



Volume 20, Issue 3/4

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BUILDING COMMUNITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The ACOSA Update!

ACOSA COPING WITH CSWE-APM CHANGES

Dear ACOSA Members

Seems like as we all find ourselves getting busier and busier, as changes go on around us with or without us. About this time of year we would usually be gathering for our ACOSA meetings and symposia at the CSWE-APM, but this is a transitional year.

While CSWE held abbreviated Leadership Seminars in Charleston and Phoenix in February 2007, only a few ACOSA regulars were in the crowd. CSWE's Annual Program Meeting is moving to the fall. This year it will be held from October 27-30, 2007 in San Francisco, CA.

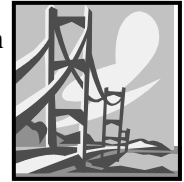
More than just the time of year, the format of the APM has changed from our usual set of symposia to much broader range of topical *Tracks* - 35 in all (See page 13).

Also about this time of year, we would be holding our key meetings, electing new officers, and celebrating the ACOSA awards. But, given the changes, it seems

best to postpone our business to the fall APM in San Francisco.

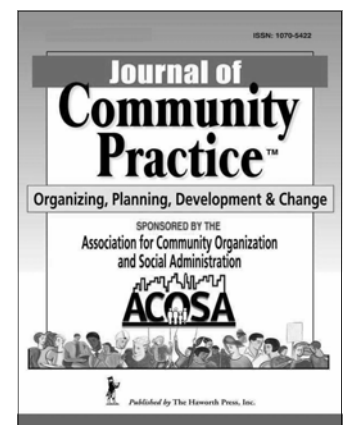
Even this reliable newsletter took a brief hiatus over much of the winter! This issue represents a collection of fall and winter articles from our students, faculty, and practitioner members. We hope you will enjoy this belated issue of ACOSA Update! We will strive to be more timely and keep you posted on other news and changes.

We continue to ask for your news, ideas, opinions and articles on timely topics for our newsletter. This issue represents a solid contribution from and reflection on the work of students studying macro practice. We hope you will also enjoy the challenging and thought-provoking articles by ACOSA practitioners and faculty. Finally, our contributors remind us that not only are we celebrating Social Work Month in March, but March 27th marks the first annual World Social Work Day. Get out and celebrate!-- *Tracy M. Soska, Chair Elect & ACOSA UPDATE! Editor*



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Contact the Editors!
Journal of Community Practice

Email: jcp@wayne.edu

Fax: 313-577-8770

SERVICE LEARNING: The Bridge Connecting Institutions of Higher Learning to the Community

By Irma J. Gibson, PhD

Service Learning is defined as “a successful method of teaching, learning and reflecting that combines academic classroom curriculum with meaningful service, (frequently youth service), throughout the community” (Wikipedia, 2007). It is a trend that has become a crucial component in the academic setting, including the secondary education level. Service learning is also a graduation requirement in some of Georgia’s high schools. Each graduating senior is asked to complete five hours of community volunteer service for each year of high school, totaling at least 20 hours of service. This is a crucial mandate that should be commended by all who serve in the capacity of educators, advocates for social welfare policies, advocates for community and human services as well as public and civil servants and community activists.

During my 21 years of clinical social work in various components of the federal government, many of my duties as I worked with the homeless and those who were struggling with addiction and mental illness, required interactions and networking with a variety of community organizations. In an effort to effectively address the plight of the homeless, a public law was initiated and as a result, the Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Group (CHALENG) was established, on national and local levels by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). A community wide forum is sponsored by the DVA homeless department, on an annual basis to discuss eight initiatives to raise awareness of the homeless veterans’ needs and to meet those needs. Community partnerships are a crucial piece to the success of this initiative.

Because of the many years of frequent and consistent interaction and networking with a variety of community constituents, valuable professional and personal lessons were acquired as a result. Also, the opportunity to witness the success of these private, local, state, and federal community coalitions confirmed the notion that subsystems working together to address problems and issues appear to be more productive towards achieving desired goals and objectives. This is one of the reasons that service learning is so important in our society today. It is a



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community based approach to resolving and mitigating those problems in our lives that impact every generation, while academically educating and teaching our future leaders about responsibility and the role that they play in reference to improving the conditions of the world. There is no better place to start than with the community and community organizations.

Case and point: Many youth service organizations are promoting service learning via the awarding of grants and other avenues.

Youth are encouraged to work with teachers and adults (coaches, parents, mentors, etc.) in an effort to address such issues as homelessness, literacy, disaster relief, environmental awareness, education or violence (Youth Service America, 2007). It appears that the “community” sometimes through grassroots organizations is continuing to be recognized as a focal point that is instrumental in regards to addressing many of society’s social and economic disparities. Thus, service learning can be utilized as a powerful tool in our society.

Upon entering the field of academia, I was inspired by the fact that service learning is a priority of the Savannah State University (SSU). The Savannah State University’s mission and commitment to community service and service learning incorporates five goals into its philosophy, including “the support of the development of the Savannah community via engaging students in meaningful community service. As a philosophy of education, service learning reflects the belief that education must be linked to social responsibility and that the most effective learning is active and connected to experience in some meaningful way” [www.savstate.edu/adm/aa/ctl/default.htm].

Research has shown that service learning is a vital aspect of our society today (Learn & Serve America, 2007) and is one of the crucial factors in maintaining the connection between the overall community, community grassroots organizations and those institutions that are instrumental in educating the leaders of today and tomorrow. It is my hope and my vision that this trend will only be strengthened in the future as the faculty and the staff of all institu-

(Continued on page 15)

COSA Students Conduct 2nd ITV Conference On Collaboration By Richard Elsbury, COSA Student

Once again, on November 28, 2006, COSA programs at three schools of social work—University Of Pittsburgh, Hunter College, and the University of Maryland-Baltimore—held a second annual Interactive television (ITV) conference event on the topic of *collaborations*. An ITV event is one that allows for all participants to be simultaneously connecting using the internet for television linkage. Each site is then be able to see and hear the facilitators and presenters at the other sites.

