School, Alumni Association To Sponsor Social Work Month Celebrations

Workshops, Diversity Lecture Slated for March 12, Alumni Luncheon for April 3rd

The School of Social Work and the Alumni Association will co-sponsor events to commemorate March as Social Work Month. The first is really a series of three events: a morning workshop, followed by the 3rd Annual Diversity Lecture, and a second workshop in the afternoon. The other Social Work Month event is the annual Alumni Association award luncheon, which is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. on Friday, April 3rd in the McGregor Center (Rooms F, G and H.)

The March 12 events are designed to serve as an in-service training on child welfare for Michigan Department of Human Services professional staff and social workers who specialize in child welfare areas such as protective services, adoptions, foster care and juvenile justice. All three events will be held in the Community Arts Auditorium on the Wayne State University campus.

The morning workshop, to be lead by Addie Williams, CEO of Spaulding for Children, will begin at 9:00 a.m. and discuss the Michigan Children’s Rights Lawsuit Settlement and resulting new standards of care for best practices. It will be followed by the Diversity Lecture which will be delivered by Shay Bilchik, Founder and Director of Georgetown University’s Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. His talk is entitled “Understanding and Addressing the Disparate Treatment and Overrepresentation of Children of Color in America’s Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems.” The afternoon workshop will last from 1pm to 4pm; it will be led by School of Social Work faculty member Peggy Brunhofer and is entitled “Grief and Loss Experiences in the Child Welfare System: Implications for Helpers.” For more information on these events, please see page 4.

The April 3rd luncheon will honor Alumna of the year Vicki Marlyn Freer, Alumnus of the Year Clyde Alexander and Citizen of the Year Paul Bridgewater. The keynote speaker will be Associate Dean Dean Cheryl Waters. For details on this celebration, and a registration form, please turn to page 4 also.

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Welcome to the spring issue of Visions. Hopefully by the time you read this, there will be a touch of spring in the air after one of the longer, colder winters in my memory. It does seem that March…Social Work Month…often does signal the return of milder weather. Fortunately for us, even winter has brought warmth in the form of school successes. In November we welcomed Katherine Basham who gave a timely and informative Harris lecture on the arduous road home faced by returning veterans…a most apt subject coming…as it did…one day after Veterans Day.

Then, in December, our Center for Social Work Practice and Policy Research hosted at Greater Grace Temple the first of a planned series of dialogues designed to help bridge the gap between social work practice and research. The attendance was gratifying as were the lively discussions that followed. Also on the Center page, there’s a story on the interesting research PhD Director Anna Santiago is doing on Denver families and how their housing decisions are affecting their children. It was a bright spot when this long-term sustainable research achieved additional funding support from the Ford and MacArthur foundations.

An equally bright spot, I hope and expect, will be the upcoming Social Work Month activities being co-sponsored by the school and our Alumni Association. On March 12th we will enhance the 3rd Annual Diversity Lecture, to be delivered by Shay Bilchik, with workshops before and after. It should make for a rich and productive day.

The other Social Work Month event is the annual Alumni Association award luncheon, on Friday, April 3rd. This year’s honorees at the lunch will be Alumna of the year Vicki Marlyn Freer, Alumnus of the Year Clyde Alexander and Citizen of the Year Paul Bridgewater. The keynote speaker will be Associate Dean Cheryl Waites.

Dean Phyllis Vroom

Workshops, Diversity Lecture Highlight March 12 Social Work Month Schedule

The state of Michigan recently settled with Children’s Rights, a New York based advocacy group, regarding a federal class action suit brought against the state's child welfare system. The settlement mandates extensive reforms and federal court oversight of Michigan's child welfare system, and is the latest in a series of lawsuits that have forced other state child welfare systems to change. The settlement agreement will change the organizational structure of the Michigan Department of Human Services, and also mandate staff training, caseload requirements, permanence planning, and quality assurance.

