

MOSAICS



Advocating for Asylum Seekers

Several School of Social Work students volunteered at the country's largest detention center in Dilley, Texas, where they met with asylum seekers.

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News of the SCHOOL

COMINGS & GOINGS

Clara Bradizza, formerly a senior research scientist at UB's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, joined UBSSW in the fall as a professor. (See page 6 for details.)

Tracey Eastman joined UBSSW as director of communications; over the last 16 years, she worked in UB's university communications and student affairs departments.

Director of Continuing Education **Lesla Fichte** has retired. Fichte has been with the SSW since 2004; under her direction the Office of Continuing Education served over 3,000 people annually, while remaining financially healthy. Fichte led the program during a period of disruptions across the social work industry, all the while offering her colleagues, including the dean, helpful insights.

Senior Director of Advancement, Health Sciences, **Mary Glenn** left UB after over 20 years aiding advancement efforts. She accepted the position of vice president of institutional advancement at Daemen College in Buffalo, NY.

After 25 years with UBSSW, Associate Professor **Kathleen Kost** retired. Kost's research focused on Tanzanian community development initiatives; her work was instrumental in establishing student field placements there. During her tenure, Kost held many leadership positions in the school, including director of the UB Institute for Nonprofit Agencies, interdisciplinary programs and the MSW program. She also served as associate dean for academic affairs, and most recently interim undergraduate studies coordinator.

Director of data analysis in the Buffalo Center for Social Research **Eugene Maguin** left after 21 years of dedicated service; he will join the research team in the UB Department of Psychology.

Student Services Advisor **Jenell Spitale** joined UBSSW in the summer. She previously worked at Buffalo State College in the Career Development Center.

Paul Stasiewicz, formerly a senior research scientist at UB's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, became a SSW professor and the Janet B. Wattles Endowed Chair this fall. (See page 6 for details.)

PROMOTIONS

Laina Bay-Cheng was promoted to professor and has accepted the leadership role of associate dean for faculty development. With these changes she will be stepping down from her role as PhD program director and associate dean for doctoral programs. Professor Deborah Waldrop previously expertly served as our associate dean for faculty development for the past seven years.

Louanne Bakk was promoted to clinical associate professor and was also named our DSW program director, which enrolled its first cohort this fall.

Associate Professor **Filomena Critelli** was named undergraduate studies coordinator with the retirement of Kathleen Kost.

Gretchen Ely, promoted to professor over the summer, was also named associate dean for academic affairs after Professor **Hilary Weaver** moved into the role of associate dean for equity, diversity and inclusion.

Annette Semanchin Jones was promoted to associate professor and accepted the PhD program director position.

Associate Professor **Isok Kim** stepped into the role of MSW program director this past summer, when Associate Professor Diane Elze went back to teaching and research, after spending the past 11 years dedicated to the role.

Patricia Logan-Greene was promoted to associate professor and is the Child Advocacy Studies Micro-Credential coordinator.

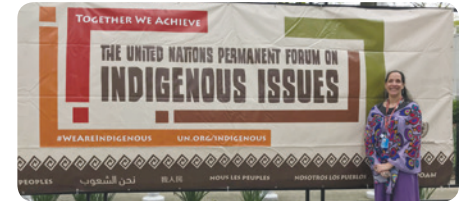
STUDENT NEWS

In March 2019, MSW students traveled with staff member Pat Shelly to Albany, NY, to promote the passage of two bills, Racial Equity Assessment in Legislation and Social Work Investment Initiative.



FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

Professor **Hilary Weaver** presented at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as a member of the International Federation of Social Workers delegation; the theme was "Traditional knowledge: Generation, transmission and protection."



NATIONAL NEWS

An article on NBC News about Lily, a new "Sesame Street" character intended to offer help and hope to the growing number of children across the U.S. experiencing homelessness, interviews Assistant Professor **Elizabeth Bowen**, an expert on homelessness. "When people think of homelessness, they think of the stereotypical image of an older man on the street, but in fact there are a lot more families with children than people think in homelessness or on the brink of homelessness," she said. "Homelessness isn't a failing of the parent or the family, but a failing of society. Anything that can help change that narrative is good." The article also appeared in The Sun in England, Ireland and Scotland, and in California's Central Coast KSBY-TV.



Photo Credit: Richard Termine / Sesame Workshop.

An article in USA Today about the increase in more restrictive abortion legislation in the U.S. and the growing number of women who are reaching out to Aid Access, an online organization that offers abortion pills internationally, interviews Professor **Gretchen Ely**. "The more people are restricted, the more likely that they are going to try to manage an abortion on their own," she said. "So instead of it being a pre-Roe situation with objects, they're going to be looking to manage it with medication. More often, it will be unsupervised." Ely added that more women turning to unsupervised means of managing their own abortions is a concerning trend. It's far preferable, she said, for women to get abortions with the advice of medical professionals.

An article on Futurity reports on research by Assistant Professor **Christopher St. Vil**, that suggests that among men of color, Hispanic males were two times more likely to have a fatal interaction with police in neighborhoods that have a high percentage of Hispanic residents, and police agencies with more Hispanic officers were associated with higher odds of Hispanic fatalities. Articles also appeared in news outlets including PhysOrg, ScienMag and 7th Space.

GLOBAL & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

After just under two weeks in Rwanda in June, **Laura Lewis**, clinical associate professor, director of field education and assistant dean for global partnerships, and Kristin Rivera, a consultant at the School's Institute on Trauma and Trauma-informed Care (ITTIC), returned with good prospects for building collaborative relationships with universities, agencies and communities in the African country. There, Lewis and Rivera met with academics from social work and psychology, as well as professionals, learning about how the country is coping several decades after experiencing a genocide that killed over a million people. They learned that some of the main issues (trauma, identity and reconciliation) are being addressed with a similar trauma-informed language that has been integrated into the SSW curriculum and philosophy. "They see their next step as applying the TI-informed model to services," said Lewis. "Our vision is to eventually bring UBSSW students to work with students there, perhaps using a 'train-the-trainer' model so that their new generation of social workers can go into the communities and help them continue to address their trauma."

NEW PROGRAM

Beginning in the fall 2019, SSW is offering courses in a new undergraduate minor in Community Organizing and Development, open to all undergraduate majors. Students will learn to help build economically and socially just communities and work in unity with others to find solutions that empower citizens. Learn more at socialwork.buffalo.edu/minor.

