The Graduate School of Social Work has continued its tradition of bringing world leaders in peace and social justice to Houston by sponsoring Houston’s first PeaceJam Conference on November 12-13. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, invited Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, spearheaded the conference.

The PeaceJam Youth Conference attracted 140 high school students during the two-day gathering designed for direct student interaction with Esquivel. Leading up to the conference, students were guided through a curriculum that focused on peace and non-violence coupled with exposure to the lifework of Esquivel.

Once at the conference, participating student groups presented their own “Peace Plans,” individually created to initiate positive change in their communities. Throughout the weekend, students engaged in a variety of leadership workshops, small group meetings and team building games. Participation in community service projects was an added highlight of the program.

The PeaceJam Foundation was founded in 1996 in Denver as a way for Nobel Peace Laureates to work personally with youth to pass on the spirit, skills and wisdom that they embody. The goal of the event is to inspire a new generation of peacemakers who will transform themselves, their communities and the world.

PeaceJam is a yearlong, ongoing educational program. The participating Nobel Peace Laureates are directly involved in developing the curriculum. It is the only organization in the world which has twelve Nobel Peace Laureates working together long-term for a common cause—our children.

Since the PeaceJam program was launched in March of 1996, almost 40,000 teenagers worldwide have participated and over 100,000 new service projects have been developed and implemented.

Esquivel, born in Argentina in 1931, was the recipient of the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize for his notable work in defending human rights. His life has been dedicated to eradicating inequality and promoting social justice.

Esquivel trained as an architect and sculptor and served as a Professor of Architecture until 1974. At that time he was designated as the general coordinator of Latin America for liberation through non-violent means. He founded the Peace and Justice Service Foundation which stands as an international campaign to denounce the atrocities committed by military regimes. As a result, other movements formed, including the United Nations’ Permanent Assembly for Human Rights and the Movement of Reclaiming Sequestered and Disappeared Children.

Since receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Esquivel has written books and articles revolving around human rights and the social political situation of Latin America. He was awarded the “Citizen of the World” prize by the Boston Center for the 21st century. Currently, Esquivel serves as president of the Honorary Advisors of the Peace and Justice Service Foundation in Latin America, president of the International League for the Rights and Liberation of the Peoples, and as a member of the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples.

“'To create this new society, we must present outstretched and friendly hands, without hatred or rancor, even as we show great determination and never waver in the defense of truth and justice.'”

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel
A MESSAGE FROM DEAN COLBY

Every so often an organization experiences a unique period of time that seems to reflect its essence. For the GSSW, one of those moments took place in November, 2005. The following email, to GSSW faculty and staff, conveys a brief 72-hour peak experience in the life of the GSSW. These events symbolize our commitment to peace and justice in a spirited manner while once again implementing quality programs with minimal resources through dedicated staff.

Colleagues,

Beginning this past Thursday evening (November 8), the GSSW experienced an atypical 72-hour period. Over a very few days, the GSSW solidified its future with an endowed professorship while putting into action the school’s peace and justice mission with PeaceJam.

In an earlier email, Mary Guillory shared with you the particulars of the Keeper Reception that was held on Thursday night. The reception recognized Cele and Sam Keeper’s work in the community and support for the GSSW. And, as Mary Guillory shared with you, we raised the needed funds, $125,000, to fully endow the Keeper Professorship in Peace and Social Justice.

PeaceJam began on Friday with a reception in honor of the 1980 Nobel Peace Laureate, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, who served as the weekend’s convener. More than 200 people joined the lively reception including civic leaders, current and former elected officials, UH faculty and staff, and Dean’s Advisory Council members. About 140 young people from high schools, churches, synagogues, and youth group associations participated in the weekend program. The youth participated in a series of workshops and community projects — GSSW and American Humanics’ students were actively involved in PeaceJam working as group leaders, mentors, and volunteers in general.

Successful events and projects just don’t happen. They require a great deal of planning and work from dedicated people. And we are very fortunate to have such people on our staff. First, I want to bring to your attention the remarkable work of both Mary Guillory and Sonia Ewing. Their combined fingerprints can be found all over these events. Mary and Sonia know how to put on a program that runs smoothly while making guests and strangers feel welcome. With minimal resources at their disposal, they time and again raise the bar for the GSSW.

