

# THE SOCIAL WORK LEADER

Western Kentucky University | Department of Social Work

Newsletter | Spring 2018



Department of  
Social Work

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Dr. Saundra Starks

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## NOTES FROM DR. DESROSIERS

The 2017-2018 academic year will forever more be known as the Year of Change. With the installation of a new President -- Dr. Timothy C. Caboni, a new provost -- Dr. Terry Ballman, and a new interim dean -- Dr. Dennis George, the landscape of WKU has been forever altered. With the energy and vigor of the new administration group, we are sure to experience new ways of conceptualizing our work and doing business. I am confident these new ways will increase efficiencies and continue to support our departmental mission.

Within the Social Work Department, our long-time and beloved department head, Dr. Dean May, has decided to embrace his full professor role and focus his remaining years at WKU on teaching, research, and service. Under Dr. May's leadership, the department has developed a strong partnership with the Department of Community Based Services' (DCBS) Training Branch growing the Credit-for-Learning Program, the PCWCP program, and the Training Resource Center. He spearheaded the development of the MSW Hybrid Program and has been very supportive to the development of the online MSW Program. Dean ushered the department through multiple successful Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation self-studies, and continues to support all of our programs. Dean's forward thinking vision and energy have been essential to the success of the department, and, as his successor, I have tough shoes to fill.

I am grateful to have Dean's wisdom and support as I begin my administrative journey at WKU as the Department Head of Social Work. Other important leadership changes include Dr. Saundra Starks taking over as the new MSW Program Director, and Dr. Simon Funge as the new BSW Program Director. Kellye McIntyre continues on as our Field Director, and Dr. Amy Cappiccie continues as our MSW Online Program Coordinator to round out our administrative team. The fresh ideas of our newest administrative team members coupled with the steady confidence and extensive knowledge of the old timers is sure to guide the department to new heights.

The old adage "With change, comes opportunity" has become our mantra. The WKU Department of Social Work is poised to continue our strong traditions of teaching excellence, scholarly research, and community service and partnership. Consider this quote from George Bernard Shaw:

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

I encourage all students, faculty, and staff in the Social Work Department and the alumni, community partners, and colleagues beyond to be open. Be open to changing your minds as well as your actions in the pursuit of progress.

Dean Patricia "Trish" Desrosiers, Ph.D., LCSW  
*Department Head, WKU Department of Social Work*



*"With the energy and vigor of the new administration group, we are sure to experience new ways of conceptualizing our work and doing business."*



## Helping the Homeless Starts with One Small Step

*A homeless woman in New York, NY. Photo: J J, Creative Commons, some rights reserved*

In the spring of 2016, Amy Stephens entered her first semester of the social work program. Like everyone else who enters the program, she took Social Work 375, the first of many practice classes. And like all the other students, she had to complete an assignment that required her to spend some time with another culture or group with which she was unfamiliar and possibly even uncomfortable. Amy stepped outside her comfort zone, and chose to join a nurse she knew on a “medical ride along”, a service provided by Hotel Inc., a local non-profit organization that provides services to the homeless. When asked about her experience, Amy recalls the following,

“During my experience I have to admit I was extremely nervous. I was going to be with people I did not know and experience something I had no idea about and in areas that were even scarier. The night I went out the weather had dropped down to 20 degrees and still we went out to check on homeless people who were staying in their encampments or where ever they could find shelter for the night. We looked for people who needed medical attention, whether it be for wounds, medicine prescriptions, hypothermia, blood pressures or any other medical issue that may have occurred.

That experience was beyond eye opening, I had so much adrenaline with this experience.”

While almost all the students who complete this assignment will go on to serve many underprivileged and underserved clients, not many immediately embrace the opportunity in an ongoing way. Amy has continued to volunteer at Hotel Inc. ever since that first class assignment. She regular volunteers with the street medicine providers, and has recently given free haircuts to the homeless during a health fair organized by Hotel Inc. (she’s been a cosmetologist for 20 years, so knows a thing or two about styling!) When asked what she finds most rewarding about her volunteer work, she said, “That I can help someone. I love helping those who truly need help. I always keep in my mind that we are all only one major catastrophe away from being in the same predicament as the ones I am helping.”

