

# MOSAICS



## Danceability

*Robin Bishop, MSW '06, co-founded an inclusive dance studio – where people of all ages and abilities are gaining community and confidence.*

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## Social Impact Fellows

*Through this innovative program, a pair of students – from the MSW and MBA programs – teamed up to help improve workplace safety at a for-profit business.*



## Celebration of Social Work

*A memorable evening – alumni awards and a new chance for students to make an impact.*

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# News of the SCHOOL

## COMINGS & GOINGS

After 11 years as front office coordinator **Darleen Ford** is retiring. Ford brought professionalism, procedures and a smile to the main office.

**Thomas Ulbrich** accepted the position of assistant dean, entrepreneurship and social innovation initiatives, a jointly funded role with the schools of Social Work and Management.

## PROMOTIONS

**Susan A. Green, MSW '88**, was promoted to clinical professor. In her 20+ years of experience, she has taught a wide variety of social work classes as well as worked with various groups and individuals. Green's professional interests include trauma, trauma treatment, integration of a solution focused approach with a trauma-informed system, resilience and post-traumatic growth. As co-director of the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, she focuses on these areas along with building training courses for educators and social workers. She is certified in various individual and group trauma treatments. Among her many awards, Green has received the Buffalo Blue Sky Gold Coin (2018), and in 2017 was the UBSSW Faculty of the Year.

## ALUMNI NEWS

**Alicia M. Laible-Kenyon, MSW '10**, was named Elderwood Administrative Services Employee of the Year, recognizing her commitment to quality, employee engagement and community leadership. Laible-Kenyon is executive director for Elderwood Health Plan, a Western New York managed long-term care plan. "Alicia embodies the core values of integrity, collaboration, accountability, respect and excellence," said Dr. Jeffrey Rubin, Elderwood's co-chief executive officer.

After **Jackie McGinley, PhD '18**, created an award for students working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Research Professor Thomas Nochajski was inspired to endow the award in honor of his late wife, Dr. Susan Nochajski, a clinical associate professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and director of the Occupational Therapy Program. The Susan Nochajski and Jacqueline McGinley Excellence in Disability Practice Award will be presented to both an MSW student and an OT student. Nominations may be made by faculty, field educators, field liaisons and fellow students.

## NATIONAL NEWS

Assistant Professors **Annette Semanchin Jones, Elizabeth Bowen** and **Annahita Ball** made national news for their research on how young adults' experiences with homelessness and maltreatment impacted their time in school, and what the adults in their lives could do to have a positive impact. Their research was reported on various news outlets including Futurity, Social Work Helper, Science Daily and PhysOrg.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

In December, 17 Western New York social work supervisors graduated from "Social Work Practice Fellows (SWPF): A Professional Development Program for Social Work Supervisors of Direct Practice across the Life Course." The **UBSSW Office of Continuing Education** offered this six-day certificate program; it's part of a multi-site initiative coordinated by Adelphi University faculty with support from the Health Foundation of Western & Central New York and the Florence V. Burden Foundation.



## FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

Clinical Professor and the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care (ITTIC) Co-director **Susan Green** and ITTIC Project Manager **Samantha Koury, MSW '15**, represented ITTIC at the New York Public Welfare Association's Social Services Leadership and Policy Forum in Albany in October 2018. They discussed ITTIC's trauma-informed organizational model and provided details about the approach's application. ITTIC is a leader in promoting trauma-informed care; its work has been fundamental in helping Allegany County to become the first New York county to pass a trauma-informed policy resolution. **Vicki Grant, MSW '05**, commissioner of the Allegany County Department of Social Services, collaborated in the creation of the Allegany County policy resolution, and was crucial to its being approved.

Clinical Assistant Professor **Katie McClain-Meeder, MSW '12**, is committed to social work and ecologically responsible food production. Combining social work values and responsible food production and food access throughout her professional and personal life, McClain-Meeder believes that small scale, local, responsibly grown food is consistent with social work values – and is vital for both environmental and community health. She and her partner, an expert in agriculture and market gardening, started Little Bear Farm, where they've been growing and selling vegetables and eggs locally for three years. Read the full UBNow story <https://tinyurl.com/mcclain-meeder>.

**Nancy J. Smyth**, dean and professor, has been recognized as a mentor through the CSWE Council on the Role and Status of Women in Social Work Education Mentor Recognition Program; she was acknowledged for this honor by Robin Hartinger-Saunders, PhD '08, MSW '97, Elaine M. Maccio, Elaine S. Rinfrette, PhD '04, MSW '98 and Kimberley M. Zittel-Barr, PhD '03, '94. Congratulations, Dean Smyth!

## GLOBAL & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



**Laura Lewis**, UBSSW assistant dean for global partnerships and director of field education, received a Fulbright Scholar Award, which allowed her to travel to the International Education Administrators program in France last fall. The program is designed to help U.S. international education professionals and senior higher education officials create connections with the societal, cultural and higher education systems of other countries. During her trip, she presented to several French institutions on the School of Social Work's model of virtual or online classroom exchange. She visited seven universities in France and met with social work faculty from several Belgian universities. Lewis anticipates continuing these talks to explore opportunities for collaboration.

UBSSW faculty **Kelly Patterson, Filomena Critelli** and **Laura Lewis** visited Haiti for the fourth time in Fall 2018 as a continuation of a community needs assessment in partnership with SUNY New Paltz, University of Albany and the Haiti Development Institute. Their work there includes social work workforce development—enrichment activities for youth, expanding women's entrepreneurial skills and helping to develop a degree path for social work by supporting a fledgling school of social work in Haiti. Reciprocal partners in Haiti include government officials, higher education institutions and social service programs. After helping to develop the curriculum and supporting the program through the accreditation process, the UB team will help deliver social work course modules to students.



