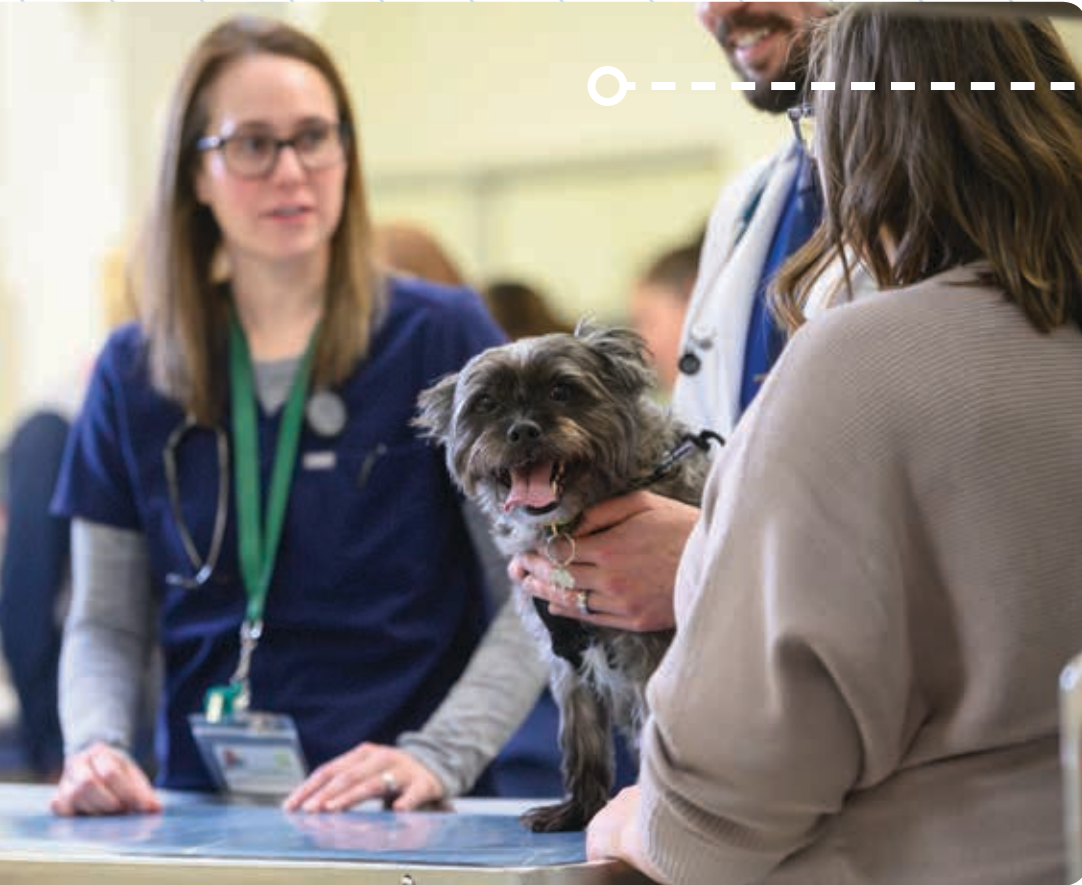


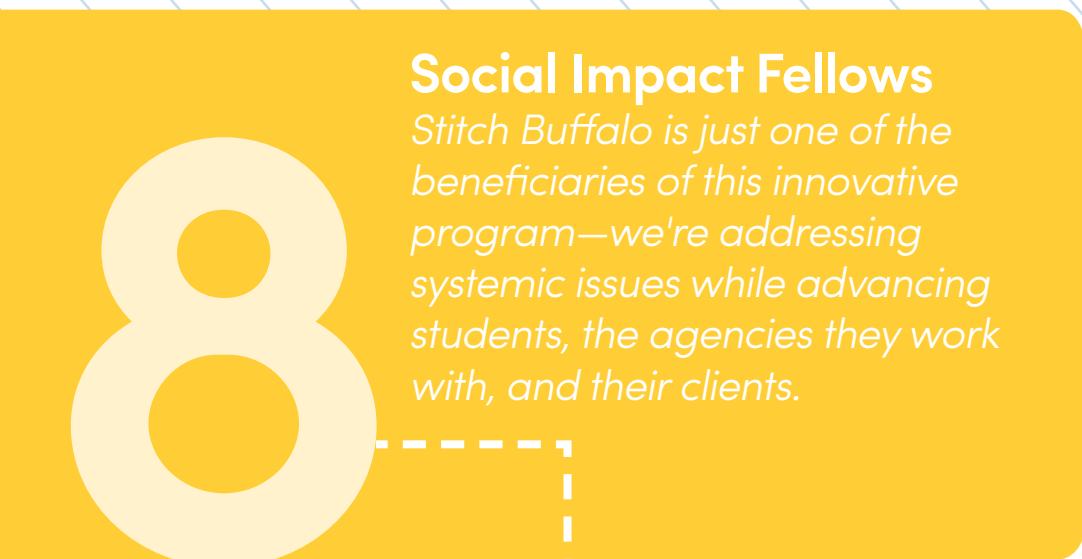
MOSAICS



Animals in Social Work

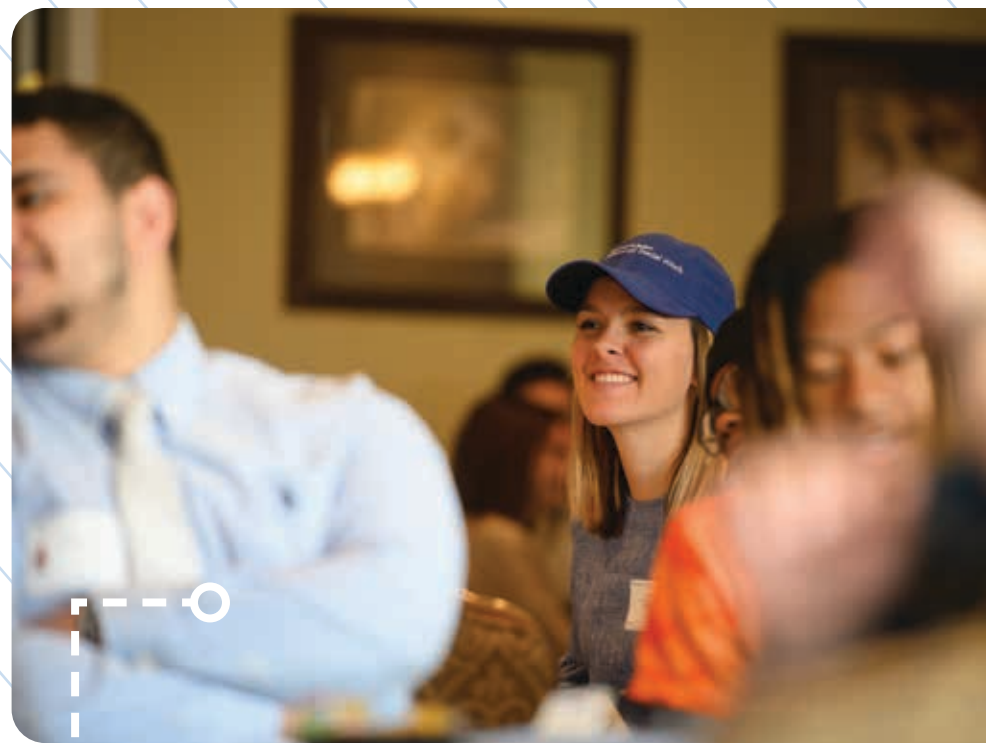
Caring for people and their animals; caring for people with the help of animals. Learn about these growing practices within the field of social work.

