

Spring 2014

## [Social Work] Newsletter, Spring 2014

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Social Work.

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### Recommended Citation

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Social Work., "[Social Work] Newsletter, Spring 2014" (2014).  
*Social Work Newsletter*. 1.

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S P R I N G 2 0 1 4

# University of Northern Iowa

## Department of Social Work



“The greatest good you can  
do for another is not just to  
share your riches, but to  
reveal to him his own.”

-Benjamin Disraeli

### Save the Date!

Understanding Trauma  
& Responding in a  
Trauma Informed Way  
9:00 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.

June 3 & June 4, 2014

Fall Colloquium -  
DSM 5  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

September 12, 2014

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## Dr. Steven Onken, PhD

Dr. Steven Onken, who recently joined the UNI Department of Social Work, has been described as a recovery scholar and practitioner. He would disagree, describing himself as a recovery guide. One can learn from many sources and he is only one such source. In practice, Dr. Onken has helped champion better understanding of, and addressing the complicated, interrelated physical, psychological, social and moral impact of trauma in the lives of youth, adults and families with complex needs, especially behavioral health and criminal justice. A trauma informed system, which provides trauma specific services in culturally resonant ways, is crucial to treatment and recovery.

Dr. Onken's practice experience began in Austin Texas where he relocated after completing his undergraduate social work degree at the University of Iowa. His masters and doctorate are from the University of Texas at Austin. Most recently, Dr. Onken was with the Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and served as the director of evaluation for Hawai'i's Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant. He also taught graduate social work courses on research and mental health practice at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work. Prior to Hawai'i, he was an Assistant Professor at Columbia University Graduate School of Social Work.



Dr. Onken with Palama Lee, whose dissertation work Dr. Onken chaired. Dr. Lee is now one of only five Native Hawaiians with doctorate degrees in Social Work and Social Welfare.



Left to right: Katie O'Brien, Dr. Onken, Amy Becker

A career highlight for Dr. Onken was serving as the principal investigator of *Mental Health Recovery: What Helps and What Hinders? A National Research Project for the Development of Recovery Facilitating System Performance Indicators*, resulting in the Recover Oriented System Indicators (ROSI) measure.

Recently, Dr. Onken received two grants, a UNI Office of Research and Sponsored Programs 2013-14 Capacity Building Project Grant and a Student-Faculty Collaboration Grant, in support of his study, *Border Crossing of the Heart – Navigating the Transition from Minority to Majority Cultures: A Pilot Study of Young Hearing Adults of Deaf Parents and Young Heterosexual Adults of Gay-Lesbian Parents*. His Co-Principal Investigator is Katie O'Brien, an American Sign Language Instructor and Amy Becker, an undergraduate in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. Amy's contribution to the study was selected to be presented at the "Research in the Iowa Capitol" on Tuesday, April 1, 2014. This annual event, a collaboration of the honors programs from the Regents universities, highlights quality undergraduate research taking place at all three state universities through student poster presentations in the statehouse rotunda.

In general, Dr. Onken's research focuses on innovative ways to capture an emerging evidence base for peer-to-peer, indigenous and cultural approaches to mental health wellbeing and recovery. He is a recognized speaker and consultant locally, regionally, nationally and internationally with state and territory collaborations in Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawai'i, Iowa, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and Washington. His international collaborations include New Zealand, Switzerland, Canada (French and English provinces), Australia, Scotland, England and Colombia.

The Department of Social Work is pleased to have Dr. Onken join us. His expertise and focus on quality education are commendable.

## Student Thoughts...

"Not only has Dr. Onken brought his amazing background and experience to the students and the programs, he has also brought hope for a bright future and large dreams for the field of social work at UNI."

-Megan Vogt

"I remember on the very 1st day of class he had asked the class to come up with what the word "social work" meant to us. After listening to what the class had come up with, Dr. Onken wrote on the board: Hope. The word "Hope" encapsulated all of our answers to his question. I instantly connected with this, as the word Hope means so very much to me, and honestly guides me in my practice each day. Dr. Onken, although a quick presence as I will never have him as a professor again, left a lasting impression. Dr. Onken will continue to be a wonderful resource to me/his students, as he has told us to never hesitate to contact him. I am excited for students to meet him and have him as a professor, as he is an amazing addition to the Social Work Faculty!"

