The 2009 National Conference on Career Development in Social Work Education was hosted June 17-19 by the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. The conference, Strategizing for Social Work Employment in Our Difficult Economy addressed the issues that face social work graduates and alumni seeking employment in today's challenging economic environment head-on. The two day conference spotlighted local social work leaders as speakers who introduced pertinent strategies to be shared with students and alumni of the 15 colleges and university career services offices that were represented.

Rick Noriega opened the conference with remarks on the Stimulus Package, followed by Ronnie Hagerty who addressed “Retooling for the Challenges of Today’s Job Market.” Agency directors Betsy Schwartz, Curtis Mooney, Heather Constantine and Laurie Glaze delivered valuable information on service direction innovations. With program funding of utmost importance, George Grainger, Jason Sabo, Nancy Frees Fountain and Rebecca Leppala discussed the posture of foundations and current funding stream directions. Claud Young, James Booker, Jane Bavineau, Judy Hicks Harris and Miguel Ortega discussed recruitment and workforce projections while Ann Hilbig, Caroline Zorn-Pickens, Ellen Seaton and Marki McMillan highlighted sources of new grants that have recently added social work jobs. “Managing Stress in Disastrous Economic Times” was addressed by Sandra Lopez, while a discussion of niche job opportunity creation was led by panel members David Jobe, Jeff Christie, Lillian Ortiz and Stephanie Foy. Best Practices discussions were facilitated by conference coordinators Jennifer Luna-Idunate, Michael Jogerst and Carol Doelling.

This year’s conference was coordinated by Fordham University, The University of Texas at Austin, University of Chicago, University of Houston and Washington University in St. Louis. Participants included Julie Alter-Kay and Janet Joiner of Wayne State University, Keith Caldwell of University of Pittsburgh, Tim Colenbach, Amber Lewandowski, Caitlyn Pisarski and Michelle Woods of University of Michigan, Carol Doelling of Washington University in St. Louis, Pam Graham of Florida State University, Michael Jogerst of University of Chicago, Tracey Kelley of Baylor University, Carrie Lew and Juan Macias of University of Southern California, Jennifer Luna-Idunate of The University of Texas at Austin, Andrew Marks of Texas State University, Lauren Mazer of Hunter College, Dana Reed of University of Buffalo, Cindy Snell of Boston College, Cate Solomon of Boston University and host Ann Liberman of University of Houston.
The number “10” has many meanings. For example, in science “10” represents the atomic number of neon as well as the number of carbon atoms in decane, a hydrocarbon. There are ten cents in a U.S. or Canadian dime, itself one tenth of a dollar. There are “10” pins in bowling. In music, “10” is the interval of a major or minor tenth in an octave plus a major or minor third. In the card game of blackjack, the number “10” card counts the same as a Jack, Queen, or King. In a baseball game there are a minimum of 10 players on the field at all times (including the batter). There are “10” provinces in Canada and the British Prime Minister lives at #10 Downing Street!

For me, the number 10 had a special meaning this past summer: July 1st, 2009 marked my 10th anniversary as dean of the Graduate College of Social Work at the University of Houston.

Time moves so very fast. It just seems like yesterday afternoon when I opened an email, while on sabbatical at the University of Wales, that announced the vacant deanship at the then UH-GSSW. Over the 10 years, I have met and worked with some extremely talented and amazing people who have become good friends and colleagues. In the past 10 years, the GCSW faculty developed a new, cutting edge curriculum, created a variety of international program experiences; and their research and scholarship has placed them among the top programs in the Country. During my 10 years, I have seen close to 1,300 social work students walk across the Cullen Auditorium stage to receive their social work diplomas, heard the loud cheers and horns, and seen tears of joy and celebration.

Throughout my ten years I have seen many alumni doing some extraordinary work -- from leading agencies, to advocating for fairness in social polices, to working with those set aside by our communities such as victims of abuse, the homeless, immigrant families, and the poor.

For me the number 10 will always remain special and forever remind me of the remarkable acts of service and work that have been and will continue to be provided by alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends of the GCSW.

I thank all of you who have been part of my 10 years but also know together we all will be part of the GCSW’s future.

