Mental Health Care in North Carolina

Advocating for care and the challenges ahead
From the Dean...

This issue of Contact spotlights the critical issue of mental health care reform in North Carolina, the challenges ahead, and the many ways we are advocating for better care. Here are some highlights.

Our faculty are actively engaged in innovative research that examines programs, policies and services geared toward improving the state's public mental health and addiction care system. And our programs, such as the Behavioral Healthcare Resource Program and the Developmental Disabilities Training Institute, bridge the gap between academic resources and the state's clinicians.

A promising new Mental Health Policy Institute, a UNC-Duke collaboration, is in the planning stages.

Our board of advisors member Ruth Cook worked with the legislature on our behalf to establish a study commission to examine ways to increase the number of mental health social workers in underserved areas of the state, including tuition remission for students in the MSW program.

In response to the many changes in the N.C. mental health care system, our School revised its MSW curriculum to better prepare graduates to meet the needs of the state.

In other School news, we continue our global work. Last summer, we traveled to China for a summer study abroad session, and to conduct disaster response training following the devastating earthquake there. Also, a UNC delegation traveled to Lithuania to train its social workers. We are currently planning our next summer study abroad trips to South Africa and China.

In August, we welcomed three new assistant professors to our faculty—Gina Chowa, Gary Cuddeback and Joan Yoo.

Gina Chowa is the principal investigator for AssetsAfrica, a research demonstration project in Sub-Saharan Africa. AssetsAfrica, now in its 5th year, is a quasi-experimental, matched savings project in Masindi, a rural district in Uganda. Her future research will draw on lessons learned from the Uganda pilot project as she refines and expands the AssetsAfrica project.

Gary Cuddeback has been associated with our School since 2004 as a research assistant professor, as well as a faculty research fellow at UNC's Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research. His areas of interest include evidence-based interventions for justice-involved persons with mental illness.

Joan Yoo's research focuses on understanding the risk and protective factors associated with at-risk children's well-being over the course of their development. She is interested in identifying socioeconomic, behavioral, and familial factors associated with at-risk children's mental and physical health.

Soon we will begin recruiting for the Spears-Turner Distinguished Professorship. We're seeking a leading scholar and researcher with expertise in research related to children, families and social work practice. Lynn Usher and Natasha Bowen are chairing the search committee.

In September, the School received a $1 million bequest from an anonymous donor to establish a professorship focused in the area of poverty.

Also in September, the School unveiled its new Web site. It was created completely in-house, by staff members Manuel Garcia, Michelle Rogers, John Anderson and Susan White, with input provided by faculty, staff and students.

In October, UNC-Chapel Hill installed a new chancellor, Holden Thorp. He shows a great understanding of social work and I look forward to working with him.

Several of our faculty have received grants for their projects recently, many of which are detailed in the Faculty Spotlight section on pages 16-17.

Unfortunately, along with the good there is some sad news to report. In October, we lost a great friend and our building namesake, Jack Tate.

You may have heard about the mandatory budget cuts affecting the UNC system statewide. The School of Social Work has received a 5.5% budget reduction since August. We expect to sustain additional budget reductions this spring, and an additional 5% permanent cut in our state allocated funds in July. These reductions will mean that less than 20% of our total operating budget is provided by the state.

Now more than ever, the School must rely on the generosity of our alumni and friends. With your support, together we will weather this economic storm.

Thanks for everything you do for the School of Social Work, and all my best for a happy holiday season and new year.

Jack M. Richman
Focus on Mental Health Care in North Carolina: Advocacy and Challenges

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When North Carolina introduced mental health care reform in 2001, Susan McCracken was optimistic that changes over the following years would bring Lincoln County long-needed services. For a while, the new efforts appeared successful, especially as private providers popped up to offer psychiatric and crisis counseling—resources that most residents could usually only find 35 miles away in Charlotte.

“We had more services for kids who had been sexually abused and for those struggling with substance abuse,” said McCracken, the county’s director of social services and an alumna of UNC’s School of Social Work. “Those were the two areas where we were most lacking and saw changes quickly.”

But like other communities around the state, Lincoln County watched with disappointment as many new private agencies quickly stumbled. Some didn’t have enough qualified licensed clinicians to meet demand. Those that did have the expertise struggled to serve clients who qualified for Medicaid, the government insurance program for low-income residents and those with disabilities. Program
reimbursement rates were so low that some private providers were financially challenged and couldn’t offer the more expensive services that some clients needed.

A few providers only seemed interested in helping those who could afford it, McCracken said. For residents already desperate for services, state reform was more of a hindrance than a help, she added.

“There were so many providers and so much going on, it was hard to weed out the good from the bad,” McCracken said. “And then people who were able to get services, they disappeared quickly so they were constantly having to relocate to another provider. I think that constant change might have been more damaging than if the service had never been here.”

Mental health reform was supposed to save money and provide more choices for those with mental illnesses by shifting care from the state’s psychiatric hospitals and government-run agencies to private companies. As promoted, people would receive “community support services” and be cared for closer to home, enabling state hospitals to open more beds for the sickest patients.

But many lawmakers, advocates for the mentally ill and others agree that what resulted was a broken system with unqualified providers unable to meet client needs and hundreds of millions of dollars in wasteful spending.

“Certainly, there were a few success stories but not very many,” said Mark Sullivan, executive director of the Orange County Mental Health Association and an alumnus of the School. He thinks the state pursued reform with a “poor understanding of how market forces would affect the system.”

“Private corporations have a mandate to make money and are responsible to shareholders,” Sullivan said. “If that means using unqualified people, that’s what you do. If you can sell somebody a soda for five dollars because that’s what they’re willing to pay, you sell it for the most you can.”

Much of the mental health system’s breakdown was reported earlier this year in a series of articles in the Raleigh News & Observer. According to a newspaper investigation, the state wasted at least $400 million on community support services. Many seriously ill patients needing intensive treatment went without or overloaded emergency rooms; others needing less intensive care got services they didn’t need, the newspaper reported. A legislative report issued in August also cited out-of-control spending on services.

At some of the state’s psychiatric hospitals, there was troubling news of patient abuse by employees and questions surrounding the deaths of dozens of other patients. A couple of hospitals also lost federal funding because of safety concerns.

State officials, including those at the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, continue to search for ways to strengthen the system. This summer, lawmakers approved $20 million for more local services, including the creation of dozens of mobile crisis teams. Some money will also be used to start mental health clinics where patients can seek care once they are released from hospitals.

Mental health advocates, including Sullivan, think more attention is also needed to develop a competent workforce. “That’s probably one of our main challenges,” he said. “I think Orange County is better off than some other parts of the state, but we still have people who really don’t have any business providing clinical mental health services who are providing key mental health services.”

Though higher institutions provide training and help evaluate state programs, reform efforts have created additional challenges, said Anna Scheyett, associate dean for academic affairs at UNC’s School of Social Work.

“Everything is in flux, so it is harder to educate students about the system,” Scheyett said. “And policies and procedures do not necessarily reward the use of evidence-based practices.”

Workforce issues are likely to grow more complicated next year. That’s when a new state regulation is expected to stop allowing provisionally-licensed providers such as social workers, counselors and psychologists from billing Medicaid unless they are supervised by a physician such as a psychiatrist.

Traditionally, provisionally-licensed providers could practice as long as they were supervised by a licensed clinician in a similar discipline.

“The provisionally licensed issue has been a train wreck in several pieces as far as we’ve been concerned,” said Jack Register, director of advocacy and legislation for the North Carolina chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. “The first disconnect is the idea that because you’re a provisionally-licensed person and you’re not reimbursable, then you’re not a clinician. This notion that monetary reimbursement drives ability to practice is just not the case.”

For rural areas, the regulation may create lengthier waiting lists for services, mainly because smaller towns and counties don’t have the money to attract psychiatrists and other highly-trained mental health professionals. In Rockingham County, some residents are already on a two-month waiting list for services, said Larry Johnson, the county’s director of Human Services and an alumnus of UNC’s School of Social Work.

Worried that privatization would ignore the county’s neediest residents, Rockingham officials agreed to continue spending about $1 million annually on mental health services, Johnson said. Some money has paid for detoxification programs and other substance abuse services for people struggling with cocaine addiction, a growing problem in this county of about 92,000.

Rockingham’s mental health center, where caseloads generally hover around the maximum of 2,000, probably would have closed had it not been for county support, Johnson said. But with budgets tightening, he isn’t sure the county can afford to chip in much longer.

“We knew that the clock was ticking and that we needed to try to do something that would ultimately perpetuate some services being available,” he said. “But I don’t know what it will look like a year from now. I know we’ve got to make some radical changes here. We can’t keep doing it the way we’ve been doing it.”

When social workers don’t know where to point families for help, there are other repercussions, McCracken added. “If we’re telling a family you’re going to lose your children if you don’t do certain things and seek out mental health services, but then we can’t help them get those services to keep their children, there’s something very wrong with that,” she said. “The shame of it all is that some of the sickest can’t get help.”

Cynthia “Syd” Wiford understands the frustrations, especially concerns with meeting client needs. Wiford is the co-principal investigator of UNC’s Behavioral Healthcare Resource Program, which was created to bridge the gap between research, academia and clinicians in the public mental health and substance abuse system. BHRP, which is housed within the Jordan Institute for Families, contracts with the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services and has provided much of the training under the state reform model.

Though much work is still needed to improve public mental health and addiction care, Wiford said the changes should lead to better oversight and accountability. “At least now the system is alive and kicking, and it’s getting lots of attention,” she said.

But ultimately, state funding will help determine the system’s long-term success, she added. “It took 30 years for the system to get this bad, and you aren’t going to fix it in three years. And it’s also not going to get fixed without adequate resources.”

“The shame of it all is that some of the sickest can’t get help.”

Susan McCracken
Director of Social Services
Lincoln County
Faculty lead innovative research in mental health and addiction

School of Social Work faculty are actively engaged in innovative research that examines programs, policies and services geared toward improving the state’s public mental health and addiction care system. This research is taking place in North Carolina’s schools, within the criminal justice system and among nonprofit agencies. The following are just a few examples of these faculty-led projects.

By Susan White

Mimi Chapman: Addressing mental health needs of Latino youth

For more than a year, Associate Professor Mimi Chapman has been directing a project designed to address the mental health needs of Latino youth.

Chapman helped launch “Creating Confianza,” which is Spanish for “trust,” in February 2007, in partnership with Chatham County Schools and El Futuro, a nonprofit group that focuses on Latino behavioral health. The three-year project targets Spanish-speaking students at Jordan Matthews High and Chatham Middle schools in Siler City. The town has a large Latino population.

Creating Confianza is funded by a $300,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and was one of 15 projects selected from around the country that focuses on the mental health needs of underserved children and youth, especially those within immigrant and refugee families.

Creating Confianza is geared toward improving the overall well-being of Latino adolescents largely by providing services for early intervention, referral and treatment. A school family liaison employed with El Futuro helps address many of these needs by working with the schools four days a week to screen students, perform assessments and provide supportive counseling. The liaison also works with parents, directing them to needed resources.

The project also aims to foster a more welcoming environment for new immigrant youth and training educators and parents about the mental health difficulties Latino youth may face.

“The program really focuses on how to recognize mental health problems and then intervene with them,” Chapman said.

Data collected from 2004 to 2006 illustrate the need for such research and the challenges North Carolina schools face in assisting Latino children. According to the Latino Adolescent Migration, Health and Adaptation Project, a third of the state’s Latino youth, ages 12 to 19, showed anxiety symptoms, while 6 percent exhibited signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and 8 percent showed signs of depression. According to the report, girls were also more likely to have suicidal thoughts.

The percentage of Latino students showing similar difficulties was even higher in Chatham County, according to the 2006 grant proposal for Creating Confianza. That report noted that about 19 percent of the school division’s seventh and eighth-graders and 26 percent of high school students “reported feeling sad or hopeless for at least a two-week period.” An estimated 12 percent of middle- and high-school youth reported having suicidal thoughts, while 37 percent of high school students said they felt like harming someone else.

Researchers know that a child’s mental health can influence academic success. Yet, traditionally, there hasn’t been a wealth of resources to assist Latino children, Chapman said. These youth also face additional barriers, including language, culture, insurance status and family expectations about treatment. Furthermore, research suggests that Latino youth may experience mental health difficulties for different reasons than other youth.

