

# Mosaics

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News from the University at Buffalo School of Social Work

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What started as an internship led Robin Hartinger-Saunders through two UB social work degrees to a faculty appointment at Georgia State University.

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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 375 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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# Our News

## SSW and Community Connections

School of Social Work faculty delivered invited talks and made presentations at conferences across the country this spring. Here are highlights.

- Diane Elze delivered a Social Work Month talk titled "Social Work as Poetry: Passion, Purpose, Possibilities and Power" at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Buffalo to honor the role of VA social workers in the care of veterans and their families.



Elze (third from right) with VA social workers

- Mansoor Kazi spoke at Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo on the evaluation of arts in health care.

- Barbara Rittner spoke on marketing and branding at the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors conference in Phoenix, Ariz.

- Deborah Waldrop and Sharon Herlehy (MSW '90), assistant director of field education, gave a presentation on standardized patients for the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education in San Antonio, Texas.

- Kelly Patterson presented a paper on fair housing barriers at American Society for Public Administration in Miami, Fla.

- Adjoa Robinson presented for the Building on Family Strengths conference in Portland, Ore.

- Filomena Critelli (MSW '77) presented at the fifth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

- Doctoral student Brian Pagkos (MSW '03), Mansoor Kazi and Heidi Milch (MSW '98), CEO of Community Connections of New York, presented findings from a study on wraparound services at the University of South Florida Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health.

- Laina Bay-Cheng and doctoral student Nicole Fava (MSW '08) made a presentation on adolescent girls' sexual assessment and management at the American Psychological Association Convention in Toronto, Ontario.

## Celebrating Field Educators

The gardens at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society were in full bloom for this year's Field Educators Award ceremony on April 30. The event honored 27 nominees from a variety of field settings reflecting such disparate areas of practice as the United Way, legal agencies, schools, family and children services agencies, UB's CARES program (a dental and social work schools collaboration), as well as mental health and hospital settings. These committed educators make a difference every day by providing quality learning opportunities to MSW students and serving as social work professional role models. This year's Outstanding Achievement in Field Education Award was presented to Kristen Luppino (MSW '05), from the Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence.



FROM DEAN  
NANCY J. SMYTH

## International Developments

In late May, Jay Misra, director of International Affairs/Alumni Affairs at Amrita University in Tamil Nadu, India, visited a number of departments at UB and made a presentation to social work students, faculty and staff. Misra is on the faculty at Amrita School of Business. This visit was a prelude to the planned August visit to Amrita University by Diane Elze, director of the MSW program; Laura Lewis, director of field education; and Dean Nancy Smyth, to explore a possible partnership with the School of Social Work. Misra described grassroots community activism in their social work department that ranges from building affordable housing to running orphanages to developing NGOs.



Misra

In addition to the planned trip to India, faculty from the School of Social Work will participate in a trip to explore the development of a school for girls in Tanzania. The trip was organized by Mara B. Huber, special assistant to UB president John B. Simpson and director of UB's Center for Educational Collaboration (CEC), who learned of the urgent need for such a school during a serendipitous encounter with

Tanzanian nuns. Joining Huber in Tanzania will be Katie Biggie, also from the CEC; Kathleen Kost, School of Social Work; Mary Gresham, dean of the Graduate School of Education; Brian Carter, dean of the School of Architecture and Planning; Annette Lecuyer, School of Architecture and Planning; Kevin Crosby from Full Circle Studios; and Brenda McDuffie, president and CEO of the Buffalo Urban League.

Catherine Dulmus and doctoral student Amy Manning (MSW '03) presented a poster at the 2009 Campbell Collaboration Colloquium, Oslo, Norway. Dulmus also presented a poster with Bruce Nesbit (MSW '74), CEO of Spectrum House, and doctoral students Manning and Nicole Tomasello (MSW '02), at the World Psychiatric Association International Congress, Florence, Italy.

## U-Presence on YouTube

The School of Social Work has opened its own You Tube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/ubsswmedia](http://www.youtube.com/user/ubsswmedia). If you tune in, you will find videos about the school's master's and doctoral programs and talks by cutting-edge researchers from the school's Distinguished Scholars series. The school will continue posting videos about interesting projects during the year. So check it out, rate and discuss the videos, and tell your friends. ■

There has never been a more critical need for social workers. Communities around the world confront problems with violence, poverty, substance abuse, racism, homelessness, chronic disease, psychological trauma and oppression. Individuals and families face the challenges of recovering from emotional, physical, developmental and psychological disabilities in societies that disenfranchise and stigmatize them. Entire nations face challenges from economic deprivation, inadequate education and limited access to vital services and resources. Fear and its cousin, hatred, are too often the lens through which people reject those who are different.


