Where in the World is GSSW?

National ranking jumps 10 points!  Page 1
FROM THE DEAN

In today’s global society, an increasing number of social workers are choosing to live and learn in cultures very different from their own. In fact, many believe there is no better way to truly understand the impact of global forces on the vulnerable populations they serve, both at home and abroad.

At GSSW, the past decade has brought significant growth in the number of students choosing to pursue social work practice in a global community. As well as in the number and variety of international experiences we offer them. As social work educators, we’re rapidly expanding our focus beyond our local communities to the global community of which we are all a part.

In this issue of GSSW Magazine, our cover story features first-person accounts by our faculty, MSW students and alumni who have taught, worked or conducted research internationally. We also invite you to meet our international PhD students who bring unique personal and cultural perspectives to their research and teaching at GSSW.

A few months ago, we distributed the second issue of GSSW’s e-newsletter to keep our readers updated about recent and upcoming events. To ensure that future newsletters reach you, please click here to provide your current email address.

Meanwhile, we welcome your interest in our school and encourage you to stay in touch with us during the coming months.

Sincerely,

James Herbert Williams, PhD, MSW
Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair

This and all past issues of our magazine are online. Click here and then click on “GSSW Magazine.” You can also scan this barcode to read GSSW Magazine on your smartphone or tablet computer.

GSSW BOARD OF VISITORS

Gary Tourt, Chair
Libby Bortz, MSW, LCSW
David L. Gies, MS, MPA
Alberto Godenzi, PhD, MBA
Ben Lewis, MBA

Bri Makevsky, MA, MSW, JD
Jana Edwardi, MSW, LCSW, BCD
Troy A. Eul, JD
Grover “Clive” Gilmore, PhD, MA
Libby Bortz, MSW, LCSW

Margaret Roath, MSW, LCSW
Glenn Villanueva, MSW
Philip Wims, DPS
Alex Wyman

GSSW congratulates Board of Visitors member Troy Eul, JD, who was named “Lawyer of the Year” by the Colorado Bar Association in December 2011.

GSSW Soars in new U.S. News Rankings

The Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver, already considered one of the best in the nation, rose another 10 points in new rankings just released by U.S. News & World Report. The oldest school of social work in the Rocky Mountain region, GSSW is ranked number 20 among the nation’s best Master of Social Work (MSW) programs, placing it in the top 11 percent of all nationally accredited programs.

The school has risen an unprecedented 24 points during the magazine’s last three ranking periods. GSSW is the top-ranked social work school in the Rocky Mountain West and currently offers the only accredited MSW program in the Denver metropolitan area.

“GSSW’s new ranking reflects widespread recognition of our faculty’s scholarship and the achievements of our alumni,” says Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair James Herbert Williams. “Our colleagues across the country are noticing our accomplishments, and we are just getting started.”

U.S. News bases its rankings solely on the results of peer assessment surveys sent to deans, other administrators and faculty at accredited social work degree programs or schools. Only fully accredited MSW programs in good standing during the survey period are ranked. Those schools with the highest average scores on the survey are included in the list published by the magazine.

University of Denver to Host First Presidential Debate

The University of Denver will host the first of three 2012 U. S. Presidential debates on Wednesday, October 3, 2012. It is the only debate currently scheduled in the western United States and marks the first time DU has hosted such an event. The debate will be held in Magness Arena at the Daniels C. Ritchie Center for Sports & Wellness. Please note that tickets are not available to the public, but there will be a limited number of tickets available by lottery for DU students only. Click here for more information.

University of Denver

In today’s global society, an increasing number of social workers are choosing to live and learn in cultures very different from their own. In fact, many believe there is no better way to truly understand the impact of global forces on the vulnerable populations they serve, both at home and abroad.

At GSSW, the past decade has brought significant growth in the number of students choosing to pursue social work practice in a global community. As well as in the number and variety of international experiences we offer them. As social work educators, we’re rapidly expanding our focus beyond our local communities to the global community of which we are all a part.

In this issue of GSSW Magazine, our cover story features first-person accounts by our faculty, MSW students and alumni who have taught, worked or conducted research internationally. We also invite you to meet our international PhD students who bring unique personal and cultural perspectives to their research and teaching at GSSW.

A few months ago, we distributed the second issue of GSSW’s e-newsletter to keep our readers updated about recent and upcoming events. To ensure that future newsletters reach you, please click here to provide your current email address.

Meanwhile, we welcome your interest in our school and encourage you to stay in touch with us during the coming months.

Sincerely,

James Herbert Williams, PhD, MSW
Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair

This and all past issues of our magazine are online. Click here and then click on “GSSW Magazine.” You can also scan this barcode to read GSSW Magazine on your smartphone or tablet computer.

GSSW BOARD OF VISITORS

Gary Tourt, Chair
Libby Bortz, MSW, LCSW
Jana Edwardi, MSW, LCSW, BCD
Troy A. Eul, JD
David L. Gies, MS, MPA
Grover “Clive” Gilmore, PhD, MA
Alberto Godenzi, PhD, MBA
Ben Lewis, MBA

Bri Makevsky, MA, MSW, JD
Margaret Roath, MSW, LCSW
Yvonne Savage, MSW
Glenn Villanueva, MSW
Philip Wims, DPS
Alex Wyman

GSSW congratulates Board of Visitors member Troy Eul, JD, who was named “Lawyer of the Year” by the Colorado Bar Association in December 2011.

GSSW Soars in new U.S. News Rankings

The Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver, already considered one of the best in the nation, rose another 10 points in new rankings just released by U.S. News & World Report. The oldest school of social work in the Rocky Mountain region, GSSW is ranked number 20 among the nation’s best Master of Social Work (MSW) programs, placing it in the top 11 percent of all nationally accredited programs.

The school has risen an unprecedented 24 points during the magazine’s last three ranking periods. GSSW is the top-ranked social work school in the Rocky Mountain West and currently offers the only accredited MSW program in the Denver metropolitan area.

“GSSW’s new ranking reflects widespread recognition of our faculty’s scholarship and the achievements of our alumni,” says Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair James Herbert Williams. “Our colleagues across the country are noticing our accomplishments, and we are just getting started.”

U.S. News bases its rankings solely on the results of peer assessment surveys sent to deans, other administrators and faculty at accredited social work degree programs or schools. Only fully accredited MSW programs in good standing during the survey period are ranked. Those schools with the highest average scores on the survey are included in the list published by the magazine.

University of Denver to Host First Presidential Debate

The University of Denver will host the first of three 2012 U. S. Presidential debates on Wednesday, October 3, 2012. It is the only debate currently scheduled in the western United States and marks the first time DU has hosted such an event. The debate will be held in Magness Arena at the Daniels C. Ritchie Center for Sports & Wellness. Please note that tickets are not available to the public, but there will be a limited number of tickets available by lottery for DU students only. Click here for more information.

University of Denver
FALL EVENT FOCUSED ON ANIMALS AND KIDS

Events that include animals or children tend to be popular, so it’s little wonder that a family-friendly GSSW program focused on both dogs and kids drew a substantial crowd last fall. Held on October 15, the evening included a lecture by Dr. Aubrey Fine, author of the book “Animals Play in the Lives of Children.” Meanwhile, children had the opportunity to meet trained service dogs. Complete an art project and hear author Jon Marie Broz (MSW ’07), AASW, LCSW read her book, Bosco, the dog who was jacked/afraid of the dark.

The event also included beverages, hors d’oeuvres, dessert and a book-signing. Proceeds benefitted GSSW’s Institute for Human-Animal Connection.

Scholars Highlight 2012 Dean’s Lecture Series

The 2012 Dean’s Lecture Series began on March 5 with a lecture by Karina L. Walters, MSW, PhD, William R. and Ruth Gerberding Endowed Professor and Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Washington School of Social Work. Walters’ talk was entitled “Booby Don’t Just Tell Stories, They Tell Histories: Embodiment of Historical Trauma and Microaggression Distress.”

An enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and a recent recipient of the Fulbright Award, Walters focuses her research on historical, social and cultural determinants of physical and mental health among American Indians and Alaska Natives. She serves as principal investigator on several groundbreaking studies funded by the National Institutes of Health.

The second lecture in the series was presented on April 10 by Fred M. Ssewamala, PhD, Global Thought Fellow and Associate Professor of Social Work and International Affairs at the Columbia University School of Social Work. His talk was entitled “Impact of Economic Empowerment Programs on Health and Educational Outcomes of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children: Lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa.”

A Senior Research Fellow with New America Foundation, Ssewamala served with the Red Cross in Uganda, where he helped design poverty alleviation and community development programs. His research on Africa, funded by a consortium of organizations, examines asset-ownership development, financial management and creating life options through economic empowerment and innovative financial inclusion models. Ssewamala also is researching economic empowerment interventions in urban America’s poor African immigrant communities.

Register Now for the CPD Summer Series!

The Graduate School of Social Work is pleased to introduce its new Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Summer Series. Workshops will be held during June and July at Craig Hall, 2148 S. High Street, on the DU campus. The series is geared toward human service professionals seeking to strengthen and enhance their professional knowledge and repertoire of skills. Professional Development Hours (required for Colorado licensure) are available, as well as Continuing Education Units.

For more information, including cost and registration, click here.

Title | Date | Time
--- | --- | ---
Facilitating Experiential Therapy Groups | 6/4/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Assessment and Treatment of Depression in Older Adults | 6/5/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Domestic Human Trafficking Information for Youth Service Providers | 6/21/2012 | 8 a.m.–noon
Social Work as Spiritual Practice | 6/21/2012 | 1 p.m.–5 p.m.
A Skill-Based Introduction to Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) | 6/22/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Effective Practice with High-Risk Youth | 6/28/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
The Practice of Empathy | 6/29/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Working with Military Families | 7/12/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Neurobiology and Social Work | 7/13/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
The Impact of Memory Impairment in Hospice and Palliative Care | 7/19/2012 | 8 a.m.–noon
Management Basics for Human Services | 7/20/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Trauma-Informed Care | 7/26/2012 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

WORKSHOP EXPLORES GIS & SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Bridge Freisthler, PhD, associate professor at UCLA School of Public Affairs, presented a workshop at GSSW on February 8. The day-long workshop was entitled “Using GIS (Geographical Information System) and Spatial Analysis in Social Sciences Research.”

Freisthler uses GIS and spatial analysis to examine the spatial ecology of social problems, particularly child maltreatment and the development of environmental interventions. Her research has been funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and the National Institute of Mental Health.

