

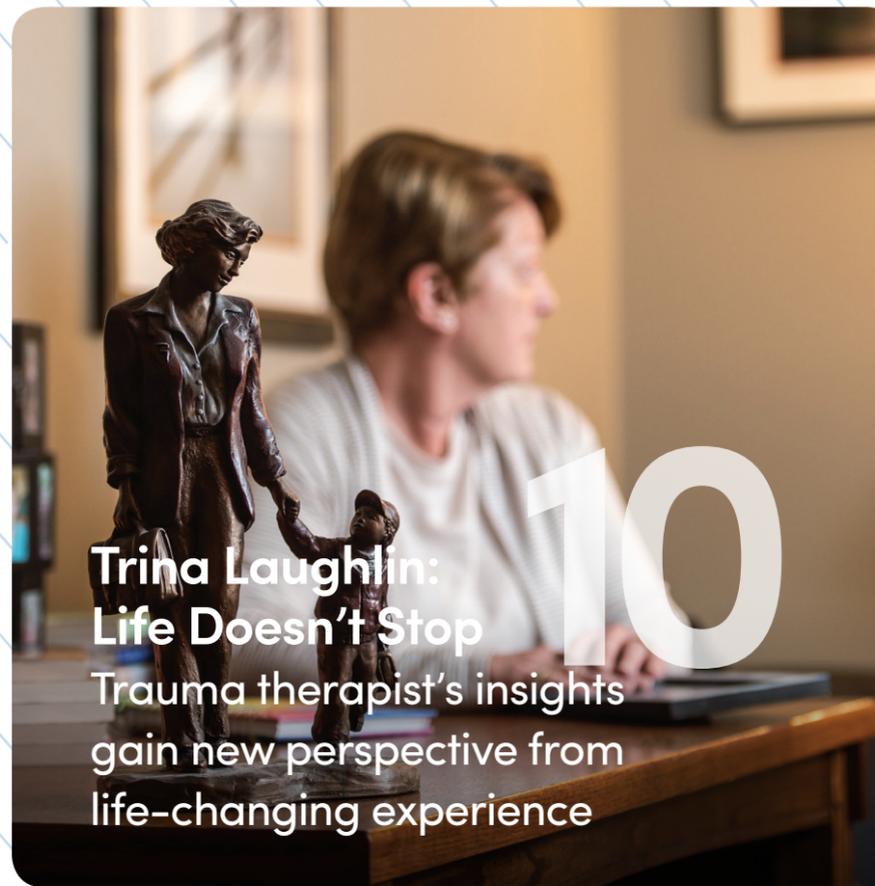
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News of the SCHOOL

COMINGS & GOINGS

Katie Crosby, '12, previously our social work philanthropy associate, has been promoted to annual gift officer in the Office of Annual Giving.



Jennifer Battisti joined the social work philanthropy team as a new associate, working with Mary Glenn, senior major gifts officer.



Alison Grizzard joined our Resource Management team as a staff assistant.



Lauren McGowan arrived from UB's School of Nursing and is now director of recruitment and admissions.



PROMOTIONS

Leah Feroletto Walsh, academic information and enrollment analyst, has been promoted to director of academic processes and data operations.



ALUMNI UPDATES

CDR **Nancy Mautone-Smith, '96**, is deputy director at the Office of Women's Health, which coordinates women's health-related activities across Health Resources and Services Administration to reduce sex- and gender-based disparities and support comprehensive, culturally competent, quality health care.



EVENTS

CSWE APM SUNY University Centers Reception

Last November, SUNY university centers at Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo and Stony Brook hosted a reception in Atlanta, GA during the Council on Social Work Education's 2016 Annual Program Meeting. With over 200 people in attendance, it was a great success.



Gathered at CSWE APM, from left: Lynn Warner, interim dean, School of Welfare, University at Albany; Nancy J. Smyth, dean, School of Social Work, University at Buffalo; Victoria M. Rizzo, chair, Department of Social Work, Binghamton University; and Jacqueline B. Mondros, dean, School of Social Welfare, Stony Brook University.



FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Development **Deborah Waldrop** was honored with the Career Achievement Award from the Association for Gerontology Education in Social Work. The national award is given annually to a faculty member who has been an outstanding leader in social work education and aging with significant career achievements in this area including major research and publications, prominence in promoting education in gerontology and mentoring of faculty and students interested in aging.



Faculty members whom Waldrop has mentored over the years convened at the awards ceremony. Flanking the award winner are, from left, Stephanie Wladowski (Eastern Michigan University), Cara Wallace (St. Louis University), Deborah, Nancy Kusmaul (University of Maryland, Baltimore County), Lori Thomas (University of North Carolina at Charlotte), and Terri Lewinson (Georgia State University).

Associate Professor **Gretchen Ely** has been chosen as a full fellow in the Society of Family Planning (SFP). This organization aims to bring together experts from various professions who make significant contributions to family planning research and education. Its ultimate goal is to enhance clinical care practice in the areas of abortion and family planning by encouraging collaborative, interdisciplinary scholarship. Ely is one of only two full fellows with a social work background, allowing her contributions to be distinctly impactful among SFP fellows.



Clinical Associate Professor **Susan Green, '88**, was invited to serve on the Council on Social Work Education Trauma Task Force Steering Committee again through the National Center for Social Work Trauma Education and Workforce Development. The task force is charged with developing advanced-year trauma competencies for specialized practice. This appointment continues through 2017.



Pictured left to right: Marissa Szprygada, Channel McCain '15, Lauren Ashburn '16, Julia Szprygada '13 at the Women's March on Washington.

NATIONAL NEWS

Associate Professor Robert Keefe made national news last fall with his research finding that criticism of low-income African-American fathers for not being involved with their children is largely untrue. U.S. News & World Report, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, HealthDay News, and Science Daily were among those reporting.



FROM DEAN NANCY J. SMYTH

The rapidly evolving national policy agenda that has developed since January is prompting people to express how they feel in a wide range of political and social action ways. Social media becomes an integral part of that context.

For those social workers who continue to resist social media involvement, that resistance endangers their relevancy to these times. When 69 percent of adults and 86 percent of young adults use social media, we can't afford not to know how to use those tools in our toolbox. That's certainly a message that I've raised repeatedly in the profession, ever since my realization that the client populations I was seeing in my practice were using technology in their lives. For me to fully engage with them, I needed to become more familiar with the technology so I could understand their cultural context.

The stories in this issue of Mosaics illustrate a "coming of age" of sorts for veteran social workers adapting to social media, as well as those already tuned into its reach and using it to advance learning in novel ways.

