SCHOOL NEWS

Message from Dean Cathryn Potter

Dear School of Social Work alumni and friends,

We were pleased to recently host members of our Alumni Council to discuss projects that will promote the lifelong engagement of alumni with the School of Social Work. These dedicated council members have boundless energy and creative minds. Together we are designing some strong new initiatives. What a pleasure to work with great social workers like these. Stay tuned for more information as the Council works to promote enhanced networking, career advancement opportunities, peer mentoring, the exchange of ideas, and the establishment of fundraising and social events.

Upcoming Alumni Council events include the Social Work Career Fair, open to Rutgers students and alumni, to be held on April 4 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at the Paul Robeson Campus Center, on the Rutgers Newark campus, and the Rutgers presence at the upcoming NASW-NJ 2014 Conference, to be held in Atlantic City, May 4-6, 2014.

(Pictured left: Marla Blunt Carter, Lynne Healy, Cathryn Potter, dean, Tawanda Hubbard, Dawn Hall-Apgar, Alexis Biedermann, Kyle Smiddie)

In this issue we highlight a new grant to establish community coalitions to prevent substance abuse, and a special thank you luncheon for our field instructors and liaisons. We are also pleased to spotlight an outstanding young woman, Gina Pearson, former foster child, now social work student, who is also a Youth Ambassador for the Statewide Youth Advisory Boards.

Sincerely,

Cathryn C. Potter, MSW, PhD
Dean and Professor
Rutgers School of Social Work Receives $2 Million Grant to study substance abuse prevention efforts and to recommend improvements for community coalitions

Andrew Peterson, associate professor of the Rutgers School of Social Work, is the principal investigator of a grant totaling $2,038,215, a subaward of a larger grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The grant will be used over the next five years to develop the data infrastructure of the state for substance abuse prevention and to reduce the harmful consequences of alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse in communities. The project is called New Jersey’s Strategic Prevention Framework—Partnerships for Success Initiative.

By working with 17 different coalitions, all of which include healthcare systems, retailers, law enforcement, and community-based prevention agencies, Peterson and his team hope to track data that can be used to initiate the best intervention plans. Rutgers School of Social Work will then train these community partners in the most effective ways to create policy changes and to evaluate the effect of interventions.

Read the rest of the article here.

Upcoming Events

Moving to the Changing Rhythm of Behavioral Health, April 2 – 3, 2014 – NJAMHAA Annual Conference, Pines Manor, Edison, NJ

Social Work Career Fair & Professional Development Workshop, open to Rutgers students and alumni, to be held on April 4 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at the Paul Robeson Campus Center, Newark.

International Symposium on Labor Security and Social Welfare, April 18 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Forum Room, Edward J. Bloustein School. Outstanding speakers for labor security and social welfare issues in both China and the United States, and our very own Andy Germak, Emily Greenfield, Lenna Nepomnyaschy, and Bill Waldman, along with EVPAA Edwards and Dean Potter, will speak at the event. Renmin University of China is the co-host for the event. Hosted by the Huamin Research Center, School of Social Work and the Edward J. Bloustein School.
Professor William Neal Brown Endowed Lecture, Please join us on April 23 from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. for a lecture on the topic of “This Digital World (that we must leave): Technology as Extension, Ecology and Exodus”. Our guest speaker, Jack Z. Bratich, is associate professor and chair of the journalism and media studies department at Rutgers University. One complimentary non-clinical CEU will be granted upon request.

NASW-NJ 2014 Conference, May 4-6, 2014, Borgata Hotel, Atlantic City. Come stop by our booth and say hello! We’ll have special giveaways for Rutgers School of Social Work alumni.

Rutgers Students Chosen to Attend the Clinton Global Initiative University Conference and receive Funding for their Literacy Initiative

Undergraduates Bonnie Wong, a social work major, and Stephanie Enriquez, a history and political science major, were among nine Rutgers students chosen to attend the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) meeting at Arizona State University, March 21-23.

