

The APPPAH Newsletter

News From the First Frontier: Conception To Birth

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Laura Huxley Receives Vervy Award

The Thomas R. Vervy Award for Outstanding Contributions in Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health was established in 1999, on the retirement of Dr. Vervy, after eight years of service as President of the Association. The Award was created by the Directors to honor both the Founder of the Association, and a distinguished recipient.



Laura Huxley and Barbara Findeisen

With two doctorates, one in medicine and one in psychology, Thomas was well-equipped to understand the field of prenatal and perinatal psychology that was emerging around him. His comprehensive vision was displayed in his path-breaking book, *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child* (1981) and in the organization of the first International Congress on Pre- and Perinatal Psychology held in his city, Toronto, in July 1983. The rest of the story is history.

The 6th recipient of the Vervy Prize is Laura Archera Huxley. Born in Turin, Italy (the romantic accent is with her still), Laura quickly grew into a virtuoso violinist, and made her debut as a teenager in Carnegie Hall. Later, her interests and skills broadened to include counseling, prenatal psychology and writing. She developed deep concerns about children and their earliest relationship experiences. Laura wrote, "Health and disease begin in the womb; love and hatred begin in the womb; war and peace begin in the womb." She saw that sensitive parenting held the key to health and happiness.

In 1977 Ms. Huxley established the non-profit Foundation, "Children: Our Ultimate Investment". Thereafter holding two significant conferences, and

developing several imaginative and practical projects, including "Teens & Toddlers", for which we honor her tonight. Originally called "Prelude to Conception", the new program brought together 9- to 15-year-old boys and girls and matched them up with toddlers in nursery

schools. Suddenly, the youth were having a vivid *initiation* into parenting, and started to rethink the whole notion of sexuality and pregnancy. The initial pilot program blossomed into an experiential curriculum taught in high schools, first in Grass Valley, then South Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, California. "Teens and Toddlers" spread to Vermont (USA), Germany, and finally to Greenwich, Gloucester, and Southwark in England. The teen-pregnancy rate was drastically reduced in each community in which the program was introduced.

At the 11th International APPPAH Congress in San Francisco (USA), where Ms. Huxley received the award, she showed a ten-minute film about her project, after which Barbara Findeisen, president of APPPAH, presented her with a framed citation and an award of \$1,000.

***APPFAH Regional Conference
Issaquah, Washington
November 18 - 21, 2004***

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