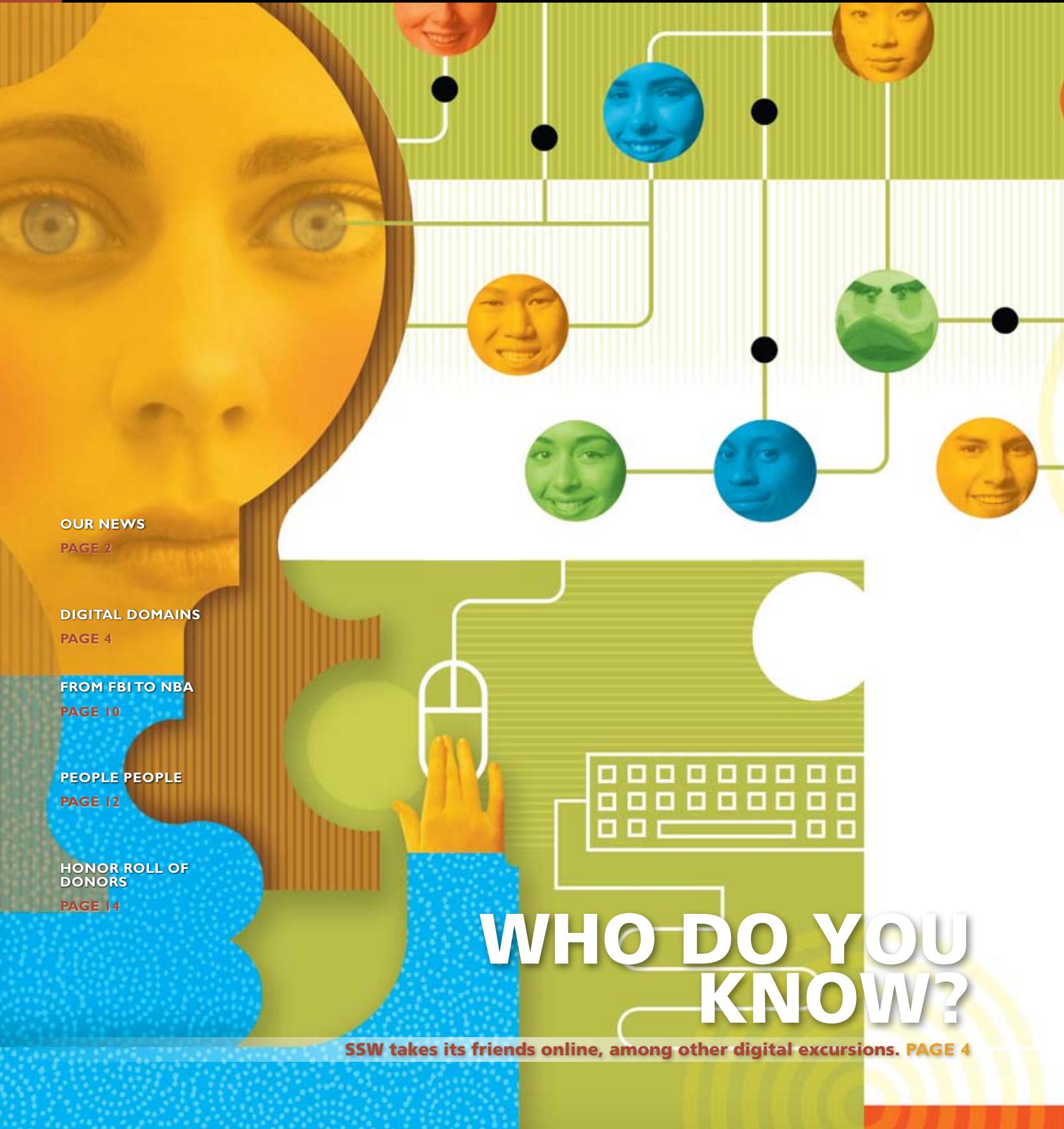


Mosaics

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3
SPRING 2009

News from the University at Buffalo School of Social Work



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Mosaics

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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 28,000 students pursue their academic interests through more than 300 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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School of Social Work
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Our News

Research on parade

The research strengths of the School of Social Work faculty, students and alumni were on prominent display in New Orleans at the Society for Social Work Research annual conference, Jan. 16-18.

According to Barbara Rittner, associate professor and director of the PhD program, the conference felt like a series of mini-reunions as bands played and SSW faculty and students connected with alumni John Bricout (MSW '94) (see story on Page 13), associate professor at the University of Central Florida; Paul Smokowski (MSW '95), associate professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; and Elaine Macchio (MSW '99, PhD '04) from Louisiana State University, Meri Stiles (MSW '00, PhD '06) from Lyndon State College, and Kelly Jackson (PhD '07) from Arizona State University, all assistant professors.

