On April 15, 2009 the North Carolina Child Welfare Education Collaborative at UNC Chapel Hill and the Collaborative Central Office hosted the North Carolina Statewide Child Welfare Collaborative Training Institute. The focus of this event was on secondary traumatic stress and its effect on practitioners and their work. Josephine and David Pryce, authors of “Secondary Traumatic Stress and the Child Welfare Professional” facilitated the training. The event included 160 child welfare scholars, employees and faculty who were interested in learning how to identify and develop coping skills for STS in child welfare work.

A highlight of the day was keynote speaker, Dr. Nancy Dickinson, Executive Director of the Jordan Institute for Families. Dr. Dickinson’s speech entitled “Rocket Science” reminded scholars that child welfare work was not rocket science, it’s harder. She also encouraged participants to remember that they make a difference in the lives of families. Specifically, she asked that they offer their services when case plans were written and take the time to use their skills with families, rather than solely referring services to other professionals.

(You can read the entire speech at the end of the Newsletter.)
could attend to learn more about budgeting and the cost of actual real world items. She was able to get many businesses in the community involved and the youth were able to walk out with bags of ‘goodies.’ She also conducts monthly LINKS meetings that keep the youth interested and wanting to participate. One youth said they would they would never come to any LINKS events before because they were boring until Social Worker Carson started planning them. Some of the recent topics have been self-defense, game night, postponing pregnancy, and crime prevention.

This is innovative because it is uncommon for foster care youth to want to participate in anything that is offered by Social Services. Many of the teenagers now actually look forward to the LINKS meetings and activities because of Shante’s enthusiasm and creativeness. She has motivated the youth to become involved and learn important skills that they will need to know once they are out of foster care. Shante works hard on everything that she does and puts her heart into working with the teenagers in Pitt County.

Kelli Clay received the Outstanding Field Instructor for 2009. Kelli is not only a Field Instructor at Pitt Co. DSS in Foster Care; she is an 2005, MSW scholar graduate form East Carolina University. Kelli completed her employment contract at Pitt Co. in 2006. She has worked there for almost 4 years; three years beyond her obligation. Kelli was nominated because she has made field an interesting, wonderful experience for scholar interns. She allows them to learn the way that is most helpful to the intern and offers suggestions along the way. She is very knowledgeable and has shared much of her experience in foster care with the interns. Her stories and experiences have helped to make scholar interns better social workers. Kelli is great about answering questions for interns and motivates them to do a good job. She gives feedback for improvement and is patient and willing to work with interns until they understand what they should do. Kelli models professional behavior in everything that she does. Many other individuals in the agency and youth in foster care look up to her because of the professional that she is.

Dan Beerman , MSW, M.Div., JMSW Coordinator received the Child Welfare Innovative Teaching & Learning Award. Dan began with the Collaborative in its early stages in 2000. He holds a MSW from Rutgers University and a M.Div. from the Princeton Theological Seminary. He worked at Forsyth County Department of Social Services for 21 years. At UNC-Greensboro he is an Assistant Professor; JMSW Coordinator of Child Welfare Education Collaborative; and Coordinator of the HES Summer Language and Cultural Immersion Program in Costa Rica. Dan sets up his child welfare class to bring in a panel of retired social workers to sit with students and reflect on the profession, its mission and their experience. His goal is to give students a better understanding of the context of their practice and an opportunity to learn from the collective wisdom of people who had worked in the DSS world for a long time. One of the things they talk about is how they survived—what kept them focused and able to handle the complexity of the work. They tell the scholars stories that would illustrate their perspective. Last year, Dan introduced a recently retired Guilford Co. DSS Director. The class met every two weeks for 2 ½ to 3 hours and was only for Collaborative students. During the class students were asked what they wanted to learn about the Department of Social Services. As told by one scholar, “the class was awesome. We each took away information that helps us in our practice. Each class was set up to go over the topics the scholars wanted to learn about, plus other information about how the agencies work. Dan brings to his class real people. He gives scholars a taste of what it’s really like to work in child welfare—good and bad. You find out things when you start working that most other workers don’t know.” Dan was also the NC-NASW 2009 Social Worker of the Year.

A very special award was presented to Nancy Dickinson, MSSW, PhD; The Leadership Award. Nancy is Executive Director of the Jordan Institute for Families at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work. She has also been the Collaborative Co-PI for the past ten years. Nancy has been a powerful leader and spokesperson for the Collaborative and was the one person who almost understood the Collaborative budget. We thank her for her leadership, dedication, vision and her commitment to the Collaborative. Nancy will be leaving in July for the University of Maryland at Baltimore.
NC CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE; Promoting a Qualified, Committed Child Welfare Workforce

By Selena Childs

For 10 years, the Child Welfare Education Collaborative has worked with social work students to prepare them for careers in child welfare. Collaborative graduates are making a difference for children and families in departments of social services all across our state. Collaborative Scholars stay in child welfare longer than others, and many graduates have moved into leadership roles in departments of social services. But even with the excellent work being done, there are still workforce challenges that are a part of our child welfare system.

If you work in the field of child welfare, then you know about some of the toughest workforce issues facing departments of social services today:

- High job vacancy rates
- Recruitment of qualified workers
- Staff retention

The Impact of Workforce Issues

In North Carolina there are over 2500 social workers in child welfare positions. 73% of new child welfare hires leave within five years. It takes an average of 71 days to fill a vacancy, and some counties have had vacancies for more than a year. Caseload standards could be met if all positions were filled, but approximately 31% of child welfare positions are vacant at any given time. Increased caseloads for remaining workers and supervisors lead to increased stress and increased worker turnover. And at the end of the day, high-risk families and children may not get the level of service they deserve.

