

Social Work

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 Program. The Advisory Board supports the program's mission to prepare undergraduate baccalaureate students for competent generalist social work practice.

Are you interested in serving on the Advisory Board as a voting member or as part of a particular committee or project?

Contact Joe Zoske at 518-783-4123.

Program Updates

The Program received full reaccreditation from the CSWE in Oct. 2007.

Two new adjuncts join our team – **Tammy LaBrake**, who does private practice and is well experienced in gerontology and elder abuse prevention, and **Kevin O'Connor**, who works at Joseph's House and Shelter, is a field instructor for our students and a former member of the Program Advisory Board.

Siena College Social Work Leaders



Siena's Team - some of the Social Work Senior Class (2008) with other Siena students and community members at the 2007 Memory Walk for the Alzheimer's Association.

Future Social Work Leaders

Carly James- Class of 2008

"In my senior year, I became the president of the Habitat for Humanity club. As an officer I have planned and led 4 spring break service trips, and have also created and directed the club's big fundraising event, the *Mr. Siena Pageant*. The show has been increasingly successful over the past two years, and we have been able to raise over \$4,000. I have also been involved in the Student Events Board: In my junior year I was the co-chair for Siblings Weekend and as a senior I held the executive board position Parliamentarian. My experiences with SEB and Habitat helped me to realize that my interests in Social Work lie in working with organizations, groups, and the community, and my macro focus has developed with the aid of these leadership opportunities."

Holly Holleran- Class of 2008

At 16 years old, I was pregnant and faced many difficult decisions. Ultimately, I chose to carry my pregnancy to term and place my beautiful son for adoption. This not only changed my personal life forever, but this experience also created a clear and very positive path for my future. I want to be an adoption counselor. In 2004, I was asked by the National Council for Adoption to be the Birth Mother speaker at several of their conferences in upstate New York. These opportunities lead me to creating a Birth Mother Support Group in the Capital Region. I have published several articles about adoption in the Friends in Adoption bi-annual newsletter, and have attend several 'Get Acquainted Weekends' hosted by Friends in Adoption to share my story and present life-long issues of open-adoption. I feel honored to have had all these opportunities. Social Work is about enhancing human well-being; it's about empowering individuals who are vulnerable and/or oppressed."



An Interview with President Fr. Kevin Mullen, OFM

Last fall, Siena College was able to “begin again.” This was the theme Fr. Kevin Mullen chose to begin his term as Siena’s newest President. However, Fr. Kevin is not new to Siena or to service. He spent the last three years as the Director of Siena’s Franciscan Center for Service and Advocacy. In this role, Fr. Kevin provided Siena students with opportunities to commit to service, and to partake in advocating for the poor and marginalized in the Greater Capital Region. One of Fr. Kevin’s favorite parts of his job at the Center was being able to teach Catholic social thought and then see students apply it in the real world. Fr. Kevin stated that he was “called” to being a Friar. He had seen strong examples of other Friars and found that he too felt at ease in the tasks put before him.

Like his calling to the Franciscans, Fr. Kevin says that Social Workers must have a strong commitment to the dignity of the person. He stated that it is important to keep the outlook that people are ultimately good, even when faced with the task of seeing the brokenness of people and families. His advice to those working in the field is to “never stop advocating for the people you are working for” and to see the strength in the team that social workers bring.

Fr. Kevin has found his new position at Siena to be very rewarding. His passion for Siena, and its alumni, current student and faculty have made the transition all the easier. While Fr. Kevin does not anticipate this position to be his last, as he loves challenging himself and taking on new roles, he did stress the importance of having a passion in your life. He stated in order to be successful you must “enjoy what you do, take pleasure and - more importantly - meaning and purpose” in whatever your aspirations are. These are wise words from a very happy and sensible man.

– by Amy McCarthy, Class of 2009



Allyson Sweeney and Amy McCarthy, Class of 2009 with President Fr. Kevin Mullen.

ALUMNI LEADERS

Joanna Sepp- (Class of '98). “I am currently Dean of Students at a Long Island high school, while finishing a post graduate degree in School Building/District Leadership at the University of Stony Brook. I manage all aspects of student attendance by working with a team of administrators, mental health staff, and outside agencies, utilizing a multitude of interventions. I have been active in the push towards incorporating social emotional literacy (SEL) into school curriculums and culture. An active member of Long Island’s SEL forum, I recently presented at our SEL Conference with a group of students, including a first annual Student Voice Forum for students to speak out about SEL, and educate other schools about programs that promote this type of learning.