Ira C. Colby
Dean and Professor of Social Work
Professor Brings Texas to Hope Trip Camp

GCSW Professor Patrick Bordnick traveled to Beijing, China in April 2009 to work with the Austin-based Great Wall China Adoption agency’s Hope Trip Camp. The purpose of the journey was to educate the participating special needs children about American culture and to evaluate the children in an effort to improve their chances for adoption in the United States.

This year’s rodeo themed Hope Trip Camp was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the 46 Chinese orphans, ages 8 to 13 selected to participate. Bordnick took lassos, cowboy hats and other Texas items to use in activities with the children. The children came eager to learn, excited to make new friends, ready to face new challenges, and discover the gifts they did not even know they had. The children were introduced to American culture, customs, and family life through enrichment activities. All of the children selected to attend Hope Trip Camp are now available for adoption.

Dr. Bordnick served as a volunteer alongside three other Great Wall staff and volunteers on the four day trip. His role was to personally meet and evaluate the children, allowing for quality time with each child to gain valuable information to be used in firsthand reports to interested families. At the close of the trip, Great Wall Waiting Child Program Manager, Stephanie Crouch, wrote, “To be able to see these children face-to-face, to experience firsthand their strengths, and to truly, wholly realize that their limitations don’t really matter in the grand scheme of life, has touched my heart so immensely that I will never be the same.” (http://www.gwca.org/blog/?cat=5) Since April, two children from Camp Trip Hope have been united with their families and several more will meet their families in the coming months.

Great Wall selected Bordnick for the trip not only because he speaks Mandarin Chinese and is a licensed social worker, but additionally he has felt the benefits of the agency in his own family. He is the father of three adopted daughters from China. Bordnick states, “If at least one of these kids finds a home by my going there and doing this camp and providing and gathering information about these children, I will be thrilled.”

Great Wall China Adoption is a Hague Accredited, non-profit licensed child placing agency who is an internationally recognized leader in Chinese adoption. Great Wall opened its doors in 1996 and has placed thousands of children with their “forever families.” Patrick Bordnick, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor with the University of Houston-Graduate College of Social Work. He describes himself as a Behavioral Scientist, Human Computer Interaction (HCI) Visionary, Researcher, Practical Dreamer, artist, and photographer.

Karen A. Holmes, Ph.D.
GCSW Associate Dean for Academics Retires

After 29 years of dedicated service to the University of Houston and the Graduate College of Social Work, Dr. Karen Holmes retired this spring.

Dr. Holmes’ mark on the Graduate College of Social Work is indelible. Her many accomplishments and her leadership on behalf of faculty, staff and students is extensive. Throughout her years at the GCSW, Dr. Holmes inspired the mission of the college through her work and through her deeds.

From all of us at the GCSW, best wishes for fulfilling retirement years.
The National Institute on Drug Abuse has granted $1.5 million to the University of Houston Center for Drug and Social Policy Research (CDSPR) to create the Interdisciplinary Research Training Institute on Hispanic Drug Abuse, a program that will develop new researchers in the drug abuse field. The funds will be available over the next five years to address the root causes of drug abuse in various populations.

The education program has three goals: to provide educational training opportunities for new researchers, to implement a mentoring plan to support new researchers and to create a network of professionals in the field of Hispanic drug research. “What this grant does is to help develop the capacity of young investigators who are interested in pursuing careers in drug research to meet this very serious public health problem,” states Avelardo Valdez, Professor and Director of the CDSPR. “Their research will inform those who work in drug prevention and intervention programs. Understanding what drugs are being used and by whom allows us to target prevention and intervention programs for specific populations as opposed to one-size-fits-all.”

The grant provides for young scholars to be paired with mentors in their chosen fields over a two-year period with the overall goal being to prepare the researchers to establish independent research careers. The experts will come from faculty at the University of Houston, other Texas institutions, and throughout the United States. With the first group selected by summer 2010, five cohorts of scholars will be involved in the program.

The EDSPR develops and disseminates new knowledge on drug abuse and related social problems from a multidisciplinary perspective. Housed in the UH Graduate College of Social Work, faculty from a wide range of disciplines collaborate on intellectual and scientific research studies focused on understanding the social and health consequences of drug use and the development of public policies that address the problem of drug abuse.

Students Selected to Attend the Clinton Global Initiative University

In Fall 2008, GCSW students, Nadia Kalinchuk, Sandra Harris, Erin Allison and Shirlen Hardeo, submitted a commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative University to address the challenge of the limited number of mental health professionals in those areas most affected by the AIDS pandemic. Moving Beyond Borders: Social Workers in Action for AIDS, was accepted enabling the students to attend the second annual CGIU Meeting in Austin.