What’s Being Done to Address Workforce Issues?

Funded for five years by the Children’s Bureau (US Department of Health and Human Services), the NC Child Welfare Workforce Collaborative is designed to address workforce issues in child welfare. The Workforce Collaborative will build on the NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative and the Recruitment and Retention Project in two main ways:

1. By providing leadership and management education for Master of Social Work (MSW) students and county Department of Social Services (DSS) staff.

2. By looking at the big picture and helping with system-wide workforce planning for child welfare/social services in NC.

- The Workforce Collaborative establishes additional child welfare traineeships for MSW students employed in DSS (Leadership Scholars). Like other Collaborative scholars, Leadership Scholars receive funds for school and commit to working in child welfare positions in NC following graduation as repayment for school. Currently Leadership Scholar slots are filled by students enrolled in the UNC-CH School of Social Work, but as the project moves forward the plan is to partner with other NC universities with MSW programs and include students from those schools.
- A new MSW course Leadership and Management in Public Child Welfare is being developed. The on-line course will be available to Leadership Scholars and others including DSS staff. DSS staff will not need to be enrolled in a MSW program to participate, but will be identified as “emerging leaders.” The course will be offered for the first time in the Spring 2011 semester.

“Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”

—Theodore Roosevelt
(1858–1919)
Speech in New York, September 7, 1903

Pilot counties will implement an assessment and planning practice model that will be evaluated, then turned into a manual and made available statewide.

- The Workforce Collaborative will be available to assist counties with current workforce needs by connecting them to resources such as Recruitment and Retention Project tools, supervisors training, and other existing resources depending on individual county needs.

The Workforce Collaborative is funded for five years, until September 2013. Leadership Scholars have already been recruited for the first year, the leadership and management course development is underway, and a comprehensive assessment is underway to provide a foundation for system-wide planning.

For more information about the Workforce Collaborative, contact:

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NC Child Welfare Workforce Collaborative
UNC-CH School of Social Work
325 Pittsboro Street, CB# 3550
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550
sbchilds@email.unc.edu
919-843-8144
A Service of the Children’s Bureau.

Spring 2009
The Child Welfare Collaborative of Appalachian State University is completing another academic year: 2008–2009, which is our 17th semester. We joined the North Carolina Child Welfare Education Collaborative during spring semester, 2001 or 8½ years ago! This semester has been so successful but exerting in regards to the economic status within the state, which has caused a close look at all services and funding—including the Collaborative. You have been receiving updates and requests to advocate for the Child Welfare Collaborative by speaking, calling, writing, or e-mailing; thanks for doing so. The beginning statements relate to looking back at our contributions: numbers of selected child welfare scholars; employed Scholars electing to remain with DSS in child welfare positions beyond her/his collaborative obligation; and impacting over 25% of the counties/communities of North Carolina with your preparation, education, professionalism, and commitment to improving lives of children and families. Is it any wonder—that ASU, the Collaborative, and especially I, are proud and grateful for your contribution!

Now for the updates:

- In January, 2009—four new CW Scholars were selected. They were Kelli Bowman (Shelby cohort), Cara Martin and Chelsey Cansler (on-campus cohort) and Laura Harrison (Wilkes cohort). These new selectees joined the returning six CW Scholars: Tina Cline, Alicia Storie, Janet Minton, Amanda Moore, Jessica Lo, and Amanda Gillespie, bringing the total to ten scholars representing all cohorts: Catawba, on-campus, Shelby and Wilkes.

- Janet, Alicia, Tina, and Amanda G. completed field placements at four different county departments of social services respectively: Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, and Watauga. Likewise each is looking forward to graduating on May 10th.


- The three graduating Child Welfare Scholars of Dec/2008 are employed with Caldwell DSS (Lindsey Morgan), Catawba DSS (Sasha Flora) and Harnett DSS (Erin Selm).

- Congratulations, on completing your employment obligations, to those former graduates: Angel Richardson, Tracy Reavis Gregory, Dawn Cole, Rachel Williams, Jessica Peedin, Cassie Snyder Moore, Regina Drake, Tanesha Williams, and Amy Storie Horney; plus those with completion dates in May: Michelle Cole, Rici Goodhue Reid, and Athena Sparks.

- For spring semester, there were nine waiver students in eight different county departments of social services completing child welfare field placements.

- SW 3540: Competencies in Child Welfare class (pre-service) was offered twice this semester to on-campus and with the Wilkes cohort. This course was reviewed and approved by ASU as an elective course for BSWs. A separate review of this course was completed by the NCCWEC and the NC Division of Social Services, with approving the class for MSWs.

- Regarding MSWs—that first class of students are graduating next week. There are no service awards for MSWs—just BSWs—but curriculum approval allows MSW Waiver status.

- The Social Work Department is currently undergoing (as I write to you) the site visit for the Initial Accreditation for MSW Program. Lots of time and hard work applied to this.

- Summer and fall semester additions to the Social Work Department will be Dr. Gail Leedy as Chair of the Social Work Department and two new faculty members.

This time with you, via the printed words, always reminds me that the semesters and the years pass too quickly, however you are thought of often!

