

NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative

The Scholar Alumni E-Newsletter

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Jo Adams, Editor



A Scholar Success Story From the Buncombe County Department of Social Services Annual Report 2005/2006

In the summer of 2005, Buncombe County DSS hosted a skilled and insightful **MSW Collaborative Scholar from UNC-Chapel Hill**. In February 2006, she developed the DSS Kinship Care Handbook. This handbook, in conjunction with training, offers basic guidance to the kin caregivers and outlines information about DSS and providing safety and stability to children who cannot remain at home.

In a case this past year, In-Home Services successfully placed a child in a permanent home

with kinship caregivers while maintaining a connection with the birth family. Utilization of the DSS Kinship Care Handbook and support training represents partnering with families in a strength-based, family-focused way to support child safety, family connections, and permanence. The agency is fortunate that the intern who developed the Kinship Care Handbook returned to work in the In-Home Division.

Child Welfare Coordinators Participate in 85th Annual Social Services Institute, Hosted by NCACDSS

by Jo Adams

The NC Child Welfare Collaborative Coordinators were sharing their outcomes for success at the Social Services Conference this fall.



Gwen Clark, UNC-W Coordinator

Gwen Clark, Coordinator from UNC-Wilmington, and others from the University and New Hanover County DSS held a session on Building Success for Workers and Families. The New Hanover DSS and CPS has implemented an ongoing weekly MRS training and consultation program with 12 line workers and supervisors focused on a rigorous curriculum designed with the assistance of the Strengths Collaborative at UNC-W. This small group was chosen to test the impact of an extensive ongoing training program in strengths-based and solution-focused collaborations between workers and customers. The intention has been to learn how workers, supervisors and customers might benefit from staff having a

greater understanding of the strengths-based perspective and solution-focused social service practice and the opportunity to participate in weekly consultation and training. The presentation briefly outlined the rationale for creating this initiative, the content of the training, the training process, and the successful outcomes for staff and customers.



Dan Beerman, JMSW Coordinator

Dan Beerman, Coordinator from JMSW, conducted a session on "Ethical Issues in the DSS Setting, Part I & II." The DSS setting has a unique set of practice issues that can create ethical challenges. This workshop provided a framework for decision making using the NASW Social Work Code of Ethics. Dan used examples gathered from the DSS community and participants for ethical discussions. Ethical issues covered included dual relationship, client self-determination, confidentiality and issues that arise while working with non-voluntary clients (CPS, APS and court ordered).



Deb Ryals, ECU Coordinator

Deb Ryals, Coordinator from East Carolina University, was the Master of Ceremonies at the Best Practice Awards Luncheon. She announced the award winners recognizing the best practices in North Carolina's Department of Social Services.



Melvia Batts, Nash Co. DSS, ECU Scholar

Among the winners was an **ECU scholar**, Melvia Batts, from Nash County DSS for *DV Screening Tool Used in Child & Family Team Meetings*.

There were other scholars and Coordinators at the conference.



Deborah Hairr, NC State University Coordinator



Rhonda James, ECU Scholar, now working at Washington Co. DSS



John Benton, NC State & ECU Scholar, working at Johnston Co. DSS



Sara Osborne & Krissy Thomason, ECU Scholars working on their MSW's.



Karma Warren, ECU scholar, working at Washington Co. DSS

ATTENTION SCHOLARS

February 23, 2007 8:30 am-4:30pm
NC CHILD WELFARE COLLABORATIVE
STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

Disparities and Inequalities in Child Welfare-Reaching for Solutions
Located in the Raleigh-Durham Area

No charge for Collaborative Scholars (current students and alumnae). We will feature guest speakers from the Breakthrough Collaborative, a national child welfare initiative funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as well as North Carolina professionals who are truly putting solutions into practice.

If your address has changed, contact your **University Coordinator**.

Appalachian State University

by Judith Wesson

Greetings from the mountains—which are reflecting an array of colors! As you recall this season draws “leaf lookers” which translate into more traffic and activity. As for activity—the Social Work Program is in an active mode. There are new faces amongst the familiar with Dr Leon Ginsberg as Program Director, and Mr. Griff Gilbert as part-time Instructor. Dr. Christian is on family leave this semester, but does bring the twins by occasionally. Amy, Drs Reed-Ashcraft, Renkert, Sprinkle, Green, Gross, and Kittle (part-time), as well as Ms. Dews, Ms. Kaplan, Mr. Powers, and I make up the program.