## FROM DEAN NANCY J. SMYTH

The concept of “social innovation” may puzzle many social workers, who may feel they have been developing innovative social solutions their whole careers. I've learned that only a small percentage of alumni and peers are tracking the far-ranging global social innovation movement, which is often dominated by disciplines having nothing to do with social work.

When our school moved into this arena a few years ago, we sent some faculty to a national social innovation conference; they came back passionately saying, “We have to be in this space. They're working on all of the issues we're concerned about.” Another viewpoint they brought back is that many domestic-based social innovation projects could benefit from having the complexity of understanding the social problems that social workers bring to the table.

The world is filled with well-intentioned people offering solutions to social issues. But because the problems are complex, and not just one discipline's to solve, the path to an effective, sustaining solution is to have social work play a key role at the interdisciplinary table. Our integral participation in interdisciplinary social innovation projects needs to start now.

While all social workers work creatively and collaboratively, we are missing a larger opportunity by not sharing our knowledge, values and perspective with the international and national interdisciplinary spaces where much of social innovation is happening now.

It can be challenging to veer from the path we've taken to explore a cross-disciplinary approach with new partners in new spaces. What does it mean for those with a social work perspective to take a co-design approach to innovation with colleagues in business, engineering or urban planning? How can it be done in a way that also preserves our values and understanding of vulnerable populations?

Assistant Professor Betsy Bowen, featured in this issue, talks about her social innovation journey, that is, moving from healthy skepticism to appreciation for what can be learned from this perspective and in engaging new partners in new spaces. Her story helps us all consider how we might continue to challenge the status quo in new ways.



  
NANCY J. SMYTH, PHD, LCSW

# MOSAICS

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# Q&A

## “Innovation” – it doesn’t have to be a dirty word

Interview conducted and edited by  
Jana Eisenberg

In the spring of 2018, Assistant Professor Betsy Bowen wrote a guest blog post for the National Center for Excellence in Homeless Services, where she discussed innovation in the context of homelessness services. The article, widely read, made us start thinking about the word “innovation,” which in Bowen’s piece, she refers to at least once as “the ‘i’ word.”

Since the word, if not the practice, of “innovation” has become frequently used in both corporate and nonprofit settings, we thought it bore a bit more discussion. Read on for an edited version of our conversation with Bowen.

**Q Jana Eisenberg:** Why did you feel you needed to write about innovation in this context—and why did you call it “the ‘i’ word”?

**A Betsy Bowen:** I was calling out my own healthy skepticism; not that innovation as a whole is a bad thing, but as a buzz word people can throw it around without thinking of what they really mean. Then the word can become meaningless. The blog post came out of my reflection on that.

The starting point was the combination of my background as a practitioner and a course I co-taught during our Social Impact Fellows program. I was thinking about how the word is used in social work. When someone says, “You need to innovate XYZ,” it can sound like they’re saying that what you are doing isn’t good enough. So, sometimes when I hear it, I can feel a little defensive.

**Q JE:** How can innovation be discussed, especially in sensitive areas like working with homelessness services, without causing that sometimes-defensive reaction?

**A BB:** True innovation includes asking the right questions of the right people. You need to listen to the people most directly affected by the problem. Before the word and the notion of “innovation” became so prevalent, social workers already thought in terms of things like systems change—that’s one of the things that distinguishes social work from other fields. We think about how changing one part will change the whole.

A good example of this is the Housing First model, which has since transformed the field of homelessness services. Through advocacy, and listening to clients, the model of providing housing for people experiencing homelessness was flipped. Instead of requiring that they be clean and sober in order to have access to housing, this innovation emphasizes getting people into housing first, and then helping them stabilize in other ways with access to services.

**Q JE:** Some definitions refer to collaboration (as part of innovation) as a “new competitive advantage.”

**A BB:** The idea of collaboration is certainly not new to social workers. What’s new may be bringing collaboration to new spaces and types of partnerships. Collaboration, like innovation, is core to what social workers do. It can be beneficial to have partnerships between systems, government, and nonprofit and for-profit agencies. Ideally, it’s happening, and working to everyone’s benefit, but, mostly due to lack of resources, it doesn’t always happen as fully as it could.

A lot of my research, for example, has to do with young people who have experienced homelessness. My colleagues Annette Semanchin Jones and Annahita Ball study child welfare and education respectively, and what we realized in talking with each other is that it’s often the same children experiencing homelessness, dealing with the child welfare system and having trouble in school; all the systems know it—and they may even have good intentions of coordinating services. But, because of a lack of resources, the collaboration that would best serve these kids often isn’t there.

**Q JE:** Outside of the social work world, for example in politics, it seems like people are trying to “innovate” on topics/systems they don’t know a lot about. It’s also popular to turn to technology—“we need an app!”—to solve the problem.

**A BB:** There are technology solutions that can help, say with addressing homelessness—but most are not going to solve the root of the issue. Like I said, a lot of it is resources. Providers are overwhelmed; if you are a social worker with an 800-kid caseload, it’s hard enough to just do your job. Social workers know that good collaboration is about relationships, trust and good communication; our research is showing that it’s hard to have those elements when you are overwhelmed.

**Q JE:** We’re hearing you say that to achieve innovation and collaboration, it can be a long road and takes many competent hands.

**A BB:** Yes. Maybe part of innovation is simply realizing you don’t have to accept the status quo. Also right-sizing innovation doesn’t necessarily start with thinking that you are going to change the whole system, it can start with one program.