There is no profession as able as social work to address problems from the individual level to that of society as a whole. Investing in social work is investing in the future of our society and in hope for our collective future. Each life that social workers touch, affects hundreds of others. In the course of our careers we can affect thousands of lives. This year's class of graduates inspires me with hope for our future. Their work, building on the efforts of their predecessors, will enable individuals, groups, families, organizations and communities to heal and move forward to reclaim wellness and wholeness in their lives and in the world around them.

Nancy J. Smyth, PhD,  
LCSW



## In the next issue

This fall, Mosaics will discuss a significant revision to the core MSW curriculum that emphasizes trauma-informed care from a human rights perspective. This approach recognizes that direct and indirect exposure to traumatic events can strongly affect clients; it may be a precursor to mental health problems, substance abuse, domestic violence, and may affect juvenile justice, child welfare, and crisis intervention services.



Robin Hartinger-Saunders, MSW '97, PhD '08

## The quest to improve child welfare

Fredonia State College undergraduate Robin Hartinger-Saunders knew immediately after starting an internship at Chautauqua County Department of Social Services that child welfare would someday be her lifelong career focus. “My first exposure to child welfare was in preventive services with teen mothers and then with juvenile delinquents,” she says. “I liked the legal aspect, working within the court system.”

By Jim Bisco

**S**HE DIDN'T KNOW THEN that one day she'd be packing up to leave Chautauqua County for Atlanta, Ga., as Professor Hartinger-Saunders.

Saunders worked closely with all aspects of the legal system, including family and criminal court and the local probation department, as well as foster care and adoption services.

She began to wonder how things could be done differently and more efficiently in order to work toward better outcomes for children and youth in the

county. Aside from the obvious challenges of working with abused and neglected children and juvenile offenders, she became intrigued with larger organizational issues that appeared to impede progress with families.

She realized she would need to pursue her master's degree in order to enhance her existing skills. “Part of the reason I wanted to go back to get my master's was to come up with better interventions for families, especially working with juvenile delinquents,” she notes. “I

saw many of the children I worked with in the foster care system, due to abuse and neglect, return to the system years later as juvenile delinquents. I knew this was not a coincidence. It intrigued me and I wanted to understand it further.”

Saunders has always been a strong proponent of collaboration between organizations involved in the lives of families and youth—probation departments, social services, mental health services, school systems, and others—believing it is one of the major issues plaguing

the proverbial system. “Duplication of services is often a problem because of the lack of communication between service providers,” Saunders states. “Clients are often overwhelmed and inundated with a multitude of appointments.”

**D**URING THE PURSUIT of her master’s at UB she continued working at Chautauqua County DSS, allowing her to readily implement what she was learning in the classroom.

After several years of service at Chautauqua County DSS, Saunders made a career shift in August 2000. In an effort to influence change on a larger level, she accepted a position as field coordinator and assistant professor in the social work program at her undergraduate alma mater, SUNY-Fredonia. “Becoming a social work educator seemed like an exciting and natural progression for me, another challenge,” she says.

Her decision to enroll in the social work doctoral program at UB was triggered by her desire to contribute to the knowledge of the social work profession through her past experiences working with families and children.

“Understanding the connection between research and practice is critical, and in order to communicate to my students just how important and relevant research is in our discipline, I knew I needed to be engaged in it myself,” Saunders says. “Instead of simply identifying issues and problems affecting the child welfare system, I wanted to be part of developing solutions.”

Her dissertation examined whether the different types of youth victimization, direct or vicarious, influenced offending

behaviors differently: she wanted to know if different types had separate or shared effects on the frequency and seriousness of the offending behavior. “What I really wanted to know was who are our most violent juvenile offenders. Are they the kids who are directly or indirectly victimized?” she relates. “There were additional layers I wanted to explore: whether psychological distress and moral disengagement, or lack of guilt, mediated the relationship between a youth’s victimization experience and offending behavior.”

Saunders considers her role as research assistant to UB’s Peter St. Jean, assistant professor of sociology, in his Buffalo Area Neighborhood Study to have been a valuable component in her

**“THERE WERE ADDITIONAL LAYERS I WANTED TO EXPLORE: WHETHER PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND MORAL DISENGAGEMENT, OR LACK OF GUILT, MEDIATED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A YOUTH’S VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCE AND OFFENDING BEHAVIOR.”**

dissertation research. “It opened up a whole new arena that I rarely considered,” she says. “Dr. St. Jean’s work helped me see the relationship between neighborhood contents and actions,” she says. “Prior to my work with him, I never considered how neighborhoods can actually contribute to and perpetuate delinquency and crime; I was more focused on the dynamics between the family systems and individual kids.”