Their proposed CGI U Commitment to Action, a literacy initiative to assist migrant children in China, will receive up to $3,000 in seed funding through the CGI University Network, of which Rutgers is a member.

“Bonnie and I were crying when we found out that our project had been chosen by CGI U. These migrant children have so little and yet they are so happy and loving. Providing any sort of additional resources will mean a great deal to them and be very appreciated,” says Enriquez.

Learn more information here.

FOCUS ON VAWC

VAWC Speaker Series: New Brunswick
Utilizing the Arts to Raise Awareness about Violence Against Women and Children
Date: Wednesday, April 9, 2014
Rutgers Student Activities Center
Time: 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
Registration info

The Institute for Families at the School of Social Work, the Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs of Rutgers University, and The Huamin Research Center provided an executive training program in management and leadership for 21 government administrators from the Jiangxi Province in China. The culmination of the program was a closing ceremony on January 22.
VAWC Speaker Series: Newark
Military Sexual Assault: A Conversation with Anu Bhagwati, Executive Director of SWAN (Service Women’s Action Network)
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2014
Paul Robeson Student Center, Newark
Time: 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Registration info
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The Center on Violence Against Women and Children are co-sponsors of the upcoming Union Country C.A.R.E.S (Community, Action, Response, Education, Safety), Domestic Violence Symposium. The symposium will be held Thursday, April 10th from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Kean University. CEU Credits are available. For more information and to register visit: UCDVSYMPOSIUM.EVENTBRITE.COM

SSW Newark hosts Luncheon to Thank Field Instructors and Liaisons

Students from Rutgers SSW look forward to putting their education to real life use through field placements in hospitals, schools and a variety of agencies. The unsung heroes behind these successful field placements are the Field Instructors and Field Liaisons who monitor and assist the students, guiding their successful progress. The SSW at Newark held a luncheon in January to recognize these “field families” and show appreciation for their efforts.

Currently the Newark campus has the largest number of students in field training at one time, 419 students in all. The lunch program focused on highlighting Field Instructors and Field Liaisons for their service and commitment to SSW students during their field education experience throughout the year.

“We wanted to strengthen our relationship with these partners and thank them for carefully and expertly guiding the next generation of social workers,” says Mark Lamar, executive director, Office of Field Education at Rutgers, who was also the keynote speaker for the event.

Two other event speakers included students Brian Cousin and Mary Guzman, who were completing their field placements. Brian, an Advanced Standing MSW Student with an interest in clinical social work, interned at Project Impact at Hoboken University Medical Center, which provides comprehensive evaluation and treatment for sexually abusive and fire-starting juveniles in Hudson County. Mary is a
second year MSW Student, also focused on clinical social work, who interned at Elizabeth Public Schools. Both students were recommended by their Field liaisons and the Office of Field Education as demonstrating excellence in their field placements.

“Field education is an opportunity to integrate classroom knowledge and theory into actual practice with clients. It is an incredible learning opportunity. Just recently a client told me that while he is working on change, it will not happen overnight. That helped me as a clinician to learn the value of patience, to realize that change takes time, and to enjoy the process,” says Brian.

More than 60 agencies and organizations were invited, and the attendees expressed praise for both the students and the School.

“We are pleased that our field partners have such positive reports about our students, and that they greatly appreciated this luncheon to recognize and thank them,” says Trinay Thomas, associate director of Field Education.

Rutgers First-Year Students Expand Their View of Motherhood through Byrne Seminar

A group of first-year students gaze at paintings from colonial days that depict images of mothers and children. The mothers look grim, unsmililing, and the babies are dressed oddly to resemble small adults. The paintings show an image of motherhood that is not as rosy as photographs on modern Mother’s Day cards. The images spur discussion among the students about what it means to be a mother, the good, the bad, and everything in between.

The course, called “Mama Mia: Social Constructions and Conceptions of Motherhood,” is part of The Byrne First-Year Seminars Program. For these new undergraduates, the class has greatly expanded their perceptions of motherhood.