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# WE HEARD FROM YOU ABOUT HOW YOU

# MSW

| by Jana Eisenberg

Our feature story in the Fall 2018 issue of *Mosaics* about MSWs working in non-traditional social work careers and fields resonated with a lot of you—we got a great range of responses. Here are highlights from a few of them:

## A FARMER WITH EMPATHY AND AN APPETITE FOR FOOD JUSTICE

Andrea Grom, MSW '05, is an organic vegetable farmer—after she got hooked on farming during grad school, she stuck with it, and now works at Windflower Farm in upstate NY. The community supported agriculture (CSA) vegetable farm has over 1,000 members who live in New York City.

For Grom, organic farming is not just about growing delicious food in sustainable ways. Along with the farm's owners, Ted and Jan Blomgren, she believes that everyone should have access to that food.

"Like social work, farming has rewards and challenges. My interest in macro social work is fed through my advocacy for food justice," she wrote in response to the article. "I work closely with our New York City site coordinators and membership to make sure [CSA] members with lower incomes have access to our produce via sliding scales, donations and SNAP. I also deliver perishable produce to our local food pantry, making sure that nothing goes to waste."

Her ability to view people—both members and colleagues—through the lens of "where they're at" also reflects her social work background.

She empathizes with farmers, who as a group face many stressors, and, for many reasons, including how hard they work and how tight their funds can be, are among the least likely to seek help in relieving those stresses. "When I sit down with farmer friends, I feel like I'm a social worker—in a good way," she said, of her ability to listen and provide emotional support at some level.

She is also acutely aware of the bigger policy issues in the national conversation about immigration, considering that many farmers employ migrant workers—some from other countries, who are here through the H2A visa program.

She sees that migrant population—hard-working, highly skilled people—as deserving to be treated well. "They are trying to make ends meet and work hard like anyone else," said Grom. "If more people got to know them and what their needs are, there would be more understanding overall regarding immigration in general."

"It's like a family on the farm," she said. "The culture is inclusive and respectful; a lot of that because of the boss. We each make contributions, and it wouldn't work without any of us."

## A LIFETIME OF PARTICIPATION MAY LEAD TO A LIFE IN POLITICS

While Veronica Golden, MSW '11, does have a traditional social work job in Erie County Medical Center's outpatient dialysis unit, her path seems to have been written much earlier—and (possibly) headed in a different direction. In addition to her "day job," Golden is a twice-elected Erie County Democratic Committee member who also sits on the Erie County Youth Board.

Her lifelong experience with volunteer work and being involved in the community has contributed to Golden's current mindset. When she first started college, she thought she'd be a nurse. By the time she got her bachelor's, she was majoring in health and human services. During her undergraduate work, she did two terms with AmeriCorps, and ended up working at the City of Buffalo's Division of Citizen Services. Among other things, that office handles quality of life calls about things like broken street lamps and unsafe sidewalks.

"If someone can't push their stroller on the sidewalk because it's cracked and broken, they walk in the street," she said. "Then it's more likely that they will get hit by a car." With this view, she sees cultural and social problems as being solvable by virtue of being "little things," and, she said, "working on the little things can lead to greater outcomes."

Her political involvement has further opened her eyes to the impact of policy and legislation. "It's important to stay on top of what's going on in the community as a whole at the county, state and federal level because the effect always trickles down to the individual, and also has an effect on what we as social workers do. I like to be at the table—I'm involved in block clubs and attend community events," she said. "If the opportunity arises, I might like to be

more involved with government and politics, legislation and decisions."

## A WINDING ROAD LED TO HIS CALLING

By the time he was studying for his MSW, at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, Drew Mendoza, BSW '77, knew that he had a variety of interests. After his early career, which included urban planning and going into (and burning out on) the restaurant and food business, Mendoza got a job as an executive recruiter in the hospitality industry.

This circuitous route led to Mendoza eventually finding his passion. He's now managing principal at The Family Business Consulting Group, a company that works with families to facilitate all levels of planning and communication.

"Communication is one of the cornerstones of successful multigenerational family businesses," said Mendoza. "Our clients view me as a neutral yet interested and committed professional—they rely on my ability to help with conversations among family members."

His social work education—learning about communities and systems—helps him understand the inner workings of families, as well. "Members of families who own businesses can have powerful bonds," he said. "I'm able to ask questions as they relate to family relations."

Mendoza has worked in this field for over 25 years. "I estimate that the number of people employed by the family businesses that we've served in that time is over 1.25 million," he said. "We've worked with these families to create healthy communities of people who have jobs. That huge impact is similar to the impact that administrative social workers can have."

He also notes the need for more social workers or those with a social work mindset to also learn something about business and/or the law, and to apply their combined knowledge and skills in varied sectors—especially in finance.

"It's difficult finding people with that perspective and training and who understand aspects of business, like sales, corporate governance and strategy," said Mendoza. "It's a huge gap. Most professionals have a pretty narrow focus—therapists, lawyers, CPAs...it's great to have advisors who get the different pieces. When you think about having an impact on our society, it's an area where social workers could be having a great effect."





Robin Bishop, MSW '06,  
Elissa Webster, MSW '12,  
Morgan Bauer, BA/MSW '19

# A DANCING SOCIAL WORKER, AN INCLUSIVE DANCE STUDIO

## DANCEABILITY, CREATING COMMUNITY AND CONFIDENCE

| by Jana Eisenberg

It's not much of a stretch to observe how deeply Robin Bishop, MSW '06, integrates her social work training and instincts into the dance studio that she co-founded in 2007. The studio, a nonprofit, is called Danceability, and it specializes in programs—including classes, instruction, performances and community-building—for children and adults with special needs and their parents or caregivers.

