



Volume 21, Issue 3

Spring/Summer 2008

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The ACOSA Update!

WE'RE BACK

Dear ACOSA Members

What a year of transition this has been, not only for ACOSA, but for our *Journal of Community Practice* in particular. It has taken a while to get on track with the big transition to our new publisher Taylor and Francis and the new editors for the *JCP*. As you might imagine, Alice and I have been especially frantic with ACOSA, Journal, and those other sundry concerns we call our employers. If we have seem a bit distance and out of touch in recent months, our sincere apologies.

But we've made it through this tough transition period, and we want you to know that our organization is rolling again. In addition to this renewed newsletter publication, which will be back on schedule for summer and fall (pre-APM) issues, membership should be seeing the first issue of Volume 16 of our Journal arriving shortly from Taylor and Francis, if not already. We are pleased to say that we have three issues already in the works, and manuscript contributions continue at a strong pace. I am also happy to welcome Addie Weaver (see page 8) who is stepping in as Associate



Editor on the ACOSA Newsletter and helping me on other ACOSA work. You will get a chance to meet her at the ACOSA booth this fall.

During this transitory phase, ACOSA was not asleep at the wheel.

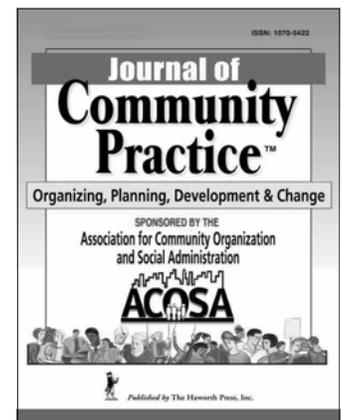
Thanks to the hard work of Bill Butterfield and Gary Grzebienik, our webmaster, we have an updated ACOSA website, as well as new and improved online membership options, as well as a number of in-house record and data improvements that we hope will make for improved membership service as we move forward. In addition, I want to thank both Bill and Ana Santiago, our *JCP* Managing Editor, who handled the brunt of all the back-and-forth with Haworth Press and Taylor & Francis in getting our membership records and other details hammered out so that we can enjoy our continuing subscription to the Journal.

I also want to thank our outgoing board

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Contact the Editors!

Journal of Community Practice

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Exploring Opportunities for Macro Practice Collaboration

Susan A. Murty, Ph.D., Associate Professor School of Social Work at the University of Iowa and representative of the Association for Community Organization & Social Administration (ACOSA) went on the road for ACOSA to be a guest speaker at the March 20, 2008 event hosted by the Association of Macro Practice Social Workers (AMPSW) in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

AMPSW is an organization founded in Minneapolis by a group of macro practice social workers in the fall of 2006. AMPSW founders began the group to meet the advocacy, networking, and professional development needs of social workers in the fields of management, supervision, research, advocacy, higher education, and other areas of macro practice. The event was held at the Chatterbox Pub in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The event attracted about 20 participants who came to hear about the synergies that might exist between ACOSA and AMPSW

Dr. Murty discussed the role and mission of ACOSA with AMPSW members. There was a lively exchange of questions and ideas which resulted in the following ideas for collaboration between the groups: hosting a regional ACOSA conference in the Twin Cities, considering the possibility of AMPSW serving as an ACOSA state chapter (which would be the first of its kind), printing an article in ACOSA's newsletter and on the AMPSW website, AMPSW submitting an article to ACOSA's journal publication, providing networking opportunities on a national level, meeting at the APM, co-sponsoring a symposium, and others.



Dr. Murty intends to discuss opportunities for collaboration with ACOSA members, and AMPSW members will also discuss their thoughts on participating in shared opportunities in the future. "Wingspread", a NASW movement to bring all social work organizations together with a single voice was also discussed. This movement may provide the momentum needed for all social work organizations to look for opportunities to maximize collaboration. ACOSA and AMPSW plan to continue discussions of shared interests. Stay tuned as we continue to build relationships to create more opportunities to build macro practice synergies!