FROM DEAN NANCY J. SMYTH

Welcome to the fall 2019 issue of Mosaics.

We are excited to announce that colleagues Dr. Paul Stasiewicz and Dr. Clara Bradizza, both psychologists who were formerly of UB's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, have joined our faculty as full professors; in addition, Stasiewicz assumes the newly established Janet B. Wattle Endowed Chair. (Read more on page 6.)

Adding two more full professors to our senior leadership is a boon for the School's entire academic community. We are especially thrilled that their addition fulfills our current faculty's desire for mentorship in funded clinical studies—Stasiewicz and Bradizza bring with them \$9 million in NIH-funded research; our faculty is looking forward to learning how to expand their own research portfolios similarly.

You will also see information about our country's immigration crisis—specifically, about asylum seekers at the U.S./Mexico border. This is a glaring global issue, and while it's easy to feel overwhelmed by its enormity, we focus on interdisciplinary advocacy and action, which we and many others realize is so important. We are proud that several of our students partnered with the law school and traveled to Texas (see story on page 4).

The new UB micro credential program is another effort that answers a wider calling: that of non-degree-related credentials and certificates. While degrees are absolutely still relevant (I think the MSW is terrific, even though many employers and others outside the field may not yet understand what's behind it), students and professionals need other ways to stay current and show others that they are current. And the embeddable digital badge (versus a paper certificate), is a thoroughly modern way to show one's achievement. (Read all about it on page 7.)

I continue to be fascinated by the many ways in which social work is relevant outside of our traditional and assumed areas. We as social workers and social work educators understand the huge applicability of the training that we have, the skill sets that we can share, the approaches to problem-solving and community-building that are second nature to us. I hope you agree, and find stories that illustrate this as you journey through this issue of Mosaics.



NANCY J. SMYTH, PHD, LCSW

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The University at Buffalo is a premier research-intensive public university, the largest and most comprehensive campus in the State University of New York. UB's more than 30,000 students pursue their academic interests through more than 390 undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs. Founded in 1846, the University at Buffalo is a member of the Association of American Universities.

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MOSAICS



Advocating FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

| by Jana Eisenberg | photos by Steve Pavey

In our national media, there is no escaping daily reports of the circumstances at our country's southern border. And it's not just the waves of asylum seekers or the lack of organized response to them. It's also the larger issue of the systems currently in place in our country.

Every individual's reaction to this crisis may vary—but two UB School of Social Work recent graduates were driven to take action. In January 2019, Leighann Ramirez, JD/MSW '19, and Teresa Watson, MSW '19, joined a group of UB Law School student volunteers and traveled to the largest refugee detention center in the U.S., in Dilley, Texas. Their intention was to help some of the many women and children housed at the South Texas Family Residential Center.

The weeklong trip, part of UB School of Law's U.S.-Mexico Border Clinic course, took place under the auspices of the Immigration Justice Campaign's Dilley Pro Bono Project.

Before embarking, the team all received training on immigration law and the asylum-seeking process. In addition, Watson conducted a three-hour crash course on trauma-informed care, preparing the law specialists for the harrowing work which they were about to commence.

Prepping for the interviews

Each day, the student clinicians met with women and children in the "family residential center" (the moniker preferred by the detention center's for-profit operators) to help prepare them for the next official stage of the asylum-seeking process: the credible fear interview (CFI).

Once inside the center, the volunteers held *charlas* (roundtable conversations) to review with the asylum seekers the specifics of the process, what to expect. "In Dilley, we got to see the beginning stages of the asylum process. The person fleeing persecution or violence in their home country crosses over, says they are seeking asylum, has an initial interview, says they're scared, and then they are placed in a cell—that the asylum seekers call a *perrera* ("dog cage")—where they wait for their CFI to be scheduled, before they even arrive in the residential centers like the one we visited," said Ramirez.

Because of the lack of consistency with the officials conducting the CFIs, preparation does not guarantee success. "The threshold to pass the CFI is not that high, but many fail without legal support," said Ramirez. "Before the Dilley project was in place at this facility, the passage rate was 40%—now the percentage is up to the high 90s."

Using a trauma-informed perspective

Holding CFI preparation meetings with women is traumatic for all involved, said Watson. Social workers understand that asking someone to repeat their story can bring up the trauma they've experienced, and that this can have many different manifestations—including gaps in memory.

And preparing for the CFI interviews was especially difficult, since the volunteer lawyers and

social workers had to guide the women regarding which parts of their story to emphasize—which elements might give them a better chance of having their request for asylum moved to the next stage. The work is also hampered by language barriers.

The rapid shifts in criteria coming from the current anti-migrant administration affect the asylum application process. "No one really knew what was going to happen from one week to the next," said Ramirez. Protections for domestic violence claims were revoked and then re-established—and the courts hadn't decided the outcome by January of 2019.

So, during their sessions, the volunteer staff worked with the seekers to help them understand the criticality of their CFI statements. Most seekers don't understand, for instance, that if, during their asylum interview (which is held before a judge), they bring up a claim of fear not previously mentioned in their CFI, things can go badly. The judge may not accept it, or may view it as suspicious. Initially, establishing a dual claim during CFI written statement enables the women to be legally able to talk about other daily dangers, if domestic violence protections were overturned.

As the women told their stories, the clinicians had the difficult task of telling them that what may have been the most upsetting or traumatic part of their experience, like domestic violence, might not count toward establishing credible fear because of the current interpretation and application of the law. For the volunteers, said Watson, "telling women that

"They are working hard to keep themselves and their kids safe, and we're working with them on ways to present their story."

- Teresa Watson

their worst days weren't the most relevant pieces to their claim felt like invalidating the pain the women had endured."

"As advocates and social workers, we strive to be honest, caring and empowering with the information and choices we're able to give the seekers," she said. "They are working hard to keep themselves and their kids safe, and we're working with them on ways to present their story."

"It felt like an intense, crisis-full week," added Watson. "While self-care is ethical and important, it can be hard to find the time and energy. This was also relevant for the law students. It was good that we could all act as a team, and use a buddy system. I advise not trying to push through if you're feeling overwhelmed...you can miss important things. We stressed how trauma-informed care is best practice for almost anything, and why."



Inside the South Texas FAMILY RESIDENTIAL CENTER

Observations of UB social work students who visited the South Texas Family Residential Center—a migrant detention center—shed light on the inhuman state of life for refugee families. Detention center rules seemed designed to dehumanize.