Melissa Affronti (PhD '09) presented at the conference, just weeks before her official graduation, as did PhD students Laura Greyber (MSW '07), presenting a poster with Hillside Family of Agencies CEO Bruce Nisbet (MSW '74), and Amy Manning (MSW '03), who presented at a well-attended paper session. SSW assistant professor Kelly Patterson, an urban planning specialist by training, made her first-ever presentation at a social work conference and found herself engaged in lively discussion about Section 8 housing and other factors associated with suburban flight. She was joined by faculty members Catherine Dulmus, Mansoor Kazi, Tom Nochajski and Gene Maguin in paper and poster presentations.

Extreme events expert joins faculty

Noted trauma expert Lisa D. Butler has joined the School of Social Work faculty. She was previously a senior research scholar at the Stanford University School of Medicine. Butler's work is familiar to trauma scholars around the world. She has been a regular presenter at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation, and the International Society for Traumatic Stress.

Butler has roots in the Buffalo area. She received her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto and her doctorate in psychology at Stanford. As a research scholar at Stanford, she was a co-investigator on eight funded research projects on trauma. Among them, Butler conducted an Internet-based national prospective study with Cheryl Koopman, also at Stanford, titled "What Love Has to Do With It: Altruism, Generativity, and Spirituality in the Aftermath of 9/11/01."

Celebrate the 75th

Please join us for a gala celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the School of Social Work.

Saturday, October 24, 2009

For information on cost and location, visit the anniversary celebration Web site at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/75th/gala/ or call 716-829-3991.

Limited seating and sponsorships available. Black tie optional.



FROM DEAN NANCY J. SMYTH

Few people seem to be aware that there is a shortage of social workers. Demand is up, the federal job outlook is projecting it as a growth profession for the next 10 years, and yet, as a profession, we are aging and haven't done well recruiting enough young people. Paradoxically, there are many young people who share the values of our profession who are not knowledgeable about social work. My theory is that part of the problem is our tendency to eschew technology, insisting proudly "we are people people." What we may be missing is that the growth of social media is not about interest in technology, it's about relationships and about access to information, both values that are core to our profession. By ignoring how technology is expanding the ways people connect, we are also failing to show up on the radar for the millennial generation, our best source of new recruits to our profession.

For this reason I have encouraged our faculty, staff and students to become leaders in how we use digital technology. In August 2008 we started a Facebook group for the school and already we have about 300 members (students, faculty, staff, alums, community members and friends). And in October we launched a school podcast on topics in social work that might be of interest to practitioners, researchers, and others. And, of course, we continue to offer some excellent online courses. This issue highlights some of our work on the new digital frontier. My hope is that it will pique your curiosity and that you'll explore what we're doing.

Hillside partners with Buffalo Center for Social Research

Hillside Family of Agencies, a large, comprehensive Western New York social services agency, has entered into a five-year research partnership with SSW's Buffalo Center for Social Research (BCSR). BCSR will assist Hillside in establishing and implementing a strategically focused research program that builds on the strengths of both BCSR and Hillside. As part of the collaboration, BCSR director Catherine Dulmus (MSW '91, PhD '99), who serves as principal investigator on the contract, and doctoral student Nicole Fava (MSW '08) will conduct an environmental scan to assess Hillside's existing research capacities and infrastructure needs and develop a training plan for Hillside staff to support the collaboration's research-to-practice and practice-to-research priorities.

Speaking internationally

Filomena Critelli (MSW '77), assistant professor, will present "Claiming the right to freedom from violence in Pakistan" at the fifth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry being held at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, May 20-23.

Larry Shulman, professor and dean emeritus, presented at the conference "Culture and Mental Health: Emerging Trends in Psychotherapy and Social Programs (International and Cuban Approaches)" in Cuba in February 2009. The conference was sponsored by the World Psychiatric Association.

Mansoor Kazi, research associate professor, convened a special interest group,

International Members of SSWR, at the Society for Social Work Research annual conference, New Orleans. In July, he will present "Realist Evaluation of Social Services: What Works and in What Circumstances," at the Fourth International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, at the University of Athens in Athens, Greece.

Nancy Smyth, SSW dean, delivered an address, "Social Work and Disaster Response: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina," at "Crisis as an Opportunity: Organizational and Professional Responses to Disaster," an international conference on trauma held at Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, Israel, sponsored by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Rutgers and Magen David Adom in Israel's International Institute. In the spring semester, Smyth will lead a small group of social work faculty and administrators on a visit to Amrita University in India to explore opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.

Rittner on domestic violence

Barbara Rittner, associate professor and director of the PhD program, recently appeared on New York State Supreme Court Judge Penny Wolfgang's radio show, "On Target," to discuss how domestic violence affects children. On Feb. 12, Rittner participated with a panel of national and international experts discussing "Drugs, Pregnancy and Parenting: What the Experts in Social Work Medicine and Law Have to Say," sponsored by National Advocates for Pregnant Women and the New York University School of Law and Silver School of Social Work. ■

**REACHING
OTHERS**

At the University at Buffalo, our purpose—our promise—is to reach others. It's a promise that knows no boundaries.
www.buffalo.edu/reachingothers

Nancy J. Smyth, PhD, LCSW



Have you ever listened to a podcast? Have you ever visited a social networking Web site like Facebook? If you answer No to either question, you are almost certainly over 30. And you're probably not alone—yet.

