

# SWAN NEWSLETTER

Social Work Alumni Network • Fall 2015

*I tell my story  
to others...*

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# From the Department Chair

*"I tell my story to others. This often helps them to rediscover their confidence and to reclaim hope."*

— Martha Quick

In my role as chair of the Social Work Department, I am introduced to the full range of student, staff, and faculty experiences. Last year, I had the honor of eulogizing a colleague. This year, I have the honor of profiling licensed independent clinical social worker **Martha Quick '10 MSW**. I first met Martha when she entered my research methods class. I remember her honesty and active participation. Martha enlivened the class experience in a very good way. Fast forward a few years to late August 2015, Professor Laura Boisen came into my office with an amazing story of courage and commitment.



Martha had become a successful mentor to several folks who had failed the LGSW (licensed graduate social worker) licensure exam in the past. She had found a way to guide social workers toward their goal of becoming a licensed social worker. I asked Martha if I could tell her story.

*How do you remember feeling when you were nearing graduation with a master's degree in social work?*

I felt confident that I was so close to achieving my dream of becoming a social worker. I enjoyed—and was relatively successful in—my classes and did very well in my internships. So, I chose to take the licensure exam early, before graduation. So, I was stunned when I failed the LGSW exam. Failing the exam the first time was a very difficult experience. I felt shame. I felt that all the hard work I had put towards my degree meant nothing. That I was not going to be a social worker after all.

*What did failing the exam mean to you?*

Becoming a licensed social worker was my dream and I felt that I would not be able to reach my dream. It meant that I am not a social worker. It meant that I could never be a real social worker.

*What did you do next?*

After I graduated, I took six months off from work to concentrate on preparing for the exam. I had support from my closest friends and family but could not talk about my failure to many people. I did reach out to Professor Boisen who agreed to coach me through to the next exam. We both worked hard, meeting and talking over the knowledge and exam taking skills. I took countless number of exams. Professor Boisen was faithful and I worked hard. It took me more than several attempts to pass the exam.

*What kept you going?*

I really wanted to be a social worker. I also remembered my mother, an undocumented resident in the U.S.—I thought often about her strength, the chaos we lived with as she had to work several jobs without legal protection and without documentation. For many years she labored under the legal radar. She worked hard so that her children could succeed in life. She worked and saved so that her children could have a better life.

Also the support of my family and close friends was very important. I did open up to a few friends and told them I had not passed the exam. They helped me to see that the failed exam was not about me, not about my ability as a social worker. I was a good social worker!

I continued to study and work hard between exams to review the materials and practice my test-taking skills. At one point, with great respect and gentleness, Professor Boisen suggested that I begin to explore the possibility that one of the major barriers was anxiety about taking the exam. I knew all along that I was not very good at test-taking, so I took her up on her recommendation. I worked extensively on my anxiety. Before my final attempt at passing the exam, I looked for symbols that would represent the love and confidence of others. Something physical I could take with me into the exam room to remind me of their confidence. I found a small necklace that could carry an ounce of water. I filled it with holy water and then told myself that it represented the confidence of others, especially the work and confidence of Professor Boisen. Well, I passed! Finally, I was successful. And Professor Boisen was the first person that I called when I knew I had passed the exam.

(A side note here, I was in my office when Martha made that phone call. I think that everyone in Memorial Hall could hear Laura's joyful shout.)

*A major part in this story is how you have now become a mentor to others who struggle with passing the licensure exam. How did you become connected to others who are failing the exam?*

After I had failed the exam the first time, I began to talk with others about this. Because I was open about it, I was introduced to others who had also failed the exam. I discovered, to my surprise, an underground community of folks who have not yet passed or who have failed the exam. There seems to be so much shame about failing the exam and people do not want to talk about it. I know, I felt that shame. I guess I just refused to be quiet about it. So, once I passed the exam, I was in a better place to encourage others.

*Then you began to work purposefully with friends, applying what you have learned about your own experience.*

Yes, I began to meet with one friend who failed the exam. I encouraged her to continue to work on passing

the exam. At first she believed she was done, finished as a social worker and fell into a depression. We began to talk and I offered her my story. I began to suggest ways to think about her experience as not about her, but about her worry over taking the exam. We worked on becoming hopeful (reframing her understanding of the exam and failed score). We began to work on mindfulness techniques. We talked about the failed exam as not a flaw or failure, not a reflection of your social work skills or aptitude. The failed exam was about the context of exam taking. In the end, she did pass the exam and continues to work as a highly skilled social worker.

*You have now worked with several colleagues. What do you do to help others?*

I meet with them frequently, working first to establish a trust and friendship. What do I bring? I bring my confidence in their abilities. I believe in them. What do I do? We work on restoring confidence, using our mind, our body, and our spirit. You see, some of us need to overcome our fears of the test. Some of us are wired to expect to fail a test. I believe we can rewire our brains so with some of the work I do, I help my friends rewire their brains.

