

Social Work & Family Studies Alumni Newsletter



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

SPRING—SUMMER 2012

Hello, Social Work Alumni! Greeting from the Dean

Special points of interest:

- **Alumni Weekend**
- **NASW Dinner**
- **Alumni Features**
- **Dr. Pittman's Top 3 Projects**
- **Program Trips**
- **New SWPRO Alumni Website**

Here's a question I bet you've not thought about—"How are social work alumni like dogs?" Maybe some of you are thinking, "Now, that's just mean," but something I read recently encouraged me to make a connection. "There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle..."

This inscription was found on a tiny gravestone after a devastating air raid on Britain in World War II. Some thought it must be a famous quotation, but it wasn't. The words were written by a lonely elderly woman whose small dog had been killed by a Nazi bomb.

Her little pet had made an impact on her life that could not be extinguished. When I think of dogs and Southern's social work alumni, I think of the many ways you light up the world. You often work in darkness and difficulty, but with the skills and effort you offer to a hurting world, you too bring light that will not be extinguished.

When I hear of the great work you are doing on behalf of those in need and in pain, I'm so thankful that you are like the elderly ladies' candle that will never go out.



I would like to invite you to share some of your stories of successes and challenges with us, and we'll use them to encourage others on their journeys as well.

All the best!
Dr. Rene Drumm

Alumni Homecoming Weekend Update

Join us Alumni Homecoming Weekend!

What: Lunch and Learn on Self Care (2 CEU's)

When: Thursday, October 25th, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Where: Collegedale Church Fellowship Hall

Cost: \$30
Register online at alumni.swpro.org

Speakers: Abigail Smith & Jennifer Reynaert presenting on Self-Care.

Special Guest:

Rhonda Edwards
Facilitating a Guided Imagery Exercise

Rhonda Edwards is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the Center for Cancer Support at Memorial Health Care Service. She holds a certification in oncology social work and is the Tennessee state representative for Association of Oncology Social Workers. She is certified in Mind Body Medicine through the

Center for Mind Body Medicine in Washington D.C. and regularly conducts Mind Body Groups for cancer patients and their families.

One tool that Rhonda utilizes regularly is Guided Imagery. This is a form of deliberate and directed daydreaming, which can be a very effective coping strategy dealing with stress and anxiety, as it induces the relaxation response in the body.

Come prepared to experience a technique designed to relax and rejuvenate!

Contributed by: Abigail Smith

Inspiring Quote:

"No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted."
— Aesop

Alumni Eat and Greet

On Wednesday July 18th, The School of Social Work and Family Studies Alumni Community held a lunch event for its Alumni. The event took place in the classy

Broad Street Grille in downtown Chattanooga. Kristie Wilder (class of 2003) and Lisa Koffler

(Class of 2010) welcomed the local SOSW alumni and shared information for the future of the Alumni Community.

There was a raffle gift give away of a free CEU admission for the Alumni weekend on October 25th. The 21 attendees also received gifts of appreciation and were encouraged to be a part of the

Leadership Board. The vision for the Alumni Community is to provide opportunities for professional growth and support for our Alumni and the community.

We encourage all of the alumni to become involved in the Leadership



Board for the Alumni Community and to attend future events.

Contributed by: Natalie Montaldi

Alumnus Feature: Lorri Merchant

Lori Merchant is a new face to most on campus, although she is in fact an alumnus who graduated from Southern in 1994. Since then, she has been on a social work journey which led her back here. “You should come back and teach,” were unknowingly foretelling words said encouragingly by Mr. Lamb, the then dean of the School of Social Work.

After graduating with her bachelor’s in social work, Lori went on to the University of Kansas, where she graduated in 1996 with her master’s in social work. She then worked in social work health care and hospice care before branching into a teaching position at Union College in Lincoln, Ne. At Union College, Lori was hired as

the director of the department. She also increased her eclectic class collection along with hosting ‘spa nights’ at her home and other fun events.

