

It was a beautiful spring weekend in Chicago with the sun shining most of the time, a balmy 65 degrees and blossoms flowering on all the trees, welcoming 65 conference participants from all over the U.S.A. and other countries. There were participants from 21 different states, one from Canada, and one who came all the way from Saudi Arabia! Out of the 65 Participants, 27 were already AAS members with the other 38 becoming new members. In addition to the 65 students there were 13 faculty members representing the AAS for a total of 78 participants. The National University of Health Sciences was a fantastic venue for our event providing perfectly set up lecture halls including large screens, audio, and ample seating with desks for our students, all within close range of great hotels offering reasonable rates with restaurants and shops close by. The local staff from the university were amazingly friendly and helpful in making sure that everything was perfect in suiting our needs, even offering their personal phone numbers to ensure that the weekend progressed without a hitch. They made themselves available to answer any questions or solve any problems that may arise even on their days off from work and checked on us during that time. The local people of Chicago were on every level, over the top friendly and genuine in helping us in every aspect of the conference, setting the tone for a very successful event.

For the very first time we managed our own catering offering lunch for 2 days and snacks for all 3 days which included a beautiful spread of fresh food carefully selected by our own team. A highlight of the conference was our 25 year anniversary celebration dinner held on Friday night at the Greek Islands Restaurant in Lombard where more than 50 participants gathered to celebrate and honor the history and work of Charlie Mraz. Keynote speaker Brad Weeks talked about the history of AAS and the life of Charlie Mraz while everyone enjoyed a casual family style dinner. Everyone had a lot of fun, the food was amazing, probably some of the best Greek food any of us has ever had. The best part of the evening was that many of us had a chance to get to know each other, creating a bond and an energy that defined the entire weekend.

In reviewing the evaluations from the participants, it was evident that the conference was a great success. We brought in some very interesting and diverse guest speakers including Dr. Brad Weeks, MD, Dr. Frank Yurasek, PhD, L.Ac, Sheila Kingsbury, ND, RH all from the U.S.A. and also Antonio Couto from Lisbon, Portugal and Hossein Yeganehrad from Canada. They all did a fabulous job bringing in new topics, adding a lot of excitement and taking everyone's experience to the next level. A very emotional and moving highlight was Dr. Frank Yurasek's panel of patients who volunteered their time to courageously attend, arriving in wheelchairs to share with us how they benefited from Apitherapy and Dr. Yurasek's dedication to their progress and well being. Antonio Couto was amazing in the practical demo, easily relating and bridging the lay person with the health care professionals. His experience was evident and his talent with micro stinging was unrivaled. As always we had some of the AAS's very own extraordinary speakers including Frederique Keller, L.Ac., Dr. Andrew Kochan, MD, Vetaly Stashenko, Ph.D, Dr. Chris Kleronomos DAOM, L.Ac., Glenn Perry, Kate McWiggins, and Kristine Jacobson who marked her debut as a speaker delivering an energetic, dynamic presentation on General Apitherapy Overview later followed by a well received practical "Live Sting" demo. Thank you all for your continued support and dedication in volunteering to educate others, you are all AMAZING!

There were several factors setting this year's conference apart from others, perhaps the very reasons for such a positive outcome. We attribute the overall success to the facility where we were able to easily be together the entire weekend without peripheral distractions. Food was available on site, the dinner celebration was affordable and most of the attendees were able to participate. There was ample time for people to talk and find common ground like never before, and we had an astounding group of people who were riveted with what we had to offer and the passion in which we delivered it. For the very first time participants were gifted an 8G flash drive engraved with the AAS logo and all of the conference material will be available for them to download, hence eliminating the bulky notebooks of the past. The conference was professionally video recorded, we are looking forward to seeing the finished product and thinking of ways that it can be shared with others via the website. This was a very exciting conference on many levels as we enthusiastically bring the AAS into the future. At present we have 4 participants who will be applying to become board members with several others who expressed a serious interest in becoming board members in the near future.

Finally, a very special thank you to all of you who believed in us, together we created a fine tribute to Charlie Mraz, if it were not for him none of us would be doing this. We shared a lot of ideas, made friends for life, and we look forward to a great future at AAS so please stay connected, give us your feedback, and we hope to see you at our next conference. Again, THANK YOU ALL for being there!