Take care,

Judith C. Wesson
Child Welfare Education Coordinator
ECU Scholar Grad Named Nash County DSS Director

In February of this year, ECU Scholar Graduate Melvia K. Batts was named Director of the Nash County Department of Social Services. She becomes the second NC-CWEC scholar graduate to serve in this capacity in North Carolina. Melvia began her DSS career with the Nash County agency 14 1/2 years ago as a Social Worker Trainee in foster care and reports she never dreamed that she would someday be leading the agency. Melvia acknowledges the importance of being employed by an agency that valued training and higher education as a means of strengthening practice and improving outcomes for families and children.

In 1998 Melvia moved into a social work supervisor position at Nash County DSS in child welfare. Several years later, while a full-time employee, she enrolled in the MSW program at East Carolina University. When presented with the opportunity to become a Collaborative Scholar, Melvia reports “I knew it was a win-win situation, both for me and for all those in my circle of influence.” As a Director, Melvia’s circle of influence has expanded beyond the agency where she is employed into various community and political realms. “I’m able to network and advocate on behalf of not only families and children, but also on behalf of those who work diligently to serve them, the social work professionals.” Melvia is a current member of the NEED, Inc. Board of Directors, the Down East Partnership for Children Board of Directors, a Bridging the Gap Board of Directors, the Headstart Policy Council and the Jordan Institute of Families ‘Leaders in Transition Academy.’ She served as a member of the ECU Scholar Selection Committee for the 2007-08 academic year and is a former member of the NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative Statewide Advisory Board.

Melvia was awarded her MSW in 2006 and has since completed her employment payback to the Collaborative. She remains a supporter of the program and the advanced skills and knowledge it provides to Scholars. When asked what advice she might have for other CWEC Scholar Graduates with aspirations of becoming a DSS Administrator or Director one day, Melvia provided the following: “I believe that with the advanced skills and knowledge one acquires as a Collaborative Scholar, it is almost impossible, given continued commitment to the profession, not to advance into positions of increasing responsibility and to not make a more profound impact on child welfare, whether it is through direct or indirect practice.”

Congratulations Melvia, on your many accomplishments and your piece of CWEC history. We can definitely hear the sound of the bar being raised.

ECU Makes a ‘Collaborative Effort’ to Benefit Foster Children

In early January 2009, the ECU Graduate Association of Social Work (GASW) began brainstorming possible service projects for spring semester. Child Welfare Education Collaborative scholars that were active in the Association suggested the GASW join with the Collaborative to collect suitcases for area children in foster care. Anyone that has been involved with the removal of a child from their home knows that this is a last resort measure to assure safety and that it can be a very traumatizing event for the child. To have these children move into or out of foster care with their possessions in a trash/garbage bag should be avoided if at all possible.

The idea of a suitcase drive was a hit with the other members of the GASW, to say the least. Collaborative Scholars made and posted fliers and suitcase collections began. Dr. Paige Averett, faculty advisor for the GASW, generously volunteered to keep track of collections. The GASW collected suitcases from February until April and response to the drive was phenomenal. Students and faculty from across the ECU campus donated a variety of new and gently used suitcases, duffle bags, etc. While most of the donated items came directly from individuals within the College of Human Ecology, some came from friends and family members of students and faculty members. When the suitcase drive ended, a total of 36 tote bags, 18 duffle bags, 15 suitcases, nine backpacks, seven purses, and one garment bag had been collected. The donated...
items were then given to several of the Departments of Social Services that had served as a field placement agency for Master of Social Work scholars. DSS agencies receiving the benefits of this very successful CWEC/GASW ‘collaborative effort’ included: Wilson, Pitt, Bladen and Beaufort Counties.

ECU graduating MSW scholars encourage and challenge Collaborative programs at other schools to ‘top’ their numbers with a similar service project.

The ECU Collaborative program sends their congratulations and best wishes to The May 2009 ECU Scholar Graduates

**MSW Graduates**
- Thomas E. Burke
- Whitney Stroud Moore
- Kimberly M. Butts
- Havah Navarro-Henzler
- Rufus Scott Brown
- Kathy B. Parker
- Jean-Marie Hawkins
- Shannon M. Pennington
- Amber Perry McMichael
- Crystal A. Teachey

**BSW Graduates**
- Leslie Magen Kite
- Melanie Davenport
- Doneika Harris

Two Generations of Child Welfare Scholars

This past Spring semester, the NC-CWEC at East Carolina University conducted it’s second BSW Scholar Selection of the year, selecting four new scholars and four waiver students. The selection of one of these scholars, Jasmine Jordan, marked another ‘first’ for the now 10-year-old Collaborative Program. Jasmine is the daughter of 2008 Collabortive BSW Scholar Graduate Oglatha Woodard. Jasmine, an ECU Junior, is the first ‘second-generation child welfare scholar.’ Jasmine’s mother is quite proud of daughter’s choice of social work as a career. Oglatha, a licensed foster parent for many years, enrolled as a non-traditional student at Wilson Community College after being laid off by her previous employer. She transferred to ECU after completing her 2-year degree and was a commuter student while daughter Jasmine enrolled as a freshman and lived on campus. Oglatha is now employed with Edgecombe County Department of Social Services as a child welfare social worker and she reports that she finds the work very rewarding and the right choice for her. She continues her work as a licensed foster parent. During a telephone conversation with Oglatha soon after she had learned about her daughter’s selection, Oglatha commented that she did not know which of the two of them was the more excited! “I am so pleased for her...I know that this is what she has always wanted to do after college.”