The workshop introduction, presented by Addie Williams, JD, MSW, will address the social work practice impact of the Settlement Agreement.

Part of the morning workshop, the annual Diversity Lecture will be conducted by Shay Bilchik, JD, and will explore the factors contributing to the disparities in treatment experienced by children of color in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Bilchik will also highlight efforts, common in both systems, to address the resulting overrepresentation and opportunities for greater collaboration. The presentation will also touch on policy and program implications and challenges in adopting a cross systems approach.

The afternoon workshop is entitled “Grief and Loss Experiences in the Child Welfare System: Implications for Helpers” and will be led by Peggy Brunhofer, LMWSW, PhD, of the school faculty. Children in the child welfare system cope with many significant psychosocial losses. These can go unnoticed if the adults charged with their care are unaware of the many real and symbolic losses the children experience. Children react to loss differently than adults and often experience unique physical, behavioral, social and psychological reactions to loss. This workshop will identify the loss experiences, children’s expression of grief, and the risk factors for complicated grief reactions for children separated from their biological families.

Professionals attending the workshops and lecture can earn up to 5 Continuing Education contact hours (2 for the morning presentations, 3 for attendance in the afternoon), by registering in advance. To register for credit or learn more details, contact Loren Hoffman at 313-577-4464 or by email aa2851@wayne.edu.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dean Phyllis Vroom

The state of Michigan recently settled with Children’s Rights, a New York based advocacy group, regarding a federal class action suit brought against the state’s child welfare system. The settlement mandates extensive reforms and federal court oversight of Michigan’s child welfare system, and is the latest in a series of lawsuits that have forced other state child welfare systems to change. The settlement agreement will change the organizational structure of the Michigan Department of Human Services, and also mandate staff training, caseload requirements, permanence planning, and quality assurance.

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Kathryn Basham, Ph.D., LICSW, professor and co-director of the Ph.D. program at the Smith College School for Social Work and editor of Smith College Studies in Social Work delivered the 21st Annual Edith Harris Memorial Lecture in November. The audience numbered over 400 and was followed by a lively question-answer session.

Dr. Basham received her B.A. magna cum laude with special honors in psychology from the George Washington University, her M.S.W. degree from the University of California at Berkeley and her Ph.D. from the Smith College School for Social Work. She was inducted into the National Academies of Practice as a Distinguished Clinical Practitioner.

Basham’s lecture, titled “Homecoming as Safe Haven or the New Front: Attachment and Detachment in Military Couples,” addressed the trials and stressors that service members and their families face as they reunite following combat-zone tours of duty. Following a brief review of contemporary research on the mental health effects of deployment stress, Basham identified central risk and protective factors, including attention to diversity factors, that affect resilience and coping with reentry following homecoming. She then concluded by highlighting the utility of a specific phase-oriented couple/family therapy model intended to strengthen attachments in family relationships and facilitate transitions back home, followed by clinical vignettes that demonstrated practice processes and interventions.

As the only clinical social worker participating in a congressionally mandated committee sponsored by the Institute of Medicine, Basham has co-authored two texts titled Physiologic, Psychological and Psychosocial Effects of Deployment-Related Stress (2007) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Diagnosis and Treatment. Her co-authored text titled Transforming the Legacy: Couple Therapy with Survivors of Childhood Trauma (2004) introduces a phase-oriented practice model grounded in a synthesis of social, neurobiological and psychological theories.

Basham has written extensively and consulted on clinical practice with survivors of childhood trauma and combat trauma; cross-cultural practice; pedagogy and anti-racism; and ethics. She maintains a private practice in clinical social work in Northampton, MA specializing in couple, family and individual psychotherapy, consultation and supervision services.

Edith Harris Memorial Lecture delivered by Kathryn Basham November 12

Edith Harris Memorial Lecturer Kathryn Basham flanked by (from left) Harris Committee member Antonio Gonzalez-Prendes, Dean Vroom and (at right) Harris Committee member Fayetta Martin.