FRIENDLY VISITORS ROCK THE SSWR ANNUAL CONFERENCE!

A total of 18 GSSW faculty, visiting scholars, Butler Institute for Families researchers, PhD and MSW students were among the presenters and co-presenters at the 16th Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), held in Washington, DC, in January. This year’s conference also showcased our faculty’s musical talents, as the Friendly Visitors band stole the show at the Friday evening President’s Reception.

Pictured L-R are GSSW Professor Jeff Jenson (the group’s organizer), Amanda Smith, Steve Kapp (University of Kansas), Justin Smith, GSSW Associate Professor Michele Hanna, Dan Herman (Hunter College) and Herman’s wife, Beth Falk. Click here to watch a video of the performance.
Intercultural Competence and Social Work
by Clinical Assistant Professor Stephens von Mere, MSW '03, LCSW-CO

As Coordinator of GSSW’s Social Work with Latinos/as Certificate, I’ve had the pleasure of accompanying four groups of MSW students to Mexico over the past three years. The trip is a key component of the MSW course, “Global Relations and Poverty in Mexico,” which I teach in Spanish as one of the requirements for students earning the Latino/a Certificate. The course is also taught in English by Associate Professor Lynn Parker for non-Certificate MSW students.

The demand for social workers who are linguistically and culturally equipped to work with Latinos remains high. I believe there is no better way to learn these skills than by being immersed in a Spanish-speaking setting. Because Mexicans are the fastest-growing immigrant group in the United States, it is critical for students to gain knowledge about Mexican culture at the same time they hear, practice, and conceptualize the Spanish language in its natural environment. When they return home, the students bring with them concepts of global and transnational justice and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights called a “universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Offered twice each year, the Mexico course provides a mixture of experiential and academic education based on the community learning model of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Freire’s educational philosophy holds that oppressed individuals must play a role in their own liberation, and that, if true liberation is to occur, the oppressors must also be willing to rethink their way of life and to examine their role in the oppression. Within that framework, the GSSW course covers aspects of Mexican culture, community development, historical patterns of oppression, spirituality and liberation theology, global economics and policy, as well as the role of indigenous movements.

Our two-week journey to Mexico begins with several thought-provoking lectures by academic scholars and community leaders: Faculty from the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico provide an overview of recent political and economic reforms, and of the ways other countries’ policies impact Mexico and its people. Members of the women’s health community, like community social worker Carmen Granados, address topics such as breast cancer, familial violence and women’s rights. Granados also provides students with firsthand information about her work with the physically and emotionally wounded residents of the Mexican state of Chiapas and on the border in Ciudad Juarez, one of the most dangerous cities.

During their time in Mexico, our students engage in critical dialogue and service with indigenous groups, natural and spiritual healers, local social service professionals and faculty members from neighboring universities. We also explore numerous prevention and intervention strategies being used to treat the innocent children, youth and families who have been impacted by the increased violence along the border—strategies that include community organizing efforts, the use of spiritual leaders to address physical and mental health concerns, and the use of natural healers who create floral remedies to treat a variety of ailments and diseases. Our days are packed full of activities meant to prepare students for the rigorous occupations they will hold when working with one of the largest Spanish-speaking groups in the United States.

I’m proud of the commitment our students make to becoming effective and culturally responsive social workers by building relationships with people from different cultures. My hope is that all people who work with marginalized immigrant groups discover the value and richness inherent in getting to know people who are different from themselves. Cultural differences among nations often create misunderstandings and fear, but it’s how we respond to those differences that are the social work profession apart. I’m convinced that there really can be “justice for all” if we learn to value the things that make us both unique and diverse as global citizens.

Making Connections in Mexico
by Aaron Green, concentration year MSW student

Last August, I was one of the students who traveled to the Mexican State of Puebla as part of “Global Relations and Poverty in Mexico,” a required course in the Social Work with Latinos/as Certificate. One of our lectures focused on how foreign policies and international corporations affect Mexican policies and, in turn, the lives of the Mexican people. We also began to reflect on how these policies affect the lives of the clients we work with in the States.

One of the most impactful themes of the trip was making connections between the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the daily lives of the Mexican people. I observed that NAFTA created economic hardships on two fronts: First, it introduced foreign competition into Mexico so Mexican farmers and small businesses could no longer compete economically with large international corporations. Second, it created thousands of factories in Mexico where the workers make almost nothing and work in very dangerous conditions.

These economic realities have resulted in mass migration. We spoke with indigenous mothers, orphans and elderly people who described how America’s economic policies necessitated that they and their families migrate from their rural Mexican homeland either into urban areas or across the border into the United States.

While the economic situation we observed in Mexico was discouraging, we also had several experiences that gave me hope. We spent a day with a social service agency that works with “street children,” providing services such as residential treatment and individual, group and family therapy. I had the opportunity to join two therapists on a home-based therapy session and it was one of the most interesting hours of the trip.

Although this family faced oppression in every aspect of their lives, the session helped empower the family members, and they reported positive reactions to the intervention. Even though I observed just one session with just one of the millions of oppressed families in Mexico, I was encouraged that the therapists could partner with the family to make a positive change in their lives, and this gave me hope.

Perhaps the most important element of the trip was gaining a clearer understanding of the systems the affect my clients here in Denver and identifying ways of providing culturally competent social services to marginalized populations in the U.S. Before visiting Puebla, I believed that many Mexicans were poor, and this was devastating. But I did not realize how some foreign policies affect Mexican people’s lives and impact global poverty. Now I feel better prepared as a social worker to critically analyze how systems of oppression affect my clients, and to identify ways to effectively challenge these systems.
The Social Work with Latinos/as Certificate: An Exceptional Learning Opportunity
by Frank Jadwin, MSW ’11
Outpatient Child and Family Therapist, Aurora Mental Health Center

Social work has a proud history of offering services to populations placed at risk by economic, political and social factors beyond their control. In general, the Latino demographic in the United States fits this profile. While the Social Work with Latinos/as Certificate was just one factor that influenced my decision to attend GSSW, it subsequently became an indispensable piece of my MSW education and a defining feature in my identity as a social worker.

As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer when I came to DU, I already had an adequate fluency in Spanish and a fair understanding of the diversity and complexity of Latin American culture. But I soon realized that becoming a culturally competent social worker for a group as heterogeneous as what is categorized as Latino requires much more than an adequate fluency in the Spanish language.

“Latino” and “Latina” are broad, umbrella terms representing a diverse group of national origins, unique ethnicities and cultures, and even different languages. While there are several characteristics not uncommon to find among the Latino demographic—e.g., the importance of family, respect for authority, collectivism, fatalism and spiritual beliefs in partnership with the Catholic Church—even these attributes exist on a spectrum, and no person’s or group’s experience is identical to another’s. These distinctions are made even more complex by factors like the number of generations a family has been in the U.S., citizenship status and level of acculturation.

Although other classes at GSSW provided a forum to discuss cultural competency, nothing quite compared to the depth and breadth of the multicultural and multilingual learning I experienced while earning the Latino Certificate. The Certificate allowed me to build upon my previous experience in working with populations with historical ties to Latin America, helped me develop my clinical vocabulary in my second language, and taught me how to tailor interventions to be more effective for my clients and more respectful of their unique backgrounds.

In my current position as an outpatient child and family therapist, I often realize the degree to which the Latino Certificate has made me a better clinician and colleague, and allowed me greater successes in community engagement. It has also opened the door to unique professional experiences, like the week three co-workers and I spent in Costa Rica recently as part of an international exchange. We presented at the International Symposium of Nurses in Mental Health, received intensive tutorials on the status of mental health in Costa Rica, toured several facilities and mingled with mental health professionals from 11 countries throughout the Americas and the Caribbean.

These types of opportunities not only demonstrate the value of educational programs like the Latino Certificate, but are essential in building networks to refine mental health practices in an age of globalization.

As the number of Latinos in the U.S. continues to grow, there will be an ever-increasing need for social work education to provide culturally sensitive training to students. In fact, I believe our profession’s current lack of preparedness for meeting the needs of this population is alarming. Because providing effective, culturally competent services is a complex task that requires ongoing education and lifelong commitment, I highly recommend that any aspiring social worker take advantage of the exceptional learning opportunity offered by GSSW’s Latino Certificate.

Empowering Communities Through International Social Work
by Katie Susman, MSW ’11, MA
Global Brigades Honduras Program Manager/Research and Evaluation Program Lead

When I graduated from the University of Denver’s dual masters degree program in Social Work and International Studies last June, I was confident in my desire to travel the less-beaten track to serve others through international social work. Although I realized this field was untraditional and not the most financially lucrative, my passion for global social justice was unrelenting. Thus, green and eager to translate my theoretical knowledge into action, I found myself on a plane headed to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in July 2011 as the Research and Evaluation Program Lead for Global Brigades, an international NGO (non-governmental organization).

Global Brigades is the largest student-led sustainable development organization in the world. In rural communities in Honduras, Panama and Ghana, we work in nine different areas including medical, dental, water, public health, microfinance, business, architecture, law and environment. These programs empower communities to improve their quality of life through sustainable development initiatives. Global Brigades also provides opportunities for cultural exchange and collaborative learning, and it raises student and community awareness of the ways a holistic model of development addresses both community and individual needs.

How did I come to choose this particular career path? As a prior Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) student, I was fascinated by the discipline’s dedication to empowerment, cultural sensitivity and strong Code of Ethics. I hoped to sustain these values in a future career in international social development. I felt strongly that international social development could best be achieved through cross-disciplinary action.

As a community track student at GSSW, I was intrigued by the relationship between international development and social work in Latin America. Particularly how community development could impact individual empowerment and quality of life. My studies sparked a strong interest in capacity building, research and evaluation, and program development. In my GSSW practicum, I conducted qualitative research and gained interviewing skills with migrant farm workers and survivors of human trafficking. My courses on social work with Latinos further strengthened my intent to work in community development in Latin America.

We social workers constantly hear buzz words like “holistic” and “empower.” As students we were encouraged to think critically and analytically regarding non-profit organizations, leadership and transparency. We reflected on topics of privilege and oppression at great length. In the past seven months, I have translated these concepts into action in a growing international non-profit, while facilitating my professional growth as a social worker.

As the director of the Global Brigades Research and Evaluation Program, I have the opportunity to conduct baseline household surveys, lead research initiatives, support students in research and create relationships with communities and institutions. Ironically, statistics used to scare me. I scoffed that “social workers don’t need to know how to manipulate numbers: we work with people!” Now I’ve developed a newfound appreciation for data, numbers that illustrate impact and data analysis that is one of the most effective ways to prove that your organization is “doing good.”