Some, for example, have shown signs of PTSD related to their family’s immigration experience, especially when it involved a “border crossing,” Chapman said. For others, experiences of racism and discrimination may also “play a different role and provide more stress,” she said.

Project Confianza helps educators better understand a child’s life experiences. An initial two-day training, for example, focused on diversity and achieving “cultural humility.” The training highlighted how personal views of power, privilege and personal status shape a school’s climate, Chapman explained.

“The self-reflective nature of the training helped us peel back the layers of bias that are in all of us,” she said.

Such processes are designed to encourage educators to think differently about their students, and to consider, for example, that classroom behavior issues may not always just be a discipline issue, she said. “It can be related to a full blown mental health problem.”

Since Creating Confianza began, several parent group sessions have also been held at the two participating schools to offer support and address concerns. Discussions have focused on topics such as substance abuse, sexuality and gang issues. Participants have also learned about available mental health resources for their families. Follow-up sessions are planned and will be based on parent suggestions for discussions.

Grant funding for Creating Confianza is expected to end in 2010, but all involved would like to see the project continue, Chapman said.
Natasha Bowen and Joelle Powers: How much of a student’s psychological well-being influences learning?

At Chapel Hill-Carrboro elementary schools, educators are not just focused on academics in an effort to narrow the achievement gap among third- through fifth-graders. They’re trying to determine how much of a student’s psychological well-being also influences learning.

The assessment is part of a three-year longitudinal study at Carrboro, Ephesus Road and Frank Porter Graham elementary schools. School of Social Work faculty members, Natasha Bowen, an associate professor, and Joelle Powers, a clinical assistant professor, are directing the project, which is based on the School Success Profile (SSP), an assessment tool used to identify and address students’ social-environmental needs.

The assessment was developed at the School of Social Work and since 1991, has been helping educators nationwide to identify barriers to learning, mainly among at-risk middle and high school youth. Bowen created a similar evaluation for elementary schools, known as the Elementary School Success Profile (ESSP).

Though research suggests that more and more children are receiving mental health services in schools, teachers and staff are not usually equipped to thoroughly address those needs, Powers said.

“So few faculty are trained in recognizing mental health problems in students or how to support students with mental health problems,” she said.

Long-term, the profile project may assist in those efforts.

The assessment helps schools “prioritize concerns and develop intervention plans,” Bowen said. The project partially focuses on data collected from an online questionnaire that gives educators a glimpse into a child’s mental health, including social skills. Students are asked, for example, about peer relationships, parental involvement with homework and other activities, the safety of their communities and school behavior.

“A child’s exposure to neighborhood violence, for example, is a risk factor for mental health problems, while access to caring adults in the neighborhood and school is protective of well-being,” Bowen explained. “Current psychiatric definitions of “mental disorder” include behavioral as well as psychological disorders.”

So if, for example, a student is being bullied every day on the bus or on the walk home from school, the effects of the harassment may show up in the student’s grades, Powers added.

A few teachers have already started to use early data to address behavior issues in their classrooms, Powers said. The project doesn’t dictate what interventions should be used but offers an online database of evidence-based practices for educators to consider. One school is using a model that ensures that behavior rules and discipline are consistent from classroom to classroom.

Teachers have also been pleased to learn just how actively involved many parents are with their children at home, Powers said.

The profile project is gaining interest around the state. The Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools are in their second year of the study, which is being funded by Strowd Roses Inc. and the Triangle Community Foundation.

Bowen is also directing similar evaluations for schools in Durham and in Columbus and Halifax counties.

Rebecca Macy: Helping survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence

Throughout North Carolina, sexual assault and domestic violence agencies are beginning to see an increase in the number of clients with mental illnesses and substance abuse issues. In some cases, survivors are arriving with more severe co-existing problems than ever before and increasingly need more comprehensive services.

Those were among the findings from Rebecca Macy’s recently completed two-year study that looked for effective sexual assault and domestic violence services in the state and existing gaps. Ultimately, a greater understanding of what’s working and what isn’t should assist public and private grantmakers and funders to determine where best to spend their money and help service providers avoid reinventing the wheel when they begin a new program, Macy said.

Over the years, there has been a growing body of evidence that shows that women who experience sexual abuse or domestic violence trauma are more likely to also experience anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. These survivors are also more likely to abuse substances, Macy said.

But the associate professor’s study also found that many of the domestic violence and substance abuse agencies “feel unprepared” to deal with their clients’ complex problems. Many offer support services, such as 24-hour crisis lines, group counseling and medical and emergency room advocacy, to help survivors address the trauma of domestic violence and sexual assault. But often, they do not have the expertise, for example, to deal with depression or alcoholism.

Because most survivors try to manage the violence in their lives with the help of friends and family first, they often arrive at shelters and agencies with more complicated challenges, Macy said. For some, the need for emotional support is compounded by physical difficulties such as a need for affordable housing and job training.

Traditionally, clients with severe mental illnesses and substance abuse problems have been referred to other service groups. But some private agencies offering this support have struggled to stay open amid changes within the mental health care system, leaving domestic violence and substance abuse providers scrambling to make appropriate

Continues on p. 10
referrals, Macy said.

“You then have people falling through the cracks of the mental health care system,” she said.

Macy’s $100,000 study was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice through the Governor’s Crime Commission of the N.C. Department of Crime Control & Public Safety. The project included interviews with directors of 12 North Carolina domestic violence and/or sexual assault agencies; focus groups and interviews with representatives of state-level funding and advocacy-training organizations. The study also included a statewide survey of all executive directors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault agencies.

Sexual assault and partner violence “continue to be widespread problems” that pose serious dangers to women’s overall health and well-being, the study showed. Among other challenges, Macy’s investigation found that limited funding often prevents agencies and shelters from providing ideal services, such as transportation to help survivors access services, transitional housing and specialized services for children.

Furthermore, the study reported that because of a lack of money and knowledge about how best to deliver services to a diverse client population, including survivors from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds; sexual orientations; abilities and immigration statuses, there is concern from state-level personnel that agencies are not as welcoming as they should be.

There also remains an ongoing need to educate the public that violence against women is not just a “family problem,” Macy said.

Gary Cuddeback: Can mobile mental health treatment teams help clients succeed?

Can people with severe mental illnesses who have been receiving intensive community-based services receive less intensive services without negative consequences?

Assistant Professor Gary Cuddeback hopes to answer that question as part of a two-year study of the Assertive Community Treatment program, an evidence-based practice model built around mobile mental health treatment teams.

ACT teams provide comprehensive psychiatric, rehabilitation, substance abuse and support services to clients and help most generally avoid frequent hospitalizations because services are taken directly to them and are available 24 hours a day, Cuddeback said.

But there has been very little research to show that clients can succeed with less intensive services. Cuddeback hopes to collect empirical data on that issue.

“When ACT was conceptualized over 30 years ago it was thought that persons who were eligible for the program needed it for life because of their profound illnesses,” he said. “Today we have a better understanding that people can recover from severe mental illnesses and may not need the intensity of services indefinitely.”

Because ACT services are costly—$100,000 per person annually—and few communities can fund enough teams to meet demand, it’s important to understand who the neediest clients are.

Cuddeback is currently focusing on ACT consumers whose services have been downgraded and how they are managing. This includes, for example, clients who once were receiving home visits from ACT teams two to three times a week but are now getting visits two to three times a month, he explained.

Cuddeback’s study is targeting ACT teams in Ohio, mainly because the state has a comprehensive database on mental health consumers and because he has developed relationships with community mental health service providers there. The project is also being funded by an $80,000 grant from the Ohio Division of Mental Health and the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati.

Long-term, the assistant professor hopes that his ACT research might provide additional insight into how to keep people with mental illnesses from cycling through the criminal justice system.

Nationwide, many jails and prisons have become the system of last resort for communities trying to manage people with severe mental illness, he said.
Anna Scheyett: Helping students with mental illnesses, support services prepare for ‘what-if’ scenarios

Nationally, an estimated 15 percent of students experience some form of mental illness such as major depression while in college. Many often struggle with where to get support.

But a new study at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill could close this gap by encouraging students to consider their needs and treatment options well in advance.

The research project, which began this year, explores whether students with mental illnesses will document their mental health issues, outline the care they prefer and provide copies of this information to people and agencies that students agree could assist if a crisis occurred.

Known as “advance directives for mental health,” these legal documents enable someone to communicate their wishes while they are capable of making decisions on their own. The study is being funded by the UNC School of Social Work’s Armfield-Reeves Innovations Fund, which was established by Billy and Janie Armfield and Sam and Betsy Reeves.

The project is believed to be the first of its kind involving college students and could help ensure that young people get the help they need sooner, said Anna Scheyett, the project’s lead investigator and associate dean for academic affairs at the School of Social Work.

“It’s almost like a living will,” Scheyett said. “It gives you a chance up front when you’re healthy to speak for yourself and your needs—to keep your autonomy when the illness might be trying to take that away from you.”

Scheyett said because of confidentiality laws, administrators often struggle with the legal and ethical dilemmas of how to respond when a student shows symptoms of a mental illness. An advanced directive could help the University to act more responsibly for students.

The document can include as much information as a student is comfortable sharing. For example, it may explain “how a student looks” during a crisis or what signs to watch for, what medicines he or she prefers to take, the name of a therapist and hospital instructions.

“It could even include things like, ‘Call my brother and tell him to pay my rent so I don’t lose my place,’” Scheyett noted.

Information on the study is being distributed through UNC’s Disability Services, the Office of the Dean of Students and Counseling and Wellness Services. Students must be 18 to participate. Staff members have been trained to assist students with creating the advanced directives documents and selecting what agencies should receive copies, such as campus police, an emergency room or a local police social work unit. Students can also choose to give copies to resident advisers, faculty or any other friends, relatives or people they trust.

“I think the preparation just says a lot,” said Jim Kessler, director of Disability Services. “I think many students do have ownership of their mental health issues and are compliant with their medication, but sometimes that doesn’t work.”

For families, just preparing for college can be stressful. When it involves a child with a mental illness, there are additional anxieties. Knowing that the University has an advance directive on file may help alleviate family fears, Scheyett said.

It also ensures that the University has up-to-date information in case of an emergency, said Melinda Manning, assistant dean of students. “Our ultimate goal is we want to retain all of our students,” she said. “And anything we can do to accomplish that goal is worth it to us.”
Researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and at Duke University are beginning to explore how the state's psychiatric hospitals can more effectively and efficiently serve patients as part of an ongoing effort to improve the state's mental health care system.

The investigation is the first step toward creating a Mental Health Policy Institute, a "nonpartisan policy research shop," that Joseph Morrissey, a health policy and management professor at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and Dr. Marvin Swartz, a psychiatrist at Duke, are interested in developing. The researchers say such an institute could assist North Carolina leaders with mental health reform, including examining alternative policies and proposals for improving the quality and availability of public mental health services.

The researchers have begun working on one project to help kick-start the proposed institute: the creation of a computer simulation model to pinpoint how patients arrive at the state's psychiatric hospitals, are discharged from those facilities and the costs for shifting care or services for some, including those who may not need long-term hospitalization.

“We want to add more texture and context to the populations at our state hospitals,” Swartz said. “We’re trying to understand more about how patients get there and what appropriate resources they need.”

The two-year study was selected as one of the first five funded projects from the Gillings Innovation Labs. Morrissey and Swartz received $400,000 for their project. The researchers hope to eventually receive state funding to develop the full-fledged institute.

“The institute idea is predicated on the fact that the problems in the mental health system are so multiple and so complicated that no one small little project will make a difference,” Morrissey said. “If there is going to be an impact, it has to be a broad based one.”

The researchers’ two-year study will initially focus on the new Central Regional Hospital in Butner. The $138 million state hospital was built to replace Raleigh’s Dorothea Dix and Butner’s John Umstead mental health facilities.

Central Regional partially opened in July, but according to the Raleigh News & Observer, a complete transfer of patients was stalled in September after a local advocacy group filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Dix patients, and a state judge issued a temporary restraining order blocking the transfer. The lawsuit, the newspaper reported, cites safety issues for postponing a full opening of the new hospital.