I consider Patricia Shelly (pg. 12) to be the poster child to challenge people who say, "Oh, I'm too old to learn social media." Starting from relative scratch, she has come up to speed in the digital world in a whirlwind time span to become the school's lead on Twitter and blogging in her role as director of Community Engagement and Expansion.

Hilary Weaver, SSW professor and associate dean for academic affairs, admits to being among the formerly reluctant to get on board but has been rising to the occasion as she embraces the value of social media participation, overseeing the Race and Emerging Technologies series (pg. 7) and appreciating the use of social media for social action on such issues as the Dakota pipeline controversy.

At the other end of the experience spectrum is SSW assistant professor Annahita Ball (pg. 8) whose social media savvy is being put to novel use in bringing a theory course to life for her students by having them create social issue stories using Snapchat.

With social media's ability to become rife with abuse and misinformation, social workers, like anyone else, have to learn to determine healthy digital boundaries. And yet, given its role in communication, social media's immediacy and impact can be essential in advancing the work of social work. There's never been a more critical time to take action and connect.



NANCY J. SMYTH, PHD, LCSW

Thank You,
ALUMNI,

FOR RANKING US FIRST AMONG UB SCHOOLS
in the recent alumni survey that asked, "How likely are you to recommend UB to a qualified prospective student?"

Mosaics, the newsletter of the UB School of Social Work, is produced twice a year. April, 2017. Volume 11, Number 2.

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 29,000 students pursue their academic interests through more than 390 undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs. Founded in 1846, the University at Buffalo is a member of the Association of American Universities.

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Electronic versions of this publication may be found <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/mosaics>.

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MOSAICS

Trans action

HELPING ADDRESS GENDER IDENTITY POLICY IN THE BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By Jana Eisenberg

Earlier this year, School of Social Work masters candidate Siobhan Fitzgerald-Matson was honored to be involved with reviewing and communicating about the Buffalo Public Schools' (BPS) proposed gender identity policy.

The BPS undertook the policy in response to the Obama administration's letter to the nation's schools. According to a New York Times story (5/12/16), the letter directed schools "to allow transgender students to use the bathrooms that match their gender identity."

As the Times goes on to point out, the letter "adds...to a highly charged debate over transgender rights...The declaration—signed by Justice and Education Department officials...does not have the force of law, but it contain[ed] an implicit threat: Schools that do not abide by the... interpretation of the law could face lawsuits or a loss of federal aid."

And, on October 27, after an "emotionally exhausting" process, the policy was approved by a vote of 8-1 by the BPS board.

The positive outcome reflects a shift in the community's thinking, posits Fitzgerald-Matson. "I'm hoping that this decision is the beginning of a continued discussion," they said. "[During the process], people on both sides learned about other issues in the school system that aren't being upheld, like rights for students of color, and came to understanding about intersectionality—how trans people of color have to live in a couple of different worlds."

Their participation in the BPS process, says Fitzgerald-Matson, was partially empowered by a recent School of Social Work course. "Before taking 'History and Policy,' with Dr. Elizabeth Bowen, I was intimidated by politics and the policy process," they say. "I now believe policy is an effective way to educate on trans and LGB identities. I also have a newfound respect for people who are constantly advocating and involved in policy."

Fitzgerald-Matson works as the trans wellness coordinator at the Pride Center of WNY, Inc. It is in this capacity that they, along with representatives from other organizations, were invited by Dr. Will Keresztes, BPS' chief of intergovernmental affairs, planning and community engagement, to an informal meeting to review the policy.

Fitzgerald-Matson and their colleagues were pleasantly surprised when Keresztes incorporated their suggestions. Afterwards, several public meetings were planned, where parents and community could discuss the policy with Keresztes and panelists.

Fitzgerald-Matson was included on the second of two panels; the meeting, held at the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. branch of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library on August 17, was emotional and occasionally loudly out of control, demonstrating how divided people are on this issue.

Fitzgerald-Matson first learned about the trans community's struggles during studies for a BA at St. Lawrence University in sociology, with a minor in gender and sexuality studies. Even though at the time, they "didn't yet know that [they were] genderqueer," they became "obsessed."

"I really identified with the community," they continue. "I wasn't sure how, but I knew that my passion would be to work with trans people."

All available statistics say that the trans population is one of the most at-risk for discrimination; they frequently feel (and actually are) isolated for various reasons, and that, says Fitzgerald-Matson, is something they want to address.



"I want to create a performance art sleep-away camp for trans youth," they say. "The focus on mental aspects of transgender is a huge problem because your mind and body are actually in dissonance; what's missing is connecting to bodies, especially around presentation and expression. To get from 'gender dysphoria' to 'euphoria,' trans people of all ages, especially youth, need a protected place to be yourself in your body."

Schools' (and the nation's) "bathroom issue," adds Fitzgerald-Matson, have historic parallels.

"Most of the debate around trans people has to do with the fundamental misconception that sexuality equals gender," they say. "The ideas that trans people are pedophiles absolutely need to be separated."

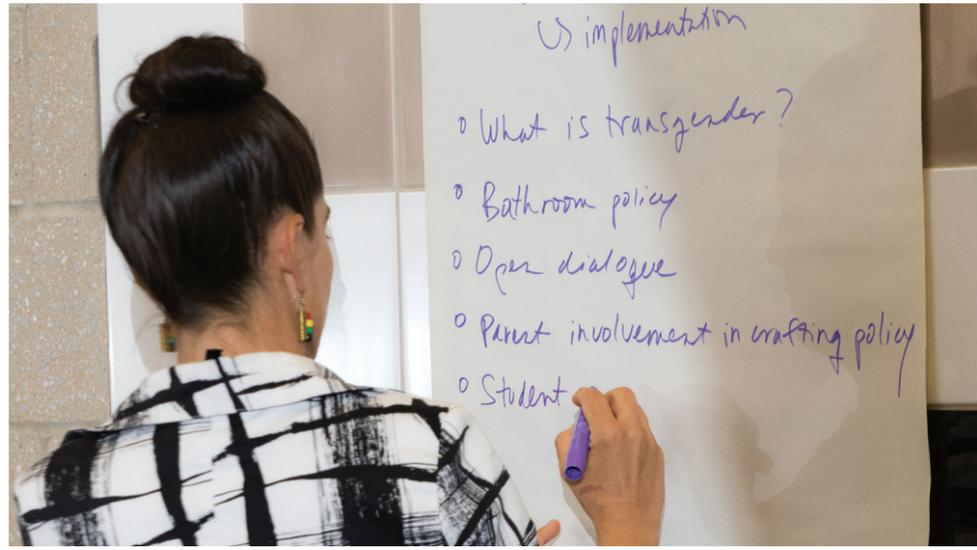
"Going to the bathroom is a simple human right that you do multiple times a day—every time a trans person does it, it's like they have to prove who they are, and many times they face violence and discrimination," they say. "Look at black history: Black people were invisible. We had to educate and integrate. That's what we have to do now. All people need to be treated as human. Especially in a country where we say we have 'freedom for all.'"