Organized and hosted by COSA students at each school, the main purpose of the event was teaching students about collaboration. Each classroom presented material from their COSA program or course experience and answered questions from the other universities on their study and learning on collaboration.

This was the second year for such an ITV learning experience that was initiated to help students examine collaborations by using this distance, interactive technology to share common learning on this important topic in community and organizational practice. In the 2005 ITV conference the same three school collaborators designed a collection of presentations that aimed at defining characteristics of collaboration and presenting several student group projects working with collaborations

For the 2006 ITV teleconference, Hunter College students presented on collaborative organizations that had an impact on transportation and the school systems in New York and the Bronx respectively. At the University of



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Maryland students presented on an organization that formed a collaborative to solve the housing issues of low-income families. The University of Pittsburgh presented a three person

discussion panel on the issues facing faith-based organizations in collaborations. Each school's presentation informed the audience of the elements that make successful collaborations and the issues faced by collaborating organizations.

The University of Pittsburgh panel presentation raised some interesting issues about the unique nature of faith based initiatives and their challenges in collaboration, notably that faith-based organizations have secular interests in the collaboration process besides providing services. They also are recruiting members for their churches and, thus, may see other churches as competitors rather than collaborators, even in common causes.

Following the presentations and the discussion panel, students had the opportunity to ask dialogue with one another across distance cities and to pose questions and ideas for future ITV conference collaborations. The ITV experience even afforded an opportunity for some competitive jousting over rival football clubs – notably among Steeler and Raven fans. Those wishing to offer ideas for 2007 and new school collaborators are most welcomed. In any case, staying with the collaborative theme and affording students the collaborative experience in planning and running the event in 2007 are encouraged.

*Richard Elsbury, University of Pittsburgh:
we4+@pitt.edu*

Book Announcements!

ANNOUNCING the 4th (a thoroughly revised and updated) edition of Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin's, *Community Organizing and Development* will be out by the end of February (with a 2008 copyright date).

Susan M. Chambre, at Baruch College, CUNY announces *Fighting for Our Lives: New York's AIDS Community and the Politics of Disease*. The book is the product of over 15 years of research and is a rich description of the development of community-based AIDS organizations and their impact on local and national policy. There are important implications for nonprofit managers.

A World out of Balance: Working for a New Social Equilibrium

by Florian Sichling

Half a century ago the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) was founded in Munich. Between July 30th and August 3rd 2006 about 1,500 social workers from 76 countries gathered in Munich to celebrate this significant anniversary.



World Social Work Day - March 27

During the opening ceremony the award *Most Distinguished Social Worker of IFSW* was awarded for the very first time, and it went to Irena Sendler from Poland for saving 2,500 children from the Warsaw Ghetto during WWII.

In light of the problems caused by the impact of globalization and an increasing polarization of our societies worldwide, social work today is as important as ever. The keynote speaker at the closing ceremony Jakob von Uexküll the founder of the *Right Livelihood Awards* (also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize) spoke to this growing international dimension of our profession. This award recognizes the efforts of those coming up with practical answers to such challenges as the pollution of our air, soil and water, the danger of a nuclear holocaust, the abuse of basic human rights, the destitution and misery of the poor and the over-consumption and spiritual poverty of the wealthy. According to von Uexküll the *Right Livelihood Awards* aim to help the North find the wisdom to match its science and the South to find a science to match its ancient wisdom. He also initiated the *World Future Council* an organization that will speak up for our common values as world citizens and ensure that the interests of future generations are no longer ignored when decisions affecting them, are made. In his keynote he also encouraged the participants to bring our minds back to what really matters in the world and to social work's active role in the establishment of a social equilibrium on a regional as well as global level.

After 6 years of successful and progressive work Imelda Dodds (Australia) handed over the presidency of the IFSW to David N. Jones (U.K.). Mr. Jones pledged to continue to work for an intensified cooperation between the IFSW member organizations representing more than 84 countries and over 500,000 social workers. With regard to the keynote speech he said that under his presidency there will be a strong emphasis on supporting the

growing awareness within our profession that economic development without a parallel

social development is counterproductive and in many cases harmful.

One of the results of the 18th world conference of the IFSW is the acknowledgement that international exchange among social workers is not only important, but crucial, if the profession wants to find effective responses to the great challenges facing humanity. In many countries it will be equally important to develop a new self confidence for the profession in order to make clear to the political and business leadership that we are as significant for the future development of the world as the development of an economic infrastructure.



During the course of the conference there were about 600 events around the six major themes:

- The Balance of Generations: Youth and Ageing
- Physical, Emotional and Mental Health
- Between Inclusion and Alienation: Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons
- Human Rights and Civil Rights: Between Globalization and Marginalization
- Social Systems Between Demands: Basic Needs and Minimum Standards of Social Security
- Social Work as Profession: 50 Years of Progress and Vision for the Future

The presentations and workshops, but particularly the round table discussions where topics and themes could be discussed in small groups, contributed to a great level of exchange and paved the way for new approaches and ideas.

On a personal note I would also like to make two critical points regarding the conference. The first one concerns

(Continued on page 14)

A DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE

By Kathy Byers

A total of 650 social workers, social work students, and faculty participated in the seventh annual Social Workers Legislative Education and Advocacy Day (LEAD) in Indianapolis, IN, on February 28, 2007. LEAD is an official committee of the Indiana Chapter of NASW, with support from all the social work education programs in the state. Speakers from NASW, including Teri Cardwell, Chapter President, and Lann Thompson, NASW National Board Regional Representative, welcomed participants and reviewed the NASW Public Policy agenda, highlighting the progress of bills on interest at the state level and advocacy efforts needed. Students, Kristina Kates and Stephanie Cunningham, in two macro practice practicum including one at Planned Parenthood, doing lobbying work at the State House, spoke eloquently about their experiences and their learning.