State officials agreed to delay the Dix move until concerns are addressed at Central Regional, but postponing the merger also puts North Carolina at risk of losing more federal Medicaid and Medicare funding, the newspaper reported. In September, Goldsboro’s Cherry Hospital lost federal insurance payments because inspectors determined that the facility was unsafe, according to the N&O. Broughton Hospital in Morganton regained its funding in July after losing federal dollars for nearly a year.

The UNC-Duke study is expected to test policies and structures at Cherry and Broughton hospitals during the project’s second year, Morrissey said.

The researchers are optimistic that a Mental Health Policy Institute can provide sustainable assistance to North Carolina leaders tackling systemic mental health problems. Historically, the state has relied on outside agencies to address similar issues, but suggested solutions often take years to produce results.

The proposed institute would enable university researchers with broad policy and scientific experience to collaborate and provide ongoing support to the N.C. General Assembly, state agencies and Local Management Entities, the researchers agreed. Other priority topics on the proposed institute’s agenda include workforce development, incarceration of people with mental illnesses, Medicaid psychotropic medications, use of hospital emergency rooms and local crisis services.

That expertise is welcomed, said Dr. Michael Lancaster, co-director of the state’s mental health division. “I think one of the things we have to do as a state is better utilize our academic facilities,” Lancaster said. “We have to take advantage of that as a resource.”

More than a dozen faculty members, including UNC School of Social Work assistant professor Gary Cuddeback, have been tapped as potential researchers for institute initiatives.

Meanwhile, work is progressing on the computer simulation model study. To create the model, the researchers must first map all the various routes a patient may use to enter a state psychiatric hospital, such as from police departments and jails or local emergency rooms.

By having a better understanding of how patients enter the system and where most obtain care, officials can then simulate possible alternatives, Morrissey said. For example, the model could suggest shifting beds from one hospital to another to free up space or shifting services so that patients would not have to be hospitalized, he said.

Such information, he said, may be particularly helpful given the state’s commitment to spend millions on more local services, including dozens of mobile crisis teams, which would work with volatile patients, and to create mental health clinics that would offer care to people once they are released from psychiatric facilities. A computer simulation model would enable officials to maneuver care and services in a virtual manner first to see what works best, he said.

“It allows you to raise a whole set of ‘what if’ situations so that you can see how to better manage beds,” Morrissey said. “You can see what the likely ramifications are.”

Traditionally, UNC and Duke have focused their efforts on training the state’s mental health and public health workforce. But the universities also have an obligation to respond to current community needs, Morrissey said.

“All the answers are not at UNC and at Duke, but we’re willing to partner with the decision makers,” he said. “I think a lot of the failures and shortcomings in the state could have been avoided if this kind of capacity had been in place.”
Tuition forgiveness program proposed

To attract students to careers in mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse units in underserved communities

By Susan White

M any of the state's more rural counties and towns have struggled for years to address mental health needs in their communities, largely because they lacked enough professionals to meet demand. But a proposal to attract and graduate more master's level students into the social work field could eventually assist municipalities in providing much-needed services.

Over the summer, the N.C. General Assembly agreed to create a study commission to evaluate a proposed “tuition forgiveness” program for MSW students studying mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse. The program, if approved, would cover tuition, fees and other costs for students enrolled in schools of social work around the state in exchange for graduates working in underserved communities after completing their degrees.

Such a program would not only improve the state's mental health system, it would allow MSW students to consider a broader range of job opportunities after graduation, said Anna Scheyett, associate dean for academic affairs at UNC's School of Social Work. On average, UNC students graduate with about $36,000 debt, she said. But the average starting salary of an MSW social worker is just about $40,000.

“So, the pressure to take the best-paying job, which is often in a more urban area or at a large agency or institution, is huge,” she said. “Tuition forgiveness would give students the option of thinking about where they want to practice more than how they are going to pay off their loans.

“With this program, we could recruit the best students and have a way to provide them with financial support so they could graduate debt free, and North Carolina would have a stronger mental health system with more MSW-level clinicians all across the state.”

At least 35 percent of North Carolina counties are considered “underserved” by mental health professionals, according to statistics included in the study commission bill.

Smaller mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse units are often the most challenged to attract and retain these workers, said UNC School of Social Work Dean Jack Richman.

“It's hard to get MSW students to go into some of these areas, much less into a rural agency,” he said. “These agencies are often some of the toughest places to work because some of their clients are the most difficult to serve and need the more expensive services.”

Long-term, the hope is that the proposed program would operate very similarly to the N.C. Child Welfare Education Collaborative, which is comprised of 10 social work programs at universities throughout the state, including at UNC. The N.C. Division of Social Services contracts with the collaborative for about $2.7 million annually, enabling these universities to offer financial incentives to students interested in pursuing careers in public child welfare services to enroll in BSW and MSW programs. UNC enrolls about 25 to 30 students in its master's program each year.

Richman thinks a mental health collaborative could be supported for the same costs, although the financing would depend on how many schools join the proposed network.

The nearly 10-year-old Child Welfare Education Collaborative has produced about 500 graduates, many of whom continue to work within the child welfare workforce. The program has helped change how students view the child welfare profession, Richman said. “It promotes graduates as experts in their field,” he said.

Richman hopes a mental health collaborative would attract students for the same reasons. “And working in an underserved county is a good place to start,” he added.

The program could also help ensure that clients have the opportunity to receive mental health services from highly trained professionals, said Mark Sullivan, a School alumnus and the executive director of Orange County's Mental Health Association.

Critics of mental health reform in North Carolina have complained the changes enabled many private companies to get wealthy because they could hire cheaper and less-skilled employees to provide services.

“Workforce issues are very critical, and services are only going to be as effective as the people who provide them,” Sullivan said.

Ruth Cook, a current member of the School's Board of Advisors and a former state legislator, advocated for the bill, which was sponsored by state Reps. Verla Insko, Jimmy L. Love, Sr. and Rick Glazier. Insko thinks a mental health collaborative among schools of social work in the state would receive broad support from lawmakers. But she was uncertain how soon the commission may consider the issue. Improving the state's mental health system should be a priority, but overall state fiscal needs will ultimately determine if the proposed higher education program is affordable, Insko said.

“Everyone knows that the mental health system in our state is in such disarray,” she said. “So, this program will partly depend on economics and what kind of impact it will have on the new budget. We’ll also have a new governor in place, and it will depend on if the mental health system will be a high priority for their administration. So, it’s not a done deal.”

By Susan White

Contact | UNC Chapel Hill School of Social Work
Programs bridge gap between academic resources and state’s clinicians

By Susan White

Through state mental health reform has largely targeted improving services for people with mental illnesses, agencies that work with clients with addiction issues and groups serving people with developmental disabilities have also strengthened their efforts.

At the Jordan Institute for Families, two groups that contract with the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services work to ensure that quality resources are available to people struggling with addictions and that the needs of some of the state’s most vulnerable residents are met. The Behavioral Healthcare Resource Program and the Developmental Disabilities Training Institute both provide education, technical support and research assistance to public and private agencies serving these populations.

BHRP was created in 1998 to bridge the gap between research and academic resources and clinicians in the public mental health and substance abuse system. The program promotes evidence-based practices and tailors training, curricula development, and technical assistance and consultation to providers’ needs.

Services focus on a range of issues, including dual diagnosis training, adolescent mental health and substance abuse issues, gender-specific substance abuse and disaster preparedness training for mental health and substance abuse professionals. A project recently began to address the addiction issues of returning veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Each year, about 20 MSW students and graduate practitioners enroll in BHRP’s substance abuse certification program, which prepares participants to meet the requirements for the Certified Clinical Addictions Specialist (CCAS) credential.

This year, BHRP also began offering training to those who are interested in certification as a peer support specialist. These specialists include recovering addicts and alcoholics and individuals recovering from mental illnesses. Peer support specialists act as mentors or “shepherds” to clients in recovery programs.

Nearly 200 specialists have already been certified across the state, said Cynthia “Syd” Wiford, BHRP coordinator and assistant clinical professor at the School of Social Work. Wiford and Amelia Roberts-Lewis are BHRP’s co-principal investigators.

Ron Mangum, a clinical instructor with the project, is now assisting the state in the development of peer-run centers, helping to define what they would look like and how they would operate.

The state relies largely on BHRP to review and evaluate publicly funded programs. One of the latest projects: determining why the state’s 24 local management entities have allowed millions of dollars in substance abuse services to go unspent. Although the number of people in substance abuse programs has declined overall, Wiford thinks some of those in need are simply being missed.

“We’re still not doing a good job recognizing addiction issues at the front door of the public system,” she said.

School of Social Work faculty and BHRP staff also remain actively involved in research. For example, Matthew Howard, the Frank A. Daniels Distinguished Professor for Human Services Policy Information, is currently investigating why publicly operated methadone clinics have been seeing a significant increase in clients addicted to painkillers, such as OxyContin.

Similar vital research and service are ongoing at the Developmental Disabilities Training Institute. Founded in 1963, DDTI works to ensure the well-being and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities.

DDTI has contracted with the state for 10 years and also assists private agencies with workforce development needs, including training with person-centered care options, Medicaid service definitions and with implementation of the state’s Home and Community Based Services Waiver, a Medicaid program for people with developmental disabilities. DDTI principal investigator Susan Parish, a School assistant professor, is evaluating the Community Alternative Program (CAP) MR/DD waiver.

State mental health reform recognized that many services aimed at supporting people with developmental disabilities are working, but many individuals remain in need, said Chris Egan, DDTI coordinator.

“There are still many families who are waiting for services, and there are many aging parents who are supporting their children at home,” Egan said. “DD is not about rehabilitation. It’s about habilitation and the long-term support needed for people.”

For many of these families, the Community Alternative Program (CAP) MR/DD waiver is the key toward getting needed services. Across the state, nearly 10,000 CAP slots are assigned to people with a diagnosis of mental retardation or other developmental disability. On average, these waivers provide each slot holder with about $44,000 annually—money that pays for everything from wheelchairs and communication devices, day-to-day supports and respite support for caregivers.

The system was designed to help keep people out of institutions and within their communities. More could potentially be served under a proposed two-tiered system that would issue waiver slots based on severity of needs. As proposed, the new system would initially create between 1,500 and 2,000 additional CAP slots that would cover up to $17,500 in services for each waiver holder within the first tier.

How cost effective or flexible the proposed system would be remains unclear, though Egan thinks it will provide support options that many currently do not have.

“The idea is that it’s based on the strength of the current system and offers more choices,” he said.

“We just need to make sure that we continue to develop and foster a community-based system that provides a choice of quality services and meets people’s needs.”
Mental health reform and the School of Social Work’s MSW curriculum

By Anna Scheyett

One of the concerns raised as a result of mental health reform has been that of workforce development. Do we have enough mental health practitioners to meet the needs of the state, and do these practitioners have the right knowledge and skill sets? The School of Social Work has spent the past two years thinking about this question, looking at our curriculum and making changes to ensure that our graduates are well prepared to face the challenges ahead.

Some of the goals of mental health reform were ambitious: shift patients from institutional care toward community-based services; rely on evidence-based or best-practice interventions and give consumers and families a stronger voice in the system. Pragmatically, reform also required mental health centers to stop providing services and to refer people to a provider network of private for-profit and nonprofit agencies.

Given these changes, how did the School revise its MSW curriculum to better prepare our graduates? First, all of our students are now familiar with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV, the standard text used to diagnose mental disorders. With the blurring and dispersing of providers across a range of agencies, we felt that all social workers, whether engaged in direct practice or management, needed familiarity with this vocabulary.

The School’s curriculum has also been strengthened to place an even greater emphasis on the use of evidence-based practices, interventions that have been proven effective based on stringent standards of empirical research. For example, we have added content on multisystemic therapy, an intensive family-based treatment that addresses serious behavior problems in youth, and a short course on interpersonal therapy, which focuses on depression and a person’s relationships with their peers and family. We have also introduced best practices such as agency self-evaluation, which focus on helping agencies learn how to evaluate their own performance on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, students who once were required to take a research and statistics class are now learning how to find and use research evidence to inform and evaluate their practice.