Second, PeaceJam. Brian Trachte, a PhD student, was given the responsibility to coordinate and develop PeaceJam. Last year, Brian was provided an office and a telephone. From these modest resources, he organized his own community advisory group, which included students, alumni, and community volunteers, and worked tirelessly to realize this past weekend. Brian’s efforts paid off handsomely with a tremendous weekend filled with many successes. Ann McFarland, too, needs to be recognized, as from the outset, she provided Brian day-to-day supervision — I cannot think of a better tutor in program planning and development.

This particular slice in time reminds us that there are many who believe in the GSSW’s ability and potential to be a positive change agent in our community. And we also see that there are some pretty ingenious, resourceful, and dedicated people in our surroundings. I wish to recognize and thank all of our colleagues and ask that you too celebrate their successes.

Ira Colby
Dean and Social Work Professor
THE SOCIAL WORK RESPONSE TO KATRINA

Newscasters and newspaper reporters have told the world from their perspective about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. We have all seen the disastrous effects and heard the heart wrenching tales of our Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama friends. I would like to relate the story of how the GSSW and the social work community throughout Houston rolled up its sleeves in response to the call for action on that dreadful day when the news broke of the effects of Katrina’s wrath.

Houston sprang into action by offering the Astrodome and George R. Brown Convention Center as shelters to New Orleanians who were evacuated from the Superdome. Houston and its mighty force of volunteers opened up their homes and their hearts to any and all that came. The GSSW, via email, communicated the need for volunteers at the Houston Food Bank initially, and then at the Astrodome, at shelters throughout the city and at the Red Cross. The response from faculty, staff, students, alumni and GSSW community friends was amazing. Countless response calls and endless committed volunteer hours were selflessly put into effect. The task was enormous and continues for many today. The Katrina Relief Effort has rallied the social work profession’s soul in Houston. For those of you outside of Houston reading this article, I will share some of the unsounded logistical miracles that were put into action to help our fellow man by the GSSW community.

Overall, the University of Houston accepted 1,700 New Orleans students into the university on an emergency basis, of which the GSSW enrolled 31 declaring that the financial and academic arrangements would be worked out later. Assistance was given in finding housing, transportation and financial backing for incoming students. When students voiced the concern that they did not have funds to purchase textbooks, requests to alumni provided for textbook vouchers. In addition, current and former students donated their applicable textbooks and faculty members contacted textbook publishers. Alumni offered housing options and committed to transport students to classes. Field Instructors accommodated the 31 incoming and unexpected students in need of immediate field placements and offered to provide the catch up needed. e direction for all of us to follow. There have been many challenges along the way, but the semester is well underway and academic goals are being achieved!

American Humanics students participated in Neighborhood Centers, Inc. efforts to gather information and assess the current and future needs of the people displaced by Hurricane Katrina housed at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Students collected 75-100 assessments through personal interviews with individuals driven from their homes on the Gulf Coast. The information gathered was entered into a database which has been used to contact the families and update their information. NCI began to link evacuees with case management services and with clothing, gas cards, food, etc.

As soon as the needs and vulnerabilities of the elder evacuees were discovered, a coordinated effort was created by the gerontology community to quickly remove them from the Astrodome and to relocate them to more appropriate settings. The Seniors Without Families Team/Tool (SWIFT) was made up of teams of nurses and social workers who went out to the sites — the Astrodome, Reliant Center and Arena — and walked between the cots to identify and assess vulnerable elders who were on their own. SWIFT found some families with elders who were not functioning or who were overwhelmed by the care of their elderly relatives. Elders were relocated to nursing homes, assisted living or sent to triage. The team worked on getting them to appointments, connecting them with lost relatives, getting food and clothing, etc. while they were in Reliant City. Currently, the SWIFT partnership is working to provide ongoing case management for calls relating to seniors made to the Houston Emergency Center.

Countless lives have been changed throughout this disaster in the Gulf Coast region. Through it all, the faculty, staff, students, alumni and community friends of the GSSW have participated in the most incredible relief effort imaginable. The effort goes on, but for many, the road to recovery is in process.