Beryl Cohen, NASW Public Policy Committee member, provided an update on the Governor's privatization plan set to begin a gradual implementation process by region in the middle of March. In Indiana, the application process for Food Stamps, TANF, and Medicaid is to be provided by the Hoosier Coalition for Self Sufficiency (HCSS), an IBM-led consortium that includes ACS, the company that started the privatization process in Texas that ended up being so problematic. HCSS has been assuring both the public and community agency representatives in regional meetings that efforts are being made to avoid the problems that have occurred in other states. The plan is to roll out the program gradually and retain some of the state employees who are required by law to make the final eligibility determinations. The plan also calls for local community agencies to voluntarily assist clients in applying for services using a toll-free phone number (that will be answered by call centers) and using the web. There are no plans to reimburse the community agencies for the use of their resources or the provision of their staff time. In addition, there is no plan to monitor or evaluate the time or resources donated at the local level, the use of which increases the profits of the consortium.

After some discussion of the importance of political involvement by social workers in addition to legislative advocacy by Kathy Byers, LEAD Planning Committee member, the participants went to one of six break-out ses-

sions focused on particular legislative issues that were still "alive" at the State House: affordable health care, housing and community development, children and family issues, prevention issues in reproductive health, professional and licensing issues, and GLBT civil liberties. A particular focus of the discussion in the last group was stopping the passage of SJR 7, the amendment to the state constitution that would establish marriage as only between a man and a woman and possibly make unconstitutional various existing domestic partner benefit programs. This resolution has already passed the Senate during this legislative session and is now under consideration in the House. If passed in this legislative session, it will go on the ballot in the 2008 election since it already passed both chambers last year. Social workers are working closely with the Human Rights Campaign and other organizations to defeat this Resolution.

When the break out sessions concluded, participants, armed with signs and chants, marched to and then around the State House. Inside, by the rotunda, ten legislators came to address the group, emphasizing the importance of being involved both legislatively and politically. One legislator, who has introduced a bill to increase the minimum wage, spoke about the need to for social workers to speak up for those who cannot, to tell the stories of the people with whom they work. Another spoke about the administration's efforts to take the "social" out of social work in the privatization effort that assumes that clients will be able to access services through phoning a call center or getting on the internet. The last legislator to speak emphasized the social justice commitment of social workers and urged participants to push for those issues that encompass social and economic justice. After his rousing ending, participants took cards expressing their views about specific pending legislation to their legislators.

Many adjourned afterwards to a lunch of reflection and networking at the Indiana University School of Social Work. There participants discussed their increased sense of power to make a difference through legislative action and their determination to be part of state change efforts. LEAD Planning Committee members felt it had been yet another successful LEAD event. Planning for next year has already begun.

Kathy Byers, Indiana University School of Social Work
kvbyers@indiana.edu

GET OUT THE VOTE: Reflections on the 2006 Elections

by *Natalie Greene*

Working with America Votes Pennsylvania to Get Out the Vote in 2006

For the last six weeks leading up to the 2006 mid-term elections, I worked every single day (up to 14 hours a day sometimes!) as Regional Field Organizer for America Votes Pennsylvania to ensure a Democratic victory in the state of Pennsylvania – which we actually did!! As one trained in community organizing, I was very surprised to learn many of the different strategies used by political community organizers to engage the public. Using a range of contacting strategies from phone calls to canvassing door to door to thank you and reminder postcards, we made multiple contacts to voters for surveying purposes at first, then persuasion towards our side later and lastly reminders for those we recorded as being likely to vote for our candidates.

However, like many organizations across the state and nation, we constantly struggled to recruit the high numbers of volunteers to help us achieve our goals for contacting voters and carrying out our mission. For volunteers we were try to get to assist with our efforts, we engaged in discussions to connect issues they deem most important to the need to change political climate, demanded their assistance in getting others out to vote, and most surprisingly, did not thank them for their assistance. The reason for these strategies was not transparent to me at first, though their successfulness was remarkable. Volunteers often were already involved or wanted to be involved in the massive political efforts to win back our nation, but they just needed a little pressure to become active and we were offering them the opportunity to do so.



Student Perspective

“Advocacy groups must demand to have the promises made by candidates kept and carried out”

The 2006 mid-term elections became very significant as Election Day drew nearer. More and more Republican seats came up for grabs than ever expected and suddenly the ability to win both the state of Pennsylvania and nation on November 7th was actually within reach. Our organization, America Votes Pennsylvania, was not affiliated with any party or candidate – America Votes PA is a coalition of grassroots advocacy organizations seeking progressive change in Pennsylvania state government. Organizations in the coalition for the Southwest Pennsylvania area included Planned Parenthood, Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, SEIU, AFL-CIO, Liberty PA, and others. Being made up of women’s rights group, environmental groups and various unions had both its enormous strengths and major drawbacks. Different interests and agendas prevented all organizations from agreeing to support many candidates. For instance, while America Votes PA sought to get all Democrats into state office, other organizations would endorse those candidates who specifically supported their issues, whether Republican or Democratic. However, there were many fine Democratic candidates that everyone in our coalition could support making collaboration among organizations possible and viable.

So many ask what happens now? How do the advocacy efforts of the organizations involved in the coalition continue? I am not sure... unfortunately, my role in this huge campaign came to an end just a few days after the election. But my understanding of these types of political campaign efforts is that the immense political capital built up by the organizations in our coalition must continue to be fought for from the Democratic candidates voted into office. Advocacy groups must demand to have the promises made by candidates kept and carried out, and sometimes they must be willing to stand together again to make that happen.

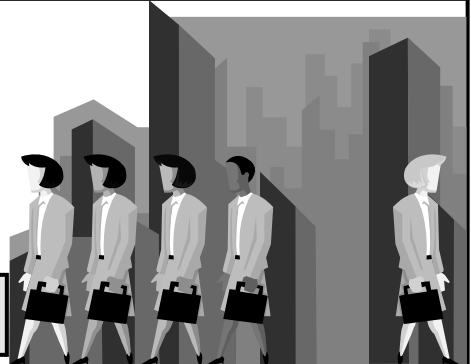
Natalie Greene is an MSW COSA and PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh. nrg4+@pitt.edu

The Workforce Crisis in Human Services: A Perspective From the Field *By Jeffery Shelton, PhD, LPC*

There is clearly a widespread and growing labor shortage in the human services field. When this phenomenon has received attention, the primary focus has been on traditionally low paid workers such as child care assistants and juvenile specialists. From my vantage point as an administrator in an agency of 200 serving a moderate-sized locality (pop. 220,000), the shortage extends to all levels of the organization, including leadership positions and clinical providers.