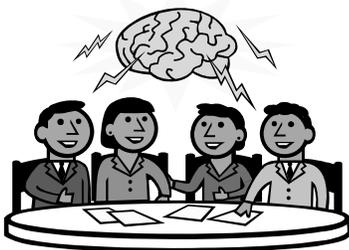
Christina L. Erickson, LISW, PhD Assistant Professor; Augsburg College. Contact her at: 2211 Riverside Ave. CB 51; Minneapolis, MN 55454, phone 612.330.1704, fax 612.330.1493, email: ericksoc@augsborg.edu

Are You...

Planning a Regional ACOSA Meeting?

Working with Community Practitioner Group or Community-based Initiative?

Engaged in Other Community Initiatives?



Please Share Your Meeting Outcome and Community Reports with ACOSA. We would like to regularly feature reports from your regional community efforts.

HUMAN SERVICES PROMOTE NEW CIVIC VOICES

By Bob Feikema

At the turn of the century, the human service sector could celebrate nearly forty years of tremendous growth. Non-profit employment reached 12.5 million in 2001, having doubled in size since 1976, outstripping the annual growth rate for both business and government. Between 1997 and 2001, the largest percentage increase in employment among the major nonprofit industries was in social services with a growth rate of over 17 percent.¹

But the success of the industry in building greater capacity to serve more people with an ever widening array of increasingly complex problems also spoke to the magnitude of its failure. When the avowed aim of most agencies is to eventually “go out of business,” increasing numbers of clients/consumers/customers is not a favorable outcome. This predicament is in part the product of a service orientation that concentrates too much on the “person” term in the person-in-environment paradigm. “Strategies for improvement of individuals and families, though worthy, have not and will not change...the structural and environmental conditions under which people live.”² Or as a long-time community organizer once observed, “If everyone’s achieving these great outcomes, then how come my neighborhood still looks the same?”

Human service agencies were not exempt from the decline in civic life that Robert Putnam has been documenting since the early 1990s. What was keeping agencies from playing an active role in the public policy arena? In 2003 the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) – having just implemented a program on democratic practice that sought to encourage nonprofit agencies to participate in civic engagement -- turned to the Alliance for Children and Families to help find the answer. The Alliance, with over 350 members in North America, seeks to strengthen the capacities of child and family serving organizations to serve and to advocate for children, families, and communities.

After identifying the barriers that prevent agencies from engaging in advocacy, the Alliance launched the Building Community Voices project to train and support agency Board members to become public policy advocates. The Alliance also began to address the parallel issue of how agencies can encourage the people they serve to become more engaged in civic life. New Voices at the Civic Table (New Voices) was established to provide training, technical assistance and funding to agencies interested in



CLI fellows share perspectives on their leadership training experience

Practitioner Perspective

building the authentic voice of the people they serve. New Voices and Building Community Voices work hand in hand to enable local agency board members, staff, and residents to work for social changes that improve community conditions and life opportunities for agency clients and community residents.

Another long-standing program at the Alliance, National Family Week, has also taken a stronger turn toward supporting civic engagement and advocacy efforts. For over thirty years National Family Week (NFW) has assisted agencies to recognize leading advocates for the family in their communities. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), NFW has been transitioning over the past several years to focus on celebrations that are oriented toward civic engagement projects that promote and bolster year-round family-strengthening work, which in turn supports and fosters long-term systemic change. The goal is to bring visibility to agencies’ civic engagement initiatives, bolster the authentic voice of community members, and celebrate success in enhancing social policy that strengthens children and families.

Drawing on RBF and AECF support, the Alliance has provided funding to more than a dozen Alliance member agencies over the past two years in support of civic en-

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New Books on Consensus Organizing

By Mary Ohmer, PhD

While I was working as a community organizer in the field it seemed like a daunting task to actually write a book about the work I was doing. As many experienced organizers know, it's very hard to step away from a very busy and exciting job to sit down and take the time to write about your work. I'm sure my colleague Mike Eichler felt the same way while he was traveling around the country teaching people about consensus organizing (Mike and I worked together for many years implementing and teaching consensus organizing strategies).



Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Eichler, 2007). Mike's stories reveal how parallel organizing strategies can truly empower people to affect change.

I'm delighted to say that I and another colleague, Karen DeMasi, are in the process of completing a workbook on consensus organizing (*Consensus Organizing: A*

Community Development Workbook, forthcoming, Sage Publications, Inc.). The workbook is designed so that it can be used along with Mike's book, or by itself. It has been a labor of love for Karen and me to pull together our knowledge, materials, and experiences. The case studies and field exercises allow both students and practitioners to learn, apply and practice consensus organizing. We also believe that many of the strategies presented in the workbook can apply to range of organizing approaches, not just consensus organizing.

The workbook has five main sections that explain: (1) consensus organizing and how it compares to other community organizing approaches; (2) the role of a consensus organizer; (3) how to conduct a community analysis of both internal and external community resources; (4) how to use consensus organizing to facilitate partnerships and effect change; (5) how to engage youth in consensus and apply consensus organizing other fields; and (6) strategies for evaluating consensus organizing and community level interventions.

Both books were featured at the ACOSA and Sage Publications booths at the CSWE-APM in San Francisco.

Mary Ohmer, PhD, Assistant Professor; Georgia State University. Contact her at: Urban Life Building, Suite 1244, P.O. Box 3995, Atlanta, GA 30302, phone 404.413.1053, fax 404.413.1075, e-mail: mohmer@gsu.edu

“What makes consensus organizing unique is the use of parallel organizing, in which community organizers mobilize and bring together the interests within the community, as well as the political, economic, and social power structure from outside the community.”

(Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh & Vidal, 2001; Eichler, 2007)

Well, miracles do happen! Since Mike and I have joined academia (Mike is at San Diego State University School of Social Work), we have been blessed with the opportunity to write about the work we love so much. Mike's new book *Consensus Organizing: Building Communities of Mutual Self Interest* (2007, Sage Publications, Inc.) is awesome! Even though I know almost all of the stories about Mike's work as a consensus organizer, I found it difficult to put down the book. Mike can tell a story like no one else I know. And, as you read his book, he demonstrates how consensus organizing strategies can be used to help the poor, forgotten and disempowered.

Mike's book explains consensus organizing and how it evolved, how to design consensus organizing programs and develop relationships inside and outside the neighborhood, and strategies for engaging youth in consensus organizing.

What makes consensus organizing unique is the use of parallel organizing, in which community organizers mobilize and bring together the interests within the community, as well as the political, economic, and social power structure from outside the community (Chaskin, Brown,

Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Eichler, 2007).

**Michael Eichler is the Director of the
Consensus Organizing Center
on the School of Social Work
at San Diego State University**

To learn more, visit:

<http://consensus.sdsu.edu/>

2008 ACOSA AWARDS

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Nominations are sought in the following four areas:

Career Achievement, Emerging Scholar, Practitioner, and Student

We all know outstanding examples of individuals using community and administrative skills and knowledge to promote macro practice perspectives in social work. ***Now is the time to nominate these colleagues for an ACOSA award!*** This is one of ACOSA's best ways to show that the work we do makes a real difference. The awards, and their criteria, are:

Career Achievement

The nominee should have contributed to:

The conceptual framework of community and/or administrative practice

The empirical knowledge base of the discipline, including research methods and findings

The development of practice methods, including work as a practitioners, teachers, and scholars.

The dissemination of knowledge of the discipline

A letter of nomination (from an ACOSA member), the candidate's vita, and two letters of recommendation are needed. Samples of the nominee's work should also be included for committee review.

Emerging Scholar

The nominee shall have a MSW and a Ph.D. in social work or social welfare. Any tenure-track faculty member is eligible for this award. However, preference will be given to a candidate who has completed his or her Ph.D. within a time frame of less than three years prior to his or her nomination. The candidate shall have demonstrated:

Outstanding scholarly potential in an area(s) of social administration and/or community practice as evidenced by the dissertation and/or other writings

Dissemination of knowledge through presentation of work at a minimum of two professional conferences or one publication in a professional journal.