Flash forward to the present, Mrs. Merchant is ‘looking forward to continuing to teach,’ and has a sense of ‘a home coming’ at being a part of a program that helped to shape her social work career. Seeing students grow and change is the perk of her job. For her, teaching students is a double blessing because ‘she can touch students, who will then touch others.’

She herself loves learning and is currently working on her doctorate, in Sociology, from the University of Nebraska. The dissertation proposal will be asking and helping to answer the question of, “How does Spirituality and Religion Buffer the Stress of Caregivers?”

This next year is coming up soon and Mrs. Merchant will be preparing to



teach both bachelor and master level classes. The undergraduate students can expect to find her teaching the Research and Methods class. The master level students can prepare to see her co-teaching the Advanced Seminar class. Mrs. Merchant is devoted to ‘being able to do what she can do at the best of her ability,’ and she believes God has brought her to Southern to help her do just that.

Contributed by: Amy Koffler

If you are interested in being featured in a Alumni spotlight or you would like to share with us an alumnus to feature, please contact us by email.

Email: swfsalumni@southern.edu



Dr. Pittman's Projects

beautiful campus in June, coordinated by The Southern Center of Response Enhancement (SCORE).

The conference offered opportunities for awareness training, and exercising PFA skills for professional and volunteer Early Responders in all helping fields. The MSW program is in its final push toward the last step in the accreditation process.

Dr. Pittman says, "We were given a fast track option by CSWE and we are working to finalize the full self-study documents and make sure we are all ready for the final site visit."

The School of Social Work is eager to hear from you, our alumni, about innovations that you feel can improve our advanced social work education.

Dr. Pittman is a very busy professor these days, recently receiving 'The Lifetime Achievement Award,' and she is not about to slow down anytime soon. Among her many on-going projects, her top three are: the facilitation of a class cohort's project

SCORE, the Accreditation process, and plans for the future of the MSW program. The 2nd Annual Psychological First Aid (PFA) was held on Southern's

One of the program additions that we are considering offering is a summer intensive face-to-face teaching model with year-round, online-only learning options.

The school will put more courses in as fully online and shorten the time that students need to be geographically close.

Also, be sure to send your ideas about emerging practice issues that we might address in new specializations and/or course content that will keep us cutting edge. While we miss having you in the program, we wish you the best of continued professional success.

Contributed by: Dr. Pittman

(Edited by: Amy Koffler)

Program Learning Trips: Haiti & Kenya

This past school-year the MSW program included in its calendar two exciting trips. The first trip was to Haiti, and the other trip was to Kenya, in April and May respectively. Three different MSW students who participated shared about their experiences. Elizabeth Baker & Jaimee Daily went on the mission trip to Haiti. Their account is below:

"Every day of the trip, as our group rode out to visit with an orphanage or other agency in the community, we were greeted by the rubble left over from the earthquake and the ever-increasing garbage piled up on the sides of buildings — and even in

the streets. A group of six Southern Adventist Social Work graduate students were in Haiti for one week to conduct needs assessments of six orphanages in the Port-au-Prince area.

Our purpose for being here was two-fold: first to speak with the caregivers and administrators of the orphanages about how their orphanage was conducted, funded, and what needs were identified; second to interact with the children and provide therapeutic interaction time with them.

We noticed many needs: one in particular was the need to develop a system to deliver and monitor donations and their usage in the orphanages in order to eliminate misuse of donations and



(Elizabeth & Jaimee are pictured center.)

to develop an international program that promotes accountability as well as continued student interaction. It is our hope that the work done on this trip will be a building block for a continued work with the Haitian people and orphans, which is empowering and life-changing."

(Continued on page 5.)

NASW Dinner Coordinated by MSW Student

Each year during Social Work Month (March) the Southeast Branch of The National Association of Social Workers of Tennessee (SE-NASW TN) holds an annual Social Work Month Banquet and presents awards to local social work professionals and students. An advanced MSW student from Southern Adventist University named Doug Blackburn was the one to coordinate this spectacular event this year. Doug became involved with NASW during his foundation year, while doing his practicum at The Center for Cancer Support at Memorial Hospital. His field supervisor, Craig Pressley, LCSW, was then the program chair for the SE-NASW TN.