- Zenab Henschel

"I appreciated that Professor Onken took the time to personally meet each and everyone of his students. It was refreshing to sit down with and him get to know each other. Professor Onken took time with his students in assignments and would work with us until we got the concept; that showed me that he wanted me to understand the material. Not to mention he has the best stories and with his diverse background and experience, it always would leave you wanting to know more!"

-Rachelle Duvall

"Dr. Onken's passion for the Social Work profession is highlighted by his role as an educator. His vast knowledge of practice and experience makes what some may consider tough concepts, easy to grasp and retain. I look forward to being further instructed by him."

-Salina Wentz

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*"We are custodians of those that have come before for those that will come after. There is a cool connectivity in that – in one breath you realize your insignificance and in another you realize that you are part of a larger sequence of things that give hope and relevance to our time together."*

*-Dr. Steven Onken*



## Undergraduate Student Highlights

### Danielle McLaughlin

Danielle McLaughlin is an undergraduate Social Work major at UNI. Danielle is also involved with the Student Social Work Association here on campus. She was the media specialist during the 2012-2013 school year and is currently the secretary of the student organization. This spring, Danielle interned for the head of the department of social work, Dr. Cynthia Juby assisting with various tasks such as developing the social work major tri-fold presentation, helping write the newsletter, as well as talking to incoming freshman students about what opportunities social work has to offer them. Danielle will be continuing her education in the fall in the School Counseling graduate program here at UNI with hopes of becoming a high school guidance counselor.



### Ivan Naranjo

Ivan is a sergeant in the Iowa National Guard and a senior at UNI. Upon graduating in December, he plans to pursue his MSW and eventually work in the Department of Veteran Affairs. Ivan was a gunner during the 2010-2011 deployment into Afghanistan along with many other Iowa residents. His experiences during deployment and the issues he witnessed with returning veterans prompted him to go into the field of social work. His primary research interests revolve around Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury and suicide prevention within the military.



### Michelle Wilke

A current undergraduate student with a double major of Social Work and Psychology, Michelle is also co-president of the Student Social Work Association, a resident assistant, and involved in various organizations both on and off campus. For her field practicum, Michelle interned at Bremwood, LSI where she participated in various administrative tasks, met with her caseload weekly to discuss their treatment goals and progress, and co-facilitated group sessions. As a special interest, Michelle also traveled to Texas to obtain her Equine-Assisted Healthcare certificate at SpiritHorse International, from which she is licensed to provide therapeutic benefits to individuals with disabilities through the use of horseback riding. Michelle is excited for the opportunity to begin pursuing her MSW in Fall 2014.



## UNI Student Social Work Association

The undergraduate Student Social Work Association (SSWA) strives to educate members about the social work profession by working with several agencies to serve and advocate for various populations. This year, the SSWA had the opportunity of attending Student Day at the Iowa Capitol in Des Moines to speak with legislators and promote the passage of a Dating Violence bill. Throughout the year, they have participated in many volunteer opportunities in the community, these include: sending care packages to soldiers in Afghanistan, volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club, preparing the Grout Museum for their anniversary event, assisting with judging at the sixth grade science fair at the Grout Museum, playing games with residents at NewAldaya Lifescapes and having a garage sale to fund raise for the House of Hope and the YWCA. They have also participated in university events such as Make a Difference Day, MLK Day of Service, the Northeast Iowa Special Olympics and the UNI Dance Marathon and Relay for Life. The SSWA looks forward to each volunteer opportunity and enjoy taking part in a variety of activities that help the community.