In addition, says Fitzgerald-Matson, the policy was already being enacted, whether official or not. "Every school is already accommodating trans students with gender-neutral or the gender facility of their choice," they say. "Also, kids aren't as scared [of trans people] as their parents; they're the ones who are guarding the door while their trans friends pee."

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides protections as well. "If their kids aren't treated according to their rights, parents of trans youth will start suing," Fitzgerald-Matson adds. "And, if schools are truly at risk for losing federal money, they'll have no choice. In Buffalo, we have dilapidated school buildings, crowded classrooms, unfilled teacher jobs. We don't want to lose that money."

"Going to the bathroom is a simple human right that you do multiple times a day—every time a trans person does it, it's like they have to prove who they are, and many times they face violence and discrimination."

- Siobhan Fitzgerald-Matson



Topics and ideas covered at the BPS gender identity policy panel discussion.

Acceptance combined with education is what will save us. "I was blown away by the love and support at the first public BPS meeting," Fitzgerald-Matson says. "I hope that people are willing to be educated and compassionate—to have empathy. The decision

to adopt the policy is exciting to see. It may cause some ripples...the hope is that Buffalo will become safer space overall. We have the opportunity to do things like cultural competency training. If people are still on the fence, they can learn from it—in the end, I hope they will be happy that they upheld every student's rights." ■



Siobhan Fitzgerald-Matson (center) participating in BPS gender identity policy panel discussion.

A word about gender identity /'prō, nouns/

by Diane Elze

Transgender. Genderqueer. Gender-fluid. Gender-variant. Gender nonconforming. Two-spirit. Although *transgender* is an umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression do not conform to the cultural norms traditionally associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth, not all gender nonconforming people identify as transgender (American Psychological Association [APA], 2014).

A growing number of people are embracing gender identities outside of our society's binary categories of "male/female" and are opting to use gender-neutral pronouns (APA, 2014). Be aware that grammar and language surrounding the use of gender-neutral pronouns is constantly evolving. Among the gender-neutral pronouns used by individuals are they, ze, sie, and zie (subjective); them, zim, hir, and zir (objective); their, zir, hir, and zir (possessive adjective); theirs, zirs, hirs, and zirs (possessive pronoun); and themself, zirsself, hirsself, and zirsself (reflexive) (FORGE, 2015), but that list is not exhaustive.

In the accompanying story, Siobhan Fitzgerald-Matson, who identifies in part as a "genderqueer, feminist, human rights activist," uses the pronouns "they/them/theirs."

SUBJECTIVE	She/He	They/Ze/Sie/Zie
OBJECTIVE	Her/Him	Them/Zim/Hir/Zir
POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE	Her/His	Their/Zir/Hir/Zir
POSSESSIVE PRONOUN	Hers/His	Theirs/Zirs/Hirs/Zirs
REFLEXIVE	Herself/Himself	Themself/Zirsself/Hirsself/Zirsself





Gnome DELIVERY

Social work student takes food pantry on the road

By Cathleen Draper

UB SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENT MATTHEW SCHWARTZ is turning the tables on traditional food pantries, providing food directly to the hungry out of the trunk of his car.

Schwartz, 31, works as a case manager for Jewish Family Service of Buffalo and Erie County, and he noticed that many of his clients were struggling to access food pantries. He is a part-time student in his second year with an anticipated summer 2018 graduation.

"I was working with some child survivors of the Holocaust and also my general community, and I saw one of the food pantry things," Schwartz says, referring to a list of requirements for those wishing to access a food pantry. "I looked at it and I thought 'this is so ridiculous the amount of information they're requesting.'"

Food pantries can require a variety of information from those in need, among them identification in the form of a driver's license or ID card, documentation of financial need and a local address. Transportation issues and limited food pantry hours also present obstacles to the hungry.

"The system is not built to be conducive to the reality of people who require food bank assistance," Schwartz says.

He teamed up with the Jewish community, the United Church of Christ and other case managers locally to found Food Gnomes, a mobile food pantry that launched November 2015.

Schwartz graduated from UB in 2008 with a bachelor's in applied linguistics. He relocated to Israel, serving in the Israel Defense Forces for 37 months. Upon his return to his hometown on Long Island, he completed his MBA at the University of Phoenix.

A "Buffalonian at heart," Schwartz moved back to Western New York and later enrolled in UB's MSW program. Social work appeals to him, he says, because it unites his expertise under one goal.

"It takes all of the skills I have and uses them as a tool kit," Schwartz says. "It's a way where I get to feel like I've made a difference."

He does make a difference — daily — serving clients and the hungry on the streets through Food Gnomes.

Food Gnomes does not accept financial donations. Rather, the mobile food pantry is fueled by food drives and public donations of non-perishable goods.

Schwartz doesn't keep statistics on how many people are fed, eliminating a time-consuming bookkeeping process.

"We'd rather spend the time getting food to people," he says.

Volunteer drivers — or gnomes — are case managers for local social service agencies. Vibrant green magnets identify cars as mobile food pantries, and gnomes dedicate one-third of their

trunk space to non-perishable boxed and canned items. They refill once a week — or as needed — at two local distribution centers.

Gnomes are also equipped with brochures and pamphlets outlining housing options, domestic violence resources, career training and educational opportunities.

"Volunteers are working with clients already who generally need the food, and they know how to make those referrals if someone stops them on the street," Schwartz says. "So, it's not just food. It's 'hey, here's some food, but are things going OK? Is there anything else we can help you with?'"

Schwartz hopes to help more than just the needy in Buffalo; he envisions the organization assisting members of the UB community as well.

He notes that SUNY Buffalo State provides a food pantry for its students. UB maintains a relationship with the University Presbyterian Church's Food Pantry across from the South Campus where students in need can obtain food.

Schwartz envisions starting Food Gnome Fridays at UB, similar to Food Truck Tuesdays at Larkin Square in Buffalo — but free.

He feels Food Gnomes can start a conversation about hunger at UB. "Anything that gets people talking about social situations and social awareness and class consciousness is a very good thing," Schwartz says. "UB students are the best and brightest in the world, period. I think UB has a lot to offer the community."