4



Social Impact Fellows

Stitch Buffalo is just one of the beneficiaries of this innovative program—we're addressing systemic issues while advancing students, the agencies they work with, and their clients.



Challenge 2 Change: high school day

The annual gathering of diverse high school students—moderated by our MSW students—to build unity and racial understanding in their communities. It's working.

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News of the SCHOOL

COMINGS & GOINGS

After 30 years with UBSSW, **Mary Civileto**, fiscal coordinator for the Office of Continuing Education, has retired.

Kathleen Heim, MSW '10, joined UBSSW as director of the Office of Continuing Education. Most recently she was a community health manager at the Neighborhood Health Center-WNY.

Melissa Miller joined our Buffalo Center for Social Research as a research administrator.

Earlier last year **Trevor Wilson** joined UBSSW as client support specialist with our information technology unit.

NATIONAL NEWS

PBS Frontline quotes Professor **Gretchen Ely** in an article on how changes to Title X funding are impacting Planned Parenthood, which has pulled out of the program, and other clinics. Among the changes: doctors will be forbidden from referring patients directly to an abortion provider. "All the clinics that receive this Title X money are going to be faced with whether or not they're going to let the gag rule stand and take the grant money, which I'm sure is contrary to their mission, or are they going to drop the Title X and no longer be able to serve patients," Ely said. "It's a terrible choice for a health care provider."

A Newsweek story on a CDC report indicating that preventing childhood trauma is likely to improve a person's lifelong health interviews Associate Professor **Patricia Logan-Greene**, who said the report is intriguing because of the variety of factors it examined, including poverty and discrimination. "All of those experiences can be extremely toxic, and typically are not included in the studies about childhood adversities for a variety of reasons," Logan-Greene said.

Futurity and other news outlets reported on a new study by Assistant Professor **Annahita Ball**. The research suggests that laptops and tablets in classrooms have educational virtues for elementary school kids, but limitations, too. "You can't simply throw technology at kids and expect positive outcomes," Ball said. Consumer Affairs, Phys.org, Niagara Frontier Publications and BrightSurf were among media that carried the story.

Articles in Popular Science and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution on how self-care varies widely between individuals quote Associate Professor **Lisa Butler**, who said, "Originally, self-care focused around protecting or alleviating negative outcomes like stress, burnout, [and] vicarious traumatization. But I think self-care is bigger than that—or certainly could be bigger than that. I think it's about maintaining or actually enhancing your well-being. It's going beyond manning the ramparts."

An article on CNN about more people dying in their homes rather than a hospital quotes Professor **Deborah Waldrop**, who studies end-of-life decision-making. "I cannot emphasize enough the point of having these conversations, not just what kind of care you want in later stages of an illness, but also what the person's thoughts are about where they want to be," Waldrop said. "Honestly, some of my worst moments in practice is when someone tells me, 'I don't know what she wants, we never talked about it.'" The story was featured on television news websites nationwide, including ABC15 Arizona, WKBW-TV in Buffalo and Fox4 in Florida.

FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

Professor **Clara Bradizza** and Kathleen Parks (PIs) with co-PIs Professor **Paul Stasiewicz** and Christopher Barrick received NIAAA funding for the project, Assessing the Feasibility of a New Secondary Prevention Intervention to Reduce Alcohol-Related Sexual Revictimization of College Women (3 years; \$621,700).

Associate Professor **Filomena Critelli** receives the 2019 Council on International Studies and Programs' Outstanding Contributions to International Education Award.

Assistant Professor **Nadine Shaanta Murshid** was invited to join the Bangladesh Development Initiative, a nonprofit promoting research and policy advocacy.

Assistant Professor **Melanie Sage** is the new chair of the Human Services Information Technology Association (husta). This international group is concerned with the ethical and effective use of technology in human service sectors and oversees the publication of the Journal of Technology in Human Services.

Assistant Professor **Noelle St. Vil** was the featured speaker at Planned Parenthood of Central & Western New York's All Access fundraiser.

STUDENT NEWS

PhD student **Nicole Capozziello** wrote about solitary confinement in The Buffalo News Another Voice section. "While criminal justice reform is a hot topic these days, the practice of solitary confinement—confining a human being to a space smaller than a parking spot for between 22 and 24 hours a day—remains in the shadows, a horror too dark for the true crime shows we watch in our living rooms," Capozziello wrote. "Yet it is a practice used in every state, with 80,000 Americans in solitary right now."

MSW candidate **Hector Chaidez Ruacho** has accepted an Advanced Clinical Social Work Fellowship with the Yale School of Medicine in the Child Study Center: Education. (See pages 12-13 to learn more about him.)

ITTIC LEADERS GIVE KEYNOTE

This past fall, our Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care (ITTIC) was the invited keynote presenter at Michigan State University's (MSU) 2019 Trauma Summit, hosted by the Trauma Service and Training Network. Over 50 faculty and staff from a variety of MSU departments, including the School of Social Work and Department of Psychology, came together for the summit, based on their investment in ensuring they are responding to the university community in a way that is trauma-informed. **Sue Green** and **Samantha Koury** provided a three-hour presentation on ITTIC's Trauma-Informed Organizational Change Manual with considerations for a university setting. The Trauma Service and Training Network Steering Committee will continue to facilitate regular meetings to plan for and implement action steps to build on MSU's commitment to preventing sexual violence and misconduct in a trauma-informed way.

FROM DEAN NANCY J. SMYTH

This issue of Mosaics contains an excellent overview of the breadth of our programs and collaborations, as well as some of the impactful ways that your donations and support help our students gain an even richer immersive experience.

Our feature story on the exploration of the human-animal bond through social work reminded me of the flexibility of our MSW program. The MSW degree is a “license to learn.” Some MSWs know what they want to focus on from the start, and use our “design your own concentration” degree to do just that. Others need time and experience after earning their degree to find their passion, whether it’s veterinary social work, health disparities, or real estate. Either way, what you’ve focused on during your time here is just the beginning. Continuing education and certificate programs are excellent options for more in-depth knowledge.

Our ongoing collaboration with the nonprofit Say Yes Buffalo is multi-pronged and mutually beneficial—providing resources for Say Yes “clients,” who are Buffalo area public and charter school students and their families; the staff and other stakeholders of Say Yes; and our own faculty and students. Our social work educational community strives to be part of intentional change-making. That is why our support of the Say Yes Buffalo goal, to ensure that every public and charter school child graduates high school and has access to and support for post-secondary education, is so meaningful.

