

C NASW-NC is excited to announce Adriane Marie Casalotti as the winner of the 2010 Presidents' Award. Adriane is a graduate of the MSW/MPH Dual Degree Program from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Adriane Casalotti's interest in policy and social work was fostered by many of the opportunities that sprung from her MSW program experience. While serving as a research assistant for Dr. Gary Shaffer, she worked on advocacy campaigns to ban corporal punishment in schools and incorporate evidence-based sexuality education into the N.C. public school curriculum. These and other activities allowed her to put social work skills and values into practice through building relationships, reframing messages, and promoting the health and safety of children and youth. Casalotti also assisted in licensure and other professional issues for school social workers—a task that she believes has given her unique perspective on professionalizing social work and building support networks for overworked and underappreciated school social workers.

As a student, Casalotti devoted time in service to the School of Social Work itself, having served on the search committee for a research faculty position and on the Committee on Students—a group of faculty and students that examines student issues and develops responses to those matters that are in the best interest of the student, the School, and the profession. But Casalotti believes her work as a student ambassador was perhaps my most rewarding service to the school. In the position, she answered any questions or concerns from prospective students, participated in first-year orientation, and served as a representative of the school to other groups, like the Alumni Council and at admissions events. “This experience challenged me to truly embody the social work perspective, so I can share it with those currently outside the profession” said Casalotti.

To gain a stronger foundation in research, Adriane participated in a wide range of policy research on the benefits of low-income homeownership, asset building, and community economic development with UNC faculty member Dr. Michal Grinstein-Weiss. “Economic development is not frequently discussed in social work, but I have tried to bring social work values to this dynamic field full of economists and financial analysts. Through this position, I worked on an impact evaluation of asset-building policies and wrote and edited numerous funding proposals and publications, including two journal articles currently in press.” Most recently, Adrian had been promoted to coordinate a new project on asset development in Israel. This added responsibility has included conducting an evaluation of the first asset-building program there and crafting a new policy to start child development accounts for all Israeli children.

Outside of her class work and research, Adriane had involved herself in MCH issues within the broader University community. In her first year, she worked as a graduate assistant for the Carolina Women's Center, focusing on intimate partner violence and sexual assault prevention and presented on equal pay issues at the Roosevelt Institute's annual Year Ahead Conference. And, while at the Graduate School Orientation, she was the Masters Student representative on a panel entitled "Establishing the Successful Mentoring Relationship."

Additionally, Adriane tried to share her interests and experiences with the school community. Before the 2008 election, she undertook a voter registration campaign at the School of Social Work, first helping students and staff register to vote, then providing them with early voting information, nonpartisan voter guides, and answering questions about the process. This experience sparked Casalotti's interest in the intersection of social work and politics—something

that led her to create and propose an elective course on Political Social Work that will (hopefully) be included in the curriculum. Said Casalotti: “The NASW Code of Ethics calls us to be active in the political arena. Hopefully, this class would teach students the critical skills needed to succeed in those actions.”

Adriane firmly believes that Carolina provided many opportunities for her to excel, both inside and outside the classroom. Having received the top grade possible in all courses, she also has received numerous funding awards from the University, including a tuition grant, social work partial tuition remission, and the Tannenbaum Scholarship for service to Guilford County. Furthermore, Adriane was chosen as a student fellow for both the interdisciplinary Maternal and Child Health Leadership Consortium, and the American Public Health Association, and inducted into the Frank Porter Graham Honor Society.

Outside of the University, Adriane provided counseling and HIV testing to free clinic clients and at local community events. Furthermore, her first year field placement at Triad Health Project in Greensboro, N.C., expanded her sense of community to include both the Triangle and the Triad as she served as a case manager for clients with HIV/AIDS, co-facilitated prevention and motivational interviewing groups, and made presentations in the community. This past summer, Adriane brought her experience working on the front lines of social work to meetings with high-level government officials in the family planning, HIV, and education arenas as a federal and state policy advocate with the Sexuality and Information Council of the United States.

Adriane is now translating her career passions professionally serving as a Congressional Fellow, working on health policy on Capital Hill. During her interview rounds, she was continually asked why a social worker would want to join the ranks of law, political science, and

public policy graduates on the Hill. Adriane feels that it is really “pretty simple” where the truth is that the issues our government handles are, at their heart, matters of social justice, and thinks that may be one reason more than a few social workers serve in Congress. Adriane stated that she is proud to educate her future colleagues about the profession, one staffer at a time... and is willing to teach them the many lessons that she learned as a graduate student in the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. In short, Adriane Marie Casalotti has tried to incorporate social justice values, empower others, and give back for all the opportunities she has received in all areas of her life. Said Casalotti “I know that, no matter where my career path takes me, social work skills and social justice values will continue to guide me.”

*Article extracted from Adriane Marie Casalotti’s Essay for submission for the 2010 Presidents’ Award. Edited and re-written for publication by Aaron Swart, Director of Membership Services, NASW-NC and aid to the Recognition and Awards Committee.*