Saunders’ findings suggest that social workers need to develop interventions that simultaneously address victimization and offending from multiple levels. Because delinquent youth are influenced directly and indirectly by neighborhood,

family, and peers, true rehabilitative approaches must embrace this notion. For this to work, Saunders contends that collaborative efforts across multiple systems of influence on a youth must be included in the plan. “It will be critical to engage Family Court judges, probation departments, school administrators, teachers, coaches, parents and others.”

Saunders hopes social workers, caseworkers, probation officers and judges utilize these findings to facilitate participation by parents when dealing with youth.

Born and raised in Silver Creek, N.Y., Saunders considers herself “a small-town girl.” But she is now embarking on a dramatic educational journey to Atlanta where she has accepted a position as

assistant professor in the School of Social Work at Georgia State University.

“The move is really about growing professionally and personally,” she says. “This seemed like the next obvious step for me, teaching at the graduate level and expanding my research opportunities—everything about it just felt right.”

And so, with her husband, Grant, four-year-old son, Mason, and two-month-old daughter, Malia in tow, Saunders is off to Atlanta to continue her quest. “I’m proud of the work that I’ve done here,” she says, “and I’m confident that my education at UB has prepared me to do great things at Georgia State University and for child welfare.” ■



# Reaching Others

Perhaps more than in any profession, social workers are able by touching one life to improve the lives of many; by empowering one person, to change the lives of families and neighbors; by empowering one group, to send change rippling through neighborhoods, organizations, communities, and nations.

In 2009, the School of Social Work graduated 181 professional MSWs and three PhDs in social welfare, all committed to making a difference.

*What follows are the stories of three new MSWs who represent the best of who we are as a school and a profession.*

## OLDER AND WISER

PETER FIRESTONE, BA/MSW

**S**TRAIGHT OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL, Peter Firestone spent six years working with youth in community centers and schools in several South Side and West Side neighborhoods of Chicago. Realizing there was a limit to what he could do in the world of human services with a high school degree, he decided to return to his native Buffalo and go back to school.

“My interest was how to make organizations work better, how to make projects serve people better,” he says.

Firestone enrolled in the BA/MSW program at UB. In the MSW program he started working with an aging population.

“At first you want to say that you know what you want to do,” he says, “but there is wisdom in the school’s plan to fill in the gaps of your experience. You become more well-rounded.”

Indeed, he found a new calling through an internship at the nearby Weinberg Campus, a senior living community with a pioneering aging-in-place program that aims to keep frail older people living independently in the community.

Firestone pursued this interest in an advanced-year field placement that was part of the school’s Hartford Partnership Program in Aging Education, a field education model that rotates students through different parts of a single program or agency so they gain a rich perspective of the full spectrum of aging and of the diverse services that older adults and their caregivers need.

“It is a comprehensive program for building competency in all disciplines for geriatric work,” he says, “giving you opportunities to interact with hospice, hospitals, senior centers, and the VA, and talking about dementia, end-of-life care, policy, substance abuse, veterans’ issues, and any issue that intersects with aging.”

Attention to the individual is the primary focus. “We assume older people have all these problems instead of looking for their strengths,” Firestone says. “There’s a catch phrase in social work that people are experts on their own problems. They know what they’re going through. They know what they’ve tried. They know what’s failed. So it’s really about honoring the person’s individuality and strengths and

helping them to pull those things out. Listening is huge. And being there as one who’s willing to advocate—because a lot of times seniors are just shuffled around.”

An example of this occurred during Firestone’s fieldwork when it became apparent that a client was being placed into a completely inappropriate level of care.

“**A** WOMAN WHO CAME INTO A NURSING FACILITY for rehabilitation after a fall wanted to go home,” Firestone recounts. “But someone decided that she was confused and belonged in a dementia unit. She was justifiably disoriented because she had been shuffled from a hospital to rehab to a dementia bed in the course of just a few days, with little or no explanation. After sitting with her and actually taking the time to evaluate her situation, we saw this was the source of her agitation and confusion. This woman was a refugee who fled from the Nazis in World War II—can you imagine why she was now concerned about being held hostage?”

Firestone is committed to the Buffalo area and to finding a position in the new order of aging care.