For the past 4 years, I have also been running “Natural Helpers,” a program which trains select high school students to help their peers when a personal crisis arises. At the start of each school year, myself and a co-worker take approximately 60 students in grades 9-12 from different cliques on a three day retreat. Here we train these students to be effective peer-helpers. A small group of teachers, whom the students feel they could go to if they had a problem, also participate. The weekend focuses on breaking down barriers between the different cliques, creating an atmosphere of trust, team building, and communication skills. We educate these peer-helpers about the early warning signs of common problems related to adolescence, and strengthen the relationships between the students and the staff. Each year the students are amazed at all the new friends they have also made on the weekend! This has undoubtedly been the most rewarding part of my career to date. This program inspired me to further my education and become involved in school administration, because I feel strongly that schools place too much emphasis on testing scores and not enough emphasis on the social and emotional development of children. I also find that teachers require more training on how to promote the social and emotional development of children through both their personal relationships with the students and the curriculums they teach.”



ALUMNI LEADERS

Beth Smith-Boivin (Class of '82) is the Director of the Anne B Goldberg Alzheimer’s Resource Center at the Neurosciences Institute at Albany Medical Center. She coordinates patient care, provides education to families and the community, and assists research scientists recruit individuals for studies conducted by the Neurosciences Institute. Beth’s passion for working with individuals and families affected by Alzheimer’s was ignited by personal experience. She is involved in both micro and macro practice in her job and in her work with the Alzheimer’s Association, where she served on the national speaker’s bureau. She is also newly appointed to the Governor’s Taskforce on Alzheimer’s Disease.

With an undergraduate social work degree from Siena, Beth went on to get a Master’s Degree in Health Services Administration with a concentration in Gerontology and Mental Health. Prior to her current job, she worked in a nursing home, as an administrator in an assisted living facility, and as a Mental Health Instructor for the Police Academy. She truly feels her Siena degree prepared her well, and challenges current students and practitioners to think broadly about the role of social work, and prevent burnout by doing something one can be passionate about.

Tasha Alston, M.S.W. (Class of '99) currently resides in Atlanta, Georgia and is involved in numerous community affairs. She recently completed the United Way’s Volunteer Involvement Program in Atlanta, GA, which develops and places ethnically diverse and underrepresented populations into leadership roles in nonprofit agencies, in order to create a more open and caring community. Tasha also completed training for United Way’s Community Impact Program. This program trains individuals to review and approve grants for organizations that provide community solutions for youth, people at risk, hard working families, and early learning.

Tasha Alston is currently in the process of completing Women’s Economic Development Agency’s (WEDA) Atlanta’s Microenterprise Initiative program. WEDA’s Atlanta Microenterprise Initiative program helps emerging and new entrepreneurs learn how to start and manage a successful business. Tasha is currently a Behavioral Health Coach at Matria Healthcare, Inc. in Marietta, Georgia. She is also President/Owner of I.D. Coaching and Therapy Services, L.L.C., a life coaching and therapy service for teenagers and young adult’s ages 12-21.

Alumni Leaders

Conor Boyd (Class of 2002) is a leader and an entrepreneur. When asked if he thought he was a leader he stated “absolutely!” Conor is the creator of ASKWISH.com, a website dedicated to making it easy for people to give and receive (or as he calls it: dishing and wishing), and Conor is the broker. The concept eliminates the barriers that money puts on people who need help or may want to learn something new, by exchanging their needs and skills.

Conor says, “I built it for myself. I wanted to meet people and enjoy an experience”. The members of ASKWISH.com are from all age groups and walks of life. Membership is free. Even some big companies are wishing and dishing, one such company being the Red Cross! Conor wants to create and sustain goodness, and shift the way people interact. “We won’t be successful as a generation of we don’t move forward and use the internet.” Conor is passionate about his website and wants more people to join in the experience. “If I had one wish...I would wish for more wishes.”

First Scholarships Awarded!

The first two scholarships from the Social Work Endowed Scholarship were given to Johannah Hibbs and Jennifer Bradshaw during 2007-2008.

To contribute to the Social Work Scholarship Endowment, send a check to: the Office of VPDEA, Siena College, 515 Loudon Rd, Loudonville, NY 12211. Be sure to note on your check that it is for the “social work scholarship endowment.”

This is a wonderful way to give back to the Program by investing not only in future generations of students, but the future of the social work profession!



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**Are you a Leader in
Social Work or
another Field?**

**Drop us a letter or
email and let us know
about your work!**

**ARE YOU A BSW
PRACTITIONER?**

**Our 2009 Summer
Newsletter will be
focused on BSW
practice. So, please
contact us with what
you are doing!**

**This newsletter is the
partnership between The
Advisory Board and the
Social Work Faculty.**



SOCIAL WORK CLASS OF 2008

Back Row, left to right: Patricia Campbell, Diane Martori, Holly Holleran, Carly James, Megan Lehmann. Second Row: Lindsey Nickles, Margaret Ryan, Amanda Fuchs, Jason Clark, Margaret Walsh. Front Row: Jennifer Bradshaw, Johannah Hibbs, Julianna Piazzola, Mandy Malone

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