and all the AACAP Life Members,

My name is Miles Reyes, third year medical student at UC Riverside School of Medicine, and I wanted to write you all my sincerest thank you and gratitude for choosing me to be one of the Life Members Mentorship Grant for Medical Students recipients. This award made it possible for me to attend the AACAP Annual Meeting in Toronto for the very first time and I can’t explain just how eye opening and impactful this experience was.

I was strongly considering Child and Adolescent Psychiatry as a profession for most of medical school and was between CAP and Pediatrics for a while. It is needless to say, that because of this experience and being able to gain mentorship and a stronger understanding of the opportunities as a child and adolescent psychiatrist that I’m now 100% all in for this field. Because of this grant I was able present my research, meet mentors, and explore the exciting new dimensions of this specialty.

I can’t say thank you enough for seeing my potential as a future child and adolescent psychiatrist! It was such a treat to meet several of you at the events throughout the conference and also at the Meet the Life Members Dinner. I will definitely be returning to the annual meeting as often as I can to continue to be a part of this amazing community and grow my professional network. Looking forward to applying next year to be a psychiatry resident 😊

Thank you all so much again!

Miles P. Reyes, MS3
November 8, 2022

Dear Life Members Committee,

My name is Alexandra Tamura, and I am a fourth-year medical student at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia. I wanted to say thank you for the opportunity to attend the 2022 AACAP Annual Meeting in Toronto! Given the expenses of medical school and applying for residency this year, your generosity enabled me to attend this conference. I would have never had this experience without your help.

During the Annual Meeting, I made numerous memories that I will cherish for a long time. I met friends interested in child and adolescent psychiatry that I hope to carry with me throughout my career. Through the poster session and other educational lectures, I learned more about public health and child and adolescent psychiatry, a specific part of the field I hope to pursue in my future. As a medical student about to transition into residency, I greatly benefitted from the application and interview preparation offered.

While I immensely enjoyed all these aspects of the conference, the highlight for me was the chance to meet and learn from experts in the field, most notably the Life Mentors. Meeting the Life Mentors was one of my favorite sessions because I was able to hear wisdom from so many experienced child and adolescent psychiatrists. I truly appreciate all that you have done to support the field and AACAP throughout the years.

Thank you so much again.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Tamura
University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia
alexandratamura@gmail.com
Dear Life Members Mentorship Grant Program,

I’m writing to thank you, as a medical student recipient of the AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grant, for making it possible for me to attend this year’s Annual Meeting in Toronto. It was my first time having the chance to present a poster and help facilitate a workshop, but it is only because of the Life Members Mentorship Grant that I was able to travel to Toronto and take advantage of these opportunities! I had such a fantastic time meeting fellow medical students, residents, early career psychiatrists, and life members. In addition to the Life Members Committee events, I met some wonderful mentors during the Life Members Reception dinner whom I’ve already been lucky enough to reach out to for guidance since the meeting; I’m grateful to have sat with such kind, generous Life Members willing to share their wisdom and insight. It’s this kind of thoughtful mentorship and support that makes the AACAP community so special, and I look forward to continuing to participate next year as I transition from medical student to resident! Again, I cannot thank you enough for granting me this opportunity and enabling me to participate in such an excellent, invigorating, inclusive, and educational experience.

With gratitude,
Lauren Tronick
MS4, UC San Diego School of Medicine
AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Cynthia Pfeffer, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

To AACAP Life Members Committee:

I am writing to thank you for sponsoring this year’s program and extending the award to me at this year’s annual meeting. With the MGMS grant, I was able to attend multiple ticketed events and gain better insight about the child and adolescent psychiatry field. It was an honor to meet distinguished Life Members who pioneered many advancements in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry at the AACAP conference. From interacting with them, I learned about the true beginnings of child and adolescent psychiatry, obstacles they encountered, and unattainable wisdom for how I should pave my own career path. In particular, I enjoyed the session where Dr. Benoit shared her own story of how one person healed her father’s childhood trauma and promoted a continuous loving family of multiple generations. Not only did I gain a broader picture of what lies ahead of my future, but I also gained exposure to the unique aspects of child and adolescent psychiatry such as the collaboration with pediatricians. From the workshops and clinical perspectives events, I was able to learn from leading figures and share my own knowledge and questions. Thus, I am in full support of the continuation of the Life Members Mentorship Grants to support the next generation of leaders.

I believe this conference provided me with numerous opportunities to network with others, grow as a person, and indulge myself in the miraculous journey toward becoming a child and adolescent psychiatrist. The immeasurable advice I received was rewarding and I am grateful to the individuals who offered the opportunity to mentor me. Overall, the conference met all my initial expectations and I hope to continue attending the future meetings to contribute to mental health education as a resident, fellow, and onwards.

Sincerely yours,

Sammi Wong
December 5, 2022

To the AACAP Life Members Committee,

Coming into 2022, I was decided on psychiatry but not so much on fellowships and futures. However, I knew that subspecialties within psychiatry hosted annual meetings. Why not apply for a grant to attend AACAP's?

I was so happy when I learned that I had received the grant for medical students. When I arrived in Toronto, CA, I was welcomed by vibes that were both warm and familial. Some colleagues I'd known, yet met many more I did not. I loved hearing them share their journeys to CAP with me over Tim Horton's.
Being able to celebrate the progress of the field amongst national CAP leaders was something that no virtual event could ever provide. For this reason, attending the Life Members dinner was probably my favorite event.

Besides these memories, I valued learning more about the field and opportunities within CAP that I now want to take: participate in child advocacy and shape larger, national policies regarding child mental health.

While I interview for psychiatry residencies, I am now prioritizing programs that will set me up for a CAP fellowship and my career goals. I also want programs that will finance me attending (and hopefully presenting at) future conferences!
As 2022 comes to a close, I reflect back on the opportunity that the Life Members gave me with much gratitude and humility. Personally and professionally, I know that I am for the better because of those who have come before me and afforded me this opportunity. I look forward to next year's AACAP meeting which will be hosted in NYC, across the river from where I grew up in NJ.

Sincerely,
Allison Zuckerberg

Allison Zuckerberg
Pronouns: she/her/hers (Why include pronouns?)
allison.zuckerberg@hmhn.org
MS4 | Class of 2019 | Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine