



# SOCIAL WORK NEWSLETTER

FALL | 2017



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

It's been an outstanding year for the Department of Social Work at the University of Memphis. I am pleased to present this year's newsletter that highlights many of the accomplishments of our faculty, staff, students and alumni.

Our students continue to make their mark on our community, giving 80,000 hours per year in service through field internships. Our undergraduate program continues to be vibrant at both the Memphis main campus and the Lambuth campus in Jackson, Tenn. Students at both campuses are actively engaged in service learning throughout their time in the degree program. Our MSW program continues to grow at the Memphis campus with plans to expand to Lambuth.

Our faculty continue to do outstanding work in research and engaged scholarship. A list of recent faculty publications is included. We have recently had three faculty members win prestigious University awards. In addition, our faculty bring more than \$500,000 per year in grants. I am pleased to highlight some of our grant-funded and community-engaged research projects.

Finally, this newsletter highlights one of our outstanding alumni, Ms. Florence Hervey. We are fortunate to have a growing number of alumni who are making an impact on the Mid-South and beyond. I am pleased to share these highlights and would like to thank everyone who contributes to excellence at the University of Memphis Department of Social Work.

**-Susan Neely-Barnes, PhD**  
Department Chair



## GIVING HIV A VOICE

The Strengthening Communities Initiative began a collaboration between Dr. Robin Lennon-Dearing and Friends For Life, Inc.: the Women's Empowerment Group project. The program develops new ways to empower women while validating their strength, courage and insight, and to increase community HIV awareness. Women participants were provided with digital cameras and given assignments to take photos that they could bring to group, share and discuss. The twenty-three participants collectively took more than 500 photos of their unique perspective as women living with HIV. Each woman chose specific photos to put into a poster collage to share a piece of her journey.

This study uncovered, from the perspective of the participants, how they overcame challenges and struggles, how important it is for them to have healthy relationships in which they are valued and supported, and how being diagnosed with HIV had provided them with new opportunities and the motivation to make positive changes in their lives. Posters of the women's photos and stories are being utilized to educate the community, channelling the participants' knowledge and insight about living with HIV toward education and social action.

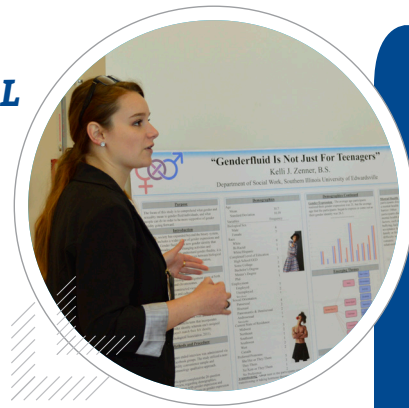
Over the past two years (2015-2017), approximately 100 University of Memphis social work students have participated in various activities related to this Strengthening Communities project. In the 2017 spring semester, 38 social work students from an undergraduate practice class helped to organize eleven community poster exhibits and presentations for women who participated in the Women's Empowerment Group research project. An estimated 350 members of the Memphis community viewed the posters at one of the eleven public exhibits. The women who participated in the photo exhibits and presentations felt that they benefited from sharing their story. Not all the women openly revealed their HIV status and some did not use photographs that would identify themselves in their posters, yet most of the participants personally attended poster exhibits. By courageously sharing their story and helping others become aware of their experiences, participants said they felt accepted and supported.

## UOFM HOSTS THE 2017 RURAL SOCIAL WORK CAUCUS

The University of Memphis Lambuth and the Department of Social Work hosted the 2017 Rural Social Work Caucus Conference July 19 – 21 at the Wilder Student Union on the Lambuth campus.

The Rural Caucus of Social Work was established in 1976 and meets annually to present research on issues of practice in rural social work. Approximately 60 participants attended the conference. This year's conference included presentations on poverty and homelessness in rural America; meeting the health and mental health care needs of rural residents; preparing students for rural practice; practice with rural gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals; and practice with African Americans in the rural South.

Keynote speakers included Rep. Jimmy Eldridge from Tennessee District 73, Frank McMeen of West Tennessee Healthcare Foundation, and Susan Elswick of the University of Memphis.



## DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL WORK AND CEPR RECEIVE GRANT TO FUND MASTER'S STUDENTS

The Departments of Social Work and Counseling, Educational Psychology and Research at the University of Memphis have been awarded a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program grant. The total award is \$1,917,762 and will be distributed over a four-year period Sept. 30, 2017, to Aug. 31, 2021. The five faculty on the award team are Susan Neely-Barnes (principal investigator), Elena Delavega, Laura Taylor, Steve Zanskas and Chloe Lancaster.