A letter of nomination (from an ACOSA member), the candidate's vita, and two letters of recommendation are needed. Samples of the nominee's work must also be included for committee review.

Two letters of recommendation and a vita or work history for the candidate are required.

Outstanding Practitioner

Nominees must have at least two (2) years of experience in community and/or administrative practice

An ACOSA member must nominate the candidate and this member needs to submit a letter of endorsement for the practitioner indicating how s/he is making a difference in or contributing to macro practice.

Two letters of recommendation and a vita or work history for the candidate are required and this member needs to submit a letter of endorsement for the practitioner indicating how s/he is making a difference in or contributing to macro practice.

Student Recognition

Nominees must be in a BSW or MSW program

Nominees need to submit a written essay (not to exceed 750 words) on the following three issues: 1) describe the importance of social justice and at least one historical instance in which community organizers and social activists have made a significant impact on society. 2) describe the strategies and tactics used in the change effort and why these methods were effective; 3) describe your own current or future practice as a community organizer. How have you influenced social change or how do you plan to influence change in the future?

An ACOSA member must nominate the student for this award, and this member must submit a letter of endorsement for the student, indicating how s/he is making contributions to practice.

The awards committee will review all nominations with careful attention to the depth and diversity from the fields of community and administrative practice. Award recipients will be notified by mid-January. Presentation of the awards will occur at the ACOSA Membership meeting held during the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting in Philadelphia October 30- November 2, 2008. **Deadline September 2, 2008**

Submit Nominations to the ACOSA Office
Attention Awards Selection Committee

HUMAN SERVICES PROMOTE NEW CIVIC VOICES

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gagement and advocacy projects. Among the projects that received funding from both New Voices and National Family Week for 2007-08 is the Citizens Leadership Initiative (CLI). The CLI is designed to develop community leaders and promote democratic practice among low-income residents in Pittsburgh/Allegheny County (PA). A corresponding goal is to develop the capacity of human service agencies to support civic involvement by the people and in the communities they serve.

The CLI is a collaborative project of ten human service agencies, coordinated by the Parental Stress Center, a child abuse prevention agency. The Coro Center for Civic Leadership is the CLI's training partner. The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work is providing consultation on community organizing and project evaluation.

The agencies have recruited twenty (20) individuals with low incomes to become CLI fellows (who receive a modest stipend). The project involves three stages. The first stage began in February 2008 with the fellows participating in a twelve-session leadership training program designed and facilitated by Coro. The training program prepares the fellows to plan the second stage of the project: a series of "community conversations" that they will conduct in low-income communities between May and July 2008. The purpose of the conversations – which may include town meetings, focus groups, surveys, and individual interviews – is to hear what residents consider to be their most pressing concerns and the possible solutions to problems in their communities. In September, the fellows will complete the third stage of the project by reporting their findings and recommendations to civic leaders – including elected officials and the leaders of government agencies, foundations, businesses and nonprofit organizations.

The collaborating agencies provide individual support for each fellow, supply agency facilities and resources for the community conversations, and facilitate contacts with community leaders. The agencies will follow through on the CLI by devising strategies aimed at implementing the CLI's findings and recommendations.

The CLI embodies the core set of values guiding the Alliance's civic engagement efforts, which include:

- Community residents have a right to influence and determine the course of their own lives.
- Community residents possess the capacity to identify the social barriers blocking their path to success, and the creativity and wisdom to formulate strategies to remove those barriers.
- Community residents – especially those in lower socio-economic neighborhoods – must have access to the civic participation tools that are available to everyone in a civil society in order to organize and convey their 'authentic voices.'

The CLI aims to put the person back into his/her environment, an environment that features the active participation of human service agencies in promoting social change with and on behalf of the people they serve.