According to Watson and Ramirez:

- There is a strict dress code for women visiting the center—dresses must fall below the knee and low-cut tops and makeup are not allowed.

Visitors are not allowed to:

- Take any photographs inside the center.
- Bring bottled water to the residents. Only for themselves.
- Offer children toys, books or crayons to play with.
- Carry more than one day's dose of over-the-counter medication, like ibuprofen, and not give any to the residents.
- Give any food to the residents.

Residents:

- Drinking water contaminated with arsenic and there are outbreaks of e coli infections.
- Medical care was inadequate. Watson and Ramirez said they saw evidence of both adults and children with infections, and when they asked if they'd been given antibiotics, were told no, that if they were able to see a doctor, they were not given antibiotics.



STUDENT reflections

“

“Strangely, I felt hope.”

“These women took their kids and left their homes, they traveled across entire countries over weeks or months; even in detention they took care of business for themselves and their children.”

“Every time a woman told me her story, I was floored by her resilience and strength. . . .their power overwhelmed me.”

“These women’s lives. Their stories. Their legitimate fears, and the utter indifference of an asylum system that prioritizes male-dominated protected categories.”

“The patriarchal double standard is written into our laws; it is a part of our society as much as any other. Of everything I saw in Texas, this breaks my heart, every day.”

Excerpts from Teresa Watson's last blog post about her experience in Dilley. To read her posts in their entirety, visit the School of Social Work's blog at socialworksynergy.org.

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Get involved:

Not everyone may be able to journey to Texas to give their time. There are many other ways people can get involved.

Immigration Justice Campaign (immigrationjustice.us) has a number of partners around the country always in need of volunteers.

Al Otro Lado (alotrolado.org) is a bi-national, direct legal services organization serving indigent deportees, migrants and refugees; they also provide many other kinds of assistance.

Justice for Migrant Families WNY (justiceformigrantfamilies.org) works locally to bridge the gap between the undocumented community and the larger Buffalo and immigrant community, to defend the human and civil rights for all immigrants in Buffalo. They also provide visitation services for people housed in the Batavia detention center.

Landmark UB scientists to apply NIH-funded research to solving society's problems

Addictions researchers Paul Stasiewicz, PhD, and Clara Bradizza, PhD, join UB School of Social Work faculty

In confirming the establishment of a new strategic focus on translational research for the School of Social Work, Dean Nancy J. Smyth, PhD, further announced the addition of internationally renowned addictions researchers, Clara M. Bradizza, PhD, and Paul Stasiewicz, PhD, to the school's faculty, as full professors.



Together, these scientists have over 20 years' experience conducting National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded addictions research. Their current research, which will continue under the auspices of the UB School of Social Work's Buffalo Center for Social Research, in a newly established Behavioral Health Clinic, is presently funded by \$9 million in grants from the NIH.

"Social work is a broad area; at its core is the adaptation of scientific discovery to workable changes that benefit those in need," said Smyth. "Clara and Paul have achieved remarkable success in securing research funding and conducting successful clinical research programs—and translating that research into workable treatments for vulnerable populations. Their contributions to our current research, faculty and students will be immeasurable."

The two researchers join the school after having served as senior research scientists at UB's Clinical and Research Institute on Addictions (CRIA, formerly the Research Institute on Addictions) and in the UB Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences' Department of Psychiatry, where they have been associated since 1996.



Stasiewicz, who also assumes the new position of Janet B. Wattles Endowed Chair, is a leading researcher in the field of addictions research. The Janet B. Wattles Chair was recently established with funding in part provided by donations from UB alumna Janet B. Wattles (MSW, 1950).

"We are grateful for the generosity of Janet B. Wattles. Her gift and the Wattles Chair position will strengthen the bridge between our school's research and real social change," said Smyth.

Bradizza brings extensive experience leading addictions research programs and over her career has been awarded more than \$22 million in NIH research grants.

In addition to continuing their groundbreaking addictions research, Bradizza and Stasiewicz will teach doctoral-level

courses and serve as mentors to both students and faculty. Their experience will contribute greatly to faculty as they define their research agendas, and to doctoral students, as they refine their professional goals.

"In moving to UB's School of Social Work, we are excited about collaborating with new colleagues and with local agencies to find ways to reduce alcohol-related harm in our communities," said Stasiewicz.

"Together, the disciplines of psychology and social work can shed more light on the personal and environmental factors that drive health behaviors. We believe we can translate that into new and better ways to positively impact the health of our communities, our nation and the world," added Bradizza.

Smyth and the school administration are confident that the work of Bradizza and Stasiewicz is both unique and appropriate for the School of Social Work. Their success in translating research discoveries into treatments and tools that can improve the lives of those suffering the ravages of addictions is a major benefit—much of their research focuses on vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, victims of sexual violence and individuals with mental illness and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Stasiewicz has been the principal investigator on several landmark NIH studies, and his research has been funded by the NIH, specifically the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), for more than 20 years. His peers' esteem is demonstrated by the degree to which he is invited to consult on far-reaching policies and programs. He has frequently been invited to review grants for the NIAAA, and he is a respected long-time member of committees of the American Psychological Association and, more recently, of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. He earned his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Binghamton University and completed Brown University's Post-Doctoral Training Program in Alcohol Treatment and Early Intervention Research.

Bradizza has provided leadership in the field of addictions research including an editorial position at the journal *Addictive Behaviors* and has served as program chair at American Psychological Association conferences. She is a permanent member of an NIH Study Section, "Interventions to Prevent and Treat Addictions," that evaluates the scientific merit of NIH grant applications and has participated in review meetings for the Tobacco Centers of Regulatory Science, an interagency partnership between the Food and Drug Administration and the NIH that informs the regulation of tobacco products. She earned her PhD from Binghamton University and completed Brown University's Post-Doctoral Training Program in Alcohol Treatment and Early Intervention Research.

Please join us in welcoming our new faculty!



Earn the skills you need. Get proof you have them.

Micro-credentials at UB School of Social Work

The new micro-credential program from UB is a natural extension of classroom learning, and is an ideal way for current students and practitioners to build skills and competencies in specialty areas.

Micro-credentials take less time to earn than a degree, and can be either credit-bearing or not-for-credit; if credit-bearing, they will never be more than 11 credits and can be earned in as little as one semester.

Micro-credentials give you the freedom to learn what you want, without the financial and time commitments of a degree. With the option to personalize your learning, you can earn a micro-credential in your own field of study, like a "mini-concentration" or, currently enrolled students, may earn a micro-credential in a field of study outside your major, like a "mini-minor."