When Dean Nancy Smyth meets with her fellow 50- and 60-something UB deans, she's the one in the room with the best handle on new ways to use the Web and the Internet to extend her school's reach. She says the dean of engineering expresses mild chagrin that, at least at UB, social work is leading the way in these digital matters.

Actually, it makes sense. Engineers may have built the Internet and its proliferating digital facilities, but they don't have special insight into its social uses. For social workers, however, that's a home court advantage.

DIGITAL DOMAINS

PODCAST » FACEBOOK » ONLINE COURSES » SECOND LIFE

The stories that follow describe what the School of Social Work is doing with podcasts, the social networking site Facebook, the virtual world of Second Life and online education. The first three of these digital destinations didn't exist 10 years ago and the fourth, an updated version of distance learning, is so enhanced by the Internet and new digital technologies that it might as well be new.

The suddenness with which the Internet and the Web became ubiquitous doesn't mean this new kind of communication might be a passing phenomenon. What has sprung to life—a universally available technology that collapses distance and expands time—is as profoundly influential on the way we live as the invention of telecommunication.

Nancy Smyth bought her first computer in 1983 and she has kept up with the technology ever since simply by being open to what's new. She first looked at Facebook and Second Life after hearing about them from clients.

If you haven't been there yet, she says, Go there. The online world is becoming indispensable in social work practice. She's taking the school online. She wants you to come along.

» LOG ON, DOWNLOAD, GET SMART



Although social workers may joke about the profession's reputation as "late adopters" of new technologies, UB's School of Social Work recently broke out as the first adopter among its colleague schools of social work when it started posting podcasts on timely social work topics.

The school's march into this corner of online media makes available, to anyone in the world, a high-quality, professionally produced biweekly podcast—for the uninitiated, this is the equivalent of a radio program that can be downloaded from the Internet and played on demand—on social work issues featuring insightful conversations with prominent professionals, cutting-edge researchers and experts on emerging trends.

The series, titled "Living Proof," was launched in August 2008 in order to engage social work practitioners and researchers in lifelong learning and to promote "research to practice, practice to research." It's available online at the school's Web site, from iTunes and several other popular podcast subscription services.

"We are the first school of social work-sponsored podcast series," says Howard Dueck, professor and associate dean for faculty project development, who helps facilitate production of the series. "A number of schools have put together what they've

called podcasts, but they haven't really been an ongoing series."

The institutional support behind the podcast is reflected in both its professional sound—including catchy intro and outro music produced in-house by IT staffer Steve Sturman (see story on back cover) and a faculty host who formerly ran a community radio program in Portland, Ore.—as well as its scope and ambition.

"We want to reach social work researchers, practitioners and, hopefully, policy-makers," says Adjoa Robinson, the radio host-turned-assistant professor who serves as the voice of "Living Proof." "We would like to reach not only local audiences but an international audience."

Guests who've been featured in the series include such big names as Sandra Bloom, MD, co-creator of the influential Sanctuary Model, and Alex Gitterman, EdD, recipient of the Council on Social Work Education's 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award, as well as regional experts such as Hon. Lisa Bloch Rodwin, Family Court judge for Erie County, and several prominent UB professors.

The cutting-edge research and evidence-based practices highlighted by the series should not only appeal to academics, says Dueck, but also community professionals hoping to enhance their performance in the field.

"It's a way to raise our profile," he says. "I jokingly say we're reaching out intergalactically to anyone who's willing to listen."

Podcasts are also an excellent way to reach out to prospective students, says Robinson.

"We also want to connect with other folks who may not be as aware of social work, who maybe haven't thought about it as a profession," she says, "the younger generation that's coming up, that's more tech-savvy, more into podcasting."

So far, Sturman, who is an instructional design specialist for SSW, says the podcast's Web site has seen about 3,000 hits per week since its launch, with about 200 to 300 visitors downloading and listening to episodes. Visitors to the site range from across the U.S., as well as countries such as India, China and Vietnam.

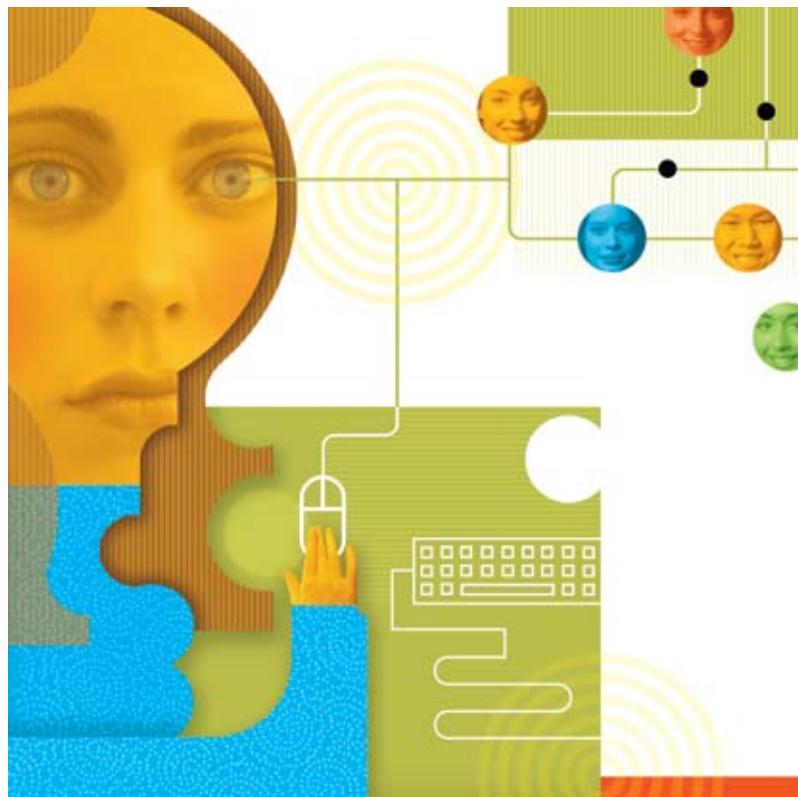
Podcast subscriptions should increase as more people learn about the series, he adds, pointing to a presentation on the sub-

