

# Let's Chat

Spend a few minutes with us catching up on the latest happenings. Find out who's doing what, and where. Locate an old friend...get reacquainted and reconnected!

## UAF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM NEWSLETTER SPRING 2008

### Rural Intensive Cohort

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Social Work Cohort provides a unique opportunity for approximately 25 rural Alaska students to work toward earning a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. The overall mission for the cohort program is to "grow our own" practitioners. Instead of the revolving door of well-intentioned practitioners coming in and out of rural Alaska in a year or less, UAF is committed to "growing our own" practitioners from within the rural communities. These professionals know their communities intimately and are committed to staying and providing much needed service.

The program is delivered through a combination of face-to-face and audio conference class sessions. At the beginning of each semester the students come to Fairbanks for a week and again for three days at the end of the semester to receive intense classroom instruction. The remainder of the course is taught through audio conference, which allows the student to take courses without leaving their community. This method of instruction has been highly successful as it allows students to develop collegial relationships that will assist them when they return to their communities as professionals. Students receive course instruction not only from the university instructor, but also from Alaska Native Elders, incorporating both western and traditional approaches to learning.



### Cohort Success

The Social Work Cohort graduated its first two students in 2007. Darlene Christensen from Kalskag and Bonita Mohan, originally from Maine, currently living in South Naknek, are proof that this model has the potential to change the make-up of the social service work force in rural Alaska. Both graduates continue to live and work in rural Alaska.

Bonita continues to work for Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation and states she "enjoys giving back to her community." She entertains thoughts of returning to school for a master's degree but for now she enjoys her work, subsistence fishing, picking berries and spending time with her grandchildren.

Darlene is also an example of how the various social work delivery models available at UAF serve rural and urban students needs. She originally started working toward her BSW in the cohort model from Kalskag but became eager to finish sooner so she moved to Fairbanks to complete the campus based program. Darlene has extensive knowledge of the Indian Child Welfare Act and with her social work background she hopes to help build a "bridge of understanding" between the tribes and the Office of Children's Services.

Both Bonita and Darlene utilized the "pipeline route" in working toward their BSW degrees. Both began by completing their Rural Human Service certificates before moving on to completion of their Associates degrees and finally on to the BSW program at UAF.

**Congratulations graduates!**

**WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO? IF YOU HAVE A TOPIC OF INTEREST YOU'D LIKE TO CHAT ABOUT, OR YOU'RE A GRADUATE OF OUR PROGRAM, WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU. E-MAIL US AT [FYSWK@UAF.EDU](mailto:FYSWK@UAF.EDU)**

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## MEASURING SUCCESS

Over the last 15 years, the UAF social work program has utilized standardized tests and surveys to collect data on student performance for the purpose of program and curriculum evaluation and improvement. The Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT) is administered to all graduating seniors during their last semester of study. The ACAT reflects content integration of the four major content areas making up the social work curriculum (social policy, practice, human behavior and the social environment, and research). In addition, all graduates complete an exit survey regarding their satisfaction with the learning environment in the Social Work program and at UAF (in terms of advising, library resources, career planning, student services, etc).

In 2002 the Social Work Department also began administering the Baccalaureate Education Assessment Project (BEAP) forms to gather additional data. The BEAP survey forms include a demographic profile of students, an exit survey, an alumni survey, an employer survey, and a values survey. The fact that we have been administering and tracking this data consistently for 15 years (in the case of curriculum content areas) and for over eight years with the BEAP forms there exists a wealth of information on how our students and program are performing.

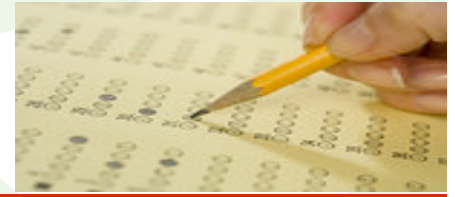
In general, the data has shown that our students consistently score above the national average of students taking the ACAT exam (over 4,700 nationally last year). This is significant since UAF is an open enrollment university (meaning students can enter with a high school diploma regardless of GPA and test scores) and since the Social Work department has no pre-major selection process. Students at UAF demonstrate that they have mastered the knowledge base of the profession through their coursework at UAF.