Our Social Impact Fellows initiative is a striking example of our generous donors’ dollars at work. The summer-time program offers our MSW students the chance to collaborate in a small multidisciplinary team (3 people) and affect real change within a nonprofit agency or business. We’re hearing from the leaders of those organizations that these are consistently the highest value student projects they’ve had.

Philanthropic giving also empowers us to send several students a year to the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP) Political Boot Camp and Media Training held in Washington, DC. The school has a specific fund designated to supporting students who want to learn about policy and political action for social workers. They tell us the experience is life-changing. And we couldn’t do it without you.



NANCY J. SMYTH, PHD, LCSW

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MOSAICS



EXPLORING THE *human-animal* CONNECTION THROUGH SOCIAL WORK

| by Jana Eisenberg

More and more schools of social work are teaching about and examining the relationship between humans and animals, and how those relationships might be beneficial in the practice of social work.

From Colorado to New Jersey, over 15 universities in the U.S. have some sort of program, certificate, course or ongoing research, exploring the various ways that social work educators, students and practitioners who are interested in animals can mesh that interest with their practice—and be of service and value to their clients at the same time.

A growing specialty within the area is the use of therapy animals in a wide variety of environments, such as private practice, nursing homes, schools, courtrooms and mental health centers. Another natural offshoot is the increasing presence of social workers within veterinary practices, to provide an emotional connection and other services to people with pets across the spectrum of care they're seeking for their companion animals.

Providing social lubricant, and easing the minds of pet-owners

After earning her degree at UBSSW, Roberta Thompson, MSW '08, pursued her love of animals at one of the more well-known of these programs, and holds a post-graduate certificate from University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work in the animal-human bond.

"When I was at UB, there was not much acceptance for animal-assisted therapy; I was told that there was no evidence-based research and studies," said Thompson. "At Denver now, they have an endowed chair to study and promote the human-animal bond, and animal assisted-therapy is becoming more accepted and common."

Her work, at Chautauqua Hospice and Palliative Care in Chautauqua County, NY, finds her facilitating animal-assisted therapy. "As part of the therapeutic services offered at



UB Libraries hosts Stress Relief Days during the last week of classes each semester.

Chautauqua Hospice and Palliative Care, I was asked to start a program of pet therapy," said Thompson. "The goals with the animals in the hospice program include socialization and overcoming depression. When we go to visit a patient, what I find is typically, the animal serves as a social lubricant; the patient will begin to talk to or about the animal, and volunteer all sorts of information."

With funding from the Banfield Charitable Trust, Thompson also founded a chapter of Pet Peace of Mind at the hospice. The national program recognizes the importance of pets to patients/humans, and helps them plan for their pet's care when they are going to hospice. That plan may involve being able to keep their pet or making sure that the animal is cared for. "Pets are family, sometimes people's only family. When you think about giving them up, that can be a profound loss," said Thompson. "Some people will even avoid taking care of themselves if they are not clear about what will happen to their pet."

A calming presence, building trust •----->

Day Cummings, MSW '02, also employs animals in her practice. She founded the animal-assisted therapy program at BestSelf's Child Advocacy Center (CAC). She attested to the simple reason that animals can be effective in therapeutic settings: "Animals are comforting to both kids and adults; when people are anxious or stressed, animals can have a calming effect."

In social work, one of the most important things is being able to connect and engage with clients. "In my private practice, I have clients who say they're coming to see my dog, Isabella, not me," said Cummings. "Animals can help build trust, too. Isabella is a helper; they are talking to me through her. People are often more relaxed when animals are around, and having one in the room can also give purpose and focus."

Dogs are the most commonly used therapeutic animal; Cummings said that they are brought in for both individual and group work at CAC, as well as to accompany children testifying in court. "I have seen a child in a courtroom, with a Labrador at their side for two days of testimony; the dog was so calm, no matter what happened in that room. It was amazing to watch. The child just touched the dog constantly, feeling the warmth," she said.

In therapy with both kids and adults, added Cummings, having an animal nearby or in their lap can ease them into the process. "Because the animals are an accepting and non-judgmental presence there, kids have a tendency to tell the therapy animal what's going on rather than the counselor," she said. "The animals like you no matter what."

Easing the way for both •-----> families and veterinary staff

Like many others drawn to this area of social work, Alyssa Pepe, MSW '14, always had a strong love of animals, and they had always been part of her life. Pepe is now a veterinary social worker at the Orchard Park Veterinary Medical Center. She also volunteers for the SPCA Serving Erie County in the wildlife department. (See sidebar p. 6 for a deeper look at her work.)

"In grad school I learned about the ability to blend social work and animals, though there weren't a lot of open positions," said Pepe. She worked for a time in mental health before finding her current job. "Social work is a helping profession," said Pepe. "It came naturally to be able to combine working that with helping pet owners through the grief and loss process. Bringing in my understanding of that was very powerful."

The four major areas of veterinary social work are delineated as: compassion fatigue, conflict management, animal-related grief and bereavement, and the link between animal and human violence.

"I do a lot of work with families coming in with their pets for euthanasia or quality of life discussions," said Pepe. "And I help the veterinary staff develop self-care and compassion techniques to avoid burn out and moral distress. They experience job difficulties. They might not be in agreement with the client; or they're explaining difficult things like euthanasia. We work on training staff to recognize signs of animal abuse. I also try to help them understand where the clients might be coming from."

Pepe noted that animals can actually be the therapy and provide a spiritual connection for people. "Last spring and summer I started volunteering in the SPCA Serving Erie County wildlife department; I was caring for baby birds in the bird nursery," she said. "I found it grounding, and it also put me in tune with the human and animal relationship in a very different way. The experience motivated me to keep helping and promoting the importance of all animals in our lives."



Another UB end-of-the-semester Libraries Stress Relief event featuring the SPCA Paws for Love program.



Alyssa Pepe (middle), MSW '14, with Eric Kancar (left), Licensed Veterinary Technician, and client (right), at the Orchard Park Veterinary Medical Center, where she is a veterinary social worker.



Adjunct instructor Day Cummings' dog Isabella visits her MSW students at UB, and she says, "I find it very beneficial for her to come to class, especially when discussing trauma. Bringing her relaxes the students and offers them an outlet at times when it is needed most."



ALYSSA PEPE, MSW '14: A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE LIFE OF A *veterinary* *social worker*

↑
Pepe, with her own rescue dog, Lola, believed to be a cairn terrier mix.

What's a typical day involve?

I assist both clients and staff. With clients, I maintain a support role. They often arrive in an emergency, panicked by their pet's rapidly declining quality of life. I help facilitate communication between clients and veterinary staff, and also help clients normalize their feelings and provide psychoeducation. When there is a decision to euthanize a companion animal, we provide the Rainbow Room, a private, intimate, quiet, area where family and friends can spend time with their beloved pet before or after the procedure.

Some clients' pets have been with our medical center their entire lifetime. When clients receive difficult diagnoses and experience stressors, including emotional distress, I can help provide clarification for the client, and work with the doctor to ensure the client fully understands the treatment options. I offer support and provide resources around quality of life assessment, financial assistance, anticipatory grief and end of life care/support.