Bishop's lifelong involvement with dance, combined with her abiding interest in volunteerism, drove her career to where she is today: running a nonprofit that fills a clearly identified need and has grown continually, increasing the size of its facility, staff and programs since its founding 12 years ago.

Like many an MSW, this was not her intended path, though she'd been a dancer and dance instructor throughout most of her life. Earlier in her career, during stints at Catholic Charities, Renaissance Campus and Hospice, she said, "people kept honing in on my dance background. It was somehow incorporated into everything I did."

Combined with her training, interest and experience, her education provides a deep well from which she can draw for her work. Bishop holds dual undergraduate degrees in dance/health and human services and her MSW. She has also completed dance therapy coursework.

The business started after Bishop identified the demand. "I'd started hearing about people wanting a dance studio for kids with special needs that also had a family focus," she said. "Being a dancer, dance teacher and social worker, I knew I could offer that—both the dance and figuring out how to improve dancers' lives as a whole."

After she identified the basic need, the fact that she and her business partner had no experience running a business didn't stop them from accepting what seemed to be the inevitable. As they started thinking about it and talking to people, "doors kept opening."

With all the positive responses, they ended up on hyper-speed: in the space of six months, they got a business mentor through SCORE Buffalo, wrote a business plan, formed a board of directors, found a space and through a pre-Kickstarter grassroots fundraiser asking friends and family for \$5 per donation, raised exactly enough money to secure the location.

Signing up their first group of dancers in 2007, Danceability is more than answering the call that Bishop heard 12 years ago.

How are they able to accommodate the various levels of needs and abilities? Bishop says it's no secret, and takes a page from the social work playbook to create the accepting, respectful and inclusive environment that Danceability has

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- Robin Bishop  
”—

for the dancers (girls and boys, women and men), parents and caregivers whom it serves.

First, comes assessment. "We focus on the individual—learn their likes, dislikes and abilities," she said. "We analyze who each person is, and think about which other students they might mesh with. Then we use that information to add them to an existing class or create a class for them. We set goals for each dancer each year, and then see what they meet. Every year, each dancer is reassessed, considering what might have changed with their schooling, health, medications, home life, etc."

The dance sessions have elements of traditional dance classes; they also can have farther-reaching effects. "While students are here, they're also learning things like social skills, appropriate boundaries and posture—all that translates into life. It can help improve behaviors and build confidence," she said.

Like a typical dance studio, there is tuition, though through individual and corporate donations and sponsorships, Danceability funds 20% of their dancers with scholarships. The business is not funded by any state or federal grant money, operating on a low budget and occasionally hosting fundraisers to keep things going.

Danceability is able to provide one-on-one work because of their volunteer system. "Each class has a teacher, who is leading the



class. Then each dancer has a volunteer with them during class. The volunteers can be cheerleaders, seeing that the dancers are working hard, getting a step for example. They give and get hugs and smiles.” (See sidebar for a story on one of the volunteers, Morgan Bauer, BA/MSW ‘19.)

Family support and community-building are huge parts of the process, affirms Bishop. “We had a newer dancer, a girl under 10 years old—she started exhibiting negative behaviors,” said Bishop. “Her mom was apologizing for the behavior—I thought that the mom could use more support. I asked another ‘veteran’ dance mom to connect with the newer mom and see if she could help. This holistic approach makes it successful and unique.”

“We like to have the parents in the waiting room, not in the class,” continued Bishop. “Sometimes, with a newer dancer, the mom will want to go in. One time, this mom was amazed at what her daughter was doing. We can sometimes flip the idea that their kids are fragile—most of the time you just have to find what makes them click. I love seeing tiny kids grow to teenagers and adults. I don’t see special needs people; I see dancers.” ■

Elissa Webster works with students at Danceability.



# AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK THROUGH Danceability

| by Jana Eisenberg



While never involved in dancing, BA/MSW student Morgan Bauer grew up very familiar with those with special needs: her mom was a special education teacher, and Bauer was drawn to working with the population as well. By the time she was in middle school, she was coaching special needs athletes for the Special Olympics.

Once she was a college freshman, she found herself missing the work with that community, as well as slightly adrift; “having a hard time adjusting, as freshmen do,” said Bauer. It was then that she met Robin Bishop, MSW ‘06, founder of Danceability (see main story page 6).

“I was looking for a volunteer opportunity, so I sat in on one of her dance classes to see if it would be a good match,” said Bauer. “I fell in love. The students are amazing. And everyone else at Danceability—the teachers, volunteers, families and the group home staff who bring the older dancers—is very involved. The whole Danceability community celebrates people with special needs—and all their abilities.”

The connection was so strong that she’s entirely switched gears in her education—she’d started out in occupational therapy, and after volunteering at Danceability and talking with Bishop and some of the other teachers, including Elissa Webster, MSW ‘12, Bauer has changed her major to social work.

She feels the switch comes at the right time. “Our world is trying to get better about being inclusive, but special needs people aren’t included as much,” she said. “So, having a specific dance team for them is so beneficial. It’s a place where they learn that they can be themselves.”

Bauer affirms that social work training provides valuable perspective. “I’ve learned to go into things with an open mind, and to focus on [an] individual’s strength,” she noted. “It’s like when you see any new client, you try to help them to focus on their strengths as well.

“There can be challenges. With this population, we use a lot of redirection,” she added. “During the beginning of class, while everyone is stretching, we talk about what’s going on in the students’ lives. They show what their needs are that day—they may say it, or with non-verbal dancers, we may be able to tell from facial expressions and body language what they may be struggling with. There is a constant conversation between teachers, students and volunteers in the class. It’s cool to see how the dancers interact with and help each other. We all stay positive.”