Recently I was given the opportunity to serve as the Honduras Program Manager for Global Brigades. This new role encompasses program and staff development, in-country operations, marketing, management, reporting and facilitation of the organization’s holistic model. I am constantly referring back to my time at GSSW, thankful for the well-rounded curriculum and field experiences that prepared me to work in the international social work field.

While international social work is fraught with challenges, it provides me with an amazing opportunity to test my professional mettle and personal fortitude in serving as a social worker abroad.

A bilingual dual degree graduate, Susman earned her MA from DU’s Korbel School of International Studies at the same time she earned her MSW.
Serendipity took me to BiH the first time in 2007, when I provided supervision and agency development for GSSW students interning with Project Bosnia, DU’s oldest international service learning program. What I assumed would be a one-time visit was the start of opportunities that I never thought possible. In 2011, I was named Director of Project Bosnia and also taught GSSW’s first MSW course on social work in Bosnia.

On that first trip to Sarajevo, I had no idea what to expect. What would a capital city in Eastern Europe look like? I discovered a welcoming, secular city where churches and mosques sit side-by-side, where the ancient call to prayer rings out five times a day and where peace-keeping forces are noticeable everywhere. Most striking was the beauty of the city and countryside, although noticeably blenished by the ravages of war.

I quickly learned about Bosnian hospitality about the importance of meeting over Bosnian coffee and about the resilience of people who were targeted for genocide and lived under siege for three years in the 1990s. The Bosnian sense of humor delighted me from the very beginning.

Since that first trip in 2007. I have facilitated a formal affiliation agreement between GSSW and the University of Sarajevo School of Social Work that has led to a partnership with my Bosnian colleague and friend, Professor Sanela Sadic. As a visiting lecturer at the University of Sarajevo, I taught classes to Bosnian social work students. In turn, Sanela traveled to the U.S. when she was awarded a Kendall Fellowship through the Council on Social Work Education. Our shared projects continue to grow.

For the first time in 2011, GSSW students had the opportunity to take an MSW course I developed entitled “The Social Work Response in Post-War Bosnia.” The students learned about Bosnian history, culture, religion and politics, then spent two weeks in Bosnia where, paired with Bosnian social work students, they visited historically significant sites and social work agencies. The students also attended lectures by University of Sarajevo faculty.

Our group stayed in old town Sarajevo—Baščaršija—and, by the end of the trip, students could even pronounce it! I watched our students fall in love with the beauty and people of BiH, even as they struggled with the reality that genocide took place here in the 1990s while the world looked on. I saw our students realize how much they had in common with their new Bosnian friends, while also understanding that the Bosnians had experienced things Americans can’t begin to imagine. Through their interactions with the resilient Bosnian people, our students began to shift their world view and challenge some of their long-held beliefs in ways that happen only through international experiences like these.

In addition to teaching the MSW class, I also take Project Bosnia students from across the University of Denver campus to Sarajevo each summer. For eight weeks, these students immerse themselves in Bosnian culture by completing internships in organizations that happen only through international experiences like these.

Through the Glass: A Reflection on Project Bosnia and Herzegovina

by Kristin Rojbal, concentration year MSW student

It’s been more than six months since I returned to the United States from my Project Bosnia experience. But as I write this in the space I call home, images of Bosnia surround me. Every time I walk in the door or read with a cup of coffee. I see three of the most evocative images—the keepers of moments frozen in time that tell only part of a story.

I see a life-size chess figure, its paint peeling from years of weathering, waiting to be played by chess players strategizing their next move. Beneath that, a sea of aged pocket watches, no longer ticking like they used to, but stopped at some moment in time that was likely meaningful for someone else. And the face of a Bosnian woman, Rahima, her beautiful headscarf, perfectly rendered wrinkles, a purposeful gaze surveying the Bosnian mountainside or perhaps the strangers visiting her village.

Images have always been a powerful influence in my life. Obliging me to reflect upon the power I carry as a photographer, the biases and perspective I bring to composition, the ethics and meaning of “seeing.” But it’s also an important metaphor in my life as a student, a social worker, a traveler, a participant in the humdrum of everyday life. I will always look through the metaphorical glass—through the bus windows, through the complex layers of knowledge gained from life, books and an unrestrained imagination, through the lens of my own existence. While I’ll never fully understand the whole story that belongs to some other person or place. I find deep meaning in the fragments of knowledge I allow myself to perceive and reflect upon. I find deep meaning in the awareness that my “seeing” is caught up in the very existence of someone or something else.

As I reflect upon the Bosnian chess players, the broken down pocket watches and a woman’s gaze locked in my time. I see the inevitability of only understanding myself through attempting to understand everyone and everything else around me. Regardless of how long I’ve been back or gone, the subtleties of daily experiences—those from my time in Bosnia and those I will freshly live tomorrow—all converge to shape how I see the world.

Photo credits this page: Kristin Rojbal
Social Work Practice in Deeply Divided Societies
by Associate Professor Nicole Nicotera, PhD and Associate Professor Eugene Walls, PhD

The legacy of British colonialism in Northern Ireland makes an excellent case study from which to deepen our understanding of issues of difference in our own society. Getting outside of American culture and its pervasive racism, sexism, classism and other divides, enables us to more clearly see how policy, structural violence, political rhetoric, and even art can become tools that reinforce and maintain power, oppression and privilege. Over time, and across generations, stratification often becomes legitimized and justified, and comes to be seen as “natural.”

The solutions for maintaining “the peace” between loyalists (Protestants) and republicans (Catholics) in Northern Ireland will likely seem shocking to students. There are “peace walls” in interface zones that are closed at 6:00 p.m. to avoid violence. There are segregated schools where children from the loyalist community grow up without ever interacting with children from the republican community. And there are segregated neighborhoods where residents will walk miles to avoid shopping in stores that are closer but owned and run by the Other.

While American media has often simplified “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland as a struggle between Catholics and Protestants, this deeply rooted conflict is not about differences in religious beliefs or practices, but rather about differences between those who view themselves as connected to the United Kingdom (loyal to the crown or loyalists) and those who view themselves as connected to the Republic of Ireland (republicans).

Last December, a University of Denver Internationalization Grant allowed us to travel to Ireland to develop the in-country portion of a future GSSW course, “Social Work’s Response to Macro-Level Political Violence: The Case of Northern Ireland.” Accompanying us on the trip were two professional colleagues from the Denver-based nonprofit, Seeking Common Ground: Executive Director Erin Breeze and Director of Programs Jacquelyn Eisenberg (MSW ’08).

Students who participate in the MSW course we are developing will examine the history and background of The Troubles in order to better understand the current situation, along with social work’s role in addressing issues between deeply divided communities. In addition to meeting with social service providers, researchers, educators and human rights practitioners, students will meet men and women who have been involved in the conflict, including former IRA and loyalist paramilitary personnel, many of whom have served time in prison for their role in the conflict.

The course will begin in Dublin, Ireland, examining the situation from the Irish point of view. As you move on to Derry where the infamous Bloody Sunday incident occurred and end in Belfast, the center of some of the most intractable violence of The Troubles. In contrast to the conflict and divisions that have characterized The Troubles, contemporary practitioners, educators, researchers and other individuals have embraced a focus on peace and reconciliation. There are many lessons we will learn from the methodologies they have used, and are currently using, to heal from decades of violence and conflict.

Along the way we will be asking ourselves a number of questions: What roles have social workers played in peace and reconciliation work? What interventions at the macro and micro levels have been tried within a society whose divisions have existed for generations? What has worked, and what hasn’t? And, finally, what does this work tell us about the divisions in our own country and the role we can play as social workers in repairing those divisions?

Our hope is that students who participate in this international experience will gain a deeper commitment to their responsibility as global citizens, broaden their understanding of the role social work can play in peace and reconciliation efforts, and learn important skills—both micro and macro—that can be used in their future practice models.

Learning from the Globe
by Dean Emeritus and Research Scholar Jack Jones, PhD

The Irish emigrate—and being Irish—so did I. My job-hopping started when I came to the States for graduate work and shortly afterwards became dean at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Far too cold there, I switched to the warmer Chinese University of Hong Kong. But feeling homesick for America, I landed back here.

My fascination with international social development, however, really began in Asia. While in Hong Kong, I had an opportunity to assist in training courses conducted by various United Nations bodies. Among the most impressive U.N. agencies was the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) based in Nagoya, Japan—with a regional office in Nairobi, Kenya. In the days of telegrams, mine went astray and under the impression it had not arrived, I was soon able to use that link to advantage. Thanks to a change in the American-Chinese political climate, my visit to China in 1987 began GSSW’s relationship with Beijing’s China Youth University and led to a series of faculty and student exchanges. Other research and training projects have followed.

When my days as dean were done, I moved to DU’s Conflict Resolution Institute as a research professor and then, at Dean Williams’ kind invitation, to GSSW. My move to Denver in 1999 was received with great enthusiasm, and I have continued to work with students and faculty here ever since.
invited back to GSSW. New research and training projects have been launched, more advanced and challenging than any of GSSW’s earlier ones. The focus of these research and training projects is conflict and human security in Northern Kenya with Dean Williams as the Principal Investigator. Dean Williams, Dean of the Department of Social Work, and Dr. Asfaw Kumssa from the University of Botswana, Centre for Regional Development, are the National Investigators. Dr. Asfaw Kumssa (Coordinator of the UNCRD Africa Office) and I are the Investigators. Dr. Asfaw Kumssa from the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, the Department of Social Work, and Dr. Asfaw Kumssa from the University of Botswana, Centre for Regional Development, are the National Investigators.

Opportunities are opening for other U.N.-GSSW projects in Africa. For example, the first of these, a research and training project on conflict and human security in Northern Kenya with Dean Williams as the Principal Investigator, began in 2010. This one-of-a-kind endeavor includes three partners: GSSW, the UNCRD Africa Office and the University of Botswana. United Nations cooperation with universities and other institutions is frequent enough, but one where a university dean heads a U.N. research project is truly rare.

Palgrave Macmillan published our research findings last year in the book, Conflict and Human Security in Africa: Kenya in Perspective. The data revealed that the current causes and patterns of conflict in Northern Kenya are complex and intertwined with ethnicity, environmental degradation, competition for scarce resources and the influx of illicit arms from neighboring countries. Cultural practices such as cattle rustling, along with poor governance and political incitement, add to Kenya’s problems. Severe poverty is a major cause of insecurity in the region. In fact, scholars believe that reducing poverty by doubling income would reduce conflict by half. This is because people who have lost their livestock to either cattle rustling or drought have few alternatives. Lack of a stable economy and employment opportunities, as well as easy access to guns, have led the country’s youth to engage in criminal activity such as cattle rustling. That is why creating alternative and sustainable livelihoods is so important.