Schwartz offers a lot to the community as well through his work as a case manager and with Food Gnomes.

"We really believe in having an impact by answering the needs as the community states them, not what we think they are," Schwartz says.

"We only have one question: Are you hungry? If the answer is yes, then we feed you."

Food Gnomes
Mobile Food Pantry
(716) 533-7284
FoodGnomes.org

SSW student and Food Gnomes organizer Matthew Schwartz embarks on another food drive, bringing accessibility to the food pantry.

Photos by Nancy Parisi



SERIES *sheds light* ON *race & racism* IN EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

By Jim Bisco

The screen glow from social media, video games and other windows of technology can be illuminating or dimming for minorities. That was the focus of the SSW's series over the past year entitled Race and Emerging Technologies, part of the Social Work Tech Now program, instituted by Hilary Weaver, SSW professor and associate dean for academic affairs, and Michael Langlois, SSW adjunct professor.

"We didn't want technology to stand alone because technology is a means to an end – not the end itself. It's something that we as social workers should be using and be exploring with our students how to use it," says Weaver. "So we thought it would make sense to look at various racial issues and tie those into technology."

The three-part series, all hosted by Langlois who was contracted to produce the series, began last spring with a webinar entitled, "What White People Need to Know About #BlackTwitter." Kimberly Ellis, a nationally recognized leader on Black Twitter, was the guest expert.

The webinar looked at the networked group of black Twitter users and its cultural identity on this social network, combining activism, thoughtful conversation, humor and camaraderie, resulting in productive discourse and a sense of community. Black Twitter grew exponentially after the killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, but was referenced as early as 2008.

The second event in early fall was a film screening before a live audience. "Prep School Negro" is an autobiographical documentary focusing on the film's director, Andre Robert Lee, who spoke at the screening about his challenging experiences attending a mostly white prep school in the 1980s, with an ensuing discussion that had a more explicit tie-in to technology. Lee said he felt very isolated at school and home at the time, but then imagined how different his experience would be in today's world where technology is everywhere and can build bridges and tie things together in a way quite different than the 1980s.

The point was made that now with social media and other technology, even if there are still two different worlds – the black world and the white world – a lot more cross-pollination exists with each world having information about the other. The director explored how that opportunity could be used now among small minorities within fairly elite schools.

The last of the series in late fall was a roundtable discussion online – and at an SSW viewing – on race and racism in the video gaming industry, with three industry experts discussing the marginalization of men and women of color who want to be video game designers and character stereotypes appearing in the games themselves.

Weaver, a Native American whose work is steeped in diversity, noted a video game her godson was interested in playing where the evil enemy that jumps out to scalp people is a stereotypical savage Indian. "I was just shocked. So I learned more about imagery and gaming," she says. "The

The Race and Emerging Technologies series can be accessed online at <http://bit.ly/2hx7TPi>.

event came at several different angles, looking at the opportunities that people of color have to develop games and to program and control the content, but also looking at the stereotypical images that our children are confronted with and that they internalize."

Weaver acknowledges that social workers as a whole have probably not embraced technology as much as they should, counting herself among the more reluctant. "Social workers should always be open to new things, especially when it's not quite in our comfort zone. Technology is part of our daily world, it's certainly a part of the lives of social workers, of parents, of everybody, so I'm very interested to learn more."

Langlois noted during an earlier interview that the Social Work Tech Now program wants to look at some of the emerging technologies and help social workers understand why they matter and how they either marginalize and repress or liberate and amplify. "In order for social workers to really use them in their clinical practice or their social justice practice, they need to be able to understand what the impact of technology – and particularly emerging technologies – are for the populations they serve," he said. "One of the things we want to do in Social Work Tech Now is to look at technology without either demonizing it or glorifying it, and see how it impacts the people who we serve, and how can we leverage it to make good use of it, and also to help people to make good choices about how to use it."

The response to the series among social work schools across North America was significant. More technology events will be emerging.

The educational pursuit of

Annahita Ball

By Jim Bisco

Educational equity in non-academic ways

SSW assistant professor Annahita Ball grew up wanting to be a teacher. Although her career aspirations eventually shifted to social work, her focus in that regard has remained in the classroom.

Ball's reach is toward educational equity, "leveling the playing field for all kids, particularly in urban schools, to get a high-quality education and be successful in whatever way they define that as. I'm interested in all of the non-academic ways that we can support students to be successful in school."

Her research has found that the disparities are enormous in many urban school districts, spanning mental health needs, community level needs, learning disabilities, behavioral issues, not to mention antiquated buildings, textbooks, and technology.

Ball's prime interest currently is in establishing quality mental health programming for children through schools: specifically, positive youth development. "Self-esteem, self-worth — two really significant issues in behavioral problems," she says. "A key part of what I'm interested in there is interprofessional collaboration, because when we do mental health programs in schools, we have a number of different professionals working together — school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, teachers — and how we work together seems to really matter for the outcomes that we have."

She is also concerned with the lack of preparation teachers have to address children's mental health issues in the classroom because of a lack of training in their graduate education. "Now teachers have so many pressures to only provide academic instruction and students' grades are tied to their own job security, they don't have a lot of flexibility anymore addressing children's mental health needs," Ball relates. "It depends on school district leadership. Because of the way our public educational system operates, it's very localized. Principals and district leaders can make their own decisions. So it's really up to the priorities of the individuals in charge."

The other component of her work is on school-family-community partnerships and family engagement in schools. "We need to work with teachers and parents and everyone in sync. It's so strange how that's very difficult," she says. Her observation is that parents in most urban districts become marginalized for various reasons, among them concentrated poverty and a racial-ethnic disconnection from the school.

'Snap' decisions in academic ways

Ball's penchant for the classroom manifests itself with her own teaching at the SSW in imaginative ways. "I tend to change my classes a lot because I get bored with them," she says.

Case in point: How to inject life into an essential first-year theory course, Human Behavior and Social Environment? By incorporating a vivid piece of social media into the learning.

"It's interesting how it overlaps with my research," says Ball. "I was doing a project in Buffalo Public Schools where we gave tablets to parents, so they could take them home and could get free Wi-Fi. It was to boost parent engagement and communication with teachers. I was working closely with an instructional tech coach at the school. He teaches teachers how to use technology. When I asked him what I might be able to do with the course, he told me about storyboards and moviemaking and how he used it with fourth-graders.

"I was thinking what if we made a movie and the students had to piece together different components because they learn about life stages in the life cycle. What if they had to apply something--a theory, perhaps--to all different stages? This made sense to me as a sequence like in a movie or storyboard. Then, after talking with my sister who is a true-blue millennial, she said, that's a Snapstory."