As far as being a volunteer in a dance class with no dance background, Bauer adds that she needs assistance once in a while. “I’m kind of clumsy and not a very good dancer,” she said. “The students are so good, sometimes they even help me with the step!” ■





Aric Gaughan, MBA '19, Maggie Saia and Alyssa Bergsten, JD/MSW '19, observe a mechanic at Oneida Sales and Service

# A social work perspective to benefit the business world

Social Impact Fellows winning team employs social work in safeguarding employees at a for-profit company

| by Jim Bisco

The second annual Social Impact Fellows (SIF) program last year resonated throughout the Western New York community, particularly in business. The SIF program pairs students from the schools of Social Work and Management to develop solutions to social issues at mission-driven area organizations and companies. And this year, the top prize in its Pitch for a Cause competition went to the student team that helped put Oneida Sales and Service on track for a culture shift in safety in the construction industry.

For the 2018 iteration, SIF was expanded to 10 teams and projects, with the addition of research associates from the College of Arts and Sciences to help with the team projects. Community nonprofits were in the majority of organizations with which the student teams worked. Projects ranged from students developing adaptive sports gear for blind and impaired athletes at the Olmsted Center for Sight, to the expansion of The Tool Library, an innovative tool rental program for neighborhood improvement in UB's South Campus community, which placed second in the pitch competition.

Social impact on the business world, however, was significant in taking first prize, emphasizing a rising awareness of the need for the personal perspective in the workforce.

## Person-centered safety

For-profits should be for people, according to Maggie Saia, Oneida's safety director, who relates the philosophy of company president (and her father), Fred Saia. "He believes that if you focus more on people skills and the people side of things, you could wind up with a more productive company, and social workers have a skill set that a lot of business people don't have," she said.

That philosophy laid out the welcome mat for Alyssa Bergsten, JD/MSW '19, and Aric Gaughan, MBA '19, when they approached the company about developing a new, person-centered safety concept. "We used 'person-centered' as a way of explaining a multi-pronged approach to safety at

Oneida," Bergsten said. "It helps focus on improving understanding of construction workers' particular physical and mental health needs—building upon existing practices to make holistic safety discussions regular and relevant, and looking to construction workers as valuable sources of information in creating safety solutions."

The concept involved a transition from "safety cops" who more traditionally discipline after an infraction with a "suck it up and get back to work" mentality, to the idea of establishing "safety coaches" who work to create a positive, safe working environment. To develop the concept, the pair researched safety metrics and the prevailing construction industry psychology. They interviewed more than 60 construction workers, coming to the conclusion that Motivational Interviewing (MI)—an approach used by various mental health professionals, including social workers—would be the most effective approach in making the transition.

"We collected surveys, and we also heard input on working conditions, communicating with managers and third-party vendors, safety concerns and logistical and interpersonal issues," said Bergsten. "We determined our best efforts would be to focus on the health of individual workers, the communication between Oneida's



At the University Heights Tool Library, the Social Impact Fellows helped the nonprofit create an expansion and sustainability plan.



managers and employees, and the overall shift in culture toward a safety-focused approach."

After collecting and analyzing employee data, Bergsten and Gaughan also conducted qualitative interviews with several key managers to gain further insight into the organizational systems. That experience gave them a sense

that the same MI techniques might be useful both among managers as well as between managers and employees.

"The idea of 'safety coach' encompasses how managers would approach employees in the fashion of an MI intervention," Bergsten said. "Rather than an authoritative, punishment-

based approach, managers encourage positive employee behaviors by understanding them, making them feel heard and incorporating their concerns into safety solutions. When people feel heard and can participate in problem solving, they are more likely to feel ownership and follow through with change."

## Social Work significance

"With Alyssa and Aric's idea of changing the safety culture, we knew that was our goal," said Saia. "They helped us figure out a way to do it, using more of a social work perspective."

Maureen Hammett, SSW vice dean/chief of staff, who has played a role in the planning and execution of the SIF program, noted, "In helping Oneida make headway with this initiative, the fact that the primary technique used was born out of a counseling/mental health approach is significant."

With ideas from several social work professors, Bergsten and Gaughan suggested bringing in a social worker experienced in Motivational Interviewing to train managers in the context of safety protocol implementation, including the application of a trauma-informed perspective.

Gaughan felt that they arrived at a solution gathered from both management and social work worlds. "While Alyssa led the survey crafting and questions, I tracked the results and looked for trends," he said. "From there we spent time refining and developing how we communicated the worker-centered approach so that most any audience or listener could understand it. She and I saw things through similar lenses. We both understood how the industry was affecting workers mentally, and came to similar conclusions about the results of the surveys."

Saia noted that the implementation is still in its early stages of getting everyone on board. She sees this as a long-term initiative.

## Real experience, real change

The whole experience gave Bergsten the opportunity to practice applying a gamut of social work skills. "It was a rare chance to be able to observe a system, develop ideas for positive interventions and make a plan to see them implemented, in only two months," she said. "My background is in nonprofit work, so I couldn't have asked for a more drastic departure from that world. It was refreshing to meet people with a totally different knowledge base and interesting to observe the relationships and processes. The creative opportunity was really exciting; I hope to do this type of systems-level, policy-based work in the future."

Gaughan was encouraged by the company's positive response to the SIF team's culture-shifting concept. "In order to continue implementing social work principles, the company will likely require consistent social worker presence until the ideas become second nature," he said. "The experience also gave me a taste of doing consulting, which I really enjoyed.

I will likely continue to pursue that as a future career path."