During the past decade or so, there have been at least three major developments in human services and the larger society that have contributed to this problem. First, expenditures for a college education have greatly in-

From the Field



“..... many human service agencies lack career paths for younger staff that will encourage retention.”

creased and many graduates leave school with large debts in student loans. Salaries in our field have not kept pace with those in others, especially business and computer sciences, and today’s graduates appear to be less attracted to a career in social work or counseling. Generational differences in life goals and aspirations have contributed. Second, many human service agencies lack career paths for younger staff that will encourage retention. In part, this is due to the predominance of the larger Boomer generation in supervisory and administrative roles, but also to a certain lack of creativity in those of us that operate agencies. Third, the fields of mental health and addiction treatment have professionalized during this same period. A result is a decline in traditional entry level positions, which have been replaced by those requiring licensure or certification which may take years to acquire. Related to this is an apparent decline in the number of potential staff with these credentials which leads to competition between (and even within) agencies for a small number of applicants.

The labor shortage is pushing the mean age of staff upwards. Nowhere is this more evident than at the leadership level and we now see workshops on “executive succession.” Not surprisingly, those with the most longevity tend to be the oldest and we seem to have difficulty in acknowledging our own finality in our field and making plans for our successors. Perhaps part of the difficulty is that Boomers in human services possess the same ideals and motivations that brought them into the field, above all the sincere desire to help others and change society. It may be hard for us to understand that those who (may) follow have somewhat different ideals and motivations. The tendency is assume that old answers (such as improving benefits) will address new problems.

One neglected contributor to the shortage is the relationship between human service practitioners and the academic community. Considering how much the world has changed over the decades I have practiced, it is striking to realize how little this relationship has changed. Typically, the primary locus of contact between colleges and universities and human service is still the intern and practicum student. In my experience, academic institutions make little effort to obtain input from “the field” on curriculum offerings. One illustration has to do with the growing emphasis in my field on treating persons with co-occurring disorders and complex needs. I have yet to encounter a student, graduate or undergraduate, who has had a course on co-occurring disorders and some do not know what they are.

The labor shortage in our field affects both practitioners and academia based on simple supply and demand logic. Organizations such as ACOSA could play an important role in bringing the groups together for discussion and visioning. What we all care about is in peril and we need to act.

Jeffrey Shelton, Ph.D., LPC jshelton@chesapeakecsb.net
Chesapeake (VA) Community Services Board

Global Warming: A Grandfather's Perspective

by Bill Whitaker

When the Frank Church Institute invited Al Gore to keynote its January 22 Boise State University Conference, *Global Warming: Beyond the Inconvenient Truth*, the prospect of 10,000 Idahoans turning out to listen to Gore probably seemed somewhat less likely than the Boise State Broncos winning the Fiesta Bowl.

Nonetheless, the Broncos won and, when 700 tickets for the Gore event were distributed in less than 10 minutes after the box office opened, his keynote was relocated to the university's 10,000 seat basketball arena. After distributing 785 more tickets to students and reserving 2,000 for students away for the holidays, all available tickets were snapped up at \$5 a pop in less than 6 hours. Lines at two box office locations were estimated at over 500 hundred persons each.

It looks as if global warming has become a hot topic in Idaho. On behalf of my grandchildren Fiona and Max and on behalf of all the children and grandchildren of our planet, I hope this is true. Their futures and the futures of all of us younger than about 60 may well depend on what is done to counter global-warming-related climate change over the next decade. Fortunately, there are steps both large and small we can take to change our future. Some of these will be described later.

Our world is getting hotter. This fact is not in question. Our most respected scientific bodies have concluded unequivocally that global warming is happening and we are causing it by our consumption of fossil fuels and destruction of forests.

Here's how it works. The sun sends solar energy to earth, warming us and making life possible. The rub is that while some solar radiation is essential, too little or too much creates problems. The earth is wrapped in a blanket of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" that affect how much solar radiation is trapped on earth and how much is reflected back into space.

During the relatively brief time that life has existed on earth the composition of the carbon blanket has gone through natural cycles affecting the earth's thermostat and warming or cooling our planet within a temperature range hospitable to life as we know it. This may be about to change for the worse.



Cycles of warming and cooling are directly correlated with the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Changes in the level of carbon dioxide are directly correlated to the coming and going of ice ages, to the rise and fall of ocean levels. Climate change killed the dinosaurs and opened the way for birds and mammals, opened the way for human beings to become the dominant life form on planet Earth today.

In recent centuries humankind has multiplied with great success. As we have become the first species capable of remaking our environment, we are on the brink of becoming the victim of our success. The fossil fuels we burn, the forests we clear are increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide at rates our planet cannot sustain without dire consequences. Today's carbon blanket contains 25 percent more carbon dioxide than has ever before existed during the past 650,000 years.

As a consequence, more of the sun's energy is trapped by our atmosphere, increasing temperatures throughout the globe. Some areas, including polar regions, are increasing in temperature faster than others. Rising temperatures are melting the polar icecaps and raising sea levels. Since open seas and bare land reflect less radiation back into space than do ice and snow, even more heat is absorbed by the earth and we are creating a feedback cycle that speeds up the warming process.

Unless steps are taken to prevent polar icecap melting, during the lifetimes of our children and grandchildren rising sea levels are likely to inundate large areas of major cities such as New York, San Francisco and Alexandria, Egypt and much of Florida, the Netherlands, Bangladesh and Pacific island nations. Massive concentrations of people are clustered in coastal lowlands threatened by the sea.