The 3 off-campus social work cohorts are Yadkin, Rutherford and Catawba. Social work field placements number 25 students in 23 different agencies/services. Progress with the MSW

Program is outstanding. Applications for Spring/2007 —part-time at Hickory Metrolina Educational Center, Hickory, NC are being reviewed. The full-time on-campus MSW classes begin Fall/2007.

The praises, compliments and comments regarding your work, social work knowledge, and preparedness for Child Welfare services are a pleasure to hear and receive. Always remember you were an outstanding student/scholar at ASU and I know you are just as outstanding in the agency setting. The Collaborative is making a difference! From May/2006 graduating Scholars, all are employed: Hillary Hedrick went to Alexander DSS, Dia Carswell went to Burke DSS, Tonda Lowman returned to Iredell DSS and Jennifer Hall was deferred to attend Advanced –Standing MSW

at UNC-C. Plus 5 of the 6 graduating waiver students took positions as DSS Child Welfare social workers. This semester, we have 9 Scholars (remember the extra money last year really aided in the selection of extra scholars). There are 5 Scholars in field placements: Lauren Cho and Jessica Peedin at Watauga DSS, Shea Laws at Cabarrus DSS, Cassie Snyder at Mecklenburg DSS, and Tracy Reavis at Iredell DSS. These Scholars will graduate in December along with 4 waiver students currently in DSS field placements. Hopefully that equates to 9 Collaborative trained graduates entering the DSS workforce across the state. Come spring/2007, one full-time slot is

available ---that may bring back memories of the interview process and selection. Changes to the BSW package may be of interest to you--- recruitment focuses on BSWs with 3 or less semesters before graduation; awards \$4,000 per semester and requires a 6 months employment commitment for each semester awarded (with a one year minimum).

We are trying to schedule a trip to a conference or workshop for fall semester ---so hope to have photos after that. Take care! Judith C. Wesson, Child Welfare Education Coordinator

JMSW

by Maura Nsonwu

JMSW 2006 graduates, Alanna Alexander, Jessica Brinkley, and Sarah Dix were used to working collaboratively on school projects when they were students. They also relied on each other for emotional support and child care assistance during their busy academic schedules. Jessica recalls "It is all about having support. I know I would have not been able to get through graduate school without the support of my classmates since I do not have family nearby". As newly hired child welfare social workers at Forsyth County Department of Social Services, they have transferred this model of cooperation to the work place. Jessica and Alanna are mothers of preschoolers, Paige and Cristian respectively. They understand the delicate balance of family and work especially in a work environment that has to be flexible to the time schedules and needs of their clientele. Therefore they have put into place support and child care arrangements that mirror the collaborative effort that they learned to value in graduate school. Upon accepting employment at DSS, Jessica and Alanna decided to place their children in the same daycare, First Assembly Preschool in Winston Salem. This childcare arrangement allows them to assist each other when they need to work late or if an emergency arises. As Foster Cares workers, Alanna and Sarah are able to plan out their day easier than Jessica who works in Family Assessment and must be flexible to respond to the crisis. Although Sarah does not have children of her own she has graciously assisted Jessica and Alanna in picking up their children at childcare. In addition to this

pragmatic childcare arrangement, Alanna, Jessica and Sarah have been a valuable resource for each other in providing camaraderie, networking and consultation to each other in their work. Jessica sums it up "It is all about having support. I know I would not have been able to get through graduate school without the support of my classmates since I do not have family nearby". We applaud these graduates who have learned that this strategy of supporting one another not only benefits child welfare workers in balancing their responsibilities at home but it also models resilience and retention in the workplace.



Sarah Dix, Jessica Brinkley and Alanna Alexander (left to right).

UNC-Chapel Hill

by Joanne Caye

Child Interviewing in Chapel Hill

The Chapel Hill Child Welfare Class spent Monday evening, October 17, interviewing children between the ages of 3 and 16. the purpose of the class was to practice the Cognitive Interviewing method, used by professionals nationally to interview victims and suspected offenders of sexual abuse. It is a legally recognized way to encourage a child to talk about a situation, without leading them. It also supports accurate information gather, because the interviewer at one point, asks the person to recall the incident(s) in reverse. Most people are not able to maintain fabrication backwards.

18 children spend a couple hours at the School of Social Work in Chapel Hill. The children watched a video based on their age, and then were interviewed by the Scholars who did not see the video, and had about a three sentence summary of the situation presented in the video.