Developed in 2007 to engage the next generation of leaders on college campuses around the world, the Clinton Global Initiative University provides students from all disciplines an opportunity to meet with world leaders, human rights advocates, philanthropists and other students interested in addressing today’s global challenges. Each year, the Clinton Global Initiative University recruits students that have made a commitment to action in the areas of Education, Environment & Climate Change, Peace & Human Rights, Poverty Alleviation, and Public Health.

The primary focus of the meeting is to engage students in creative problem solving and innovation that incorporates networking and the use of resources that are already in place. The three-day meeting included an opening plenary, a call to action day, and a day of community service. The opening plenary was facilitated by President Clinton and featured actress and activist, Natalie Portman; founder of TOMS Shoes, Blake Mycoskie; Graduate Student of Biomedical Engineering, Mambidzeni Madzivire; and President of Dell Global Public, Paul Bell. Throughout the call to action sessions on the second day, students were encouraged to network and were able to work alongside human rights advocates, people leading sustainability efforts and public health experts on issues central to CGIU. The final day provided students an opportunity to participate in a community service project. As a close to a momentous weekend, Matthew McConaughey, President Bill Clinton and Blake Mycoskie joined in the community effort with students.
The Nobel Women’s Initiative hosted its biennial international conference--Women Redefining Democracy for Peace, Justice, and Equality--in Antigua, Guatemala, May 10-12. The three-day conference convened women Nobel Peace Laureates, activists, politicians, filmmakers, and many others from all over the world to engage in conversations of how to shape policy, actions, and dialogue to positively influence human rights and social justice. GCSW students were instrumental to the success of the conference.

Six GCSW students dedicated months to planning, organizing, and executing critical details for the international women's conference. Students encountered multilingual, multicultural experiences as they contacted high-profile women, offices, and consulates in various nation-states in efforts to bring the 120 esteemed participants to Guatemala. Because of the students’ contributions, many were able to obtain visas and clearances for travel to participate in the event. At the conference, students greeted participants, arranged for transportation, handled finances, and conducted presentations.

As per the theme, the conference profiled women participants from all different backgrounds, including many who live under oppressive governments and in struggling economies, bringing their experiences as key insights into the exploration and evaluation of democracy. Recognizing that women comprise half the world’s population, participants were emboldened to confront the problem that the process of democratization is still incomplete in current governments, institutions, and in people’s minds as women are consistently and systematically denied rights to life, entitlements, human rights, safety, and security across the globe. Furthermore, participants were challenged to consider democracy from a feminist perspective that not only embodies the experiences of women from the developed West, but also encompasses the cultures, values, and living conditions of women across the world.

Participants left unified in a vision to demand a true and holistic democracy--one that takes into account the lives and circumstances of all peoples and draws from the wisdom and experiences of women. By involving women, society can begin to collectively redefine for itself a democracy that is more real, relevant, true, and encompassing of all its peoples.

“The women that I worked with, as well as the women that I had the pleasure of meeting in Antigua, were of the highest caliber in terms of kindness, generosity, work-ethic, and activism. This class and conference has had a significant impact on my life, both personally and professionally. I have made friends and connections that I plan to maintain indefinitely. I could not have asked for a better experience in my education as a future social worker.”

Januari Leo, NWI Independent Study Student

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NWI Staff Members

Sonya Dias is the Manager of Events and Operations for the Nobel Women’s Initiative. Sonya joined NWI in January 2009 having previously worked with International Partners in Mission as Director of Programs and Partnerships where she was responsible for program development, partnership management and staff management for the three regional offices in El Salvador, Kenya and India. Sonya holds a Master’s degree of Science in Social Administration from Case Western Reserve University’s Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

Sonya is based at the Nobel Women’s Initiative office at the Graduate College of Social Work at the University of Houston. She can be reached at sdias@nobelwomensinitiative.org.

Ana Mac Naught is the Event Coordinator of the Nobel Women’s Initiative. Before coming to the GCSW, Ana commuted between Amsterdam and Freiburg in Germany where she studied for her Master’s Degree in Sociology with emphasis in Global Studies. As part of her studies, she had the opportunity to live and study for a semester in South Africa as well as in India.