References

- 1 Richard Hofrichter, "The Politics of Health Inequities: Contested Terrain," in *Health and Social Justice: Politics, Ideology, and Inequity in the Distribution of Disease*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003)
- 2 Tom Lengyel, "Is It Possible to Build Communities 'One Family at a Time?' A Critique," in *The Roundtable*, vol. 3, no. 7 (September 2000), p. 5

Bob Feikema is Director of Programs and Community Initiatives at the Parental Stress Center in Pittsburgh (PA). Your comments are invited. You may contact Bob via email: bob.feikema@verizon.net

**To Learn More About the
Alliance for Children & Families'
"New Voices at the Civic Table"
www.alliance1.org/newvoices**

ACOSA International Initiatives Committee

By Lee Staples and Yossi Korazim-Korosy

At the 2006 ACOSA Board Meeting, we were asked to Co-Chair the International Initiatives Committee and given the following charge:

- Explore avenues for ACOSA to expand its international operations;
- study the potential structure, functions and implications of the establishment of an international ACOSA branch or chapter;
- explore possibilities for developing a pilot branch or chapter in Israel;
- and prepare an interim report for Board review and ultimately a final prioritized action proposal.

We developed some basic questions to gather ideas and a number of individuals around the globe provided feedback, including Sandra Butler, Ram Cnaan, Michael Gano, Jean Judes, Igor Kokarev, Judit Kozma, Carmit Lubanov, Michael Mensky, Merav Moshe, Shinichi Murota, Irene Queiro-Tajalli, and Zeynep Turkmen. In early June 2007, after submission of the interim report, we were given the clear message that ACOSA needs to concentrate on expanding and engaging its U.S. membership before launching an ambitious international initiative.

Therefore, we didn't present a final prioritized action report at the October meeting in San Francisco, but instead, offered a number of points for further discussion and consideration. Regarding the increase of individual "at-large" international members, the possibilities included:

- Plan a purposeful international membership drive;
- reach out to senior practitioners in other countries;
- become more multi-disciplinary by recruiting non-social work faculty and practitioners in other countries;
- examine the use of personal and organizational benefits as membership incentives;
- improve the ACOSA website to become more attractive to potential international members;
- And support regional seminars and websites that include worldwide participation.

We also asked the question whether ACOSA dues are too "pricey" for individuals in many countries.



Beyond increasing individual "at-large" members, we raised some fundamental questions about whether the goal is to "internationalize" ACOSA by adding more individuals from

different countries, perhaps including some more representation on the Board; or whether we want to create a truly *international organization* with the U.S. being one of many component parts, albeit probably the largest. If we were to pursue the latter goal, the current ACOSA By-Laws offer little guidance for a number of structural and operational questions that would need to be addressed. These include:

- How many members would be needed to constitute a chapter? (We would suggest 35 -40).
- What organizational benefits would an official chapter receive? (ex. recognition and standing; officers and committees; the right to hold "ACOSA" conferences, events and activities.)
- What are the financial implications for ACOSA? For example, support for travel to the Annual Meeting?
- What sort of intermediate structure(s) might exist between free floating individual members and a full chapter? For example, an Organizing Committee with a minimum number of members and co-chairs. But what kind of standing might such a body hold within the international organizational structure?
- Beyond the chapter level, what would be a logical formulation for additional ACOSA Regions?
- Instead of a "direct membership" model with the unit of membership being an individual person, should ACOSA also explore an "organization of

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CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACOSA UPDATE!

With Spring semester wrapped up, many of us will take time to catch-up on our reading and writing. As you are going through this process, please consider sharing a part of your work with your ACOSA colleagues by submitting a piece for the next issue of the ACOSA Update! Please encourage your students to share their work as well. Our colleagues— faculty, students, and practitioners— are often involved in cutting edge, innovative research and practice that many of us would be interested in learning more about.

In addition, ACOSA members are on the move! Many of you are involved in your campuses and communities in various capacities, and we would like to share your accomplishments in the ACOSA Update! If you or a colleague has been in the news, please let us know so they can be recognized!

Finally, we are interested in getting ACOSA members perspective on some of the latest issues confronting the field. As Christina Erickson mentioned in her piece on Macro Collaboration (see page 2), NASW has discussed bringing all social work organizations together through the Wingspread movement. If anyone attended the Wingspread conference or has thoughts on the movement's potential impact on ACOSA, we would like to hear from you. CSWE is also in the process of passing new EPAs, which will also impact ACOSA. We would be interested in articles for the Summer issue in regards to the new EPAs.