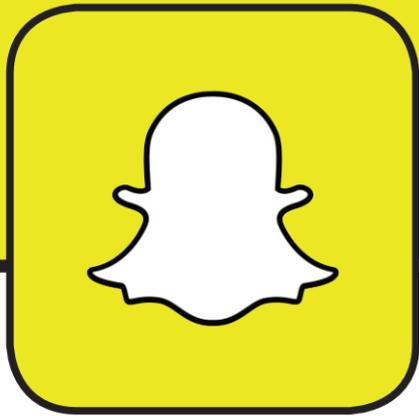
Click to Snapchat.

Annahita Ball brings creative learning to the classroom.



From left, MSW students Elizabeth Bartnik, Alexandra Lindke, and Lorianne DeVito present a Snapstory concerning grief and loss.





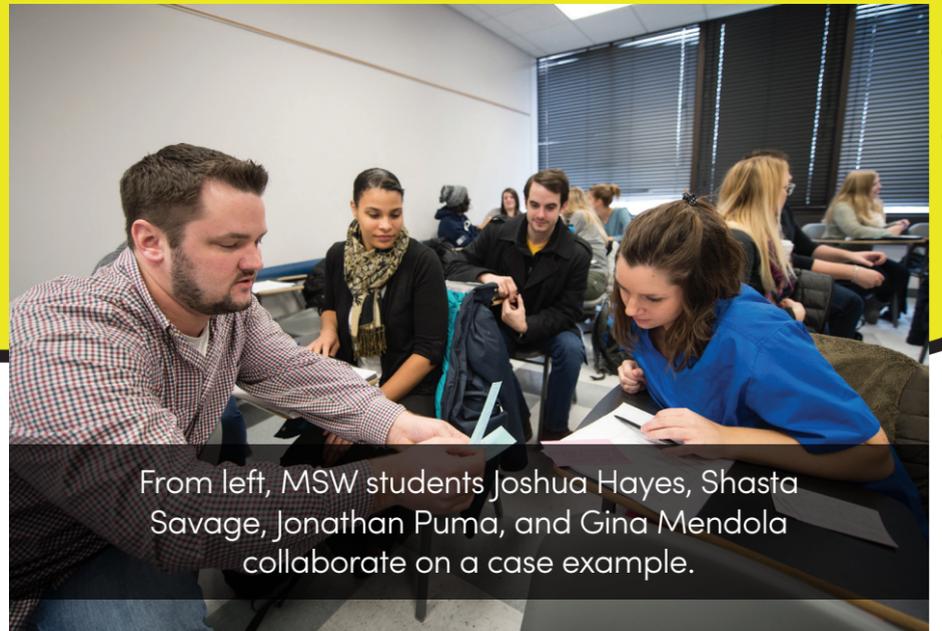
The image-messaging, multimedia mobile application can link photos like an album, creating a visual narrative of an experience. And so, with a Snap, Ball set up the parameters for students in her theory class.

She divided them into six groups and assigned each group an adverse childhood experience--neglect, parental abuse, divorce, etc. Each group would work together for the entire semester to illustrate in a Snapstory how the adverse experience would impact an individual throughout the life course, using each stage.

It began with a lit review where students gathered research on the topic and developed a paper. Then they created a Snapstory and wrote a narrative to accompany it that connects it to the research. On the last day of the semester, the groups presented the Snapstory to their peers detailing how theory relates.

"When you let students come up with their own stuff, they never stop surprising me," exclaims Ball. "This shakes up the students, makes them refocus, try some new things, take some risks, and learn how to work on one project over time that has multiple components.

"You have to find ways to feel like you're having an impact and to find ways to connect with people. I do it for my research but I also think I'm meeting that for my teaching. If I didn't have that, I wouldn't be as fulfilled because I am a social worker ultimately." ■



From left, MSW students Joshua Hayes, Shasta Savage, Jonathan Puma, and Gina Mendola collaborate on a case example.



Snapstories in theory class unfold at a ready touch.

SSW student learns — the value of — **INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION**



Nine hundred UB students from nine professional programs attended the first Interprofessional Forum in Kapoor Hall, South Campus.

Photo credit: Sandra Kicman



Victoria Rader is an advanced standing student in the SSW set to graduate in May.

I recently had the privilege of attending an Interprofessional Forum sponsored by UB's Office of Interprofessional Education. The forum, entitled "Confronting Opioid Dependence: An Interprofessional Strategy," brought together students from UB's schools of Social Work, Law, Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Dental Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Management, and Public Health and Health Professions (occupational and physical therapy programs) to examine the multisystemic factors leading to opiate addiction and the ways in which each profession plays a role in treatment and recovery.

Coming from the School of Social Work, I walked into the forum with a great deal of information surrounding the causes of opioid use and dependence. Working with my colleagues from the other schools, however, helped stress the importance of collaboration and communication among professions and systems if social workers truly want to address the root of the epidemic.

My group was comprised of two social work students, one medical student, one occupational therapy student, one nursing student, one dental student, and one pharmaceutical student. We realized how easy it is to examine a problem from the viewpoint of one's chosen profession, but considering all of the different systems with which one client could work makes all the difference in the world.

In examining the case that we were given, we realized how interconnected each of our systems are and were able to provide referrals for the client, recommendations for each other and glean new information about how each system would work with (and sometimes against) the client.

The best part of the forum was watching the pieces fall into place as students from the different professions learned about the responsibilities of the other professions. At the end of the forum many of my colleagues reflected on what they learned the most. Few of us knew what nurses would be responsible for and many of us were confused about how the occupational therapist would be able to help. I realized that I will likely have a great deal of contact with occupational therapists in the future as they help clients in various areas of life, such as activities of daily living and social participation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of my colleagues stated that they did not realize the scope of social workers' responsibilities or connections to resources and vowed to communicate with social workers wherever possible. Maybe the professions have similar goals, after all.

— by Victoria Rader



TRINA LAUGHLIN | *Life doesn't stop*

Trauma therapist's insights gain new perspective from life-changing experience

By Judson Mead

At Christmastime in 2007, as Trina Laughlin, MSW '96, describes it, the offices and hallways of the Society for the Protection and Care of Children in Rochester, NY, where she was the Family Violence Program director, were stacked with wrapped presents her coworkers had brought in to give to children the agency served.

Laughlin was feeling jaded. She had been dealing with a cascade of trouble involving a 20-year-old sexual abuse victim whose angry behavior toward her four-year-old daughter had led to an abuse investigation of the mother.