By Ann Liberman, MSW
PAL-STEP TRAINING GRANT FUNDED

Congratulations go to Kelli Connell-Carrick, Assistant Professor, and to her Co-Principal Investigator Maria Scannapieco, Professor and Director for the Center for Child Welfare at UT Arlington School of Social Work, on receiving funding from the Administration on Children, Youth and Family for the Preparation for Adult Living-Supervisor Training and Empowerment Program (PAL-STEP) project. Congratulations also go to Cache Steinberg of the UH GSSW Office of Community Projects and Ritalinda D’Andrea who will conduct the evaluation of the curriculum.

Over a three-year period, the overall purpose of this project is to develop, implement, evaluate and disseminate a training curriculum for public child welfare supervisors with the intent of increasing knowledge and skills for culturally responsive delivery and management of federal independent living services for youth in foster care. This project will maximize for youth in foster care their successful transition to independent living. The curriculum incorporates the four core principles found in successful programs for youth, which include positive youth development, collaboration, cultural competence and permanent connections. One hundred CPS supervisors in regions 3 (Dallas/Ft. Worth), 6 (Houston), and 10 (El Paso) will be trained on the PAL-STEP curriculum.

The project employs the collaborative efforts of the University of Houston and The University of Texas at Arlington schools of Social Work, and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. It builds upon existing and longstanding partnerships of these entities. A PAL-STEP Advisory Board consisting of foster youth, foster parents, service providers (Transitional Resource Action Center in Dallas and Houston Alumni and Youth Center), CPS foster care supervisors in Dallas and Houston, Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) coordinators in Dallas and Houston, university faculty with expertise on youth, and the state PAL coordinator will provide direction to the project. Critical to this project is a nontraditional training approach where young adults who have experienced the foster care system and the aging out process will be partners in the training process.

BILINGUAL SCHOLARSHIP SUCCESS

The Dean’s Committee for Scholarships for Spanish-Speaking Social Work Students, co-chaired by Nancy Frees Fountain and Barbara Henley, met its first year goal of raising over $100,000 to provide for full-tuition scholarships for a cohort of six newly admitted GSSW students. Four first year students, and two advanced standing students (second year) share this honor. We salute the eighteen donors who contributed to the Fund, including four non-profit partners (Catholic Charities, DePelchin Children’s Center, Methodist Hospital, and Neighborhood Centers, Inc.) plus eight local foundations (Bangs, CRC, diPortanova, the Greater Houston Community Foundation, Frees, Henley, Powell and Simmons), plus generous contributions from several “friends.”

We are grateful to Professors Steven Applewhite, Sandra Lopez, and Avelardo Valdez and alumna Theresa Ramirez, for designing and implementing the scholarship interview process. The scholarship award criteria included not only comfort in colloquial Spanish and English but also commitment to the social work profession. It is our expectation that the community of Houston will soon be enriched by the talents of the 2005 student scholarship recipients: Claudia Aguirre, Esmeralda Alamia, Adriana Crane, Misty Miller, Lillian Ortiz, and Jose Romero.

We are extremely pleased to have reached our first year goal but need continued help to strengthen this unique scholarship opportunity for the next two years. Please help us by: (1) Spreading the word that the scholarship opportunity exists for full-time GSSW students who are Spanish fluent and committed to working in the Houston area for two years after graduation (2) Helping identify community partners interested in contributing to the Bilingual Scholarship program to ensure continued funding. For information or to schedule a presentation for your organization, contact Barbara Henley at bhenley@uh.edu.
The faculty and staff at the GSSW are very excited to launch the first part-time MSW Weekend College. This gerontology focused initiative, which will take three years to complete, includes some incentives for the first cohort, including fee waivers and a subsidy of $10,000 to be used for tuition. The program, which begins in January 2006, will be delivered through a combination of face-to-face and distance education courses.

The aging curriculum is directed toward gerontological practitioners who know first hand the challenges and choices that exist in old age. Course content is designed to help students reframe issues, so that they can assist older men and women with their daily tasks, in fulfilling their civic responsibilities, and in deepening their own sense of psychological and spiritual worth. The Weekend College will educate professionals on aging, a social issue that has never been perceived as urgent, yet is destined to dominate lives across generational lines for decades ahead. Americans are living longer. By and large, they are healthier, wealthier, and perhaps a bit wiser. The new program affords an opportunity to seize on the advantages of aging and to address issues of concern throughout the continuum of care. For more information about the program, call 713-743-8075.