If interested in volunteering with Hotel Inc., please contact Beth Carrol: [beth@hotelincbg.com](mailto:beth@hotelincbg.com), or call Hotel Inc facility at 270-782-1263



## Social Work Lobby Day

On March 8th, after awaking at the crack of dawn, and traveling for hours, approximately 40 students and faculty from all 4 WKU campuses converged on Frankfort. There, they met hundreds of other social workers and social work students from across the state. Why? Because social workers need to be heard. Because some clients don't have a voice. Because to be a social worker is to advocate for the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the oppressed!

After arriving at the Capitol, students were met by a Lobby Day Ambassador who talked to them about key bills in the legislature and to give a quick tour of the Capitol Annex, where the legislators' offices and meeting rooms are. Students then met with at least 5 different legislators to learn about what the legislators were currently working on, and to advocate for issues important to social workers and the clients they serve. Issues addressed included sensible gun control, sex education in the public schools, fairness for LGBTQIA, DACA, and more! The afternoon ended with a rally of hundreds in the Capitol Rotunda. Social workers' unified cheers echoed loudly throughout the capitol, and they will not be not be soon forgotten in Frankfort.





## Research Presentations in Atlanta

### Kazandra Trejo and Gracen Williams:

Dream On: Predictors of attitudes toward the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Kazandra and Gracen presented their research at BPD 2018 in Atlanta and at the REEACH conference at WKU. In addition, they have been accepted to present at another national conference at the end of May at Washington University, St. Louis. Both were interested in assessing factors associated with attitudes toward Dreamers among social work undergraduate students. They found a significant correlation between attitudes towards Dreamers and attitudes towards immigrants, as well as a relationship between knowledge of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and the respondents' promotion of social justice issues. In addition, they learned that individuals with parents or grandparents who immigrated to the United States were significantly more likely to know about DACA than those whose parents or grandparents were born in the United States.

### Kia Brewer and Kimberly Helton:

Kia and Kim presented their research at BPD 2018 in Atlanta and at the REEACH conference at WKU. Following the hurricanes, flooding, and mass shootings, these students became curious about what factors predicted sustained volunteer effort after a crisis passed. Using Aizen's theory of planned behavior, the students examined the impact of altruistic attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms on the intent to volunteer. They found a very strong relationship between perceived behavioral control and intent to volunteer. In addition, they found a confidence in having time to volunteer and belief in one's engagement skills were significantly related to intent to volunteer. Finally, they learned altruistic attitudes were associated with the appraisal of classmates' and professors' endorsement of volunteering.



## WKU Glasgow: Social Work Student Union

- Hosted two on-campus meet-and-greets with local professional social workers.
- Served meals at the Thanksgiving lunch at the Ralph Bunche Center in Glasgow.
- Sponsored three local seniors for the "Santa to a Senior" program.
- Sponsored a bedding drive for the "Give the Gift of Warmth" program. Blankets were distributed to residents at the Signature HealthCARE of Glasgow Rehab & Wellness Center.

WKU Glasgow Social Work students also partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Glasgow-Barren County and The WKU's \$100 Solution program to implement three projects at the Club. The projects included supplying a bookcase with age-appropriate reading materials, new activities for the Club's mentoring program, and a photo wall highlighting and celebrating Club members who demonstrate character and leadership among their peers.

Photo: students Nia Johnson, Hali York, and Misty Matthews (l to r), and Dr. Simon Funge



## WKU Owensboro: Social Work Student Union

On Thursday, March 22nd, the Owensboro Social Work Student Union had an agency fair with five speakers representing the following social welfare agencies in Owensboro:

- Audubon Area Community Services
- Owensboro Regional Recovery
- New Beginnings
- FRC Daviess County Public Schools





## Poverty Simulation

**O**n Tuesday, March 6th, approximately 45 students from the Department of Social Work and other programs within the College participated in Community Action of Southern Kentucky's 2-hour Poverty Simulation. Sponsored by South Central Kentucky Area Health Education Center (AHEC) and staffed by volunteers from the College and community, the powerful experiential activity gave students the opportunity to experience the day-to-day challenges of living in poverty.