ject that he and Doueck made during the 2008 Council on Social Work Education Conference in Philadelphia.

"There was a lot of good word of mouth about it at the conference," Doueck says. "Everyone was talking about it."

To hear the "Living Proof," visit <http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/podcast>. —Kevin Fryling

» THIS IS FACEBOOK. WHERE ARE YOU?



Social networking used to mean going somewhere people congregate to talk and talking about yourself or listening to someone talk about herself. Times have changed—a lot.

What used to be talking is now texting. What once was a resume neatly formatted to fit on one side of one piece of paper is now just as likely to be a MySpace, LinkedIn, or Facebook page. Social networking started as a high school and undergraduate phenomenon but it is rapidly becoming something everyone uses, from students to their parents, employers and now even organizations.

Social networking sites are both expanding and becoming specialized. The popular Facebook and MySpace are general-purpose sites; LinkedIn defines itself as a business networking site.

Another interesting phenomenon in the world of social networks is that while they may have originally started among local groups (Facebook takes its name from the books college freshmen use to identify each other), in the new reality, reports suggest that the vast majority of today's social networks are not local or even regional. In a social network, your friends may be people you will never meet face to face—or, in the case of that student who was so funny in your Interventions I class, ever meet again except in cyberspace.

Of course the School of Social Work has a Facebook page. The school may be a leader in applying electronic technologies to social work education; but this is an instance of conforming—everyone has a Facebook page. The school's page—"Living Proof: University at Buffalo School of Social Work" on facebook.com—was conceived as a venue for UB social work alumni and friends to network with each other, and for the school to expand its reach to other social workers, local, national and international.

Some visitors use it to continue to stay in touch with a favorite faculty member—the one who you always thought "got it." The school's Facebook page administrators also envision it as a way to let the community of alumni and friends know about new developments in interventions the school teaches. Indeed, the page could become a text adjunct to the Living Proof podcast series. In February, the page was hosting

a discussion initiated by a friend named Amber who was looking for advice on how to prepare for the LMSW. She got what she was looking for, including some tips from Dean Smyth, and reported later that she'd passed.

But more than any use, the school hopes that its Facebook page will become a true community, a place where friends can promote the profession, advertise positions, develop connections that lead to collaboration, boast about success, notify the community about marriages, births, and deaths, seek consolation over losses, explore regions for relocation or just travel. The options are endless. Knowing how creative social workers can be, the school is looking forward to seeing the ingenious uses to which its Facebook page will be put.

All this will be old news to Mosaics readers who use sites like Facebook daily, even hourly, at home, at work and even on the phone (thank you iPhone!).

The school's Facebook community currently has more than 300 members. If you aren't one of them, log on and sign up. Post what you're doing. Get into the ongoing conversation. Post information about other groups and organizations on the "wall" (if you don't know what that is, take a look at the site), link to the new SSW podcasts and school news and events, or simply check out the school and other members. It's time. —*Jessica Perkins*

» EVERYONE EQUALLY CLOSE



Because continuing education is part of the lifeblood of social work, the School of Social Work works hard to make high-quality courses available to practicing professionals wherever they are. Traditional students who want to learn on their own time, at their own pace, take advantage of the school's online offerings as well.

Learning by studying from distant locations commenced with reliable mail service in the mid-19th century and has jumped aboard each new technology, from radio to television to the Internet.

In spring 2009, SSW offers three courses that are completely online; two blended or "hybrid" courses in which a small percentage of time is spent in a traditional classroom; and two online workshops for social work professionals seeking continuing education credits. The school has a fourth online course in its catalog, not available this semester, and plans to launch another in fall 2009.

"For our students who live farther away, these courses have to do with travel and accessibility," says Denise Krause, clinical associate professor and associate dean for community engagement, who teaches both an online and hybrid course in SSW. "For others, who don't have a lot of travel, they want flexibility, which is attractive if they've got a lot going on in their lives."

The split between traditional and nontraditional students enrolled in online courses is about 50-50, she estimates, noting that about two thirds of the students in her classes could probably take a seated course, but still prefer to learn online.