Jan Leger, LMSW, joined the GSSW staff in the spring assuming the newly created position of Academic Advisor for the GSSW. The role of academic advisor and the strong impact it has on our students is a significant piece in the educational process. The obvious result is that academic requirements are met through ongoing dialogue and academic follow-up with students. The secondary benefit is in providing “consumer friendly” rapport building that supports the overall educational mission of the school. The advisor’s role truly makes a difference in the overall graduate educational experience for the students, and we are thrilled to have Jan on board!

Jan received her MSW from the University of Houston and her BS in Behavioral Sciences from the University of Southwestern Louisiana. She is a native of Lafayette, Louisiana and has lived in Houston for the last 14 years. Prior to joining the GSSW, Jan worked with the Spring Branch Independent School System where she developed and implemented drug and violence prevention programs. In Spring Branch, she also served as project manager for Communities in Schools and as site coordinator for the 21st Century After-School grant. She has worked for MHMRA in the Child Adolescent Mobile Crisis Unit, CAPES. Jan has served on the board of Westside Homeless Partnership and currently sits on the GSSW Alumni Association Board.
IN MEMORY OF DR. GEORGE MAGNER

It is with great sadness that we share the news with you that Dr. George Magner, Professor and Senior Vice President Emeritus of Social Work, passed away on August 21 from complications following surgery. “We will certainly miss George. He was an incredible friend who made everyone — students, staff, faculty and alumni — feel very special. His passion for justice, his advocacy for quality public services and his expectation that the University of Houston be a center for excellence, will not be lost. While we feel a great sense of sadness, we are richer for having been touched by George and knowing he no longer is in pain,” said Ira Colby.

George was a longtime professor and veteran administrator who helped set the course for higher education in Houston and for the University of Houston System for three decades. He held several key administrative positions within the UH System, including Interim System Vice Chancellor and Interim President at both the University of Houston and the University of Houston-Downtown.

George earned a PhD from the University of Chicago in 1961, and spent his early career years in the mental health field. In 1966, he joined the University of Illinois at Chicago as professor and as dean of the school of social work. He joined the University of Houston in 1978 as provost and professor of social work. For the past fifteen years, the University of Houston has recognized his contributions to undergraduate education by awarding the George W. Magner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising to one staff member and one faculty member annually.

Among his many professional activities, George was the Co-Project Director of the Texas Consortium of Geriatric Education Centers, a member of the Texas Department of Human Resources Advisory Board for Programs for the Aged and Disabled and Chairman of the Academic Council of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. He also served as a consultant to the National Institute of Mental Health. He published two dozen articles related to mental health and social policy over the years.

George Magner was a friend and mentor to his students and fellow faculty members, a loving parent to his children, and a greatly admired grandfather to his eight grandchildren. His call to action for all of us is to support stem cell research. May George’s life example serve as his legacy for all of us to remember and to know that we are better people for having been a part of his life.

“SONIC BOOMERS”
A BOLD VISION FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

Dedicated to Dr. George Magner

UH alumni from across the metropolis arrived October 6 to hear Dr. Andrew Achenbaum impart his vision on the coming “boom.” Dedicating his talk to Dr. George Magner, Dr. Achenbaum extolled about how George added vitality to life – throughout his advancing age – and taught him, for instance, how to enter names in his cell phone. “Why did you learn to do that?” Dr. Achenbaum asked Dr. Magner. “Because I wanted to.” To want to – the motivator in older age – when one has time to choose.

Dr. Achenbaum, or “Andy” as he likes to be called, offered the audience his personal perspectives from the vantage point of middle age. Considering comments of speaker and alumni, and in loving memory of Dr. Magner and his mentorship, emboldened “boomers” exemplify vitality, working onward to later life, valuing “choice” and “relationship.” May you enjoy the escalator ride!

Among the sponsors for this evening of “Learning & Latte” were Merrill Lynch, which hires Gerontologists to help the corporation meet the needs of older investors, and Dietrich Coffee who provided the “latte.”