Firestone says that his UB experience prepared him well for the road ahead. “The School of Social Work program challenged who I am as a professional and helped me grow in that regard,” he says. “You come out of it with a certain confidence. When you’re first starting out in social work, you have this idea that there’s a

formula for helping people or communities, some magic piece of knowledge. What you really learn is that while you approach everything with a theoretical framework, people and communities are dynamic, and the problems they face are dynamic, so you have to be creative about helping to solve those problems. You can’t just rely on what you think may work, or even what has worked somewhere else.

“The joy in the work is finding the way to help people. I came away with an understanding of systems and issues that I wouldn’t have necessarily pursued on my own.”

—J.B.



PETER FIRESTONE

## HONOR THE STORY

RICHARD CONHEADY, MSW

**S**OME STUDENTS ENTER MSW study directly from college. Many come with a few years of ground-level experience in social services, sure now of their career choice; some come to change careers.

Richard Conheady came with 15 years of progressively more challenging social services experience.

He answered the call of social conscience in 1991 and has worked with people in need ever since. His MSW studies confirmed what he'd learned along the way and equipped him with new skills.

Conheady started his social service career with a church-based outreach to ex-offenders, first managing a restaurant that was part of a work reorientation program for recently released offenders, then leading counseling groups in correctional facilities and eventually running a residential services facility for released offenders. He'd been an ornamental horticulturalist for 10 years when joining Rochester's socially active Corpus Christi Church set him on a different road.

After seven years of learning on the job, he decided he needed a degree—"I thought I'd better get some education." He knew there would be too many doors closed to him without one. So he enrolled at SUNY-Brockport, graduating four years later with a BSW. He added another stop in his professional development with a field placement with the Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center.

Newly credentialed, he went to work for the Cayuga Home for Children in Monroe County, among other things helping the agency develop outcome measures for its functional family therapy program. He was eventually made program coordinator.

He enrolled in the MSW program when the clock was about to run out on his advance-standing option. (That he received an A- in an otherwise perfect academic record at UB indicates that he did still have something to learn!)

Actually, what Conheady wants to learn more about at this stage is narrative therapy, which he was introduced to

by a colleague early in his career and then practiced during his undergraduate fieldwork and again in his MSW field placement at St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center in Rochester. St. Joseph's provides comprehensive health care, counseling, adult education and social work services for individuals and families who lack access to health insurance.

Because the center serves the uninsured, it doesn't have to march to any insurer's tempo and so it is free to use a poststructuralist practice such as narrative therapy that is too new to have the kind of replicated outcome studies that payers need to see.

**F**OR CONHEADY, whose social work career has been the realization of the vocation he found in himself, there is a natural appeal in a therapeutic model founded on helping clients develop the "story" of their skills and abilities. As in other models, the therapist recognizes that the client is the expert in his or her life. Unlike solution-focused therapies that are organized by problem, narrative therapy seeks to discover the story line the client can use to solve problems.

Ironically, the MSW program taught him models he knows he doesn't want to use. And it formalized and sharpened his critical thinking. So now he can develop his skills in a nonstructuralist approach to therapy, knowing where it fits in the universe of available therapies, and confident in his reasons for preferring it.

Moreover, he'd like to contribute to the body of understanding about narrative therapy by using an evaluation process to measure its effectiveness.

As he surveys the available opportunities at the point of resuming his career, Richard Conheady says he will continue to work with underserved populations; he'd like to combine working for a nonprofit agency with private practice. And maybe teach. "I'd love to develop a course around nonstructuralist therapy."

Since past performance is a good predictor of future performance, that's a course you may find in the Rochester area someday soon.

—J.M.



RICHARD CONHEADY



## DOUBLY ARMED

MANDY TEETER, MSW/MBA

**H**OW MANY PLATES CAN ONE PERSON SPIN SUCCESSFULLY? More than you'd guess, if that person is Mandy Teeter. Teeter is a mother, wife and an accredited addictions therapist living and working just outside Rochester, N.Y. As of this May, she is also the first to graduate from the School of Social Work with a combined MSW/MBA degree.

"It's been wonderful—rather tough and challenging at times—but rewarding," Teeter says of the dual degree. While she worked part-time in Rochester as an alcohol and substance abuse counselor, she commuted daily to her full-time graduate school programs in Buffalo.

The MSW/MBA is a three-year program. Taken separately, the degrees would require four years to complete. Credit hours are split between the two schools, with two joint internships.

Teeter always planned to go to graduate school after earning her undergraduate degree, but chose to work for a few years until she knew exactly what she wanted to study—and why. She eventually began researching schools with interdisciplinary and combined programs in social work and business.