As soon as she arrived, Ana traveled to Guatemala to coordinate the Nobel Women’s Initiative Second International Conference where she spent 21 days working with GCSW interns as well as with the Rigoberta Menchu Tum Foundation, the local host of the event. Ana looks forward to exploring Houston and to her December wedding.
Dr. Danielle Parrish joins the Graduate College of Social Work as an assistant professor. Dr. Parrish received her Ph.D. from the UT School of Social Work and recently completed a post doctoral research position with the Health Behavior Research and Training Institute at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests include substance abuse intervention research with adolescent and adult females; mental health intervention research; prenatal health; the prevention of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD); and the adoption and implementation of evidence-based practice in behavioral health settings.

Dr. Parrish currently serves as a co-investigator for a CDC funded research project that is being implemented in four Harris County Hospital District community clinics, titled “CHOICES+: A Preconception Approach to Reducing Alcohol and Tobacco-Exposed Pregnancy.” This study will assess the efficacy of CHOICES+, a motivational interviewing intervention to prevent nicotine and alcohol exposed pregnancies among women of childbearing age (18-44).

Much of Dr. Parrish’s prior scholarly work has focused on the implementation of evidence-based practice in behavioral health settings. Dr. Parrish has co-authored and published the Evidence-Based Practice Assessment Scale, which assesses practitioners’ views of the EBP process. Dr. Parrish’s dissertation research involved the development and evaluation of a continuing education training on the EBP process for community practitioners, which was funded by the Center for the Study of Social Work Practice at Columbia University. This training model has been disseminated to the George Warren Brown School of Social Work and to the University of Minnesota. Prior to her doctoral work, Dr. Parrish worked as a mental health clinician in the areas of juvenile justice mental health, infant mental health, and outpatient children’s mental health. Dr. Parrish is excited to be joining the faculty and thanks everyone for a warm welcome.

Dr. Amy Traylor joins the Graduate College of Social Work as an assistant professor this Fall. Dr. Traylor just completed a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center where she worked with faculty using emerging technologies, such as virtual reality, to explore behavioral and environmental factors related to smoking. She continues to collaborate with researchers at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in developing a virtual-reality based training program aimed at teaching communication skills to genetic counseling students.

Dr. Traylor’s research interests include issues related to adolescent and young adult substance abuse and mental health, as well as the use of emerging technologies in social work research, practice, and education.

The use of virtual reality technology in assessing reactions to substance cues has been a common theme in Dr. Traylor’s prior research collaborations. Previous work has focused on assessing reactions to smoking, alcohol, and marijuana cues in adult populations and these studies have been published in journals ranging from Addictive Behaviors to CyberPsychology & Behavior. Her dissertation research focused on young adult smokers and their reactions to virtual-reality based smoking cues.

A native of Alabama, Dr. Traylor practiced social work in Wyoming and Arizona, mainly in the areas of school social work and treatment foster care, before receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. She is excited to be joining the faculty at the GCSW and looks forward to establishing strong research and academic relationships with students, faculty, and alumni.

Dr. Suzanne Pritzker joins the GCSW faculty as an assistant professor. She relocated to Texas this summer from St. Louis, where she recently completed her doctorate at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. Dr. Pritzker teaches in the areas of social welfare policy and political social work. Her research interests include civic engagement, service-learning, positive youth development, and social policy. She specializes in research to inform the development of effective programming to increase adolescent civic engagement. Her dissertation study used nationally-representative secondary data to investigate the development of political behaviors among low-income and ethnic minority adolescents.

As a research associate at the Brown School’s Center for Social Development, Dr. Pritzker conducted extensive research on the efficacy of service-learning as a civic intervention for adolescents and on institutional support for service-learning in the U.S. and globally. She has been selected twice as an Emerging Scholar in K-12 Service-Learning Research, and her academic work has appeared in such journals as the Journal of Community Practice, Social Development Issues, and Family Relations.

