

2018

## [Social Work] Newsletter, 2018

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Social Work.

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NEWSLETTER



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FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD:

# YEAR IN REVIEW

FALL 2017 - SPRING 2018

The 2018-2019 academic year finds the Department of Social Work humming with fresh energy. As we launch the new year, we welcome more than 300 undergraduate and graduate students, two new faculty and two outstanding staff.

Ashley Rasmussen and Donna Raubs joined the department in early summer and quickly settled into their secretary roles. Ashley is an alum of UNI. She graduated with her B.A. in management in May 2018 and started the secretary III position shortly thereafter. Ashley is a single mother of three very active children. She enjoys gardening and helping her children achieve their goals.

Donna Raubs was a secretary with the Department of Teaching in the College of Education for the last four years before joining the Department of Social Work. Prior to that, she worked as a clerk at Camp Adventure. Donna lives in Cedar Falls with her husband and two boys, one is a junior at Cedar Falls High School and the other is a freshman at Holmes Junior High.

Two new faculty, Sei-Young Lee and Libby Fry, will be part of our team as well. Sei-Young comes to us from California State University and will teach research and Human Behavior and the Social Environment this fall. Libby, an Iowa native, has been an adjunct at UNI for several years. In her full-time faculty role, she will teach practice and policy courses.

We are excited to include Sei-Young, Libby, Ashley and Donna as part of the UNI family! With our impressive faculty and staff, we have a dynamic department that I am proud to be a part of. Please enjoy this year's newsletter and continue to reconnect with us by visiting [unialum.org](http://unialum.org) and [uni.edu/socialwork/alumni](http://uni.edu/socialwork/alumni).

Cindy Juby Ph.D.



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
University of Northern Iowa

# PROFESSOR HIGHLIGHTS



**William  
Downs**

Professor Downs has been a professor of social work at UNI since 1992. From 1992 to 2000, he was the director of the Center for the Study of Adolescence; from 2000 to 2002 was founding director of the MSW program; and, in 2012, was interim head of Social Work.

In addition to full-time teaching and administrative responsibilities, Professor Downs is a prolific grant-writer, having written approximately 75 grants since coming to UNI, with approximately 50 of those grants being funded. A series of grants from the Office on Violence Against Women has funded the Integrative Services Project (ISP - [www.ispia.org](http://www.ispia.org)), a partnership between UNI and the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) to develop and enhance

collaboration between victim service and substance abuse treatment programs across Iowa. Since 2001, ISP has worked with approximately 20 different victim service and 20 different substance abuse treatment programs that cover 81 of Iowa's 99 counties, developing new services that enhance both safety and sobriety for women.

Professor Downs received the 2008 Time to Lead award from ICADV and the 2014 Award for Excellence from the Iowa Behavioral Health Association. Professor Downs has also helped develop Social Action, Inc., a community and social action agency that works with at risk youth in east Waterloo and Amani Community Services, the only culturally specific victim service agency for African-Americans in Iowa and also located in east Waterloo. Professor Downs received the Social Action, Inc. Community Service Award in 2010, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Veridian Credit Union Community Engagement Award in 2010, University of Northern Iowa James F. Lubker Faculty Research Award in 2010 and the Iowa Board of Regents Award for Faculty Excellence in 2011.



**Laura Parker**

Dr. Parker earned both her Ph.D. in social work and an M.S.W. from the University of Missouri – Columbia and a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with a double major in social work and women's studies. Dr. Parker has been teaching social work for over 20 years and is a former social work program director. Her practice experience includes working in the fields of child welfare, domestic violence, substance abuse treatment, with the elderly, the homeless and as an activist for persons of low income. Her current research is a comparative study of the attitudes and beliefs of social work students in northern Iowa to those of social work students in Southern West Virginia as they relate to poverty and affordable housing.



**Katherine  
VanWormer**

Katherine VanWormer recently finished her newest book "Social Work and Social Welfare: A Human Rights Foundation," co-authored with Rosemary Link, as well as two volumes of "Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Micro Level and Macro Level," co-authored with Fred Besthorn, and "Addictions Treatment: A Strengths Perspective," co-authored with Diane Davis. She finished her final semester at UNI as a professor this past May and entered retirement in July. She is now living in Madison, Wisconsin, near grandchildren, and will continue to write on policy issues.



**Matthew  
Vasquez**

Matthew Vasquez has been working on a variety of projects since the start of the 2017-2018 school year. His first project is "The Effects of Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TSY) and Tai Chi on PTSD and Other Co-Morbid Symptoms: A Pilot RCT." He has joined with Dr. Ashleigh Kysar-Moon in this project and the study aims to examine the effects of trauma-sensitive yoga (TSY) and a therapeutically modified style of Tai Chi (TC) on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other co-morbid symptoms (i.e., anxiety, depression, and stress). The study is taking place at the Satori Hospital Wellness Center in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and will evaluate a program that uses both TSY and TC

as adjunctive treatments to traditional mental health counseling. Drs. Vasquez and Kysar-Moon received the UNI Capacity Building Grant for this project, totaling \$6,725.

