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RURAL CROSSROADS

What comes to mind when you hear the word "rural?" How about horses grazing in a field while a shiny red Corvette zooms along the highway next to the field? Or a sleepy, one-stoplight town that is home to a community of folk artists? Whatever your view of rural America, a complete description probably includes all this and more. In today's society, the term *rural* encompasses a diverse array of people and places.

Interest in rural social work has long been part of the profession; however this practice specialty experienced a revival during the 1970s due to the efforts of social work practitioners and educators who shared a passion for this important part of the profession. This group organized the Rural Social Work Caucus, created at the first National Institute on Social Work in the Rural Environment held in Knoxville, Tenn.

in 1976. The efforts of these rural social work pioneers continue to expand and bear fruit today. A prime example is last summer's annual rural conference, hosted by Western's Department of Social Work. As alumni of the MSW program know, Western's program has as its focus "direct practice in rural settings." Faculty and students have attended and presented at previous meetings of the rural caucus, including the 29th annual conference in Salt Lake City, Utah in 2004.

It seemed only natural under the direction of MSW Program Director, Dr. Suzie Cashwell, that WKU would one day host the rural conference. This became a reality last July 19-22 when nearly 200 practitioners, faculty, and students arrived in Bowling Green for the 31st National Institute on Social Work & Human Services in Rural Areas. Conference attendees represented 25

states, including Kentucky. In addition, two social work educators traveled all the way from Taiwan to attend the conference and share their research on changing patterns of social care in rural Taiwan.

Among the highlights of the conference were a pre-conference workshop that included a field trip to an Old Order Mennonite community, and outstanding keynote speakers: Dr. Hilda Heady, vice president of West Virginia University, who addressed issues of rural veterans; Ruth Garret, author of *Amish Talk*; and Dr. Brenda Jarmon, Dean of the School of Social Work at Florida A&M University.

Participants selected from a vast array of concurrent workshops on topics ranging from rural mental health challenges and programs, to equine facilitated therapy, to innovative interventions for children and older adults in rural Appalachia. Conferees were introduced to the local color of south central Kentucky by dining at the restored L&N Railroad Depot in Bowling Green and enjoying the musical entertainment of the Ernie Small Blues Band, a local favorite.

WKU social work faculty Suzie Cashwell and Jan Peeler served as conference co-chairs, working in conjunction with colleagues from Murray State University and numerous volunteers from the campus and local community. Financial support was provided by the Office of the Provost, Dr. Barbara Burch; Dr. John Bonaguro, Dean of the College of Health & Human Services, and Thompson Publishing.

So, if you're enjoying your work as a social worker in a rural part of the country, consider joining the rural caucus for next year's conference!



31st National Institute on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas: July 19-21, 2006

Focus on Field: Field Supervisor, Patty Alford, MSW



Patty Alford's advice for beginning social workers: "Respect your client's right to self-determination. It is not the job of a social work professional to make decisions for the client. The right choice for one person may not be

the right choice for another." Ms. Alford is employed as the Executive Director of Girls Inc. in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the local unit of "a national nonprofit youth organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold" (www.girlsinc.org). When supervising social work students, Patty hopes the students learn what resources are available to clients and how to communicate effectively with diverse client populations. She believes it to be important for the students to begin networking with community partners and making positive reputations for themselves.

According to Patty, the most important aspects of her job are to know the available resources, to be involved in the community, to be concerned with the safety and well-being of the girls involved in the program, and to give the girls the needed support or resources to be successful in school. The duties of her position include responsibility for the day-

to-day operation of the facility, hiring and supervision of other staff members, writing grants, and answering to the 30-member Board of Directors.

Patty graduated in the first Western Kentucky University MSW cohort in 2005. Patty admitted to always having been drawn to the field of social work, saying she felt it was her calling to help others make their own lives better. She began her career as a social worker as a Youth Services Center Coordinator at Bowling Green Junior High. While she was there, one of the teachers approached her and informed her about the opening for Executive Director at Girls Inc. Her initial reaction was, "Why are you telling me?" She did not feel qualified for the position. The teacher continued to encourage her, and now, she has been the Executive Director for Girls Inc. for 11 years. Many thanks to Patty Alford for her supervision of WKU's social work interns across the years.