"I knew the MSW would give me the clinical side," she says, "and a foundation in evidence-based research. But I also realized that an MBA could give me useful exposure to business and management principles." UB was the only school in New York offering the combination, and since it was only an hour away, she decided to take the plunge and apply.

Teeter says that in the addictions field, the focus tends to be on the individual. She wanted to look holistically at intervention programs that are more collaborative and better suited to her goal of becoming a social services administrator in the nonprofit or local government sector.

"Ideally, I see myself at the administrative level, working on transforming systems of care and services delivery," Teeter says. She'd like to consult on evaluation data for a health department or nonprofit serving a regional population. "I've learned that you can't really improve health care services until you've collected all the data."



MANDY TEETER

Teeter's two internships were (MBA) at the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Goodwill in Rochester, where she researched Medicaid policy and reimbursements; and (MSW) at the Monroe County Office of Mental Health, where she worked on developing assessment tools and an integrated care plan for a Rochester-based mental health and chemical dependency services provider. In both internships, Teeter collected and organized health data to make it more accessible and useful for each agency.

Howard J. Doueck, professor and associate dean for academic affairs, served as Teeter's advisor during the three-year program, and helped her pioneer the dual degree, along with Diane E. Elze, associate professor and director of the MSW program, and Kathleen Kost, former associate dean for academic affairs. They charted which courses were available and when, and pointed Teeter to the people with the answers for scheduling courses and internships.

**T**EETER SPENT THE FIRST SEMESTER adjusting to the quantitative courses in management and getting a general feel for the vocabulary and culture of business school. "It was like a different world from behavioral health, with its own language," she says.

By her third year, having both social work and management courses under her belt, Teeter was comfortable, and began to fully appreciate how each degree informed the other.

"We often see people with clinical—but not financial or managerial—backgrounds running nonprofit agencies, and it may not always be a good fit. If you have a background in both management and social work, you're prepared for the variety of responsibilities that leadership at that level must deal with," Doueck says.

Teeter is looking at Rochester-area nonprofits to see which ones fit her unique skill sets. The plates are still spinning and she feels empowered to keep them going.

—L.N.M.

# COMMENCEMENT 2009

Photos on this page: Nancy J. Parisi



UB MSW student Bina Ahmed with children at the Dastak Charitable Trust shelter for women in Lahore, Pakistan.



## Cultural difference

*Research in Pakistan educates student and professor*

By Judson Mead

**F**LOMENA CRITELLI (MSW '77), an assistant professor in the School of Social Work, is interested in policy and transnational social work issues. One of her research projects is a study of methods women in Pakistan are using to improve their status, especially with respect to the social tolerance of domestic violence.

Her research has been funded by grants from the school's Les Brun Research Endowment Fund Pilot Program and from UB's Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy to support travel to the city of Lahore, Pakistan, where she is observing the work of AGHS Legal Aid, a practice specializing in women's rights, and the Dastak Charitable Trust, a women's shelter established by the principals of the legal aid group.

She is interviewing lawyers, social workers and residents of the shelter in order to build an ethnographic picture of their work.

Bina Ahmed is an Urdu-speaking MSW student from Toronto who was born in Pakistan but raised in Saudi Arabia before her family moved to Canada 12 years ago. She's interested in international social work.

Someone told Ahmed she should meet Critelli. And two weeks after she did, Ahmed was getting ready to travel with Critelli to Lahore where her family still has property and she has cousins to visit. It would be her first trip to Pakistan since she was a child.

For Critelli, Ahmed's appearance was a boon. On her first trip to Lahore, she'd had to depend on bilingual Pakistanis to translate when she was interviewing non-English speakers. In

Ahmed, she had a fluent translator who could also be a research colleague, someone sensitive to nuance in both question and answer and able to extend and elaborate on lines of inquiry.

Ahmed crammed for the trip, studying guidelines for doing research in other cultures and getting up to speed on Critelli's project. She also briefed herself on general issues of cultural competency, which might seem unnecessary for someone raised in a Pakistani household in an expatriate Pakistani community, but the trip proved otherwise.

Critelli and Ahmed spent a month in Lahore during UB's 2008-09 winter break. When she landed, Ahmed experienced culture shock. The street scene was completely different from Toronto's or Buffalo's. Among other things that unsettled her was that she was the object of "hooting" by men when she went out without covering her head.

She also had a hard time getting comfortable with the vehement, even intimidating, style of arguing she encountered when she and her cousins talked about women's rights. She was surprised at how different her worldview is from that of many people she met despite having been raised with what she calls "Pakistani values."