By Ellen Stevens-Roseman, DSW, MSW
Andrew Achenbaum, Professor of History and Social Work, kicked off the speakers’ series of the University of Houston Alumni Association on October 6 with a talk entitled “Sonic Boomers.” His remarks were based on his new book, Older Americans, Vital Communities: Toward a Bold Vision of Societal Aging forthcoming from Johns Hopkins University Press. Achenbaum also delivered the Preston Dyer Lectures at Baylor University, and will be giving plenary talks at the Gerontological Society, the University of Southern California, and Ithaca College later this semester.


Dr. Gerson David, Professor Emeritus, attended The 18th Congress of the International Association of Gerontology, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June. He participated in sessions related to the World Health Organization Aging and Life Course Program, focusing on active aging, the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life.

Ellen Stevens-Roseman, Associate Professor, has been appointed to the Editorial Board of the Journal of Gerontological Social Work. She has had the following manuscript accepted: Stevens-Roseman, E. “Research ’Alive’ in the Social Work Classroom: Teaching Social Work Graduate Students to Evaluate Practice Effectiveness,” Arete – A Professional Journal Dedicated to Excellence in Social Work (2005).

Maxine Weinman Epstein, Professor, delivered a presentation on September 4 at The Children’s Hospital of Shanghai, China and Fudan University entitled “Evidence Based Practice and Ethics.”

J. Dianne Garner, DSW, ACSW, presented “Women & Aging: Filling in the Knowledge Gaps” at the annual Richard J. DeBottis Memorial Lecture on November 2. Held at the Terrace at West University, the night was filled with learning, dining and networking. In addition, second year student, Margaret Jeannette Barnes was awarded the R.J. DeBottis Scholarship for her demonstration of activism and advocacy for older adults.

Dr. Garner has been an incredibly active and dedicated social worker, having held positions on the Board of Directors and as Vice-President for the National Association of Social Workers, President of the Kansas Chapter of the Council on Social Work Education and as Director of the Department of Medical Social Work in Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles. She has written several books and currently serves as the editor of the Journal of Women & Aging.

Dr. Garner proposed that several common factors tend to be found in successfully aging women, including commitment or having a sense of purpose, strong coping skills and a sense of humor. She stressed that the current research calls for further exploration, and thus pushed for academics and practitioners to collaborate and, “research, write and publish.” The research conducted now, she emphasized, will greatly impact the lives of older women in the years to come.
ALUMNI IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

At long last the GSSW Clinical Practice Alumni Group is up and running. The group held its initial meeting in April 2004 at which time leadership was established. The goal of the group is to allow for private practitioners and clinically oriented alumni to link with the GSSW in providing opportunities for current students and alumni to network. Fall and Spring meetings will focus on providing for professional learning opportunities for students and alumni as well. Mentorship opportunities between clinically focused alumni and students are in the planning process.

The fall meeting, “A Dessert and Networking Social” was held on October 21 at the home of Cele Keeper. Dean Colby gave an update on the happenings at the GSSW, the topic of student/alumni mentoring opportunities was discussed and recommendations were requested from participants as to future meeting topics of interest. Above all, an opportunity for networking with fellow clinically focused professionals was the highlight of the afternoon.

Linda Chase serves as Chair of the group and Melissa Standish is Program Chair. Membership is open to those GSSW alumni who are providing clinical practice services either within agency, hospital or private practice settings. If you are interested in being notified of future meetings, please email Ann Liberman at aliberman@uh.edu.

GSSW Name Change

The Board of Regents of the University of Houston approved a name change for the school on November 18, 2005.

The GSSW will now officially be called

The Graduate College of Social Work

DOCTORAL PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS


Willis, N. & Gambrell, M. “Effectiveness of a School-based Intervention of Adolescents with Incarcerated Parents: Findings and Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research.” Presented at the 29th Annual National Association of Social Workers Texas State Conference, Galveston (November 2005).
In the heat of the summer, the GSSW Alumni Association sponsored a thought provoking afternoon of discussion entitled, *Military Experience: A Social Work Perspective*. The program discussed issues faced by military personnel and veterans including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, combat stress, return home/post deployment stress issues, military women, compassion fatigue for military social workers and current research in the social work/military field. Panel members offered firsthand information on the topics based on recent active duty experiences in Iraq and through local work in outpatient services at the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VA). CEUs were offered at no charge to GSSW Alumni members.