Students who complete a credit-bearing micro-credential program receive both a notation on their academic transcript as well as a digital badge, and those who complete a non-credit program receive a digital badge.

The digital badge is a dynamic, clickable icon which houses information such as the issuing institution, the date earned, and the evidence that shows that the criteria to earn the credential have been met. The holder owns the digital badge, and may upload it to any social media profiles, such as LinkedIn, add it as a link on their digital resume, or embed it in their e-portfolio and more.

For current UB students, there is no additional cost to enroll in micro-credentials, beyond regular tuition rates.

UB School of Social Work offers these micro-credential programs:



Child Advocacy Studies (CAST)

UNDERGRADUATE MICRO-CREDENTIAL

- Gain the knowledge and skills to recognize and respond to child abuse and neglect.
- 3 classroom/in-person courses (9 credit hours).
- Open to current undergraduate students from any major, or non-degree students.*
- Will not count towards MSW coursework.

TO LEARN MORE

socialwork.buffalo.edu/cast



Excellence in Aging

GRADUATE MICRO-CREDENTIAL

- Gain knowledge and skills to improve the care and well-being of older adults, their families and caregivers.
- 2 courses, online or hybrid format (6 credit hours).
- Emerging Topics in Aging Seminar Series required.
- Open to current graduate students from any major, and social work non-degree (non-matriculated) students.*

TO LEARN MORE

socialwork.buffalo.edu/aging



Interprofessional Collaborative Practice

- Gain knowledge of values and ethics, roles and responsibilities of healthcare providers, and communication and teamwork skills.
- Participation is achieved through learning activities such as interprofessional forums, simulation experiences, and clinical experiences.
- Micro-credential open to current UB students enrolled in health professions education programs.

TO LEARN MORE

buffalo.edu/ipe

*Community members wishing to become a social work non-degree (non-matriculated) student need to first apply and be approved for non-degree (non-matriculated) status in order to register for credit-bearing courses.

TESTIMONY

"The UB Interprofessional Collaborative Practice micro-credential was challenging and rewarding. The collaboration with colleagues from medicine, pharmacy, law, social work, education and business gave us a deeper understanding of our client's concerns."

– Cheney Brockington, MSW '19



UBSSW COMMENCEMENT 2019



2018-2019 STUDENT AWARDS RECIPIENTS

- ANDREW J. LAUGHLIN AWARD | MOLLY RITTER
- ANGEL MCKNIGHT-MILLER MEMORIAL AWARD | CHENEY BROCKINGTON
- ARCHIE W. SWANSON HONORARY AWARD | SARA SPENCE
- BERTHA S. LAURY THORN & ROSE AWARD | KATHRYN FREEMAN
- DEBORAH ZIMMERMAN AWARD | HAILEY WHITE
- DENA P. GOLD MEMORIAL AWARD | ERIN BASCUG
- DOROTHY LYNN HONORARY AWARD | EPIPHANY MCGEE
- DREAM AWARD | JESSICA WOJTKOWIAK, ERIKA ZAMBOTTI
- HASELTINE T. CLEMENTS MEMORIAL AWARD | TERESA WATSON
- JULIAN SOJDA MEMORIAL AWARD | KELLY MERCER
- KRISTOPHER L. BRASELTON MEMORIAL AWARD | MARIAH MANN
- LOUISA CIELEN AWARD | EMILY SHANAHAN
- MARY O'DONNELL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD | CLARA BROWN
- NASW AWARD | MOLLY RITTER
- NILES CARPENTER AWARD | PAIGE IOVINE-WONG
- OUTSTANDING STUDENT AWARD | MICHAEL SHURMATZ
- ROSE WEINSTEIN SCHOLAR AWARD | DANIELLE CAVARETTA
- SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARD | ALICIA POPP
- SUSAN NOCHAJSKI AND JACQUELINE MCGINLEY
EXCELLENCE IN DISABILITY PRACTICE AWARD | PAMELA SYNOR
- TERESE EUSANIO MEMORIAL AWARD | WHITNEY MARRIS



CONGRATULATIONS
TO THE
RHO KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY 2019 INDUCTEES

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Morgan Bauer
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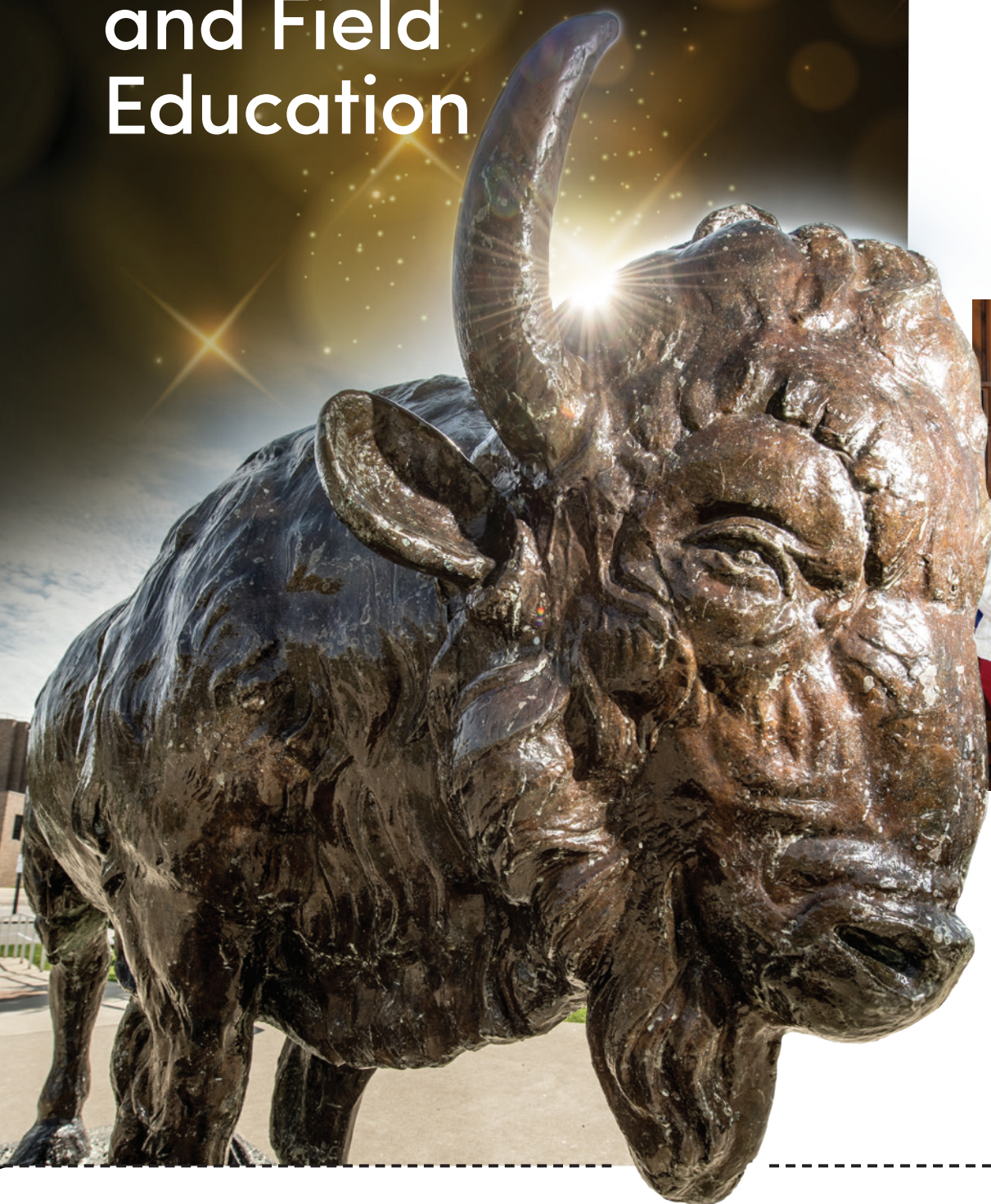
Kelly Wentworth