Part of capacity audience at Harris Lecture (below)
Typically, at its Annual Luncheon, the Alumni Association honors two community leaders. This year, however, there will be three honorees: Alumna of the Year Vicki Marlyn Freer, Alumnus of the Year Clyde Alexander and Citizen of the Year Paul Bridgewater. Associate Dean Cheryl Waites will be the keynote speaker.

As Director of Programs and Services for Family and Children’s Services, Midland, Michigan, Vicki Freer (MSW Class of 2001) supervises the clinical staff and serves as the agency’s liaison for social work student interns. Freer received her BSW degree from Saginaw Valley State University. After earning her MSW degree she, served in a number of leadership roles at Family and Children’s Services. As Director of Programs and Services she is responsible for the daily operations of the agency which serves over 10,000 people a year. Alexander (MSW Class of 1988), currently serves as Chief Administrator, Pontiac Children’s Services and School Social Worker with the Pontiac School District, where he has supervised social work students from WSU for the past 13 years. He also runs a mentoring program, Male Responsibility Network, in which seven mentors work with 25 youths between the ages of 9 and 18, which was recently the subject of a story by Diana Dillaber Murray in The Oakland Press.

Bridgewater is President of the Area Agency on Aging in Detroit. He is a member of the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, has been on the board of the National Area Agency on Aging Associate and was a member of the Executive Council of AARP’s Michigan Chapter. Bridgewater is also a Trustee of New Detroit, Inc. and hosts “The Senior Solution” on WGPR 107.5FM Saturday mornings.

If you have not yet received a registration form in the mail, please use the one below or download it from the school’s website, www.socialwork.wayne.edu, and sign up to attend.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION LUNCHEON REGISTRATION FORM

I plan to attend the Alumni Association Luncheon on Friday, April 3, 2009 at 11:30 am

Name _____________________________________________________________
Address _____________________________________________________________
City ____________________________ State __________ Zip __________
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Reservations:
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Make check payable to WSUSSWAA (Wayne State University School of Social Work Alumni Association) or you may pay by credit card:

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► Email:  aa2851@wayne.edu
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    School of Social Work
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    Detroit, MI 48202
Last December, The School of Social Work’s Center for Social Work Practice and Policy Research hosted a dialogue at Greater Grace Temple in Detroit. The aim of this and other planned dialogues is to help bridge the gap between social work practice and research. This first dialogue was entitled, “The Role of Fathers in Child Maltreatment.” Social work practitioners who work in this area and researchers who study fathers and child maltreatment were invited to participate. Attendees included practitioners from Black Family Development Inc., the City of Detroit Health Department, Matrix Human Services, Wayne County Head Start, The Guidance Center, Children’s Hospital of Detroit, Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute, Spectrum Human Services, the Michigan Department of Human Services, and Don Bosco Hall. Also in attendance were Wayne State University faculty and staff from the School of Social Work, the College of Education and the Department of Psychology.

The event began with panel presentations by Dr. Shawna Lee and Dr. Shirley Thomas of the WSU School of Social Work, Mr. Roy Wilds from Don Bosco Hall, Benjamin Hoskins of Spectrum Human Services and Dr. Doug Barnett of the WSU Department of Psychology.

The presentations were followed by small-group break-out discussions during which practitioners and researchers talked about the most meaningful and “eye-opening” components of the presentations and how the information they picked up might influence their current practice or research. The dialogue produced many interesting comments and ideas. Most notable was the finding that fathers want to be involved in the treatment process, as well as information suggesting that fathers are sometimes overlooked by practitioners. The break out groups also gave participants an opportunity to engage in discussion about questions they have for research and/or practice, what inconsistencies exist between research and practice, and how social work can address these inconsistencies. Dialogues also included discourse regarding practitioners’ and researchers’ experiences in working with fathers who maltreat; successful strategies to engage fathers in the lives of their children; evidence-based programs that intervene in child maltreatment perpetrated by fathers; and strategies that may assist in bridging the gap between research and practice.