Now that the Kenya project is coming to a close, what comes next?

Part of the answer lies in continuing the work of livelihood capacity building, started in Northern Kenya, but applicable to the entire country and beyond. Opportunities are opening for other U.N.-GSSW projects in Africa. For example, a research project has begun in Botswana: again with Dean Williams as the Principal Investigator. Dr. Afewar Kumssa (Coordinator of the UNCRD Africa Office) and I are co-PIs. As with the previous project, the team includes a national university—the University of Botswana, which Dean Williams visited this March.

GSSW is now deeply involved in the international arena, serving countries in the developing world and committed to international social development. So here’s to our shared global future.

Promoting Sustainability Through Capacity-Building
by Clinical Professor Philip Tedeschi, MSW, LCSW-CO
Clinical Director, Institute for Human-Animal Connection

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defines sustainable development as that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

For the past four years, GSSW has been translating this concept into action through MSW courses emphasizing global practice. Conservation-focused courses and internships are now offered annually in Kenya and elsewhere, allowing students to study the intricate relationship between healthy environments for people and for animals. This concept, which the United Nations calls “One Health,” emphasizes biodiversity and eco-system services as emerging measures of community health and resilience.

The social work concept of “person-in-environment” does not lose any of its potency when it is applied to the critical conservation issues people face. On the contrary, at this critical juncture in our collective efforts to advocate for biodiversity protection, we must recognize that empowerment of local communities occurs from the bottom up. This means that our empowerment efforts must emphasize the practical realities of communities where people work, grow food, eat and drink, and go to school.

A community’s capacity to advocate for itself and for environmental health is an important measure of social justice, and the empowerment of local people is at the heart of GSSW’s immersion service learning courses and internships. These experiences help students develop the social work skills and cultural competencies they need to assess and facilitate solutions to problems within communities that are very different from their own.

In the MSW course “Social Work in Kenya: Context, Empowerment and Sustainability,” we collaborate with the African Network for Animal Welfare to apply concepts of ecological economics, sustainable wildlife management models and cost-benefit valuation to understanding the roles of local people, tribal structure, government and private/public partnerships intended to create improved sustainable models. Unless sustainable alternatives are provided to these areas, human-animals conflict arises as impoverished people poach animals for income or to meet basic needs.

In addition to removing snakes used to trap endangered animals, GSSW students work with communities to promote conservation and animal welfare. For example, they helped introduce community-building solutions like high-compression brick-making machines that offer people a sustainable livelihood. Students also have become friends, advisors and customers of a cultural center established within Kenya’s Watha community to generate income from ecotourism. Here, local members demonstrate and preserve a wide range of cultural practices, native dances and basket-weaving skills that provide environmentally friendly sources of income.

Social work and the supporting academic infrastructure can support these communities’ efforts by establishing best practices and evidence-based approaches that influence the way scientists, researchers, policy-makers and businesses think about, and interact with, our environment. The most powerful point of intervention in the environmental movement is occurring with people on a local level, a level well-suited for social worker participation.

The Watha: A Displaced Culture in Kenya
by Cori Noordyk, concentration year MSW student

While driving through Tsavo East National Park, one of the oldest and largest parks in Kenya, Karungu suddenly stopped the Land Cruiser and looked out the window. He swept his arm across the horizon in a grand and proud gesture. “This is where the Watha used to live,” he said.

I stood up through the opening in the roof and saw the hugging river winding through an expanse of plush green meadow. “Karungu, it is beautiful,” I said. “Yes, yes,” was his solemn response.

The Watha now live on a small square of land on the outskirts of Tsavo East National Park. They were once a tribe who lived off the river. They were once a tribe who lived off the river.

Kenyan cultures are the key to make a unique “arts & craft” creating a more environmentally sustainable way to regenerate income.

Students also work with communities to promote conservation and animal welfare. For example, they helped introduce community-building solutions like high-compression brick-making machines that offer people a sustainable livelihood. Students also have become friends, advisors and customers of a cultural center established within Kenya’s Watha community to generate income from ecotourism. Here, local members demonstrate and preserve a wide range of cultural practices, native dances and basket-weaving skills that provide environmentally friendly sources of income.

Social work and the supporting academic infrastructure can support these communities’ efforts by establishing best practices and evidence-based approaches that influence the way scientists, researchers, policy-makers and businesses think about, and interact with, our environment. The most powerful point of intervention in the environmental movement is occurring with people on a local level, a level well-suited for social worker participation.

The Watha: A Displaced Culture in Kenya
by Cori Noordyk, concentration year MSW student

While driving through Tsavo East National Park, one of the oldest and largest parks in Kenya, Karungu suddenly stopped the Land Cruiser and looked out the window. He swept his arm across the horizon in a grand and proud gesture. “This is where the Watha used to live,” he said.

I stood up through the opening in the roof and saw the hugging river winding through an expanse of plush green meadow. “Karungu, it is beautiful,” I said. “Yes, yes,” was his solemn response.

The Watha now live on a small square of land on the outskirts of Tsavo East National Park. They were once a tribe who lived off the river.

Kenyan cultures are the key to make a unique "arts & craft" creating a more environmentally sustainable way to regenerate income.
An Africa That Never Was

by Jane Boone, MSW '11

Director of Preventive Connection, a Freedom Service Dogs program

Africa holds a place in my mind that is one part fantasy, one part history and one part reality. My journey into our modern day Heart of Darkness began with a book. No, not that book, but rather a series of fiction that swept Africa’s lands and rich history. I was drawn into these narratives and images of desolate sand dunes, rich dense jungles, and people who spoke languages that sounded like nothing I had ever heard. I was captured by a history that was fabulous in its brutality—and an Africa was born in my mind that held within its borders the last place on earth that was untouched, unsullied, un-Americanized.

The real Africa is not the Africa of my dreams. It is a land that offers so many dichotomous images that it can be almost impossible to wrap my head around this “real” Africa. The Africa that I came to know through two trips to this incredible continent was an Africa where I could pet lions and drink Coke: where I dove in car doors lined with baboons: where the people sang and danced ancient rituals wearing Nike t-shirts. This is the real Africa. And it is a place that is not without flaws. This discovery created a new Africa for me. Out of the shattered pieces of my idealized perspective came a new understanding and a greater appreciation.

I traveled to Kenya in the winter of 2010 with a group from the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver. We came to study conservation social work, but in my heart was the knowledge that I was traveling thousands of miles to live and breathe Africa, and for me Africa is indistinguishable from its animals; they are one and the same. What I found was a country that was bitterly pitted against the one thing that defines it in my mind: Kenya—the lion king, the great migration, the animals—was waging a war. People plagued by animals who are plagued by people. This idea was at first baffling. How could elephants in the homes of the families we visited, and seeing beauty in the simplicity of their lifestyle while at the same time being thankful for all the conveniences they have at their fingertips. I remember walking through the slum—the smell, the claustrophobia, the faces of the children staring at us.

I have at my fingertips. I remember being surrounded by the sounds of the night and what I took with me when I left.

During our trip we traveled to a rural village at the foot of Mt. Kasigau to visit the Rukanga people. It was this place—these people—that defined the contradictions that I struggle to unify in my mind. I was the first to step off the bus as we pulled up to the community center. The view of Mr. Kasigau was exquisite—one of the most beautiful places I had ever been. It seemed in that moment my feet touched the ground. I found myself in the arms of a very enthusiastic, singing, black woman. I was swept up in a series of hugs, kisses, tears and exclamations, most of which I could not understand. It was a greeting that I will never forget. And I felt as though I had found a mythical people in an untouched place.

We spent about four days with the Rukanga people. and not all of it was as magical as that first moment. Our last meal—one that had been prepared for us at what I can only imagine was great expense—was a celebration, a goodbye, a thank you for our work there. We were seated in a semi-circle watching as the women put finishing touches on the meal, and a stray dog wandered into the circle: drawn by the smell of the food. A man, a member of my mythical imaginings, took a stick and hit the dog, chasing him away. Tears welled up in my eyes—a hysterical desire to run to the dog and protect it taking shape in my thoughts. I forced myself to remain seated, to bow my head and control my tears. to laugh along with my peers. But this moment created a rift—how to knit together the image of that first welcome, that beautiful moment, with this single act of cruelty? To me, that place, those people and that experience, have come to define Africa: a continent of great beauty, filled with beautiful people and rife with cruelties.

Although that moment lives on in my mind as a type of reality check when I get too nostalgic about an Africa that exists only in fiction. it does not change my love for Kenya. In fact what I took from that trip was so much more than the sum of its parts. Do not single experience can describe what I took with me when I left.

I remember being surrounded by the sounds of the night and how it made me snuggle further down into my blanket. I remember being in the homes of the families we visited, and seeing beauty in the simplicity of their lifestyle while at the same time being thankful for all the conveniences that I now take for granted. I found a mythical people in an untouched place. And I remember walking through the slum—the smell, the claustrophobia, the faces of the children staring at us. I forced myself to remain seated, to bow my head and control my tears. to laugh along with my peers. But this moment created a rift—how to knit together the image of that first welcome, that beautiful moment, with this single act of cruelty? To me, that place, those people and that experience, have come to define Africa: a continent of great beauty, filled with beautiful people and rife with cruelties.

Although that moment lives on in my mind as a type of reality check when I get too nostalgic about an Africa that exists only in fiction. it does not change my love for Kenya. In fact what I took from that trip was so much more than the sum of its parts. Do not single experience can describe what I took with me when I left.

I remember being surrounded by the sounds of the night and how it made me snuggle further down into my blanket. I remember being in the homes of the families we visited, and seeing beauty in the simplicity of their lifestyle while at the same time being thankful for all the conveniences that I now take for granted. I found a mythical people in an untouched place. And I remember walking through the slum—the smell, the claustrophobia, the faces of the children staring at us. I forced myself to remain seated, to bow my head and control my tears. to laugh along with my peers. But this moment created a rift—how to knit together the image of that first welcome, that beautiful moment, with this single act of cruelty? To me, that place, those people and that experience, have come to define Africa: a continent of great beauty, filled with beautiful people and rife with cruelties.