HONORARY INDUCTEES

Glenn Frost, MSW '94
Mary Ellen Kranock, MSW '94

Recognizing Excellence

in Research
and Field
Education



Honoring Distinctive Research

Accolades for faculty and student contributions

Research is one of the cornerstones of our school. Our faculty and students are passionately engaged in examining populations, data and theories, and in spending time finding evidence-based solutions. These annual awards help us shine a spotlight on some of the intense and important work that's being done here.



Student research: Bringing a focus to “how” rather than “how much” emerging adults use social media

Carol Scott, PhD '19, was awarded the honor for her exploratory project, “Time Spent Online: Latent Profile Analyses of Emerging Adults’ Social Media Use And Study 2: General and Alcohol-

In the field:

Awards for field educators highlight the importance of the experience

Each year, we acknowledge two of our most outstanding field educators. They are nominated by their peers, coworkers or students. It's an honor for us to have so many dedicated professionals sharing their experience with our students, and we thank each of you, who give your time and experience to help form our newest professionals. It gives us great pleasure to introduce this year's awardees to you, our readers.



Dedication to his students, deep knowledge of his profession

Joseph Pace, LCSW, a social worker with the Cortland Enlarged City School District who is specifically assigned to Barry Elementary School, was one of the recipients of the 2019 honor.

“Being a field educator affords me the opportunity to share my knowledge, experience and expertise with aspiring social workers. It's my way of paying forward what my field educators gave to me,” said Pace. “In addition, it enriches and enhances my professional experience—the students who do field placements with us are valuable assets, bringing fresh perspectives which can be inspiring.”

In her nomination of Pace for the Outstanding Achievement in Field Education Award, Sara Egan, an MSW online student who participated in field work with him, said, “Joe takes his field educator role seriously. His emphasis on trauma-informed practice in his work supports my learning in important ways. In addition, I am appreciative of how knowledgeable Joe is when it comes to applying theory and various evidence-based approaches to our work.”

As for his example as a social work professional, she added, “Joe consistently models excellent social work values, interacting thoughtfully and professionally with everyone he encounters: children, families, teachers, other professionals. He is always respectful of those who may have different viewpoints or backgrounds from his.”

Faculty research: Better communication can lead to better outcomes for people living with chronic/end-stage renal disease

Specific Social Media Engagement Profiles Predict Emerging Adults' Drinking Outcomes," focused as much on how youth spend their time online (i.e., degree of engagement), as well as on the amount of time they spend online.

Scott and her colleagues explored survey data from 249 U.S. emerging adults (ages 18–26) regarding their social media use (SMU). They found that high frequency social media users tended to be women and to have more Facebook friends. Highly engaged users (i.e., those most interactive online) tended to be white and more highly educated.

These findings indicate that youth SMU frequency and SMU engagement warrant separate consideration. In his nomination of Scott for this award, Brad Linn, PhD '18, MSW '12, said, "Carol ultimately wants to transition her research to intervention studies—how social media could be used to transmit harm reduction or alcohol education messages to young people; this has the potential to reach a huge number of people. And, the knowledge gained has the potential to be useful for social workers, educators, parents and other caregivers and many other allied health professions."

Research Professor Tom Nochajski echoed that sentiment, in his description of the significance of Scott's work. "The fact that Carol's first paper has already been cited in subsequent papers, indicates that it has captured other scholars' interests. The implications of her work for practice include a deepening of our knowledge of the deleterious effects of social media use, which is nearly ubiquitous with our clients. Any knowledge of a factor that shapes our behavior has a direct implication for practice."

And, in her nomination of Scott, Professor Gretchen Ely noted that research about social media and its use has the potential to expand the knowledge base and allow those in the field to explore how social media may be useful for research and interventions.

Professor Deborah Waldrop received the award for faculty research. Her project, "Improving Communication: Serious Illness Conversations in Chronic and End Stage Renal Disease," addressed the urgent need to improve the quality of communication between healthcare professionals and people living with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and end-stage renal disease (ESRD).

Her abstract posited that, because CKD/ESRD confer tremendous morbidity and mortality, they bring different challenges and choices from other serious illnesses. Nephrologists frequently report significant barriers to engaging patients and families in frank conversations about CKD/ESRD's realities.

Patient-provider communication is also fragmented by strong emotions that create personal barriers to understanding the disease trajectory, especially when multimorbidity makes prognostication difficult.

Waldrop used a 2-group longitudinal cohort design with pre- and post-intervention interviews with people who have CKD and ESRD. The intervention involved adapting the nationally recognized Serious Illness Conversation Guide to facilitate conversations between providers and patients, with the

aim of determining both how the guide can be adapted and the best timing for such a conversation. The results will benefit patient understanding and inform better, more effective patient education.