The award will establish the Mid-South Integrated Behavioral Health Training Initiative (MIBH-TI). The program will fund 30 master's level students per year for four years from the fields of social work, school counseling, mental health counseling, and rehabilitation counseling. To be eligible, master's level students must be in their final year of internship placement. Eligible students will participate in a field internship that involves interdisciplinary team practice. The students will also participate in trainings on interdisciplinary teamwork, working in integrated behavioral health settings, selecting evidence-based practices, identifying emerging mental health conditions, and promoting cultural and linguistic competency.

"The program builds on the success of the Mid-South Social Work Professional Development Initiative (MSW-PDI) and expands that program to both social work students at the Lambuth campus and counseling students at the main campus," said Neely-Barnes, project director for the program and department chair. "We were able to demonstrate that the prior program improved students' skills in working with teams and capacity for serving clients in an integrated healthcare setting. We are excited that HRSA has recognized our success and chosen to continue its funding."

## THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK ANNOUNCES 6TH ANNUAL SOCIAL WORK SYMPOSIUM

The Department of Social Work at the University of Memphis is pleased to announce its Sixth Social Work Symposium on April 13, 2018.

On the 50th anniversary of both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination and the foundation of the social work program at the University of Memphis, we want to honor the legacy of MLK and how social work has walked in his footsteps in our role promoting social justice and equity for all people, particularly marginalized and poor people.

Student posters and abstract proposals will be accepted until **Jan. 30, 2018.**

If you are interested in information for submitting a proposal, please visit:

[memphis.edu/socialwork/news](http://memphis.edu/socialwork/news)





# UOFM SOCIAL WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

## **SOCIAL WORK ALUMNA SPEAKS TO MID-SOUTH FOOD BANK**

On Thursday, Sept. 7, the Mid-South Food Bank hosted its annual Provider Agency Conference at the Grace House on the grounds of Graceland.

The theme for the 2017 Conference was the Challenge of Change and the keynote speaker was E. Florence Hervery, CEO of Case Management, Inc. (CMI). In addition to CMI being a 20-year partner agency with the local Food Bank, Hervery also currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Mid-South Food Bank. Hervery's address to the more than 200 attendees centered around ensuring that agencies were sensitive to the needs of those who seek them out for food assistance.

Hervery informed the audience that current statistics indicate there are more than 41 million people in the U.S. facing food insecurity. Attendees were challenged to consider and rank everyday needs that families face, i.e., clothes, shelter, food, medicine, school supplies, entertainment outings, safety, transportation and personal hygiene. Then based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, they were asked to rank the items in order of importance or priority to an average family.

This exercise revealed that every family is different and there is no cookie-cutter solution to serving this population.



## **COLLECTING SUPPLIES FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS AT LAMBUTH**

Led by instructor Veronica Morrow, UofM Lambuth social work students in Jackson, Tenn. were recently highlighted by *The Jackson Sun*, a local newspaper, for their work collecting supplies to donate to Hurricane Harvey victims. Morrow said, "We try to look for opportunities each semester to do stuff that can help those in need, because I want to do more with my students than simply teach them theory and information about social work. And my students are good about jumping in and helping when we do decide to help someone. Which is good, because if you don't have a heart for social work, then why are you here? All the information in the world won't help much if you don't have a heart for the work."

In the past, Morrow's classes have helped gather supplies for the Flint, Mich.; water crisis as well as assist at local community centers.

*Photo and Quotation courtesy of  
Brandon Shields/The Jackson Sun*

## **SUPPORT SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS**

Your gift to the Department of Social Work at the University of Memphis can make a difference. Consider supporting the Department today. Visit [supportum.memphis.edu](http://supportum.memphis.edu) today and donate to the Social Work Enrichment Account. If you would like your gift to support students, you may designate your gift to the Student Assistance Scholarship in Social Work. All gifts to the Student Assistance Scholarship go directly to students experiencing financial crisis. Thank you for all you do for social work education!

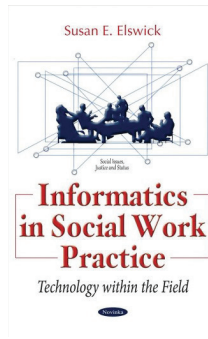


## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: SUSAN ELSWICK, EDD

Dr. Susan Elswick has had two books published this year. You can read synopses of her publications to the right.

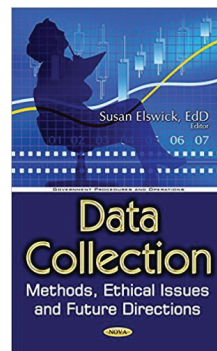
### INFORMATICS IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE: TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE FIELD

Technology and Informatics in the field of applied social work is at the cusp of development within the profession. For many years other applied fields, such as medicine and nursing, have been implementing and benefiting from the use of technology in practice. Technology has improved outcomes for researchers, practitioners, and consumers within the field of medicine and nursing. Although lagging behind in the technology trend, social work practitioners are learning the importance of these systems within their daily applied practices.