*What advice can you offer to those who fail the licensure exam or any major test?*

To discover that you are not alone. To meet with others who have not yet passed the licensure exam. There are other highly successful social workers who at one time failed the exam. You will need to reach out to ask for support. That first conversation, that first call is the most difficult. But once you have found someone who truly understands, someone who you can talk to honestly about your experience and your feelings, then you can begin the restoration work—the work toward feeling competent again. So, if someone calls me (and I am always available to help), my first goal is to reestablish confidence and hope. I tell my story to them—my failures and my final success. This often helps them to rediscover their confidence and to reclaim hope.

*This is not the end of Martha's remarkable story. She continues to reach out and offer support and guidance to others who fail the exam—once, twice, or more times. We are honored to know Martha, and proud that she is an Augsburg alum. Martha is willing to offer support and help for those who have failed the exam. Please reach her at marthaquick4@gmail.com.*

**MICHAEL SCHOCK, PHD, LICSW**  
**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND DEPARTMENT CHAIR**

## Program Update

### BSW Program

#### Administration: Stability

*Whether you go by the Hamiltonian method or are a Hartree-Fock(er) equilibrium and balance is a good thing.*

The BSW administration team has been in place for more than a year and needed stability in it's beginning to yield new ideas and new initiatives. Advances in field coordination and curriculum development are coming to set the Augsburg BSW program creatively ahead of the competition.

#### Curriculum: Innovation

In fall 2014, a BSW curriculum committee was convened to start the process of reviewing the program's curricula beginning spring 2015. Two senior students participated on the committee: **Alisha Olson '15** and **Kevin Schleiger '15**. The top to bottom review of the Supporting Program revealed opportunities for developing minors and interdisciplinary connections. Particularly creative and productive were the discussions on international content within the major.

#### Admissions: Back to normal

After a down year, the junior class admissions returned to the expected levels. The "three slices of the BSW admissions pie" (Auggies + transfers + major-changers) were back in balance. (The Auggie portion had suffered from the college-wide freshman retention issue.) The level of freshmen social work majors is the highest it has been in several years and that bodes well for a large junior cohort in 2017. The BSW Program policy of accepting junior transfer admissions until July 15 is being reviewed. A later junior deadline is being proposed: one that serves the needs of the prospective majors and the college admissions goals.

#### Advising: The 128

The biggest advising challenge for advisors and the College is not the sometimes byzantine interaction of major and graduation requirements, but converting to the 128 semester credit minimum. Even after two years students are still not hitting the magic number. Is it the number 128? Frustrated, I went to Google and typed in 128...

#### Advising: (REL)

The BSW cohort averages from 30 to 50 percent transfer student enrollment. Transfer students must take one or two religion courses. It was often a struggle for advanced transfer students to get a Search for Meaning II course (REL 300) and fit it into their compressed schedule. Guess what? REL 300 is gone. All advanced transfer students take REL 100.

## Recruitment: Expanding the Empire

For three years in a row there have been successful presentations to a human services class at MCTC. This past year, however, Augsburg had to share the time with the College of St. Scholastica, Cardinal Stritch University, and Metropolitan State University. The challenge for recruitment is not the quality of our program, but the cost. (The presentation given by Augsburg's BSW assistant director "blew away" the competition—there was applause and enthusiasm afterwards, but when the question of affordability arose, deflation in the room.) College is expensive ...

Also, there is an ongoing controversy about how the two-year human services degree (AS) can fit with the BSW degree. The two degrees do not match up well. It has been commented by an admissions counselor that Augsburg does the best job of trying to match two-year degrees for transfer to a four-year program.

This coming academic year, an expansion of the trips to two additional schools is planned with one school being in the East Metro.

## Diversity: Here to stay

The incoming junior class is as diverse as the previous cohort with more than half of the class students of color. Transfer students and "Auggies" contributed to the diversity of the cohort profile. However, in contrast with the previous year's graduation class, the incoming cohort has no students who are legitimately non-traditional. Increased interest by non-traditional/adult learners might require a new format for course content delivery.

## Scholarship and Leadership

The graduating class placed three students in Latin Honors: cum laude. Below are some BSW students that we celebrate with respect to scholarship and leadership:

- **Amy Amsler '15** and **Emily Uecker '15** successfully completed their Summa Cum Laude exam.
- **Emily Uecker '15** presented on her 2014 URGO research with Dr. Christina Erickson on application of a public health program to enrollment on the Affordable Care Act. They presented with their partner, Saint-Paul Ramsey County Public Health, at the MN Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers in June of 2015.
- **Sheng Vang '15** completed her year-long term as the BSW student representative on the Board of the MN Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.
- **Shauna Greischar '15 BSW** and **Melissa Pascoe '15** both had letters to the editor published in the Echo. Shauna's letter addressed the problem of sexual harassment of women with disabilities. Melissa's letter addressed transgender rights on campus.
- Leadership: The BSW representative for SWDAC is **Sheng Veng '15**.
- **Alisha Olson '15** was recognized with the Student of Year leadership award.

