

Letter from Rick Doblin, MAPS President

This is MAPS' final year as a teenager.

Founded in 1986, with youthful exuberance, unbridled confidence, and totally unrealistic assumptions about the likely timing and cost of research, MAPS turns 20 in 2006. MAPS was begun with the hopes of blazing a path toward the resumption of research into the risks and benefits of psychedelics and marijuana, and the eventual goal of developing these substances into FDA-approved prescription medicines. Rather than blazing, MAPS has barely been able to keep a small spark of science alive during decades of constant struggle, powerful opposition, and limited resources. Yet now that MAPS is emerging into its early adulthood, the sparks of research that we have painstakingly nurtured are poised to expand into an international series of studies that over the next ten or twenty years have the potential of achieving MAPS' initial goals and more.

Inspiringly, Albert Hofmann, inventor of LSD and the first person to isolate psilocybin, celebrates his 100th birthday on January 11, 2006. Albert's birthday will be followed by a January 13-15, 2006, conference in Basel, Switzerland, at which MAPS will be represented by researchers and staff. Compared to Albert's 100 years, MAPS' two decades of existence, and another one or two decades that will probably be required before we see the establishment of a network of psychedelic clinics and prescription marijuana, are a relatively short amount of time that will not unduly tax our patience, persistence or passion.

Signs of MAPS' maturation abound. Dr. Michael Mithoefer's MAPS-sponsored MDMA/PTSD pilot study is halfway completed and has demonstrated that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy can be safely administered to subjects with treatment-resistant PTSD with significant therapeutic benefit. If the second half of the study generates similar results, MAPS' \$5 million, 5-year plan to expand the MDMA/PTSD research from 20 to 600 subjects, and convince the FDA to approve MDMA as a prescription medicine, will become an achievable goal rather than an illusive dream.

Internationally, a MAPS-sponsored MDMA/PTSD pilot study has passed initial ethics committee review in Israel and is currently before the Ministry of Health, with approval more likely than not. On October 7, 2005, a pilot study co-sponsored by MAPS and the Swiss Association for Psycholytic Therapy (SAePT) was submitted for review to an ethics committee. In Spain, we're preparing to seek permission for a revised MDMA/PTSD study that would expand upon the preliminary research that was halted by political anti-drug pressure, which we seem able to overcome now that we have begun this research in the US. On October 14, 2005, a DEA field investigator

inspected the safe at Harvard Medical School-affiliated McLean Hospital, where the MDMA will be securely stored for Dr. John Halpern's pilot study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in subjects with anxiety associated with advanced-stage cancer. Since December 2004, this study has only been awaiting DEA approval to begin. As you can read on the inside front cover, a mother writes about how MDMA proved helpful to her daughter to gracefully and courageously accept her death from cancer, suggesting the potential benefits to our society from this line of research.

Preliminary work is underway on protocol design for a MAPS-sponsored study of LSD and psilocybin in the treatment of cluster headaches, which we hope will also take place at McLean Hospital.

MAPS is also coordinating a DEA Administrative Law Judge hearing, in which Professor Lyle Craker, Ph.D., UMass Amherst, is suing the DEA for refusing to issue him a license for a MAPS-sponsored marijuana production facility. I started MAPS after working from 1984-1985 to help coordinate testimony for a DEA hearing about the scheduling of MDMA, so this new DEA hearing helps me see how MAPS has grown in the last twenty years. Another sign of MAPS' growing maturity is that Jag Davies, MAPS staffer, cut his hair and I purchased an entirely new wardrobe, in order to walk the halls of Congress to help obtain support from over 30 members of Congress for the UMass Amherst facility!

Yet there have been some growing pains. MAPS has more projects and staff than ever before, with increased fundraising needs and overflowing email in-boxes. We struggle to retain the same personal touch with MAPS members that has been our strength over the decades.

In order to build community and retain this personal connection, MAPS invites all members and friends to camp with us at Burning Man for MAPS' 20th anniversary gathering next year (coincidentally, 2006 is also Burning Man's 20th anniversary). This is a great opportunity to see MAPS in action assisting the Black Rock City Rangers to provide psychedelic emergency services. We will also be coordinating a lecture series about psychedelic and marijuana research to take place in our camp. Artist Alex Grey and friends will be joining us next year, and we will be adding a large dome for Alex's art

The breakthroughs we are poised to make in the next year or two will set the foundation for MAPS' work over the next decade or two. Your support has carried MAPS through its adolescence; your continued support will enable us, and our society, to mature together.

Psychedelically yours,

–Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS President