SSWA officers, from left to right: (Top) Ivan Naranjo, Treasurer; Jude Buchheit, Co-President; Amanda Keeney, Student Representative; Michelle Wilke Co-President; (Bottom) Michelle Owens, Corresponding Secretary; Danielle McLaughlin, Secretary



Above: Making care packages for troops in Afghanistan. Left: Members assisting with judging at the sixth grade science fair at the Grout Museum





## Graduate Student Highlights

### Stephanie Kollasch

While completing her graduate practicum at the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) in Cedar Rapids, IA, Steph has used her skills to help raise money for research and services through the MDA. By the end of her placement, she will have applied for \$30,000 worth of grants to help send children ages 6-17, with one of the 43 neuromuscular diseases covered by the association, to summer camp. Alongside this work, she has raised over \$5,000 for research. Steph will also be presenting her graduate research and findings focused on the effects of extensive care giving on those caring for individuals with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy to the MDA neuromuscular clinic team at the University of Iowa. This team is comprised of some of the leading experts on neuromuscular diseases in the world. Steph has a promising future with the MDA after graduating in May 2014.



### Megan Vogt

Megan is currently a foundation student in the MSW program, while also completing a graduate certificate in Women's and Gender Studies. When not in the classroom, Megan works as a graduate research assistant in the Institutional Research Department's Chief Information Office and is completing her first of two internships at Congressman Bruce Braley's Office in Waterloo. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Megan presented at the 2014 Graduate Symposium and also received the 2014 Outstanding Graduate Paper on Gender Award for a piece entitled *Portrayals of feminism: Through the eyes of Hans Christian Andersen and Disney* with the help of her advisor, Dr. Katherine van Wormer. In the future, Megan plans to continue her studies in the field of gender, policy, and social justice.

### Ron DeVoll Jr. & Timothy Tolliver

During their time in the MSW program, foundation students Ron and Tim have worked to advocate for military personnel and veterans at UNI. With both Ron and Tim being veterans, helping veterans is something they both care greatly about. Ron is a founding member of the Military and Veteran's Student Services Committee and both Ron and Tim are founding members of the UNI Veteran's Association. Together, they have rebranded and reshaped the UNI Veteran's Association by advocating for policy change and pushed for research to benefit veterans and those in the military. Ron and Tim have assisted with many accomplishments and changes in this area, which include adding a full-time Veteran's Coordinator on the UNI campus, establishing a veteran's lounge area, assisted with establishing a scholarship for student veterans and helped enact an attendance policy change to benefit student veterans at UNI. Recently, they presented at the State Veteran's Conference, which was held at UNI, to educate faculty and staff and to promote trauma informed practice in the classrooms. They have shown great success with identifying needs and bridging gaps for veterans and military personnel in order to help them achieve their educational goals while at UNI.



## UNI Master's of Social Work Student Association

The Master's of Social Work Student Association (MSWSA) is a non-profit organization driven to promote the social work field in many ways. The MSWSA creates a great sense of community and gives students a chance to be involved in many opportunities within UNI and the community. This year, the MSWSA has been busy volunteering, attending events, fundraising and much more! They collected food donations door to door on Halloween (Trick-or-Can) for the Northeast Iowa Food Bank, organized speakers and workshops on campus, fundraised for the YWCA, volunteered at the House of Hope and other organizations and participated in Make a Difference Day. The MSWSA is a great way to get involved and meet new people!

**Masters of Social Work**  
**STUDENT ASSOCIATION**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**





## Political Activism

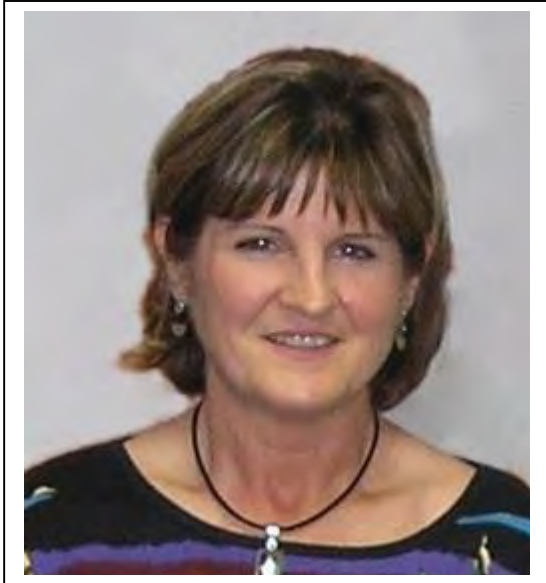
This year, Precious Mseba, Xia Wang, and Megan Vogt from the MSW program, attended the annual NASW Legislative Day in Des Moines. This event was held at a local church where they met for a morning session meeting with other social work students, professors and professionals from across the state of Iowa. The Iowa NASW chapter provided speakers to come in and educate students on relevant topics for this year. The topics that were focused on included: The Iowa Juvenile Home, Child Care, Minimum Wage and Veterans Issues. They also had the opportunity to go to the Capitol and put their knowledge to good use by educating others, specifically our Legislators. While at the Capitol, they were able to talk with one of the Black Hawk County Representatives, Bob Kressig and touch base with a few legislators outside of our jurisdiction. They were very appreciative of the student efforts on speaking up about issues they were passionate about and for bringing in new perspectives that they might have not thought about before.