"It was an eye-opener for me to see how privileged I am to live where I have fundamental rights," she says.

The subject of Critelli's research presented the two with other cultural challenges. They could be enthusiastic about the success story of a village woman who had escaped to the women's

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# People People

## Alumni Association News

Dear (new) fellow alumni,



The idea of living a purpose-filled life has attracted much attention in recent years, but what does it actually mean? Ask a social worker and you will find out.

I recently had the privilege of welcoming the UB School of Social Work Class of 2009 to our professional ranks. Reflecting on this experience,

I feel so much pride in belonging to such a great profession.

Social workers are very special individuals in our communities—we are driven to serve and help others and to take action that makes a positive impact on society.

Social workers are society's safety net. The need for social workers is growing rapidly. A career in social work provides the perfect fit for someone who wants to help others and who has an inherent desire to serve.

We need to attract ever more of our kind of compassionate, purpose-driven people to the profession. Alumni are an invaluable source of information, advice and networking. We need to expand the public perception of the breadth and depth of our profession and the school.

It continues to be an exciting time for the SSW and the university. UB is a premier center for learning, research and discovery, nourishing our lives and the communities we live in. Our alumni are an important part of who we are. As we become a nationally and internationally recognized center of social work education, I have even more reason to encourage you to become an Alumni Association member or to renew your membership.

Please visit [www.socialwork.buffalo.edu](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu) or [www.alumni.buffalo.edu](http://www.alumni.buffalo.edu) for opportunities to join us.

As always, feel free to contact me by e-mail at [GovGirl55@aol.com](mailto:GovGirl55@aol.com).

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

Congratulations and welcome.



Congratulations to the University at Buffalo School of Social Work MSW Class of 2009! Special congratulations to our three doctoral graduates—Melissa Affronti, Albert Dirschberger and Abbie Kirkendall. Your graduation marks not only

a personal milestone, but an important milestone in the history of the UB School of Social Work. You are proud members of the 75th graduating class. As such, you share a legacy with thousands of committed social workers who have made a difference in Western New York, the nation, and throughout the world.

You are now alumni! Welcome. You stand on the threshold of a new beginning, trading in text books and research papers for organizational policy manuals and progress notes. Read with a critical eye and evaluate your work and that of your colleagues. Challenge the systems in which you work. Educate the community about the profession, and challenge the stereotypes. Commit to transforming lives and communities for the better. Embrace research, contribute to knowledge and informed practice and contribute to best-practice development. Be proud of your profession, be proud to call yourself a social worker, and be proud of your accomplishments! Well done!

Stay connected. The relationship we began during your student years does not end with graduation—we want to know where your career is taking you and to keep you connected with your school and colleagues. So join the Alumni Association! You can stay in touch with your peers and the school while enjoying the benefits of membership. Learn more and sign up at [www.alumni.buffalo.edu](http://www.alumni.buffalo.edu).

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

## CLASSNOTES

### **Teri (Arthur) Browne (MSW '95)**

After 13 years as a dialysis social worker, Teri has just completed a term as chair of the Council of Nephrology Social Workers. She recently completed a PhD at the University of Chicago and is now an assistant professor at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work. Teri has published extensively and is a co-editor of the Handbook of Health Social Work.

### **Erika Vinograd Osborne (MSW '02)**

Before entering the renal field four years ago, Erika was a mental health social worker at a day treatment center; she also worked nights and weekends as an on-call crisis clinician.

### **Sarah E. Gordy (MSW '03)**

This January, Sarah established a new congregation in the Holy Apostle Episcopal Church in Tonawanda, N.Y. One of the youngest priests in the diocese, she is taking on the challenge of starting anew after the departure of most of the members of the original, conservative congregation due to theological differences with the more liberal national church—a point of contention being the inclusion of gay persons as clergy by the national Episcopal Church.

### **Sharon Sisti (MSW '81)**

Since 1996, Sharon has taught at Hilbert College where she is assistant professor and chair of Human and Rehabilitation Services. This year she was named 2009 Social Worker of the Year

by the Western Division of the National Association of Social Workers, New York State Chapter, for her professional accomplishments and because she exemplifies the values of the profession. She also received the William B. Hoyt Award for Advocacy presented by Child and Family Services of Erie County for her commitment to advocacy.

### **Matthew J. Bystrak (MSW '01)**

Matthew has been working as a school social worker in West Seneca for seven years; he is currently pursuing a master's degree in school administration.

### **Michael Carr (MSW '96)**

Michael has worked for the Erie County Department of Social Services for the past two years. As director of Temporary Assistance, Emergency Services and Food Stamps, he leads a staff of more than 300 dedicated to those in need in Erie County.