The test results also demonstrate that students taking courses by distance audio or through the cohort/intensive format receive scores in the curriculum content areas comparable to the students taking their classes in a face-to-face format on the Fairbanks campus. This is a significant finding, since UAF is one of the very first schools to offer a social work degree by distance methods, and since at the time when we began to offer our degree by audio, many people in academia felt that a comparable education could not be provided using this methodology.

The BEAP forms show that, in general, students are very satisfied with the advising and education they receive, and almost all plan to go on to careers in social work. It was also found that students' values, as measured by the BEAP, and based on three ethical concepts contained in the Social Work Code of Ethics: confidentiality, self-determination, and social justice, change significantly while in the program, with graduating seniors showing more understanding and appreciation of these concepts than students entering their first social work course. Alumni and employers demonstrate high satisfaction with the education provided by our program; however, return rates on these surveys has been low. This year we will conduct focus groups with field supervisors (many of whom are program alumni) to gather additional data regarding our program. Overall, the measures have been very positive and indicate that students graduating from the UAF social work program have the knowledge base and appreciation of ethical concepts impor-

tant for professional social workers.

This March, Dr. Judy Shepherd, Heidi Brocius, and Carol Renfro will present a paper at the Baccalaureate Program Directors Meeting in Florida to discuss the utility of these outcome measures for program assessment and planning and to summarize what we have learned about our program through this process. •



### **“What will you be doing in 2020?” The Hartford Geriatric Social Work Initiative**

By 2020 one of six Americans will be 65 years old and older. The John A. Hartford Foundation, with its interest in aging and health, has committed to support the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Geriatric Social Work Initiative to prepare much needed gerontologically competent social workers and improve the care and well-being of older adults and their families. One of the Initiative's goals is to infuse gerontology competencies into social work curricula and teaching.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Social Work Department was one of several social work programs selected to receive training and support through the Initiative's Curriculum Development Institutes (CDI). Two faculty members from UAF along with faculty from six other western region universities explored how to infuse aging into curricula in new ways such as identifying intersections of aging with other problem areas (e.g. child welfare – grandparents raising grandchildren) and embedding aging into the program's overall organizational structure such as the mission statement, electronic materials, program objectives and overall culture.

One outcome of UAF's CDI participation which benefited students directly was the addition to the social work curricula of a Minor with Gerontology Specialization. Another positive outcome was the creation and presentation of numerous community training seminars on social and age related health issues. These seminars, developed cooperatively with the Northern Regional Geriatric Center and delivered throughout Alaska, were sponsored by community organizations such as: Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Maniilaq Association in Kotzebue, Bristol Bay Native Association in Dillingham, Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation in Bethel and Tanana Chiefs Conference. The topics included: Culture Gap in the Care of the Elders, Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders, Healthy Paths to Successful Aging, Eden Philosophy, Prevention of Vulnerable Adult Abuse & Elder Mistreatment, Elder Behavioral Health & Rural Practice. All seminars were open to students, community members and professionals.

“Gero-specialists” are in high demand. The Social Work Department will continue to sustain efforts to enrich our curriculum with aging related issues so that students have the opportunity to enjoy the many possibilities of delivering services to families across the generations. \$