Although that moment lives on in my mind as a type of reality check when I get too nostalgic about an Africa that exists only in fiction. it does not change my love for Kenya. In fact what I took from that trip was so much more than the sum of its parts. Do not single experience can describe what I took with me when I left.

I remember being surrounded by the sounds of the night and how it made me snuggle further down into my blanket. I remember being in the homes of the families we visited, and seeing beauty in the simplicity of their lifestyle while at the same time being thankful for all the conveniences that I now take for granted. I found a mythical people in an untouched place. And I remember walking through the slum—the smell, the claustrophobia, the faces of the children staring at us. I forced myself to remain seated, to bow my head and control my tears. to laugh along with my peers. But this moment created a rift—how to knit together the image of that first welcome, that beautiful moment, with this single act of cruelty? To me, that place, those people and that experience, have come to define Africa: a continent of great beauty, filled with beautiful people and rife with cruelties.
GSSW in Sichuan Province, China: Conservation Social Work in Action
by Research Scholar-in-Residence and Adjunct Professor Sarah M. Bexell, PhD
Institute for Human-Animal Connection

I have worked for the past 12 years in Chengdu, the capital of China’s Sichuan Province, with the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding. Throughout this time, my colleagues and I have forged strong relationships with professors at Sichuan University, Sichuan Normal University, and many international and domestic non-governmental organizations. Our aim is to better understand the human strain on the natural environment and how it impacts wildlife health and human health.

In 2010 and 2011, I had the honor of taking GSSW students to China for six-week summer internships. Now we are preparing for another exciting summer of work and learning in Sichuan, and next year we’ll be offering a new MSW service-learning course in addition to the internship. Entitled “Connecting Social and Environmental Sciences: Biodiversity Health and Ecological Systems in Southwest China,” the new course will focus on the rapidly growing field of conservation social work.

China exhibits some of the world’s most severe biodiversity declines, with impacts on human health and social stability already prevalent. Both the internship and the new course are designed to introduce students to the social, economic, cultural, health, environmental and conservation issues of urban and rural China. The students will have the opportunity to integrate hands-on research with service-learning projects and field work in the urban areas of Chengdu (a city of 14 million people) and remote areas of rural Sichuan Province. These experiences will allow the students to gain firsthand knowledge of the environmental and social challenges facing China and, in turn, the world.

Today, no country operates in a bubble, especially when it comes to environmental concerns that impact human health globally: air, water and soil pollution, emerging infectious diseases, food security, dwindling natural resources and much more. As the fight for global health reaches a tipping point, I can barely contain my excitement about the critical partnerships that are developing between conservationists and social workers.

The conservation community has been working for decades to turn the tide toward a healthier human presence in the world, but thus far has been working in vain. We desperately need partners in the social sciences, and especially in social work, community organizing and international social development, to help us better engage with all citizens to protect Earth, our life support system.

The social work community is committed to human health and well-being, but without a healthy planet, it cannot fulfill its mission. I have great hope that, together, we can ensure a future for humanity by protecting our planet and the amazing others with whom we share our land and water.

Conserving Our Environment
One Panda at a Time
by Kelsey Holmes, concentration year MSW student

After four airports, two flight delays, one briefly lost piece of luggage and just seconds to adjust to Chinese toilets, my MSW classmates Samantha Rabins and I finally arrived at Chengdu in China’s Sichuan Province. Earlier in the year, Sam and I separately applied for an internship that focused on vital conservation issues and their direct influence on human mental health. Our shared interests led us to Dr. Sarah Bexell, Director of Conservation Education at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding. I was here that we would spend the next six weeks studying and educating others on these environmental issues.

Waking up on our first day in Chengdu, Sam and I eagerly gazed out of our balcony window at the unfamiliar view below. It seemed as if all of the city’s 14 million people had gathered on the streets below! Mopeds, bicycles and walkers filled the sidewalks, while buses, taxis and trucks filled the streets. To our left was an elementary school filled with children; to our right, hotels and shops seemed to be popping up daily. Straight ahead, where we expected the mountains to be, there was nothing but smog—a logical result, considering all of the activity in this busy city.

Although Chengdu is bustling with people, it is also home to the Panda Research Base, a beautiful green escape from city life. Here the air seemed fresher, the sun brighter and the trees bigger. Sam and I were fortunate to be given the opportunity to work at the Base daily, with wonderful staff, educating English-speaking visitors about giant pandas and their close relationship to conservation issues. Our education hut was directly across from the enclosure for the one-year-old pandas, and we found their cuteness completely intoxicating: their cub-to-cub play dates, constant eating of bamboo and talent for sleeping high up in a tree.

To our surprise, the most common question we were asked was not, “Why are pandas so cute?” but rather “What are two social work students from the United States doing on a Panda Base in China?” Our answer was always the same: conservation. By conserving our environment, we explained, we can directly increase positive mental health in humans.

Think about it: Aren’t you happier on a beautiful day when you can walk down the street or hike up a mountain while breathing clean air? Yet climate change, overpopulation, pollution, and fragmentation and loss of wildlife habitats are having devastating effects on our planet. By educating ourselves, and understanding the importance of “living lightly,” we can help reduce these negative impacts and try to rehabilitate the world.

Learning about these important issues in an environment like Chengdu was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for both Sam and me. Our knowledge will help us improve our world so the next generation can enjoy it as much as we do.
Research and Teaching in China
by Associate Professor Julie Laser, PhD

During my nine years at GSSW, I have worked on two distinct, but interrelated, projects in China. The first is a collaborative study of everyday resilience among Chinese youth, similar to research I previously conducted in Japan, Korea, Senegal and the United States. I also created and led an MSW course focused on social work in China. Both projects continue a research and academic collaboration between GSSW and Beijing’s China Youth University that began more than 18 years ago.

Everyday Resilience in Youth Projects

My Everyday Resilience in Youth (ERY) projects investigate the concept of resilience, by culture and gender, by researching the factors that protect or promote healthy development for youth, as well as the risk factors that are particularly deleterious to youth. To better understand these protective and risk factors for youth from each country, it is imperative that those who know youth best are partners in the research process. Therefore, my ERY projects are conducted in collaboration with youth experts in each host country.

Researchers from the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand have found a great deal of commonality in terms of protective factors and risk factors for youth. Yet, until recently, virtually nothing has been known about resilience from a “non-western” perspective.

I have created the two base survey instruments that the ERY projects use: The Laser Ecological Protective Factors for Youth-Revised (LEPFY-R) is designed to assess potential protective factors and has 151 items; with responses provided on a five-point Likert scale. Questions include internal, external, family, peer, neighborhood and school protective factors that a youth may possess or have in her or his environment. The 114-item Life Events Survey of Youth-Revised (LESY-R) measures potential risk factors in the youth’s development, family, peer, neighborhood and school protective factors that a youth may possess or have in her or his environment.

Both instruments are modified by knowledgeable people in the countries where the research is being conducted. The instruments, with culturally appropriate modifications, have been used by over 3,500 respondents in Ghana, Japan, China, Korea, Senegal and the United States. Both instruments have good reliability and validity. As part of the data analysis, male and female sub-samples are evaluated.

Over time, having a base survey instrument that remains constant enables me to study resilience across cultures, by region and by gender. Modifying the instruments slightly in each culture allows me to better understand resilience in each specific country. This combination allows me to better understand both universal risk and protective factors and those that are most pertinent to a particular culture, region and gender.

Everyday Resilience in Chinese Youth

An investigation of youth resilience in China has never been undertaken and is a fascinating new exploration into the mechanisms of protective and risk factors. Conducted in collaboration with Dr. Li Yan Ping at the China Youth University in Beijing, this study is a continuation of a collaborative relationship with GSSW that began in 1994.

The sample consisted of 1,292 youth attending post-secondary schools in the Beijing area. The schools differed in prestige and academic focus, along with two vocational schools, there were two-year colleges, four-year colleges and four-year universities. We evaluated the risk factors that contributed to outcomes of delinquency, internalizing behavior, substance abuse and sexual acting out as well as protective factors that increased the likelihood of resiliency.

Social Work from a Chinese Perspective

Social work strives to understand the person in the environment. Similarly, as environments vary, so does social work practice.

“Social Work from a Chinese Perspective,” the MSW course I developed and taught for the first time in 2000, provided students with an opportunity to learn in the classroom about China’s social, cultural, historical, political and economic characteristics. Then see firsthand how these characteristics have made Chinese social work distinctive.

In Beijing, students attended lectures given by faculty at China Youth University (CYU), participated in discussions with social work students, visited social work organizations and important cultural landmarks, and took part in a nightly synthesis of their new knowledge and experiences.

After five years of teaching this course, I conducted a survey to determine its long-term outcomes. The survey focused on my former students’ knowledge about China, as well as how the course has influenced their personal growth, world outlook and development as social workers.

The survey results were very encouraging. Eighty-five percent of the former students believed the course helped them better understand others, and 80 percent said they gained better insight into themselves. All of those surveyed believed the course increased their international awareness, nearly 90 percent said it changed their world-view, and more than 60 percent said it changed the way they understand their own nationality, as well as their level of responsibility as Americans and world citizens. Ninety-two percent of the students believed the course helped them become better social workers, and nearly three-quarters said their approach to social work was different because of their participation in the China program.

As these survey results clearly illustrate, well-organized international experiences can greatly enhance social work education, deepen and sustain students’ commitment to social justice, and have an enduring effect on their future social work practice.

Taking Animal-Assisted Interventions to Japan and Chilé
by Professional Development Adjunct Professor Ann B. Howie, LICSW ACSW

Principal, Human-Animal Solutions LLC

As an instructor in GSSW’s online Continuing Professional Development Certificate “Animals and Human Health,” I’ve taught a wide variety of human service professionals how to incorporate animal-assisted interventions into their practice. Over the past six years, our more than 150 Certificate students have come from across the country and around the world. During the past year, I also had the pleasure of speaking on this topic before audiences in Japan and Chilé.

At the end of August, I made four presentations at the Japan Association of Pet Dog Trainers (JAPDT) annual conference: Making Accommodations for People with Disabilities. Using Therapy Dog Classes to Prepare Animal-Assisted Interactions (AAI) Handlers. Handling Skills to Enhance AAI and Motivational Training Methods. This was the first year JAPDT included training about therapy dogs, and I was the only foreign speaker. I also lectured on key AAI skills at the Kitasato University School of Veterinary Medicine, and on manifestations of grief at a meeting of the Veterinary Medical Association of Miyagi Prefecture. In addition, I participated in strategic meetings with Japanese leaders in the AAI and veterinary professions.