Safety Director Saia is optimistic about the person-centered approach becoming the company—and industry—norm. "In the construction industry over the last five years, there's been more of a push toward safety," she noted. "Oneida is often a subcontractor on our projects, so we're answering to a general contractor. More and more of those large general contractor companies ask about your safety records. They want to know what you're doing, how you're staying safe and what your plan is."

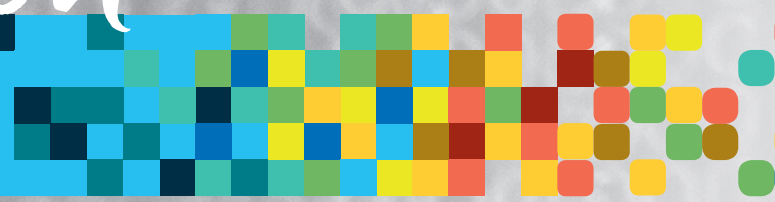
Saia sees her colleagues at Oneida as being receptive to the new safety concept. "Overall, everybody's been very open to it," she said. "We're shooting for a more collaborative approach rather than coming down with an iron fist and saying 'this is what you have to do now.'"

Hammett is also encouraged that Oneida's intent to help make that approach an industry standard, may have far-reaching significance. "That message, about amplifying or maximizing impact, was not only a winning idea but an idea that they intend to build from," she said. "It wasn't just going to be living within Oneida but ideally would be shared and spread beyond."

Hammett envisions the possibility of for-profit companies having a larger presence in future SIF competitions. "This is not just for the nonprofit world," she said. "We see value for the students and the organizations on the for-profit side too. Reaching out to the for-profit side now, as with Oneida, will pay off in greater for-profit representation in the 2019 Social Impact Fellows program."



# A Celebration OF SOCIAL WORK



## ACKNOWLEDGING ALUMNI WHO ARE **doing good & doing well**

| by Jana Eisenberg

Last October, the school hosted a Celebration of Social Work—the fun and casual event combined our alumni awards with a new element: a competitive student pitch.

In her opening remarks, Dean Nancy Smyth pointed out that alumni continue to be an important part of the school community, acting as ambassadors for both the school and social work education in general. “It’s amazing to see what our alumni are doing with their degrees, whether they’re in traditional or non-traditional social work environments,” said Smyth.

She also noted that alumni can and do continue to make a difference for current social work students, whether it’s investing in the school financially and/or giving time or guidance for the next generation of social workers by mentoring or providing internship and field opportunities.

Rita Andolina, MSW '88, executive committee member of the UB Alumni Association board of directors, added her welcome, noting that social workers, in their practice or research, make outstanding contributions while maintaining “a positive attitude and a drive to help others.”

The Distinguished Alumni Awardees for 2018 are Dr. Toby Laping, MSW '63, Dr. Nancy Kusmaul, PhD '13 and Lisa Kaseman, JD/MSW '06. The fast-paced event included brief introductions from a colleague, then a brief acknowledgment from the award recipient. Thanks to all who attended!

### Distinguished Master of Social Work Alumni Award

Kristin Surdej, MSW '00, principal of Laping Surdej Associates, gave the introduction for Laping, who is an acknowledged leader in geriatric care management in the region; in the 1980s, Laping pioneered the area’s first private geriatric care management agency, Laping, Sayers Associates (since changed to Laping, Surdej Associates).

“Toby’s dedication and positive impact are evident from her long, successful and diverse career as a social worker, philanthropist, educator and entrepreneur,” said Surdej. “She’s impacted the community on so many levels, working for years as a classroom, field and public educator, a mentor and field supervisor. She is gracious and generous.”

Donor Zoe Koston was very excited to win the door prize when her name was randomly selected!





Michelle Spencer, Toby Laping, Pam Schasel, Kristin Surdej, Jon Wiley, Kate DeMarzio

"She's personally invested in others, giving service to people, one professional at a time," added Surdej. "Her contributions are lasting—she had a long-running column in Forever Young magazine; she's provided legal services for the elderly and disabled; and served on the Dean's committee. Though she calls herself 'essentially retired,' she never stops working. She continues to consult to those providing services for older citizens; she was a founder of the nonprofit Canopy of Neighbors."

Surdej wrapped up by saying that this is one of many honors that Laping has received, and acknowledging her own experience with Laping as a role model.

In Laping's brief and characteristically enthusiastic comments, she thanked her husband for his understanding of her commitment to her profession. She thanked Surdej, who took over the Laping firm around 2008.

"[Dean] Nancy [Smyth] and the school are doing a wonderful, creative job, exploring and teaching students new ways and new understandings of how social work can function," she said.

## Distinguished PhD in Social Welfare Alumni Award

The next honoree, Nancy Kusmaul, PhD '13, was introduced by fellow alum Rebecca K. Eliseo-Arras, PhD '16, MSW '08. Kusmaul, who is an assistant professor at the University of Maryland, specializes in organizational culture, trauma informed care and the impact of trauma experiences on the workforce.



Dean Nancy J. Smyth, Nancy Kusmaul, Rebecca Eliseo-Arras, Denise Krause

"She serves as mentor to others, and models social work values in teaching others," said Eliseo-Arras, reading from Kusmaul's nomination. "She's an amazing social work colleague and great and reliable friend who cares for students, friends and family. She's dedicated to her goals and humble about her accomplishments."

Living up to that assessment, Kusmaul acknowledged the honor being bestowed on her with humility. "I've only been a PhD and a social work faculty member for about five years," Kusmaul explained. "My goals include improving services for older adults and their caregivers, and my research has focused on direct care workers. I couldn't do it without my friends." She added that she enjoys being part of her BSW students' "aha" moments every day. She also thanked her UBSSW mentors from her dissertation committee, including Tom Nochajski, Deborah Waldrop and Dean Smyth.