### **Lorraine Eyth (MSW '00)**

After working with people who have diverse needs—including addictions, MICA (mentally ill chemically abusing), regular therapy, child therapy, and sexual abuse therapy—Lorraine, now an LCSW, works with adults at Wayne County Behavioral Health Network in Lyons, N.Y. She calls the clinic a “collaboration for success.”

### **Elizabeth Coleman (MSW '03)**

Elizabeth recently passed the clinical licensure exam. She is pursuing a PhD at Arizona State University.

### **Yhermana Puello (MSW '08)**

Yhermana is currently living in New York City. She was chosen to participate in the National Urban Fellows Program, a highly selective national leadership development program for people of color. The fellowship is a rigorous, full-time, 14-month scholarship program that combines study for a master's in public administration with a nine-month mentorship at a leading national agency. She is in the process of finishing her mentorship as a program director at the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families.

### **Edna Wielbon (MSW '00)**

Edna has worked as a residential social worker, an intensive case coordinator, and a family functional therapist. She is currently working for Mid-Erie Counseling and Treatment Services' school-based mental health program. She is seeing children and families as a school intervention specialist (social worker/therapist) in the Buffalo public school she attended as a child. Having grown up in the same neighborhood and attended the same school as the children, she feels she has a unique perspective on their lives that suits her well for the position. “I feel that I know where the children are coming from—which helps me to understand them and provide them with the skills needed to make the best of things and strive for success,” Edna writes.



Wielbon

continued on next page »

# Alumni spotlight



**PAUL R. SMOKOWSKI (MSW '95)** is one of the School of Social Work's young alumni academic stars. He is an associate professor at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill School of Social Work where he became tenured four years ago; he will be evaluated for promotion to full professor this fall.

He has held pre- and postdoctoral fellowships in social welfare and child development, funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Smokowski received his doctorate in social welfare from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1998. He did his postdoctoral work at the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. He has published more than 40 refereed journal articles and has received more than \$3.5 million in research funding from federal, state and local sources.

Among the highlights of his research, he has served as co-principal investigator of the Making Choices Project, a National Institute on Drug Abuse–funded intervention research program that attempts to lower child and family risk for developing aggressive behavioral disorders. He is also director of the Parent–Teen Biculturalism Project and the Latino Acculturation and Health Project. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the two projects are studies examining psychosocial and educational adjustment in Latino youth.

Smokowski is also a collaborator on the Chicago Longitudinal Study, a 20-year prospective longitudinal investigation of early intervention and educational outcomes in inner-city African-American youth. His research focuses on risk, resilience, prevention program development, psychosocial adjustment and educational outcomes for minority adolescents.

## CLASSNOTES

(continued from page 13)

### Rebekah J. Crofford

**MSW '96, PhD '07**

Rebekah, an associate professor of social work at Roberts Wesleyan College, was recently honored with the Darlene E. McCown Faculty Service Award. The award is presented annually to a faculty member who demonstrates outstanding service to others and extraordinary caring as a member of the faculty.

## CONTACT US!

Tell your fellow alumni what you're doing through *Mosaics'* Classnotes section.

Please send your news to [ssw-alum@buffalo.edu](mailto:ssw-alum@buffalo.edu).

## Cultural difference continued from page 11



Filomena Critelli (left) and Bina Ahmed flank shelter director Victoria Bhajhan.

shelter after running away from her family to marry for love and who was now attending college and working for the legal aid firm; and then be brought up short by the woman's deep and enduring pain and guilt about betraying her family. Critelli says that listening to the women's stories, she'd realize how much her assumptions were bounded by a Western perspective.

One day at the legal aid firm, she and Ahmed witnessed a woman being hustled to safety out a back way when her estranged family was gathering in front of the building.

AGHS Legal Aid was founded in 1986 by sisters Asma Jahangir and Hina Jalani, two of the most prominent women in Pakistan who, in 1980, had been the first women in the nation

to open a law firm. Their legal practice specializes in divorce and other women's legal matters; the legal aid organization, headed by well-known activist Shahtaj Qizilbash, offers paralegal education for women.

Now, back in Buffalo, Ahmed is translating and transcribing tapes of more than 20 lengthy interviews she and Critelli conducted, at the rate of 10 hours of labor for every hour of tape. When that work is done, she will go through the transcripts to look for common themes. Eventually, Critelli will compare what they collected with the hypotheses she brought to this phase of her work.