Out of respect for the efforts of the Japanese people to recover from the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, I donated part of my lecture fee to replace damaged furniture and equipment at Miyagi Prefecture’s South Nursery. The child-care center and nursery school moved into a senior center after the tsunami destroyed their building.

In January, I taught a three-day professional development course at Universidad Santo Tomas in Santiago, Chile. The course was designed to train human healthcare professionals how to write AAI treatment plans and work with volunteers who provide AAI for their clients. As an advocate for therapy animal welfare and well-being, I also provided training on how to recognize behavioral signs of therapy animal stress, as well as strategies to mediate such stress during AAI. The course was sponsored by the veterinary school at Universidad Santo Tomas and by Corporación dos Amigos, a local group of volunteers that provides professional-level AAI to various facilities in Santiago.

Find more information about “Animals and Human Health” and GSSW’s other Continuing Professional Development options by clicking here.
Doctoral Program Draws Students from Around the Globe

International students have been an integral part of GSSW’s doctoral program for many years, and several cohorts in the late 1990s were composed almost entirely of students from outside the U. S. Although the 9/11 terrorist attacks sharply reduced the number of international students applying to the University of Denver for several years, that number has since risen steadily. GSSW’s current PhD students include citizens of China, Israel, South Africa and South Korea.

Third-year PhD student Jie Feng focuses on multicultural-community practice, particularly women’s issues and empowerment, as well as international program development and management and social work administration. She earned her Bachelor of Social Work degree at China Women’s University, followed by an MSW from the University of Manitoba.

"Although I was inspired by my study experience in Canada, I began to doubt that my passion for working with Chinese rural women was sufficient to truly help my oppressed sisters," Feng explains. "Fortunately I am now working with Dr. Jean East, whose expertise in empowerment theory and community practice has helped clarify a path toward achieving my goals."

Feng’s professional experience includes two years as a trainer and supervisor at China Women’s Federation in Inner Mongolia, followed by an MSW from the University of Manitoba.

Second-year doctoral student Hagit Brandes is from Israel, where she earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at Haifa University.

"As the field of animal-assisted practice is becoming more widespread, it is important to me that I work with professional leaders in this field and contribute to the scientific rigor that validates our work with animals," Brandes explains. "That led to my choice to come to GSSW. As far as I know it is the only university that approaches animal-assisted work from a social science perspective. I also wanted to work with Dr. Frank Ascione and Philip Tedeschi in GSSW’s Institute for Human-Animal Connection."

Once she completes her PhD, Brandes says she hopes to continue research and teaching in the animal-assisted field, contributing to the development of this new and exciting discipline.

South Africa’s Badiah Halifeje (MSW ’11) received the Jean Pearl Sinnock Award at her MSW graduation last June for her overall contribution to GSSW, commitment to social justice and representation of the social work profession. Now a first-year PhD student, she serves as the doctoral student representative on GSSW’s Advisory Council on Racial Diversity and for the student organization, Shades of Brown Alliance.

Halifeje’s primary research interest is immigration policy and how it relates to refugee women. Currently she’s focusing on refugee educational disparities in the American public education system, particularly family culture/school culture conflicts. She’s also examining cross-cultural challenges parents face when interacting with the school system and supporting their child’s education in a new country.

"I chose to pursue my doctoral education at GSSW because of its excellent mentors and its commitment to local, national and international involvement," Halifeje explains. "As an MSW student, I met the most awe-inspiring members of the GSSW community; whose unwavering support and insight provided me with a rich academic experience, including an intellectual and empowering personal journey. GSSW’s faculty and staff combine authenticity with kindness and compassion."

After completing her PhD, Halifeje plans to become a professor of international social work, continue her research and establish a non-profit organization designed to “heal refugee women from within” by addressing resettled individuals’ emotional, physical and educational needs.

Before he joined GSSW’s doctoral program, second-year PhD student Songmin Kim earned a Bachelor’s degree in economics from Yeungnam University in South Korea, a graduate degree in counseling psychology from Kenyung University’s Graduate School of Education and a Master of Divinity in pastoral counseling from the Denver Seminary. His research centers on social service delivery at the community level through faith-based organizations, especially local Christian churches. He’s also interested in the role of religious organizations in delivering social services at the neighborhood level and working with local Christian churches to find more effective ways of meeting individual and community needs.

Where in the World is GSSW?
Assistant Professor Kim Bender received a grant from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado to fund an evaluation of the organization’s Student Success Initiative, which uses data-driven mentoring services in an effort to improve student success outcomes such as attendance, academics and school behavior. Big Brothers Big Sisters is creating a feedback system that collects data from public schools and shares it with program specialists and mentors, both to identify youth at risk of school trouble and to celebrate youth successes in school.

Professor William Cloud is conducting a grant-funded evaluation of the Denver Housing Authority’s South Lincoln HOPE VI Program. Through demolition and reconstruction of the South Lincoln public housing development, along with various supportive services, the five-year project is intended to create a mixed-income community that decreases concentrated poverty and related social problems. Once construction is completed, the development will consist of housing units for those who qualify for low-income housing, affordable housing and market-rate housing.

Associate Professor Jean East received a grant from DU’s Center for Teaching and Learning to support three curriculum development innovations: creation of a new curriculum delivery model for students in the foundation [first] year of the MSW; development of new technologies to better integrate field internship and classroom learning experiences; and a proposed replication of GSSW’s Durango-based Four Corners MSW program in another rural area of Colorado.

Associate Professor Michele Hanna received a Faculty Research Fund grant for a project entitled “Exploring Bias in Child Welfare Family Assessments.”

Associate Professor Nicole Nicotera is conducting a grant-funded research study entitled “The Effects of Engaged Learning on Civic Development and Well-being.” The research focuses on first-year undergraduate students at the University of Denver.

Associate Professor Debora Ortega, Director of the University of Denver Latino Center for Community Engagement and Scholarship, was a panelist at the 2011 Latino Policy Symposium in September. Co-sponsored by the University of Colorado Hispanic Alumni Association and DU’s Latino Alumni Association and Center for Multicultural Excellence (CME), the Symposium addressed education, health, economics, civil rights and immigration, and political engagement.

In February, Ortega received a CME grant in support of her continued research with historically marginalized and under-represented populations.

Clinical Professor Philip Tedeschi, Clinical Director of GSSW’s Institute for Human Animal Connection, provided training for the Board of the Greater Littleton SCO Youth Initiative in September 2011. Created soon after the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999, the Initiative sponsors only evidenced-based programs aimed at reducing youth violence. Among news media covering the September training event was the Los Angeles Bureau of the BBC.

Tedeschi also appeared on Denver’s NBC affiliate, KUSA-TV, in February to discuss safe interactions with dogs. After one of the station’s morning news anchors was bitten by a rescued dog while interviewing the dog’s owner live on-the-air. The bite incident, which received national publicity, has resulted in changes to the station’s animal interaction policies. Tedeschi also showed the video of the incident in his Animal-Assisted Social Work Certificate course to help students identify the ways human behavior can trigger aggressive behaviors in dogs.

Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair James Herbert Williams, pictured at far right, co-chairs the 36-member Behavioral Health Disparities Task Force of the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (NADD). The goal of the task force is to strengthen the role and advance national leadership of schools and departments of social work in the effort to eliminate disparities in health care and health status. The group is currently conducting a survey of current health disparities curriculum content in social work programs, seeking funding for a proposal that would provide resources for strengthening that content, and sponsoring a NADD conference on health disparities.

Williams is also chairing the committee seeking a new Dean for the University of Denver’s Graduate School of Professional Psychology. Former GSSP Dean Peter Buirski will step down next fall from the position he has held for 20 years and return to the school’s faculty.

Digital Instruction Specialist Ethan Crawford was re-elected to a two-year position on the University of Denver’s Sustainability Council last fall. He also chairs the Council’s Transportation Committee whose recent projects have included optimizing usage of DU’s BCycle bike-sharing program, publication of a campus bicycle report and analysis for DU and the City of Denver, and creation of WeCar, a car-sharing partnership between DU and Enterprise Rent-A-Car that provides shared rides to students and nearby community members.

The Transportation Committee also spearheaded the addition of sharrows on South High Street along the western perimeter of the campus. The “shared arrows” are painted street symbols that protect bicyclists by showing them where to ride if there are cars parked along the street. Opening car doors can pose serious danger for bicyclists, and the symbols help them avoid accidents. Future committee projects may include the addition of a solar-powered electric vehicle charging station on the DU campus.
GGSW Volunteers Lend a Hand
What began as part of GSSW’s 80th Anniversary Celebration in 2010 is now on its way to becoming an annual fall tradition. On September 9, 2011, more than 100 student, faculty and staff volunteers gathered at two Denver locations for a day of community service. Designed mainly for entering MSW students the first time around, this year’s service day included returning concentration year students as well.

A large contingent performed clean-up and maintenance tasks at Ruby Hill Park, a favorite spot for picnics and family gatherings in the southwest part of the city. Still more volunteers pitched in at the Denver Warehouse of Food Bank of the Rockies (FBRR). Colorado’s largest private hunger-relief organization, helping to package donated food for distribution. FBRR’s clients include the homeless, the working poor, children, seniors on fixed incomes and people with health issues.

GGSW’s hard-working volunteers were rewarded afterward with a barbecue lunch on Craig Hall’s sunny Shramm Foundation Plaza.

GGSW Volunteers

Student-Sponsored Event Explores Grief and Loss
All six GSSW student organizations joined forces last fall to co-sponsor “El Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead)—A Mexican Celebratory Perspective on Grief and Loss.” Held on November 2 in Craig Hall’s Boettcher Foundation Community Room, the event was a continuation of the discussion series entitled “Faith, Religion, Spirituality and Social Work Conversations,” begun during the previous academic year.

Day of the Dead co-sponsors included ECO (Environment + Conservation + Opportunity), Conscious Graduate Student Association (GSA), Multicultural Social Justice Student Organization (MJS), Phi Alpha (Xi Delta Chapter) honor society, Queer Equality Alliance (QEA) and Shades of Brown Alliance (SOBA). Each organization created an altar honoring and celebrating those who have died. Event participants visited the booths and, over dinner, shared their thoughts about grief and loss.

Students and faculty members celebrated last year’s Day of the Dead event.

GSA Promotes Sustainability
This spring, GSSW’s Graduate Student Association (GSA) voted to add a sustainable purchasing policy to the organization’s bylaws. The group hosted lunchtime information sessions and organized a petition that was signed by more than 225 students, faculty and staff.

