

## PSYCHOLOGY ALUMNA IS PRESIDENT OF THE ILLINOIS PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION *By Beth Rom-Rymer*

*Beginning in July, U of I psychology alumna Beth Rom-Rymer (PhD '86) began serving as president of the Illinois Psychological Association (IPA) for 2011-2012. IPA is the largest professional association of psychologists in Illinois and it is affiliated with the 130,000 member American Psychological Association. Below, Rom-Rymer shares with us some of the challenges facing IPA and practitioners.*

I welcome diversity on many levels: diversity of professional identity, venues, goals, opinion, age, ethnic background, cultural practice, gender, geographical home within our state, political preferences, sexual orientation and identity, and racial identity.

We are a profession that is at a crossroads. We have skills and expertise across many dimensions: research, teaching; psychotherapy; individual, group, organizational, corporate, and governmental consultation; public policy development and consultation; psychodiagnostics; forensic evaluation, testimony, and consultation; neuropsychological evaluation and consultation; medical psychological evaluation and consultation; and promotion of a biopsychosocial understanding of our world.

Yet, we face many challenges to the practice of our professional skills including the need to implement reimbursement parity and raise our reimbursement rates to ensure the financial viability of our profession, the ongoing statewide and national economic crisis, competition from related healthcare professions, and competition from peers within our profession. In addition, there are population groups within our state who have very little or no access to skilled mental health services. Our challenge is to find ways to integrate our past with our future; to determine how to most effectively use our skills to meet

the needs in our communities; and to advocate for and expand the recognition of our professional expertise.

I believe that we can meet these challenges by cultivating our diversity to weave a rich fabric of professional identity and growth. We can also raise the level of community awareness of who we are and what we do through our very successful state-wide workshops and conventions; by continuing to create and solidify alliances with our psychologist peers (including our peers in the regional psychological associations) and with our peers from the related healthcare professions (social work, primary care providers, psychiatrists, etc.); continuing our Association's excellent work with APA to ensure reimbursement parity; enhancing and updating our communication tools (our website; text messaging; twitter, podcasts, webinars); reaching out to our community mental health centers and other community and forensic centers and state agencies that work with underserved populations; increasing our visibility in our communities by working with governmental entities to tackle social issues (school violence, child abuse, hate crimes, elder abuse, spousal abuse, among others); and pairing "senior" IPA members with "junior" IPA members for all kinds of exchanges of training.

As IPA President-elect, I am eager to work with all of our psychologists in taking care of "our own" as well as taking

care of those who traditionally have not had the voices to ask for help. I have tremendous respect for who we are, and for what we have been, and I have great confidence that we will continue to grow and prosper as psychologists in our community. Do join us by signing up for Section and Committee membership as we take this fascinating journey together.



Beth Rom-Rymer received her undergraduate degree in psychology from Princeton University in 1973, as a member of the first class of women at Princeton. She received her MA (1980) and PhD (1986) in clinical psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, with an emphasis on community organization and gerontology. She currently has a national consulting practice in forensics, working as a forensic expert witness in civil litigation in which there are allegations of sexual abuse and physical abuse, sexual and physical harassment, and other forms of violence: in nursing homes, in the context of child custody litigation, in the workplace, and on pleasure cruises. She helped to create the field of forensic geriatrics and has published articles in this area. Rom-Rymer is a guest lecturer at Northwestern University Medical Center in the Department of Psychiatry. She is currently working nationally to create training and practice opportunities for prescribing psychologists in public service venues such as state hospital systems, federal and state prisons, military bases, and Indian reservations.