Under reform, social workers have also learned that it is unlikely that they will spend their careers only working directly with clients. Today’s mental health environment requires some expertise in supervision, managing budgets and working collaboratively with a range of public and private human services agencies. To assist with these workforce changes, we have created an integrated practice course that teaches all students both direct practice skills and some of the macro skills needed to develop and run programs and agencies.

Finally, although mental health reform was supposed to give consumers and families a greater voice in state policy and planning, significantly more work will be needed for this goal to be realized and in fact, for the mental health system to survive. The School is committed to these efforts, and we have revised our advanced policy classes to ensure that our students are skilled at evaluating policies and developing strategies to promote needed change and that will enable them to be greater advocates for individuals with mental illnesses and their families.

The School remains steadfast with its goal: to educate social work professionals to have the skills and knowledge to address the needs of vulnerable populations and communities. We expect our graduates to have excellent practice abilities so that they may effect change for individuals, families, agencies, and communities. We expect our students and graduates to commit themselves to social justice, to think critically and to use their knowledge to create and promote effective and just policies and programs.

Mental health reform has been a time of tremendous challenge in North Carolina and in some instances, a time of tragedy. Much change is still needed, and we will work to ensure that our students graduate armed with the necessary tools to direct that change.
Students learn to navigate the mental health and addiction care systems

For many MSW students, learning how to navigate the mental health and addiction care systems, especially following state reform, has been a valuable lesson of their field education experience.

“It’s been a real eye opener,” said Caty Carpenter, who is in her second year at UNC’s School of Social Work. Carpenter is among a half dozen students working this semester with Durham’s Carolina Outreach, a private company that offers in-home mental health services to children and families and intensive psychiatric in-home and outpatient therapy. The agency serves about 500 clients in Chatham, Durham and Orange counties.

“Before I started, I was unfamiliar with the entire mental health system in our state,” Carpenter continued. “I was unfamiliar with how Medicaid worked or what in-home therapy looks like or how referrals are made.”

Such real working world experiences, including observing how employers are adjusting to change and meeting client demands, are vital to a student’s education, said Marilyn Ghezzi, a clinical instructor in the School’s Field Education Program.

“We want the students to know the mental health system as it is—for better or for worse,” she said.

Across the Triangle, many of the School’s MSW students are encountering community support first hand—the state reform model that shifted most public mental health and addiction care over to private companies so that they could deliver services closer to where clients live.

Despite difficulties, the system changes have challenged some public and private groups to consider better ways of working together, and UNC students are immersing themselves in these efforts.

For example, Angela MacDonald and Mandy Sackreiter, both social work/divinity dual-degree students, are learning how Durham County developed a network of comprehensive resources to ensure that children and adults get the help they need. The students were assigned internships this semester at Housing for New Hope, a nonprofit agency that works to prevent and end homelessness.

The group is a member of the county’s Adult System of Care, a community outreach partnership that provides family-centered services targeting complex behavioral, academic, social and safety needs. This collaboration includes leaders from public health, mental health, social services, juvenile justice, area churches and nonprofit agencies.

Agency representatives come together more than two dozen times a month as part of “care review” teams to meet with people who are homeless, have mental health disorders or addiction issues. During these sessions, clients are encouraged to share their stories—where they are in their lives, how they got there and what their wishes are for the future. Then, with the client’s input, the care review team draws up a plan to address that person’s health and housing needs as well as strategies to begin working toward their goals. The client-directed model empowers people to take control of the care and services they receive, Sackreiter said.

Last month, during a care review session at Durham’s Urban Ministries, MacDonald and Sackreiter were captivated as a veteran in his early 50s described his struggles with alcohol. The man, who has been in and out of shelters for years, drank almost daily and wasn’t sure he was ready to stop. The alcohol, he explained, helped to quiet the voices in his head. “They tell me to kill myself,” he said.

Ann Oshel, coordinator with Durham’s System of Care, reassured the man that the team wasn’t there to judge, only to help. “Everybody
Remembering Jack Tate: a great friend to the School of Social Work and building namesake

By Susan White

John A. “Jack” Tate, founding member of the School of Social Work’s Board of Advisors, Charlotte businessman and longtime social justice advocate, died Oct. 14 after a brief illness. He was 91.

Tate, a retired banking executive and former chairman of UNC’s Board of Trustees, was remembered fondly for his visionary leadership and guidance, helping the School to attain academic prominence.

“Jack was a great friend of the School of Social Work and his passing is a significant loss,” said School Dean Jack Richman. “He provided leadership and support to our School during a time of significant growth.”

Mark Fraser, John A. Tate Distinguished Professor for Children in Need, agreed. “Jack [Tate] gave money for my chaired professorship,” Fraser said. “He helped secure our building by working with state legislators; he chaired our board; he advocated for children; he funded many innovative projects; he was an advocate for social work; he was a critic of social policies; he was a scholar gentleman; and he was a great mentor to many faculty.”

In Charlotte, Tate’s hometown, the businessman was also remembered for his passion in promoting children’s causes. Following his death, an article in the Charlotte Observer noted Tate’s assistance in creating several city organizations that serve children, including one to keep at-risk students in school and another to help college students find financial aid.

Tate’s influence at UNC goes back to the late 1980s, when then-School Dean John Turner tapped him for fundraising assistance. According to a 1996 article in the Raleigh News & Observer, Tate traveled around the state “talking to graduates, social service agencies and nonprofits about the perception of the school,” concluding that “something significant had to happen.”

Turner and Tate raised expectations and eyebrows when they first announced a $3 million fundraising goal, the N&O reported. Enlisting additional assistance from TV journalist Charles Kuralt, the trio eventually set out to raise $5 million, an unheard of amount for a School that was not well known at the time.

“We always made the pitch that it was good business,” Tate told the newspaper. “We were out to help people help themselves.”

Tate’s efforts to enlighten others on the significant contributions of social workers extended to the state capital where he spent years lobbying lawmakers for $10 million to construct a new School. A new five-story brick building on Pittsboro Street in Chapel Hill opened in 1996, bearing the names Tate-Turner-Kuralt in honor of the men who provided unwavering support.

A few years ago, the School established the John A. Tate Distinguished Lecture Series in his honor. The Tate Lecture is given once a year by a nationally preeminent scholar in the field of children’s studies, to distill from their work core principles that might guide social work practice and the design of social policies.

I’ve talked to who hears voices is trying to find some way to get them to stop,” she said. “That’s why we need to find the right combination of medications and dosage for you. We just want to figure out how to help you be successful and keep you in one place.”

Such partnerships, MacDonald and Sackreiter agreed, illustrate how holistic approaches can assist in problem solving. But understanding the obstacles that prevent clients from succeeding is equally important, MacDonald said. “We need to know what’s going on in our communities because it’s not always obvious,” she said.

For some private agencies, such as Annas Resources, the biggest challenge has been ensuring that the system’s unpredictability doesn’t affect service quality, said Jen Snider, a therapist/trainer with the Chapel Hill agency and supervisor to MSW student Erin Betlej.

“People are having a hard time trusting what services are there and what will be supported in the future,” Snider said. “We want to be good advocates for our clients because that’s our strength. But it seems we spend a lot more of our time managing care instead of servicing our clients.”

Betlej, an advanced standing student, has worked diligently this semester to give extra support and attention to the three young people in her care. Betlej is working with the youth on behavior issues and how to cope with depression and anxiety, skills that should serve her well when she pursues a career as an elementary school social worker.

“I see working with children, especially young children as a preventative strategy,” she said.

“If we can get to the root of the issues they’re facing and intervene early and often while they’re young, then maybe they won’t have so many issues to deal with when they get older.”

Back at Carolina Outreach, Carpenter has been reminding herself that sometimes, positive “change happens gradually.” This semester, the second-year MSW student has been teaching a 9-year-old girl how to be more attentive during homework time—which may provide a nice comfortable place to sit—and how to deal with peers who sometimes frustrate the fourth-grader. The latter lesson hasn’t been as easy.

“I’m supposed to walk away and ignore them,” the girl said. “But I don’t always do that.”

In an evolving environment, Carpenter has also learned that adaptability is a must, especially for social workers. “In this work, you must be flexible,” she said. “And you must be creative in finding approaches and interventions that are appropriate for each client and family based on its unique history and personality.”
Betsy Bledsoe

Bledsoe has received several grants recently, as the principal investigator of “Better Beginnings: A Feasibility Test of Brief, Culturally Relevant Treatment for Depression in Low-Income Adolescents.” They include a $12,000 ECHO Pilot Grant in Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities, from the UNC Program on Ethnicity, Culture, and Health Outcomes; a $5,000 research grant from the University Research Council, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As the co-principal investigator of “University-Agency Partnerships for Evidence-Based Practices: A National Survey,” along with co-principal investigator Jennifer Bellamy of the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis, she received a $40,000 grant from the Silberman Faculty Grant Program. As a co-investigator of “Feasibility of Screening and Recruitment of Community-Dwelling Mothers for a New Project: Reducing Depressive Symptoms in Low-Income, LEP Latina Mothers,” she received a $9,600 grant from the Faculty Summer Research Funds, UNC School of Nursing.

Natasha Bowen

Since last spring, Bowen has worked with school and district staff in Columbus County, N.C. to help four elementary and middle schools assess their students’ social environments, choose intervention goals, and implement interventions directly targeting these goals. This project uses the School Success Profile (see story on p. 7).

Starting this fall, Bowen begins a second collaboration with the N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction to train district and state school personnel to implement the ESSP Model of Assessment and Prevention in two elementary and four middle schools, and two ninth grade academies in Halifax County. The goal is to become a valuable partner to the DPI by demonstrating a model of school-based decision making that is enhanced by social environmental information and evidence-based strategies. Also this fall, Bowen and the ESSP team will by carrying out an experimental test of the program in five elementary schools in Durham, and continuing a three-year study in three schools in Chapel Hill-Carrboro. Bowen’s team includes Clinical Assistant Professor Joelle Powers; doctoral students Kate Wegmann, Krysti Webber, and Aaron Thompson; and School of Education doctoral student Heather Bower.

Iris Carlton-LaNey

Carlton-LaNey was selected to serve in several capacities recently. They include: election to the delegate assembly for the N.C. Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers; advisory board member for Concern of Durham; selection committee member for the Wildacres Leadership Initiative for the selection of the William C. Friday Fellows for Human Relations 2008-2010 class; and was appointed by the provost to the director search committee for the Institute of African American Research and to UNC’s university teaching award committee.

Nancy Dickinson and Gary Nelson

Dickinson and Nelson received funding as part of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, a five-year, $16.5 million project ($3.3 million per year) and the only one of its kind funded. The intent is to cultivate leadership at multiple levels within child welfare agencies across the country to implement sustainable systems change, institutionalize effective workforce practices, and improve outcomes for children and families. Eight universities (Fordham, Michigan State and universities at Albany, Denver, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina and Southern Maine) along with the National Indian Welfare Association are collaborating on this effort. The School of Social Work at Albany is the prime contractor. Nelson is the PI on a UNC subcontract to provide leadership development to child welfare managers. Dickinson will be the overall project director.

Gary Nelson recently participated in an urban caucus and rural working group joint symposium on child welfare reform, held in Washington, D.C. He was a member of a panel that included House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Nelson was invited by N.C. Congressman Bob Ehrigde to provide testimony about child welfare outcomes.

Michal Grinstein-Weiss

Grinstein-Weiss has received several grants recently in support of her $1.5 million project studying the long-term impact of individual development accounts (IDA) and asset building on social and economic well-being, including a $170,000 grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. In addition, Grinstein-Weiss was awarded the Smith Richardson Foundation’s Domestic Public Policy Research Fellowship, a highly competitive award. The Smith Richardson Foundation’s Domestic Public Policy Program supports the work of the next generation of public policy researchers and analysts. Grinstein-Weiss will receive $60,000 to develop two peer-reviewed research publications about the long-term effects of IDAs. In the midst of the mortgage and credit crisis, evidence from this research will shed light on intervention models, such as IDAs, that provide an alternative to subprime lending.