With staff, I work to combat compassion fatigue and burnout. In this stressful environment, moral distress can negatively impact the quality of employees' work and home lives. Rather than therapy, I offer debriefing; seeing what's going well and what may be overwhelming. I provide information on mental health and the importance of maintaining it, sometimes suggesting counseling. I share resources with staff for community trainings in mental health first aid, and work to create awareness among staff to better recognize signs of mental health concerns.

I attend various staff meetings to provide feedback. If I'm ever not on site, I've created a resource binder to help empower staff with materials and handouts for clients.

An important skill that I've learned is building rapport, crucial for establishing trust,

especially in a fast-paced, life-and-death decision-making mode. It's also important to understand the raw emotion involved with grief and trauma; they are present in different capacities in both community mental health and veterinary social work.

Immediately after I was hired here, I traveled to the Dallas, Texas area for training with Sandra Brackenridge, LCSW. Sandra is a long-time veterinary social worker and consultant; I continue to receive supervision and support from her.

I feel fortunate to have an amazing local supervisor who listens, provides feedback, and challenges me to grow as a social worker and person. Good supervision has helped me gain perspective on my experience, and time to reflect on my skillset and understanding of working with different clients.

What have you learned that might transfer to a broader social work environment?

Compassion. Having the privilege to watch owners hold their beloved pets, kiss and embrace them during the end of life process has exposed me to the pure love that people feel for their cats and dogs, which are the primary animals we serve.

This work also shows the strong bond between pets and families, even in difficult times. Pets may be there when someone is grieving the loss of a loved one, helping them find the courage to leave a domestic violence situation, or being a support during divorce. Clients often tell me that their 14- or 15-year-old cat or dog has been with them longer than relationships they've had with friends or significant others; the animal is in a sense their "oldest friend." These examples show the unique bond humans are able to have with companion animals.

– Interview conducted by
Jana Eisenberg

Say Yes & the School of Social Work

Part of a larger collaboration to help kids finish high school—and get post-secondary schooling, too

| by Jana Eisenberg

What does it take to make sure that every public school student both graduates from high school and also gets the preparation and support to attain, afford and complete a post-secondary education? The national nonprofit organization Say Yes to Education has at least one solution, and it's been working in Buffalo to accomplish that goal since 2011, when it established its second full chapter here after a competitive process.

The Say Yes model includes a deeply embedded, unique local collaboration made up of strongly invested stakeholder contingents—including cities, counties, school districts, institutes of higher education, parents, teachers, administrators, businesses and foundations. From the start, UB was one of those stakeholders, and SSW continues to deepen its intertwined relationship with Say Yes in many meaningful and symbiotic ways.

Early on, said Say Yes Buffalo Executive Director David Rust, UB School of Education students worked through Say Yes to help public and charter school students complete FAFSA and TAP scholarship and aid applications, which is a prerequisite for participation in the program. "Completing the forms helps students access those allocated dollars," explained Rust. "We would not be where we are without the UB partnership from the beginning." It's one marker of success that the application completion rates have risen and stayed higher since Say Yes came on the scene.

And the connections with UB have become more and more positively entwined as Say Yes and its partners put in the years of work required to attain their sweeping goals.



Q&A

Assistant Professor Christopher St. Vil is active with the

Say Yes Breaking Barriers program, which he began after meeting program coordinators Pastor Tommy McClam and Daniel Robertson; the work is in line with his social work research interests, which focus on interventions for black males. “Their intervention is a specific form of mentoring and I wanted to be a part of it,” he said.

How are you involved with Breaking Barriers?

I am evaluating their program and helping generate data to demonstrate their effectiveness.

Why is this interaction with Say Yes important?

Exploring whether and how Breaking Barriers is impactful in reducing negative outcomes experienced by black males is important to inform other efforts.

Why is it important to foster collaboration between universities and community organizations in general?

Universities must form effective, reciprocal relationships where they are, to conduct research that may improve conditions in that community. As long as the relationship is not coercive, and the university shares the benefits of conducting community research with the community, it’s a win-win.

How does the relationship between UBSSW and Say Yes affect your professional life?

It has enriched it. I interact with Breaking Barriers participants regularly; we’ll be soon presenting some evidence that we hope to publish. I feel privileged to work with them. And it’s up to me to prove the value and worth of collaborating with the UBSSW.

– Interview conducted by Jana Eisenberg

Among the many forms the Say Yes/UBSSW relationship takes: our degree students intern with the organization, and participate in field work with staff in the Buffalo Public Schools. Various UBSSW faculty members help to analyze and apply results from data, monitor programs, and provide trainings. Say Yes hires graduates of our program, and the MSW program has become a continuing education resource for Say Yes staff.

Clinical Assistant Professor Michael Lynch, MSW '10, personifies the relationship. Post-UBSSW MSW, he was hired by Say Yes as a site facilitator supervisor. Now, as a member of the SSW faculty, he oversees our field work program, placing dozens of MSW students yearly with the Buffalo Public Schools and Say Yes, and continues to be intrinsically involved with Say Yes, consulting on data management and storage, as well as conducting research on strategies that engage high-risk families.

Lynch agreed that the relationship between Say Yes and UBSSW is an important and effective one. “We all want to do whatever we can to make sure young people in Buffalo have a chance at success,” said Lynch. “There are so many barriers and systems that perpetuate the problems. When you find partners who share your values, it’s easier to work together.”

Rust also concurred that a united front, as well as an unusual organizational power structure, contribute to the measurable successes being attained. “Say Yes uses a collective

impact model, which is very different than traditional nonprofits,” he said. “We’re creating partnerships with common goals, and we do it all together. There’s no one person or group in charge. The partners allocate things like time, political will, and financial resources; it’s not always easy, so it’s essential to have an agreed-upon strategy.”

“This only works if the partners put aside their doubts, and I give full credit for some of the significant contributions,” continued Rust. “Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown put a lot of resources into the public schools, which he did not have to do; the County allowed mental health services delivery in the school system—that’s also not required. And the school system itself has embraced [Superintendent Kriner Cash’s] New Education Bargain. This reallocation of resources on behalf of common goals can be fragile, and it takes time and kindness to build trust and respect.”

Tabatha Lumley, MSW '14, provides some of those services that Rust was referring to—services that are also foundational to the success of Say Yes in making sure that students stay in school, stay mentally and physically healthy, learn what they need to learn, and graduate.

Lumley is a Say Yes school social worker, placed at P.S. 27 Hillery Park Elementary. “Through the Say Yes and School of Social Work relationship, I’m out here working on macro, mezzo, and micro levels,” said Lumley.

“With the skills I gained through the MSW program, I’m able to assist children and families. I know how to work with them, to set achievable goals, to do interventions when they’re required—all using solution-focused and trauma-informed care.”

“During the week, or when I’m not there, the school nurse, assistant principal, and principal regularly call me,” she said. “The kids trust me; I have relationships with them, and they want to talk to me. We’re dealing with families, sometimes around things like sexual abuse and addiction. I’ve learned so much from being a social worker at Say Yes, and I’m proud to be one of the people representing the School of Social Work in the community.”