Originally from Virginia, Dr. Pritzker held policy and research positions in the Office of the Virginia Secretary of Education and the Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission prior to completing her doctorate. She appreciates the warm welcome to the GCSW and to Houston that she has received thus far, and is excited about the opportunity to develop strong relationships with students, faculty, and alumni.
**Faculty Highlights**

**Andrew Achenbaum.** Professor of History and Social Work, has been named the first incumbent of the Gerson David Collegiate Professorship in Gerontology. Dr. Achenbaum states “Three connections with Professor David make this honor particularly gratifying: Gerson David, one of the pioneers in research on global aging, encouraged me to work in this area; Professor David shared my enthusiasm for introducing spirituality concepts and practices into our curriculum; Gerson’s courtly manner did not block his fierce desire to fight racism in academic life. By honoring his sterling principles, I am in a position to ensure that these issues remain in the forefront of gerontology at UH.”


**Monit Cheung.** Professor, will be recognized by the *Journal of Social Work Education* as the Journal’s Best Reviewer for 2009! She will be honored at the CSWE APM in November in San Antonio.


**Jean Latting.** Professor Emerita, published: Jean Kantambu Latting and V. Jean Ramsey, *Reframing Change: How to Deal with Workplace Dynamics, Influence Others, and Bring People Together to Initiate Positive Change,* Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, October 2009. The book is based on the premise that if people act with integrity and learn to develop positive workplace relationships, a ripple effect can engender changes in the organization as a whole.

**Patrick Leung.** Professor was honored in October at the Asian American Family Services 15th Anniversary Gala for his role in enhancing the mental health and social well-being of the Asian community in Houston.

**Mary Lewis.** Professor Emerita, was inducted into the 2009 Alabama Social Work Hall of Fame this spring, Alabama Social Work Hall of Fame Inductees are elected and honored for their professional status, exemplary leadership, contributions to the profession, and influence in the life of the community.


**Suzanne Pritzker.** Assistant Professor, was selected as an Emerging Scholar in K-12 Service-Research by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, Brandeis University, and the University of Minnesota for which a travel grant was awarded to present at the Emerging Leaders Work-in-Progress Seminar in Minneapolis (June 2009).

**Ellen Stevens-Roseman.** Associate Professor, has a manuscript accepted for publication: “Older Mentors for Newer Workers: Impact of a Worker-Driven Intervention on Later Life Satisfaction” in the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health.*


Doctoral & MSW Student Updates


**Brett Needham.** Doctoral Student, has been working for the Community Behavioral Health Program (CBHP), a joint venture between the Harris County Hospital District, Baylor College of Medicine, and the Council of Alcohol and Drugs Houston (CADH) for the past four years. The CBHP provides psychiatric services, individual, family, and group psychotherapy, and brief interventions/treatment and referral to treatment for substance abuse/addiction in HCHD satellite clinics throughout the county. While Brett continues to work for the CBHP, as of March 1, his role changed from being an employee of the CADH to an employee of Baylor College of Medicine at the rank of Instructor in the Department of Psychiatry.


**Cindy Arispe.** MSW AGIFT Fellow, was selected to be a member of the national Committee on Leadership in Aging organized by the Social Work Leadership Institute at the New York Academy of Medicine. As a member of this Committee, Cindy will be a part of an inaugural national work group to establish the activities that will promote leadership and professional opportunities for HPPAE graduates. The group will develop a strategic communication network for HPPAE graduates, determine the content for alumni and student meetings at professional conferences, and help establish the first journal featuring student research in aging.

**Van Hua.** MSW Student, was awarded the Committee Chair of the Year at the *UH Student Government Association Annual Banquet* in April.
Social Work Day at the United Nations

Students for the Advancement of International Social Work (SAISW) is an organization invested in promoting international social work in support of its philosophy that social workers play an increasingly important role in the international arena by contributing skills and knowledge to enhance solidarity with our global neighbors. To honor this mission, the group coordinated members of the GCSW community to attend the Global Social Work Student Conference at Fordham University and the 26th Annual Day of Social Work at the United Nations in April. Both events were coordinated by well recognized international social work leaders including, Dr. Janice Wetzel, representing the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and Dean Robin Mama of Monmouth University, representing the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).


The GCSW Office of Alumni and Career Services hosted a Sunday morning brunch where students, faculty, and staff were able to connect with GCSW alumni who live and work in the New York area. Participating New York area alumni included former Associate Director of Field, Patti Aldredge, Jennifer Miller, Mickey Montemayor, Annemarie Redelmeier, Maura Quealy, Bertha Fountain, and Judith Baer. Students enjoyed meeting New York alumni and telling of the exciting happenings at the college. GCSW students included Tehmina Hyder Athar, Leslie Saccomanno, Amber McCarthy, Shirleen Harado, Lori Godwin, and Israel Martinez. GCSW Faculty/Staff included Dr. Patrick Leung, Amber Mollhagen, Jan Leger and host, Ann Liberman.