## Dr. Judy Shepherd receives J. William Fulbright Senior Scholarship

Dr. Judy Shepherd, Chair of the Social Work Department, was awarded a J. William Fulbright Scholarship during the 2006-2007 academic year. This prestigious award allowed Dr. Shepherd to conduct research and teach at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in St. Augustine, Trinidad. While at UWI Dr. Shepherd developed and taught a new class, titled Social Work Practice in Rural Communities, served as a guest lecturer in nine classes and supervised students in field placement at a home for children who are HIV positive and in the thoracic unit at the Eric Williams Medical Complex. Additionally, she conducted a seminar for field instructors on rural social work, a training for guidance counselors and social workers at the Ministry of Education on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and a seminar at the Center for Gender Affairs and Development on domestic violence in rural communities. Dr. Shepherd's community service included a television interview to educate about domestic violence interventions and participation as a panel member discussing boys' school failure for a radio talk show. Academically, she presented two papers at the Caribbean Social Work Educators Conference in Trinidad. While taking full advantage of the academic and research opportunities available at UWI, Dr. Shepherd found time to attend numerous cultural events including Carifesta, the Tobago Jazz Festival, and of course, Carnival.

Before Dr Shepherd ended her Fulbright year last spring, she was invited by the Dean of the UWI Department of Behavioral Sciences to return for the fall semester as a Visiting Lecturer to teach two graduate courses, Skills in Critical Analysis: Critical Thinking and Practice for Social Work, and Advanced Social Work Theory and Methods: Risk, Abuse and Resilience. UAF granted her a one-semester leave of absence to partake in this opportunity.

Dr. Shepherd fell in love with the people, culture and weather of the Caribbean, and is hoping to develop an ongoing relationship with UWI and the UAF Social Work Department in the future. While at UWI, Dr. Shepherd developed a new course for UAF, SWK 330; Seminar in International Social Work, which will explore the impact of globalization on poor women and children throughout the world. This course will be offered in the fall of 2008.

Students, faculty and staff are proud of all she accomplished and eagerly welcomed her December return. Judy arrived just in time for some 40 below weather and national accreditation work. She has lots of ideas and energy and is excited to add an international perspective to the UAF social work curriculum.



## Indigenous Voices Conference



"Indigenous Voices: Not Lost in Translation," a conference sponsored by the University of Hawaii School of Social Work and the Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center on June 4<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> 2007, in Honolulu, brought professionals and scholars together from North America, Hawaii, New Zealand/Aotearoa and beyond to listen and learn from indigenous voices. Judy Shepherd, Social Work Director and Heidi Brocious, Clinical Assistant Professor, together with a panel of students, gave a presentation on UAF's cohort model as an example of an innovative way to offer an academic program for rural indigenous social workers. Faculty from Hawaii and other places were interested in the UAF program and the possibilities that similar programs might offer their students.

The conference provided an opportunity for UAF faculty and students to learn from indigenous social workers from other parts of the world, and to observe social work intervention programs that drew on Hawaiian Polynesian cultural traditions. UAF student Mona Perdue said, "Even though we are miles apart, our techniques are not all that different in that we always turn back to our cultures' basics of restoring harmony."

(Pictured above, Mona Purdue, one of the 5 student presenters. Others included Lucy Apatiki, Lindsey Kinegak, Robert Curtis, and Jennifer Dale.)

time and support with others. Interdependence and reciprocity are values that I have grown up with in my Native culture and I believe they are also very compatible with who I am as a social worker.

I am excited and energized to be in a position to create change and work for a brighter and stronger future for our children and grandchildren. There is much left to do and experience and though it can be overwhelming it is also important work and by taking on the challenge we honor those who came before us and those who will be here when we are gone. Dogidih! Thank You!



## ALASKA NATIVE SOCIAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION, STUDENT CLUB

Written by UAF SWK graduate

Jordan Lewis

(published in *The New Social Worker* magazine, Spring 2008)

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) is home to a unique social work club that promotes and celebrates diversity within the field of social work. The Alaska Native Social Workers Association (ANSWA) is a student club that enhances cultural awareness in the human services fields and provides support to those students planning to work in rural settings, with an emphasis on Native peoples. This year the ANSWA club has reached out to distance delivery students who are working on their BSW's from their home communities, primarily in rural villages across Alaska. As a social work club that promotes diversity and supports Alaska Native social work students, it is important that all interested students are able to get involved, regardless of where they live. The distance student club members are very active in the club and serve as our voice across the State, providing us with an opportunity to reach out to others outside of Fairbanks. Without the involvement of our

distance club members, ANSWA would be unable to reach out to rural villages and support those in need. This past Christmas 2007, ANSWA supported two families in the villages of Kotzebue and Gamble with boxes of dry goods and winter clothing.