She couldn't help thinking that for the little girl, all the presents piled up at the agency — all the presents in the world, for that matter — would not make the magic of the holiday last beyond the next explosion at home, which could come at any moment.

Laughlin knew that without finding a way to reach into the young mother's trauma, it could contaminate everyone she touched.

Laughlin was in a dark place. She wrote about that moment: "I am merely an older, more tired, and definitely more overexposed trauma therapist." She was 51.

A few days later the death of her youngest son would change her life.

Laughlin was a relative latecomer to social work. She had been an English major at the University at Buffalo dreaming of writing the great American novel when an almost fatal bout of salmonella poisoning ended her college career in 1977, just one semester short of graduation. She had gotten married, raised three children and run a successful trucking business before finishing her BA and enrolling in the School of Social Work in 1994.

She completed her MSW — graduating with the school's Dena P. Gold award honoring her commitment to working with women, children and families — the same year her oldest son finished his MBA at the University of Rochester's Simon School of Business. He was taking a job as a financial analyst in Chicago and they laughed—at the difference in the starting salaries they'd been offered.

She went to work for the Society for the Protection and Care of Children, where she had served her field placement. When she joined the agency, its mission was to provide support for children in households disrupted by domestic violence. Under her direction, the agency eventually converted from a support-only role to providing clinical services for children it recognized as traumatized by what they had witnessed.

When Laughlin earned her MSW, the UB program was not yet oriented to a trauma-informed perspective, though she finished with a broad knowledge of trauma issues. Once in the field, Laughlin says she "ate, read and slept" everything published on trauma. She calls the body of practical knowledge she developed a combination of common sense and self-directed study. Soon she was presenting at workshops around the country.

Laughlin, who believes that unexamined trauma will distort a victim's life, uses a psychodynamic approach to help clients "witness" and illuminate traumatic experiences that underlie their present-day troubles.

She says trauma causes a misalignment of mind, spirit (emotion) and body. Trauma can shut down emotion (spirit) and displace its expression onto the other two, producing physical complaints, inappropriate rationalization, or both.

In 2000, she became an adjunct faculty member in the UB MSW program. She already had a strong SSW connection with Bonnie Collins, MSW '80, also an SSW adjunct faculty member. When Laughlin started clinical work, she recruited Collins to be her clinical supervisor. The two coauthored "The Power of Story: A Process of Renewal for Therapists Who Treat Trauma," published in 2004. They became close friends.

Collins also helped Laughlin work through the writing of a very different book — "The Season of the Fallen Sun," her wrenching account of the first 12 months after the death of her son, Andrew.

He died, surrounded by his family, in the ICU of Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital, on December 23, 2007, from injuries suffered in a car crash on the New York State Thruway the day before. He had just finished his BA at UB and would start the SSW MSW program the next fall.

Laughlin's account of her life in the following 12 months combines the insightfulness of a trained therapist with the scalding honesty of someone compelled to explore her grief until there is nothing left to discover.

Ironically, Laughlin found something in those explorations that answered a question about her work that had always weighed on her. "Although I'd delivered services and watched people apparently get better," she says today, "I never really knew if what I did worked." Now she knows it does.

"Although I'd delivered services and watched people apparently get better," she says today, "I never really knew if what I did worked."

Her experience also subtly shifted her perspective on helping her clients work through trauma they have experienced.

"I viewed myself as a very good trauma therapist," she recently told Linda Tucker on the Podcast "Challenge Your Thinking" (drlindatucker.com). "I never believed I needed to experience the specific event that your clients did in order to be good at helping them heal." Laughlin had worked with clients who had lost children.

But now she has a heightened sense of the individuality of pain. "Even when we're really good at what we do, we can't truly feel the way someone else felt when something happened to them."

She quit the Society for the Protection and Care of Children — every child was her son. She went back to seeing private patients after a few months, hoping that she could keep her work and her grief from crossing, and discovered to her relief that she could function in that role as well as she had before her loss.

She stripped away her other commitments, including the adjunct post at UB and her business involvement. She healed herself. She put it all, good and bad, into her book.

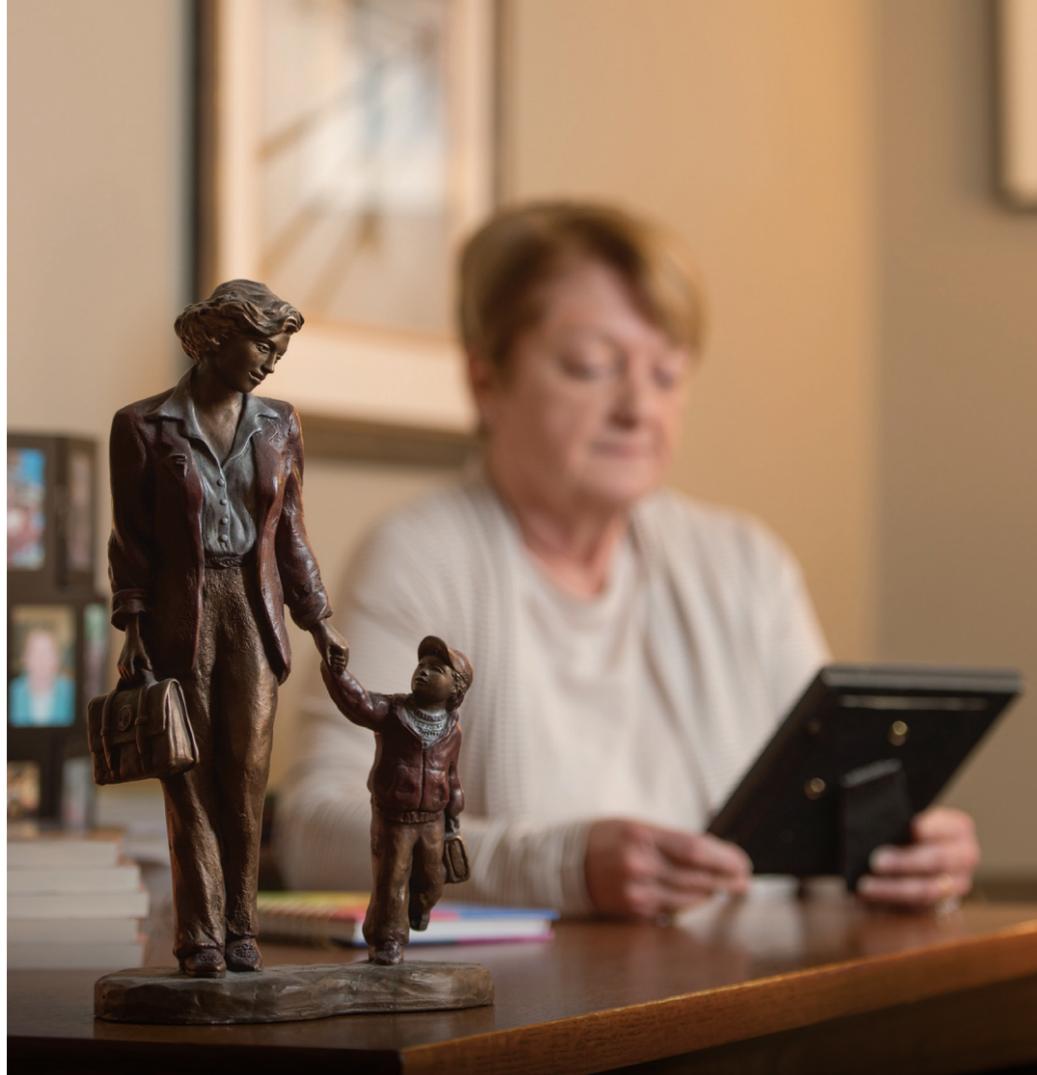
One of the ways she and her husband, Dennis, decided to remember Andrew was through an endowed award and a scholarship at the SSW. They donated funds and raised other funds to establish and endow a scholarship and the Andrew J. Laughlin Memorial Award.