Through the course of the "month," students' "families" were challenged to pay their bills on time on limited incomes, get their kids to school, juggle day care, and make appointments, while faced with a series of unexpected crises.

Dr. Simon Funge, an Assistant Professor of Social Work, who helped recruit participants and volunteers for the simulation, observed that, "It's one thing for our students to sit in a classroom learning about the underlying causes and consequences of poverty; but it's another for them to experience the visceral day-to-day stresses of living in this circumstance. While it's only a simulation, students often remark in the debrief about how challenging, frustrating, and stressful it was for them to just get by; and without fail make the connection between their experience in the simulation and the daily lives of their future clients who are often the most economically vulnerable in the community."

As one student participant reflected, "[it] really opened my mind and had me look from a completely different perspective. That was so helpful!" It's for this reason that Community Action and AHEC plan to continue delivering the powerful Poverty Simulation to members of the CHHS community.



## Dr. Owens Honored: CHHS Faculty Award for Student Advisement

**D**r. Larry W. Owens, associate professor of Social Work, is this year's recipient of the CHHS Faculty Award for Student Advisement, and he has submitted a portfolio for the WKU Faculty Award for Student Advisement. Dr. Owens was nominated by social work students for this honor because of his willingness to go "above and beyond to meet his students' advising needs" and making advising sessions on degree concerns and other issues convenient for his students. In fact, Dr. Owens has served as lead faculty member at both Owensboro and Elizabethtown regional campuses. He regularly mentors students in research, conference presentations, and community endeavors such as field placements, community fundraisers and policy initiatives in the Kentucky General Assembly.



*Dr. Larry Owens with students at the Social Welfare Advocacy with State Representative Jim DuPlessis, Social Work Lobby Day 2017*



*Dr. Larry Owens with students at the BPD Conference in New Orleans*



## Successful Reaffirmation

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Council on Accreditation (COA) has voted to reaffirm the accreditation of both the BSW and the MSW programs for 8 years ending February 2026. This is great news for our department, our students, and the community, and follows an extensive process spanning over 18 months that included program self-studies, site visits, and COA reviews. We were one of 6 (14 total in this cycle) BSW programs and 3 (10 total in this cycle) MSW programs to achieve the highest level of reaffirmation offered by CSWE's COA.

The accreditation process insures that our social work programs meet the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards including such aspects as competencies, curriculum, and policies that indicate a high level of performance, integrity and quality. There are 522 accredited baccalaureate social work programs and 260 accredited master's social work programs as of the February 2018 COA meeting. Information on CSWE, COA, and accreditation is available online at <https://www.cswe.org/>

The Social Work Department would like to thank everyone involved in this process including students, staff, faculty, and Departmental Advisory Council members. It takes a village, and we are lucky to have such a dedicated one!



## MSW Online Cohort

The Department of Social Work is pleased to announce the graduation of our first online cohort in the Masters of Social Work (MSW). A total of 17 students are on track to graduate in May of 2018. Students attended synchronously online from Kentucky, Illinois, and Missouri for two years to complete this part-time program. In Fall of 2018, the MSW Program will again offer the online part-time Advanced Standing Program as well as offering the new Traditional Program. Advanced Standing students are those with a BSW degree from an accredited program. The new online Traditional Program is for those undergraduates that have degrees outside of the field of social work. The Department looks forward to continuing to grow our MSW online programs as an additional delivery option to meet both the workforce demand for social workers nationwide and to offer a more flexible format for a segment of the student population.

## BSW Program Update

We are excited to announce that the accreditation of the WKU BSW Program was reaffirmed by the Council on Social Work Education in February 2018 through February 2026.