East Carolina University Scholars, Alums and Faculty at the Training Institute, April 2009
JOINT MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM
AT UNC GREENSBORO AND NC A&TSU

by Dan Beerman

JMSW was built on the partnership between NC A&TSU and UNC Greensboro. The combination of a historically black university and the former women’s college of the system brings a unique focus on two of the preeminent civil rights issues of the last century: racial and gender justice.

We are pleased that as of 2009 NC A&TSU BSW program has joined us by seeking and obtaining status as a waiver program. The BSW programs at A&TSU and UNC Greensboro each had six waiver students this year as we celebrate another level of partnership! Congratulations to NC A&TSU and thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Watson, their BSW Director for her work in making this happen.

Advanced Standing

This was the first year of opening the JMSW program for advanced standing students. In May we will graduate four advanced standing students. These students came to us from BSW programs at UNCG, NC A&TSU and NCSU.

Advocacy

We were pleased to be able to bring our whole contingent of child welfare scholars to the NASW Lobby Day in Raleigh on March 18. Participants did a great job in working the legislature and helping support the Collaborative and other issues of legislative importance. We organized a second mini lobby day event with faculty and students in early April.

Foster Care Chronicles

In partnership with the Guilford County Department of Social Services the JMSW Scholars continued to work with the Foster Care Chronicles project, which was, funded through a grant form the UNC Greensboro Office of Leadership and Service Learning. Now it its second year, the project has used narrative therapy models to help foster youth capture and tell their stories in a theatrical setting. Scholars Denise Tyler, Amy Jackson and Natasha Fisher and child welfare waiver La’Shanda Daniels each worked with foster youth on Saturday sessions throughout the fall and winter. A JMSW/NC-CWEC alumni, Alicia Kaplan, who currently works in Guilford County DSS as a therapist, served as the director and producer of this project.

Our 2009 MSW May Graduates

Top, L-R, Minda Howze Barefoot, Meredith Wilson, Emily Owen, Kimberly Armbrust, Jacquelynn Trueitt, Bottom, L-R, Alexia Duggins, Adrienne Thompson, Susan Shore, Stacie Hazelwood, Linda Atack, Denise Tyler

BSW Grads from NC A&TSU

Sha’Tanga Caudle
Phylli Lockhart
Jonathan Long,
Ashley Shigg
Mya Speller
Precious Dixon

BSW Grads from UNCG

Michelle Campion
La’Shanda Daniels,
Amanda Johnson
Crystal Kellam
Holly Nowak
Heather Wakefield
**UNC Chapel Hill**
By Lisa Cauley

**UNC Chapel Hill Social Work/Law School Day**

The Chapel Hill Child Welfare Education Collaborative hosted its annual School of Social Work/Law School Mock Trial and Courtroom Training on March 21, 2009. The event was attended by all University Child Welfare Collaborative programs which included Appalachian State University, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina State University, UNC Pembroke, the Joint MSW program at UNC Greensboro and A&T, UNC Wilmington, and Western Carolina University.

Social work and law students engaged in mock trials, experienced testifying in court, and attended a 90-minute class on courtroom evidence and etiquette taught by attorney Alisa Huffman, Esq. The educational experience gave social work students, with career aspirations in child welfare, the opportunity to experience a court room environment and to testify on a witness stand, something most child welfare workers eventually experience.

Also participating in the event as acting judge was the Honorable Ann McKown, district judge in Durham County, and attorneys Judith Guibert, Esq. and Sydney Batch, Esq. who consulted with the students.

**UNC Chapel Hill Spring Celebrates Spring Graduates**

On May 9, 2009 seven Collaborative Scholars will be awarded their Master of Social Work degrees prepared for the child welfare workforce. This year’s scholars include Adrian Daye, Gordon Miller, Blair Payne, Rhonda Reese, Rae Marie Render, Danielle Turnage and Allison Sanders.

Gordon Miller, Blair Payne, Rhonda Reese, Rae Marie Render, Danielle Turnage and Allison Sanders have been busy interviewing for available positions. Collectively they have an interest in child welfare employment that spans North Carolina from the mountains to the coast! In addition to graduation festivities, our scholars were honored at a luncheon on May 4 at Shula’s restaurant in Chapel Hill. The UNC Chapel Hill Child Welfare Education Collaborative is proud of these scholars and excited about the skills and dedication they offer to the child welfare workforce.

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**UNC Charlotte Collaborative Program on the Move!**
By Suzanne Boyd

The winter and spring semesters have been a very exciting and busy time for the UNC Charlotte NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative Program, which received its funding on December 1, 2009. Dr. Suzanne Boyd, the Principal Investigator, commented, “We are grateful for the support that our University leadership has provided to this initiative.” According to Dr. Dennis Long, the Co-Principal Investigator, “Our experience with the Child Welfare Collaborative has been wonderful. It is an excellent example of public monies being used to promote the effective preparation of professional social workers for the protection and well-being of children.”

We are extremely proud to recognize eight BSW Child Welfare Scholars, four MSW Child Welfare Scholars, and four BSW Waiver Students.

Students listed below in bold will graduate on May 9, 2009:
We wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors as they enter the public child welfare field in DSS divisions across the state. As of May 9, 2009, UNC Charlotte will have a total of 6 Collaborative Scholar graduates (5 BSW/1 MSW) and 33 Waiver graduates (28 BSW/5 MSW); 39 graduates overall. Three BSW Scholars, three MSW Scholars, and seven Waiver students will continue their participation in the Collaborative Program. The Collaborative will host a celebration event on May 7, 2009, to honor our students and recognize the contributions and support provided by our University and Department faculty and staff.