The future of the initiative looks solid for now, with a Gates Foundation investment designated to various partners to develop transitional curriculum and so that recent Say Yes scholars can help influence their younger counterparts. Say Yes Buffalo administration and staff, currently around 100 strong, will move to a new East Side building on Jefferson Avenue. “There are areas that we can grow, and will continue to fill gaps to better serve our students,” said Rust. “We’re in an endowment campaign, and have already raised \$39.7 million from our very generous community.”

UBSSW’s Lynch agreed that there’s room for extending and expanding the program—again to benefit all parties. “We hope this relationship continues to evolve. Say Yes is innovative; they’re working with different populations using a variety of interventions,” he affirmed. “The School of Social Work would like to continue to expand this on many levels—researching that innovative work; providing field placements where School of Social Work students help further the Say Yes mission, and grow and develop along the way themselves.”



Asst. Prof. Christopher St. Vil (front row, seated, far left) with leadership and participants in the Say Yes Buffalo Breaking Barriers program.

Changing Lives Through Social Work Partnerships

UB's Social Impact Fellows continue to make an impact in Buffalo and beyond

| by Mike Gluck

Providing low-cost prosthetics to amputees in third-world countries. Giving vegetable gardens to refugees on Buffalo's West Side. Building beds for kids who have nowhere else to sleep.

These are just a few of the ways that UB's Social Impact Fellows (SIF) are making a real difference in Buffalo—and around the globe.

Last summer was the third year for UB's Social Impact Fellows program—a unique initiative co-founded by the schools of Social Work and Management. Through the program, UB places interdisciplinary teams of graduate students in internships with local mission-driven organizations. The program is offered in collaboration with UB's Blackstone LaunchPad powered by Techstars, a campus-based entrepreneurship center.

Each Social Impact Fellows team includes three students: a master's student in social work brings a trauma-informed and human rights perspective to the team, an MBA student employs his business and leadership skills, and a student from the College of Arts and Sciences offers research-based support for each project.

A Summer of Learning

For 10 weeks during the summer, the Social Impact Fellows spent four days each week on-site with their organizations, then one day a week learning how to identify and define social challenges, generate sustainable solutions and practice entrepreneurial principles. Students worked with a variety of companies, nonprofit organizations and government agencies on some of today's most pressing issues, from voting reform and supporting the needs of the aging population, to helping survivors of domestic violence.

"The Social Impact Fellows program is about bringing diverse students and perspectives together in a blended disciplinary model to change the way all of

us—students, faculty and community partners—view things," said Nancy J. Smyth, dean of the School of Social Work.

The culmination of the program was the annual Pitch for a Cause competition on August 2. Standing at the front of a packed lecture hall, each team of Social Impact Fellows had five minutes to tell a panel of judges about their work and its impact on the community.

Following a series of impressive presentations, the judges had some tough decisions to make. Second place in the competition (and \$1,000 for the partner organization) went to the team working on The Service Collaborative of WNY's Beds for Buffalo program, which constructs beds for children who are living in poverty.

The coveted first-place prize—along with \$2,000 for the partner organization—went to the team who had worked with Stitch Buffalo, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to helping refugee women. At Stitch Buffalo, refugee women learn how to make hand-sewn textile art products—including beautifully embroidered peace pins, heart ornaments and custom pieces for corporate gifts and bridal parties—and then sell their work through Stitch's online or physical store (on Niagara Street, on Buffalo's West Side), or on their own. Through this experience, the women gain greater financial independence, learn new life skills, and are able to share some of their cultures' artistic traditions.



Ultimately, that's what programs like the Social Impact Fellows are all about—making things better: better outcomes for organizations such as Stitch Buffalo, a better society through the promotion of social justice, and better experiential learning opportunities for UB students.

Stitch Buffalo's 1st place team poses with their prize. Left to right: Nancy Smyth, Shannon Lach, Xingyu Chen, Kristie Bailey, Paul Tesluk

A Warmer Welcome to the City of Good Neighbors

Stitch Buffalo was founded to serve the growing number of refugees in Buffalo—one of the top cities in the U.S. for refugee resettlement. Thousands of refugees come here to start anew after fleeing deadly wars, natural disasters, political upheaval and other life-threatening events around the world. But once they arrive, the men typically go to work, the children go to school, “and the women get left behind,” said Dawne Hoeg, founder and executive director of Stitch Buffalo.

Since 2014, the organization has provided refugee women with opportunities to move their lives forward to benefit themselves—and their families. The flexibility to work on their own schedule is crucial for these women, who need a dependable monthly income to contribute to their family’s success in the U.S., but may not be able to work in traditional jobs given their other responsibilities such as taking care of elderly family members or young children at home.

Stitch Buffalo was accepted into the SIF program at a key turning point. The nonprofit was five years old and growing quickly. Leaders wanted to take a step back and determine how best to organize the operation for efficiency, help the women they support to prosper, and sustain the nonprofit’s growth for the long term. The organization applied and was accepted to the Social Impact Fellows program, which paired them with a team of three Fellows: MSW student Kristie Bailey, MBA student Shannon Lach, and Xingyu Chen, a PhD student in Global Gender Studies.

The UB students started by interviewing key stakeholders at Stitch Buffalo and conducting an organizational assessment to identify short- and long-term needs. For social work student Bailey, the experience showed her how she could make an impact in the community by applying her knowledge.

“I have a strong interest in the intersection of business and social good,” said Bailey, whose interests include fair labor practices, female empowerment and sustainable fashion. “I wanted to know exactly how to operate in a business framework with a social conscience.”

Priority #1: Helping the Refugee Women See the True Value of Their Work

At Stitch Buffalo, the Social Impact Fellows launched a new website, wrote and designed a brochure to welcome new participants, restaged the retail environment, led the

organization’s first board retreat, and even performed a safety check of the storefront. At the Pitch for a Cause competition, the students identified another priority for the organization: a digital point-of-sale system, which would replace the paper ledgers that were increasingly difficult for Stitch Buffalo to maintain, given how fast the organization was growing.

Using the prize money from Pitch for a Cause, Stitch Buffalo purchased new point-of-sale hardware in January. The system streamlined Stitch Buffalo’s financial reporting by reducing the amount of time and labor spent on accounting, allowing Stitch Buffalo to pay women on a more regular basis, and providing each woman with an exact record of what she sells. “It helps us meet the needs of our growing business, and more importantly it helps us meet our ethical obligations to the women we serve,” said Hoeg.

In addition, the refugee women will have the opportunity to learn how to use the new technology. “For women who are interested in this kind of retail work, we can train them on this system, and they can transfer those skills to employment opportunities outside of Stitch Buffalo,” said Hoeg.

An Ongoing Relationship with UB

Hardworking. Conscientious. Diligent. These are just a few of the glowing adjectives Hoeg uses to describe the Social Impact Fellows—which explains why she’s excited to keep working with students from UB. In fact, in the spring of 2020, Hoeg welcomed a group of UB undergraduate social work students to Stitch Buffalo, where they studied the ways in which Stitch Buffalo benefits local families—a natural extension of the work that the Social Impact Fellows did.