- **Reies Romero '16** was elected vice president of Augsburg Day Student Government. He is president of Save the Kids group who won "Best New Student Organization Award," and a Peer Education Award winner.

## International

**Mexico.** This year three juniors went to Mexico for a life-changing immersion in social work in Cuernavaca, Morelos. In spite of Mexico's reputation in the media, Cuernavaca continues to be a great place for students to hone skills in a cross-cultural context. Great thanks to all of the staff at CGE in Cuernavaca for running an exceptional program.

**Norway.** The BSW program is committed to maintaining a strong relationship with colleges in Norway. Norwegian students continued to come to Augsburg to study, intern, and contribute to the cultural exchange with their U.S. classmates. In fall 2014, there were a total of eight students evenly divided between the junior and senior classes. There were three students from Diakonhjemmet College, three from Harstad College, and one each from Molde and Oslo/Akserhus. There were also two students from Sør Trondelag University College who did not need internships and studied with the sophomore class. Two students opted to stay the entire year. A new school was added this year, University of Nordland, which sent one student in spring 2015. Along with Harstad, this makes two schools from above the Arctic Circle. I guess they come to Minnesota for the warmer weather.

**Slovenia.** The exchange program started by Rosemary Link and continued by Laura Boisen and Lois Bosch with the University of Ljubljana was passed over to Barbara Lehmann. This exchange is the longest running student-faculty exchange for Augsburg. The exchange follows a three-year cycle of hosting in the home countries and a "resting year" in between. Seven students and two faculty visited Augsburg for the 2015 session. The visit is supported by MSW student volunteers (who participated in the previous exchange) and some staff support. The exchange is scheduled to occur over the end of June and the beginning of July. This year an ambitious itinerary of agency visits and social and cultural events was created. Also, the hosting process (budget, international and human service agency coordination, contact database) was documented, enabling others to recreate it in the future. Students and faculty of the University of Ljubljana receive certificates of participation at the conclusion of the activities.

## BSW Forum

*(The BSW Forum is a student-faculty-staff organization that advises the Social Work Department on policy, governance, and informs the department on student issues.)*

The BSW Forum continued to serve the Social Work Department with a mix of important curricular input, community-building, academic events, and conduit for student concerns and student leadership. In academic year 2014-2015, the BSW Forum:

- Provided leadership for the largest Social Work Day at the Capitol
- Continued input for a revamping of field internship program (from student's point of view)
- Enjoyed the “non-midterm break” in October for social work majors
- Brainstormed on creating a “Social Work Career Day”

The BSW Forum also continued the coordination of the “All SWK Get-Together” in September, the Sophomore Only Event, and the Eighth Annual Professional Panel.

### Steen-Torstenson Senior Award Winner 2015

The Steen-Torstenson Award is an annual honorary recognition by the Social Work Department of an outstanding (peer-elected) social work senior. The names of the students receiving the award are displayed in the Department. The award is in honor of Paul Steen and Joel Torstenson, both faculty emeriti of Augsburg College, who taught many years in the Sociology Department and founded the Social Work Department. Both were instrumental in developing the social work major in the 1970s and were active forces in social work and social justice in Minnesota. *The winner of the 2014 Steen-Torstenson Senior Award was Amy Amsler '15.*

### Phi Alpha Omicron Delta

Omicron Delta, the Augsburg BSW chapter of the national social work honor society, Phi Alpha (faculty advisor Christina Erickson), continued to provide academic leadership and also sponsored two events. For the past two years Omicron Delta has been operating as an independent student group to allow for flexibility in programming and organization.

## MSW Program

In 2014-2015 we welcomed 40 new Foundation students in the fall and 30 new Advanced Standing students will be joining us in January, bringing total program enrollment to 140 students for the academic year. In May, 59 students successfully completed their MSW degree. Two of these students successfully completed the requirements for the Diversity Social Work Advancement Program (DSWAP), which is a grant funded by Minnesota Department of Human Services Adult Mental Health Division and coordinated by Family and Children's Services of Minnesota. One of DSWAP's primary goals is to increase the number of licensed mental health professionals from immigrant, refugee and minority communities.

Our MSW/MBA dual degree enrollment remains a popular option for macro students after they graduate. There are currently five students completing the MBA portion of their degree. Also, we have been active with our MSW/MA in Theology dual degree students this past academic year, and we had two more MSW/MA students join us in the fall of 2015 after they completed the Luther portion of the dual degree.

Last academic year, new federal regulations required Augsburg College to change how we scheduled class meetings, recorded credits on student transcripts, and planned the academic year. We believe these changes created a higher quality learning experience for our MSW students. As you know, the MSW program was restructured to change from a traditional on-campus format to one that encompassed hybrid-learning opportunities. Hybrid learning is a combination of face-to-face classroom sessions and online/experiential learning. This change to hybrid learning means that our students' workloads have been more evenly dispersed throughout the academic year. Second, all Augsburg programs have moved to a semester credit-based academic system, which is a system used by most other colleges. Third, the academic calendar has changed. The MSW program now follows a semester calendar. Our Foundation students will continue to have a 10-month academic calendar, yet within that timeframe we will have a fall semester (September through December), a spring semester (January through April), and a summer 1 term (May through June). While these changes will require some adjustments, we anticipate minimal disruption to our students and as stated previously, increased quality to our MSW program. Our Advanced Standing students will now have a May start instead of January. This redesign will allow our incoming students with a BSW to complete their program in a 13-month calendar year. They will have a summer semester (May through August), a fall semester (September through December), a spring semester (January through May) and a summer 1 term (May through June).