In her hybrid course, Krause says students come from across the region, including Rochester, Corning, Jamestown, Pennsylvania and Canada.

Casting a wider virtual net, Barbara Rittner's online course in psychopathology is pulling in students from across the U.S. and even as far away as a U.S. Army base in Baghdad, Iraq. The course is recommended by the New York State Office of Professional Services as a good brush-up for the New York State licensing examination and, at an average enrollment approaching 100 students, it is the school's largest—so far.

Online courses also present educational opportunities otherwise unavailable under traditional learning models, says Catherine Dulmus, associate professor and associate dean for research. Dulmus is offering a new course this semester, Evidence-Based Mental Health Practice, in which students have the chance to learn from top experts in the field via videotape, including Bruce Thyer, a nationally recognized expert on evidence-based practice, and Michael Hogan, commissioner for the New York State Office of Mental Health.

"In order for practitioners, who might already have their MSW, to really have access to this cutting-edge information, I thought that it was critical that it be offered online," says Dulmus. "Your average person can't take off 14 Wednesdays in a row. I really think of it as a workforce development opportunity."

In addition to video lectures, Krause says the online courses use such tools as PowerPoint presentations, supplemental videos,

moderated chats and discussion boards, and online tests and quizzes, as well as the ultratraditional reading assignments. Students stay on track through a series of course modules, she adds, each of which must be mastered in order to progress to the next lesson. All class activities are conducted via the popular course management system BlackBoard.

"There are no sophisticated technologies that students have to learn," says Krause (although help materials are available). "The amount of e-mail I get on the technical aspects of the course has dwindled to almost none." —K.F.

» STEP THROUGH THE SCREEN

Blogging, podcasting and social networking have gained household word status, or close to it, just since the turn of the new century. Not satisfied with the relatively familiar, the School of Social Work is exploring the potential of a newer Internet phenomenon: Second Life.

Second Life, created by Linden Lab in 2003, is an online "virtual world" in which individuals create computer-generated characters, or "avatars," in order to navigate and interact inside a 3-D graphical environment. The software—and the world it supports—is available for free online, although like the real world, there are opportunities to earn and spend real money in Second Life. It is estimated that Second Life has 16.5 million denizens.

"I'm not a gamer, so before I got started [in Second Life], I thought, I'm just not interested," says Charles Syms, clinical associate professor, who began exploring the online platform for its educational potential at the request of Nancy Smyth, SSW dean. "But this is different because you're relating to people—interacting with people—from all over the world."

"The more time I spend with it," he adds, "the more I'm convinced that it does have some pedagogical utility."

Syms says that many major universities are already using Second Life as a teaching tool, including Princeton, Stanford, DePaul and Ohio State. Other kinds of organizations using Second Life as a tool include adoption agencies, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Cancer Institute and the Veterans Administration, the last of which uses the platform to conduct long-distance support groups for Iraq War veterans.

Syms was impressed when he learned that a Second Life course at Genesee Community College taught by Ellen Gilmour (who is a UB adjunct instructor) attracted 300 students.

"I was stunned when I heard that," says Syms, whose UB course, tentatively titled "Virtual Space and Applications for Social Work: Using Second Life in Education and Practice," is slated for the fall 2009 or spring 2010 semester.

In addition to curriculum development, Syms says his course will require establishing a robust SSW presence in Second Life, including acquiring virtual real estate (UB's Instructional Technology Services has virtual land holdings that it makes available to academic users) and constructing a building in which students can meet for classes and training and view presentations.

Among those to whom the class might appeal are commuter students, as well as social work practitioners with scheduling conflicts for traditional courses.

"A lot of schools are using Second Life as training or teaching places," says Syms. He sees great potential in the platform's avatar and real-time speech communication system for practicing client-worker interactions using role playing, rehearsing client assessments, and interviewing.

"One of the problems with role play," he says about traditional classroom exercises, "is that students often know one another. It's difficult to see that person as someone else."

But in Second Life, as elsewhere on the Internet, no one knows who you are. "If you're not seeing your actual colleague in front of you, the quality of your roles in a role-play situation might be different," says Syms. "It may influence the ways in which you relate in a pseudo-therapeutic setting."

In other words, you might just learn a little more in real life by knowing a little less about your partner using Second Life. —K.F.



Always a social worker at heart

From the FBI to the NBA, Bernard Tolbert, BS '71, MSW '73, retains the values of his first calling.

By Jim Bisco

WHILE Bernard Tolbert's career path has taken him to high-profile positions in law enforcement and security with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Basketball Association, he has never lost sight of his social work beginnings.