## Louis H. Swartz Memorial Award

In her introduction of the next awardee, retired UBSSW Field Education Coordinator Zoe Koston acknowledged her father, longtime UB Professor Louis Swartz, for whom the JD/MSW award is named. He instilled in her a sense of determination, and the belief in the circular philosophy of both giving back and paying it forward. The Louis H. Swartz Memorial Award is a way of doing that, she said.



Maria Goodberry, Lisa Kaseman, Shannon Goodberry

In her introduction of Lisa Kaseman, JD/MSW '06, her colleague Joan Hoover described her as "compassionate, considerate, tough, fair, candid, real and passionate about helping anyone she encounters anywhere."

Kaseman, who is a regional vice president at Conifer Real Estate Development, Construction and Management, uses her law background and her social work training in the real estate field, leading the development team for New York, and "impacting lives at a social level, showing a commitment to alleviating homelessness in Rochester," added Hoover.

Kaseman thanked her family and friends, as well as Conifer's in-house counsel, Susan Jennings, who had nominated her for the award. "I'm appreciative of Conifer's residents—the people we serve every day," said Kaseman. "My time at the School of Social Work taught me the importance of celebrating diversity, and the differences that we can make in each other's lives." She wrapped up by announcing that she'd be donating the stipend associated with the award to Veterans Outreach.

See story on next page for coverage of the student pitches.





# A Celebration OF SOCIAL WORK

## ENTREPRENEURIAL SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS, Pitching for Their Cause

| by Jana Eisenberg

Frequently, alumni and friends express an interest in giving back to the UBSSW. And there are many ways to do it, depending on individuals' preferences and abilities. Some volunteer as field educators, mentors and advisory board members. There is also literal giving—making donations to help the school and our students in various ways and via various avenues.

An exciting new opportunity for alumni and friends to support the school was presented at October's Celebration of Social Work—the newly formatted event included both the alumni awards (see story page 10) and this chance to support a student-led initiative.

It worked this way: three students or student groups, each representing a different initiative, gave brief, live “elevator pitches” (a timed three minutes) to the Celebration attendees. After hearing all of the pitches, the attendees voted for their top choice—the initiative that earned the most votes was awarded 100 percent of the event registration fees, which totaled about \$950.

### CHALLENGE2CHANGE SOCIAL ACTION INITIATIVE

The first pitch was presented by students Krista Regdos and Erika Vertigan. They talked about a successful leadership development program for high school students, already begun by a UBSSW contingency, through which MSW students conduct intergroup dialogues with diverse Western New York high school students to develop and implement social action plans that will enhance cross-cultural understanding and social justice locally. The newly empowered high school student leaders are bridging cultural differences in meaningful and positive ways—at the end of the semesters, they put their plans into action to create real-world impact by hosting community forums and advocacy events among other possibilities.

The funds would be used to help the schools create the unique student-driven social actions to create greater cultural understanding, tolerance and acceptance.

### ADAPTIVE SPORTS TOOLS FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED: A SOCIAL IMPACT VENTURE

MSW student Cheney Brockington described how, as part of the 2018 Social Impact Fellows program, she and her MBA partner Lauren Weiss were placed at Olmsted Center for Sight. While there, and with their mission to create social change, they identified immediate barriers to participation in sports for individuals with visual impairment. Lacking adaptive strategies, many of these individuals experience inequalities. Brockington and Weiss designed an adaptive sports athletic product,

as well as an online adaptive sports resource guide, which promote inclusivity in physical activity. Addressing such inequalities, said Brockington, falls within the purview of the social work field.

### STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS FUND

In her pitch, MSW student Priscilla Kabilamany noted that, while social work graduate students are working to make differences in others' lives, empowering and advocating, that sometimes they themselves need a hand. That is why the UBSSW Students Helping Students Fund was created: to help current students through emergencies that might otherwise disrupt their progress towards earning their degree. The fund, which is supported through donations from students, faculty/staff and alumni, offers one-time financial assistance for immediate and current emergency situations. Awards of up to \$600 are granted upon review and approval of a student's request for assistance.

The anonymous votes, made by placing a chit in one of three buckets to indicate the voters favorite, were tallied during the break. The winner

Cheney Brockington, Krista Regdos,  
Dean Nancy J. Smyth,  
Priscilla Kabilamany, Erika Vertigan



emerged, as Challenge2Change—all the causes are worthy ones, of course, and anyone who would like to support any of our many student- and school-led initiatives is invited to contact Mary Glenn at (716) 829-4773 or glenn@buffalo.edu or go to [tinyurl.com/ubssw-giving](http://tinyurl.com/ubssw-giving) to make your gift.

Thank you again to all who participated, and on behalf of our excellent students and their creative, passionate work.








# DSW Program vs. PhD Program





As the popularity and relevance of professional doctorates grows, the UB School of Social Work has become the first SUNY and the first institution in the region to offer the Doctorate of Social Work, or DSW degree, with the first cohort of students starting in Fall 2019. See below for a breakdown of how our DSW program differs from our PhD program, and consider if one or the other might be right for you.

For more information, contact Dr. Louanne Bakk, [louanneb@buffalo.edu](mailto:louanneb@buffalo.edu) (DSW program) or Dr. Laina Bay-Cheng, [lb35@buffalo.edu](mailto:lb35@buffalo.edu) (PhD program).