### DATA COLLECTION: METHODS, ETHICAL ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The ability to make clinical decisions that are data informed for all clients should be at the forefront of social work practices. This book will assist clinicians with understanding the importance of informatics in social work practice, identifying ways in which to embed these practices into their current practices, identifying potential barriers and needs when using technology, and also assist them in identifying ways in which to manage these barriers to practice.



## BUILDING AN INFANT MENTAL HEALTH MODEL IN THE MID-SOUTH

The Early Success Coalition and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital recently contracted with Drs. Susan Elswick and Laura Taylor on a grant aimed at developing a model for infant mental health consultation for the Memphis region. Incorporating Integrative Behavioral Health and Infant Mental Health models of practice, Elswick and Taylor are looking to develop a local Integrative Behavioral Health and Infant Mental Health model that includes assessment, consultation, professional development and support for infant mental health clinicians and caregivers in the state of Tennessee. Following a new state designation for Infant Mental Health as an endorsement certification in Tennessee, the project will work toward building capacity in the West region to increase the number of Infant Mental Health clinicians.

The grant work will provide consultation and support to three local child care centers, early childcare staff, parents, and a pediatric medical clinic in order to build supportive capacity to care for the healthy social and emotional development of the children within our community. The program includes a focus on the ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) awareness, which assists in educating parents and care-givers about the damaging effects of early childhood trauma and the ways in which to build resilience in early childhood.

# FACULTY AWARDS AND PUBLICATIONS

## GREGORY WASHINGTON

- Distinguished Research Award, Excellence in Engaged Scholarship
- Presented by the University of Memphis Alumni Association

## SUSAN NEELY-BARNES

- Distinguished Research Award, Social Sciences
- Presented by the College of Arts & Sciences

## ELENA DELAVEGA

- Early Career Research Award
- Presented by the College of Arts & Sciences



## PUBLICATIONS:

Sarango, M., DeGroot, A., **Hirschi, M.**, Emeka, U., & Rajabiun, S. (2017). *The Role of Patient Navigators in Building a Medical Home for Multiply-Diagnosed HIV-Positive Homeless Populations*. *Journal of Public Health Management*, 23(3), 276-282.

**Delavega, M. E., Neely-Barnes, S., Lennon-Dearing, R., & Soifer, S.** (2017). Engaged Scholarship: A Signature Research Methodology for Social Work. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 53(3), 568-576.

**Lennon-Dearing, R., & Harper, F.** (2016). *An Empowerment Forum for Women Living with HIV*. *Journal of Sociology and Social Work*, 4(2), 98-109.

**Lennon-Dearing, R., & Delavega, M. E.** (2016). *Do Social Workers Apply "Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself" to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transpersons in the South?* *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63(9), 1171-1193.

McAdory, T., **Elswick, S. E.**, & Lennon-Dearing, R. (2016). *Embracing life: The Gift of a Day Program*. *Illness, Crisis and Loss*, 24(2), 59 -72.

Hunter, W., **Elswick, S.**, & et al (2017). *Multi-Tier Systems of Support for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Collaborative between School Social Workers and Teachers*. *Children and Schools*.

Smith, C., Casey, L., Williamson, R., and **Elswick, S.** (2017). *Investigating the Symptoms of Traumatic Stress in Fathers of Children Diagnosed with Autism*. *DADD Online Journal: Research to Practice* (Summer 2017).

Cuellar, M., **Elswick, S.**, and Theriot, M. (2017). *School Social Workers' Perceptions of School Safety and Security in Today's Schools: A Survey of Professionals Across the United States*. *Journal of School Violence* (Spring 2017).

Cuellar, M., **Elswick, S.**, and Theriot, M. (2017). *An Investigation of School Social Worker Perceptions Towards School Security Personnel*. *School Social Work Journal* (Spring 2017).

**Elswick, S.** (2017). *I Hear the Music Soaring*. *National Poetry Contest/ Online Publication*. *The New Social Worker* (2017).

Hunter, W.C., ....**Elswick, S.** (2017). *Literacy Workshops: School Social Workers Enhancing Educational Connections between Educators, Early Childhood Students, and Families*. *Children and Schools: A Journal of the National Association of Social Workers*. (Spring 2017).

**Delavega, E.**, Kindle, P. A., Peterson, S., & Schwartz, C. (2017). *The blame index: Exploring the change in social work students' perceptions of poverty*. *Journal of Social Work Education* 53(4), 664-675.

**Delavega, E.**, (2016). *The Earned Income Tax Credit: Estimating non-claims Rates among eligible participants and why it matters to social workers*. *Journal of Policy Practice*. 15(3), 145-161.