Vanessa Hodges and Sharon Thomas

Hodges and Thomas traveled to Durban, South Africa in July to attend the International Association of Schools of Social Work Conference. Their presentation was entitled “Preparing Graduate Students for Study Abroad: Mutual Responsibilities of Home and Host Institutions.” They also used the time in South Africa to begin preparing for our School’s 2009 study abroad trip to the country.
Matthew Howard

Howard wrote an op-ed column that was published Sept. 27 in the Raleigh News & Observer. He explains why the recent decision of 129 college and university presidents to sign the Amethyst Initiative, which urges that the legal drinking age be lowered, is ill-considered and should be rescinded.

In a recently completed study, Howard, with Brian Perron of the University of Michigan School of Social Work, found that nearly one out of four teens who use an asthma inhaler say their intent is to get high. Findings identified high levels of asthma inhaler misuse among anti-social youths, who displayed higher levels of distress and were more likely to abuse other substances.

Rebecca Macy

Macy presented and co-led a workshop at the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2008 Biennial Conference in May. Macy’s presentation aimed to demystify evaluation and outcome measurement, and to offer practical tools to help domestic violence programs assess service outcomes.

Macy, Gary Cuddeback and Anna Scheyett gave presentations to the Crime Victims Services Committee of the North Carolina Governor’s Crime Commission in July. The Committee discussed the issues of mental health and mental illness, including the ways in which mental health connects with people involved with the justice system, as well as those receiving victims’ services. Scheyett presented information on mental illness and North Carolina mental health reform. Cuddeback presented on promising practices for justice-involved people with serious and persistent mental illnesses, and Macy presented on promising mental health interventions for survivors of violent victimization.

Susan Parish

Parish’s study on hardships of families with disabled children (see p. 18) has received national attention, including being featured on national NPR news radio. During Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue’s remarks at The Arc of North Carolina annual conference, she specifically referenced findings in Parish’s study that address how the economic downturn is directly affecting families with children who have disabilities.

Jack Richman and Shenyang Guo

Dean Richman and Associate Professor Guo were named honorary professors at the School of Social and Public Administration at East China University of Science and Technology, in Shanghai. See related story on p. 24.

Amelia Roberts-Lewis

Roberts-Lewis conducted training on “Ethnographic Interviewing” for the UNC-Charlotte School of Social Work annual alumni meeting, and on “Cultural Considerations in Counseling: Case Studies” for Piedmont Behavioral Healthcare. She also received a special recognition, the “Julian F. Keith Outstanding Staff Award” from the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work and Jordan Institute for Families for her instrumental work in the development of the Certificate of Substance Abuse Studies program as a principal investigator.

Anna Scheyett

Scheyett, associate dean for academic affairs, was elected president of the board of directors of the National Association of Social Workers-North Carolina (NASW-NC). During her term, Scheyett aims to increase public awareness of the social work profession and of the NASW.

Scheyett was the Memorial University awardee for the Canadian Association of Graduate Schools’ Distinguished Dissertation Award. Her dissertation was entitled “Clinician Impact on Consumer Decisions Regarding Psychiatric Advance Directives.”

Gary Shaffer

Shaffer received an award in appreciation of his outstanding service to the Council on Social Work Education. Shaffer served as a commissioner on the Commission of Accreditation from 2005-2008. “There are few positions in our volunteer governance structure as important to the future of social work education as that of the peer review process,” said Julia Watkins, executive director of the Council. “We deeply appreciate the contribution that you have made to strengthen the process and the quality outcome of accreditation.”

Evelyn Williams

Williams was appointed by Governor Mike Easley to a term on the North Carolina Council for Women.

Williams and Nancy Dickinson presented workshops at the “Scaling the Summit” conference in Denver in August, which was sponsored by Denver University and focused on recruitment, selection and retention of the human services workforce.

Williams was awarded $2.5 million in funding for her five-year project, “A Systems Approach to Child Welfare Leadership Development and Workforce Planning in North Carolina.” Williams is collaborating with Dean Duncan. This N.C. Workforce Development Project will focus on increasing coordination about workforce development among state, local and university stakeholders, developing leadership capacity of DSS staff and pilot testing a regional workforce planning model. The UNC Team will work with the N.C. Association of County Directors of Social Services and the N.C. Division of Social Services.

Irene Nathan Zipper

Zipper, along with doctoral student Dari Jiguidsuren, attended an intensive two-week course offered at the School of Education and Communication in Jonkoping University in Sweden in June, along with 26 graduate students from the United States and Europe. The course was entitled “Practice, Policy and Research in Early Childhood Intervention.” Zipper was a faculty member for the course, which was offered as a part of ECI-NET, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the European Union.

Welcome new faculty

- Gina Chowa, assistant professor
- Gary Cuddeback, assistant professor
- Joan Yoo, assistant professor
For the past nine years, the N.C. Child Welfare Education Collaborative has trained nearly 500 students from a half dozen universities for practice in public child welfare. This collaborative, which lawmakers created in response to a workforce crisis, will expand this spring when four more state universities join the partnership and help strengthen North Carolina’s commitment to the safety and well-being of children.

A total of 32 “child welfare scholars”—BSW and MSW students—are expected to enroll in the program at Western Carolina, Fayetteville State, UNC-Charlotte and UNC-Pembroke. These scholars will join students from programs at UNC, East Carolina University, Appalachian State, N.C. State, UNC-Wilmington and the joint program at North Carolina A&T/UNC-Greensboro. About 25 to 30 master’s students enroll in the collaborative through UNC each year.

The joint effort was established in 1999 and is administered by the Jordan Institute for Families. The latest expansion follows several years of advocacy and support from professional partners, including the N.C. Association of Directors of County Departments of Social Services and the state chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

The N.C. Division of Social Services contracts with the collaborative for about $2.7 million annually, enabling member universities to offer financial incentives, including tuition and fees, to students interested in public child welfare services. In turn, the child welfare scholars must agree to work in social services agencies throughout North Carolina following graduation. Participants are obligated to work in a public child welfare agency one year for every year or partial year they receive support.

Statewide, about 75 percent or three out of four “new hires” leave child welfare jobs within five years of employment. The collaborative helps to shore up this workforce by recruiting students to the social work field and assisting local agencies in retaining qualified practitioners.

There are signs of success. A recent review of 196 child welfare scholars showed that 91 percent continued to work in a local social services agency at least two years after completing their employment contracts with the collaborative, about half remained after five years.

At Fayetteville State, students are thrilled that the program will give them “hands-on experience in a child welfare unit,” said Debra Brown, School alumna and Fayetteville State co-principal investigator. “Additionally, it allows them to train under seasoned child welfare professionals, which is beneficial to the student, the agency, the university, the community and the state-at-large,” she said.

Because many rural and underserved areas still struggle to recruit and retain child welfare workers, collaborative members hope the UNC system’s four other accredited social work programs will eventually join the educational partnership.

For more information, contact Evelyn Williams, collaborative director, at ewms@email.unc.edu or (919) 962-6437.

Dean Jack Richman and School of Social Work faculty Kim Strom-Gottfried, Katherine Dunlap and Joanne Caye, along with Lawrence Rosenfeld from UNC’s Department of Communication Studies, traveled to Lithuania in July as part of a delegation with the American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education (APPLE). The nonprofit partnership was founded in 1990 to support educational reform in Lithuania.

The School of Social Work has played a significant role in reforming the country’s social work system since faculty members made their first trip to the country in 1994. Since that time, School faculty members have helped train young practicing social workers, police officers and others on disability, substance abuse and child abuse and neglect issues, among others. During July’s trip to Vytautas Magnus University, Klaipeda College and Siauliai University, the UNC delegation led workshops on a variety of topics, including family therapy, human resource management, direct social work practice and effective therapeutic communications.
former social worker and assistant professor Hortense McClinton credits a guest speaker at her middle school in the 1930s for steering her career path. Until that day, McClinton, then an eighth-grader in Guthrie, Okla., believed she had only one option as an adult: to be a school teacher. “That’s all blacks were told they could be,” she said.

But after hearing about social work, McClinton began to envision a different life for herself and quickly informed her homeroom teacher. The instructor, in turn, reminded the young student of her future. McClinton refused to listen, choosing instead to follow her heart and a sister’s encouragement.

She’s been blazing trails ever since. In 1941, she was the third black student to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in social work. In 1960, she was the first black professional hired to work for Durham’s Veteran Administration, and in 1966, she became the first black faculty member at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She was hired at the School of Social Work, where she remained until her retirement in 1984.

In September, she achieved another first: she became a nonagenarian. McClinton welcomed age 90 with the same no-nonsense attitude she has displayed during other lifetime milestones. “It doesn’t feel any different. It was just another day,” she said, laughing.

At the School of Social Work, McClinton is fondly remembered for her modesty. Many didn’t know of her groundbreaking entry into the nation’s oldest public university until long after meeting her. She, rarely, if ever, talked about it, unless someone broached the subject first.

“But she was willing to talk about racial issues in a way that would always help someone to grow,” said Maeda Galinsky, a Kenan Distinguished professor at the School and close friend of McClinton’s.

Growing up in Boley, Okla., a small town with predominantly black residents, taught her a lot about herself and others, McClinton said. “To me, people are just people, whether they are black, brown, green or purple,” she said. “I was taught to respect everybody.”

She quickly earned the admiration of her School colleagues, partly for her courage in speaking out. She was always willing to share her opinion, but she also showed genuine interest in hearing opposing sides, said Dean Jack Richman. “In faculty meetings, she was always the voice of reason, and she could see others’ points of view,” he said. “She was very gentle.”

McClinton, who taught casework, human development, family therapy and institutional racism, said she learned early in her career the significance of being a good listener. “I always felt that I didn’t know everything,” she said. “People have different lives and bring different perspectives and different world views on things. I could just as easily learn from them.”

As an assistant professor, she emphasized this philosophy to her students and taught them the value of spending time with clients. McClinton recently shared these “pearls of wisdom” for a video history project for the School.

“She said as social workers, we must get to know each person individually,” recalled Tiffany Washington, a second year doctoral student, who interviewed McClinton this past spring for the project. “She said you have to understand each client’s background.”

Those who worked alongside McClinton said it’s equally important for social work students and others at UNC to recognize and appreciate the former faculty member’s contributions.

“It was incredibly important for her to be here,” Galinsky said. “She represented a whole portion of knowledgeable social workers who had not been allowed into the institution before. It was good for students, good for the school and certainly good for African American students to have people of color in our faculty. But it was equally good for white students.”

McClinton (far left) in a photo from the School’s 1984-85 Record
Families with disabled children are struggling to keep food on the table, a roof over their heads, and to pay for needed health and dental care. But according to a new study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, these challenges are now falling on middle-income households and not just on poor families as previous research has found.

These latest findings show that long-held federal standards for identifying the nation’s poor are not capturing everyone in need and should be re-evaluated, especially for the financial effects on disabled children, said Susan L. Parish, the study’s lead investigator and an assistant professor in the UNC School of Social Work.

“The bottom line is that U.S. families raising children with disabilities are reporting severe hardships at rates that are chilling, including families that are solidly middle-class,” she said. “We were shocked to find such high rates of hardship among upper-income families.”

The study, which is based on 2002 data from the National Survey of American Families, were published in August in the journal Exceptional Children. The survey analyzed 28,141 households.

The UNC study found that overall, families across all income levels who are raising disabled children are significantly more challenged by food, housing and health issues compared to families without disabled children. Many also struggled to pay their phone bills.

Most surprising, Parish said, was data indicating that a significant percentage of those struggling are higher-income households. Yet based on federal poverty guidelines—which have remained unchanged since the 1960s and are used to determine eligibility for many income, food, health and disability-related programs—those same households would not be classified as “poor,” she said. They also would not qualify for assistance, despite the higher costs of raising children with disabilities, Parish noted. In 2002, the federal poverty level for a family of four was $18,100.

New studies show a significant financial burden on families raising disabled children

By Susan White
According to the study, 40 percent of the surveyed families with disabled children who earned between two to three times the federal poverty level (between $36,200 and $54,300 for a family of four, for example) experienced at least one food hardship, including worrying that food would run out or skipping meals because of a lack of money. Fifteen percent of families with incomes at three or more times the federal poverty level ($54,300 and up for a family of four) experienced housing instability, meaning they were unable to pay their rent or had to move in with others.