“The Social Impact Fellows really took an in-depth look at everything we do and asked lots of questions to understand what we’re doing—and then understand how they can help the organization, make recommendations, refine and make things better,” said Hoeg.

Ultimately, that’s what programs like the Social Impact Fellows are all about—making things better: better outcomes for organizations such as Stitch Buffalo, a better society through the promotion of social justice, and better experiential learning opportunities for UB students.

As Dean Smyth noted, “Whether it’s providing more ways for refugee women to support their families, or showing our social work students how their insight and experience can change lives, the Social Impact Fellows program continues to provide extraordinary benefits to our students—and our community.”



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1 Social Impact Fellows participated in a day of building beds for the Beds for Buffalo program with site agency and 2nd place pitch winner, The Service Collaborative of WNY.

2 Abid Alam, Derick Evans and Delaney Voorheis of the LegWorks team examine the prosthetic knee joints the company creates.

3 Habitat for Humanity Buffalo fellows Danial Khan, Paige Iovine-Wong and Josh Flaccavento at a site in-progress.

4 Gabriela Cordoba Vivas, Timothy Madden and Elias Schmidt of the Journey’s Eng Refugee Services team worked to enhance the sustainability of the Green Shoots for New Americans Program.

5 SIF participants before the Pitch for a Cause Competition. TOP: Geoffrey Mercene, Timothy Madden, R.J. Haq, Rachit Anand, Kristie Bailey, Macy McDonald, Jake Friedman, Allison Murphy, Gabriela Cordoba Vivas, Delaney Voorheis, Josh Flaccavento BOTTOM: Karolina Kulicka, Sarthak Chakravarty, Julia Schoonover, Elias Schmidt, Paige Iovine-Wong, Mel LeMay, Jordan Sobon, Akshata Gogate, Xingyu Chen, Shannon Lach, Rave Glynn, Azalia Muchransyah, Cassie Malough, Danial Khan, Abid Alam, Meg Denton, Nicole Capozziello, Derick Evans, Yash Shah



CELEBRATING

Alumni & Student PROWESS

| by Jim Bisco

Honoring those who have taken their UBSSW-gained foundational skills and insights and made significant strides in the world is reason enough for us to celebrate. Add to that our students, who are beginning to make waves as they prepare for their career voyage. Our annual Celebration of Social Work, held in the fall of 2019, acknowledged both alumni award recipients and student pitch competitors.

Student Pitch Competitors

A student pitch competition was held with three students or student groups, each representing a different initiative, giving four-minute "elevator pitches" to the celebration's attendees who then voted for their top choice. The initiative that received the most votes was awarded the event registration fees. (Stacy Tromble, Swartz Memorial Award recipient, donated her monetary award to the winner).

The student pitch winner was Maureen Wopperer on behalf of Youth Task Force. "The organization I worked with for

my project educated me on the plight of homeless youth, shared the data they had collected, their goals and their plan of action," said Wopperer. "I was stunned to win. The best part was seeing my research professor in the audience; I noted, 'It's what you taught me, research and data.' His was the hardest class I ever had but I learned a ton."

The runner-up pitches were made by Mel LeMay for Partnership for the Public Good, and Danial Khan and Cassidy Malough for the Social Impact Fellows Program.



Distinguished Alumni Award

Luz M. Lopez, MSW, '90

Luz M. Lopez, MSW, '90, who is a clinical associate professor and the associate director of Boston University School of Social Work's dual degree program in social work and public health, has widely demonstrated her pursuit of human rights and social justice. She has done this in her roles as an educator, mentor, researcher, social worker, and public health professional; she also has a focus on promoting justice and health for the Latino population, particularly immigrants and women.

Lopez's MSW pursuit at the SSW was her first journey to the U.S. mainland from her native Puerto Rico. "My experience at UB gave me a wonderful foundation for my future career as a social worker and then as an educator. I met excellent professors who supported me as I adapted to a new language and new environment," she related. "I started taking classes in the Women's Studies program, and in my last year I was asked to co-teach a course. That was an amazing experience because I worked with people from different ethnic backgrounds and different ages; together we discussed the content of the class. That experience is what I later adapted to my own teaching."

Lopez's interest in combining public health with social work began at UB during the early years of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. "People still had a lot of fear and stigma about it. I felt that public health would give me that bigger view while I continued with social work's clinical perspective. The two interrelated so well," she explained.

She has an equal passion for human rights. "I didn't want to see people being rejected. I wanted to change that. My Latino culture has a lot of homophobia and it was all related. There's where my social justice began," she said. "And now, with immigrants and refugees I'm also trying to create more of an understanding and see if policies can change so that more people can be welcomed here."



Distinguished Alumni Award, PhD

Molly R. Wolf, MSW, '07, PhD, '14

Molly R. Wolf, MSW, '07, PhD, '14, an associate professor in the Edinboro University Department of Social Work, has done notable work with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and its long-term effects. "I have examined the ways that survivors are groomed into abuse. The results of my study suggest that the grooming techniques used on survivors appear to effect current trauma symptoms, even independent of the sexual abuse itself," she explained. "The other area of my research has been examining the ways that survivors' current income is directly affected by their abuse experiences, with decreased income and lower income levels."

Of particular note in Wolf's research is her look at both perpetrators and victims. With her Edinboro colleagues, she has just completed the first portion of a study where offenders were asked how they groomed children into abuse. "We are creating a measure that can be used by clinicians to assess the offenders' awareness and commission of sex offenses via grooming behaviors towards children," she said. "The other way that this research prevents abuse is that it can be used to educate the public about grooming behaviors so that they can recognize signs of abuse in their community."

She credits her SSW experience for providing the gateway to her flourishing research work. "The professors truly cared about my learning experiences, and it was honestly because of them that I began my PhD career," Wolf said. "My MSW program served as the foundation for my PhD work, and both sets of learning experiences proved invaluable for me as I began my research career. My MSW work taught me how to be a skilled clinician, which is working with clients on a micro level. I used those experiences in my social work with many different populations, all of which were trauma survivors. My PhD work taught me how to effectuate change on a macro level through my research."



Student Pitchers

Mel LeMay, Cassidy Malough, Dean Nancy Smyth, Danial Khan and Maureen Wopperer



Pitch Winner

Maureen Wopperer



Louis H. Swartz Memorial Award

Stacy A. Tromble, JD/MSW, '07

Stacy A. Tromble, JD/MSW, '07, received the award honoring the SSW faculty member who established the first JD/MSW program in the U.S. As Swartz exemplified the ideals of social justice through his 40 years of work and advocacy, so has Tromble in her decade-plus, focusing on military veterans disabled in service.

Inspired by her father's service in the Marine Corps, Tromble did pro bono work on behalf of veterans before joining the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) in 2015; she is now the director of Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Litigation.

"We work with a lot of veterans who have compound physical and mental health disabilities," she explained. "The education that I received at UB helped me prepare for this work. We educate other lawyers and advocates to help veterans obtain the benefits that they have been unfairly denied. The analytic abilities that I learned in both schools has helped me in my day-to-day representation of veterans."