The ACOSA Update! provides an opportunity to facilitate a dialogue among members and to contribute to new ideas and strategies in research and practice. We encourage you to engage in the dialogue through contributing to future issues.

If you would like to submit an article or news for the next ACOSA Update!, please contact:

Tracy Soska, ACOSA Chair at: tsssw+@pitt.edu

Or Addie Weaver at: adw29@pitt.edu

WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR CO-EDITORS!



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR ACOSA BOARD

ACOSA is seeking interested members to serve on the Nominating Committee to prepare candidates for election to the Board of Directors, as well as to fill the position of Chair Elect. Elections are to occur in advance of the annual ACOSA Symposium that takes place at the Council of Social Work Education's (CSWE) Annual Program Meeting to be held October 30-November 2, 2008 in Philadelphia, when new Board members are seated. Please email Tracy Soska, ACOSA Chair at tsssw+@pitt.edu if you are interested in appointment to the Nominating Committee, generally a two year committee appointment. The Nominating Committee will develop a slate of candidates for a formal ACOSA election in September

ACOSA members interested in being considered in standing for election to the Board can offer their credentials to the Nominating Committee by email to the ACOSA office at: acosa@voyager.net

For more information on the ACOSA Board, its responsibilities and current members, consult the ACOSA website at www.acosa.org. Current board members whose terms are expiring in 2008 may also submit themselves for possible reelection.

Along with the ACOSA Officers, for which there is one position vacancy, the Board is comprised of another 14 members representing seven regions (2 representatives from each), including International. Currently, there will be a vacancy in each

of the following regions: Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, South, and Southwest. In addition to these five Board position, ACOSA members will also need to vote for a Chair Elect who will serve for one year before becoming the ACOSA Chair.

As ACOSA adjusts itself to the changing CSWE-APM calendar, further by-law revisions may be necessary to fully transition ACOSA's governance to this new time frame. The willingness of Board members to extend themselves through this transition period has been greatly appreciated, and ACOSA looks to get back on track with this fall's gathering in Philadelphia.



ACOSA CHAIR MESSAGE

(Continued from page 1)

members who, in this shift of ACOSA's annual meeting scheduled for CSWE, have stayed on for an extended year so that we can adjust our election of new Board members and the Chair-Elect post prior to this year's annual meeting. I also want to thank Alice for her support both to ACOSA and the Journal as senior/returning editor, despite her ferrying back and forth to Ethiopia where she is building quite a university-community partnership. Also, Charles Trent, our Treasurer, and Elizabeth Beck, our Secretary, have helped sort out last year's financial reports and minutes from our rather challenging last annual meeting.



Over this summer we will be sending you a number of messages on ACOSA business, and we will also be publishing a summer and fall (pre-APM) issue of the ACOSA Update newsletter to prepare you for our fall gathering in Philadelphia for CSWE's Annual Pro-

gram Meeting and our Community Organization and Social Administration (COSA Track). Karen Gray is promising a full slate of outstanding papers and other format sessions for our membership, and we are looking to working on a cross-track "In the Field" event at the APM. Look for more news and listing of our ACOSA Symposium over the summer.

We have also had interesting discussions with colleagues in others fields, such as Community Psychology, about ways to strengthen our mutual desires for interdisciplinary collaboration on teaching, research and practice. With our new publisher, we look to enhance our presence national, as well as internationally, and others will look more and more to partner with us.

But we can't really say "we're back" without one important element, you, our ACOSA members. As we move ahead we need you to step up and help ACOSA to "build community and administrative practice for the 21st Century." A vibrant and dynamic network needs the input and involvement of its members. In this issue there are several challenges for you to step up and become an active member:

- We are always looking for members to share their good work and news in *ACOSA Update!* (see page 8)

This is a great vehicle for building dialog, sharing ideas, and finding new colleagues who share your interest.