We will use the information garnered from this dialogue to initiate further discussions via a blog on the Center’s website, small work groups and research collaborations. This is the first of many dialogues the Center for Social Work Practice and Policy Research hopes to host in fulfilling its mission of information exchange and knowledge dissemination.

To access the electronic versions of the panel presentations please go to the Center’s website at www.research.socialwork.wayne.edu and click on the CREN tab.

School Receives New Funding for Research on Low-Income Homeownership and Asset-Building Programs, Neighborhood Effects on Children’s Health and Well-Being

In 2008, Professors Anna M. Santiago (Social Work) and George C. Galster (Dept. of Geography and Urban Planning) received two grants totaling $425,000 from the W.K.Kellogg Foundation and the Mac Arthur Foundation to continue their research assessing neighborhood effects on the health and well-being of approximately 2,000 disadvantaged Latino and African-American children. The new study is aimed at measuring the degree to which neighborhood conditions independently affect the life chances of disadvantaged children for achieving success in terms of health, education, employment, social skills and behavior. The project also aims to change the terms of the public policy debate concerning community development and the location of assisted housing.

In January 2009, Santiago and Galster also received a $250,000 three-year grant from the Ford Foundation to continue their seven-year study assessing how federal housing policies can best be used to assist low-income families in building financial, human and social capital as well as attain and maintain homeownership. This new funding will support further research on the effects of participating in public-housing- authority-sponsored homeownership counseling and asset-building programs on the acquisition of human, financial and social capital and homeownership; the effects of homeownership on homebuyers and their children; and an extensive analysis of home appreciation and foreclosure experiences of low-income homebuyers relative to other homeowners who purchased homes outside of the homeownership program. Santiago and Galster hope these additional analyses will aid in the development of more effective homeownership and asset-building programs for low-income households.
Generosity Meets Gratitude at Scholarship Reception

On Thursday, October 23rd last year, the School of Social Work honored the students who are receiving scholarships and the donors whose thoughtfulness makes that financial support possible. In greeting the school’s guests, Associate Dean Cheryl Waites said, “Thank you for joining us this afternoon... we say thanks to those who have provided financial support for School of Social Work students. And we express our pride in the accomplishments of the students who are on the receiving end of that generosity.”

Following the format developed over the past several years, the program was highlighted by three speakers, one, Annie L. Pitts Handy, spoke on behalf of the scholarship donors. Two student speakers represented those who received scholarships: Tanya Bishop, who represented BSW recipients and Mavis Curenton, who spoke for MSW scholars. Scholarship recipients historically strive to make the most of their educational opportunities and to use what they learn to better the lives of others in the community as they move from academia into the profession. These contributions are key reasons why the programs of the School of Social Work continue to be highly ranked.
MESSAGE FROM

Georgene Thornton Alumni Association President

Greetings for the New Year, and the beginning of the second semester of our Alumni Board year which follows the academic year for students and is a busy time for the Alumni Board. At our November 2008 meeting we welcomed new board member, Sherry Brown (MSW Class of 2003), who is a member of the social work staff at the John Dingell VA Medical Center in Detroit. Over the holidays your board made a contribution to the Holiday Meals on Wheels program, offered through the Detroit Area Agency on Aging, to help insure that seniors would receive meals for the holidays. Your Alumni Board is currently preparing, and will soon distribute, packages with personal care items for girls at the Federation of Youth Services.

We are also supporting the School of Social Work during March–Social Work Month—by co-sponsoring with Dean Phyllis Vroom by underwriting the cost for two child welfare workshops to be held on March 12, 2009, at the Community Arts Auditorium. The morning and afternoon workshops (totalling 5 CE contact hours) are being offered at no charge to our alumni and members of the professional community. Do not miss this opportunity to help you meet state social work licensing requirements. Pre-registration is necessary if you wish to earn the continuing education credit. I hope to see many of you there.