Dr. Vasquez' second project is known as "The Effect of Rainbowdance on Socio-Emotional and Academic Functioning for K-3rd Grade Student Populations: A Feasibility Study." Principle investigators in this study include himself and Dr.

Robert Macy (International Trauma Center). They are also partnered with the Partnership in Education and Resiliency (PEAR) of the McLean Hospital - Harvard University. This study will evaluate current social and emotional learning (SEL) programming at the Sonoma Charter School (SCS) in Sonoma, California. The intervention, called Rainbowdance, supports the enhancement of emotional self-regulation while increasing the development of empathy through the carefully sequenced practice of co-regulation and physical movement. The anticipated results of this study are to demonstrate that Rainbowdance can be used in SEL-related programming in school systems for K-3rd grade populations as a way to strengthen social, emotional and academic achievement.

Dr. Vasquez has also presented workshops on trauma, trauma-informed care and advanced clinical practice to a variety of organizations throughout the state, such as the Cedar Valley Mental Health Summit, Building Directions of Families, NAMI, Waterloo Schools, Keystone AEA and the UNI Police Department.

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

# STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

## BSW STUDENTS

### Cylea Ahlf

In the spring 2018 semester, Cylea interned at the Department of Human Services in Waterloo. Her experience there was tremendous. She had the opportunity to attend court hearings, family team meetings, house visits and adoption hearings. She also had the chance to close case meetings, conduct social histories, transport children and families, visit different facilities such as Pathways, and attend foster care board review meetings. Outside of her internship she also worked three different jobs: Comprehensive Systems, Scheels and the UNI-Dome.

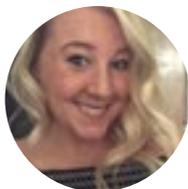


Shakari  
Baker-Bruce

Shakari spent her spring 2018 semester at Bakari Behavioral Health Inc., working with children who live in poverty and have behavioral issues. "Some of the kids I work with just need someone supportive in their lives -- a mentor, big brother or big sister -- someone to talk to," she stated. "Bakari brings a holistic approach through the Cedar Valley. We work with a diverse population of children from the ages of 5-18 and their families. They offer counseling services, clinical assessments and evaluations to more directly address issues affecting individuals and families. At Bakari we believe that every child and family we serve shows great promise and tremendous potential. We help them realize their true potential and then identify the tools necessary for that potential to be fulfilled."

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## MSW STUDENTS



Abby  
Arndt

Abby completed her undergraduate internship at Covenant Medical Center in the Department of Patient and Family Services. The internship was very hands-on, she was directly involved with patients and staff and even had the opportunity to carry her own caseload. The experience also offered her multiple opportunities to network and connect with other agencies and professionals in the Cedar Valley. "My agency supervisor and other social workers offered a lot of guidance and support," said Abby.

After graduating in 2017, Abby was hired as a social worker at Sartori Memorial Hospital and Covenant Medical Center. As a medical social worker, she facilitated discharge planning and helped educate patients on options and services that were available to them. She also advocated for, empowered, and provided emotional support for her patients.

In June 2017, Abby enrolled in the MSW Trauma-Informed program at UNI and completed her graduate internship on the Inpatient Rehab unit at Allen Hospital. Inpatient Rehab unit social workers carry a leadership role, working closely with insurance companies. They also have more time to get to know patients, their families, and arrange services/equipment to meet patient's needs. Abby graduated with her MSW from UNI this past May. At this time, she plans to continue working as a medical social worker!



Rebecca  
Brown

Rebecca is an MSW student from Marion, Iowa. She is current president of the Masters of Social Work Student Association (MSWSA) and is completing her advanced field placement at the VA Mental Health Outpatient Clinic in Coralville, Iowa. While at the VA, Rebecca has not only taken an active role in various group therapies, she also assists with case management in the Suicide Prevention Program. Moreover, Rebecca designed, implemented, and is currently collecting data for her own research paper, studying the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and post-traumatic stress disorder in 9/11 veterans.

Outside of her involvement with the department and program, Rebecca is employed part-time as an academic coach at the UNI College Reading and Learning Center. She meets one-on-one with students, assisting and teaching them time management skills, test-taking strategies, reading strategies, and more. She is also a teaching assistant for the UNI freshman-only class, "Strategies for Academic Success."