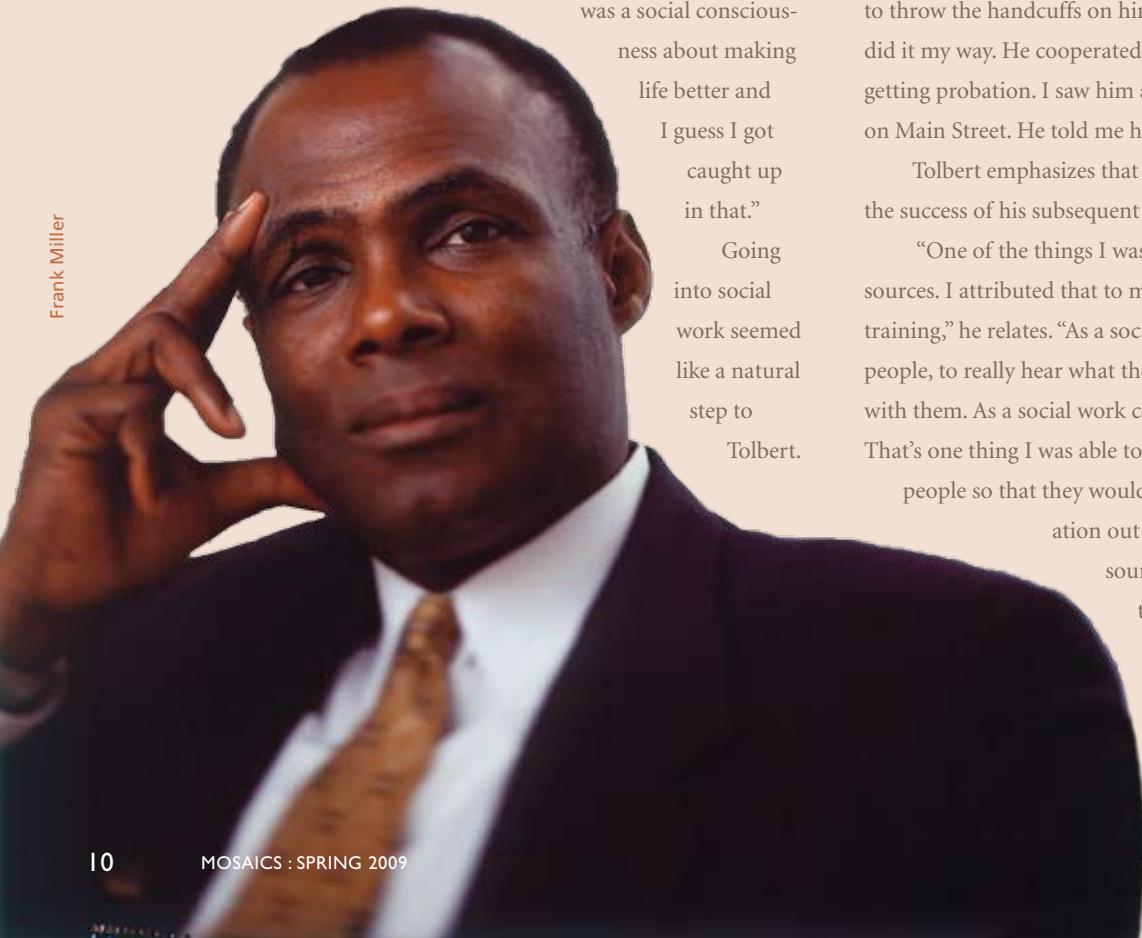
The Buffalo native originally came to UB with an eye toward becoming an engineer, but that soon changed when he became engaged in a field placement at Cradle Beach, a camp for disabled and disadvantaged children in Western New York. Cornelia Allen, associate professor in the School of Social Work at the time, was Tolbert's faculty advisor and director of caseworkers at the camp. Her dedication really impressed the meaning of social work on him.

"Another reason was the times," he says. "It was the '60s, the era of the Vietnam War. There

was a social consciousness about making life better and

I guess I got caught up in that."

Going into social work seemed like a natural step to Tolbert.



Frank Miller

His experience with special needs children got him a job teaching a class of boys with learning and behavioral disorders at a Buffalo high school. From 1975 to 1980 he was engaged in social work positions with several area agencies.

Then a career day at a local institution in 1980 set him on a new direction. A recruiter for the FBI persuaded him to join the organization. His mother felt that he was too sensitive to work for the FBI. But Tolbert prevailed, graduating from the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

Early in his career, Tolbert was accused by hardened veteran FBI agents of "being too much of a social worker." He recounts his first arrest: "An 18-year-old was part of a bank robbery gang. He decided he wanted to turn himself in at his mother's house but he didn't want any police cars, didn't want to be handcuffed. I agreed. The other law enforcers couldn't believe it. They wanted to throw the handcuffs on him and drag him out of there. But we did it my way. He cooperated and testified for us and ended up getting probation. I saw him about three years ago at a gas station on Main Street. He told me he was now a minister."

Tolbert emphasizes that social work played a major part in the success of his subsequent 21-year FBI career.

"One of the things I was pretty good at was developing sources. I attributed that to my social work background and training," he relates. "As a social worker, you learn to listen to people, to really hear what they're saying, and to communicate with them. As a social work counselor, you establish a trust. That's one thing I was able to do, to establish that trust with people so that they would talk to me. Right after my graduation out of Quantico, I was able to develop sources that gave me more information than a lot of guys who had been around (the FBI) for a long time."