Globally, nearly 1/3 of the arable land from which we feed ourselves could be flooded by rising seas, if global warming continues during our generation. Global warming has the potential for generating famine and starvation beyond biblical proportions.

Global warming is spreading the range of mosquitoes, mice and other pests that carry disease—contributing to

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Global Warming...

(Continued from p. 8)

outbursts of hantavirus in the United States and dengue and yellow fever at ever higher elevations in Central and South America. Hotter days lead to unhealthier air and more smog, worse temperature inversions and more asthma.

Warmer seas result in more and stronger hurricanes. Storms like Katrina caused more than \$100 billion in damage to U.S. coastal areas in 2005. More than half the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of a coastline.

The last nine years have each been among the 25 hottest on record, a streak called “unprecedented in the historical record” by the National Climatic Data Center. As global temperatures rise, the number and duration of heat waves is expected to increase.

The Chicago heat wave of 1995 left 739 persons dead. In the heat wave of 2003, 27,000 persons died in Europe, 14,000 in France alone. The 2006 record-breaking heat wave in California resulted in at least 56 deaths and killed many dairy cows and other livestock. Thousands of carcasses were dumped into landfills, a procedure usually outlawed as a threat to public health.

Warming temperatures are also affecting the winter tourism on which many western U.S. economies rely. Spring time mountain snow cover diminished an average of 29 percent in the Cascades and 16 percent in the Rockies while sites in Washington and Oregon had reductions of as much as 50 percent between 1950 and 1997.

Rising temperatures cause more precipitation to fall as rain rather than snow with serious implications for salmon fishing, irrigation and drinking water supplies—all heavily dependent on snow melt in the Pacific Northwest.

It is estimated that by 2030 there will be no glaciers left in Glacier National park.

While the climate changes that will result from unabated global warming are daunting, we still have time to change the course of events.

“There are steps that each of us can take as individuals to reduce future warming



There are steps that each of us can take as individuals to reduce future warming:

- [1] We can keep the tires on our cars inflated properly and change our car’s air filter when it is dirty—saving 1050 lbs of carbon dioxide per car per year.
- [2] We can run our dishwashers only when they are full—and save 100 pounds of carbon dioxide. We can use post-consumer recycled paper—and save 5 pounds of carbon dioxide per ream.
- [3] We can turn our thermostats down 2 degrees in winter and up 2 degrees in summer—saving 2000 pounds of carbon dioxide annually. We can set hot water thermostats no higher than 120 degrees F, switch to tankless water heaters or add passive solar assisted hot water. We can take shorter showers and install low-flow showerheads.
- [4] We can buy locally produced produce and other products and purchase goods with minimal packaging. If we need a new car, we can buy a hybrid or, better yet, carpool or bike when possible. We can plant a tree—or three—and use a push mower to cut our lawn. We can caulk and weather strip and insulate our homes and replace single with double pane windows.
- [5] We can take simple, cost-effective steps like replacing light bulbs with long-lasting, energy-efficient compact fluorescent or LED bulbs—saving 100 pounds of carbon dioxide per bulb.
- [6] We can unplug electronics when not in use and replace old, inefficient appliances with energy-star rated newer ones. We can bring our own cloth bags when grocery shopping.
- [7] We can reduce consumption, re-use what we purchase, and recycle what we can no longer use.



Most of these simple actions both reduce our carbon load and save money in the process. Properly inflated tires reduce the cost of operating a car. A low-flow shower head uses less energy to heat the water—saving as much as \$150 per year.

But individual actions are not enough. We need to be good citizens. We need to change public policies that will

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WHY I COUNT

By Sondra Fogel, PhD

It was raining. It was windy. It was also very cold—in the 20's, very unusual for January in Tampa, FL. And I could not sleep. All I could think about was that this weather was going to “ruin the count numbers”. Of course, I felt ridiculous thinking this as I laid in my warm, dry, bed with three covers over me and a cat slapped up next to my legs, but if the “count” was low, this might further reduce the predicted diminishing federal, state, and local monies ear-marked for homeless programs in our county. In addition, if the numbers were low, this information would be used by those who dispute the claim that homelessness is a problem in our area, to further inhibit the efforts of local churches, neighborhood groups, and community organizations who set up feeding stations and/or provide innovative short-term housing options and needed immediate support services for those without a place to live. It was also not lost on me, that while I was thinking about all the men, women and children who were without a home on this night, I often do not think about their situation when I lay my head down. So, I could not sleep.



Faculty Perspective

There was no need for the alarm to ring, as I was up, showered, fed and dressed in winter clothes that I removed from a stored Rubbermaid container, long ago placed in the back corner of the garage, before the assigned waking hour. I put on my hiking boots, also not used in perhaps a decade or more, and walked out the door to my car. Again, my good fortunes were on my mind; I lowered my head and took a minute to listen to the wind and rain and feel the cold that had enveloped my hands during my brief contact with the early morning weather. I drove away to take part in our area Homeless Census Count.

I arrived at my assigned meeting spot, an agency that routinely serves those without a home, to find a hum of activity and the accompanying chaos that seems to be endemic to large scale community-agency and volunteer efforts. I was going out in the second wave of counting teams. Teams that went out pre-dawn, to count at the labor pools, camps, and other known assembling places, were returning to report their numbers. They were low.

I joined a husband and wife team who were part of the first wave and were continuing to count. Another community volunteer was assigned to our

group. She learned the day before that a relative in another state had died and was delaying her departure to the funeral in order to fulfill her commitment to this activity. We shared our concerns for her loss. I lent her the extra pair of gloves I was carrying, (yes, I know), and we piled into the car to canvass our huge and diverse assigned area.

As we drove, we discussed where we “thought the homeless” would be: under the overpasses, under the bridges, in the woods, abandoned housing units, libraries, and park shelters. It was still raining and cold. We passed under our first overpass, then another, and another. Finally, there was someone—we thought...asleep perhaps, in a blue blanket under the bridge supporting the major interstate road. We called back to the agency to send out an outreach team to check on the condition of this person.

