



# NEAA NEWSLETTER

~~~~~*Special Conference Issue*~~~~~

## President's Message

It's the time of year when I need to organize. Fall semester course materials need to be filed, spring semester syllabi need to be finalized (and new textbooks read). The holiday odds and ends must be packed and stored (if you observe 12<sup>th</sup> Night) and one's home returned to a semblance of normalcy. In the January lull, I also take a moment to look at a list I keep from year to year (and, no, it is not a list of resolutions!).

Each month, as the professional journals arrive, I skim the tables of contents and make note of articles I need or want to read. I make the list because I don't have the time to read them at that moment. And now it's January of a new year, and I still haven't found the time to read these articles. This list just keeps growing and there is something very wrong with this situation. I *want* to read these articles (as well as the wonderful fiction and nonfiction works my book club has chosen for the year) but time and speed are the issues. But the frustration with the situation always will be here as long as we treat time as a commodity and insist upon stuffing our hours and days with more and more obligations. We buy/sell/manipulate and manage time. We often judge our success by how we "occupy our time" and condemn others for "wasting" time.

What to do? My thoughts turn to the philosophy of an organization to which I belong. The Slow Food international movement was

founded in Paris in 1989 as somewhat of a joke in response to Americans' passion for fast food. The movement now has 80,000 members in over 100 countries. The main office is in Bra, Piedmont, Italy and there are over 800 *convivia* (local level, interpretive groups) worldwide. Its manifesto states that this is a movement for the protection of the right to taste. The symbol of the organization in the US is the snail and the motto is "Support the Slow Life". Its publications claim "We are enslaved by speed... fast life *Homo sapiens* should rid himself (sic) of speed which reduces him (sic) to a species in danger of extinction". The movement is not intended for the lazy, the neurotic or the weary but rather for those who wish to listen to and feel the rhythm of our senses and the earth. (For more information go to [www.Slowfood.com](http://www.Slowfood.com))

Maybe I will have a few resolutions this year. I will: not feel compelled to serve on every University committee; select carefully activities in which I will participate; visit with family and friends more often. I will learn to say no and will smell the roses often.

I am hoping to meet many of you at the meetings in Lake Placid. The venue is not only beautiful but family, friends and the organizers have many interesting events and activities planned. See you there.

-- Grace Morth Fraser

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## Message from the Editor

The events of December 26<sup>th</sup> have made me think about my role as an anthropologist even more than usual. I heard about the Tsunami when I was on a small island in Maine which you can only reach by ferry three days a week—and that is only if the weather is good—so these events seemed more surreal and unbelievable to me in the middle of the holiday season. That this was Mother Nature, whether the tsunami could have been predicted or not, is even more disturbing when you are on a tiny island in the Atlantic Ocean. However, it is the mass devastation to the Indian Ocean area and the unbelievable loss of human life – families, friends, neighbors, tourists – that is the hardest to comprehend as I sit here in my comfortable office in Bristol, RI. Almost unbelievably, the shock seems to lessen as we start discussing how the United States and other countries responded. It is no longer front-page news yet it happened just a month ago. Think about that month for the people who lived through it and what their lives have been like since then.

I know that our community of anthropologists has also been directly affected by this event. I am sure that some anthropologists were there, that many anthropologists have worked in the region and still have close ties there, and that many others were hoping to embark on new research in the region. Many members of the anthropological community have called public attention to other regions, such as the Congo, Darfur, and Somalia, where there is also mass loss of human life. Sadly, one horrific event is sometimes the only way to get us to notice others. However, the question that is rarely asked is why should it be one crisis over another? Why can't we help all those in need?

On another note, I was lucky enough to twist the arm of my fellow American University graduate and friend, Alan Hersker, to help me with the newsletter as copy editor and contributing writer. It is more fun to be able to discuss ideas with someone and have someone help with the load, and now I get to talk to him more often. I have also convinced Marybeth MacPhee (she was really in the right place at the wrong time and could not say no) to be the medical anthropology contributing editor. As we continue to grow as a discipline and an organization, one of my objectives is to make sure the newsletter reflects this growth.