Thank you for responding to our appeal in the last Visions for nominations for the 2009 Social Work Alumnus/Alumna of the Year and Citizen of the Year. This year we will be recognizing both a social work alumna and alumni—Ms. Vickie Freer (MSW 2001) from Midland, Michigan and Dr. Clyde Alexander (MSW 1989) from Pontiac, Michigan. Our Citizen of the Year, Mr. Paul Bridgewater, is President/CEO of Detroit Area Agency on Aging. I hope that you can join us in recognizing our honorees by attending our Annual Luncheon Meeting, to be held on Friday, April 3, 2009, beginning at 11:30 am, at the McGregor Memorial Conference Center on campus. If you have not yet received a registration form in the mail, please download it from the school’s website, www.socialwork.wayne.edu, and sign up to attend. In addition to our honorees, our guest speaker will be Associate Dean Cheryl Waites, who will tell us about some new initiatives in Gerontology at the School of Social Work.

Also please mark your calendars for our annual Dinner with the Dean event at the Detroit Yacht Club, which is scheduled this year for Thursday evening, June 25, 2009. If you would like to register for any of our events you can contact Dean Vroom’s liaison to the Alumni Association, Professor Loren Hoffman, at aa2851@wayne.edu or by phoning the school at (313) 577-4464. Please consider joining or renewing your membership, which helps us maintain a large, loyal alumni base. And don’t forget we offer alumni merchandise, including t-shirts, crewneck and hooded sweatshirts. Your purchase generates funds which we use to support our endowed scholarship and other events during the year. To receive a merchandise order form and make a purchase, again check the SSW website at www.socialwork.wayne.edu or send an email to the school at aa2851@wayne.edu.

My tenure as president will be ending in this academic year, and I want to extend a word of thanks to each member of the Alumni Board for their support. This volunteer group reflects, through their service, the dedication and loyalty of our membership. I invite you to consider serving a two-year term on the Alumni Board and enjoying the opportunities which unfold from working with such a dedicated group of colleagues.

Sincerely,

Georgene Thornton

In Memoriam: Faculty Member Paul Allen Koontner

Faculty member Paul Koontner died unexpectedly on January 10th of this year. He was the eldest of seven siblings and grew up in Detroit, graduating from Cass Tech High School in 1951. After meeting and marrying Barbara Miller in 1952, Koontner moved to Chicago and entered a Baptist seminary program. After returning to Detroit in 1957 to work in youth ministry, he became involved in social work and eventually earned his Masters Degree in Social Work from Wayne State University. He began practicing in social work and subsequently joined the part-time faculty, a position he held until his death. In addition to his teaching, Paul saw clients in private practice and served as the Assistant Director of Social Work at Detroit Receiving Hospital.

In 1980, Paul married Mimi Becigneul, and they spent the next 15 years raising her daughters, Michelle and Jennifer in Detroit and Southfield. After Jennifer’s death in 1998, Paul willingly took on the role of father to Jennifer’s daughter, Madison, a role he continued in until the day he died.

Throughout his life, Paul enjoyed woodworking, telling jokes, singing and fishing. But his strongest and overriding loves were for the people in his life and for his faith. Paul is survived by his wife, Mimi Becigneul, children; Allen (Patricia) Koontner, Carrie (Greg) Adas, Michelle (Mark) McCoy, Madison Becigneul-Koontner and the late Jennifer Kayl, grandchildren; Jason, Devin, Luke, Abigail Adas, Connor, Cassidy, Cailyn, Dillon, and Riley McCoy, brothers and sisters; Marilee Lauerman, Marge Stovel, Sue Wilson, Judy Hirt, Bob Koontner and the late Dave Koontner.
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School of Social Work – Development
4756 Cass Avenue
Detroit, MI 48202