The distinguished panel members included:

**Major Edward Brusher, MSC, MSW**, Chief Combat Actions Stress Office, Army Soldier & Family Support Branch from Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio, who spoke about Combat Stress and his personal experience serving in Iraq;

**Captain M. Houck PhD**, who served with the 85th Combat Stress Medical Detachment in Iraq and who is currently with the Army Soldier & Family Support Branch at Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio, spoke about post deployment stress issues, compassion fatigue and his personal experiences; **Dale Alexander, PhD, LMSW (LTC, USAR retired)** University of Houston, GSSW Associate Professor served as the moderator of the program and reviewed current research pertaining to military service men, women and families; **Frank Glover, LCSW**, Team Leader at the VA Resource Center in Houston, spoke about outpatient treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder affecting military personnel upon return from Iraq and Afghanistan; **Liz Srouji, LCSW, RMT**, Clinical Coordinator at the VA Resource Center in Houston focused on women in the military and the issues that affect them upon return from active duty.

Thanks go to Sara Lewis, Rufina Basu and Will Dickey, Membership Committee of the GSSW Alumni Association, for spearheading this informative and educational program.
Due to the tremendous outpour of generous support during this year’s devastating hurricanes, this issue’s In the Spotlight could not be dedicated to solely one person. Instead, it is hoped that all involved in the relief efforts, either as Coordinators, Supporters, or Volunteers at the Astrodome, George R. Brown, local shelters, or agencies take a step back and acknowledge themselves as truly exemplary social workers after so selflessly helping those most in need during this time of crisis.

As soon as the news broke that our neighbors devastated by Katrina were being evacuated to Houston, a most extraordinary collaboration of social service and mental health professionals began to form. People from all over the nation joined together to assist and the results were amazing. No matter from what background, Social Workers were out helping whoever they could reach, and they reached many.

While some were out in the field helping, others remained in the agencies taking over the extra shifts in order to keep operations running. Although exhausted from such intense emotional work, volunteers continued to come out and offer their invaluable services which were so greatly needed.

The dedication and compassion demonstrated during the relief efforts exemplify social work at its best. We all share a sense of pride in what was accomplished to help our fellow man. Tremendous needs have been addressed and progress has been made because of the personal touch that “we” gave.

Doris Gurd ('70) served as Program Director for the Adoption Department at DePelchin Children’s Center and became the Founding Director of the Post Adoption Counseling Services during her 11 year tenure with the agency. Since retirement in 1984, she lives in Boerne, TX, closer to her children, where she volunteered at Family Services and the Health Department until two years ago when she became a full-time caregiver to her husband who passed away in December 2004.

Barbara Soniat ('74) recently joined the faculty of Catholic University of America, School of Social Service in Washington, DC as an Associate Professor. She will head the Center on Global Aging at the university.

Cynthia Reibenstein ('88) is the President of Reibenstein & Associates where she is involved in developing personal, professional and organizational vision, motivational strategies and supports to succeed. She provides workshops, consulting and counseling avenues. She is a registered sports counselor and a trainer for mental health professionals.

Karen Winston ('92) is Assistant Professor and Interim Director of Social Work Training at Baylor in the Psychiatry Department. She maintains a private practice in Bellaire where she works with couples, adults and families.

Wendy London Levy ('95) is the Project Manager for The Family Management of Diabetes (FMOD) study through Baylor College of Medicine that is housed at Texas Children’s Hospital. She was at TCH for two years as a Clinical Social Worker before the pilot study began a year and a half ago.

Susan Collins ('96) is working in the Office of Congressman Luis Gutierrez in Washington, DC. Her work involves policy solutions for the immigration system. She and husband, Oscar are expecting their first child.

Karen McKibben ('97) is currently with the Employee Assistance Center of Interfaith Ministries in The Woodlands. She has recently been appointed as a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging by Congressman Kevin Brady of The Woodlands. The theme of this year’s conference is The Booming Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action. Karen will be joining other individuals in Washington who represent the spectrum of thought and experience in the field of aging.

Amy Blakeney ('00) and husband Ben are the proud parents of their second child, Benjamin Garrett (Bud) Blakeney, Jr. who was born on August 30!

Patricia Rojas ('01) has accepted a position as Minority Professional Staff Member with the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs where she will work directly for Senator Lieberman, the ranking member. She has worked with Congresswoman Roybal-Allard as a Legislative Aide for the past five years, also in Washington.