In the last newsletter, I had the opportunity to thank the past editor and people from Roger Williams University who will continue to help me get this newsletter to you. However, I would also like to thank Grace Frazer, NEAA President, for being incredibly welcoming ever since I sat next to her at the NEAA conference at Bridgewater State University. Also, I would be remiss not to thank John Omohundro, who has not only let me horn in on his annual "Careers in Anthropology Workshop" (come see us during the conference in April!) but also was very supportive even while twisting MY arm to take over the editorship of the newsletter.

I hope to see everyone in April!

-- Jessica Skolnikoff, Editor-in-Chief

# 45th Annual Meeting

## April 3rd - 6th, 2005 Lake Placid, New York

*GLOBAL TRENDS, REGIONAL CULTURES*

*Abstract and Session submission deadline is February 15th, 2005*

*Forms and Registration are online this year: [www.neaa.org](http://www.neaa.org)*

*Some highlights:*

- Banquet with keynote speaker
- President's luncheon with speaker
- Department Chairs' Roundtable
- Film and book exhibit
- Big poster session with time scheduled for discussion
- All five sub-disciplines of anthropology participating
- Graduate and Undergraduate student paper prize competitions
- Modest registration fees:
  - \$50 Professional
  - \$30 Student (includes membership in the NEAA)
  - Register online; you can call (M-F) and pay by credit card.
- Canadian funds accepted at par
- Bring the family: a short walk to skating, shops, dining

Everyone is going to be there  
Faut s'y rendre pour être branché  
*Todos van a estar allí*  
Akwé:Tasewe

### *The Lake Placid Hilton*

A world-famous scenic location for very modest cost.  
Rooms for students for as little as \$17/night per student, four per room  
Rooms for professionals beginning at \$70/ night for single  
Every room with a view.  
Be together for all events in one building.  
Bring the family: walk everywhere to skating, shops, dining

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*Forms and Registration: [www.neaa.org](http://www.neaa.org)*

*Menus for the Banquet and the Presidential Luncheon* can also be found online [www.neaa.org](http://www.neaa.org).

**Co-organizers and for questions:**

SUNY Potsdam (Registration and facilities) John Omohundro [omohunjt@potdam.edu](mailto:omohunjt@potdam.edu)  
SUNY Plattsburgh (Special events, evenings, book display) James Armstrong [armstrjd@plattsburgh.edu](mailto:armstrjd@plattsburgh.edu)  
Clarkson University (Program, poster session) Dan Bradburd [sheep@clarkson.edu](mailto:sheep@clarkson.edu)  
Northeastern Anthropological Association (Film exhibit) Robert Gordon [rgordon@zoo.uvm.edu](mailto:rgordon@zoo.uvm.edu)

## 2005 NEAA Student Paper Competition

Each year the NEAA Awards prizes of \$200 each to the best graduate and undergraduate papers presented at the annual meeting. Guidelines for submissions are:

1 – Separate graduate and undergraduate prizes are awarded. The undergraduate prize is known as the M. Estellie Smith Undergraduate Student Paper Prize. The abstracts are published in the NEAA newsletter and publication of the articles in professional journals may be facilitated.

2 – **To be eligible, the papers must be presented in a conference session by the author at the 2005 NEAA meetings at Lake Placid, New York.**

3 – The topic may be in any sub-field of anthropology and the paper may be given in either French or English.

4 – Only the “conference version” of the paper (i.e. **the version that is actually read**) is eligible; this is a paper of 8-15 pages, double-spaced, exclusive of bibliography. It is anticipated that few presenters could get through more than 12 pages in the 15-20 minutes allowed for presentation. The bibliography should be included with the paper.

5 – Six copies of the conference version of the paper must be submitted **by 4 March 2005** to:

Amy Gazin-Schwartz,  
Dept. of Soc/Anth Assumption College  
500 Salisbury Street Worcester, MA 01619  
[agazin@assumption.edu](mailto:agazin@assumption.edu)

6 – A cover page must be attached with the author’s name, address, phone number, institution, department and program and the name of the session and session organizer where the paper was or is to be presented. Entrants must specify the competition (graduate or undergraduate) that they are entering.