The policy states in part, that “prior to purchasing apparel, promotional items, catering or related items, GSA and other student organizations will investigate... where items were made under what conditions and how it benefits people in their environment. Buyers for all GSSW-associated purchases will select a vendor using their best judgment in addition to a combination of as many of the following generally-trusted certifications as possible: fair trade, union made, made in the USA, organic, and locally owned/made.”

Petition organizers (L-R) Brie Brower, Stephanie Noll, April Tuftee, Emily Weiss, Katie Webstering Gross, Megan Devonport, Aaron Green and Kelly Ann Shinn celebrate the passage by GSA of a new sustainable purchasing policy.

Display Honors Black Social Workers
In celebration of Black History Month in February, members of GSSW’s Shades of Brown Alliance created a photo display in the Craig Hall main lobby honoring Black social work pioneers. Associate Professor Michele Hanna and MSW student Angela Sanders took the lead in creating the concept and conducting the research. Rebecca Macy, a DU graduate student in museum studies, created the design and did the printing.

“Our hope was to educate people about the long history of Blacks in social work, and also to highlight the role of Black women,” Hanna explains. “It was important to us that we show how far back in history Blacks have played an important role in our profession.”
Conference Provides Food for Thought

Four events held during fall and winter quarters provided opportunities for members of the GSSW community to discuss their shared commitment to social justice.

On October 20, DU’s Latino Center for Community Engagement and Scholarship (DULCCES) presented a lecture by Kate Kendall, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Entitled “Bullied to Death: Policy Responses to Bullying of LGBT Youth,” the lecture attracted an audience of GSSW students and faculty, as well as a group of high school students seeking information on how to start a human rights club at their school. Associate Professor Debra Ortega, Director of DULCCES, was in charge of the event.

The fourth annual “How to be an Ally” workshop on January 5 brought together GSSW students, faculty, staff, alumni and community activists for an evening of introspection and dialogue on what being an ally really means. The workshop was co-sponsored by all six of GSSW’s student organizations.

GSSW, the Graduate Student Association and Shades of Brown Alliance co-sponsored a program entitled “Anti-Oppressive Practice: Why It Matters and What It Looks Like” on January 11. Speakers and discussion leaders included Nadilla Nyiransengeye, PhD ’07, Visiting Assistant Professor at Metropolitan State College of Denver (MSCD); Matthew J. Taylor, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; Mary Lou Makepeake, MPA, Executive Director of the Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado, and Ramon Del Castillo, PhD, Chair of Chicano Studies at MSCD. Discussion topics ranged from inclusivity to microaggressions and social justice in the workplace.

On February 7, DULCCES partnered with GSSW’s Social Work with Latinx/as Certificate program to present a screening of The Longoria Affair, an Emmy-nominated documentary film by John J. Valadez. The film tells the story of a funeral home in rural Three Rivers, Texas, that denied services to a soldier’s family because he was Mexican American. The event sparked civil rights protests, but divided the town forever. Dinner and discussion followed the film.

Social Justice Events Create Dialogue

Four events held during fall and winter quarters provided opportunities for members of the GSSW community to discuss their shared commitment to social justice.

Four Corners Program Offers Licensure Prep Class

Sixteen Navajo Nation social workers attended a two-day social work licensure preparation class in Durango, Colorado, in February. The class is similar to those GSSW offers in Denver throughout the year, but marks the first time the class has been held at the school’s Four Corners MSW program in Durango.

Nancy Lucero, MSW ’00, PhD ’09, GSSW taught the class. An assistant professor in the School of Social Work at Colorado State University-Pueblo, Lucero also collaborates with GSSW’s Butler Institute for Families on research and evaluation involving tribal child welfare.

The Four Corners Native Advisory Council initiated the plan to begin offering licensure prep classes in Durango, where they would be accessible to social workers from a number of tribes in the Four Corners region.

Lucinda Morris, Fort Defiance Division of Social Services Director, says her working toward having all of her MSW staff members obtain their social work licenses, as part of her Division’s strategic plan. Morris and her staff traveled from as far away as Dilkon in Navajo County, Arizona, to attend the class.

“It’s rewarding to support such a large group of Native social workers in their commitment to be successful on the exam,” says Clinical Associate Professor Wanda Ellingson, Four Corners MSW Program Director.

Lucero provided attendees with strategies for approaching the various types of questions found on state licensure exams, as well as an understanding of underlying practice perspectives. She also helped the students develop personalized plans for continued study and test preparation.

GSSW’s licensure preparation course will be offered again in Durango on July 13-14. For additional information about this and other continuing professional development opportunities, please click here.
Supporting Military Families with Child Support Enforcement Cases

A 2009 report by the Defense Department shows that the stress of multiple deployments, financial issues and relocations have caused the divorce rate for service members to increase by approximately 3.6 percent for all military branches. This increased risk of divorce also means increased risk of legal child support issues.

Now the Colorado Division of Child Support Enforcement (CSE) is partnering with El Paso County, Colorado, and four Colorado military bases to help educate and support active duty military personnel and their families around child support issues. The project also seeks to streamline services for processing cases and handling changes of custody reviews for military families. This three-year project is funded by a grant from the Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. Child Support Enforcement agency.

There are almost 18,000 child support cases in El Paso County, and about 10 percent of these involve active duty, reservist or retired military members. El Paso County child support services are provided by Young Williams, a private agency located in Colorado Springs, which has traditionally had a large, transient military population. Four active military bases surround Colorado Springs: Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Air Force Base and the Air Force Academy.

CSE has found that military personnel struggle to financially support their children, make custody and parenting decisions that fit with their job (particularly for those deployed overseas), and access critical legal advice concerning custody, child support payments and parenting time.

GSSW’s Butler Institute for Families will evaluate the implementation and outcomes of this project, as well as conduct a needs assessment for military families to gain a better understanding of the unique needs of these families and identify support services necessary to address these needs. I will co-lead this project along with Research Associate Stacie Hanson, MSW.

To read more about this and other Butler Institute projects online, click here. Also, visit us on Facebook.

Bridging Language Barriers

The program model of GSSW’s non-profit Bridge Project views reading skills as one of the most significant keys to the healthy development and success of the children and youth it serves in Denver’s public housing neighborhoods. The fact that Bridge literacy programs and tutoring consistently raise reading scores year after year seems all the more remarkable considering the diversity of cultures and languages Bridge families represent.

Currently the Bridge Project serves children from 14 countries outside the U. S., many of them recent arrivals coping not only with an unfamiliar culture, but also with a significant language barrier. The kids’ native languages include Amharic, Arabic, Chinese/Cantonese, French, Karin, Khmer, Lberman Kreyol, Maay Maay, Mandarin, Spanish, Sudanese, Swahili, Thai, Tribal Somali and Vietnamese.

“We have an extremely diverse population of participants and families,” says Bridge Executive Director Molly Calhoun. “In addition to promoting multiculturalism and mutual respect within the program, our staff works hard to find tutors or staff members who speak the appropriate languages to work one-on-one with students whose first language is something other than English.”

Several Bridge staff members speak Spanish, and one speaks Vietnamese. Additionally, Bridge participants who receive college or trade school scholarships from the program are required to complete 40 hours of volunteer service per academic year. Because these scholarship students come from backgrounds very similar to those of current participants, they help bridge many of the cultural and language barriers these younger students face.

To learn more about the Bridge Project click here.

*Bridge presently serves children and youth from Burma, Cambodia, China, Congo, Ethiopia, Israel, Liberia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda and Vietnam, in addition to the United States.
University Matches New Endowed Scholarship Funds

We hope you will consider following the lead of these generous donors who have created new endowed scholarship funds at GSSW. Their gifts will provide even more support for our students in the future, thanks to DU’s current matching program.

Prof. Kathleen Ohman, Ph.D., created an endowed scholarship fund to benefit incoming GSSW students whose volunteer work prior to admission demonstrates their commitment to community service and social justice. The Ohman Endowed Scholarship Fund honors her parents, Clarice and David Ohman, and the many ways they supported her in her educational and career pursuits.

“My parents evidenced their commitment to social justice in many ways, including volunteerism,” Ohman explains. “I want to assist students who have a similar commitment. I created the scholarship now for many reasons, including the matching program that adds to what is possible for me to do.”

A member of the GSSW faculty since 1988, Ohman has been a generous supporter of the school for many years and co-chaired the faculty portion of the capital campaign that led to the construction of Craig Hall. “As faculty, we contribute to our students’ futures in many ways,” she says. “Why not provide some scholarship support as we are able?”

In addition to her private practice, Margaret Roath, MSW ’68, LCPW, is Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Colorado Medical School, where she has taught in the psychiatry program since the year she earned her MSW. She established the Margaret Roath Endowed Scholarship Fund to benefit concentration year GSSW students with an interest in clinical social work.

“I’m nearing the end of my career as a social worker, and it’s a huge concern to me that today’s GSSW students will enter the workforce carrying so much debt,” Roath says. “If I can make a difference for these future social workers, even in a small way, I want to do it.”

A staunch supporter of GSSW for decades, Roath is a member of the Board of Visitors, Field Advisory Committee and Clinical Chair Campaign Committee. She received a Dean’s Award at GSSW’s 80th Anniversary Celebration in 2011.

“When I learned about DU’s matching program, and also that my donation could be spread out over a number of years, I knew this was a great time to create an endowed scholarship,” says Roath. “I hope others realize just how important it is for us to support our students.”

The Gary and Terri Yourtz Family Foundation Endowed Scholarship Fund, established by Gary and Terri Yourtz, will provide scholarship support for concentration year students with an interest in social justice.

Co-founder and longtime supporter of GSSW’s Bridge Project, Gary chaired its Board of Directors for six years. He was named Chair of the GSSW’s Board of Visitors when it was created in 2010, and he received a GSSW Dean’s Award in 2011.

“Terri and I fully understand the difficulty that the cost of this program creates for many students,” Gary explains. “and we also understand the financial challenges they’ll face once they graduate, especially in this economy. It’s our privilege to support GSSW and its students, and DU’s matching program made this the perfect time to do so in this way.”

Gary and Terri are the proud parents of Erin Yourtz, who earned her MSW from GSSW in 2010.

As this magazine’s cover story demonstrates, GSSW students and alumni are truly remarkable change agents, both here at home and in countries around the world. Yet more than 90% of our students have financial need that, if unmet, would prevent them from accessing the quality education and unique international opportunities our school offers.