- Be a contributor and make our newsletter a place for real networking and idea exchange. We are still also looking for another co-editor.
- We are looking for members to serve on the Nominating Committee and to stand for election to our Board of Directors representing your region. (see page 9)
- Yossi Korazim-Korosy and Lee Staples are continuing to build our International Committee, and many of you expressed your willingness to get involved and new members are welcome. Get in touch with them and let's make ACOSA a leader at the international level.
- Nominate members for our ACOSA Awards.

We will be putting out other calls for the annual meeting and other ACOSA tasks, and we hope you will step up.

We Are Back! Help us Step Forward!

-- Tracy M. Soska, ACOSA Chair

INTRODUCING ADDIE WEAVER

Addie Weaver, a graduate student in the joint MSW (COSA)/PhD program at the University of Pittsburgh, will spend the next six months completing her concentration field placement under Tracy's supervision.

As part of her field placement, Addie will be assisting Tracy with his work regarding ACOSA and the ACOSA Update! Addie looks forward to gaining experience and insight that will build skills in community organizing and social administration that she can utilize in the field and through her research.

Addie will be involved with the ACOSA Updates!, the Journal of Community Practice, as well as upcoming conferences and ACOSA gatherings. Addie hopes to meet many of you in the future.

Please feel free to contact Addie at 2011 Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260; e-mail: adw29@pitt.edu; 412-624-9680.

Who Should Mind the Store?

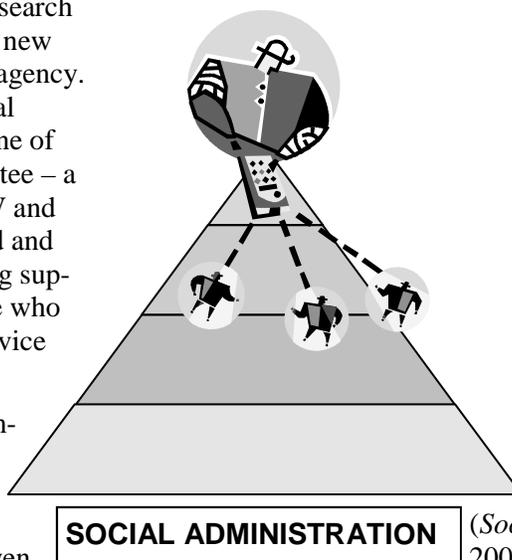
By Richard E. Boettcher, Ph.D.

Recently, I served on an executive search committee that was seeking to hire a new CEO for a non-profit, social service agency. As the committee performed its initial screening of candidate credentials, one of my closest colleagues on the committee – a fellow faculty member with an MSW and Ph.D. in social work – both surprised and wounded me by expressing her strong support for a well experienced candidate who lacked any social work or human service degrees, but did possess the MBA.

My colleague explained to the committee that she believed that a business degree provided the best preparation for running a social service agency that one could have, better even than the MSW! I thought to myself, “With colleagues who think like this we are fortunate that not many MBA graduates seek employment in the non-profit sector. If they did, they might easily take control of the entire social welfare institution!”

Later I did sit with my colleague and explained my point-of-view. Readers of this column know it. The social service field is social work territory. We need to be in charge of this territory through executive directorships so that social work knowledge, philosophy, values and expertise can predominate agency cultures. Every executive directorship is significant to this territorial perspective, and that is why we need to hire MSW’s, who have the appropriate experience, etc., to these positions. I even went so far as to cite the famous words of the very popular business author, Jim Collins, who when talking about what is necessary to produce excellence in the social service sector contends that what non-profit organizations *do not need* is leadership that will make them more like a business! (Collins, 2005). Ah, these are the words to heal a wounded heart. Collins argues that social service organizations need a culture of disciplined planning, people and governance more than they need business credentials to become great institutions. My colleague listened politely to my arguments but I am sure she was unconvinced just as I am sure we remain good friends.

Apart from whatever encouragement and mild therapeutic value Collins’ words may give us, encounters such as the one described above propel some of us to realize



that to wish for executive directors with BSW, MSW, or DSW degrees will not make it so. All too often, these important and influential positions go to persons with degrees in public administration, law, health administration, education administration, and sometimes, business.