“These results suggest that state and federal policies that are in place to help families with disabled children are not going nearly far enough,” Parish said. “They are not eliminating deprivation. And these findings are particularly troubling now when the nation’s economy is struggling. Families raising children with disabilities are likely to be hardest hit during this economic downturn.”

Though the study found that children with disabilities were more likely to have health insurance and a usual source of care, they were 61 percent more likely than non-disabled children to have postponed necessary medical care and 83 percent more likely to have postponed needed dental care. The study didn’t examine the causes for those results, but Parish said they likely are related to the expenses of obtaining care—even with health insurance—and other issues, such as limited transportation.

The research results offer a compelling reason to expand eligibility standards for federal programs designed to assist families with disabled children, Parish said. Though more study is needed to determine how best to assist these families, UNC researchers suggest that increasing the income limits for food stamps, housing assistance and federal Supplemental Security Income, which assists low-income people with disabilities, would probably be a good start. Raising the asset limit for Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid, the federal insurance program for the poor and disabled, so that families are not penalized for saving money in case of a hardship would also help, Parish said.

“These families struggle to provide adequate care for their disabled children,” Parish said, “and stronger supports are vital.”

Out-of-pocket health care costs vary widely by state

The size of the financial burden on families with disabled children largely depends on which state they live in, according to a new study conducted by the schools of social work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Washington University in St. Louis, Mo. According to researchers, parents in states with higher average incomes face smaller burdens—meaning in contrast, more vulnerable families in poorer states often pay more of their own money to cover their disabled children’s health-care costs.

The study found families in Georgia fared the worst, paying an annual average of $972 out-of-pocket to care for their disabled children. That’s nearly $200 more, on average, than families spend nationwide on children with special health-care needs.

In North Carolina, out-of-pocket costs also exceeded the national average, with families spending $856 annually.

“These are disturbing findings that highlight the high costs families face in raising their children with disabilities and health conditions, and it shows that the state in which a family lives really does matter,” said Susan Parish, an assistant professor at the UNC School of Social Work. Parish co-authored the study with Paul Shattuck, the report’s lead investigator and an assistant professor of social work at Washington University in St. Louis.

The study, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, was published in the July issue of the American Academy of Pediatrics journal.

Parish said the costs of caring for children with special health-care needs are high, relative to those for typically developing children, because of their greater requirements for both primary and specialty medical care, as well as therapeutic and supportive services such as rehabilitation, assistive devices and mental health, home health and respite care.

“The financial burden associated with raising these children has important clinical and social implications. Understanding that burden is especially pressing, given it’s estimated that between about 13 to 16 percent of U.S. children have special health-care needs,” Parish said.

Of the nearly 39,000 families included in the research, about 91 percent reported spending some money out-of-pocket on special health-care needs for their children. These expenses ranged from medications to home therapy. The study looked at families with similar household demographics and involved children with a range of disabilities, including mental retardation, asthma and spina bifida, Parish said.

The report, which was based on 2002 data from the National Center for Health Statistics, also looked closely at gross family income to highlight disparities among the states.

“What we found was not only was the financial burden higher in some states, it was higher for poor families,” Parish said. “We need to understand how state policies are affecting children with disabilities.”

Families in Massachusetts felt the least financial pinch. On average, they paid $562 yearly on health care for their disabled children.
Meet our new doctoral students

By Kathleen Rounds

Sarah Dababnah, one of two incoming MSW/Ph.D. Continuum students, received her BS in Biology from UNC in 2001. After receiving her degree, she served in the Peace Corps in Jordan as a special education advisor and then, after returning to the United States, was a research fellow at the Jacobs Institute of Women’s Health in Washington, D.C.

After receiving her MPH from Johns Hopkins University in 2005, Dababnah worked at the Columbia University National Center for Children in Poverty as both a research assistant and research analyst.

Jeff Edwards received his BA in Sociology from Clemson University in 2000 and his MSW from the University of South Carolina in 2003. While completing undergraduate and post-graduate coursework, Edwards served as a graduate intern and clinical counselor at both the Mikell's Run Group Home and the University of South Carolina Counseling Center.

After completion of his MSW, Edwards served as a peer group counselor at the Hidden Lake Academy and then as a nonprofit consultant with Blackbaud, Inc. In 2006, Edwards accepted a position with the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, working as the project manager and social research associate for the Robert Wood Johnson Dental Pipeline Grant, among other grant projects. In addition to this work, he was a teaching assistant for the School of Dentistry and the School of Public Health.

Cynthia Fraga received her BA in Psychology (2005) and her MSW (2007) from Florida International University. During completion of her post-graduate degree, Fraga was a research assistant on a project funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism that examined the effectiveness of group treatment along with the dynamics of groups targeting adolescents with substance abuse problems.

After her graduation, Fraga was a health educator with the Community-Based Intervention Research Group at Florida International University, conducting baseline assessments, intervention and follow-up interviews with adolescents at risk for developing substance abuse problems.

Aaron Thompson received his BS in Paralegal Studies (1996) and his MSW (2001) from Southern Illinois University. During completion of his post-graduate degree, Thompson was a research assistant to the Jackson County Health Department as well as the Attucks Community Service Board, collecting data to aid in the development of programs and facilities.

After completion of his MSW, Thompson served as the school social worker with the Tri-County Special Education Joint Agreement in Murphysboro, Ill., where he compiled social developmental, health-related and emotional profiles for students with behavioral symptoms of social and emotional disabilities. In 2005, he was appointed the assistant principal with the Tri-Country Special Education Joint Agreement and ultimately became the principal and technical assistance supervisor within that school system.

Kristina Webber received her BA in Psychology from Virginia Tech in 1997 and her MSW from the University of Maryland in 2002. Webber joined the Charleston County School District as a research assistant for a multi-million dollar federal Safe Schools/Health Students Grant and was ultimately appointed as a program evaluator on the same project. Before moving to the Chapel Hill area, she managed the evaluations of several district programs and grants such as a federally funded initiative to reduce alcohol abuse and the Middle Grades Acceleration Project (M-GAP) that focuses on students who have been retained multiple times and are overage for their grade level. In addition to this work, Webber helped to create the district’s At-Risk Alert System, a Web-based tool that helps schools more easily identify and plan intervention supports for students at risk for academic failure.

Kate Wegmann, one of two incoming MSW/Ph.D. continuum students, received her BS in Education from the University of Wisconsin in 2000. After graduation, Wegmann served as a volunteer coordinator with the Madison Area Literacy Council in Madison, Wis., where she recruited and trained volunteer literacy tutors. In 2002, she was appointed as a project assistant to the Puerto Rico Census Project at the University of Wisconsin, where she assisted in the creation of a representative demographic sample of raw data from the 1910, 1920 and 1930 censuses of Puerto Rico to be used in studies by a number of academic departments. In 2007, Wegmann entered the MSW program at UNC-Chapel Hill. During her first year in the program, Wegmann was a research assistant for Natasha Bowen on the Elementary School Success Profile project and was a social work intern at the Chatham County Public Health Department.
Molly Barker named UNC Alumna of the Year

Molly Barker, MSW ’89, is a four-time Hawaii Ironman triathlete and a visionary. She graduated from UNC in 1982 with a BA in chemistry and in 1989 with a masters of social work. With her expertise in counseling and teaching, along with her research on adolescent issues, Barker founded Girls on the Run in Charlotte. Girls on the Run is a non-profit organization that educates and prepares girls for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living. This innovative program combines training for a 5k event with life-changing, self-esteem enhancing lessons that promote social, physical and mental health in 8- to 12-year-old girls. Each lesson revolves around a topic geared toward reducing at-risk behaviors.

Barker began running at 15—an age when she found herself stuck in the “girl box,” a visual image she uses to describe girls who feel the need to have a certain size body, to be beautiful or popular. For some girls who desire to fit in, there is pressure to mold their bodies and their personalities to fit the requirements of the box.

But when young Barker ran, she felt strong…accomplished…beautiful.

During a sunset run in 1993, she found the inspiration that grew into Girls on the Run. Running, she believed, could give girls the tools they needed to love and accept themselves just as they are. Three years later, she developed the first 24-lesson curriculum with the help of 13 girls. The program quickly grew, with more than two dozen girls participating the second season and 75 thereafter. In 2000, Girls on the Run International was born.

Today, there are Girls on the Run programs in more than 150 cities across North America, with tens of thousands of girls and women participating. Each year, Girls on the Run hosts more than 70 end-of-season 5k events across the United States and Canada.

Barker and Girls on the Run have been featured in many magazines, including People, Runner’s World, Redbook, Woman’s Day, O Magazine, Forbes and Running Times, as well as in interviews with CNN, MSNBC, ABC News, NBC News, NPR and ESPN. In 2004, she was named Charlotte’s “Woman of the Year.” Also that year, she was selected to appear on a national tour with Oprah Winfrey and a group of experts in women’s health and fitness. In 2006, Barker was the recipient of several prestigious national awards, including Redbook magazine’s “Strength and Spirit Award,” which recognizes individuals who are building a better future for all of us; the “Woman’s Day Award” from Woman’s Day magazine, which salutes individuals who have used their vision and heart to help fix pressing problems and the prestigious “Heroes of Running Award” from Runner’s World magazine.

Even though she calls Charlotte home, Barker remains active with UNC. She is a member of the School of Social Work’s Board of Advisors and has spoken numerous times to various groups on campus. Barker is passionate about her work, but she is most inspired by her two children, Hank and Helen.

With the success of the Girls on the Run program, along with her two books, “Girls on Track: A Parent’s Guide to Inspiring our Daughters to Achieve a Lifetime of Self-Esteem and Respect,” and “Girls Lit From Within,” Barker is an inspiration and positive role model for people of all ages.

Barker has dedicated her life to shattering the “girl box” image to make the lives of young girls better throughout the country and has made it her mission to educate and prepare girls for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living.

Congratulations to Barker on this well-deserved award.

For more information about Girls on the Run, see www.girlsontherun.org.

Clinical Lecture Series

Monday, January 26, 2009
Depression and Suicide in Children and Adolescents
Jodi Flick, MSW, LCSW

Monday, February 23, 2009
From the Clinic to the Real World: Empowering Clients Beyond the Therapeutic Session
Zach Rosenthal, PhD

Monday, March 23, 2009
Ethics in Practice: Terminating Therapeutic Work With Clients
Tina Souders, MSW, LCSW, JD

Monday, April 20, 2009
Engagement Interviewing: Increasing Engagement and Retention of Clients in Mental Health Services
Betsy Bledsoe, PhD, MSW, LCSW

Two contact hours available for each lecture. All take place at the School of Social Work from 12:00-2:00 p.m. Online pre-registration is required. For more information, visit: http://ssw.unc.edu/cls

For more information about Girls on the Run, see www.girlsontherun.org.
A burgeoning relationship between U.S. and Chinese social workers is helping ensure that the world’s most populous nation can deal with its growing pains at the same time that it’s coming of age.

The problems vary widely—from helping victims of the recent Sichuan earthquake cope with trauma to managing the impact that China’s one-child policy and a booming elderly population are having on the nation’s social fabric.

Such tasks aren’t made easier by the fact that social work as a discipline is still quite new in China and the number of trained professionals is relatively low.

To help address the issue, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s School of Social Work has formed a partnership with the School of Social and Public Administration at the East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai. The two institutions recently formalized the relationship with a five-year joint “memorandum of understanding.”

The international partnership, a first for the UNC school, evolved from a series of collaborative efforts between Chinese governmental ministries and universities and comes as China’s marketplace economy continues to expand—as does the country’s need for some form of social services system.

“China is moving quickly to develop social work services, and they are developing practice and policy innovations from which we are learning,” said UNC School of Social Work Dean Jack Richman, who welcomed the joint venture. “This is a real win-win collaboration.”

Over the past several years, UNC faculty and Chinese professionals have worked together on research and training, while a study abroad program with East China University is now in its second year.

And in May, the relationship took on new meaning, when a devastating earthquake struck central China, killing tens of thousands of people.

The disaster coincided with the visit of a UNC delegation on a previously arranged visit to East China University. Arriving just days after the quake, officials there requested their UNC counterparts’ assistance on training for disaster relief and response.