The MSW program offers a short-term study abroad opportunity to students each academic year. This past summer, we traveled to China, Hong Kong, and Singapore for the first time with a group of 20 students. Laura Boisen and Ankita Deka led the course.

Finally, we visited several undergraduate social work programs this past year, hosted seven information sessions, and tabled at two conferences. To view our fall 2015 information session schedule, visit [augsburg.edu/msw](http://augsburg.edu/msw). And if you are at the MSSA or NASW-MN conferences next year, stop by and say hello!

### Student Loan Forgiveness

#### HAYLEY THOMAS

As social workers, you use a unique skillset to help those in your communities, but when it comes to finding help to pay off your student loans, where can you turn? For alumni who have earned their LICSW or LCSW licensure, there are federal and state loan forgiveness programs that may be right for you.

These loan forgiveness programs are designed to help medically underserved rural and urban populations. Each of the four major programs are competitive and have different requirements for eligibility. To see if you qualify and to learn about the application process, please go to [health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/funding/loans](http://health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/funding/loans) for more information.



Students working at CityKid Farm in Minneapolis.

## Environmental Justice and Social Work

CHRISTINA L. ERICKSON

For several decades, social workers have been identifying the need for integration of the natural environment into social work education and practice (Mary, 2008; Dominelli, 2012; Gray, 2013). Person in environment historically included the social, political, and economic environment, with a glaring absence of the natural world. That began to change as environmentalism grew and disparities for certain groups began to be documented. A core first disparity identified was toxic waste, documented in the 1980's (Committee on Racial Justice, 1987). In addition to person in environment, a core mandate of social work is the focus on justice. Justice grew in focus and specificity when the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) included and named social and economic justice in the required competencies for social work education in the 2008 educational standards. The 2015 educational standards for social work education include the expansion of justice to include environmental justice (CSWE, 2015).

Endemic to environmental justice is the inequality of natural environmental benefits and burdens. "Every person has an equal right to obtain social benefits and an equal obligation to carry social burdens." (Dolgoft, Loewenberg, & Harrington, 2009, p. 123). Health and race are deeply interwoven in areas of environmental justice. Bullard (2007) explains that the intersection of health and environmentalism is the initial impetus for environmental justice, with exposure to toxins and poor air quality topping the list of concerns for people in poverty. Following in the heels of racial justice, women's rights, and other critical theories, environmental justice is an area social work will be contributing to in growing ways.

This new mandate from CSWE to teach and learn together about environmental justice is good news. It requires us to name our expertise and share it with authority within environmental activism and research. On a philosophical level, it is an ethical impetus to assure human needs, in relation to the natural environment, are responded to. Social work's contribution to environmental justice assures that human needs are included in the

understanding of nature as a shared social good, and that programs and policies reflect this understanding.

Since 2007, the Social Work Department at Augsburg College has been offering the course "Environmental Justice and Social Change." The course is an entry into two majors on campus: social work and environmental studies. The course nurtures experiential learning by joining with the community in environmental and justice related issues. Urban Ventures CityKids Farm was our partner last fall. Students planted vegetables, built a greenhouse, spread mulch, visited with kids, and learned about food deserts and the impacts on local communities. Food access, water rights, green collar jobs, air quality, and waste disposal are all topics with ready justice related issues that are studied in the course. Person in environment takes on new meaning when we include the natural world and our place in it. Environmentalism is already influencing social work, but as Thomas Doherty suggests in his preface to the book *Environmental Social Work* (Gray, 2013), "How might social work change environmentalism?" The answer: a focus on justice.

Bullard, R. (2005). *The quest for environmental justice*. Sierra Club Books: San Francisco, CA, USA

Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ (1987). *Toxic wastes and race in the United States: A national report on the racial and socio-economic characteristics of communities with hazardous waste sites*. United Church of Christ: New York, NY

Dolgoft, R. Loewenberg, F.M., & Harrington, D. (2009). *Ethical decisions for social work practice*. (8th ed.). Thomson Brooks/Cole: Belmont, CA, USA

Dominelli, L. (2012). *Green Social Work: From Environmental Crisis to Environmental Justice*. Polity: Malden, MA, USA

Gray, M., Coates, J., Hetherington, T. (2013). *Environmental social work*. Routledge: New York, NY, USA

Mary, N.L. (2008). *Social work in a sustainable world*. Lyceum: Chicago, IL, USA



## Welcome New Faculty!

Nisesh Chalise

Last spring, Nisesh Chalise accepted our offer to come to Augsburg College and teach and study in the social work program. We are proud to say that he accepted our offer of a tenure track faculty position. He moved to Minneapolis from St. Louis this summer and has begun teaching in both the BSW and the MSW programs. He has a strong background in environmental studies and macro social work. So, he will be able to teach at all levels in the curriculum. His scholarship is global and community issues in social welfare and public health. We are excited to have



him join us as he, like many of us, has a strong commitment to social work as a global profession. By way of introduction, we have asked Nishesh Chalise to introduce himself by responding to the following questions.