The award goes to a graduating MSW student who demonstrates exemplary character, gives back to the community, is recognized for their sense of humor, strength, compassion and honesty, and models the values of the social work profession — a description of who Andrew was and would have been. Each recipient is a living memorial to Andrew.

That helps. Trina Laughlin endures. She loves her work. She can feel joy.

Andrew J. Laughlin Memorial Endowment Award

Established in 2014 by Trina M. Laughlin and Dennis Laughlin to honor the memory of their son, Andrew J. Laughlin, to provide an annual award to support the educational pursuits of a dedicated social worker.



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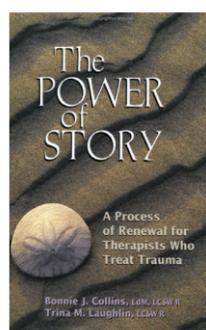
Books by Trina M. Laughlin, SSW alumna and clinical social worker who has focused her 20-plus-year career on trauma:



Season of the Fallen Sun

Trina M. Laughlin;
[Balboa Press, 2015]; 244 pgs

This is one mother's journey in the aftermath of a sudden and tragic loss through word worlds like beginnings, listen, time, reconstruction, respite, and hope, and how the exploration of those worlds can impact healing and recovery, even at the most seemingly inconceivable time.



The Power of Story – A Process of Renewal for Therapists Who Treat Trauma

Bonnie J. Collins and Trina M. Laughlin;
[Whole Person Associates, 2004]; 244 pgs

Collins and Laughlin present a unique self-care strategy for therapists and helping professionals that helps prevent and alleviate vicarious traumatization. Through the process of storytelling and hearing others' stories, therapists can be relieved of the trauma they have absorbed.

10&11

Q&A with Patricia Shelly piloting the SSW across the digital universe

by Jim Bisco

As director of Community Engagement and Expansion, Patricia Shelly, '95, looks to further the contacts and networking the SSW has with the Western New York community, nonprofit agencies, and social justice organizations.

The expansion part of her position has focused mostly on the digital universe and online communities. Through social media, she promotes the school's focus on trauma-informed practices and human rights. It was a world with which she had little familiarity when she stepped into the position in July 2012.



Are you leading the #MacroSW Twitter chats?



Was community engagement and expansion a new role for the school?

It's a new position for the school and has helped grow a bigger social media footprint for the school. The inSocialWork podcasts, which were already well-established, had garnered an international reputation. To date there have been over 2 million downloads of our 200+ podcasts. That's what put the school out there in the digital universe. When I started working at the school, I developed the school's blog called SocialWorkSynergy that covers topics pertinent to social work, social justice, trauma-informed care and human rights. I'm proud that we've had great contributors — Dean Nancy Smyth, faculty members, and both MSW and PhD students writing blog posts, as well as other guest authors.



How have you used Twitter as a tool for expansion?

We're one of the more active, if not the most active, school of social work on Twitter. Our tweets — I tweet three times a day and once on weekends — are not only about the UB School of Social Work. They cover issues, news, and the fundamental basis of social work: dealing with those who are most vulnerable and most oppressed and looking to change those circumstances and work for social justice.

We've expanded in another area: the school is a founding partner of the #MacroSW Twitter chat, a national collaboration of social workers, organizations, schools and individuals working to promote macro social work practice.



Talk about the media night the chat has developed.

It's a special #MacroSW chat held once a month, designed as a class assignment for social work students: A documentary, short film or topical article is assigned. Discussion questions cover the main points of the media piece, with participants (not just students) giving some reflection on how social work practices, ethics, and values are applied in the specific topic area. Media night is an accessible way to ease "newbies" into using social media, as there is a reference point from which to begin tweeting. Media night resources have introduced information on the wealth gap, HIV/AIDS in the Southern USA and environmental justice.





How do you feel about how far you've come in social media?

Two clichéd phrases come to mind: I've successfully navigated a "brave new world" and I've disproved the one about teaching an old dog new tricks. This was something totally new for me. I was 57 when I started in this position, and the first year was a tremendous challenge. I subscribed, at the start, to a stereotypical view about professional online interactions not having the same quality or efficacy as those much more familiar face-to-face interactions. This stereotype is what I now feel feeds mistaken beliefs about digital social work. It's just a reality that students are going to have to be digitally literate — it's another arena in which one must be aware of professional boundaries and presentation, use of language, what techniques and evidence-based, trauma-informed practices you are putting out there online.

Despite my initial resistance, I experienced a breakthrough, and discovered a digital community. In addition to furthering the school's mission and adding to its reputation, my work with social media is giving me the experience of those qualitatively valuable, durable, and still-developing relationships with social workers from around the world.



U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO U.N. PRAISES BUFFALO'S EMBRACE OF REFUGEE POPULATION

Samantha Power, the now former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations as part of President Barack Obama's cabinet, visited UB's North Campus in November. The Pulitzer Prize-winning author and former professor at the Harvard Kennedy School acknowledged Buffalo's vibrant refugee community, particularly in light of Obama's plans to hold a U.N. summit on the refugee crisis.