He took the opportunity to inform jaded agents in the FBI

about the vicious cycle of being on public assistance. "I told them there's a lot of people who would love to be in better situations. If you're born into a family where your parents are on public assistance, sometimes it's hard to break that. It becomes what you know."

Tolbert recalls being part of a team that arrested a woman who robbed a bank because she wanted to buy toys for her kids for Christmas. "The law, of course, says you can't do that, but I felt so bad arresting her because she didn't really fit the profile of a bank robber. She was a nice mother. I was almost in tears. We had to take her freedom away and send her to jail. We had to take the toys and ruin the kids' Christmas. For me, I think it was that kind of compassion that kept me well grounded and kept me from becoming one of those guys who were crusty and hardened. I never once arrested anyone that I didn't feel very bad for at the time of the arrest. Even guys who were supposedly hardened criminals. Their lives were going to change forever."

Tolbert's FBI career

included supervisory special agent in the intelligence division at FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., and supervisor of all foreign counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and civil rights investigations in Western New York.

As special agent in charge of the Buffalo office, he played a significant role in the investigation of the 1998 murder of physician Barnett Slepian. The high-profile case brought national and international recognition to the Buffalo office.

The elusive killer, James Kopp, entered the FBI's Most Wanted list.

"I got to know Lynne Slepian very well. I made a commitment to her that we were going to catch the person who did this," Tolbert recalls. "How could I be so sure? I really wasn't but I wanted to let her know that we wouldn't spare any resources and would leave no stone unturned. Fortunately, we were able to catch him."

Tolbert has been the recipient of many awards, including the Black Achievers in Industry Award on two separate occasions, and the Heroes of Public Housing Award. In 2001, he received

the Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Achievement as one of the U.S. government's top senior executives, an honor bestowed on him by the White House.

Tolbert decided to retire from the FBI in 2001, but, feeling he was too young to sit and do nothing, he moved into security management, first for Coca-Cola in Atlanta, then with HSBC Bank in Buffalo, before the NBA invited him to become senior vice president for security in 2002.

Today, Tolbert keeps watch on the more than 1,300 games played each year, maintaining rules and guidelines for players, staff and fans as he protects the NBA brand, image and reputation. The job can be demanding, he says, year-round. In the summer, the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program of clinics

and exhibition games in foreign countries requires security management that must adapt to different cultures.

Again, Tolbert says his social work sensibilities are present in the way he approaches his managerial responsibilities with the NBA and how he works

with people who have problems and issues.

Tolbert's ties to Buffalo remain close. He continues his 50-year association with Cradle Beach, in addition to his extensive service with many community organizations like the United Way, the Erie County Department of Youth Services, and Kids Escaping Drugs.

Although he is now based in New York City, Tolbert still calls Buffalo home. Two of his three children are teachers in Buffalo and his youngest is a college student here.

The university holds a special place in his heart. He is on the board of directors of UB's Alumni Association, and is enshrined in the UB Athletics Hall of Fame for his record-setting track feats as a student.

When he appears as the keynote speaker at the School of Social Work's Alumni Day in March, Tolbert says he will recognize the values of social work in many aspects of life, and how it has provided a framework for his career—an exemplary career guided by the principles of social work that were ingrained in him at UB. ■

People People

Alumni Association News

We're 75 years old...



For 75 years, our graduates have been making a difference in peoples' lives in Western New York, the nation, and beyond through their strong commitment to changing communities for the better. Now, as we begin preparations to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the school, this is a good time to reflect on the past, to reconnect in the present, and to envision the future.

Networking has always been an important part of what social workers do, and now many alumni are using digital technology to connect on Facebook, MySpace and other social networking Web sites. By making such connections, our alumni can stay in touch, support and advise each other, and open windows on their lives for the SSW alumni community.

This is an especially exciting year. We want alumni to reconnect with us whether on our Facebook page or by joining us for Alumni Day at the Buffalo Niagara Marriott on March 26 when we will hear from three outstanding alumni: Bernie Tolbert (who is profiled on Page 10 in this issue of *Mosaics*), Ellen Fink-Samnick and Christine Rine.

This year the school will graduate the 74th class of social workers, kicking off the 75th year of educating students and enriching the lives of those to whom our graduates dedicate their careers.

As alumni and social workers, you are a critical asset for our students. There has rarely been a time when funding for students has been so hard to find. We are counting on our alumni family to keep the needs of the school and our students in mind during this special anniversary year.

Today's students will soon be your fellow alumni. Show them how to give back.

Rita M. Andolina, MSW '88
Chair, UB School of Social Work Alumni Committee

...and thoroughly up-to-date.



I admit I'm not technologically savvy—but when did I fall behind?

I am doing my best to convert from cassette tapes to an iPod; from Pong to the X-Box and Wii. I called my friends from a rotary phone on my kitchen wall; now I carry two cell

phones and I text. I am making progress.

I may belong to the last generation to graduate from high school looking things up in card catalogs. I even made it through graduate school on an electric typewriter.

I am proud that the University at Buffalo School of Social Work is the front wave of change. Our faculty has been using Blackboard and online course delivery for years. We're setting the standard for other social work programs with our podcast series, RSS feeds and Facebook page. Our students are learning how to use these and other technologies to provide social work services.