The weekend culminated in the much anticipated UN Day of Social Work, themed “Global Poverty: Challenges for Social Work Practice.” After seemingly endless security checks, group members settled in seats amongst 800 social workers from all over the world to participate in the day’s events. Speakers included Aaron Greenberg, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist; Bernardo Kliksberg, Chief Advisor of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean at the United Nations Development Programme; Shulamith Koenig, Founder of People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning and recipient of the 2003 UN Prize in the Field of Human Rights; and Michael Sherraden, Professor of Social Development at Washington University, all of whom were thought-provoking and inspiring in their commitment and passion to global justice and human rights.

Students agreed that they would encourage GCSW attendance at the Annual Day of Social Work to become a college tradition. They felt the experience increased their knowledge of the purpose and possibilities of international social work. Students also felt the conference was an invaluable opportunity for networking with GCSW alumni and current social work professionals engaged in international work.

By Professor Patrick Leung and Erin Allison
Toby Newman (’87) was recently promoted to the position of Chief Program Officer at Jewish Family Services where she has served since 2000. Throughout her tenure, Toby has provided a full range of counseling services, including stress and crisis management, individual and couples therapy, grief and bereavement, and medical illness support. She has also managed the JFS student loan program, assisted in training classes for volunteers in the Jewish hospice para-chaplains program, and coordinated numerous continuing education programs.

Toby attended the UH Graduate College of Social Work from 1982 to 1987 as part of an experimental six year extended part time program. She jokes, “All my professors questioned whether or not I was really serious about school and whether or not I would ever finish the program!” Her 1986 field placement was at Park Plaza Hospital where a “Special Diseases Unit” for patients with HIV/AIDS had just opened. Baylor Department of Psychiatry served as her next field experience, but since no other student wanted to work in HIV, Park Plaza hired her part time to continue the work she had begun! She saw it as an incredible story of “loving what you do.”

For five years she facilitated numerous HIV/AIDS therapy and support groups, cancer support groups through the American Cancer Society, and maintained a private psychotherapy practice. Toby has served as an adjunct faculty member at the GCSW and states, “It was a delight when our proposal was accepted to offer an HIV elective course at the GCSW. I am pleased that I was able to train some of the next generation of social workers.”

Toby is a Diplomate in Clinical Social Work, a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers, and a founding member of The National Register of Certified Group Psychotherapists. She became a board-approved supervisor for social work in Texas and received a specialty certification in gerontology from NASW in 2009.

Alumni Notes

Irene Porcarello (’75) was named as the new president of Houston Community College Southeast College where she has held a number of administrative positions since 1982. She served most recently as Vice Chancellor of Student Success. Under her leadership and direction, the HCC Southeast College was awarded funding support for three Chancellor Innovation grants in the fall of 2008. She anticipates receiving her PhD in Education Leadership from Sam Houston State University in the near future.

Paula Waller (’79) LCSW of the heart and lung transplant, LVAD and living kidney donor teams at St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital, is among the first clinicians to become a Certified Clinical Transplant Social Worker (CCTSW). This new credential, offered by the Society for Transplant Social Workers (STSW), recognizes members who possess clinical expertise based on knowledge, skills, and experience particular to transplantation.

Christopher Brown (’03) has just published a book, The Art of Meaningful Living and had a book signing on September 17 at The River Oaks Bookstore. Christopher is in private practice as a psychotherapist and life coach. He is closely involved with his third generation family business, SPL, Inc.

Betty Rich (’04) was granted the LCSW in Colorado in March. She is in her third year at The Denver Hospice where she is part of a treatment team. She lives in a condo with a great view of a golf course and the Rocky Mountains. Her grandson, Sam, who was born on her birthday in June 2007, lives only 10 minutes away. Betty is helping her church launch an outreach program for volunteers to meet the needs of sick and elderly parishioners.

Sheryl Stanley (’04) accepted a position at United Behavioral Health. She continues to work PRN for Cypress Creek Hospital and as a contractor for Assura Source.