“...this information would be used by those who dispute the claim that homelessness is a problem in our area..”

The rain was letting up. It was still early in the morning so the libraries and community centers in our designated area were not open. But we checked the surrounding vicinities, looked in the dumpsters, and tried to be cognizant of any visual sign that someone might have been or be in the area.

We received a call to return to the agency to be reassigned to another area. We stopped to pick up some coffee because we were all tired and cold (yes, we understood how ridiculous that sounded given what we were doing), when the soles on both of my hiking boots came off. This unplanned incident was the perfect gift to allow us to burst into laughter and good humor, releasing the building stress generated by being strangers, cold, sleepy and the low count.

Once back at the agency, my soles were taped up (duck tape really does work), and out we went again to an area further away from the center of the city and any regularly available social services. The sun also came out. As we drove, we continued to look for signs of homelessness. We noticed that the design of the newly constructed overpasses lacked a space between the upper-road and the lower sup-

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WHY I COUNT...

(Continued from page 10)

port area (You know this area; it is the place where one often sees a person sleep.)

Was this a purposeful redesign? We saw empty shopping carts near wooded areas. We saw trash. We thought we were seeing makeshift barricades made from discarded construction material to protect oneself from animals or humans in deserted areas, but we didn't know because we couldn't find anyone.



Now, four and half hours into our five hour shift, we had only counted one person; although we identified areas for the late night counting teams to return to in order to check our intuitions regarding possible camp sites.

Frustrated by our lack of "findings", we stopped an elderly gentleman riding his bike to ask if he knew where homeless individuals camped out. Surprisingly to us, he was pretty well versed on the topic, being formerly homeless himself and currently living in a transitional housing program for recovering alcoholics. His story, a gift he shared with us, demonstrated the importance of community-based interventions and the impact that coordinated services can have on the lives of those who are in need. His resilient and hopeful character reminded us that we really are all in this together and not so different from one another. We thanked

"..demonstrated the importance of community-based interventions and the impact that coordinated services can have on the lives of those who are in need."

him for the information and began our drive back to the agency, still looking, reflecting on our shift together.

The sun was still shining and the temperature had risen to its normal, comfortable spot by the time we made it back to the agency. Other teams were returning. Low numbers as well. Maybe the shelter numbers will be high? Maybe the churches opened their doors for the day due to the cold? Maybe the feeding sites will report an increase in meals served? Could the numbers really be this low? No, it was agreed; the reason offered to appease our disappointment and disbelief was that "those without a home are terribly resourceful and we just don't know where to look". I had to smile.

Back in my car, sweating from the layers of clothes I still had on, I turned on the air-conditioning. I replayed the experience in my mind as I drove back to my home: my sleepless night which reminded me of my comfortable life and to be humble and thoughtful of others, the unseasonably cold and wet weather for which I had plenty of warm clothes to wear, the many conversations I had with the other volunteers including my counting team who empowered me their passion and commitment, the knowledgeable gentleman who reminded me how important "hope" is, and my disintegrating boots which stayed together long enough to get the task done and for which I knew I had the resources to buy another pair if I wanted. By the time I got home, I was pretty tired. As I laid down my head to take a nap with my cat by my side, it was clear to me why I count.

Sondra J. Fogel, Ph.D., ACSW, is an Associate Professor of School of Social Work at the University of South Florida. sfogel@cas.usf.edu

Welcome to COMM-ORG!

COMM-ORG was founded in 1995 by Wendy Plotkin and is now moderated and edited by Randy Stoecker. Its mission is to link academics and activists, and theory and practice, toward the goal of improving community organizing and its related crafts. The project is supported by the University of Wisconsin Department of Rural Sociology and the University of Wisconsin Extension Center for Community and Economic Development. Everything here is free and accessible. Visit the website at: <http://comm-org.wisc.edu>

RURAL HOMELESSNESS: Engaging a Social Work School and its Students

by Liz Fisher, PhD, MSW

Two years ago I was approached by a community member who had previously been a homeless advocate in urban areas. Upon moving to Shippensburg, PA, she was struck by the lack of a homeless shelter and limited homeless services. We began to work together with my Shippensburg University social work students in the spring of 2006 to understand more about this complicated issue. Since then, students have conducted a local needs assessment, visited urban and rural homeless shelters, interviewed providers in surrounding communities, and participated in the recent HUD point-in-time counts.

It was not an easy task to assess homelessness in the town because in addition to lacking services, the town is split by two counties. The students in my Assessing Organizations and Communities course began to tackle the issue by studying needs assessment and rural homelessness. Then, four groups of students worked on the differing goals: surveying people who utilized the food pantry, researching existing resources, conducting a focus group with religious leaders and interviewing people who were staying in a shelter in a nearby town. My role was to be the initial liaison and ongoing consultant with the students managing the majority of the project. They used weekly classes as committee meetings and community members often attended.

The results of the project were congruent with the discussions in the empirical literature and from homeless organizations regarding rural homelessness (Cohen, 2005; First, Rife, & Toomey, 1994; Fitchen, 1992; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2005). Many of the survey participants had experienced homelessness at some time, but not in the stereotypical “on the street” manner. They had doubled up with family and friends or stayed in campgrounds or their cars. The religious leaders also observed this type of homelessness and provided stories about not knowing how to help when people knocked on their doors asking for assistance. The interviewees in shelters often indicated that their homelessness was due to lack of affordable housing and poverty.

The products of this project included a resource directory, a faculty/student presentation at a regional conference and the formation of a town committee to continue the work.

Beyond these tangible results, the students learned invaluable lessons such as being shocked to learn that residents resented college students because they rented much of the available housing and inflated the cost of units. A field trip to an urban homeless shelter gave them an opportunity to serve dinner to women in a shelter and socialize with them. They also learned new skills in community work including networking, publicizing events, conducting focus groups and running meetings. They realized the value of community involvement, going well beyond the classroom confines to meet residents “on their own turf”. It became clear to us that while each county had resources for homelessness, there was little immediately in Shippensburg.