I encourage you too to take advantage of our free RSS feeds, podcasts and Facebook page available through our Web site at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu.

Here's a quick quiz. You could benefit from a technological upgrade if....

- Wiki, pokes and twitters sound like dances you did in your youth.

- Bluetooth is something to call a dentist about.
- You think a notebook is spiral bound and comes with tear-out pages.

- You believe a Dell is where a farmer lives and an Apple is just a piece of fruit.

Don't worry, it's not too late for any of us! Let the School of Social Work help you stay connected.

Kathryn Kendall, MSW '95
Director of Recruitment and Alumni Relations

RESEARCH BRINGS SSW ALUMNUS FULL CIRCLE

JOHN BRICOUT, MSW '94, has spent his pre- and postdoctoral career involved with rehabilitation research that rests on a foundation in social work. From the UB MSW program he went to Virginia Commonwealth University where he completed a PhD in 1998 and was awarded a postdoctoral research fellowship funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. At Washington University in St. Louis, he was associate professor of both social work and occupational therapy before relocating to the University of Central Florida's (UCF) School of Social Work, where he is associate director of research and coordinates the social work track in the public affairs doctoral program.

Bricout is leading a multidisciplinary research team of experts and graduate students in communication science disorders, occupational therapy, education and social work.

"We wanted to look at cooperative, virtual learning environ-



ments designed especially for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) students with disabilities," Bricout says. Because the virtual learning environment supports role-plays that incorporate cognitive behavioral "scaffolding" (the highlighting of key experiences and skills), it could improve employment outcomes.

Bricout is currently writing a grant proposal with UB School of Social Work research associate professor Mansoor Kazi and Susan Nocajski, from the rehabilitation science department in the UB School of Public Health and Health Professions, for a National Science Foundation program. If the grant is funded, the three will begin using assistive technologies such as specially programmed hand-held PDAs to further the cooperative learning models begun at UCF.

"Social work lends itself well to interdisciplinary research like this," Bricout says.

Our heartfelt thanks

In this issue of Mosaics, the School of Social Work thanks the many alumni, friends, foundations and corporations who have made financial contributions either as gifts or as grants for sponsored research between July 1, 2007, and June 30, 2008. Their names appear on the next two pages.

We produce leaders in social work education, research, direct practice and community service. And your generosity enhances everything we do.

It is important to appreciate what it means these days to be a public institution. In past years UB received much of its funding through state support, and some of that funding supported financial aid for students. Today, UB receives less than 25 percent of its funding from the state, and those funds are used primarily for general operating expenses.

Like our peer private educational institutions, public universities and colleges must now raise private support to bridge the gap between limited state funds and the cost of educating future social workers. It is our responsibility to provide opportunities for every qualified applicant.

We need your investment in the students we train—in our collective future. One of my goals as director of development is to assist the dean with her vision to create an unrestricted student support fund to support student needs at the school's discretion, including through scholarships and research assistantships.

We are a leading school of social work in an excellent university and we compete nationally for our students. But we are losing the very best students to schools that can offer better financial aid packages. If we are to attract the finest students to come to and remain in our region and state, greater flexible financial aid is critical.

We are committed to raising more money for scholarships and student support, and I am confident that we—all of us together—can do it.


MINNIE WYSE,
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT



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BEHIND THE CURTAIN: TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

A year ago, Dean Nancy Smyth gave Richard Amantia and his staff the green light to expand the School of Social Work digital presence. The results are the subject of the story that begins on Page 4 in this issue of *Mosaics*.

Since the go-ahead, Amantia, interim director of technology services; Steven Sturman, instructional support specialist; Debbie Hill, client support specialist; and Dave Coppola, Web developer, have been on overdrive adding cutting-edge electronic tools for students, faculty and staff. They've earned the school some serious "geek" credibility beyond UB.

Several years ago, the team cut its teeth building course templates tailored to Blackboard, UB's Web-based learning interface. These "shells" as they're called in the business are used to house online credit and continuing education courses. Sturman works with faculty to design the online versions of the courses. Most students are from UB, but more registrants are coming in from across the U.S. and around the world.

For the podcasts, Sturman records "intros" and "outros" with a high-end digital recorder and captures guest conversations using Skype, a type of Internet phone service. He adds music

and edits everything with Garage Band, Apple's audio authoring software. He gets occasional help from fellow podcasters in the UB Law School.

"We try to standardize all of our Web and new media products, to stay consistent," Amantia says. That includes RSS feeds, XML, and other open-source technology, as well as teaching tools like wikis and YouTube videos.

Amantia's team designed the Living Proof podcast logo and has been promoting the brand at conferences. Now they focus more on production quality than troubleshooting. "We want it to be professional and interesting, and the feedback has been very positive," Amantia says. "We can upload a podcast in 15 minutes, plus editing time."

The school's two Facebook pages allow faculty and students to post comments and view events automatically generated from the school's Web site. The online community Second Life is being explored as a future site for educational role-playing exercises. "We're trying to develop a good delivery system," Sturman says.