As a predominantly rural State, Alaska possesses unique challenges for social workers and it is our hope as a club to introduce and teach students how to effectively work with rural communities and individuals who may come from a different cultural background. The diversity of Alaska Native cultures gives the State character and uniqueness, but also presents challenges in the delivery of social services, and it is the goal and mission of ANSWA to participate in community activities and promote cultural awareness within our own communities. This student club gives students a unique perspective on the field of social work, understanding the challenges and rewards of serving rural Native communities.

The Social Work Department at the University of Alaska Fairbanks is very unique among Social Work programs throughout the United States. The Social Work program has three modalities of teaching: on-campus, distance-based, and the cohort. Staff have an opportunity to teach face-to-face, to utilize audio-conferencing capabilities and other technology, and/or teaching with the cohort students (group of students from rural areas moving together through the program that are committed to staying in their home communities upon graduation.) This uniqueness provides access to all people and communities throughout the state of Alaska, as well as develops collaboration and communication between urban and rural communities and between a number of different cultures. The program also enhances the capacity of rural communities to keep and to gain qualified individuals that are committed to staying and working in their home communities. It is our hope that other Universities can follow our example of reaching out to rural communities, building on their strengths and working collaboratively to improve the field of social work and the lives of those we work with. ANSWA and the UAF Social Work Department continue to reach out to rural students, continually striving to bridge the rural/urban divide and strengthening the social work profession one student at a time.



## UAF Social Work Graduates go on to seek their MSWs

Several recent graduates of UAF's social work program have gone on MSW programs at other schools including:

**Wendy Weston**, a 2007 graduate who lives in Ketchikan and completed her degree through distance delivery courses has recently begun her MSW at the University of Alaska, Anchorage in their advanced standing, distance program. Wendy states that she has continued to work on her social work education by learning more about effective policy advocating, and she is pleased that how her Bachelor's degree class has prepared her for her graduate work. Good Luck Wendy!

**Barbara Laman**, also a 2007 graduate of our program, has also begun her MSW journey through UAA's distance program. Barbara completed her senior practicum in 2006, doing her internship at the Office of Children's Services in Ketchikan. After a year of working at local agencies, along with finishing up a few courses, she graduated from UAF in 2007, and has begun UAA's program this fall. Congratulations and good luck to Barbara as well.

## FAREWELL MICHAEL!

For 17 years Michael D. Kelly, District Supervisor for the Fairbanks Office, of Alaska's Division of Juvenile Justice has served as a field instructor for social work students from the UAF social work program.

Anticipating retirement, Kelly reflects on his 21-year career in human services and states that working closely with UAF students entering the public service field was one of the more rewarding aspects of his job. By "providing UAF students the opportunity to combine years of bookwork to field application assists in building bridges to the community."

Placements at the Fairbanks Youth Facility have built lasting bridges. Over the years a number of practicum students gained employment with the division after graduation. Currently, Kelly's co-supervisor is a social work graduate from UAF. Thanks to Mr. Kelly, many other practicum students have left the facility after graduation with a better understanding of how to work with colleagues and clients in the corrections system.

Kelly was named the State of Alaska Juvenile Probation Officer of the year in 1991, and the UAF Justice Honor Society Person of the Year in 1993. He is the type of field instructor who, having had a valuable experience as an undergraduate intern, was eager to provide others that same educational opportunity.