“Mothers have to be strong to handle all they go through, from pregnancy and their bodies changing to raising a family. I knew they were strong before, but now I have a better understanding of the experience of motherhood over the last 100 years,” said Uniqua Smith, a women and gender studies major.

Read the full article here.
**Good News**

**Doug Behan** is the principal investigator of an award totaling $239,924 from the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services. The grant is to develop and deliver a training program to educate diverse populations throughout New Jersey on the prevention and response to financial exploitation of vulnerable adults following a disaster.

**Antoinette Y. Farmer** has been selected to receive the University of Pittsburgh, School of Education's Departmental Alumni Award from the Department of Psychology in Education. This is the department's highest designated award and will be presented on March 30 at the School of Education's Alumni Reception.

Please visit Good News for more stories.

**Social Work Student at Rutgers Gives Back and Thrives Despite Years Spent in 30 Foster Homes**

Fewer than 3 percent of foster kids nationally go on to college. Despite those odds, Gina Pearson, a senior social work major, has excelled at Rutgers, her first real home. She also gives back to foster children as a speaker. It is a remarkable achievement after a lifetime of over 30 foster care placements.

Pearson, a senior, has earned all A's since entering into the social work major, and was inducted into Phi Alpha Honor Society and received the National Honor Society of Leadership and Success presidential award, an honorary award in recognition of her GPA. She has also thrived socially and has a strong group of friends who feel like family.

“Coming to Rutgers took me out of a negative environment and gave me an opportunity to feel a sense of independence and achievement,” says Pearson. Now she has taken the opportunity to give back to children still in the foster care system.

Read the rest of the article here.
Price Family Fellowship Aids Students

This year, seven students were awarded fellowships from the Price Family Foundation (PFF), which began this program in January 2013. PFF provides supportive services to youth attending the Rutgers-New Brunswick campus who have current or former experience in the child welfare system with the goal of helping them to successfully graduate from college. Each selected student receives a $1,500 research stipend, a $1,000 book stipend, a laptop, weekly one-to-one supportive coaching, and a strong paid research fellowship in his or her area of concentration. The Fellows are part of a nurturing environment and are provided housing during holiday and winter break periods, which are difficult for most of these scholars who do not have stable housing outside of Rutgers.

Miquel Gabbidon, a sophomore transfer student from Loyola University, was one of this year’s selected fellows. She is a political science major and international global studies and French minor. Miquel plans to go to law school after graduation and sees herself either working for a bank or a trans-national corporation one day.

Miquel said that as a transfer student, the Price Fellowship provided her with helpful guidance and, most importantly, a place where she could go to ask any and all questions.

“I think it definitely helped me a lot and when I first came to Rutgers I was really overwhelmed and I didn’t really know what to do,” she said. “But the Price Fellowship helped me to feel more secure.”

Miquel is completing her research fellowship with School of Social Work professor and Director of the Center for Nonprofit Management and Governance, Dr. Ronald Quincy. Together they are working on a project comparing two villages in Haiti that were affected by the 2008 earthquake. They are gathering information about what the residents went through, who provided aid and if it was enough, how it affected their community, and how they are doing today. Miquel said that once they get that information they will assess it and see if there is anything they can do for the villages in the future.

For more information or to financially support this program, please email sgiordano@ssw.rutgers.edu.
Patty Mojta and Parent Universe

What started as just a conversation in a classroom has now blossomed into a full fledged social venture known as Parent Universe. Parent Universe aims to support new parents during the time surrounding the birth of a baby. Patty Mojta, who graduated with a MSW in 2011, created Parent Universe after wondering why home-visiting programs weren’t available to all parents. Mojta said that she was not eligible to have a home visitor because she was not considered vulnerable or high risk and didn't have an income level that would make her eligible. Mojta is also the Project Manager for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children/Human Trafficking Prevention Program at Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey.

Read the full article here.