The WKU BSW Program will have 67 May-August 2018 graduates. We are graduating students from our cohorts in Bowling Green, Elizabethtown, Glasgow, and Owensboro. Christina Crook, BSW student in Elizabethtown, was selected to be the student speaker at the WKU E/Ft. Knox commencement ceremony on Monday, May 14.

We hosted a celebration brunch in May to honor our graduates and BSW award winners. We are excited to welcome Mildred "Mit" Joyner as our guest speaker. She is the Vice-President of the National Association of Social Workers and the immediate past President and Board Chair of the Council on Social Work Education.

## MSW Program Update

The Department of Social Work is pleased to announce that our 2018 MSW graduating class will include 56 students from both the traditional and the online cohorts. Students have recently completed their comprehensive exams (PRE) and are strongly encouraged to pursue social work licensure in their respective jurisdictions. March (National Social Work Month) of this year was a month filled with exciting activities that ranged from professional self-care sessions, to state lobby day, to campus advocacy projects that focused on women and leadership. The Graduate Student Social Work Organization (GSSW) planned and facilitated a forum inviting 5 women who are slated for local, state and regional political offices. This panel of women presented their perspectives on leadership and encouraged students to get politically involved. At this forum, GSSW collected donations to support Hope Harbor, a local crisis prevention center.

Also during Social Work month, the Social Work Departmental Advisory Committee (DAC) was recognized during a celebration to acknowledge the successful reaccreditation of both the BSW & MSW programs. The community was educated about the role of social workers and social work education during a panel interview on the local televised midday news program. The panel was able to highlight events of the month as well as encourage community social workers to attend events such as the technology session which focused on the use of software applications for social work practice.



## Study Abroad Experience: Chanel Watkins, BSW Student

Studying abroad started out as a dream that with the right support turned into a reality. To be able to study abroad twice in one summer, to Trinidad and Tobago and then on to Africa, is unspeakable for a lot of students attending colleges. To be able to be amongst natives who are taught to be the “less fortunate people” and become one with them, was a humbling experience that could never be erased. Through the support of my OSD advisors and the financial grants from the Gilman, I was granted the opportunity to see and experience the wonders of traveling and discovering distinct parts of the world. There is so much that I learned on these trips, that surpasses any textual lesson that can be given in a classroom setting. Studying abroad enhances not only the cultural competencies of a person, but provides one the opportunity to educate others through sharing their stories as well.



## Study Abroad Experience: Gracen Williams, BSW Student

Before choosing social work as my major, I never imagined the extensive array of opportunities social work would hold for me. From studying abroad in Tanzania, Africa, to presenting research at the BPD Annual Conference in Atlanta, my major has provided me with valuable learning experiences. While in Tanzania I was able to participate in community service learning through my time at orphanages, visiting hospitals, and especially my time at WAMATA, an HIV/Aids center where individuals suffering with the disease can go for support. My class was able to create Project Rafiki, after doing a needs-based assessment to address the needs of the individuals residing there. Project Rafiki provides food for the families that come to WAMATA. Each month, donations are collected from a specific organization or group and sent to WAMATA where they purchase food for the families.

Currently, I am involved in a research project with Kazandra Trejo and our professor Dr. Mallinger. The title of our research is called “Dream on: Predictors of Attitudes Toward the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals”, where we examined first semester social work major’s attitudes using religious fundamentalism, social justice, and generational status as the measures. We had the honor of presenting at the national BPD conference in Atlanta and have also presented at the REACH conference Western Kentucky University holds. We have also been selected to present at the ISP conference in St. Louis, and KASWE conference in Northern Kentucky. Being able to conduct research and present our findings has strengthened my overall knowledge of research and my presentation skills, which will help me tremendously as a future professional social worker.



*“Being involved and getting hands on experience can expand your knowledge base in more ways than you could imagine. .”*

**-Gracen Williams, BSW Student**



## WAMATA Project Development

Authors: BSW Students Sierra Bailey and Chanel Watkins, & MSW Student Emily Holderfield-Gaither

**W**AMATA is a community-based organization that offers services to men, women, youth and families that are living with HIV/AIDS. WAMATA aims to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS, reduce its impact, and enhance the quality of life support to the affected people through advocacy, education, and communication.