A few program highlights are below:

Our program launched a Faculty Seminar Series, coordinated by Dr. Courtney Lynch, Collaborative Faculty, on February 27, 2009, and April 3, 2009, for Collaborative students. Five faculty members in the Department of Social Work presented on their respective research areas related to child welfare: (1) Dr. Jeffrey Shears — The Role of Fathering; (2) Dr. Susan McCarter — Juvenile Delinquency; (3) Dr. Shanti Kulkarni — Domestic violence; (4) Dr. Courtney Lynch — Foster Care Youth Aging Out; and (5) Dr. Robert Herman-Smith — Early Intervention for Abused/Neglected Children. Attendance at both events was extremely successful with 14 participants in February and 18 participants in April.

We hosted a graduation preparation workshop for Collaborative students on April 24, 2009. A panel discussion with three DSS Supervisors and one UNC Charlotte faculty member addressed topics including securing employment in DSS – Youth and Family Services, interviewing tips and resume development. Connie Polk, MSW (Cabarrus County, DYFS); Melanie Ward-Lowrance, MSW, P-LCSW (Gaston County, DYFS); Cindy Blizewski (Training Specialist, Mecklenburg County, DYFS) and Sue Marchetti, MSW, LCSW (Field Education Coordinator, UNC Charlotte) served as panelists. Amy Barsanti and Drs. Suzanne Boyd and Courtney Lynch also contributed to the content. This workshop provided students with information that is essential for a successful transition from school to employment in child welfare.

The contributions of the Collaborative team members have made for an extremely successful year here at UNC Charlotte. Dr. Courtney Lynch was instrumental in the creation of the faculty seminar series and graduate preparation workshop. Thanks to her outreach efforts with faculty and students, these events were well-attended. Through evaluation, she identified strengths of these events and areas that can be improved upon for future educational opportunities.

Sherry Anton, Program Assistant, has provided daily coordination with students and team members to ensure that the Collaborative runs smoothly. In late March, Sherry participated in the Collaborative database training at the Central Office. “The Collaborative Program has an exceptional database for tracking each and every Scholar and Waiver student as they progress through the program. Linda Pridgen-Braswell is an expert in all aspects of the database and I enjoyed my two days of database training in Chapel Hill because of her expertise,” according to Ms. Anton.

Amy Barsanti, LCSW, the Collaborative Faculty Liaison, has worked tirelessly with the students throughout the winter and spring semesters, supporting them as they approach graduation or their upcoming Collaborative field placement. She has conducted extensive outreach to extend the number of available placements in child welfare in surrounding counties. For relationship building purposes, she has visited the following county DSS agencies: Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Gaston, Lincoln, Cleveland, Iredell, Davidson, Union, Stanley, Rowan and Catawba. Sue Marchetti accompanied Amy on many of these visits. According to Ms. Barsanti, “face-to-face meetings provide
vital opportunities to develop professional relationships and alliances across the state.”

Connie Polk and Melanie Ward-Lowrance are part-time faculty who teach the BSW and MSW child welfare classes, respectively. They bring their rich first-hand experiences to the classroom and the students have greatly benefited from these qualified instructors.

Ana Liza Cisneros-Howard and Marlea Leary served as graduate assistants to the Collaborative this spring. Ana-Liza played a large role in the creation and evaluation of the faculty seminar series and the graduation preparation workshop. Marlea’s work focused on literature reviews and advocacy efforts in support of the continuation of the Collaborative.

As we wrap up the academic year at UNC Charlotte, we have much to celebrate. We are so proud of the many accomplishments of our students. Thanks to the dedicated efforts and teamwork of all the Collaborative staff, along with the support from our University and Department colleagues, we have provided our students with educational opportunities and support to benefit them as they enter the child welfare field.

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**

By Miriam Gold

The Collaborative at North Carolina State University is extremely proud of the eight scholar and six waiver students that participated in the program this past year. Our newest Collaborative students to our graduates are all committed to serving the children and families of North Carolina. Congratulations to our graduates; Glenna Boston, Jordan McCoy, Tiffany Montford-Raynor, Juanita Mendez, Miriam Abdulraheem, Nicholle Karim and Claire Middleton. This past semester our Collaborative seminar students visited the Healing Place of Wake County and learned about a peer recovery model as well as the agency’s work with families and children. Other seminar modules included Child Mental Health and Attachment; and work with resistant clients through Motivational Interviewing. Additionally, all the students enjoyed and benefited from the UNC Law School event. Clem McDonnell and Patricia Meardon did a great job participating in the mock trials.

NC State students have participated in Advocacy efforts during Lobby Day and two other trips to the State Legislature. These visits proved to be wonderful learning opportunities as well as critical opportunities to advocate for the Collaborative and North Carolina’s children and families. All the students were passionate and articulate. Glenna Boston and Nicholle Karim did a great job through their participation on the student panel at Lobby Day.

Interest in our MSW waiver program is growing. Their participation in the child welfare class and in the Collaborative has significantly increased and we look forward to the experience and contributions that they will bring to the program.

We would also like to extend a special thanks to all the Field Supervisors in Orange, Durham and Wake counties who worked with our students throughout their internships. Their commitment to training the next generation of Child Welfare social workers is so appreciated. Additionally, we would like to extend a special thanks to Orange, Franklin and Wake County Supervisors who served on our three selection committees throughout the year. To all our DSS partners, Thank you.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

**Jessie Rosenberg ’08 BSW, NC State,** is working at Orange County DSS as a CPS-treatment/foster care worker. She’s been there since the beginning of February and she has an 18 month obligation.