*Nishesh, you began your college career at Washington University. Your first college degree was in environmental science. What were some of the big environmental questions or problems that captured your interest in this area of study?*

Growing up I saw a lot of physical development. There were new buildings and roads popping up everywhere. It was not difficult to observe that the natural environment was degrading at the same time. The rivers we used to play in now looked like open sewage and there was trash everywhere. I obviously didn't have the language of sustainable development back then, but I was concerned with this idea of developing society while taking the environment into consideration.

*What are one or two big ideas that environmental scientists would say apply to your practice of social work?*

First is the idea of complexity. It is now well understood that ecosystems (even not considering human beings) are complex systems. This means that the parts are interdependent and one cannot understand the ecosystem by reducing it into parts. The idea of complexity applies and has been applied to community practice very well. The second is the idea of conservation. When people talk about conservation they are talking about conserving the habitat. Everyone understands that you cannot go about conserving one species after another. Rather you conserve the environment or the habitat that will enable multiple species to thrive. Now there are obviously important species known as keystone species, which are generally larger mammals in terrestrial ecosystems like tigers, lions, rhinoceros, elephant, and so on. The idea is that if the habitat is good enough for these keystone species then others can thrive within that. This could be applied to community practice by thinking about creating an enabling environment where the most vulnerable and marginalized can thrive. If the marginalized can thrive, the rest of society could also do better.

*How can social workers contribute professionally to the well-being of our environment?*

In my opinion, social workers can best contribute to the well-being of our environment by framing it from a social justice point of view. The burden of a degrading environment is always carried by the most vulnerable. At different levels, social workers can think about how a degrading environment is affecting the people (individuals or communities) they work with. Whether it is through food insecurity or exposure to toxins, social workers can then work to improve the situation. Social workers can also work on the preventative side by spreading awareness and organizing community groups to prevent the degradation of environment.

*Tell us a little bit about how (and when) you became interested in social work...*

I was in a field trip to a national park during my final semester as an undergraduate. We had organized a meeting to talk about the importance of conservation. After a while, a local community member asked a question, "How can we think about conservation on empty stomachs?" This moment made me realize that we were looking at it the wrong way. We have been separating the natural and the human system, when it is intertwined. Without understanding the communities that are dependent on the natural system we cannot figure out solutions to the problem of sustainable development. I wanted to get into the social science, but always was interested in the social justice, human rights, empowerment perspective. So then I chose social work.

*Can you tell us about some of your future scholarship interests?*

My primary interest is to create a deeper understanding of the nature of coupled human and natural systems. I am using the food system as a window into this. When I talk about interaction between human and natural system, people say that they don't interact with nature a lot so is it doesn't matter to them. However, everyone interacts with the natural system because all of us eat food multiple times a day. There is a lot of emphasis given to sustainable food system, without addressing the food insecurity issues of the marginalized communities. I plan to bring attention to the "marginalized communities" in the sustainability discourse.

I have been on the side of macro social work for few years, which means I have picked up other interests along the way that are not directly related to the environment. Other topics I would like to pursue for my scholarship include:

- Disparities among different ethnic groups in Nepal on varying aspects such as poverty, access to health care, education, etc. Another topic of interest is the dynamics of sustaining and scaling and human service organization.
- Dynamics of sustainability and scale up of human service organization
- Integration among human service delivery organizations
- Dynamics of diffusion of innovation
- Application of systems thinking and system dynamics modeling on various social work and public health issues
- Application of Geographic Information systems on various social work and public health issues

*You first visited our campus in February of last year. Besides the ocean surf, the constant 80F temperature and blue cloudless skies, what attracted you to Augsburg College and to Minnesota?*

When I was learning about Augsburg College, its commitment to diversity and the community around it intrigued me. Many academic institutions talk about

this but it felt like Augsburg had been able to actually implement it. There is a particular way I think (which is still developing) about teaching, scholarship and engagement which made me feel like an outcast. When I visited Augsburg and met with faculty, my ideas were reinforced. It was for the first time that I realized that there is an actual place where people think this way and it's not just a figment of my imagination.

***Nishesh Chalise, welcome to Augsburg College, to the social work community and to Minnesota.***

### **Susan Conlin**

This fall we were pleased to welcome Susan Conlin onto our full time faculty roster. Susan is a visiting professor teaching courses in our MSW clinical concentration. She has been a valued adjunct for a number of years and we are glad that she has agreed to teach full time this year. I asked Susan to answer a few background questions so that we can get to know her better.