7 – Shared authorship papers are eligible provided that the category in which they are entered (i.e. undergraduate or graduate) is that appropriate for the most senior author. Papers co-authored with professionals are not eligible for the student paper competition.

8 – All papers submitted by undergraduates must be accompanied by a note from the student’s advisor or a professor from their department, indicating that the work is an original piece and that the professor believes it to be appropriate for presentation at the conference. (Such a note is required for all undergraduate papers presented at the conference.)

9 – The submissions will be evaluated by a panel of judges under the direction of the President-Elect of the NEAA.

## Lake Placid, New York

Okay, so I've lived in Northern New York for over 5 years and I've never been to Lake Placid. The farthest I've gotten is canoeing in Old Forge . . . But, I'm excited about the NEAA conference in April and decided to do a little "research" to see what do to during our "down time" that weekend.

Lake Placid hosted the 1932 and the 1980 Winter Olympic Games and there's a self-guided tour of the Olympic Center available. If the weather turns out to be "uncooperative", you can stay indoors and check out the Winter Olympic Museum at 218 Main Street, Lake Placid. And while you're in the museum mode, you may want to take a short (by rural standards) ride to see the Adirondack Mountain Museum in Blue Mountain Lake (on NYS Routes 28N and 30; telephone 518.352.7311). The *New York Times* claims that it's "one of the best of its kind." Many of the area's historic sites won't open until May, but there are three that really caught my interest. Fort Ticonderoga (on Fort Road in Ticonderoga; telephone 518.585.2821) is a restored fort and the site of major "victories" (depending on what side you're on) in the Seven Years War and the American Revolution. The Fort also features several theme gardens, including a Native American garden (which, I assume, won't be very lush in early April). John Brown's Farm State Historic Site (in Lake Placid; telephone 518.523.3900) and the Six Nations Indian Museum (in Onchiota; telephone 518.891.2299) also got great reviews. Again, though, be sure to call ahead to see what's open.

Lake Placid has some legendary shopping. There's everything from antiques and crafts to jewelry to outdoor gear. Be sure to stop by the Bookstore Plus and With Pipe and Book to make sure they have your latest book for sale. For us foodies, the Lake Placid area (including Saranac Lake) has some wonderful restaurants. The one place I'll be sure to go is the Hungry Trout in Wilmington (518-946-2217). Their "hook" (pardon the pun) is that you actually catch your own dinner from a trout pond out back. Don't worry about going hungry, though: apparently, they keep the fish a bit underfed so that you're guaranteed to make a catch. . . and I hear Lake Placid has some pretty good skiing! See you all in April!

-- Alan Hersker

Web Resource: [www.lakeplacid.com](http://www.lakeplacid.com), [www.lakeplacidarts.com](http://www.lakeplacidarts.com), [www.adkmuseum.org](http://www.adkmuseum.org)  
[www.artsnorth.org](http://www.artsnorth.org)

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**REMEMBER *All Conference Forms and  
Registration are online this year:***

**[www.neaa.org](http://www.neaa.org)**

***Abstract and Session submission deadline is February 15th, 2005***

# ADHD and Other Adult Myths About Childhood

By Ken Jacobson, Research Associate at Boston University

This essay takes the form of an extended abstract of the book I am writing based on my PhD research. My aim is to reach a wide audience rather than a narrow academic audience. However, my approach will be ethnographic, and in that sense the book will, hopefully, be kind of Introduction to Anthropology in drag. The book has three sections. In the first I describe my research sites and methodology. One of the methods used was Focal Individual Sampling (FIS). This methodology, discussed below, is frequently used in ethological studies of animals but has not been used to study children in two decades. Thus, the first section also goes into the results of the FIS testing. Also included is a summary of the current (and inconclusive) neurobiological research regarding ADHD. The second section explores the school settings. What do children really do in school? Why don't the disciplinary tools used by teachers and administrators work? The third section examines the unexpected consequences of the socialization practices of usually well-meaning caregivers and talks about why children cannot be seen as actors independent of their environments.