Mary Beth Arcidiacono (’07) became a Child Trauma Academy Fellow in 2005 and serves as part of the CTA Critical Incidence Response Team, conducting debriefings for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services staff who have experienced the death or serious injury of children on their caseloads. In a clinical capacity she sees clients in both individual and group settings. She has developed programs for families and individuals to help deal with grief and traumatic loss and is currently working to develop integration programs and materials for schools, communities and businesses. Mary Beth also works as an advocate for children, young adults and their families dealing with issues as a result of a traumatic brain injury. Her academic interests include relational poverty, trauma, secondary trauma, grief and traumatic brain injury.

Rafael Medrano (’07) works in the area of Loss Mitigation and travels all over the country, trying to swim against the “Foreclosure Title Wave.” Rafael states, “I incorporate counseling skills, PR skills, (very good) listening skills, financial understanding of how mortgages work, and plenty of patience, because when families “finally” get to me, they are in various stages of desperation, ... so all those social work skills HAVE to come into play.” In his travels, he reports, “the same scenario is played out all over, ... incredible, the stories I come across, ‘eye ball to eye ball’ with thousands of families on the cusp of becoming homeless, dire despair, ... it’s something NOT EVEN a book can adequately describe.” Rafael meets directly with those willing to talk with him with the goal of explaining today’s available options, so families can make informed decisions to prevent foreclosure. Rafael is a member of the Dean’s Advisory Council, a strong supporter of the GCSW and a source of strength, hope and integrity for the client base he serves.

Sonya Adams (’09) was voted “Counselor of the Year” by her peers at the 36th Annual Addictions Specialist Conference held in Houston this October. Sonya, who worked in the substance abuse area for years before returning to get her MSW, was a primary organizer of the interdisciplinary conference which included programming for LCDCs, MSWs, LPCs, LFMTs, PhDs & MDs.
Social work month was ushered in with the Ninth Annual Social Work Awards Breakfast held on March 6. With the economy on everyone's minds, Rick Noriega addressed the subject in his keynote, "2009 and Beyond: The Human Side of the Stimulus Package" for the audience of 80 plus social work professionals from the community. Rick is Vice President of Community Based Initiatives with Neighborhood Centers Inc., served in the Texas House of Representatives from 1999-2008, and ran as a Texas Democratic candidate for the US Senate in 2008.

In his address, Noriega drew parallels between social work and politics, aligning his comments with having served on the Human Services Committee of the Texas State Legislature for four years. Noriega sees the current economic situation as offering a great opportunity within the social work profession to reinvent ourselves. He emphasized that social workers are going to have to "show our value, get into the discussion, stay in the arena, and stand our ground!"

Noriega insists that social workers need to "stay in the media, grab hold, and insist on being at the table." He says, "If we don't, those least able will serve as the focal point." He challenged the profession, as an obligation to our ethics, to stand up. Noriega emphasized “putting a face on our successes” by encouraging beneficiaries of our services to go to their legislators as constituents, and tell their stories of the service benefits they have received.

Each year awards are given by sponsoring organizations to highlight social work achievements. The GCSW Alumni Association awarded its Charlotte Campbell Scholarship to Amy Sugeno, and the Outstanding Alumni Award to Barbara McGinity.

The Association of Black Social Workers Houston Unit, presented its Community Service Award to John Brown, Community Advocate Award to both Charles Benton and Minister Quanell X, Social Worker of the Year to Leallia King, Odessa Sayles Scholarship to Bryanna Williams and Brittney Gaillard, and Betty Toney Book Scholarship to Eric Gaillard. The University of Houston Clear Lake Bachelor of Social Work Program honored Rene Austin with its Social Justice and Service Award.

Organizational sponsors for the annual social work awards breakfast included: Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County, National Association of Black Social Workers-Houston Chapter, National Association of Social Workers--Houston Branch, Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care-Texas Chapter, University of Houston--Clear Lake Bachelor of Social Work Program, University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work Alumni Association, and the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work.

In Memoriam

David Franco passed away in September 2009 in Los Angeles, California.

Tiffany Garza passed away in June 2009 in Houston after receiving her MSW at May’s graduation.

Steve Hancock passed away in February 2009 in Colorado.

Erica Ives - Dommsch passed away in February 2009 in Houston.
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Connections can be accessed online at www.sw.uh.edu/alumni/newsletter.htm