Significant to Tromble was that both the Law and Social Work schools were grounded in practical, pragmatic, experiential learning. "What sets both schools apart is that there is a real focus on bringing practitioners as well as academics into the classroom so that we can better understand and learn from people who are making an impact in our communities," she said.

She noted that getting veterans and active duty military personnel the benefits to which they are entitled is a daily struggle. "Some of our veterans can be tied up in the system for almost a decade; by the time they get here, they're very frustrated. At NVLSP, we provide them the legal help they need to secure the benefits they've earned through service to our country. We've had major class action victories that have created impact for large groups of veterans," said Tromble. "I go home every day very happy that I've done something to make a difference in our veterans' lives. And, I can do that, in part, because of the education that I received at the University at Buffalo."



Outstanding Volunteer Award

Edo G. Vander Kooy, MSW, '77

Edo G. Vander Kooy, MSW, '77, applied for a supervisory position that had opened where he worked after graduation and was told he needed to have some supervisory experience to be considered. The SSW provided that opportunity, saying to the ambitious new social worker, "We'll get you a graduate student to supervise." That was the beginning of a 40-year field education tenure for which Vander Kooy was honored.

He has been hailed for his dedication to and support of interns; he has nurtured many positive relationships with them, even hiring some along the way. He was noted for his thorough assessments, helpful to budding social work careers. "Assessments have always been an interest of mine; I seem to have done well in my career in supervisory positions that involve direct service," Vander Kooy said. "Over time, the field has expanded with evidence-based practices and trauma-informed care—it's been really fascinating for me to see that growth and development."

Susan Green, clinical professor and co-director of the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-informed Care, said that Vander Kooy was ahead of his time when it came to programming. "He was doing trauma-informed work before it was widely known and evidence-based treatment that was highly effective."

Although he retired from full-time work in July, he continues as a part-time consultant with Community Missions of Niagara Frontier, where he has served as manager of intensive psychiatric rehabilitation treatment and personalized recovery-oriented services for the past 24 years. Vander Kooy also continues as a field educator. "I supervise a graduate student currently and have completed the application to accept one next year," he said.



CRISP Political Boot Camp to Empower Social Workers

| by Judson Mead

There are currently six social workers serving in Congress: two senators and four representatives. Until she retired in 2017, after 30 years in office, Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski was a social worker-politician.

How do social work and politics mesh? According to a well-known Mikulski dictum: "Politics is social work with power."

The Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP) is a Capitol Hill think tank working to expand that power. Among other means, CRISP stages an annual three-day Political Boot Camp as a crash course for social work students in getting and using political power.

Imagine an entire Congress of social workers. Some of them would certainly be UB School of Social Work graduates. Six UB students have already completed the training—and these are early days.

Colleen Kristich, MSW '18, attended the boot camp's second annual session, in the summer of 2018. Kristich, a community researcher at Buffalo's Partnership for the Public Good, develops advocacy strategies with organizations working in the area of healthy housing.

She came away from the training inspired, sure that social workers can and should be involved in politics, and with a new understanding of her own impact: "I'm doing political social work."

A year later she used some of the tools of the political trade she'd picked up at the boot camp. Her friend Kathryn Franco, MSW '18, ran in a primary election for a Buffalo Common Council seat and asked Kristich to manage her campaign.

"I immediately dug out my CRISP folder," Kristich said. "Without the boot camp I wouldn't have known where to start."

After a lot of hard work, including knocking on endless doors during a Buffalo February, Franco made a respectable showing but lost to the sitting council member. Kristich says she learned a lot.

"I really believe in the necessity of political power to advance the goals for social work issues, like health care, education, immigration," she said. "We need to build collective power."

When students are selected to attend the three-day boot camp, the School of Social Work provides airfare, tuition and lodging stipends.

Pat Shelly, the SSW director of community engagement and expansion, oversees applications for the program and facilitates student participation. She doesn't expect students who attend to jump right into politics.

Rather, said Shelly, the school considers the training an investment, "so the social work profession will produce more policy makers, thought leaders, communicators, and office holders at all levels of public service."

The CRISP Political Boot Camp packs its short program with how-to information sessions ranging from getting on the ballot to opposition research to crafting a policy agenda. It also includes a visit to Capitol Hill and time for the 25-30 participants to network and bond.

The sessions on creating a personal narrative and political social work resonated powerfully with Kristen Hibit, MSW '20, who, along with fellow UB MSW students Hector Chaidez Ruacho, MSW '20, and Whitney Marris, MSW '20, attended the 2019 boot camp.

Hibit, an immigrant agricultural worker specialist with the New York State Department of Labor, hoped to bring home tools to help her advocate for system change from inside the public sector.

She'd wondered whether she was "political" enough to benefit from the training. Afterward, she said, "I was exactly where I needed to be."

Before the boot camp, when people asked her what her master's is in, she'd give a long answer, explaining macro social work. Now she simply answers, "Political social work."

Hector Chaidez Ruacho already had experience in politics. In 2016, as an undergraduate at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, he organized and caucused for Bernie Sanders. He got involved because he wanted to use his voice to address the way immigrants were being portrayed.

During his winter break this year, he was back in Las Vegas, once again canvassing for Sanders. "I'm using my micro skills door-to-door," he said.

He additionally breathed the air on Capitol Hill when he was a member of UB's social work student delegation to Student Advocacy Day in Washington in March 2019.

According to Chaidez Ruacho, the most powerful benefit of the CRISP boot camp was the connections he made with fellow students. "When we first met as a group, it was like we instantly clicked," he said. "I now have a new network to engage with."

Reflecting on what the CRISP experience taught him about making social work values heard in the political arena, Chaidez Ruacho wrote in a UBSSW blog post, "It reassured me that the future of this country is not one we should fear, but rather one we should shape by taking a seat at the table."

He's now looking at a graduate fellowship with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute as his next step.

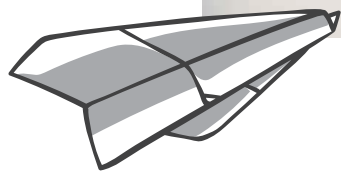
Online MSW student Whitney Marris, who, as it happens, lives in the Washington, D.C. area, thought she wouldn't be eligible for the boot camp opportunity but her faculty adviser, Denise Krause, encouraged her to apply.

Marris is a seasoned advocate and campaigner for both political candidates and causes, but, as a relative newcomer to social work, is still finding her way. She may have learned more about herself at the boot camp than about political mechanics.

"The discourse at the boot camp allowed me to make great connections," she said.

By the time the program was over, Marris said the intensity of those connections left her sure that social work is the right platform for her to work for a better world.

"This is my place," she said.



Whitney Marris, Kristen Hibit, Hector Chaidez Ruacho, and CRISP President Dr. Charles E. Lewis, Jr., pictured at the CRISP Political Boot Camp and Media Training in Washington, D.C.

THE Campaigner

On February 20, 2016, two weeks after becoming a U.S. citizen, Hector Chaidez Ruacho caucused for Bernie Sanders in his Nevada primary contest with Hillary Clinton. Later, he was named a county delegate to the state Democratic convention.