Richman, along with faculty members Mimi Chapman, Rebecca Brigham, Shenyang Guo and Daniel Hudgins, quickly pulled together a lecture series. Social service agency personnel, potential earthquake volunteers and students attended the workshop. The presentation focused on the effects of traumas, especially on children, and the need for a social support process. But it also allowed UNC faculty the chance to further demonstrate the vital role that social workers play in communities, especially during times of crisis, Richman said.

During the visit, the UNC delegation—which included 30 students—also met with Chinese faculty members, students and others to discuss Chinese social policy, unemployment and migrant
worker needs. From those conversations, UNC officials said they discovered they have just as much to learn from their Asian counterparts. “International collaboration forces us to look at old problems in new ways and allows us to see new possible solutions that were not evident previously,” Richman said.

For example, Shanghai is now developing a comprehensive plan to assist its growing elderly population. Of China’s 1.3 billion people, more than 10 percent are older than 60, a proportion that’s expected to rise more than 31 percent by the year 2050. The percentage of residents over 80 is growing even faster. The increase is largely attributable to China’s one-child policy, which was introduced in the late 1970s to help control the country’s booming population.

Shanghai’s aging plan, which didn’t exist last year, includes services that would enable most older residents to be cared for in the home, a “very progressive” move for a communist welfare system, said Hudgins, program coordinator for the school’s Center for Aging Research and Educational Services.

“I’m not aware of any state that’s done it, and the U.S. certainly hasn’t done anything like this,” he said.

Based on the rapid growth of social work programs at Chinese universities—nearly 200 exist today compared to just more than two dozen 20 years ago—there is an increasing broader interest in addressing the country’s social problems, including the health-care needs of migrant workers, Richman said.

“School faculty are excited about the opportunity to work more closely with the educational institutions in China, though cultivating a deeper relationship and trust will take time.”

Richman said the partnership with East China University opens up greater opportunities for Chinese university educators to receive training at UNC and for School of Social Work faculty to visit and train at some of China’s higher educational institutions. It should also offer further valuable possibilities for students as well. Officials are looking at developing an exchange program that would give UNC students field opportunities in China and give Chinese students the chance to pursue a masters or doctoral degree at UNC.

At least two Chinese students started classes this fall at the UNC school, one of whom is enrolling as a result of the international partnership.
Congratulations
Class of 2008

The School of Social Work held its 87th annual commencement on May 10, 2008, at the Dean E. Smith Center. Our speaker was Ann Johnson, chair of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging.

Photos by Michelle Rogers

Aaron Swart and family
2007–2008
Honor Roll of Donors

The School of Social Work thanks the many alumni, friends, foundations and corporations who made financial contributions as gifts or grants for sponsored research between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008. Thanks to your generous support, our School has become one of the best in the country. We produce leaders in social work education, research, direct practice and community service. Your generosity enhances everything we do. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the listing below. If an error or omission has occurred, please accept our apology and notify Kristen Huffman, Director of the Annual Fund and Alumni Relations at (919) 843-7285 or Kristen_Huffman@unc.edu.

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Henderson County
Scholarship established in memory of bipolar sufferer

UNC alumnus Brett Rhi Chavis (BS ‘99) was a kind and unselfish man, a giving friend who loved his family. To know him was to know that one of his chief joys in this life was to make those around him happier than they’d been just before he walked into a room. He worked hard at IBM and was well-liked and respected by his colleagues as someone who always shared his talents freely with others.

Unfortunately, Chavis also waged a very private war with bipolar disorder, finally succumbing to this horrible disease last year. As a lasting tribute, his family and friends have established the Brett Chavis Memorial Scholarship at the School of Social Work to provide support to students who work with clients who have mental illnesses.

“Social workers combat mental illness and society’s ills as a labor of love, and in North Carolina they provide the majority of outpatient services to the mentally ill,” said Associate Dean for Advancement Mary Beth Hernandez. “These are the reasons the Chavis family supported the establishment of this scholarship and why his friends are working to see it become a reality.”

Thus far, about $14,000 has been raised for the scholarship. If you are interested in making a tax-deductible contribution, please use the envelope enclosed in this magazine or contact Mary Beth Hernandez at (919) 962-6469; email: marybeth@email.unc.edu.

$1 million given to the School to establish professorship

A donor who wishes to remain anonymous has made a $1 million bequest to the School of Social Work to establish a professorship.

The professorship will be focused in the area of poverty and its impact on individuals, families and communities.

For more information about making a gift by bequest to the School, please contact Mary Beth Hernandez, associate dean for advancement, at (919) 962-6469 or e-mail marybeth@email.unc.edu.

Honor Roll, continued from p. 29

Laura Francis-Thorp, MSW ’98, LCSW, is passionate about mental health care. She is a board member and former chairperson of Caramore Community, Inc., a rehabilitation program for adults with severe persistent mental illness. She has enjoyed various opportunities to provide direct mental health services to adults and adolescents. As an employee of the Chatham County Health Department, Francis-Thorp served as counselor and director at a school-based health clinic. She was a volunteer counselor at Pregnancy Support Services and worked as an intern at Orange Person Chatham Mental Health Center and at John Umstead Hospital. As a church volunteer, she helps adults with physical and mental health needs to access resources for daily living.

Francis-Thorp received her MSW and BA in English from UNC-Chapel Hill. She resides in Chapel Hill with her husband and three children.
Three receive 2008 Distinguished Alumni Awards

By Kristen Huffman

Each year, the School presents the Distinguished Alumni Award as a way of honoring alumni who embody social work values and carry our mission of service into the field.

During the spring commencement ceremony in May, Diann Dawson ’74, Debra Jenkins ’77 and Amanda Stone ’94 were given the 2008 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Diann Dawson of Silver Spring, Md., is a career public servant with over 30 years of federal executive leadership and state program management experience. She is the director of the Office of Regional Operations within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She provides leadership and direction to ACF’s 10 regional offices responsible for federal oversight and implementation of more than 60 human service programs to promote the well-being of children and families. Through her background in social work and understanding of family dynamics, Dawson has been instrumental in helping ACF work to strengthen and rebuild families through the Healthy Marriage Initiative. She also provided the leadership to create the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI) that lays the foundation of a national family strengthening movement for African Americans. Dawson makes it back to Chapel Hill yearly as she heads the planning committee for the yearly AAHMI research conference at UNC.

Debra Jenkins of Fayetteville continues to be an advocate, an innovator and a pioneer as a clinical social worker in Cumberland County. Through her tireless commitment to helping people, she aided facilities like the Myrover-Reese Homes, which are alcohol and drug abuse treatment halfway houses, and the Thomas Bacote Center, a high level group home for youth with "difficult to manage" behavior disorders, to receive certification and funding. Jenkins has worked on several projects to improve military-civilian practices pertaining to mental health, child welfare and child sexual abuse trauma response. She also advocated for staff to develop a set of tools and services for families and children with developmental disabilities, including supporting parenting education, early childhood/development screenings, family therapy, and effective uses of therapeutic home and respite placement services. Her nominator wrote, “There is literally no one who understands community mental health better than Debbie Jenkins. Better yet, there is no one who works harder for employees, other staff members, volunteers and consumers than Debbie...for over 30 years; it has been about the consumer, never about Debbie.”

Amanda Stone of Asheville serves as the director of the Department of Social Services and assistant county manager of Human Services for Buncombe County. Through her leadership, she has revolutionized service delivery that focuses on community ownership and strategic management of resources to support community outcomes. In 2006, the primary mental health provider in Buncombe County closed and Stone used her relationships to pull together a collaboration of providers to ensure that consumers did not fall between the cracks. She did all of this with little recognition of the tremendous amount of work she did behind the scenes. As a result of her dedication, there was less impact to the clients in the community who needed services. Stone continues to work with providers around issues of coordination of health care and continues to build a system in Buncombe County that allows everyone the opportunity to receive the services they need to improve their lives.

The 2009 nominations are due by April 1. For more information, please see our Web site: http://ssw.unc.edu/alumnissw/awards.

Tate-Turner-Kuralt Champions named

The School presents the Tate-Turner-Kuralt Champions Award annually to recognize outstanding volunteer service to and advocacy for the School. The award is named for Jack Tate, John Turner and Charles Kuralt—who brought attention and esteem to the profession of social work and to the efforts of our School. Two of these original champions had no discernible self-interest in the School; they neither worked here nor studied here, yet they, like the recipients of this year’s award, cared deeply about the work that we do and about the people who social workers serve.

This year’s Champions award goes to two outstanding volunteers and members of our board of advisors who have provided innovative leadership and are working to help us maintain our status as one of the leading Schools of Social Work in the country—Janie Armfield and Linda Perry.

Janie Armfield joined the board of advisors two years ago, bringing with her a sense of humor, a deep love for Carolina and great enthusiasm for our School’s mission. Armfield and her husband established an MSW scholarship nearly 20 years ago. She was instrumental in securing one of the largest gifts in our history from Sam Reeves, a businessman who had no prior connection to our School. With Sam’s gift of $1.3 million and the Armfield’s continued generosity, we have established the Spears-Turner Distinguished Professorship and the Armfield-Reeves Innovations Fund to support faculty and students’ innovative research and public service.

Linda Perry (no photo available) has been a member of the board of advisors since 2004 and since that time, she has worked tirelessly to increase the visibility of our School among the University’s leaders. Thanks to her advocacy, we are no longer “hiding our light under a bushel” and are recognized by the administration and the board of trustees for the excellent work of our faculty, students and alumni. Perry is a member of our development committee and serves on the selection committee for the Armfield-Reeves Innovations Fund. With quiet persistence and dedication, Perry uses the skills she learned as a social worker for the benefit of our School.
1960s

Nancy T. Edwards, MSW ‘65, is donating clinical social work services to the Transylvania County Volunteers in Medicine. They see adults who have no insurance. Medications are also dispensed free of charge. Those too ill to be served there are sent to the local hospital emergency room. “We cut down on so many of the ER visits that the hospital welcomes the ones we send,” said Edwards. “How refreshing!”

Richard Terry Lovelace, MSW ‘67, a recently retired former student of professor emeritus Philip W. Cooke, hopes to honor his memory by giving away a stress relief book Cooke helped to publish. Written nearly 20 years ago, it is now online and can be accessed freely. Lovelace gives permission to print the entire text and asks everyone to read a note written by Cooke on the book’s back cover. Download at: http://www.winstonclinicalassociates.com/StressMasterCover.html

1980s

Alan Brown, MSW ‘87, was featured in a Sept. 17 Independent Weekly article about the Chatham County batterer’s treatment program he runs, called PEACE (People Ending Abuse through Counseling and Education).

Freda Bailey Shipman, MSW ‘85, joined the Veterans Administration Central Office, Office of Patient Care Services, in Washington, D.C., as the social work program manager. She has been employed with the VA in various clinical roles since 1986. Shipman obtained her doctorate in Leadership Education from Spalding University, Louisville, Ky., in June 2007.

Deborah Greene Wall, MSW ‘84, LCSW, BCD was appointed to the position of regional clinical risk management coordinator of the Mid-Atlantic region of the Department of the Navy in Norfolk, Va. Wall oversees the privileging and credentialing of clinicians, reviews fatality reports and ensures quality assurance for 17 regional naval bases.

1990s

Andrea Bazán-Manson, MSW-MPH ‘95, president of the Triangle Community Foundation, was elected chair of the board of the National Council of La Raza. A longtime advocate for Hispanics in the Triangle, Bazán will steer the board of the Washington, D.C.-based NCLR, the largest Hispanic civil rights organization in the United States. Bazán has served on the NCLR board since 2002 and was most recently its vice chair. Her term at the helm of the organization’s board will last three years.

Daniel Rhodes, MSW ‘96, graduated with a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies and a graduate certificate in Women and Gender Studies from UNC-Greensboro. His dissertation was entitled “An Anarchist Psychotherapy: Ecopsychology and a Pedagogy of Life.” Rhodes is employed as the regional clinical supervisor of Catholic Social Services in the Piedmont Triad Region, consisting of Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem.

Ursula Brown Robinson, MSW ‘91, LCSW, was appointed by the Guilford County Commissioners to serve on the Guilford County Board of Social Services. Robinson is vice president of clinical services at Hospice and Palliative Care of Greensboro.