Note from the Department Head

"Pardon Our Pride." With the help and support from the community, the WKU Department of Social Work achieved initial accreditation of the MSW program this past June! We started thinking about developing an MSW program about six years ago as a small BSW program that existed in a multidisciplinary department. Since this time, we have grown from five faculty to seventeen faculty as well as becoming an autonomous department along the way. The hard work of the MSW program director, Dr. Suzie Cashwell, the departmental faculty, the College of Health and Human Services, Academic Affairs, and the community made this happen. Speaking of seventeen faculty, the department has four new faculty, Ms. Carol Robey, Ms. Eileen Arnold, Dr. Amy Cappiccie, and Dr. Mimi Sodhi. We are so fortunate to recruit and hire faculty of this caliber. In many ways, hiring Carol, Eileen, Amy, and Mimi has had a significant impact on me. In addition to being

wonderful faculty, they also symbolize to me the completion of our Department of Social Work that has been emerging over the last few years. I mentioned in the last newsletter that we were searching for a new office associate. Deirdre Greene was hired for this position and moved from part-time office associate to full-time. I have been truly amazed with her energy, dedication, team-orientation, and ability to balance a budget! Emily Gouvas is also a new face in the department. She is the new part-time office associate. She has been a wonderful addition to the department over the last few months. We now have seventeen faculty, one professional staff, 2.5 office staff, four graduate assistants, and two work study students. In addition to seeing the initial accreditation of the MSW program and hiring three new faculty and a part-time office associate, WKU cohosted with Murray State University the 31st Annual National Institute on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas this

past summer. Nearly 200 professionals attended this national conference. The last several months have seen significant accomplishments within the department. I am taking a moment to bask in the glow of our accomplishments, but only a moment. I have already been thinking about the future. Now that we are a fully staffed department with two accredited programs, it will be fascinating to participate and watch the direction of the department over the next two or three years.

Social Work Humor

Q: How many social workers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. We empower them to change themselves!

Time to Celebrate

On Saturday, Sept. 16, 2006, a long-awaited gala event was held at the Carroll Knically Conference Center to celebrate the initial accreditation of the MSW (Master of Social Work) program at Western Kentucky University. The MSW program, under the

leadership of Dr. Suzie Cashwell, was granted initial accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education on June 19, 2006. The program has a definitive emphasis on preparing students for advanced social work practice in rural communities and has part-time, two-year, and advanced standing options.

The gala was emceed by Mr. Keith Logsdon, MSW alumnus of WKU. The evening's program commenced with remarks from Dr. Barbara Burch, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. John Bonaguro, Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, and Dr. Dean May, Head of the Department of Social Work. A special recognition

was given to Dr. Suzie Cashwell, who played a pivotal role in the program's receiving accreditation. Other distinguished guests at the gala included former Kentucky Senator Richard Taylor, WKU Staff Regent Tamela Smith, Assistant Dean of the College of Health and Human Services Dr. Sylvia Gaiko, and members of the Department Advisory Committee (DAC).

After introductory remarks, guests shared what the program had meant to them and reflected on the role of the MSW program in the larger community. Current and former students, faculty, staff, administration, and community members all shared special memories regarding the history of the program and those who made it all possible.

The celebration continued with dancing to the elegant sounds of the Doc Livingston Band and Dr. Saundra Starks led guests in several line dances. Guests were also treated to a delicious buffet dinner, a celebratory cake, and each received a custom business card holder to commemorate the event.

Special thanks to the following individuals for making this event such a success: Dr. Suzie Cashwell, Deirdre Greene, Marsha Hopper, Emily Gouvas, and Lisa Rink.



Dancing to Doc Livingston's Big Band swing music

Meet our New Faculty & Staff



Emily Gouvas, Field Office Associate, joined the department in July 2006. Formerly a student at WKU, Emily hopes to complete her degree at some point in the future. So far she is enjoying her work at the university, and especially appreciates the diversity of the staff and students at Western. When away from her job, Emily enjoys the great outdoors, especially gardening, walking, and jogging.

