

Siena College Social Work Department

Welcome Back!

Welcome to the second edition of the *Talking Circle*, the Siena Social Work Department newsletter for alumni, students, social work practitioners and others. This newsletter is the result of a committed partnership between the Social Work Program Advisory Board and the social work faculty.

We hope this newsletter serves as just one of many ways we may all stay in touch and reconnect. Do you have news you would like to share? We would love to hear from you. Drop us an e-mail or a letter.



Save this Date!

5th Annual Siena Day at the Races Friday, August 12, 2005

The college has generously offered to allocate the proceeds from this fund raising event to benefit the **Siena College Social Work Scholarship Endowment**. Come enjoy the "a day at the races" with other alumni and faculty. Social Work faculty will be on hand to share our betting strategies. For further information:

www.siena.edu/alumni/specialevents/saratogamain.asp.

Focus on Faculty: Donna McIntosh

Noting an Advocacy Anniversary!

This year marks my 20th year of advocating at the local, state and national levels on behalf of runaway and homeless teens. In 1985, I earned my MSW from the University at Albany and began work as the Youth Services Coordinator for Equinox. I was responsible for directing an emergency shelter and transitional living programs for teens. Later, I was successful in expanding those programs to include a unique drug prevention program using peer leadership from homeless youth.

Three years later, I was elected as the President of the Board of the Empire State Coalition for Youth and Family Services, the statewide advocacy and training membership organization in New York State (www.empirestatecoalition.org).

I have remained an active board member and have again been elected as President of the Board. For three years, my husband Al and I have had our home certified to take up to three runaway and homeless teens on an emergency basis. This experience has kept advocacy work "real" for me.

Over the years, I have seen many funding and regulatory advances that support this population. Unfortunately, there are many other complex issues that remain unsolved.

I am most proud of my contributions to advocacy for state compliance with the Stewart McKinney Act (a federal law passed in the mid 80s) which provided homeless youth access to continued education. There is so much more to be done and I look forward to continued advocacy work for another 20 years. Young people are worth it!

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Alumni Profile

Hillary Weicher Maxwell '87

Hillary was one of our most adventurous students. After graduating from Siena, and earning her MSW from the University at Albany, she moved to Montana in 1990. Here is her story. (RR)



Class of 2004

“When I think of all the lives I have touched since graduating from Siena, it is an overwhelming feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction.”

To this day, a statement that Bob Rivas made in class still rings in my head: “A good social worker never leads a client through the forest, he or she just holds the lantern.” This has proven to be true for me, and it never fails me, even when the forest has been very dark.

Initially, I was hired by a regional mental health center to be the County Outpatient Clinical Services Director. I stayed in that position for 5 years, then went into private practice. Private practice in Montana looks a lot different than in NY. I spend a great deal of time on the road, provide services in homes and other interesting places, and can dress very casually. Work takes me across 3 counties, one of which is the size of Rhode Island. The population is quite diverse, including several tribes of the Souix Nation. My roles are also very diverse and can range from providing clinical services to bringing food to a funeral. Flexibility is critical, as is the need to establish close relationships while still maintaining ethical boundaries and client self-determination. I have learned

that these are more difficult to maintain in rural communities than in urban ones. I have had to become comfortable with a sustained relationship with my NASW Code of Ethics to assure myself of good practice in some rather vague situations. Through it all, I have learned and continue to learn a great deal while working and living in this wonderful place. The constant struggle here is the shortage of other social workers to share the load. Alcoholism, suicide and poverty are omnipresent here.

Lifestyle changes have proven to be challenging as well. Who knew you had to order propane, that rattlesnakes could coexist with me in my garden and that groceries can be 35 miles away? I miss the food in NY, though I have learned to grow eggplant and make my own Caponata. I live in an old farmhouse and have 4 sheep, 2 rabbits and an alpaca. I have learned how to use a spinning wheel. I suspect I have lost my ability to use public transportation, order take out and negotiate an interstate highway. Every day is a gift to me here, and I know that I appreciate Montana more than most.