In her nomination of Waldrop and her research, Jacqueline McGinley, PhD '18, noted that estimates indicate that 14.8% of the population has CKD—and more than 89,000 patients with ESRD die each year in the US.

"Dialysis patients often experience existential distress; the burden of physical and psychosocial symptoms is high," she wrote. "Many dialysis patients consider end-of-life options and have been found to welcome the opportunity to engage in [these] discussions with trained facilitators, including social workers. While nephrologists prepare patients for progression from chronic to end-stage kidney disease, few engage in discussions of prognosis or goals of care."

The Renal Physicians Association and the American Society of Nephrology guidelines recommend shared decision-making between patients and the nephrology care team. "Recent research exploring the feasibility of shared decision-making suggests that it is most effective when implemented by a nephrologist-social worker team," McGinley

added, which increases the applicability of this research to the field of social work.

Congratulations to our researchers—the individuals and their colleagues, who all work to make the School of Social Work a dynamic center for resonant thought and action.



Committed to making a difference—with students, coworkers and the courts

The next field education went to Aimeé L. Neri, LMSW (MSW '06). Neri is the liaison in the 8th Judicial District for the New York State Child Welfare Court Improvement Project; in that role she works to integrate trauma-informed practices in family court.

In her nomination of Neri of the Court Improvement Project (CIP), Tosca Miserendino, MSW '19, who interned with Neri, said, "Aimee is committed to improving the Child Welfare System by working toward creating a more trauma-informed court system."

Neri also facilitates trauma trainings for Family Court employees, to help them understand how compassion fatigue and secondary trauma can impact their work. "This is especially important when we consider the staff's constant exposure to the traumatic stories of others, and how these might trigger their own unresolved traumas," added Miserendino.

Field education is a win-win, notes Neri, allowing experienced social workers to contribute to students' practical learning professional development while providing students with real time application of theoretical perspectives at all levels, in a safe and supportive learning and growing environment.

"Field educators also have an amazing opportunity to support students as they develop their self-supervision process," she said. "So, when they move into the workforce, they can feel better equipped to practice self-awareness, be honest with themselves about their practice, and create plans for continued independent and collaborative growth within their professional support networks."



Thank you to our 2019 nominated field educators.



PRECIOUS MISSION:

*Decreasing turnover
in Erie County Dept. of
Social Services*

C

| by Jim Bisco

Child welfare is demanding, life-impacting work where keeping children from falling through the cracks of the system is paramount. In pursuing that precious mission, however, child welfare workers themselves have been falling by the wayside. Turnover in organizations like the Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) has been as high as 34 percent in recent years.

The ongoing partnership between the School of Social Work (UB) and the ECDSS is aimed to improve the culture and climate of the agency in these challenging times. The latest inroad to this end is a proposal and a grant to stem the turnover tide while developing students and ECDSS leadership to meet the challenges.

"Almost 25 percent of our child welfare staff has been here less than two years, so their experience is limited," said ECDSS Commissioner Marie Cannon, MSW '91. "They come right out of school, and walk into the child welfare environment where the cases have gotten very complicated with substance abuse, domestic violence, the effects of the opioid epidemic and poverty. And so we were looking at what we could do to help develop and support our staff."

UB Associate Professor Annette Semanchin Jones, an expert in child welfare policy, was approached to assess the situation within ECDSS's child welfare services.

"One of the things that they thought might help was looking at organizational climate as well as their supervisory and lower- to mid-level leadership, and building capacity to create a good work environment so that once people are hired they will hopefully want to stay," said Semanchin Jones.

FUNDING FOR NOW AND CHANGES FOR THE FUTURE

UB's Semanchin Jones went to work on a proposal to help ECDSS adapt. The proposal outlined her findings that ECDSS's high turnover rates were directly associated with negative placement outcomes, low worker morale and increased costs to the county. While research highlights the importance of supervisors in worker retention and effective child welfare practice, many of ECDSS's newly appointed supervisors felt ill-prepared for their leadership positions.

In the midst of developing the proposal, Semanchin Jones secured a significant grant for the ECDSS from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI), an organization that comprises leadership academies providing supervisors and managers with opportunities to become skilled in leading change and implementing results-oriented decisions.

"The county is really interested in building leadership at all levels of the agency," observed Semanchin Jones. "One of their goals is to concretely support senior caseworkers—those with more experience and skills—to get their MSWs so they can make the leap from caseworker to supervisor."

The NCCWI Workforce Excellence Initiative grant provides national resources that include a general curriculum with online modules and ongoing coaching. The ECDSS together with UB's School of Social Work will develop a sustainable plan to continue those trainings.

FREE TUITION FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION FOR ECDSS EMPLOYEES

The grant, now in progress for the fall 2019 semester, has allowed the UB School of Social Work to recruit diverse students committed to child welfare practice and provide support for four cohorts of MSW students who will receive free tuition and a small stipend. In exchange for each year of study in the program, the student will commit to a year of working in child welfare at the ECDSS.

The grant also enhances the school's already-robust child welfare curriculum to include a focus on child welfare leadership development. UB will also provide support for a successful transition to work and provide support to field educators at ECDSS, which will further aid in meeting the goals of establishing a stable, diverse and highly skilled workforce.

"Part of the grant is exciting because any of the graduates coming to either the county or the community will have a greater depth of knowledge and a skill-base to work in organizations that serve vulnerable children and families," Cannon said. "That will have a long-term impact, benefitting both the ECDSS, and every student who goes through that program."

The other piece of the organizational change is examining the agency's work through a racial equity lens. "Because we see a disproportionate number of minorities in the child welfare and juvenile justice system, we've begun training our high-level staff about the idea of racial equity and we'll build that in further," said Cannon.

Another aspect of the program opens it up to diverse students, those who might not have been able to afford school. "This aspect of the program provides advantages for the students, the school, the Department of Social Services and, most importantly benefits to the clients who are our children and our families," commented Cannon.

PARTNERING FOR CHANGE

This innovative program continues the longstanding partnership between the ECDSS and the UB School of Social Work. Solution-focused, trauma-informed care has been the focus for the past three years, and it has involved the entire ECDSS workforce of 1,600. UB social work faculty members Denise Krause, clinical professor and associate dean for Community Engagement and Alumni Relations, and Susan Green, clinical professor and co-director of the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, have been providing employee training on a regular basis.

Cannon adds that the workforce has come up with their own ideas to address trauma, including trauma-informed yoga, health mindfulness classes, wellness days and an annual wellness conference.