She spends time with her family, including husband, Ernie, who is the Director of Bowling Green Parks & Recreation, and sons Alec, age 15, and Kyle, age 9. Rounding out the family are two kitties and three dogs who call Emily's home their own.

Emily also volunteers with the local Humane Society and occasionally serves as a foster home for animals at the shelter.



Amy Cappiccie brings numerous research interests to the social work program at WKU. She earned her MSSW and Ph.D. in Social work from the University of Louisville. Amy's previous teaching experience served as

excellent preparation for her dual teaching roles in both the BSW and MSW programs at Western. On a personal level, Amy enjoys traveling, both domestically and internationally, in order to explore diverse cultures; professionally, she is interested in international social work, immigration and emigration policy, refugees, and human trafficking. Her other research interests include mental illness in children and adolescents, innovative approaches to clinical practice with children and adolescents, and trauma. On a lighter note, Amy enjoys reading, walking, movies, visiting book stores, and tennis.



Mimi Sodhi received her Ph.D. in Adult Education from the University of Georgia, and her M.S.W. from the University of Hawaii. Prior to joining WKU's Department of Social Work, Mimi was on the faculty at the University of Georgia School of Social Work, where she served as the Director of Field Education for the past ten years. Her teaching areas include social work practice, human behavior, and field

Looking for a few good Field Instructors!

MSW & BSW graduates, 2005 or earlier, who are interested in being an Instructor for students doing their field placement, please consider this opportunity. It's a great way to contribute something back to your profession and be a part of life long learning.

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Agency Address: _____

Agency Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Please complete the above information and return to Western Kentucky University, Department of Social Work, Field Office, 1906 College Heights Blvd. #11039, Academic Complex 211, Bowling Green, KY 42101-1039. You can also e-mail your information to emily.gouvas@wku.edu.

education. Her practice background includes work in substance abuse prevention and treatment, mental health, and community engagement. Mimi's research interests are substance abuse awareness and prevention, and mental health and substance abuse in aging. As a retired Marine officer, she is also quite interested in social work with military members and their families. Away from the university, Mimi's interests include watching a variety of sports, her favorites being soccer and college football (especially the Georgia Bulldogs!), and spending time with her two college-aged daughters.



Eileen Arnold, a native of Madisonville, Ky., comes to the MSW program from the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, where she was the MSW program field director. She is glad to be back

in Kentucky, after living as an expatriate Kentuckian in a very cold climate for 30 years! Prior to teaching, Eileen practiced in the field of developmental disabilities, supervision of waiver programs, and training and organization development. She is especially interested in quality improvement and management tools applied to social services delivery and in spirituality (both workers' and consumers') as an important consideration in social work practice. Eileen has been active in NASW for 30 years, having most recently

served on NASW-MN's Board of Directors. Outside of work, Eileen enjoys exploring Bowling Green on foot, spending time with her parents in Madisonville, visiting with her son and daughter-in-law in Chicago, hiking in Kentucky state parks, and, last but not least, enjoying lots of quiet time at home with friends, books, and music.



Carol Ewing Robey, Assistant Visiting Professor, began teaching with the department's Credit for Learning (CFL) program during the spring semester 2006. Carol, who lives in Fordsville, Ky., is a 2003 graduate of the Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville. She brings a wealth of agency experience to her professorial role. Carol was most recently employed as Clinician I with the Foster Care and Adoption program in the Green River Region of the commonwealth's Department for Community Based Services. She worked with children and adults with disabilities during her tenure with Community Alternatives of Kentucky, in both Owensboro and Elizabethtown, Ky. As Director of Vocational Programs at the Wendell Foster Center, Carol was responsible for volunteer coordination, grant writing, public relations, and advocacy. Carol's work experience includes positions as Director of Tamarlane Industries in Beaver Dam, Ky., and Director of Rehabilitation Services for ARC of Owensboro, Ky.