Alison Parker ('03) is the Assistant Director at the Ft. Bend County Women’s Center Shelter.

Marki McMillan ('04) began the PhD program in Clinical Social Work at Smith College this past summer and is currently doing her doctoral internship at Baylor Psychiatry Clinic.

Stephanie Bell ('05) and Pam Necessary ('05) are both recently employed by IntraCare Hospital as Case Manager/Therapists.

Jennifer Conant ('05) relocated to Washington, DC where she is the social worker in the Special Immunology Clinic at Children’s National Medical Center. Her work is within the HIV/AIDS Clinic which serves ages 0-13.

Angela Panzica ('05) has begun work with residents of Heights Manor apartment complex through Volunteers of America. Her work involves helping apartment residents with disabilities between the ages of 20-40 to access resources that will enable them to live independently.

In Memory of GSSW Alumni:

Jane Newfield
Class of 1983
who passed away on September 24, 2005
As incoming President of your GSSW Alumni Association, let me just say how overwhelmed I am with this honor and responsibility. The bar has been set incredibly high by outgoing President, Barbara McGinity. We have won two consecutive banner year awards from the Houston Alumni Organization. We have increased dramatically the number of our graduates joining HAO and therefore the GSSW Alumni Association. Our presence is being felt at the school and in our community. We have been graced with incredible support for our growth through the efforts of Ann Liberman in the school’s department of Alumni Relations and by our dynamic Dean Colby.

With a little age and additional knowledge imparted by my incredible education received at our school, I have a greater understanding of the importance of “our” work – meaning our social work – and the awesome responsibility this position and our profession has. The first reality test for me came immediately with two hurricanes in our greater Gulf Coast area. The response of the school, the students and the alumni was incredible. Many of our graduates got back in touch with the school and our social work mission by responding. We stepped up to assist by housing social work students from Southern University and Tulane. We have provided untold numbers of linkages and other services to those most in need due to these natural disasters. Because our relevance has kept growing, so have our board members and our committees. We have expanded our outreach to our graduates who have a desire to serve on special committees and projects of the GSSW Alumni Association whose passion may not include board service. Please join us; we have fun, we do good work, and we want your participation and ideas. If you are up to the challenge, please let me hear from you at (713) 623-6464 or at wgd@wgda.com.

Will Dickey, President

GSSW Alumni Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the GSSW Alumni Association was held on August 24 at the Hampton at Post Oak. The evening included a wine reception and dinner, the election of officers to the new Board of Directors, a silent auction to benefit the Charlotte Campbell Scholarship Fund and an enlightening presentation by Dr. Howard Karger on his recently published book, Shortchanged, Life and Debt in the Fringe Economy. The evening provided an opportunity for alumni to reunite, and to receive CEUs at the same time.

Dr. Karger introduced the concept of the “fringe economy” to alumni as a parallel economic universe of pawnshops, payday lenders, check cashers and other businesses that target the financially desperate through enticements that claim to alleviate their financial problems. He elaborated on how instead, individuals become entrenched in high interest rates and growing debt which become part of an endless spiral for the unsuspecting poor and maxed out middle class.

The silent auction raised $2,000 to support the Charlotte Campbell Scholarship Fund which is the GSSW Alumni Association’s annual support to an outstanding full or part-time student. The goal of the group is to raise $10,000 which would endow the scholarship permanently. The money raised brings a total of $4,000 toward the overall fundraising goal. Many thanks to all the individual and business auction item donors for the contributions given.

A special thank you and presentation was made to Barbara McGinity, outgoing president, for her dedication and outstanding leadership of the alumni association over the last two years.
GSSW CONTACTS

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Field Office mswfield@sw.uh.edu
Funding Fax gsswffax@sw.uh.edu

Connections can be accessed online at www.sw.uh.edu/alumni/newsletter.htm

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Marsha Linehan, PhD, ABPP
Dialectical Behavior Therapy Training
UH Alumni Center
January 7, 2006

Social Work Awards Breakfast
UH Hilton
March 3, 2006

Field Agency Marketplace
UH University Center
April 7, 2006

GSSW Graduation
UH Cullen Performance Hall
May 13, 2006