The wave of change is advancing the ECDSS system, which puts the commissioner in an encouraged frame of mind. "This is very ambitious, and I believe my team is very courageous," says Cannon. "The people who do this work want to do it well, and they want to see good outcomes for families."

My Own Experience Drives Every Decision



Marie Cannon, Commissioner of the Erie County Department of Social Services, is a UB School of Social Work alumna (MSW '91)

Born and raised in Buffalo, Marie Cannon grew up poor. "At the time, I actually felt some shame that we needed help," she recalled from when her family began receiving food stamps. "So when I think about this work, it is in terms of a family. I see kids' faces, and not just numbers because of my own experience. I can tell you that 146,000 people in Erie County receive SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps), but I see a Becky or a David. I know that every decision we make, policy-, regulation- or practice-wise, impacts a family. I've always known that I wanted to make a difference."

"When I think about this work, it is in terms of a family. I see kids' faces, and not just numbers because of my own experience."

— Marie Cannon

Motivated by a divorced mom who believed that education was key, Cannon earned scholarships and embarked on a career steeped in early child development and family engagement. "My life's work has been with children and families who live in poverty, who are marginalized and voiceless," she said.

Cannon came to the Erie County Department of Social Services in 2014 as first deputy commissioner. She was thrust into the acting commissioner role in December 2017 after a sudden resignation under trying circumstances.

She addressed the aftershocks within the agency with a stay-the-course attitude. "I spent the first three months just keeping it settled and focused because I don't believe you let the elephant stand in the room. You talk directly about what's happening," she noted.

To help formulate the message and subsequent actions, Cannon initially sent out a letter using the solution-focused, trauma-informed approach. "Because of the surprise and upheaval, the message for the people was that we will stay focused on our work. We did three months of conversations across the entire organization, gave people space to talk, then brought some solutions because we wanted to keep things as healthy and positive as possible."

Resisting the permanent commissioner's post initially, Cannon sought divine guidance when presented with the opportunity to take on the position. Her decision was made one morning, when she prayed and randomly opened her bible to a Proverbs passage that read, "Open your mouth, judge righteously and administer justice for the poor and needy." She was officially appointed commissioner by County Executive Mark Poloncarz in March 2018.

Looking back, Cannon summons a time when she sat on the other side of the table. "I know what the interactions felt like. I am honest and open and I think I am gaining the trust of our employees," she said. "I share my upbringing and why I see the work the way I see it, and why I am adamant about doing it better."

— J.B.

Classnotes



'70s

After five years of retirement, **Marja Coons-Torn, BSW '71**, accepted an interim position as team leader for Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization at the Church of Christ. She lives in Orchard Park, NY.

Joseph Monaco, MSW '73, LCSW, a U.S. Army veteran, retired from New York State service 22 years ago. For the past 10 years, he's run his private practice at WNY Psychotherapy Services. He resides in Orchard Park, NY.

Robert Boneberg, MSW '76, was recently named general counsel for the New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking. He lives in Maplewood, NJ.

Muffin Lord, MSW '76, retired from Rutgers University after almost 30 years as a dean for the honors program and scholarships. She resides in Highland Park, NJ.

Louis Moran, MSW '78, published a web exclusive article, "Abuse, Neglect, Coming Out, Helping Clients — Self-Reflections and Psychotherapy" in *Social Work Today*. He lives in Denver, CO.

'80s

Ellen Fink-Samnack, MSW '83, published two books, *The Essential Guide to Interprofessional Ethics in Healthcare Case Management* and *The Social Determinants of Health: Case Management's Next Frontier*. She resides in Virginia.

In his multi-track career, **David Gordon, MSW '83**, has held various positions at Baker Victory Services —including division administrator — for 28 years. He also operates a private practice, and is a consultant and trainer for AdoptionStar. He lives in Amherst, NY.

'90s

Pamela (Smith) Schasel, MSW '91, a licensed social worker and certified care manager, is a behavioral health care manager at TCD Medical. She lives in East Amherst, NY.

Dana Marlowe, MSW '92, was promoted to clinical professor and director of academic excellence and teaching innovation at the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University. She resides in Suffern, NY.

Patricia Nelson, MSW '92, retired after 20 years in private practice and other positions. Soon after, she returned to work, providing online mental health therapy for BetterHelp/Faithful Counseling. Nelson lives in Wilmington, NC.

Rosemary Sherman, MSW '92, is a social worker serving children and young adults through academic, residential and community outreach programs at Mary Cariola Children's Center in Rochester, NY, where she has been employed for 25 years.

Teri Browne, MSW '95, is an associate dean for faculty and research, associate professor and co-director of Interprofessional Education at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work. She is also the co-editor of *Handbook of Health Social Work*, 3rd Edition.

'00s

Roberta M. Bruni, MSW '00, is a clinical director at Tranquil Shores in Madeira Beach, FL.

William Korthals, MSW '00, a senior social worker in suicide prevention at the Myrtle Beach VA Clinic, is completing his yellow belt in Lean Six Sigma certification. He resides in Murrells Inlet, SC.

Julie (Skladanowski) Rosinski, MSW '01, a Certified Perinatal Mental Health Counselor in private practice, received a Women of Distinction Award from Assemblymember Patrick Burke of the 142nd Assembly District, for her work in providing therapy and community support for women and families affected by postpartum mood and anxiety disorders. Rosinski is also active with Buffalo Climb Out of the Darkness Walk for Postpartum Mental Health, the Western New York Postpartum Connection, and the WNY Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorders Task Force. She lives in Orchard Park, NY.

Juliana Corsaro-Plune, MSW '02, became an independent contractor for the private practice of Shurmatz Counseling, LCSW, PC, after 17 years with Niagara County Mental Health.

As a school social worker with the Genesee Valley Educational Partnership, **Dave Pascarella, MSW '02**, works primarily in an intensive therapeutic program for 8-12 graders. He successfully founded a therapy dog program, with a puppy named Maya, who is now 2 and a certified therapy dog. Check out her Instagram: @missmayapuppy. He lives in Rochester, NY.

Erica Gruppuso Samek, MSW '03, opened her own private practice, Healing Lives From Within, in 2013 in Hamburg, NY.

Lesley Kennedy, MSW '04, is the care manager for the University at Buffalo's Center for Excellence for Alzheimer's Disease in Western New York.