The book is an outgrowth of a 16-month research project I conducted to examine children in England and the United States for the diagnostic criteria for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The rationale for picking those two locations was the extreme differences in diagnoses of that disorder: in 1999, in England less than 1% of school age children were diagnosed as opposed to the United States where at least 7% of school age children were diagnosed. Thus, the basic research question for the project asked: what is the reason for the differential in the diagnosis of ADHD? One obvious hypothesis is that children behave differently in different cultures. An alternative hypothesis is offered by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV), used by psychological practitioners in the United States as the definitive source for information on mental disorders: "Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is known to occur in various cultures, with variations in reported prevalence among Western countries probably arising more from different diagnostic practices than from differences in clinical presentation" (American Psychiatric Association, 1994:81). It turns out that neither hypothesis is correct: I found that there was no significant statistical difference in the children's behavior.

Currently, there is no scientific baseline by which to distinguish normal or typical levels of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity from abnormal or disordered levels, even though ADHD-diagnosed children must exhibit "a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and more severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development" (American Psychological Association, 1994:78). I decided, therefore, to evaluate *primarily non-diagnosed children* for the "symptoms" of ADHD to see if that baseline could be established. Accordingly, my research was mostly conducted among the regular school populations at three locations: a publicly funded primary school in Oxfordshire, England (the Riverton School); a public middle school in a New England town (the Farmdale School); and a specialist school for Dyslexic children in England. Over 100 children, aged 10 and 11, were observed.

The project utilized both qualitative (participant observation and interviewing) and quantitative (Focal Individual Sampling and diagnostic questionnaires) methodologies, and, accordingly, generated four major categories of data.

- *Fieldnotes* I decided to make the writing of notes a regular part of my daily activities at the schools. As opposed to the classic strategy of carrying a small pocket notebook into which are surreptitiously written key thoughts to be expanded on returning to home base, I decided to make notes openly and continuously for one compelling reason: I did not believe I would remember enough detail or even be in a position to make the initial notes frequently enough to develop a rich set of field notes. Over 2500 8.5x11 pages of notes were recorded in this manner.
- *Diagnostic Questionnaire* I was interested in finding out how parents of nondiagnosed children would rate their children with respect to ADHD-like symptoms and how the children would rate themselves. I asked everyone who was interviewed to fill out a questionnaire slightly modified from one used extensively by clinicians. In addition to diagnosing ADHD, it allows for the diagnoses of Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and Depression. (The language in that questionnaire was simplified to create a version suitable for the children to self-report.) Consequently, attitudes of both parents and children could be statistically analyzed and cross-referenced between the project's two major populations.
- *Interviews* I interviewed 60 children and their parents (125 interviews in total). Initially, the interview technique I used could most closely be characterized as semistructured, although as I became more adept interviews were much more open-ended.
- *Focal Individual Sampling (FIS)*. Based on the literature, a 34-item grid checklist was designed. I used 15-second intervals for each of the samples and a continuous sampling period of 15 minutes. Since one goal of the FIS observations was to establish a baseline for "normal" classroom behavior, the exhibition of any particular behavior needed to be recorded as either appropriate or inappropriate. That is, each child would be judged to be acting appropriately or inappropriately with respect to the 34 potential behaviors on a 15-second by 15-second basis over a total sample time of 15 minutes. Each child would be sampled on several occasions.

Before actual data collection was begun, the FIS grid was tested for efficacy at the Riverton School. This test raised an unanticipated issue: when is a behavior inappropriate? Interestingly, my experiences as student, parent, and teacher had not prepared me for the equivocality of trying to judge a behavior's appropriateness from an observational perspective. Scientifically, there are no absolute standards by which to judge. If a child is talking with her peer, it is not always clear whether certain behavior is appropriate. For example, when is it appropriate for a child to open a pencil case, and when not? (That is, when might that or any other behavior be interpreted as off task and an example of distractibility or hyperactivity-impulsivity?) Advice from teachers at Riverton suggested that the decision be made based on the reaction of the teacher in the room. If the teacher let a behavior continue, it was appropriate. If the teacher told the children to stop, singly or as a group, then a continuation was inappropriate. Since different teachers applied different standards, appropriateness then became situationally relative. FIS observations were balanced as much as possible between teachers (two at Riverton, three at Farmdale). Balance was also maintained for time of day and task. In addition, the Riverton children regularly either sat "on the carpet" in front of their teacher or at multi-person tables. Balance was maintained with respect to those variables also. In all over 600 FIS observations were recorded.