## How our doctoral programs vary in structural components

	 FORMAT	 LENGTH	 FUNDING
DSW Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Part-Time</li><li>• Online</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 Years</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-Funded</li></ul>
PhD Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full-Time</li><li>• On-Campus</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4-6 Years</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tuition Waivers</li><li>• Research Assistantships</li></ul>

## Doctoral program pathways: same objectives, pursued differently

Objectives	 TO PROMOTE TRAUMA-INFORMED HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	 TO GENERATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE	 TO INNOVATE OUR THINKING AND METHODS	 TO COLLABORATE ACROSS SYSTEMS AND STAKEHOLDERS
DSW Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Program Evaluation</li><li>• Implementation Science</li><li>• Professional Collaborative Networks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhanced Digital Technologies</li><li>• Evidence-Based Practice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interprofessional Networks</li><li>• Client Partnerships</li></ul>
PhD Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scientific Inquiry</li><li>• Academic &amp; Public Reports</li><li>• Peer Review</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Theory Building</li><li>• Advanced Analysis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interdisciplinary Connections</li><li>• Community Alliances</li></ul>



# HONOR ROLL to SUPPORT

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Timothy C. Callan, PhD '00  
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Barbara and George Hole  
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John M. Laping  
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*Greer Hamilton (middle) and Danise Wilson (right) with Health Sciences Director of Development Mary Glenn (left).*

## Hamilton-Wilson Student Support Fund

In 2018, Greer Hamilton, MSW '16, and Danise C. Wilson, MPH '14, established the Hamilton-Wilson Student Support Fund. Hamilton and Wilson, who both work in Buffalo's nonprofit sector, saw the need for their professions and the health and human service workforce to be diversified. This led them to establish their fund. The fund provides \$1,000 awards to incoming black/African-American students entering the UB Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health programs. The awards are designed to help with school-related expenses like books, field placement, transportation and other needs. Creating this financial support is their way of both paying it back to the schools that helped shape them into professionals, and an opportunity to pay it forward to future black social work and public health professionals.



# JULY 1, 2017-JUNE 30, 2018

As always, we are grateful to each of our donors, and appreciate each and every gift, no matter the size. We make every effort to list the donor information accurately.\*

\*In the event of an error or omission in this honor roll list for the stated gift period, please contact the Development Office at glenn@buffalo.edu or at 716-829-4773 so that we may update our records.

## Special ANNOUNCEMENT

*There are exciting changes afoot for Mosaics magazine. One of the immediate changes you may notice is that we will no longer print this list in the magazine. We hope you continue to enjoy our publication, filled with exciting and interesting stories and information about our ever-expanding School of Social Work community.*

*Thank you.*

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Elaine S. Rinfrette, PhD '10  
Jennifer L. Rizzo, MSW '18, BA '16, and  
Joseph D. Rizzo, EdM '15, BS '12  
Kali Rizzo

Samantha J. Rodgers, MSW '15  
Pauline J. Rogers, BA '47, and Louis G. Rogers  
Cynthia R. Rogers-Harrison, MSW '90  
Mary D. Root, MSW '91  
Sharon W. Rosati, MSW '93, and Paul Rosati  
Stephanie Sacco, MSW '16  
Melanie and Todd Sage  
Margarita Santiago, MSW '90  
Amy K. Scerra, MSW '09, BA '07  
Thomas J. Schierer, MSW '72  
Sondra Schreiber, MSW '02  
Michael P. Scully, MSW '92  
Lisa S. Shalwitz, MSW '98, BA '88  
Arlene E. Siconolfi, BS '76  
Jennifer M. Silverman-Van Treese, MA '10, and  
Katharine Silverman-Van Treese  
Bryan A. Sinclair, BA '06  
Iris A. Skinner, MSW '95  
Anthony J. Smaczniak and  
Virginia E. Smaczniak, MSW '85  
Lizabeth Smith, MSW '96  
Judith A. Solomon, BS '72  
Mickey Sperlich  
Curtis Steed Jr., MSW '16  
Laurel A. Stephens-Lester, MSW '03  
Pauline F. Stoehr, MSW '92, BA '85  
Rita M. Turkiewicz, MSW '04  
Erin Turner  
Carol A. Tyler, MSW '88  
Lynne S. Vallone, MSW '80  
Lawrence L. Van Heusen, MSW '90, and  
Robert A. Scharf  
Christine Daly Van Nostrand, BS '90, and  
William C. Van Nostrand, PhD '94, MS '92, BS '91  
Grace A. Wach, MSW '16  
Marjorie Y. Waller, BS '72  
Howard J. Walter, MSW '75, BS '72  
Rachel L. Walter, MSW '14  
Sarah J. Watson, EdM '09, MLS '04, BA '01  
Brandy A. Weber, MSW '99  
Kristen E. Weese, BA '02, MSW '02  
Herbert D. Weisburgh, MSW '59, BA '57  
Siobhan M. Whalen, MSW '97  
Erica D. Wichtowski, MSW '03  
Janet H. Williams, MSW '92  
Jessica L. Zimmer, MSW '05  
Max Zimmerman

\*deceased





### Giving a Feeling

How do grateful and creative MSW students acknowledge an effective professor's birthday? A surprise customized t-shirt, of course! Clinical Assistant Professor Todd Sage and his *Interventions* class had a laugh while acknowledging Sage's calming technique for overeager MSW students who want to skip straight to planning with clients. When they get stuck, and aren't sure what's next, he suggests connecting with emotion—a motivational interviewing tool. Hence the saying...and the lesson in compassion these students have learned.



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## My Bold Moment

“It was difficult to find positive people who would advocate for me and understand my lifestyle, so I decided if I ever pursued a college education, social work would be my specialty.”

**Terence Askew, MSW '12**