'10s

David A. Barker, MSW '10, was recently promoted as the HUD-VASH case manager at Coatesville VA Medical Center; in addition, he was appointed the minority veterans program coordinator. He resides in West Chester, PA.

Alicia Laible-Kenyon, MSW '10, was named Emerging Leader of the Year by Leadership Niagara, and is executive director of Elderwood Affiliates, Inc. in Buffalo, NY.

Barbara Falker-Crandall, MSW '11, is an addiction therapist 4 at Hope Haven in Batavia, NY and is also the director for the Impaired Driver program of Genesee and Orleans Counties.

Veronica Golden, MSW '11, is a hospital social worker in Buffalo, NY, and will be on the ballot in the November election on the Working Families Party line for the Masten District Councilmember seat.

Vincent T. Primiano, MSW '11, formerly an inpatient social worker at the New York State Office of Mental Health, recently became a clinical risk manager at Hutchings Psychiatric Center in Syracuse, NY. He is married to **Caitlyn (Lam) Primiano, MSW '11**, and they have four children.

Joelle Hall, MSW '12, a senior social worker at the University of Kentucky, works with adolescents and adults at a hospital behavior health unit.

Jamy Stammel, MSW '12, CPT, is assistant program director at BestSelf Behavior Health. She has completed numerous trainings, including basic EMDR and DBT (through Behavioral Tech). She is a "train the trainer" for Narcan Training, Celebrating Families, and Stop Abuse. She is also a campaign advisory board member for TIC1 Trauma Champions (Cohort 1 and Advanced Cohort). She resides in Cheektowaga, NY.

Junpyo Kim, MSW '13, a research professor at the Department of Preventive Medicine at Korea University, lives in Gyunggi-do, South Korea.

Nancy Kusmaul, PhD '13, an assistant professor at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, was selected as a 2019-2020 Health and Aging Policy Fellow.

Kathleen Witmer, MSW '13, a medical social worker at Hospice Buffalo, resides in Buffalo, NY.

Elizabeth Agnello, MSW '14, founded Brave Little Fighters Foundation in 2018, which provides free outings for seriously ill children (ages 4-18) and their families, to ease their difficult medical journeys. Outings have included visits to see the Harlem Globetrotters, Sabres, Bills, and concerts. To learn more or help, visit www.bravelittlefighters.org.

Emma Fabian, MSW '14, was promoted to senior director of harm reduction at Evergreen Health. She lives in Buffalo, NY.

Molly Wolf, PhD '14, MSW '07, was promoted to an associate professor at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.

Ema Beilke, MSW '15, is a social work case manager at Boulder Community Hospital, and lives in Louisville, CO.

Joseph D'Ambrosia, MSW '15, is a social worker at Catholic Health Center, working with unaccompanied children placed in foster care, many from Guatemala and Honduras. He resides in Rochester, NY.

Timmya Davis, MSW '15, served several years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Eswatini, and is now an immigration services office with US Citizenship and Immigration Services. She resides in Atlanta, GA.

Shannon Howley, JD/MSW '15, joined the Barclay Damon Buffalo offices and is an associate. She is a member of the Mass & Toxic Torts, Professional Liability, and Torts & Products Liability Defense Practice Areas.

Kaitlin (Incorvia) Tomasulo, MSW '15, was promoted to clinical director of Baker Victory Residential Treatment Facility in Lackawanna, NY.

Dior Lindsey, MSW '16, is a program coordinator at The Osborne Association, which recently opened a Buffalo office within the Community Health Center of Buffalo, originally only in New York City.

Brian Anderson, MSW '17, is a youth and family partnership care manager at Coordinated Care Services, Inc. in Rochester, NY.

Ryan Savino, MBA/MSW '17, senior counselor II at Horizon Health Services in Buffalo, NY, co-authored the book chapter, *Homelessness and health disparities: A health equity lens*, in the book *Homeless prevention and intervention in social work: Policies, programs, and practices*.

Heidi Billittier, MSW '18, is director of older adult services for Compeer of Greater Buffalo. Her article, "Impact of Social Isolation Among Older Adults Living with a Mental Health Diagnosis" appeared in *Behavioral Health News*, Spring 2019. She lives in Amherst, NY.

Brianna Bozeman, MSW '18, a licensed social worker, is a behavioral health care manager at TCD Medical in Amherst, NY.

Danielle Dylik, MSW '18, is a clinical therapist at Baker Victory Services in Lackawanna, NY.

Ashley Keagle, MSW '18, works at People Inc., where she created a position, director of life transitions, and founded a program that focuses on end of life care for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. She has received extensive training through the International End of Life Doula Association (INELDA), and as such, is passionate about end-of-life care as a human right. She lives in Cheektowaga, NY.

Emily (Hammer) Louisos, MSW '18, works with adolescents as a clinical therapist at Dominion Hospital in the Washington, DC area.

Kristy Miller, MSW '18, is a clinical social worker supervisor at Homespace Corp in Buffalo, NY.

Matthew L. Schwartz, MSW '18, a senior counselor II at Horizon Health Services, is also the founder of Food Gnomes, which is an LLC/Public Benefits Corporation functioning as a cooperative nonprofit. Learn more at www.foodgnomes.org.

Melissa Cirina, MSW '19, works at the International Institute of Buffalo as a case manager in trafficked youth. She lives in Buffalo, NY.

Aurora Linforth, MSW '19, is an inpatient social worker at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Strong Memorial Hospital.

Post-graduation, **Luis Maisonet, MSW '19**, went from MSW student intern at Say Yes to Education Buffalo during his advanced year placement, to the non-profit's newly hired Community School Navigator.

Shelby Spengler, MSW '19, a substance use counselor at Horizon Health Services, was hired before classes even ended, and credits UBSSW's mock interview opportunities, and other offerings for preparing her to succeed after graduation.

Asli Yalim, PhD '19, began her tenure track faculty position at the University of Central Florida School of Social Work in August. She resides in Tampa, FL.

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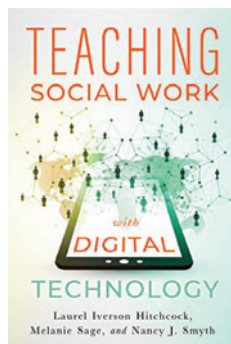
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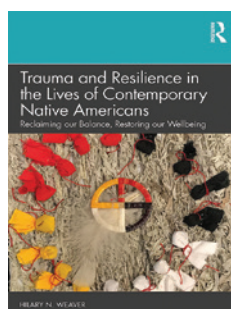
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