Rosalind S. Dorlen, PsyD, ABPP, a private practitioner in Summit, New Jersey, has experienced many changes in her 30 years as a practitioner. She began her practice long before the managed care industry gained a foothold in New Jersey. During the early 1990s, she became enrolled on several managed care company panels. But by the middle of the decade, she had systematically resigned from every one. Dr. Dorlen has worked outside the private third party reimbursement system ever since.

Yet one element of her practice has remained constant: her focus on the community. Dr. Dorlen says her dedication to community psychology has kept her practice fresh and vibrant for many years.

Her commitment has been vital for practice building. Community outreach is an integral part of Dorlen’s strategic marketing efforts, and it has paid off. Getting outside her office has returned dividends to her practice many times over.

Networking and making community connections represent core professional values for Dorlen. “Early in my career, I realized the benefits of making connections by being involved in professional and community organizations,” she says. Dr. Dorlen is a past president of the New Jersey Psychological Association (NJPA) and chair of NJPA’s public education campaign, and she served for two terms as a member of the APA Committee for the Advancement of Professional Practice.

As one of 50 stakeholders, Dr. Dorlen was actively involved in a community needs assessment conducted more than 10 years ago under the auspices of a major New Jersey hospital system. She participated in designing a survey of several hundred thousand homes that included questions about health status and insurance plan involvement, among many other topics.

Dr. Dorlen credits the community visibility she gained by participating in this process for creating many practice opportunities. For example, she subsequently became the first psychologist member of the hospital staff, gave community lectures on a range of topics related to psychological health issues, and played a key role in creating important community projects with diverse health care professionals and community participants.
Among the important projects were “Mending the Broken Heart,” a multidisciplinary program geared toward helping people understand the role of stress in cardiovascular disease, and the “Mammography Project,” which used the transtheoretical model to help motivate underserved women to practice regular breast self-examination and receive yearly mammograms.

In 2005, Dr. Dorlen was appointed by then-Governor Richard Cody of New Jersey to serve on the Task Force on Postpartum Depression. Dr. Dorlen became chair of the Postpartum Depression Public Education Committee and developed patient-education materials, hot-line numbers, referral resources and brochures to emphasize that postpartum depression is a treatable psychological disorder. Dr. Dorlen says that New Jersey became the first state to mandate screening and referral for postpartum depression, a result of her task force’s work.

The postpartum depression project was one of a dozen pro bono intervention projects that Dr. Dorlen has helped to develop in collaboration with local hospitals, schools and organizations. All of these community efforts have directly and indirectly benefitted Dr. Dorlen’s psychotherapy practice by increasing her visibility as someone who can help people.

“Community involvement helps our community and our practices.”
- Rosalind S. Dorlen, PsyD, ABPP

Dr. Dorlen has found that pushing herself to do something new—getting involved with new initiatives and interacting with new colleagues—has helped keep her practice fresh. She sees this process of innovation as critical to the health of a psychology practice. “Any psychological practice that doesn’t reinvent itself runs the risk of becoming this generation’s phrenologists.”

“Community involvement helps our community and our practices,” says Dorlen. “It raises both the visibility of psychology as a profession and the visibility of the psychologists who do community work.”