A service project was developed by the KIIS Study Abroad Social Service Learning class in order to address the needs of members within WAMATA. Students and faculty of Western Kentucky University partnered with WAMATA and the Department of Social Work at Hubert Kairuki Memorial University (HKMU) to distribute food to the members of WAMATA. This project aims to enhance the necessary nutrition of people living with HIV/AIDS so that they can live healthy lives while dealing with this serious disease. This project has relevance for not only East African countries but areas in the United States with similar issues.

Students were able to expand their social work competencies, by addressing issues of poverty and human rights on multiple levels, while engaging in service-learning and global practices.

The social work planned change process was reinforced, from a culturally sensitive perspective through student's development of this project (Sheafor, B. W., & Horejsi, C. R., 2015).

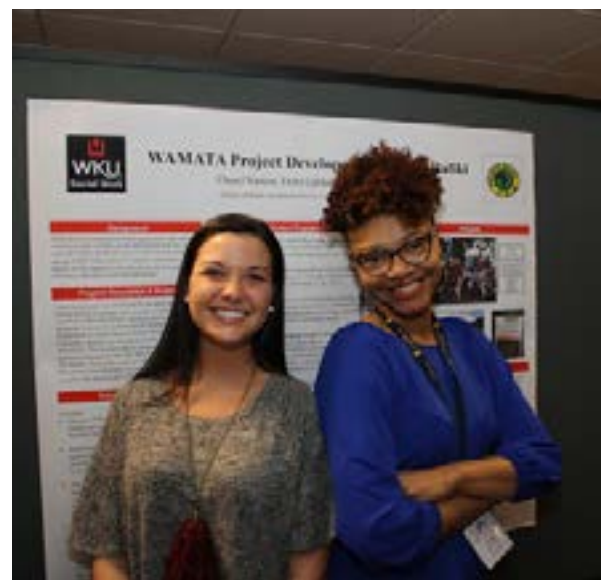
**Engagement:** This process provided students with the opportunity to engage with clients to build relationships, understand individual experiences, while developing their knowledge and skills of service delivery at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

**Assessment/Case Planning:** Students were able to conduct numerous informal focus groups to collect data to assess the needs of the members. Food was identified to be the primary need, as many of these individuals face stigmatization such as abandonment by their families, inability to obtain employment, and a lack of financial means with which to maintain a living.

**Intervention:** An intervention plan was created to determine what resources were available, how these resources and the funding would be obtained, as well as, equitable distribution amongst the families. The members and the community social workers were also included in the decision-making process which transitioned into a twelve-month sustainable food pantry.

### References:

Sheafor, B. W., & Horejsi, C. R. (2015). Techniques and guidelines for social work practice. Pearson.



*Emily Holderfield-Gaither & Chanel Watkins*

## Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education & Social Development

**C**allie Adkins is a 2017 graduate of Western Kentucky University's Bachelor of Social Work Program. In 2017, she was awarded a FUSE Grant through Western Kentucky University to conduct research on WKU's Public Child Welfare Certification Program, of which she was a participant. As a result of this grant, she has been accepted to present her research at the 2018 NASW National Conference in Washington DC and the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development (SWSD) in Dublin, Ireland. Since graduation from WKU in December of 2017, Callie has been employed with the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services under the branch of Protection and Permanency in Jessamine County as an investigator. Assistant Professor Whitney Harper was the faculty mentor for this FUSE grant.



## Newly Minted Ph.D.

**T**he WKU Department of Social Work is excited to announce the recent completion of a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work by WKU MSW alumni Austin Griffiths. Previously working for the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services in child and adult protection, Griffiths was awarded the MSW Stipend in 2009 and earned his Master of Social Work at WKU in 2011. Since then, he has partnered in research with the agency to inform efforts for workforce improvement and service delivery in his role as the Child Welfare Support Coordinator. Dr. Griffiths will be joining the MSW Program as an assistant professor in the fall of 2018.