**Alicia Colombo ’08 MSW, UNC-CH** is working at Buncombe Co. DSS. She moved to a unit doing primarily forensic investigations. Now that they have the blessing of the DA’s office, her agency is working to partner more with law enforcement and establishing memoranda of understanding with the local LE agencies. She just fulfilled her one-year obligation!! She is very happy here and have no plans to leave.
Liz Anderson ’04 BSW NC State, is working at Chatham County DSS. She initially worked for Durham County DSS in CPS investigative assessments then went to Chatham County July 2007. She is the CPS/APS intake worker primarily. She continues to do investigations/case management/ foster care as part of courtesies to other county, serve as backup to CPS investigators, and does family support services (voluntary services) too. Liz also serves as the CFT facilitator for my agency on emergency basis only when the agency may file for custody of the children.

Cara Brown (Martin) is working at Edgecombe County DSS. She has been there for two years. She has completed her Collaborative obligation and still enjoys her job.

Krissy Johnson, BSW-MSW ECU Alumni ’06 &’07. Krissy is still working at Harnett County DSS and still enjoying her position in CPS. She has been here for two years (officially in May) and is fortunate to have a wonderful supervisor and director. They are allowing her to participate in the NC Student Leadership Institute this year. While she was a student at Pitt Community College, she was selected to attend this program. There are approximately 25 students in the state that attend a week long session and two mini sessions in leadership skills. After she graduated from this program, she was asked to be a co-facilitator the following year. The next two years she was asked to be a facilitator. There are four facilitators and co-facilitators. Since working at DSS, she was unable to commit to a week in the summer until this year. The Directors of the Student Leadership Institute asked her to return and her supervisor, program manager, and director approved her going. She is very excited to have this opportunity again!

Krissy is so happy working with Harnett County DSS and plans to stay a long time! Her employment obligation (36 months) to the Collaborative will be fulfilled this May.

Samantha Nixon, ’06 MSW ECU. She is still employed at Pender DSS. As of June 23rd it will be nine years. This May, it will be three years since she graduated as an MSW Collaborative Scholar form ECU (May ’06). Since graduation she has been promoted to CPS Supervisor (Effective January 2008). Considering her passion for the field of social work, she currently serves as a field instructor for both ECU and UNC Wilmington collaborative students. Like the famous author, Rich Warren, her belief is “the highest achievers in any field are those who do it because of passion, not duty or profit.”

Lisa Anthony Weeks ’08 BSW, graduated from Western Carolina University in December. She is currently working at Haywood County DSS in CPS as a Social Worker III. She did her internship (August 2008) at Haywood and was hired by Haywood during her internship. She truly loves her job and hopes to start the graduate program at WCU next fall.

Kellie Stephenson ’07 MSW, from East Carolina University is still employed at Johnston County Department of Social Services as a Foster Care/Child Placement Social Worker. She has been there since August 2006 when she began her internship in grad school., Her employment obligation to the collaborative was up May 2008.

Dara Burleson ’08, MSW ECU, is still employed with Pender County DSS. Her obligation will be up in May 2009. Altogether it will be a four year employment at DSS as of June 2009. She is still working in foster care. Dara received her provisional clinical license in July 2008. She is also doing community support QP work as a part time job to help out financially. The picture was taken at a Human Rights Campaign Gala Event, February 2009 in Charlotte.

Jessie Raffaele ’08, MSW UNC-CH is still working for Wake County Child Protective Services as an In-Home Services social worker. Her one year employment obligation will conclude on May 12, 2009!

Carrie Ross, ’07 MSW UNC-CH has been at Catawba DSS for 8 ½ years. She was an agency worker that went back to school and completed her MSW, then returned to her agency. Carrie will full-fill her two-year employment obligation on May 12, 2009.
Spotlight on Lincoln County DSS

By Jo Adams

Lincoln County, population 74,746, (July 2007) is a rural county north of Gastonia (Gaston County) and south of Hickory, NC (Catawba County) The website for Lincolnton, the county seat, says it's located on the quite side of Charlotte. It's approximately a three hour drive from Raleigh, but well worth the trip. Lake Norman is on the east side of the county and is the largest man-made lake in the Carolinas. It was created in 1963 by Duke Energy and is 34 miles long with 520 miles of shoreline. (www.visitlakenorman.org). In other words, this part of the state is beautiful!

The Collaborative has three BSW scholars from Appalachian State University working at Lincoln County DSS: Dawn Cole '07, Rici Reid-Goodhue '06 and Tamara Wimbush '04. The agency has about 125 total employees; 45 in child welfare which includes supervisors and day care workers. Dawn and Tamara’s unit has six workers and one supervisor. It has two case managers/In-home service workers, three Investigators/Assessors, one Adolescent Coordinator and one Supervisor

I was contacted by Dawn Cole to visit the agency and asked to spotlight her supervisor, Mendie Kelly. Dawn describes her supervisor as “AWE-SOME.” “She is understanding and leads with a strong, but gentle intensity. There is comfort and security in knowing that I can rely on her when I need guidance.” I can see why her unit likes and respects their supervisor. There was a warm but professional feel to her office. Mendie has an open door policy and she’s always available for her workers. There is a very team oriented atmosphere when speaking with the members of the team. Mendie says she has a good unit because there are rules and workers follow them. She asks for nothing unrealistic and she is fortunate her workers are self motivated “I wouldn’t expect anything less.”