For Ahmed, the experience reinforced her interest in working internationally to help marginalized populations. For Critelli, it was another chapter in her education—one that she will pass along—about how many different right answers there may be to fundamental questions about women's rights. ■

# Development News

## Honor the student



As we reflect on another year passing, another cohort of students graduating—as we pass the torch to the next team of leaders now prepared for the work ahead—we cannot help but smile because we have a lot to be proud of here at the UB SSW.

On May 8 we held the annual student awards ceremony. Many of the awards and scholarships we bestowed on graduating and continuing students were established by generous donors to the school—indeed, it is their gifts that make this happy day possible. The gifts provide opportunities to students who exemplify excellence, scholarly pursuit, commitment and passion in the study of such issues as addiction, community engagement, trauma, health and mental health, and interventions that help to ameliorate social ills and discrimination.

Over the past five years, enrollment at the school has remained solid. We have a gifted and diverse student body and a first-rate faculty to instruct and guide them. Our quest for the best extends into all facets of our academic life. However, it is important for you to know that we need your continuing help. We can accomplish very little without the support of our generous donors.

Imagine the opportunity to provide a scholarship to every student who walks through our doors. Imagine recruiting the very

best and brightest men and women. Imagine a school of social work reaching beyond borders to take its work around the world.

Scholarships are a top priority at the School of Social Work. In light of the problems college students face—rising tuition costs, less state and federal grant money, staggering student debt—financial support can mean the difference between obtaining a degree and foregoing one. If we lose a student, ultimately our communities suffer the loss. Your philanthropic contributions can improve our ability to provide financial support to students, attract the best and brightest to the social work profession, and reach beyond borders.

It is our hope that next year at our student awards ceremony, more students will have the opportunity to receive support and be rewarded for their hard work. The next time I contact you for support, I hope you can join me in this honorable work. Student success is our reward.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Minnie S. Wyse".

MINNIE WYSE, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT



## 2009 Student Awards

### Front Row left to right:

Chris Lunsford, Outstanding Student Award  
Kathleen Heim, Niles Carpenter Scholarship  
Erinne Metler, Louisa Cielen Award  
Petrina Piro, Terese M. Eusanio Memorial Scholarship  
Alexandra Hahn, Dena P. Gold Memorial Award  
Julie Maier, Dorothy Lynn Honorary Award  
Alicia Laible, School of Social Work Alumni Association Award

### Back Row left to right:

Kaylin Manley, Archie W. Swanson Honorary Award  
Tabitha Vaughan, Julian Sodja Memorial Fund  
Stacey Wade, Kristopher L. Braselton Memorial Award  
TuWanner Cleveland, Thorn and Rose Award  
Trevor Martin Jones, Andrew McLaughlin Award  
Kathy Lamb, Hazeltine T. Clements Memorial Award  
Mary DelBalso, The DREAM Award  
Jennifer Dunning-Simon, NASW Award



## Come celebrate with us

The year 2009 marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Our yearlong anniversary celebration will conclude with a gala evening at Salvatore's Italian Gardens Restaurant in Depew, N.Y., on Oct. 24.

As co-chairs, we are pleased to invite you to the event. All the information necessary to make arrangements to attend or to be a gala sponsor can be found at

[www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/75th/gala](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/75th/gala).

We look forward to seeing you there.

Bruce C. Nisbet, LMSW  
President/CEO  
Spectrum Human Services  
Class of 1974

Catherine N. Dulmus, PhD  
Associate Professor and Director  
Buffalo Center for Social Research  
Class of 1991 and 1999

### 75th Anniversary Happenings

*Alumni Day*—The School of Social Work's 75th anniversary celebrations kicked off at Alumni Day on March 26. In the keynote address, Bernie Tolbert (BS '71, MSW '73) described how his social work skills have served him well, first as an FBI agent and now as the chief of security for the National Basketball Association. Ellen Fink-Samnack presented to a standing-room-only audience on the subject of balancing self and work amid chaos in these times of more work and fewer resources. Christine Rine (MSW '92, PhD '08) addressed community engagement with a workshop on neighborhood factors in culturally competent practice.

*Roll Out the Red Carpet*—On June 9, the premiere showing of *Living Proof: Reflections on 75 Years of Social Work Education* was held at Allen Hall on South Campus before an audience of more than 100 guests. The feature-length documentary is the culmination of 60 interviews conducted over a four-year period with graduates and faculty of the School of Social Work. To order a copy of the DVD, go to the school Web site ([www.socialwork.buffalo.edu](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu)), click on 75th Anniversary Events and scroll down to the pdf order form.