After the experience, the Scholars talked about their experience. One student talked about a young child who wasn't terribly interested in

speaking. "My child was a safe!" the student said. "Didn't want to open up." Another reaction was about young people who were aware of degrees of lying, and asked questions about it. Some children were from other cultures, and were sometimes hard to understand. One student (who has children of her own) was in amazement at how polite the young man she spoke to was. The presence of parents was sometimes a challenge. Another challenge came when a student spoke with a child who was very fidgety until the young lady said, "I can't talk anymore." The student worked to understand why the young girl couldn't talk anymore. Finally, she got her answer, "I need to go to the bathroom."

The Scholars felt like it was a good experience. Most said they started out pretty nervous, but relaxed as soon as they got started. The children got "goodie" bags at the end, and asked when they could come back again.

NC State University

by Deborah Hairr

NC State University welcomes three new collaborative students to our program. .



Brittany Waters

Brittany Waters & Nichole Roman are our Senior Scholars and Jordan McCoy has joined the program as a Waiver student. Brittany is our senior Scholar in Field. She is doing her field placement in Cleveland County under the supervision of Allison Clark. Brittany is having a positive field experience and is looking forward to a career in

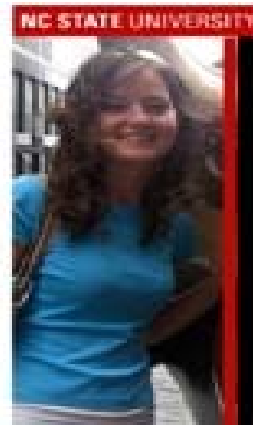
Child Welfare. Brittany is a good participant in seminar and is always willing to share things she is learning in her field placement with the other scholars.



Nicole Roman

Nichole Roman is a first semester senior and currently doing her 40 volunteer hours at Wake County Human Services under the supervision of Linda Buie. Last semester she gained experience in the adoption unit and this semester she has chosen to complete her volunteer hours in the foster care unit. Nichole is sure of her career path and hopes to one day make a difference in a child's life.

Jordan joins us as a waiver student this semester. She plans to interview for a scholar position in Fall of 2007. Jordan is an adventurous and has spent many summers working at camp Rockfish in Parkton, North Carolina. She plans to spend a semester aboard in Singapore this spring and experience a little bit of Southeast Asia culture.



Jordan McCoy

NC State Welcomes these new professional to a career in Child Welfare.

East Carolina University

by Beth Osborne

ECU WELCOMES NEW CWEC ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



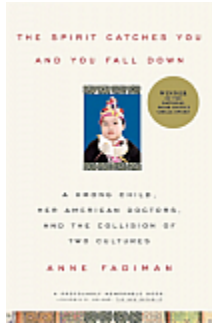
Betty Ann Hardy, ECU's new Administrative Assistant

After considering more than 85 applicants for the East Carolina CWEC Program Assistant IV position vacant since the spring, Betty Ann Hardy was welcomed into the position on October 23, 2006. While new to the position, Betty had to only move 'next door' to her new office in Rivers 219-A, as she had been employed in a temporary position with the School of Social Work Field Education Office since June.

Betty is pleased to be a part of the ECU/CWEC team and looks forward to working with scholar grads and current scholars. Betty can be reached at (252) 328-2410 should you have Collaborative questions, concerns or simply want to say 'welcome aboard.'

Betty is originally from Hawaii but after 16 years here, considers Pitt County 'home.' She currently resides in Greenville with her 16-month-old son, Conner.

CWEC 'Book Club' Established at ECU



Step aside Oprah, the newly established 'ECU Collaborative Scholar Book Club' is up and running! This year, all ECU Scholars have committed to reading two books (in addition to their assigned class readings) and meeting monthly to discuss the relevance of these readings for child welfare practice. Being read and discussed during the Fall 2006 semester is *The Spirit Catches You and Then You Fall Down*, by Anne Fadiman. This book has won numerous literary awards including the National Book Critics Circle Award for General Non-fiction. *Not My Sister's Keeper*, by Jodi Picoult has been chosen as the Spring 2007 semester selection. This second selection has won numerous awards also, including the Margaret Alexander Edwards Award given by the American Library Association. Scholar feedback received thus far regarding the Collaborative Book Club

experience has been very positive and it is anticipated that the CWEC/ECU Book Club may in fact become another ECU Scholar tradition.



The ECU/CWEC Book Club meets on the fourth Monday of each month from 12:00 until 1:00 pm and utilizes an informal book club style format. Off-campus students will be participating in discussions of the selected books via Blackboard.