There is ample anecdotal evidence to support this conclusion. In fact, this is the theme of an interesting commentary in *Social Work* by Irwin Nesoff, entitled “The Importance of Revitalizing Management Education for Social Workers”

(*Social Work*, 2007). The author cites a 2003 study by the United Way of New

York which points to an emerging crisis in nonprofit management due to the retirement of many executives and the dearth of existing human service staff who are prepared for top level leadership roles. Increasingly this void is being filled by non-human service professionals resulting in fewer social service agencies being run by social workers.

The challenge to social work education appears to be: How can we prepare social work practitioners for the practice of social service management? A number of writers have concluded that the standard generalist curriculum found in most MSW programs cannot adequately compete with two year MPA or MBA programs (Nesoff, 2007, Patti, 2003, Martin, Pine & Healy, 1999) and, of course, approximately only 10% of MSW students are interested in any form of a macro practice concentration, even if the school or department offers a management concentration with depth and breadth of content.

Another more promising approach is for schools and departments of social work to develop post MSW programs in human service management and leadership. Such programs can and do focus on a spectrum of potential target populations ranging from freshly appointed first line supervisors, who need basic knowledge and skills, to experienced middle managers preparing for advanced leadership roles. In this regard, three existing programs may be cited. This first is a program called Leaders in

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Who Should Mind the Store?

(Continued from page 10)

Action operated by the Southern Area Consortium of Human Services in conjunction with the School of Social Work at San Diego State University. This program focuses on preparing executive level leaders for the public social welfare sector. A second example is the New and Emerging Nonprofit Leaders Certificate Program offered by Kean University and based on the management standards adopted by the National Network of Social Work Managers. The third illustrative program is operated by Pressley Ridge, a large multi-state child welfare organization, which offers a program of management and training to a broad spectrum of trainees through both on-line and in vivo workshops.

The challenge to social work education and the profession is really quite clear, but not simple. If we believe that social work values, service philosophy, knowledge and skill should have a strong influence on the cultures of human service agencies, which collectively make up a very significant segment of the social welfare institution, we simply must find ways to supply the field with personnel who possess competence at all levels of human service management. The continuing education management “academy” or “institute” is one feasible way to address this challenge, and thus, to enhance the capacity of social workers to “mind the store.”



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ACOSA's International Committee

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organizations” model by working out agreements with other international organizations, such as the International Association for Community Development, International Federation of Social Workers, International Association of Schools of Social Work, etc? What kinds of reciprocal agreements or affiliations might make most sense?

We sought further guidance from both the ACOSA Board and the General membership. A decision was made to launch a pilot project in Israel. Momentum for this formal relationship was gained last year when Terry Mizrahi worked with Yossi to host a conference in Israel. Over 100 people attended this ACOSA supported conference in Israel in May. The ACOSA board gave the go-ahead for the “Israeli Initiative” so that the folks in Israel can begin the process of figuring ways to affiliate. And supported an organic process between the committee and the folks in Israel.

There was considerable interest in this topic at both meetings, and the following individuals signed-up to participate in further work with this committee: Charles Trent, Benson Chisanga, Joyce Hermoso, Sandy Butler, Terry Mizrahi, Alice Johnson Butterfield, Irene Queiro-Tajalli, Susan Murty, Dustianne North, Michele Kelley, Marilyn Sullivan-Cosetti, Sondra Seung Ja Doe, Armand Laufer, DeBrenna Agbenyiga, Dee Gamble and Sudi Pasupuleti. The International Committee is in the process of expanding, and all members are welcome to join. The International Committee is in the process of expanding, and all members are welcome to join.

Lee Staples is at Boston University's School of Social Work. Yossi Korazim-Korosy is ACOSA's International Board Representative in Israel.

***If you would like to join the
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**The Association for Community
Organization and Social Administration**

ACOSA is a registered 501c3 membership organization for community organizers, planners, activists, administrators, policy practitioners, students, and professors. ACOSA members represent a variety of disciplines and professional fields which strive to strengthen community organization and social administration in practice and education. *ACOSA Update!* is published quarterly by the Association for Community Organization & Social Administration (ACOSA).

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