Buffalo, she said, is the perfect place to examine the positive impact refugees can have on a city. The more than 14,000 refugees who have resettled in Buffalo over the past 15 years have helped reverse the city's decades-long population decline, while bolstering its economy and making the community more diverse.

Power spoke at Baird Recital Hall for about 20 minutes, pointing out the role UB plays as a diverse university that has a large enrollment of international students.

She noted that what's happening in places like Buffalo can help dispel the myths associated with refugees — namely, that they take jobs away from American workers, live off government assistance and pose a threat to U.S. security.

Power then took part in a 45-minute question-and-answer session moderated by Nancy Smyth, SSW dean, and Minahil Khan, a 2016 UB alumna who emigrated to the U.S. from Pakistan with her family when she was in grade school.

Several audience members asked Power what they can do to change the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment that persists in many rural parts of the country.

The human element, Power said, is the best way to break through because many refugees have powerful, moving stories of the strife they faced in their native countries.

In short, she said, "Nobody chooses to be a refugee."

Taking part in the question-and-answer session with Samantha Power (left) were SSW Dean Nancy Smyth (center) and UB graduate Minahil Khan. Photo: Douglas Levere



The UB School of Social Work now has a section of our website on Diversity and Social Justice— please visit it to see statements from faculty, staff and students related to the refugee crisis and other key social justice issues, like Black Lives Matter.

socialwork.buffalo.edu/diversity-social-justice

And visit our News & Events listings for educational activities related to these topics.

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Rosalie M. Sawyer
Sara Scharf
Thomas J. Schierer, MSW '72
Patricia A. Schmelzer, MSW '05
Christopher C. Schnell, BA '15
Morgan L. Schumacher, MSW '16
Matthew L. Schwartz, BA '08
Susan M. Schwartz-Mercer, BS '75
Paul Robert Schwartzmyer, BS '70, and
Judith A. Schwartzmyer

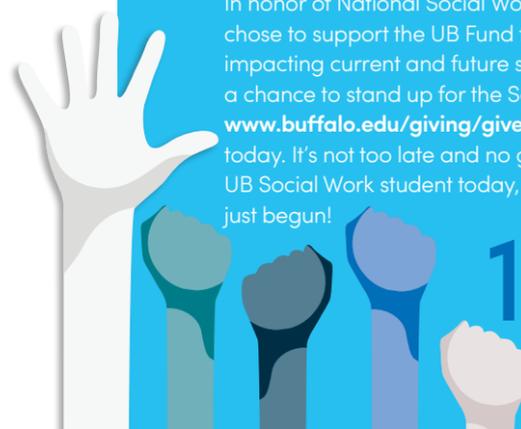
Lisa Noelle M. Sears-Ricotta
Emily Sebian, MSW '16
Jennifer Sehl
Lisa S. Shalwitz, MSW '98, BA '88
David S. Shawlson, MSW '79
Patricia A. Shelly, MSW '95, BA '93
Anne P. Sherman, MSW '90
Janet B. Siegner, MSW '81
Ellen J. Silver, MSW '85, and Russell P. Steinberg, BA '75
Jennifer M. Silverman-Van Treese, MA '10, and
Katharine Silverman-Van Treese
Dawn M. Skowronski, MSW '84
Candra Skrzypek
Jackquelyn L. Smeal
Lizabeth Smith, MSW '96
Stacey L. Smith
Alison Smolinski, MSW '16
Judith A. Solomon
Darla Spafford-Davis, MSW '99
Elena M. Spence
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Sharline St. Pierre-Noel
Laurel A. Stephens-Lester, MSW '03
Ann M. Still, BA '00, AA '93
Kristin M. Surdej, MSW '00, BA '94
Julia Talarico, MSW '16
Ghazia Tariq, MSW '16
Traci E. Tarnowski, MSW '11
Robyn A. Taylor
Janelle M. Thiessen, MSW '07
Kyle Thompson, BS '15
Steven C. Thoren, MSW '93, BA '90
Marina P. Tompkins, BA '06, MSW '06
David L. Trachtman, MSW '67, BA '65, and
Linda M. Trachtman, BA '66
Stacy A. Tromble, Esq., MSW '07, JD '07, BA '95
William K. Tupper, BS '72, and
Mary T. Tworek-Tupper, MSW '76
Carol A. Tyler, MSW '88
Lynne S. Vallone, MSW '80
Edo G. Vander Kooy, MSW '77, BA '73
Grace A. Wach, MSW '16
Howard J. Walter, MSW '75, BS '72
Rachel L. Walter, MSW '14
Sarah J. Watson, EdM '09, MLS '04, BA '01
Brandy A. Weber, MSW '99
Cassandra J. Webster
Herbert D. Weisburgh, MSW '59, BA '57
Marlene J. Weller, MSW '86
Raymond T. Welsh, MSW '65, CERT '62
Jasmine Westbrook
Caren Whaley, MSW '93
Vicky D. Wideman, MSW '12
Hope E. Wienk, BA '16
Janet H. Williams, MSW '92
Alana Winnert, MSW '16
Rachel C. Witkowski, MSW '16
Samantha Yetter, MSW '16
Ofer Ziv, MSW '14
Brittany Zucco

UB SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI

We STOOD UP in March!

In honor of National Social Work Month, our alumni chose to support the UB Fund for Social Work, directly impacting current and future students. If you haven't had a chance to stand up for the School of Social Work, visit: www.buffalo.edu/giving/give-to/social-work.html today. It's not too late and no gift is too small; support a UB Social Work student today, because their work has just begun!

14&15



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UB Out-N-About



CREATIVE INNOVATION: SOCIAL INNOVATION FROM THE OUTSIDE IN
Socially-conscious, action-oriented students from all disciplines across the UB campus came together last November and used design thinking strategies to develop innovative solutions to social challenges. The fruitful session was coordinated by the schools of Social Work and Management.

CONNECT WITH US:



YOUR GIFT *matters.*

Sara Andrew ←
CLASS OF 2017
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Sara Andrew enlisted in the Army after high school, and was stationed at Fort Hood in Texas, where she began studying social work and earning undergraduate degrees in the field. Back in Buffalo, UB attracted her with its Joining Forces-UB, a program that trains students to address veterans' needs. Andrew wants to "serve those who serve us," by helping veterans suffering depression or PTSD. "While in the military, I saw the impact of service on soldiers and their families," says Andrew, who hopes to work advocating for reintegration services for returning members of the military. Andrew says she was honored to receive a scholarship that helped lower her tuition cost, "reduced my stress and demonstrated how I can give back in the future when I am financially stable."

Gifts to the UB Fund have an immediate impact on students.

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