30th Anniversary Gala

We celebrated our 30th anniversary with alumni at a "Just Desserts" party on October 23rd, 2004. Advisory board members and over 100 alumni from a variety of class years attended. A decadent buffet of desserts was served and a silent auction was held to benefit the Social Work Scholarship Fund. The Siena String Quartet, directed by Professor Paul Konye, performed classical music for the event.

Professor Strock Lynskey and Father Pat Tuttle, both social work alumni, hosted the event and the silent auction. Donated auction items included gift certificates, wines, jewelry, crafted items and legal advice. Faculty members Donna McIntosh, Joe Zoske, Carla Sofka and Bob Rivas also participated. Others in attendance included Dr. Ralph Blasting, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, and Senator Neil Breslin, who presented us with a congratulatory proclamation. Members of the Department and Advisory Board sincerely thank all who made this event possible.



Senator Neil Breslin presents a proclamation honoring our 30th to Diane Strock Lynskey and Fr. Pat Tuttle

Alumni Profiles

Kim Reed '00

After Siena, Kim earned an MSW degree from New York University. She joined the social work team at Heights and Hill Community Council, providing services to the frail elderly in the neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill and Boerum Hill.

Kim notes, "Brooklyn is rich in cultural diversity. I have the good fortune of working with people from many different backgrounds...many have lived through world wars, genocide, the Great Depression and most recently, the tragedy of Septemeber 11th. Although it can be exhausting, it is rewarding to know that I am helping to make a difference in the lives of some of the city's most vulnerable populations."

Kim has also studied acting in NYC and recently completed a part in a new "Indie" film.

Audra Spremullo '01

An active member of the social work club and premier player on Siena's Women's Basketball team, Audra earned the MSW degree from the Fordham University. While she attended Fordham, she worked at Parsons Family and Children Services.

After earning her MSW, Audra worked for two years as a social worker in the day treatment program at LaSalle School in Albany. Currently, she is working as a school social worker in the East Greenbush school district at both the high school and the elementary school.

For the last three years, Audra has been the Head Coach of the Women's Varsity Basketball Team at Gishop Gibbons School in Schenectady. She is planning to get married in the Siena Chapel in August 2005.



Seniors ready for Lobby Day 2003

Brief Bios

Tikinna Blalock '04

In June of 2004, Takinna entered the MSW program at the University at Albany. After completing her MSW field placement at The Family Counseling Center of Fulton County, she was hired as a family therapist in their mental health clinic.

Cori Giroux '04

Cori is attending Loyola College of Maryland in Baltimore where she is working on a Master's Degree in School Counseling. She is also a Resident Director at Loyola, where she has responsibility for four buildings, a resident assistant staff, and a peer judicial board.

Megan Bressett '00

Currently, Megan lives in Portland, Maine. She is working as an Intensive Case Manager with the Frannie Peabody Center, the largest organization in Maine serving persons with HIV/AIDS.



Class of 2005

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***Social Work
Department***

Save the Date

5th Annual

**Siena Day at the Races
Friday, August 12, 2005**

Check out the Social Work
Department at our website:
siena.edu/socialwork

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board of Siena College's Social Work Program is composed of a wide variety of persons whose input and assistance is important to the Social Work Program. These include Social Work practitioners, field instructors, students, alumni, college staff, and other members of the community.

The Advisory Board supports the program's mission to prepare undergraduate baccalaureate students for competent and effective entry-level, professional generalist social work practice with a diverse range of individuals and systems who are in need by:

- providing consultation in developing and maintaining a comprehensive curriculum
- planning and carrying out activities that develop the resources and supports needed by the Social Work Program to meet student needs
- serving as a link between the academic and practice components of the Social Work profession

Interested in serving on the Advisory Board? Contact Donna McIntosh at 783-2325.

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