"This was a great opportunity and one that everyone should experience at least once in their lifetime. Take a chance and make a change." –Megan Vogt



The Student Social Work Association (SSWA) also had about 20 students attend the Capitol this year to advocate for a dating violence bill. The purpose of the bill is to add in dating violence as a component of domestic abuse. Currently, dating violence is only considered assault and that does not require a mandatory 48 hour restraining order, any preventative classes for the batterer or help for the victim. They had the opportunity to talk to legislators during funnel week to discuss this with them and talk about what their issues were with the bill, if any, and whether or not they were going to vote in favor of it. Both representatives of Black Hawk County were eager to talk to the students and help to get this bill passed!

## A Message from the Interim Department Head Dr. Cindy Juby



This has been a busy year for the Department of Social Work. The new Trauma-Informed Practice Concentration was successfully implemented and student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. What

we learned from this first year rollout was that covering such intense content every day over a two-month period was excessive. Consequently, we designed a summer course plan that begins with a two-day intensive training that provides a trauma foundation followed by a reduced number of days students are required to attend classes through June and July. The two-day training will take place on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup> and will be open to the community. The agenda and registration can be found on our website. The deadline for registration is May 20.

The Department held its First Annual Social Work Student Awards Ceremony on April 21. The undergraduate (SSWA) and graduate (MSWSA) student associations presented their activities and events of the past year and numerous award and scholarship recipients were recognized. Congratulations to those who received awards or scholarships and thank you to the SSWA and MSWSA for their dedication to social work. Ceremony highlights can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Looking to the future, the topic for our fall colloquium has been determined. On Friday, September 12, Nancee Blum will present on the DSM-5. Registration for the colloquium will begin in early fall. I hope to see all of you there!



## Faculty Highlights

### Dr. Katherine van Wormer

For Black History Month, Katherine van Wormer, Professor of Social Work, and MSW graduate Charletta Sudduth have focused on presentations related to oral histories of older African American women who moved to Iowa from Mississippi. For example, they led a discussion at Highland Community College in Freeport, IL and the Author Fair at Waterloo Public Library. On January 29, they were guests on Talk of Iowa on Iowa Public Radio along with women interviewees from their book, *The Maid Narratives* (LSU Press). Recently they published with David Jackson: What We Can Learn of History from Older African American: Women Who Worked as Maids in the Deep South. *Western Journal of Black Studies* 37 (4), 227-235, winter, 2013.

On another topic, van Wormer was interviewed for Wisconsin Public Radio, "Guest Says Legally Prescribed Heroin Could Help Prevent Deaths," February 20, 2014.



Dr. van Wormer speaking in Illinois at Highland Community College.

### Jenny Becker

Jenny Becker is the new Director of Field Instruction for the Social Work Department. Jenny graduated from UNI in 1995 with her degree in Social Work, having done her volunteer experiences at Camp Courageous and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and her field placement with the Iowa Department of Human Services. Jenny went on for her MSW at the University of Nebraska at Omaha where she volunteered with the Omaha Police Department's Crime Victim Assistance Unit and facilitated a support group for child survivors of sexual abuse. Jenny completed her field experience with Attorney Susan Koenig doing victim advocacy work and coordinating wraparound services. Jenny returned to Iowa to work at Exceptional Persons, Inc. in Waterloo, the Iowa Department of Human Services in Black Hawk County, then later at the Mental Health Institute in Independence, Iowa. Jenny has been employed for the last 12 years at Keystone Area Education Agency as a School Social Worker, specializing in special education issues, functional behavior assessments, nonviolent physical crisis intervention, and school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports.