The most interesting result of analysis of the FIS observations was that they showed a very high incidence of ADHD-like behaviors among "normal" children. Several other interesting

points also emerged from that analysis. First, the Dyslexic group, which the school's head teacher had represented to be prone to ADHD-like behaviors, actually had the lowest scores of the three groups. (The best explanation for that result I can suggest is that the classes were very small, taught by specialists, and the pedagogy called for an extensive multi-sensory approach, especially video, all of which led to the children acting more attentive than their peers.) Second, the scores for the two English groups were significantly different from the American group, but they differed from each other only with respect to hyperactivity-impulsivity (when the data were adjusted by removing video watching that difference disappeared). From that result, it might be concluded that there are culturally defined differences in the behaviors of school age children in the United States and England. However, that did not prove to be the case. When the scores were compared by teacher irrespective of culture, it turned out that the behavior of the English children in Mrs. Pegg's, one of the Riverton teacher's, classes was about the same as the scores of the American children. In reality, Mrs. Bridge, the other Riverton teacher, maintained a much more draconian classroom atmosphere than Mrs. Pegg and the averaging of the two English teacher's scores created a misleading appearance of a cultural difference. Further, even though the DSM-IV asserts that ADHD "is much more frequent in males than in females" (American Psychiatric Association, 1994:81), the data do not sustain that assertion.

One statistic jumps out: on the average 50% of children's in-class behavior is off task. Based on that and similar statistics, I found that formulating a baseline that would not include a large number of non-diagnosed children was not possible. Therefore, one conclusion from the study is that ADHD is a socially constructed disorder, and that treating the minimally 7% of American children diagnosed with the disorder with powerful drugs like the amphetamine Ritalin, is both poor medical practice and a cruel imposition of adult power onto the children forced to take those drugs.

A second conclusion is that the behaviors of the children I observed -- rather than being a biologically based "disorder" -- were actually signs of well-established counterstrategies by children to access adult power. Adult power is based in socio/economic reality, but its use seems to justify a "might makes right" philosophy, even while that use is rationalized as being in the children's best interest. Of further note is the lack of detailed conscious planning by adult caregivers as to how and why they socialize children in the manner that they do.

Children are socially organized in the same way adults are. I call their institution "the Children's World." It is a world rich in nuances, and those nuances seem to be overlooked by popular psychology's overgeneralizations about children's behavior. It is a world of gradual transitions, of some peers (usually labeled "bad") leading those transitions by daring to do age inappropriate things. Thus, not all peer influence is detrimental and not everything of value children learn comes via adults. Paradoxically, to mature into adult roles, young people need to challenge the authority of adults in those roles. Further, in many cases those leaders are motivated by less-than-ideal home environments that also often contribute to poor school achievement.

Certain behaviors are typically seen in the Children's World. I have labeled them default behaviors, or more simply "the default." Children use three characteristic strategies: (1) passive negotiation, basically doing what they want and ignoring implicit adult wishes; (2) active negotiation, ignoring explicit adult requests/demands/threats to stop doing what they're doing; (3) rebellion, strenuously arguing against adult dictates by yelling, slamming doors, or otherwise throwing tantrums. The bottom line, however, is that despite adults' best efforts, the kids usually win the confrontations. It may well be that the adults' lack of conscious reasoning for the many decisions they make weakens their resolve. *Continued on page 11*

If you had submitted a piece,  
your article would have appeared here...

For ideas, please turn the page...

## Call for Submissions

As we begin planning the upcoming newsletters for the Northeastern Anthropological Association, we would like to extend an invitation for YOU to contribute to the publication.

Please submit anything you think will be of interest to our community. You may wish to update colleagues on your recent projects or report on some significant research. You may want to tell us about your school or your department. You may want to discuss global events that affect us here in the Northeast. Or you may just want to offer your reflections on the field. We are also beginning to develop a review section of the newsletter. If you would like to suggest a book for review or if you would like to review a film or text that has been recently released or published, please let us know.