*Tell us a little bit about how (and when) you became interested in social work.*

After finishing my undergrad degree in psychology at the U of M, I completed a certificate program in chemical dependency counseling at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Family Social Science. While in this program I began to understand how systems work, particularly the importance of the family on child development and overall well being of family members. That experience led me to social work because I also have always had a sense of fairness about how people should be treated and a deep belief that people are equal, even though they are frequently not treated equally. So, in conversations with a mentor from my CD program, Constance Fabunmi, it seemed like social work would be a good fit for me.

*You are 'cross trained' in clinical social work (MSW) and in family therapy (MFT). How are these two practice areas different, how do (can) these two practice areas complement one another?*

These two disciplines are really well suited to one another yet unique. From social work I have a solid understanding of how various ecological systems interact with individuals, couples, and families, as well as have grown in my commitment to the social justice aspect of the work I do with people from diverse communities, and in supporting people from marginalized backgrounds to develop their own voice and learn to live meaningful lives. Through the lens of family therapy I continue to feel a strong sense of the importance that family involvement and guidance have on young people to grow and become adults who are able to care for themselves, those they love, and to be contributing members of society. While

I believe the nuclear family is very important to this process, sometimes that system breaks down and other systems need to step up and support a young person's development, including school systems, religious communities, friendship networks, mental health professionals, neighbors, and so forth. This is where social work and family therapy can really come together to help people grow and develop to their fullest potential.

*What draws you to the social work students at Augsburg?*

Augsburg is in a unique position to provide a quality education for social work students that supports professional growth in an environment that holds similar values. For example, if we look at some of the core values that social workers hold, including integrity, dignity, and worth of the person, social justice, human relationships, service, and competence, these are quite similar to what drives the mission of Augsburg College. According to the mission statement, the college focuses on supporting students to be "committed to intentional diversity in its life and work." This commitment to diversity was modeled by Augsburg when, in 2012, the college publicly supported marriage equality when a constitutional amendment to ban same sex marriage was on the ballot. As evidenced by various statistics, Augsburg consciously pursues developing a diverse community of students, staff, and faculty. In this way, both the Department of Social Work and Augsburg College as a whole are deliberately and purposefully committed to integrating a belief and value system that is put into practice in its programming, curriculum, and student body development. As challenging as this might be, there is also great reward in the process and outcomes. Such a challenge is one I support and want to be a part of.

*Looking around the corner, what new or renewed areas of practice should we be planning for to meet the future needs of our communities?*

Continued growth in the areas of inclusion of marginalized populations and respect for diversity are paramount. In the United States, within the LGBT community, transgender rights are finally coming to the forefront and beginning to get much deserved attention, though more work in this area is needed. Equality for women continues to take a back seat in discussions of equality. We need to respect the important role of caregiving/nurturing of our young, elderly, and needy, and support the development of these qualities in females and males alike. We also need to learn to value and respect women who are in leadership roles.

Social work needs to expand our focus on "person in environment" to include attention to the well being of our environment. We need to explore the transactional nature of the relationship between people and their environments. Our environments include all living things (i.e., humans, animals, and plant life). Extinction rates are up to 1,000 times higher than they were prior to mass destruction of habitats and climate change caused by humans. All professions, including social work, need to attend to these important environmental issues.



*If you were not a social worker, what would you be doing now?*

I would probably be involved in environmental issues because I am concerned about the future of our planet.

*On a more personal note, do you ever slaughter your laying hens? (I should also note that Susan lives on a small hobby farm outside of the metro area.)*

The short answer is “no.” The reason for this is they are like pets to us and all of them have names (we currently have 15 chickens). To illustrate their place as pets for us, we recently took one of our elder chickens, Matilda, to a veterinarian (yes, you read that correctly, not only do we not butcher them but we took one to a vet). Of course, finding a vet who works with chickens is not easy and we had to drive 45 minutes to see one. Matilda has always had a bad leg but was able to get to where she’s going until this summer. Not only could she not walk very well, she was using her wings to try to get around. Watching her work this hard was really difficult for us and so we made an appointment and drove her to New Richmond, Wisconsin, to see a doctor. Well, Matilda was quite the celebrity there. The vet assistants fought for who would get to work with her, and many of the staff came in to meet her. The vet spent a good amount of time examining Matilda and determined that she likely had arthritis resulting from soft tissue damage when she was young. She did not have a broken bone or dislocated joint as we feared. So, we were given oral pain medicine that we now give Matilda every other day with a syringe to manage the arthritis, and while she continues to limp she no longer uses her wings to walk and that makes us very happy.

*Susan, thank you for your thoughtful and enlightening responses. By the way, I am glad that Matilda is getting the proper care and medication.*

## Meet Hayley Thomas, Social Work Department Coordinator

### MICHAEL SCHOCK

Last spring we hired Hayley Thomas as our new Social Work Department coordinator. Hayley picked the most frenetic time of the calendar year to join our staff. She was thrown into the chaos of the graduate internship selection process. With nearly 60 eager and anxious students seeking just the perfect internship and more agencies offering to supervise those eager students, Hayley had her hands full. But under Laura Boisen’s guidance, the spring internship process went smoothly. Hayley proved to be patient and a quick study.