Tamara Wimbush is the newest member hired into this team and she said the interview was a ‘draining’ experience but was very happy to be there. Mendie said when an applicant applies for an open position; along with the regular interview, she has the unit talk with candidate to see if they will fit. Her unit works extremely well together. They complement each others strengths and weaknesses. Mendie says her workers are usually harder on themselves than she is of them and nothing is ever missed. She says “I’m fair—and everyone knows what’s expected.” When I asked them how they do self-care, she said “Once a year we try to have retreat—take one day a year and do something fun.” They also try to go to lunch once a month as a unit.

When talking about her supervisor, Dawn says “she gives us freedom so we don’t have to go to her for every little thing—you can make a decision then discuss it with Mindie. When we need to go to her, she has an open door policy. She knows all the resources and when she guides or leads us, she does it in a way that doesn’t belittle us.” Dawn completed her employment obligation to the Collaborative in January of this year.

Supervisors have been found to be one of the reasons that child welfare workers stay not only at their agencies but in child welfare.
Although Rici is not in Mendie’s unit, she is a valuable member of the agency. Rici is the In-Home Based Family Services Worker. Although she is the only worker of this classification in the county, Rici very much enjoys what she is doing and hopes it will continue. Rici sets goals for her clients and when all goes well, she gives them a certificate and they do something that the client will enjoy before Rici closes the case. Even after they leave Rici’s care, she still follows up on them and the clients keep in touch with her.

If you would like to spotlight your county agency, please email the Employment Support Coordinator at jeadams@email.unc.edu

If by chance you are looking for a position and one comes up at Lincoln DSS, apply. The area is beautiful and the people there are, too!

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**KEYNOTE SPEECH**

**Rocket Science**

*April 15 Collaborative Talk*

Nancy S. Dickinson

Before his death 2 years ago, my father was a Southern Baptist minister…..a very liberal one, I might add, who marched in civil rights and fair housing demonstrations and started the Baptist Peacemaker program. He always began his sermons with 3 points written on a 3X5 card and preached for about 15 minutes. In honor of his memory and wisdom, I have 3 points to make in this talk (and I will be shorter in my talk):

The 3 points are:

1. Child welfare work is not rocket science.
2. You matter.
3. You aren’t alone.

**Point #1: Child welfare work is not rocket science….it’s much harder.**

When I graduated from the University of Richmond with a degree in psychology I didn’t have a clue what to do. I had moved to Durham with my husband who was going to graduate school at Duke, so I had to get a job. I don’t remember how I learned that Durham County DSS was hiring, but I remember the interview I had with Howard Williams who was director at the time. We chatted about many things, including my background and college experiences …mostly unrelated to the case-worker job I was applying for. After about a half hour, Mr. Williams said “Well, when can you start?” “Start what?” I asked. “Your job” he responded. “I can start right away,” I said, “but what will the job be?” “You’ll find out when you come in tomorrow.”

And when I went in the next day I attended a half day orientation, spent 3 days reading regulation manuals, and spent a week shadowing Sue Jarmon, a combined AFDC/child welfare worker just like I was going to be. And then I got my own caseload and didn’t know the first thing about what to do. So, I did a lot of things wrong, I know now! One example:

I had in my caseload a grandmother receiving services for her young grandson who lived with her, since her daughter and the child’s mother was in prison. One day Mrs. Sampson, we’ll call her, telephoned me with a concern about her grandson. I don’t remember the exact
nature of the conversation or Mrs. Sampson’s concern, but do recall that she and I began to have a disagreement. Our voices became more and more strident until, in exasperation, Mrs. Sampson said, “Well, it’s clear you don’t have children or you wouldn’t say such things.” And I quickly…and a little too loudly…said “I do, too, have children!!” Some of my fellow workers who were passing by my open office door peered in….they knew I did not have children.

That incident may sound insignificant, but I know now that I missed an opportunity to learn something from Mrs. Sampson about her life and struggles in order to engage her in problem solving that might have made a difference to her in raising her grandson. Many years later I learned how to ask, “I haven’t had that experience; tell me what I would know if I had.” And I wonder how many other times I lost an opportunity to really make a difference because I didn’t know what in the world I was doing.

You do know what you’re doing because you’ve studied what works. For example, you have access to research results that show the kinds of parenting programs with the best outcomes for children at certain ages. When I worked in child welfare and the court ordered a parent to attend parent training, I only asked to see the attendance sheet verifying the number of times the parent had attended. I probably sent parents of infants to a course on Raising your Teenager, for all I know. And that saddens me, because there are available very good, well-researched, and developmentally appropriate parent training courses that will make a difference in the health and well-being of families, children and youth.

You also know that regular and frequent visits between parents and children in foster care make a difference in their probability of reunification. Even better when shared parenting occurs with foster parents so that modeling of good parenting practices happens. And your modeling of appropriate and caring interactions with children around their parents…..and talking about how you’re interacting and why….make a difference.

When I was a caseworker, we visited regularly with clients in their homes and provided a lot of transportation to appointments and meetings. The field moved away from that for awhile. I’m glad that practice is coming back but it’s coming back in a more purposeful way than just friendly visiting. Now, you know how to interview (which I didn’t study until my MSW program 11 years after my BA), do risk assessments, engage clients in ways that will make a difference and help them move forward.