Scholars grads are invited to 'read along' with us and to join us for the monthly meetings should your schedule allow. Call Betty Hardy in the Collaborative Office at 252-328-2419 for details.

ECU Scholars Select Projects

For the first time in the history of the ECU Collaborative Program, Collaborative Scholar are expected to choose a project to get involved with and work on during the academic year. Available projects include some that are appropriate for BSW scholars who are graduating in December, while others are appropriate for BSW's who will be in the program all year. Projects more suitable for 1st year and 2nd year MSW scholars are also available.

At this time, all ECU CWEC scholars have signed up for at least 1 project for the year. They will work as a part of a team, with each team expected to meet, select needed leadership and to develop their plan for project completion. Each team is to report periodically to the faculty liaison assigned to the project and are expected to present their completed project to Collaborative students, other classes, faculty or conferences. Each team will

prepare a report of the work of the group. This report may be in the form of a paper, a PowerPoint presentation, a narrated video, etc.

Projects available for 2006-07 include:

Parenting Groups/Classes: This group will review the types of parenting groups and classes being made available to (or sometimes required) for recipients of DSS child welfare services. What does the research tell us works and what doesn't? What does it take to get a group started? Who is appropriate for attendance?, etc.

Working with parents with mental illness: Child welfare social workers often work with parents and other caretakers with diagnosed (and undiagnosed) mental illnesses. These include, but are not limited to: Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Depression, etc. Changes in the delivery of mental health services in North Carolina during the past

few years have made it more important than ever that we understand how to both identify and serve these parents. Scholars in this group will explore how to recognize the signs and symptoms of some of the more prevalent DSM diagnoses. How to effectively work with this population, including the use of LCSWs in DSS in serving these families, will be explored.

Safe Surrender Act Public Awareness Campaign:

Many young people of childbearing age, including college students, are unaware of legislation which allows them to surrender an infant to certain agencies or individuals without question. This project involves planning and implementing a local public awareness campaign regarding the North Carolina Safe Surrender Act. Scholars will develop and carry out this campaign, which is to include news releases, information fliers, etc. A poster presentation capturing the highlights of the awareness campaign will complete the effort.

Child Abuse Prevention Month: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. This project involves the planning and implementation of awareness/prevention activities on campus and/or in select counties for the month. Scholars will develop and plan a blue ribbon campaign and a ceremony on campus. Media coverage will be coordinated and a paper or PowerPoint describing the work of the awareness campaign will be completed.

Monthly Forums: This group will plan, organize and host a forum one Monday night each month during the year. Scholars will select the topics of the forums, invite speakers, and make all necessary arrangements.

Foster Care Transitional Boxes: Children age out of foster care at age 18 (or 21). While some go on to college and others go to work, all go out to live on their own. This project involves collecting donations of kitchen and bedroom/bath goods needed. A list of necessary items will be developed along with a plan for collecting and distributing the items. Contact will be made with selected counties to determine the number of boxes that will be needed and items will be collected for foster children transitioning to adulthood. Other ECU College of Human Ecology units will be involved.

Image building for social work: The specific activities in this project are being developed. Deb Ryals is writing a plan for image building/speakers bureau/media coverage for the Social Services Director's Association. The intent is to retain child welfare social workers by building the image of the position and aiding counties in recruiting staff and getting 'good press.' The group will be working closely with Debbie to identify the specific tasks needed.

Recidivism in Child Welfare: The distance education scholars will be doing a special project for their field placements. They are reviewing cases and interviewing repeat clients to determine what could have been done and what can be done in the future to avoid repeat referrals for children and their families. Near the end of the school year, the scholars will present their findings, conclusions and recommendations. This presentation will be to all students and perhaps at our statewide conference.

Child Advocacy: Students on this project will be working closely with Dan Beerman of the JMSW Program and the Collaborative Advocacy Committee. The group will work to organize activities with the Legislature, lead Collaborative in letter writing campaigns and will prepare position papers on bills before the NC Legislature.

If you are interested in serving as a resource person for any of the above mentioned Scholar group projects, please telephone Betty Hardy, ECU CWEC Office at 252-328-2410. Everyone is invited to be a part of this exciting new initiative at East Carolina University and to stay tuned for project updates in this newsletter.

We Need Your Stories

If you have a story for the Alumni Newsletter, please email them to jeadams@email.unc.edu or call me at 919-962-6452. Everyone at the Collaborative knows you are doing wonderful work in your practice and we would like to share that with other scholars. The next newsletter will be in the spring of 2007.