Hayley found Augsburg College three times actually, once by accident and then twice by design. In her junior year of high school, Hayley was taking time out from class and wandered into an Augsburg College recruiter visiting her high school. “Augsburg sounded like a cool college to visit,” Hailey said. Her initial visit convinced her—Augsburg was where she wanted to go. Four years later, she graduated with a degree in history and a life partner.

Her first job was working in the AVID program at Sanford Middle School in South Minneapolis. She loved working with middle school students. “You never knew what the day would bring. My students kept me on my toes.” While being an AVID tutor, Hayley began to study secondary education instruction. Where did she take those courses? At Augsburg, of course. Fast forward to spring 2015. Hayley returned again to Augsburg this time as the department coordinator for the Social Work Department. We hope that her third time’s a charm. Please welcome Hayley when you next drop by the Social Work office.



## SAVE THE DATE — 2016 SWAN EVENT

**Friday, January 22, 2016, 3-5 p.m., Augsburg College**

This is a free continuing education event.

### Annual SWAN Event Features Panel on Social Work with Veterans and Military Members

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Augsburg College Social Work Alumni Network event! The SWAN event will include time for networking, delicious A'viands refreshments, and a panel discussion on the topic of social work with veterans and military members. This is a great opportunity to learn more about a topic that is very relevant to social work, as well as to reconnect with other Auggie social workers. In addition, those who attend the panel discussion can get two continuing education hours. There is no charge for this inspiring event, so come out of the cold and join us. Please contact Department Coordinator Hayley Thomas at [thomas5@augsborg.edu](mailto:thomas5@augsborg.edu) for more information or to RSVP. We hope to see you there!

## Empowerment Practice in Mental Health—The Role of Peer Specialists

MELISSA A. HENSLEY, PHD, LISW  
Assistant Professor of Social Work

A growing number of Twin Cities-area mental health agencies have adopted Certified Peer Specialist services as a way to help clients with a variety of skills-building and care coordination tasks. Peer specialist services have become increasingly popular since they became a service paid for by Medical Assistance funds.

What are peer specialists, and how do they help people who are receiving mental health services? Why do social workers need to be aware of the values, practices, and roles of peer specialists? In Minnesota, Certified Peer Specialists are individuals who have been diagnosed with a mental illness and who either are currently receiving mental health services or who have received services in the past. Peer specialists in Minnesota complete a rigorous training program to prepare them for certification.

Many different kinds of programs employ peer specialists. Certified peer specialists are popular in IRTS settings (Intensive Residential Treatment Services) as well as on Assertive Community Treatment teams and at drop-in centers. Peer specialists are able to use their own past experiences to help people learn new coping skills and develop wellness goals for themselves. They can provide group as well as one-on-one support to help individuals envision their own ideas about recovery and work toward achieving those ideas.

The research on peer specialist services is mixed, but there does seem to be evidence that in certain situations, peer specialists are able to engage better and develop greater trust with people with mental illness. Solomon (2004) provides a good review of the outcomes of peer specialist services that have been noted in the literature.

It is critical that social workers gain an understanding of the roles and values of peer specialists. This is because in many instances, social workers are the professionals that supervise peer specialists in the workplace. There is a great deal of overlap between the NASW Code of Ethics and the values and ethics of peer specialists, but there are some differences, too, and social workers who are aware of the differences will be better prepared to provide helpful supervision. In addition, social workers who do not themselves have a mental health diagnosis may need to work through their own stigmatizing attitudes toward mental illness, to ensure that peer specialists are welcomed into agency settings as colleagues and not viewed as somehow sick or defective. It is also critical that social workers in management positions not view peer specialists as cheap substitutes for professional counselors or case managers.

This summer, I have been interviewing certified peer specialists throughout the state of Minnesota, with the support of a scholarship grant from Augsburg's Center for Teaching and Learning. My research question has to do with gaining a better understanding of peer specialists' experience of professional supervision. The peer specialists that I have interviewed thus far report diverse

experiences with their supervisors. Some peer specialists have had welcoming, supportive supervisors who have recognized the unique talents that the peer specialists bring to the workplace. Other peer specialists have felt stigmatized and disrespected by their supervisors. Interviewees have noted that supervisors who seek training in how to work with peer specialists seem to be better equipped to provide supportive supervision.

What can we as social workers do to facilitate healthy supervision and inclusion of peer specialist perspectives in the work that we do? Those of us who do supervise peer specialists should definitely seek training in this area. We also can be helpful by making an effort to keep current on the social work literature that discusses wellness and recovery approaches to mental health practice. The contributions of peer specialists to the healing process of our clients can help us stay committed to recovery and collaborative approaches to wellness.

Source:

Solomon, P. (2004). Peer support/peer provided services: Underlying processes, benefits, and critical ingredients. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 27 (4), 392-401.