Our work in homelessness has continued from that semester. One county engaged the fall 2007 group of students to conduct interviews with housing and related providers such as food pantries. The results of this exploratory study suggested that most homelessness in the area is episodic (Kuhn & Culhane, 1998), meaning people have multiple, short-term experiences and that many could live independently with supportive services. The county is currently following up on the results with a more in-depth quantitative study.

Finally, students in my introductory social work course volunteered for the point-in-time unsheltered homeless counts in January. They joined teams of local volunteers to attempt to count the number of homeless people who were “on the streets.” In our area, this mostly meant wooded areas and parking lots. One student may have said it best when offering, “I had no idea...it was such an eye-opener.” While not speaking directly with a person who was homeless, she found evidence of a “camp” on a night that was extremely cold and miserable. This count sadly underestimates the number of unsheltered homeless people but it was a first for the county. In addition, two campus clubs are sponsoring a spaghetti-dinner fundraiser and speaking engagement about local homelessness. It is hoped that the event will help more people to recognize that homelessness affects our small town and continued efforts are needed to address the issue.

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“I had no idea...it was such an eye-opener.”

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS for COSA & Other Tracks For the CSWE-APM in San Francisco

COSA TRACK CALL

ACOSA is announcing the Call for Abstracts for the 53rd Annual Program Meeting (APM) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to be held October 27-30, 2007, in San Francisco, CA. The theme of this year's APM is "Preparing the Next Generation Educators."

CSWE decided to change the name of Symposia to Tracks. An additional change is that there are no 'special sessions' this year, although CSWE reserves the option of asking the Track to provide one.

All proposals relevant to the advancement of social administration and community organizing/development are welcome for the Community Organization and Social Administration Track. This track addresses the application and evaluation of techniques in administration, development, management, organizing, and planning. Abstracts are invited on local, national, and international perspectives such as those that: 1) Identify, critique, and explore challenges and opportunities for social workers and educators in the field of community organization and social administration; 2) Evaluate local, national, or international community practice venues such as grassroots community organizing, social administration, and/or policy advocacy; 3) Explore strategies for strengthening social work's influence on social justice, such as social capital, micro enterprise, and other assets for people living in poverty; 4) Assess innovative models of participatory, interdisciplinary, or inter-organizational networks and collaborations; 5) Introduce teaching models for administration and community courses.

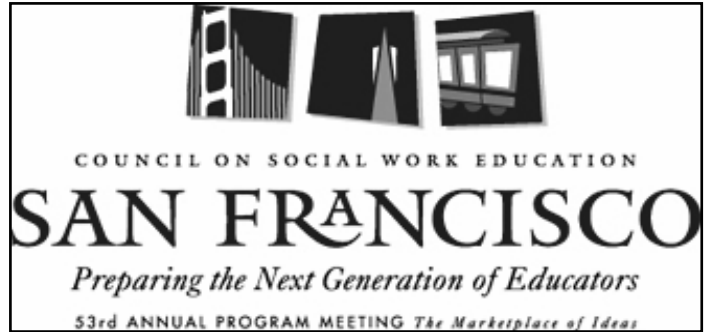
Proposals can be submitted in one of the following eight possible presentation formats:

1) Paper, 2) Poster, 3) Roundtable, 4) Skills Workshop, 5) Panel, 6) Debate, 7) Think Tank, and 8) Electronic Poster

All abstracts must be submitted online. The site is now opened at: <http://cswe.confex.com/cswe/2007/cfp.cgi>
Deadline for all proposals: **Friday, April 27, 2007** (11:59pm USAET).

For more information about the APM and submission guidelines, please visit the CSWE: www.cswe.org

See you in San Francisco in the fall, the best time of year for weather!



October 27-30, 2007
Hilton San Francisco - San Francisco,

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact anyone of us.

Track Organizer: Karen Gray karen.gray@sc.edu
Co-Chairs: Julian Chow julianchow@berkeley.edu
and Bari Cornet bari@berkeley.edu

OTHER TRACKS OF INTEREST TO ACOSA

With the reorganization of its Annual Program Meeting, CSWE is looking to increase opportunities for additional abstracts by offering a wider range of tracks. As the COSA Symposia was limited, ACOSA members had to compete with in the general paper category. The new APM format offers a range of Tracks that should be of interest to and are being chaired by ACOSA colleagues. Visit the CSWE website and APM link for more details on the following related Tracks:

Education/Non-profit Leadership

Chair: Sheldon Gelman, srgelman@yu.edu

Co-Chair: Mitzi Lowe, mlowe@csufresno.edu

International Issues

Chair: Hugo Kamyra, hugo.kamyra@simmons.edu

Social and Economic Justice

Chair: Tricia Bent-Goodley, tmgoodley@aol.com

Social Welfare Policy and Policy Practice

Chair: Rick Hofer, rhofer@uta.edu

University-Community Partnerships

Chair: Tracy Soska, tsssw+@pitt.edu

Co-Chair: Alice Johnson-Butterfield, akj@uic.edu

ACOSA HOPES TO SEE YOU IN SAN FRANCISCO



I am proud to share some great news with you. The YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Network has won the 2007 National Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award from the American Psychological Association (APA). This prestigious award was presented to YAI/NIPD Network leadership on Saturday, March 3, 2007 in Washington, D.C.

"The YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Network has a mission to 'build brighter futures' not only for the clients it serves, but also for its employees," the APA wrote in a magazine recognizing its 2007 honorees. "A participatory management philosophy, emphasis on employee development, and an extensive menu of employee benefits have helped this health and human services

agency build a reputation as a leader in the field." No one benefits from this philosophy more than the people with disabilities & their families we serve every day.