Endowed scholarships are especially critical because they supply permanent funding that strengthens GSSW’s ability to compete for the most promising applicants year after year. These scholarships enable us to attract students who have demonstrated exceptional ability and dedication, and who possess the potential to become true social work leaders.

With that in mind, the University of Denver has initiated a matching program to increase endowed scholarships for graduate students. The Board of Trustees has designated $10 million of DU’s strategic reserves to match substantial contributions to new and existing scholarship endowments dollar for dollar. By leveraging new scholarship commitments with University resources, this program enables GSSW’s most generous supporters to double the impact of their personal gifts, while establishing a lasting personal legacy at the school.

The matching program is in effect until June 30, 2013, and there are many eligible giving and timing options available. Please feel free to contact me for additional information.

Our students are counting on you, and they truly appreciate your generosity and support!

Best regards,

Lynda Ricketson
Director of Development and Alumni Giving

Click here for a complete list of giving opportunities.

Erna Butler an Advocate for Child Welfare Research and Training

When Erna Butler died on February 2 of recently diagnosed cancer, GSSW lost both a generous supporter and one of its most devoted friends.

Born in 1922, Erna became a Marine Corps sergeant during World War II, shortly after meeting her future husband, Brad Butler. The couple married in 1945. Brad became a salesman for Proctor & Gamble, but re-enlisted in the Navy when the Korean War broke out in 1950. Over the next 13 years, the family moved 22 times before settling in Cincinnati. Brad rejoined Procter & Gamble, eventually becoming its chairman.

When Brad retired in 1989, the Butlers moved to Denver, where they immersed themselves in philanthropic work. Erna served on the boards of the Colorado Symphony and the Central City Opera, volunteered at the Museum of Nature and Science, and helped establish the Touched by a Nurse Fund at the University of Colorado’s College of Nursing.

After Brad died in 1998, Erna continued to support a wide variety of non-profits, including GSSW. The school’s Child Welfare Training and Research Project was renamed the Erna and Brad Butler Institute for Families in 2005, reflecting a generous gift from the Butler Family Fund. The nationally renowned Institute currently manages projects totaling nearly $3 million, among the highest volume of research, training and technical assistance for any group at the University of Denver.

In 2010, Erna created the Butler Scholars program to provide financial support for GSSW doctoral students during their third and fourth years of study, including support for their dissertation work. Erna received a Dean’s Award at GSSW’s 80th Anniversary Celebration in 2011, honoring her service to the school.
2011 Alumni Awards

Community Service Award
This award is presented to an alumnus/alumna who has demonstrated significant and continuous volunteer involvement in major community activities and/or charitable causes, above and beyond her/his employed position.

Robert Kelsall, MSW ‘75, LCSW, AAMFT Approved Supervisor, has served directly, as well as through the therapists he trains, to serve families in the future. He has been a long-time volunteer for the Pro-Rojo Project, providing mental health services to those who could not otherwise afford them. As co-owner and co-director of the Denver Family Therapy Center, Inc., Kelsall provides mental health and substance abuse services to individuals, groups and families, as well as training and supervising MSW students who begin work toward the Certificate in Couples and Family Therapy during their concentration year. Kelsall’s previous honors include being named “Supervisor of the Year” by the Colorado Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

GSSW Service Award
This award is presented to an alumnus/alumna who has contributed to, or served, the Graduate School of Social Work in a noteworthy and significant way through personal effort and/or financial contribution.

Youlon Savage, MSW ‘94, ACSW, has served GSSW in numerous ways over the years. Most recently as a member of our Board of Visitors. He is a member of GSSW’s Advisory Council on Racial Diversity, which advises the dean, faculty, staff and students on planning, implementing and evaluating efforts to improve the environment and climate of the school relative to racial diversity. Savage’s generous financial contributions include the endowed scholarship fund he created in 2000. Youlon D. Savage Scholarships are awarded to students annually based on academic merit and financial need.

A respected leader in the Denver mental health care, Savage retired several years ago after a long career as Executive Director of Adams Community Mental Health Center. His previous honors include a GSSW Dean’s Award, presented at the school’s 80th Anniversary Celebration last year.

FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT
Dear Fellow Graduates:
I don’t know about you, but when I read about the incredible accomplishments of GSSW students and alumni, both here and overseas, my excitement about the future of our profession increases even more. Whether they’re MSW students enhancing their education through international classes and internships, PhD students discovering a wealth of new knowledge, or alumni making a positive difference every day for people and communities around the world, their achievements make me proud to be a social worker and especially proud to say I graduated from GSSW.

It’s also heartening to see our MSW program’s national reputation continue to grow; earning it a new ranking in the top 1% of all accredited programs in the country.

If, like me, you’re inspired about GSSW’s future, I hope you’ll take a few minutes to complete our upcoming alumni survey to ensure that the Alumni Association moves forward in the direction you think it should. Look for the survey postcard to arrive in the mail soon. We’ll report the survey’s findings in the fall issue of GSSW Magazine.

Meanwhile, please drop us an email anytime with your ideas and suggestions, and also with Class Notes for future issues of this magazine. We’d love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Jae McQueen (MSW ’00)
Alumni Association President

2011 Alumni Awards

Recipient of GSSW’s 2011 Alumni Awards are (L-R) Councilwoman Judith Montoro, MSW ’60, Robert Kelsall (MSW ’75), Robert L. Hawkins Social Work Achievement Award. (left) with Patsy Denver Mayor Wellington Webb and Jennifer Mayor Jennifer M. López Hancock.

Class Notes

Patrick Pei Chwen Hu (MA, MSW ’91) of Ft. Collins, CO, sent GSSW an autographed copy of his autobiography lovingly assembled by his three children as a gift for his 85th birthday last year. The book paints an interesting portrait of a man who overcame enormous obstacles to achieve his goals. Among his earliest memories were the years of famine and near-starvation his family endured in China while his father tried to support the family by farming. Then the 400-mile journey the family made on foot in the winter of 1922 so his father could find work at a coal factory.

The kindness of American missionaries eventually led to Hu’s Christian baptism, and he has remained deeply religious throughout his life. After earning his BA, he served as an interpreter for the U.S. Army during World War II, a post that later qualified him to come to the U.S. for graduate education. He entered GSSW in 1948, shortly before the Communist takeover of mainland China made him literally a “man without a country”—cut off from his family and unable to return home. He credits Professor Dorothy Spelbring, another devoted Christian, with helping him through this difficult time.

He took a break from the MSW program, earning his MA in education from DU and holding several jobs in the U.S. and Taiwan before completing his degree at GSSW in 1960. He served as Director/Coordinator of Family Life Enrichment for Lutheran Family Services in Iowa and as Director of St. Paul’s School for the Deaf in Macau, China. Before retiring in Colorado with his wife, Edna. “Our lives are in God’s hands.” He writes. “He has plans for every one of us, even this beggar boy.”

Mel Singer (MSW ‘68), LCSW, received the Most Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Colorado Society for Clinical Social Work at the Colorado Social Work Month Annual Celebration on March 9.

‘60s

Pamela Crouch (MSW ’79) retired last November after 41 years in the CO developmental disabilities field working at eight area day treatment centers and Pathways, where she served as Placement Manager. Her jobs over the years included supervising a VISTA volunteer project as an elementary school social worker when the community-centered boards provided school services for people with developmental disabilities in the public schools, case management services and, in recent years, management/administrative services. Crouch began at the state when the state home and training schools (now regional centers) were being de-institutionalized and the community-centered services were developing. She says she enjoyed her job very much, but is glad to be retired and looks forward to doing other things with her time and energy.

Patry Hathaway (MSW ‘76, MA) calls her social work story “From Jim Crow to Civil Rights Activist.” Having grown up in the segregated south, she remembers separate drinking fountains, segregated schools, blacks in the movie theater balcony and whites stationed at the doors of the Methodist Church to keep the religious service “white.” By the time she attended college, Hathaway had a growing sense that this was wrong. After earning her MSW, she worked in child protection for Denver County, then in the University Hospital system’s pediatric clinic. JFK Child Development Center and Rampy Center. An article she published in a professional journal, Health and Social Work, marked the beginning of her writing career.

In her late 70s and early 80s, Hathaway adopted two mixed race children. By the time her son was in college, she’d earned a second master’s degree in elementary education and began teaching in inner city Denver schools. ‘Social
worker/teacher is a perfect combination for working with these students,” she says. “I think a lot of Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.

Another graduate with strong military ties is Maj. James (“Jack”) Hacker (MSW ’88), LCSW, of Yorktown, VA, whose career has included a family at the center of another high-profile case of alleged police brutality. Clinic Notes are about Jim Crow and the wonderful lesson for children: Yes, it was terrible, but learning about the history of the United States, as well as in Japan and Egypt. After her husband’s 2003 heart attack, she began a research interest in police/civilian crisis response that military units that train and remain together perform better than those that train separately. Furukawa co-chaired the National Research Council’s Committee on the Safety of Nurses and the Family, which has served as Director of the Denver-based non-profit, Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC), overseeing an effort to help eradicate that stigma.
Flashmob

(ˈflæ̇ʃməb) noun – GSSW’s best-kept secret

The mysterious flyers began appearing around Craig Hall just before the holidays: “DWD 2.0,” they read, providing two dates in January when students, faculty and staff were to gather on the Schramm Foundation Plaza just outside Craig Hall’s main entrance. “What’s that all about?” people wondered aloud. It turns out that a good-sized (and very sneaky) contingent of them already knew! Those who assembled on the sunny plaza around lunchtime on January 6 found speakers blasting Lady Gaga while various camera-toting staff took up positions nearby. Once a crowd had gathered, the music abruptly switched to “Bing, Bang, Boom” by country music band, Highway 101. Four people immediately began to line-dance, oddly enough in perfect unison. Seconds later, two more joined in, and then another four. No sooner would someone ask the person beside them “What’s going on?” than that person would join the dance, too. Finally Dean Williams made a grand entrance through the door from the lobby, eliciting cheers as he fell right in step. The flashmob, onlookers finally learned, was a lavishly produced invitation to the second “Dancing with the Dean” event, to be held just over a month later.

The mob, which repeated its performance four days later, was organized in early November by Associate Professor Eugene Walls. Dance lessons and rehearsals took place in secret over the next two months—small groups meeting during lunch breaks, after work and even on weekends—without a single leak to the “outsiders” about what was to come. Amazingly enough, considering their stellar execution, the full group had never once performed together until—Bing, Bang, Boom!—the flashmob took over the plaza!

Share the fun by watching the videos.