**Thank you Michael, you will be missed.**

## A Collaborative Partnership

In 2006, Kim Husby MSW, was hired by the Office of Children's Services (OCS) Fairbanks Field Office to become the supervisor for the federally funded Title IV-E training grant which is administered through the State of Alaska's Department of Health & Social Services. As a former OCS supervisor from the Anchorage Field Office, Kim was especially qualified to take over the leadership of the unit, which oversees field placements for UAF senior students at OCS--the grant position had previously been held by a UAF social work faculty member.

An internship at OCS, available to social work students state wide, offers a great opportunity to learn the myriad skills required of a child protection worker. Interns have the opportunity to try on the role and hone their skills before taking on the caseload of a "real" employee. The consensus among graduates is that by the end of the two-semester practicum experience, they know what they are getting into. One former intern stated, "This is the best placement because you get to network with so many other agencies and programs. You learn about all the resources in the community."



Students accepted into the field placement internship at OCS receive monthly stipends and are required to sign contracts stating that within two months of graduation they will apply for any entry-level casework or licensing position in communities they have previously identified. If hired, they must work for at least one year. Since the program began in 1998, 23 interns have been hired and completed their commitment to OCS. Most interns remain at the Fairbanks Field Office, however one ended up working in the Barrow office, one in the Juneau office, and another in the Delta office.

Student interns who gain employment with OCS are more likely to remain employed in child protection beyond the national average of 18 months.

Please visit the Social Work Department web site for a copy of the stipend program's brochure.





## Voices: SWK Graduates Speak

Ade'Yixudz! Hello Everyone! My name is LaVerne Demientieff. I am a Deg' Hitan, Athabascan and my parents are the late Rudy and Alice Demientieff originally from Holy Cross, Alaska. I am the proud parent of one thirteen-year-old son named Khayree.

I currently hold a position as a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Social Work Department at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I am teaching Introduction to Social Work and Rural Social Work at this time and I really enjoy getting to know the students and being able to share my passion and enthusiasm for the field.

I received my BSW from UAF's Social Work Department and then went on and received my MSW from Washington University in St. Louis, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, with a concentration in social and economic development and with an emphasis in management. I also have an AAS in Early Childhood Education from UAF. I am presently pursuing my doctoral degree in social work through the Technology Enhanced Doctorate (TED) program at the University of Utah, School of Social Work. The TED program is a distance learning program that allows me to take classes from here in Alaska and attend six-week intensives in Salt Lake City in the course of three summers. My dissertation topic is to explore the concept of wellness with the Deg' Hitan people and understand the reciprocal relationships with language, culture, spirituality and environment. I feel that my BSW from UAF has given me a strong foundation in the knowledge, skills and values of the social work profession and I was fortunate to expand on that foundation in my MSW program, learning new skills and increasing my understanding and passion for the work, particularly in the areas of policy and social and economic development. The doctoral program will allow me to put my knowledge and skills to practice. Through my doctoral studies I have found an increasing interest in the field of research and in the area of teaching. I believe both of these areas of interest will allow me to work on behalf of Native people and communities and work towards awareness and understanding of diversity and social justice.

In my journey up to this point in my life I have come to realize and appreciate the importance of human relationships and the connection that we all have with each other on so many levels. The sacrifices and sorrows I have faced in my life don't just have an effect on me, and my successes and accomplishments are not only mine to be proud about. My family, friends and community have walked with me along the journey and many times lifted me up and supported me and now it is my time to give back by sharing my knowledge,

## Distance and Campus students gather in Fairbanks

Thanks to funding from the State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health, students taking courses via distance were able to gather in Fairbanks last April for training on the Assets model of risk reduction, by **Becky Judd**, Public Health Specialist. The two-day gathering was capped off by a potluck attended by students taking both campus-based and distance course work, all of whom were wrapping up their senior practicum year. The department would like to thank **Diane Casto** at the Division of Behavioral Health for her support and ongoing commitment to workforce-development by bringing up to the minute training opportunities to UAF's social work students!



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