When his supervisor moved out of state, Doug became the next program chair. He is also now the

Branch Board Chair and Representative. Doug's vision for the banquet was to provide an opportunity for networking among professionals, where sponsoring agencies could display information about their services.

This year's award winners were: MSW Student of the Year— Susan Grant, Lifetime Achievement Award—Dr. Pittman, Public Citizen of the Year— Rhiannon Maynard (who also won the state award), BSW Student of the Year—Karalee Rosburg, and Social Worker of the year— Pat Shaw. Dr. Rene Drumm was the speaker for the event.

The next banquet/awards reception will be during the month of March 2013. The exact date has not been scheduled, but will likely be toward the later part of the



(Doug Blackburn is pictured left.)

month. Mr. Blackburn explains, "My motivation to get involved with the NASW was my recognition of the need for more cohesion among professionals, as well as an appreciation for what NASW has contributed to the profession in terms of support, lobbying legislators and developing a code of ethics."

Contributed by: Jessica Carter

Introducing the New SWPRO Alumni Website

Check out and browse through our new Alumni Community website at alumni.swpro.org. Here you can stay current on our Social Work and Family Studies Alumni Community, register for upcoming social and CEU events, read newsletters, update your information and learn about some of the many ways you may become involved with the School of Social Work.

You can also take advantage of our resource pages, where you can search for and post job openings. There are also helpful links and references to aid you as a professional social worker.

Some of these resources include information about the licensing process in Tennessee.

If there is anything specific you would like to see on the Alumni Community website, please do not hesitate to let us know! We want this to be a helpful resource and networking tool for the Alumni Community.

Contributed by: Lisa Koffler



alumni.swpro.org

Program Learning Trips: Haiti & Kenya (continued)

(Continued from Haiti Trip)

international program that promotes accountability as well as continued student interaction. It is our hope that the work done on this trip will be a building block for a continued work with the Haitian people and orphans, which is empowering and life-changing.”

Sarah Malcolm shares about her experience in Kenya:

“I wanted to go on the Kenya trip for the obvious reason that I needed to fulfill the requirements of practicum. I also wanted to learn more about international aid, and whether aid really is helping to address poverty. This experience

has taught me more about aid and development in other countries and what needs to be done in order to make it effective.

In classes before the trip, it became evident that the church can't really afford to support its missionaries. So by combining business and social work majors, we came up with a definition of international mission and social entrepreneurship (IMSE), which uses business strategies to achieve a social goal, founded on a spiritual mission. Business and social work majors in Kenya were given opportunities to work together in social agencies to see how we could collaborate to make the agencies sustainable and more effective.”



(Sarah Malcom is center –left.)

fective.”

If you are interested in becoming involved or donating please contact:

Melissa Tortal: mtortal@southern.edu

Jillian Wills: jwills@southern.edu

Contributed by: Jaimee Daily, Elizabeth Baker & Sarah Malcolm.

Dr. Chama's Graduate Assistant Presents



On May 26, 2012 Natalie Montaldi presented at the 24th Annual National Conference on Social Work and HIV/AIDS in Miami, Florida. Natalie had been working all year long alongside Dr. Samson Chama as his graduate assistant on his research study.

Due to date conflicts Dr. Chama was not able to return in time from the School of Social Work Kenya study

tour to present and asked his graduate assistant to present instead.

The study was titled Worker Perception of Important Elements for Improving Service Delivery to Young People Living with HIV/AIDS Infected Parents and/or Guardians. Natalie said it was a wonderful growing opportunity and was grateful for the rich experience.

Contributed by: Natalie Montaldi

If you are interested in being featured in a Alumni spotlight or you would like to share with us an alumnus to feature, please contact us by email.

Email: swfsalumni@southern.edu

Continuing Education

Continuing Education Units Catalog Coming Soon, Fall 2012!!

Specialization opportunities in the summer for Alumni:

- International
- Family and Children Advocacy and Treatment
- Crisis and Trauma

If you would like more information please contact us at swfsalumni@southern.edu.