**Joel M. Levy, D.S.W., Chief Executive Officer -
YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities**

**CONGRATULATIONS FROM
YOUR ACOSA COLLEAGUES!**

IFSW in Munich

(Continued from page 4)

the staff. For the most part it consisted of social work students from the local universities that volunteered countless hours before and during the conference in order to make this event a great success. Not only did they not receive any financial appreciation for their efforts, initially they were also denied to participate in events (unless they paid the fee), eat the leftovers of the lunch buffets or go to the banquet on the last night of the conference. On several instances I witnessed also that they were treated with great disrespect by many of the participants of the conference. Considering the theme of the conference this strikes me as unacceptable conduct with regard to our future colleagues! The second observation was that none of the big-name American schools of social work – including the University of Chicago – were represented at this conference.

Despite these observations the conference was an amazing success and I want to thank all my colleagues that I had the honor to meet during these days in Munich, but also during the student conference in Landshut. Thank you for all your inspiration and I hope to see you at the next IFSW conference in Brazil 2008! For more information: www.ifsw.org

Florian Sichling, is a Social Work Doctoral Student at the University of Chicago: sichling@uchicago.edu

Rural Homelessness...

(Continued from page 12)

The lessons learned make it even clearer that there is a need to educate students on the unique issues in rural communities. For example, we experienced the importance of accessing informal networks and how lack of public transportation and geographic and political lines impact social services. The ability to work in an interdisciplinary environment, where you may be the only social worker, also became clear. While hearing many students express the desire to move on to more exciting venues in urban areas, I think some of them may now recognize that rural social work also provides many unique experiences and challenging opportunities.

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Liz Fisher, PhD, MSW; Shippensburg University
Department of Social Work & Gerontology;
EAFish@ship.edu

Global Warming...

(Continued from page 9)

have major impact on the future we pass on to the next generation.

We can challenge elected officials at every level to support efforts to reduce the output of “greenhouse gases” and we can vote the rascals out if they persist in wrong-headed decisions. We can call for replacing tax subsidies for dirty energy with support for solar, wind, geothermal and bio-mass energy generation. Using such clean, renewable sources Idaho can generate five times the total electricity Idahoans currently consume without relying on a single coal-fired or nuclear power plant.

We can become better informed and share that information with our friends and neighbors, our faith groups and service clubs, with all the people we know.

Many groups and organizations are good sources of information about global warming, including:

Stop Global Warming www.stopglobalwarming.org provides news articles that have been published recently. Its “virtual march” has enlisted more than 596,000 sup-

porters demanding solutions to global warming.

Focus the Nation www.focusthenation.org is promoting a January 31, 2008 nation-wide, non-partisan discussion of global warming policy choices in more than 1,000 universities, colleges, high schools, businesses, faith and civic organizations.

The Alliance for Climate Protection www.allianceforclimateprotection.org, an educational group launched by Al Gore, is spending millions of dollars to convince Americans that global warming is an urgent problem.

As the grandfather of Fiona and Max, I am convinced that preserving the planet that is our only home must be the great work of our generation. Children and grandchildren everywhere are depending on us.

Bill Whitaker coordinates the Boise State University Master of Social Work Program. For more than 40 years he has advocated solutions to hunger and poverty. In fall 2006 his graduate social work students researched and acted on responses to the problems of global warming.

Dr. Whitaker can be contacted at whitak@boisestate.edu

SERVICE LEARNING...

(Continued from page 2)

tions of higher learning continue to embrace the concept by incorporating community focused projects and assignments into the academic classroom curriculum. Meaningful community service, integrated with instruction and reflection only enriches the learning experience. In fact, “recent studies have shown that adding a community service learning component helps students learn more effectively. Critical reflection is the key element for relating the meaning of their service to course materials” (CTLAS, 2006). It is a “win win” situation for everyone who is involved.

According to Learn and Serve America (2007) community partnerships are utilized to identify genuine needs, provide mentorship and contribute assets towards completing a successful service learning project for those students who are involved. Both sides will give benefit from the project as a result. Research has also shown that com-

“Meaningful community service, integrated with instruction and reflection, only enriches the learning experience...”

munities are strengthened and of equal importance, students learn the important values of service to others, caring, civic responsibilities, democracy and leadership. Additionally, they are afforded an opportunity to

confront real life situations and experiences, which constitute a valuable lesson in itself. It is without question that service learning is the trend of today. It serves as the vital component that connects a wide array of social, political and economic influences and societal forces. The community and one of its main entities, institutions of higher learning, are no exception.

Learn & Serve America. (2007). What is service learning? http://www.learnandserve.org/about/service_learning/index.asp

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Irma J. Gibson, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at Savannah State University



ACOSA
20560 Bensley Avenue
Lynwood, IL 60411
Tel (708) 757-4187
Fax: (708) 757-4234

In this issue: **CSWE-APM changes, student articles, homelessness, World Social Work Day and more.. Check it out**

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ACOSA Update!

- Editor** Tracy Soska - University of Pittsburgh
Phone: 412-624-3711; tsssw+@pitt.edu
- Production & Distribution** Alice K. Johnson Butterfield, University of Illinois at Chicago, akj@uic.edu
- Practitioner** Jeffrey Shelton, Ph.D., LPC
Chesapeake (VA) Community Services Board
- Social Administration** Dick Boettcher - Ohio State University
Boettcher.1@osu.edu
- International Perspectives** Yossi Korazim-Korosy, Israel
korazim@netvision.net.il
Florian Sichling - University of Chicago
sichling@uchicago.edu
- Student Perspectives This Issue** Richard Elsbury - University of Pittsburgh
rwe4+@pitt.edu
Natalie Greene - University of Pittsburgh
nrg2+@pitt.edu

**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).

ACOSA Officers

- Chair:** Mary Rogge— University of Tennessee at Knoxville
ROGGE@utk.edu
- Treasurer** Charles Trent —Yeshiva University
trent@yu.edu
- Secretary** Susan Murty - University of Iowa
Susan-murty@uiowa.edu

ACOSA Administration

- Coordinator of Operations & Administration** Alice K. Johnson Butterfield/ACOSA
20560 Bensley Avenue
Lynwood, IL 60411
Phone: 708-757-4187 Fax: 708-757-4234
Acosa@voyager.net or akj@uic.edu
- Membership Records** William H. Butterfield
billb@en.com