He'd moved with his family from Guadalajara, Jalisco in Mexico to Las Vegas when he was six years old. He vividly remembers the trauma of starting a new school in a new culture. He was afraid to open his mouth in class because his English was still rudimentary.

A dozen years later, after becoming a voluble college student, he was attracted to Sanders' stance on human rights and signed up as a volunteer. "In a few months, I went from 0-100 in political engagement—from no involvement to being as involved as possible," said Chaidez Ruacho.

In 2019, Chaidez Ruacho campaigned for Sanders again. After attending the CRISP Political

Boot Camp (see page 12), he went home to Las Vegas and signed up for the Bernie Sanders Summer School, a web-based training program for student organizers aiming to become Campus Corps Leaders for the campaign.

One of his assignments was to make a 60-second video called "My Bernie Story" to be posted on the campaign app and shared on social media platforms.

As Chaidez Ruacho later told Yahoo News, which featured him in a story about the campaign training, the prospect of telling his story was a little intimidating. But his CRISP boot camp training in developing a personal narrative supported him.

His "My Bernie Story" video is a compelling and effective account of his experiences delivered with confidence. Chaidez Ruacho well exemplifies hoped-for outcomes of the CRISP boot camp training.

- Judson Mead



CHALLENGE 2 CHANGE GROWING & MAKING A DIFFERENCE

High school and MSW students gain from open dialogue

| by Bert Gambini & Jana Eisenberg

More than 250 high school youths had an opportunity to become thoughtful leaders in the areas of racial understanding and social justice at the fourth annual Challenge 2 Change Summit, held Nov. 21 at Banchetti by Rizzo.

The summit, hosted by the Sweet Home Central School District, was co-led by Annahita Ball, assistant professor in the UBSSW. Ball's involvement with Challenge 2 Change began in 2014, when administrators and staff in the Amherst Central School District approached her on how to build programming centered on diversity. Challenge 2 Change is modeled after a similar youth program in Missouri; it developed as a response to a fatal shooting and the civil unrest that ensued in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014.

"Challenge 2 Change speaks to my passion for inclusive learning environments and is a great opportunity for area high school students and students in the School of Social Work," noted Ball.

The program has grown every year, receiving more interest and engaging more schools and districts in its hands-on work to address important issues that teens face in high school, including bias and hate. And this year, over 40 MSW student volunteers participated as facilitators in the full-day summit.

During the summit, UBSSW students facilitated small group dialogues with high school students on matters of diversity, privilege and oppression. The objective was to provide high school students with a forum to express their feelings and concerns. Based on intergroup dialogue, Challenge 2 Change has been a

successful vehicle for high school students to responsibly and respectfully discuss difficult issues in an emotionally safe environment.

This year, the organizers tried something new: a visual representation of how they might be able to address some of these issues. "One of the activities that groups did with the MSW students was to take a 'brick' and write a brief message about what hate and bias looks like in their school," said Ball. "In the morning, they built the bricks into a wall. One example I remember was, 'making fun of the food I eat.' After lunch they talked about things they could do to create change."

The lessons gained from Challenge 2 Change are mutually beneficial to both the high school participants and the graduate school facilitators in the SSW.

"These learning opportunities for our graduate students are a chance for them to apply what they're learning in the classroom to an actual community setting," said Ball. "This experience teaches them how to be flexible and adapt to their current context so they're better prepared when it's time for them to enter the work force."

Ball added that the program has grown to a point where the stakeholders need to decide what to do next. "We've formed a steering committee made up of members from UB, the school districts and the community," she said. "We want to expand programming beyond the once-a-year summit—do



Local high school students took part in the annual Challenge 2 Change, hosted by the Sweet Home Central School District.

[a] leadership retreat for kids, engage adults in their lives and give teachers more."

To do that, they need to consider funding sources. And to do that, they need to provide evidence of success and value. "My grad students and I have done preliminary evaluation of last year's summit, and we will be publishing a paper," said Ball. "We're still studying, but the kids reported positive changes in intergroup empathy, critical consciousness and motivation for action—and that's after only one day of programming."

Oh, and the brick wall? "At the end of the day, everybody tore down their walls," said Ball. "Then they wrote on the opposite side of the brick an action they will take when they get back to school to create change."

Edreys Wajed, a local artist, educator and musician, talks about a "live" painting he created with student attendees at the Challenge 2 Change summit.



High school students learned the vocabulary of oppression in small groups facilitated by UBSSW students.





Over 40 MSW students participated in the Challenge 2 Change event. They are as follows, left to right:
 Back Row: Emma Hesch, Sara Campbell, Christopher Owen, Dominique Brown, Jessica Watt, Michael Korzelius, Danial Kahn, Thomas Griffith, Amelia Stachowiak
 Middle Row: Ta-Tanisha Palmer, Nicole Capozziello, Grace Ravines, Karishma Khemraj, Ashley Washington, Megan Krebs, Annahita Ball, Emily Sacco, Melina Ciotta, Samantha Ebeling, Nyala Ahmed, Sydney Lyons, Julianne Reese, Leah Ingraham, Kayla Savitt, Jessica Mencia, Jenna Reed, Kat Wilson, Rayna Geller, Candra Skrzypek, Amanda Sabins, Sean Brosius
 Bottom Row: Emmy Brady, Octavia Dawkins, MyKole Gates, Rave Glynn, Juliana Mowatt, Carmann Benedetto, Samantha Lee, Linette Moses

Graduate student volunteers from the School of Social Work facilitated small group dialogue with the high school students on the issues of diversity, privilege and oppression.



Students used "bricks" to identify issues, and built a wall using them. At the end of the day, they deconstructed the wall, and referenced the messages on the bricks to identify a change they could make.

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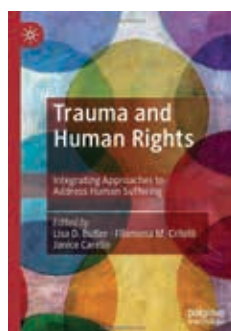
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TRAUMA AND HUMAN RIGHTS: INTEGRATING APPROACHES TO ADDRESS HUMAN SUFFERING

By Lisa D. Butler, Filomena M. Critelli and Janice Carello [Palgrave, 2019]

Other UBSSW colleagues and alumni also edited the book or authored chapters, including: Elizabeth Bowen, Diane Elze, Isok Kim, Jackie McGinley, Nadine Shaanta Murshid, Shraddha Prabhu, Christopher St. Vil, Noelle St. Vil, Deborah Waldrop, Hilary Weaver and Molly Wolf.



MULTIRACIAL CULTURAL ATTUNEMENT

By Kelly F. Jackson, PhD '07, associate professor of social work at Arizona State University [NASW Press, 2019]

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REACCREDITED!

The University at Buffalo School of Social Work is pleased to announce that this past fall, its master's in social work program was granted a full 8-year Reaffirm Accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). UB's MSW program has been accredited by CSWE since 1934. The accreditation is effective through October 2027.

AT-A-
Glance

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