The NEAA publishes the newsletter three times per year (in Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer). You may email your submissions to Jessica Skolnikoff ([jskolnikoff@rwu.edu](mailto:jskolnikoff@rwu.edu)) or Alan Hersker ([alan.hersker@sln.suny.edu](mailto:alan.hersker@sln.suny.edu)). While there are no length requirements for submissions, our current format for the newsletter works best if articles are no longer than 600 words (although this is not set in stone . . .). Please use the AAA Style Guidelines for citations and the works cited page and submit the article in .rtf format.

This is a great opportunity for students to get their work in a publication, for faculty and staff to let colleagues know about their research and for independent scholars to keep us updated on their projects. Please help us to make this newsletter an important benefit of membership in the NEAA!

*Jacobson continued from page 8*

However, those victories come with a price and in the end neither child or parent is happy. Furthermore, having over time gained adult power, the now “grown” children do not give it up. In neutralizing adult power, the children are redistributing it to themselves. This is not a process of rebellion against the use of power but rather a rebellion to usurp power. Additionally, children’s moral, social, and economic values are basically those of the adult environments (cultures) in which they are immersed: when as adults it is their turn to deal with children they will largely treat children as they were treated.

Power struggles are not restricted to just adult/children confrontations, they are endemic to our planet. How many nations, regions, ethnicities, religions, or majorities bully and physically punish their neighbors? Is it not fair to consider many environmental issues, especially habitat destruction and species extinction, as the philosophy of “might makes right” playing out? My book not only questions ADHD as a viable diagnostic category, but also the broader concept of “learning disabilities”. It concludes by asking what can be done about this reality. Can adults attend to the necessity of guiding children safely from immaturity to maturity without that process perpetuating a cycle of unhappiness and confrontation? Can formal education practices be changed in a way to sustain children’s attention? Can the cycle of “might makes right” be broken? Would changing the adult/child dynamic result in a safer, more peaceful, more environmentally friendly societies?

-- Ken Jacobson (kenjay@bu.edu)

#### *Works Cited*

American Psychiatric Association

1994 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV). Washington, DC.

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**Editor - in- Chief:** Jessica Skolnikoff (Roger Williams University) jskolnikoff@rwu.edu

**Copy Editor:** Alan Hersker (Jefferson Community College) alan.hersker@SLN.suny.edu

#### **Contributing Editors**

Physical Anthropology: Barrett Brenton, (St. John's University) BRENTONB@stjohns.edu

Cultural Anthropology: Riva Berleant (University of Connecticut) rberleant@acadia.net

Archaeology: Kelli Ann Costa (Franklin Pierce College)

Linguistics: volunteer needed

Medical Anthropology: Marybeth MacPhee (Roger Williams University) mmacphee@rwu.edu

#### **OFFICERS OF THE NEAA**

**President:** Grace Morth Fraser (Plymouth State College) gfraser@mail.plymouth.edu

**President-elect:** Amy Gazin-Schwartz (Assumption College) agazin@assumption.edu

**Past President:** Laurie Weinstein (Western Connecticut State University) WeinsteinL@wcsu.edu

**Secretary:** Elizabeth Fuller-Tarbox (Carleton) elizabethtarbox@yahoo.com

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**Archivist:** H. Martin Wobst (Umass-Amherst) wobst@anthro.umass.edu

**Film and video consultant:** Robert Gordon (University of Vermont) rgordon@zoo.uvm.edu

**Grad Student Rep:** Elizabeth Fuller-Tarbox (Carleton) elizabethtarbox@yahoo.com

**Undergraduate Rep:** Andrew Hamilton (Dartmouth College) Andrew.R.Hamilton@Dartmouth.edu

**Webmaster:** David Hooston (University of Vermont) David.Hooston@uvm.edu



NEAA NEWSLETTER  
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY/  
SOCIOLOGY, CAS 158  
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY  
ONE OLD FERRY ROAD  
BRISTOL, RI 02809

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**MEMBERS RECEIVE 3 ISSUES OF THE NEAA NEWSLETTER PER YEAR AND A  
REDUCTION ON FEES TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**