You know the science of what to do. And it’s not rocket science…..it’s harder. This work is hard, hard, hard. There are men, women, babies, children and teenagers that are in serious trouble. And research shows what you know—that families in the child welfare system are significantly more troubled than families in similar socioeconomic status levels.

I recently attended the National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect and went to a workshop about the Breakthrough Series Collaboration and its implementation in Catawba County. A practice improvement methodology, the Breakthrough Series focuses on small, rapid tests of change—“what can I do by next Tuesday?” As Mother Teresa once said, “We cannot do great things on this earth. We can only do little things with great love.” Yes, and I would add, with great skill. When you know what to do—as you do—what you do can make a difference.

2nd point: You matter.

It was 2 am and I was sleeping soundly when the phone rang. “Mrs. Dickinson,” Ella said, “my water just broke and Mama Nell says it’s time to go to the hospital.” “I’ll be right there.” Ella was a teenager—a young teenager—in foster care and about to be a mother for the first time. I wasn’t sure what she was going to do about the baby—we had talked for months about her options, but I was sure that she needed me.

There are other times when we aren’t sure that we matter….and often we don’t. But more often we do matter and we don’t hear about it. When we do hear about it, we are touched and may sigh and say “This is why I do this job.” Kathy Johnson tells the story about her habit of giving teens handkerchiefs years ago when they went to testify in court because she couldn’t stand to see Kleenex disintegrate in their hands on the stand. She got a wedding invitation in the mail from a young woman she had worked with long ago. A note in the envelope said that the former foster youth would be carrying Kathy’s handkerchief down the aisle as “something old” that had meant a great deal to her over the years.

I was training IL workers in Charlotte several years ago, talking about how the youth on our IL project used the word “love” to describe what they needed from workers….and how much that had surprised me. One big male worker in the training told the story of a foster youth who had started college at ECU and had called to invite the worker to visit him over the weekend. Weekend….time for his own family. But he went anyway and saw immediately that it was Parent’s Weekend and he was the only person there with this youth.

You matter. You probably have stories of your own to tell.
And they are important to hold onto for comfort. But your stories are also important for assurance that you can do this job. You can reflect on the story and remember the words that you used, the actions you took, the skills that made enough of a difference that a memory was made. And you can use those same skills in similar situations and know that you will matter again.

In fact, from research on the effects of turnover, we know that children in care with more than 1 worker have significantly longer stays in foster (achieve permanency in 74.5% of cases with 1 worker, dropping to 17.5% having 2 workers to a low of .1% having 6-7 workers). Also children in agencies with high turnover experience higher rates of foster care re-entry and significantly higher rates of reabuse.

You matter. I’m not suggesting that you never leave your job. I’m just asking you to behave as if you are important to your clients. There is a DVD of interviews with young adults who had been in foster care in Maine and who had each experienced many workers. The stories they told about workers just leaving or bringing another worker with them on a visit but never saying why are heart-wrenching. One young man phrased it this way, “It’s not like your worker is some little block you can remove and put back in anytime you want.” You matter, and when you behave that way, you will do the right things and you will do things right when it’s time for you to move on.

As Dr. Seuss says, “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

**Point #3:** You are not alone.

It was late afternoon and visiting hours were over at Duke University Hospital. I had just visited a child new to my caseload who had been beaten by his stepfather. I remember sitting down on the front steps of the hospital and sobbing. I had never felt so alone. This work breaks your heart.

When I was a caseworker, we were alone….taking on problems by ourselves with minimal supervision and not much peer mentoring either. And we certainly didn’t feel as if the community helped. In fact, the community didn’t know much about what we did in child welfare because we didn’t tell them much about it….we often hid our work from others, glossing over the difficulties our clients experienced, as if it were our fault and theirs.

In a favorite quote of mine Alexis de Tocqueville was talking about poverty but what he said could apply to the condition of child welfare families: “…an evil which grows greater to the sufferer the longer it lasts becomes less to the observer by the very fact of its duration.” I believe that child welfare families, like all families, want to be successful and happy. Their suffering, though, grows greater over time while the community—and sometimes we—become less aware of the suffering. That’s why we have to bring others into the service arena….other individuals like family members; other systems, like the church and the neighborhood. I heard a story from a member of a project that was trying to find adoptive families for older, harder to place teens. When asked to run through the rolodex of her mind about people from her past she remembered, the teen spoke about an elementary school crossing guard who always treated her with respect and kindness. The guard was found, remembered the girl and agreed eagerly to adopt her. You are not alone.

I love the phrase “community of practice.” That’s what you do everyday. You bring the community into your practice, including the families in your caseload. You engage them in the practice of making a difference and many of them respond with the hope that you model for them. You are not alone.

You are not alone. You are part of a national network of skilled child welfare staff who have participated in and supported agency-university partnerships like the Collaborative. Some of these partnerships—like the California Social Work Education Center at UC Berkeley—have been around as long as 20 years. The special education that you—and others—have experienced in these programs makes you a better, more skillful worker…we know that from research in KY, OK, CA, MN and NC, among many other states.

These are anxious times for the Collaborative and I am really sad about the uncertainties we face. I looked long and hard for a closing story to tell you that would be cheerful and uplifting. But nothing seemed to fit. So, I’ll repeat my 3 points….what you are doing is not rocket science, it’s much harder; you matter; you are not alone. I have really enjoyed sharing the journey with all of you; thank you for what you do; I will miss you.