## Faculty Highlights

### Dr. Tom Keefe

Dr. Keefe celebrated 40 years of service to the UNI Social Work Department! He is pictured here with his wife, Lynette, at the event that took place in October 2013.



### Ga-Young Choi

Ga-Young Choi, Assistant Professor, gave a presentation entitled, "Elder Abuse in Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities" at the 2014 Annual Conference of the American Society on Aging in March.

## Award Ceremony

### Anna McCullagh Memorial Scholarship

Hayley Downey  
Jude Buchheit  
Tricia Wisniewski

### Outstanding Master's Research Paper Nomination

Whitni Warnke

### Best Graduate Paper Award (First Place)

Haley Schroder

### Best Graduate Paper Award (Second Place)

Stephanie Kollasch

### Best Trauma Informed Poster

Sandra Welchert

### Dr. James McCullagh Award for Academic Excellence

Taylor Goetzinger

### Mary Padovan School Social Work Scholarship

Hayley Downey  
Sarah Vollema

### Outstanding Graduate Service Award

Brittany Schau

### Outstanding Undergraduate Service Award

Jude Buchheit

### Robert A. Schneider Award for Excellence in Leadership

Michelle Wilke

### Robert Runkle Endowed Scholarship

Megan Vogt  
Molly Bonin

### Ruth Bluford Anderson Scholarship

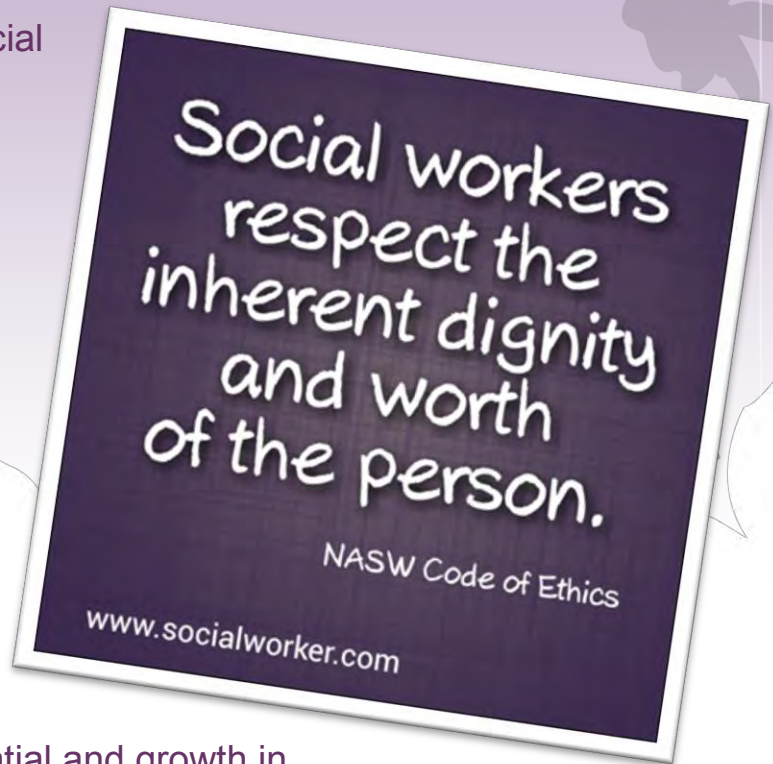
Juana Hollingsworth



# Congratulations!

# Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Social Work, in keeping with the broader mission of the University and the purposes of professional social work education, is to prepare students for competent, effective, and ethical – beginning and advanced – professional practice and leadership; to conduct scholarship that advances knowledge; and to provide services to local, state, national, and international communities. Using multidimensional theory, knowledge and skills, students and faculty are committed to enhancing human potential and growth in diverse human systems. This commitment is supported by the promotion of multicultural sensitivity, human rights, and social and economic justice within a framework of social work values and ethics.



UNI Social Work

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