

The Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Society of Greater Washington (CAPSGW), our regional organization of the American Academy for Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists (AACAP), provides annual scholarships to support a resident or fellow in attending the Annual Meeting. Through this investment, CAPSGW not only gives back to the next generation of child and adolescent psychiatrists, but also fosters their professional growth and meaningful engagement within both AACAP and our regional organization. This year, I was honored to be selected as a scholarship recipient and to attend the Annual Meeting in Chicago—my first time at the conference.

The meeting offered far more than high-yield lectures and a bustling exhibition hall. It was a rare and meaningful opportunity for connection. I reunited with residency colleagues who are now practicing across the country, traveled alongside fellows and attendings from my current institution, and reconnected with mentors who have shaped my professional path. Despite the scale of the conference, what struck me most was the serendipity—unexpected hallway conversations, joyful reunions, and the ease of reconnecting. The sense of camaraderie and approachability within AACAP was palpable.

A wide variety of lectures piqued my clinical interests and allowed me to explore emerging work in special populations within child and adolescent psychiatry, ranging from maternal cannabis exposure to suicide risk assessment in youth with intellectual disability. The robust exhibition hall further provided an opportunity to explore career pathways, learn about institutional offerings, and engage colleagues in thoughtful dialogue about the evolving job market for child psychiatrists.

At the evening receptions, I was particularly moved by the enthusiasm of new members and trainees exploring fellowship opportunities at institutions where I have trained. It was a privilege to share my experiences and, in turn, support their professional curiosity. I also had the opportunity to attend the Kentucky reception, where I connected with former colleagues of Marian Swope—a trailblazer in our field who passed away last year, with whom I had the privilege of working with in a legislative advocacy capacity early in my career.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to attend the Annual Meeting and for the organizational home I have found within AACAP as a psychiatrist. Equally, my involvement with CAPSGW has provided enduring opportunities for mentorship and meaningful connection with colleagues at every stage of their careers in this deeply rewarding field. I look forward to deepening my involvement with CAPSGW and contributing to its mission throughout my career.