Lanya Shapiro, MSW-MPH ‘97, runs a political activism organization called Traction. She was featured in a Sept. 30 WUNC public radio news story about voting.

Dawn Wilson, MSW ’90, started a new position as special projects coordinator with the Catawba County Department of Social Services. Her primary project is a study funded by The Duke Endowment that looks at the well-being of children ages 0-12 in foster care through engagement of families and provision of post-permanency services to reunified, adoptive and kinship/guardianship families. She is currently in the first year of project design and works closely with the project evaluators, Duke Endowment and Child Trends in Washington, D.C.

2000s

Daisy Adkins, MSW ‘08, husband Ryan and son Camden welcomed baby Aiden Joseph Adkins on Aug. 6. Aiden was 8 pounds, 11 ounces and 20 inches long.

Sarah Axelson, MSW ‘08, moved to Fairfax, Va., and started a new job as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program Manager at Advocates for Youth in Washington, D.C.


Rachel Buchanan, Ph.D. ’08, started a new position as an assistant professor in the Social Work Department at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Md.

Mary Beth Cox, MSW/MPH ’04, and husband Roy welcomed their first baby, Ivy Cheyenne Brown on May 16. Cox is a program evaluator with the Oklahoma State Department of Health Children First program in Oklahoma City.

Robert Herman, MSW ’03, received his Ph.D. from Case Western University. Herman accepted a position as an assistant professor at UNC-Charlotte and is relocating to Matthews, N.C. with his partner Jeff and their son Colin.
Megan LaBounty Highsmith, MSW ’01, her husband Miles, and son Turner are living in New York City. Highsmith is a graduate of our former Charlotte distance education program, and is taking post-graduate courses in social work at NYU.

Amy Hobson Fadden, MSW ’01, and husband Brian welcomed their first child, Colin Patrick Fadden, on May 24.

Ebon Freeman-James, MSW ’02, LCSW, was married on Aug. 8 and had a destination wedding in Dunn’s River, Jamaica. She then moved from Hampton Roads to northern Virginia and is now an employee of Capital Hospice, which serves the Washington, D.C. area.

Amily McCool, MSW ’03, and Robert Schutte, along with their 9-year-old son Ethan, welcomed Ryan McCool Schutte, 6 lbs. 9 oz., and Connor McCool Schutte, 6 lbs. 11 oz., to the family on September 17.

Lee Chaix McDonough, LCSW, MSW/MSPH ’03, started a new job as a clinical social worker for the VA Outpatient Clinic in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. She provides mental health and supportive services to veterans. Previously, she worked as an inpatient psychiatric social worker in Fort Walton Beach, where many patients were active duty military members returning from deployment. Her husband is currently serving in the Air Force.

Jung-Sook Lee, MSW, Ph.D. ’08, has relocated to Sydney, Australia, where she started a new position as a lecturer at the School of Social Sciences and International Studies at the University of New South Wales.

Jini Pendleton, MSW ’03, LCSW, and husband Kwame welcomed their first child, Kameron James Tyler, on May 7. Pendleton works in the Atlanta public school system.

Daniel Platt, MSW ’07, and Reid Smithdeal, MSW ’07, graduates of our Winston-Salem program, have opened a Recovery Education Center in Watauga County to help people overcome mental illness and substance abuse issues. The center offers classes on a building scale, meaning each class builds on the previous, just as a college course does. The classes and workshops cover a wide range of topics including mental, physical, social, financial, spiritual and general wellness.

Shweta Singh, Ph.D. ’05, was featured in Loyola Magazine. Singh is an assistant professor of social work at Loyola University in Chicago. Last summer, Singh worked with Asian immigrant women examining how gender, mental health outcomes, and social service institutions are affecting women’s experience in the United States. By documenting women through audio and video recordings, she hopes to make this kind of research accessible to people who would not typically look at social policy research, which is usually presented in the form of a scholarly paper.

Katie Smith, MSW ’08, was featured in an article in the July 3 edition of the Philanthropy Journal, entitled “Teaching as Social Work.” Smith discusses how her dual perspective as teacher and social worker has given her a more complete picture of the obstacles facing disadvantaged youth.

Christopher Solomon, MSW ’07, accepted a position with the North Carolina Division of Social Services as a social services program consultant II. He will serve as a member of the Children’s Services Review Team, conducting audits at local departments of social services across the state. Solomon is a graduate of the Winston-Salem Advanced Standing Distance Education Program, where the primary focus is management and community practice. He is the first African-American male to graduate from that program.

Sabrina Sullenberger, Ph.D. ’03, and husband Ryan welcomed their second child on May 19. Ireland Elisabeth Rose Sullenberger was born a week early on her big sister’s second birthday.

Mark Sullivan, MSW ’02, helped organize a legislative breakfast and discussion of mental health issues with area General Assembly members. The annual event was held on May 31 at UNC’s Friday Center in Chapel Hill and was part of a day of activities organized by the Mental Health Association and the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Sullivan is the executive director of the Mental Health Association in Orange County.

Anna Scheyett, associate dean for academic affairs, moderated the legislators’ panel discussion on the state’s mental health crisis.

In Memoriam

Noel Castle, Jr., MSW ’94, of Durham, died in July at age 39. He was employed as a licensed clinical social worker in the Triangle area. In addition to his parents, Castle is survived by his wife Michele, sons Noel and Nathan, and daughter Lilian.

Martha Jenkins Cleveland, MSW ’74, age 88, died on June 29 after a brief illness. A resident of Chapel Hill, Cleveland was an active social worker and an administrative secretary in the Department of Romance Languages at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Margie Freeman DeWoskin, MSW ’80, died of cancer at age 62 on May 16 at Duke Hospital. She was the director of the Employment and Training Programs Area, Agency on Aging at the Triangle J Council of Governments prior to retiring in 2006.

Allan Jarratt, MSW ’59, died July 12 at age 80. Jarratt retired in 1989 from the VA Medical Center in Coatesville, Pa. He was an active volunteer for several organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels and Brandywine Hospital and spent 10 months in Nigeria serving with Sudan Interior Mission.

Robert Enloe Parker, MSW ’40, of Franklin, died Feb. 23 at age 91. She was a retired teacher in the Macon County school system.

Sylvia Knopp Polgar, MSW ’81, of Wilmington, died April 9 at Lower Cape Fear Hospice Center. Polgar earned her Ph.D. in sociology at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1974, and taught courses in sociology, social work and anthropology at UNC-Wilmington from 1976 to 1995. In addition, she served her community in many leadership roles, encouraging community relations and public health.

Harold Shields Jr., MSW ’06, a graduate of our Triangle Distance Education Program, died Oct. 3 after a brief illness. He is survived by his wife Kenitra Carby-Shields, MSW ’07, and two small children, Mecca and Dima.

Do you have news to share?

If you have received an award, promotion, taken a new job, gotten married, or added a new member to the family, let us know. We would love to share your news with other alumni and the School of Social Work community. Please e-mail your alumni news and photos to sswalumni@unc.edu.

Contact  |  UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work
Sally Knight grew up in Charlotte and attended Duke University and the University of Minnesota. While applying to graduate programs in psychology, she decided she’d rather pursue an MSW instead. Knight was especially intrigued with social work’s emphasis on systems theory, holistic approaches to issues and clients and the profession’s ability to track intervention success.

Today, Knight uses her social work background in a unique way as the owner of YogaOne Wellness in Charlotte. Mary Beth Hernandez recently interviewed Knight about how she incorporates social work with her passion for yoga.

How did you become interested in yoga?
I was very resistant to yoga. I was a lifelong endurance athlete, a triathlete and dedicated runner. Yoga seemed like something I would pick up in my retirement years! Then a friend gave me a gift certificate and virtually dragged me into my first class. And at the end I felt great—light, freer, open and clear. Eventually, I gave up running altogether, and now all I do is yoga.

How does your interest in yoga relate to social work?
When I worked with the homeless, I would sit there and evaluate the family, their needs, assets, etc., and I would come up with the plan. And in spite of all my training, it still felt like “I” was sitting up here with solutions, and “they” were sitting down there with their problems.

Yoga is a philosophy that believes that everyone is already whole and complete. We have within us the answers. At Yoga One and in our outreach work with Urban Ministries and in prisons, we create a safe and supportive environment for people to come in, let down their masks, their endless tactics to “look good,” all the stalling and avoidance, and we work their bodies and minds with asana (the postures). They know they aren’t judged; they are accepted and supported as well as physically and mentally challenged. The result? Their resistance, their blocks, their walls come down, and they find and connect with their own solutions, not my solutions for them.

We are now teaching yoga to a high school football team to show how it can help them in their performance but also in their grades, life, relationships. It’s been a trip teaching these young guys, but they are hungry for (balance) and by the way, they are winning their games!

And we’re also getting a lot of people who are struggling with the recent economic crisis and using us to get some clarity and direction for their future.

What are the challenges and rewards of being a small business owner?
The challenges for me center around maintaining my own yoga practice and balance in my life! I am the mother of four young boys, and I have to make sure to balance their needs, the needs of my husband, myself, our marriage and my students and teachers. Luckily, my business partner is my husband, so he’s doing the same thing and also understands the whole process. So I have the best of both worlds: home and business.

My social work training helps me in this whole process. I don’t offer solutions. I practice active listening and believe in people and know that if they stay open and willing, the answers come.

How does yoga help people?
Yoga creates balance. Whatever is out of line, it brings and restores balance. For example, many people have neglected their health and their bodies. For them initially, yoga restores freedom of movement, melts away excess pounds, opens tight spaces and brings vitality and energy. Like social work, it’s a holistic approach: yoga addresses the whole person and operates on all levels (mind, body, spirit). That’s why it works.

What are your long-term goals, personally and for the business?
My immediate long-term business goal is to open satellite locations in smaller communities. To accomplish this, I intend to keep training amazing teachers who can carry this work forward and turn people on to their own strength and inner wisdom.

My long-term personal goal is to support my sons in their development and interests. They are my real intervention in the world. I want them to know that they can do and be anything, and they can change the world.

Who or what inspires you?
I am very fortunate to have two great teachers who mentor me. I also am deeply inspired by the teachers at my studio and our students. They show up, work hard, and I get to watch their lights turn on and grow bright. The teachers raise the bar and that keeps me on my toes!

Finally, I am inspired by my family. My sons are natural little yogis: full of joy, contentment and wonder. I hope to keep that alive in them and in all of us!
From the Alumni President

Dear Fellow Alumni, School of Social Work Community, and Friends,

Times are challenging to say the least. On a national level, we are facing economic challenges and a level of crisis that will have an impact on generations to come. On the state level, we continue to be in the midst of mental health reform, with the challenges that remain for clinicians, clients, advocates, and consumers in navigating the fragmented system. On the individual and community level, I am sure many of our budgets are a little bit tighter.

In spite of these circumstances, this issue of Contact is filled with the amazing work of students, faculty, staff and alumni who have contributed to the School of Social Work, our communities, nation and the world through their commitment to social work and its values. It is this commitment and drive that will help us remain focused and dedicated during these difficult times. Indeed, in the midst of our national economic crisis, a mental health parity bill was recently passed and as of this writing, is expected to be signed into law soon. This bill will work to end insurance discrimination against mental health and substance use disorders, requiring full parity coverage with physical health benefits.

Many transitions have taken place at the School of Social Work and on the University level. The Triangle Distance Ed program has moved from N.C. Central University to the UNC campus, and Holden Thorp was installed as UNC’s 10th chancellor on University Day. Changes have been made to the MSW class structure in the foundation and advanced curriculum, allowing for more flexibility of electives. And a new “self-directed” MSW concentration has been added to the program, allowing for a blend of direct practice and management and communities courses.

With all of these changes taking place and our current struggles in our communities and agencies, I encourage you to be an active partner with the School of Social Work. Whether you donate your time as a field instructor, a student mentor, an Alumni Council member, or in any other way, know that your input and experiences are not only valuable but crucial in these challenging times. Remaining a strong community of social workers will help us remain committed to the goals of social work, the goals that brought us to this field and drive us every day.

Sincerely,

Michelle Turner ’03

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