## What Interesting Persons Social Workers Are!

BY PROF. EMERITUS TONY BIBUS, PHD, LISW

Since you are reading this, you probably share my anticipation for learning what Augsburg College social work students, staff, faculty, and alumni have been up to. What a wide array of activities open up for us in our careers and lives! With the generalist person-in-environment perspective we can pursue opportunities to work in public or private sectors, with individuals, families, groups, or communities, and anywhere in the world. And while doing so, we meet other social workers whom we come to admire for the kind of human beings they are as well as for their interests. My studies lately in virtue ethics have highlighted the important role played in my professional and personal life by exemplars of what it means to be a social worker. Often, they are Augsburg colleagues, carrying out our characteristic commitment to social justice.

For example, a colleague who goes the extra mile models how social workers can act with moral courage, sometimes under adversity (Strom-Gottfried, 2015, pp. 22-23). One of my students stood up to a medical doctor who was staunchly opposed to referring a patient to hospice care along with the individual and family, plus other care providers she advocated for hospice as the best way to meet the patient's needs. Several graduates have demonstrated the virtue of practical wisdom in deciding between internal or external channels to confront colleagues' or agencies' wrongdoing. And SWAN newsletters have featured alums acting with integrity, compassion, and cultural humility; this kind of professional integrity has been defined as "maintaining and acting upon a deeply held set of values, often in a hostile climate" (Banks, 2010, p. 2170).

Last year's newsletter shared updates from alumni who

were involved in education, corrections, planning, and community health while raising families and exploring the globe. One of the most enduring rewards in my life has been working shoulder to shoulder with remarkable colleagues. A catalog of all their activities and interests would fill pages. I have known social workers who are also poets, playwrights, peacemakers, gardeners, cooks, entrepreneurs, therapists, lawyers, political leaders, volunteers, fundraisers, explorers, coaches, teachers, preachers, musicians, athletes, knitters, etc. Their breadth of practice arenas is equally wide and diverse. Imagine how long the list would be if we each added various services we've offered during our careers. I am grateful for opportunities that social work has given me to engage in such practices as: helping, counseling, problem solving, case managing, supervising and mentoring, researching and evaluating, developing and implementing programs and policies, serving on committees and boards, administering agencies, organizing campaigns, leading professional associations, consulting on ethics, offering social work courses and workshops, publishing articles and books, and caregiving.

So, social workers are interesting persons who do interesting things! May you have many chances to discover social work colleagues' inspiring virtues as well as fascinating interests. If they're Auggies, let us know so we can feature them in next year's SWAN newsletter. While you are at it, update us on what you are doing too.

#### References

- Banks, S. (2010). Integrity in professional life: Issues of conduct, commitment and capacity. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40, 2168-2184.
- Strom-Gottfried, K. (2015). *Straight talk about professional ethics* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.

## Alumni Updates

**Keira Klein Anderson '07 BSW** earned her MSW at the Jane Addams College of Social Work in Chicago in May 2012. Since then, she has worked as a professional nanny and as a birth doula. She is currently enjoying her favorite job yet—raising her son Parker (born in October 2013). She, her husband Kyle, and Parker recently left Chicago to start a new adventure in Des Moines, Iowa.

**Shereen Reda '14 MSW, MCMP, LGSW** was honored by NASW-MN with the Early Career Excellence Award. Shereen works for Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault as a collaboration specialist, and the Minnesota Point of Contact. She recently served as the interim coalition coordinator for the Minnesota Coalition of Licensed Social Workers. Shereen is also a Board Member of the Association of Macro Practice Social Workers, and chairs its Training and Events Committee.

**Mallory Carstens '12 BSW** is currently working at Pinnacle Services as a case manager captain. She continues to provide case management for long term care waivers in addition to supervising case managers.

**Emerson Ball '14 BSW** is currently working at Mental Health Resources at the Seward CSP as a program counselor.

# 2016 SOCIAL WORK INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

MAY 5-6, 2016

## Global Social Work Communities: Emerging Challenges, Interwoven Solutions

The Social Work Department at Augsburg College invites panel, paper, and poster proposals for its International Social Work Conference, **May 5-6, 2016**, at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. The conference is intended to be an international exchange of social work practice throughout the world. Conference kick-off reception will be held on May 4. We will issue a separate call for proposals in November 2015.

For ongoing updates, go to [augsburg.edu/iswc](http://augsburg.edu/iswc).

*The Augsburg College Social Work Department is a continuing education provider approved by the Minnesota Board of Social Work (CEP-203).*

### Augsburg College Social Work Department

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# AUGSBURG COLLEGE

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## Share your news

The Social Work Department tries to keep its records current to ensure that you continue to receive updates on news and special events. If you have an address or employment update, please fill out this form and send it to: Hayley Thomas, Department of Social Work, 2211 Riverside Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55454, or thomas5@augsborg.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

*Please print. Include additional pages if necessary.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name when enrolled: \_\_\_\_\_

SW degree(s) and graduation year(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of employment: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional news, honors received, volunteer positions held, etc.: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Personal news you would like to share (marriage, children, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

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