Although Rebecca received her BS in psychology, she chose to pursue a career in social work as she grew up actively partaking in community service and working with diverse populations. She grew up as a "military brat," moving 10 times and living in eight different states before the age of 18. After graduation, Rebecca hopes to continue working for the VA, where she plans to later receive supervision to become a Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW)..

# STUDENT SERVICES



## Masters of Social Work Student Association (MSWSA):

The MSWSA hosted Susan Vallem for a presentation on animal assisted therapy. Their event was featured in the graduate newsletter and had a wonderful turnout of graduate students, undergraduate students and others interested in animal assisted therapy. They also assisted the UNI Veterans Association in planning the PTSD Conference at UNI. The event had various speakers who spoke about the broad range of events that can cause someone to develop PTSD, such as combat, sexual assault and near death experiences.

On March 26 and 28, 2018, the MSWSA hosted a film screening of "Suicide: The Ripple Effect" at Marcus College Square Theatre in Cedar Falls. The film is a powerful documentary about the recovery story of Kevin Hines who attempted suicide at the age 19 by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. The goal was to have an event where attendees learned the warning signs of a person experiencing a crisis and how to approach and support a person in crisis. Approximately 175 people were in attendance, the audience included community members, high school and college students, teachers, counselors and more. After the 90-minute documentary, there was a panel discussion led by Tom Eachus, the Executive Director of Black Hawk Grundy Mental Health Center; Brian Nissen from UNI Suicide Prevention; Donna Kitrick from the Waterloo School District; Karen Schatz, founder of the Make Life Swyter Promoting Kindness organization; and Angela Gray, a holistic wellness coach. The MSWSA partnered with the UNI Suicide Prevention program, the Waterloo Community School District, Alive and Running, and the Make Life Swyter Promoting Kindness organization to make this event possible.



## IN THE FIELD

### BY THE NUMBERS

In a field filled with uncertainty and surprises, data or numbers can bring about a simple sense of familiarity and structure. During the 2017-2018 school year, the social work field program oversaw

**28,600+**

UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL WORK  
INTERNSHIP HOURS SERVED

**24,600**

GRADUATE SOCIAL WORK  
INTERNSHIP HOURS SERVED

**43 SITES IN 96  
COMMUNITIES**

NUMBER OF IOWA FIELD PARTNERS

**23 SITES IN  
13 STATES**

NUMBER OF OUT-OF-STATE PARTNERS

**SEOUL WOMEN'S  
UNIVERSITY IN KOREA  
AND NELSON MANDELA  
UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA**

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

### FIELD LIAISONS

The field program experimented with the use of adjuncts as field liaisons this past school year.

The brave individuals who journeyed from classroom instruction to field liaison instruction included Traci Ludwig from Mercy Health Covenant Clinic, Jordan Dunn from Pathways Behavioral Services, Nathan Schutt from Cedar Valley Hospice, Dina Plum from Communities in Schools and Anna Cullen from UnityPoint Health Allen Hospital. The switch from classroom instruction and agency supervision, as many of them also supervise intern students in their own agencies, to overseeing student field experiences from the lens of a faculty member, provides them a unique perspective.

"It has been a wonderful opportunity to serve as a field liaison. It is the utmost reward to see our students apply their classroom education and flourish in their field work. Further, the opportunity has allowed me to see it all come full circle. I couldn't be more enthused to welcome our students to the social work field as respectable and well-rounded colleagues."

--Traci Ludwig, LISW, Mercy Health Covenant Psychiatry, Cedar Falls

"The use of adjunct liaisons helps maintain strong connections between students, the UNI social work department and community agencies. A variety of involved stakeholders (students, UNI, professionals, agencies, clients, community members) benefit when we share experiences and information about resources and services. It has been great to see how real-world needs may inform course curriculum while, at the same time, students are bringing the most up-to-date classroom knowledge and integrating this into their placements."

--Jordan Dunn, LISW, Pathways Behavioral Services, Waterloo

"It has been a very rewarding experience for me to be a part of the social work program on this side of the desk. Being a graduate myself from the program at UNI, it is so great to feel like I can play a small part in training up the next generation of social workers to repay in a small way all of the mentors I have had in the past from the instructors at UNI (Dr. McCullaugh is still there!) to my social work mentors in the Cedar Valley who helped me so much when I was as student. All I can say is 'wow,' I am amazed at the talent level and initiative of the students I am blessed to work with!"

--Nathan Schutt, MSW, Cedar Valley Hospice

## AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

The Department of Social Work's field program successfully places over 100 field students each year. This cannot be accomplished without the dedication, commitment and expertise of our agency partners throughout the community. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize two of those partners for their contributions to our program.

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### Lutheran Services in Iowa:

Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) is one of Iowa's largest human services agencies with over 1,000 employees. They are a nationally accredited agency, providing services in all 99 counties of Iowa and with over 20 locations throughout the state. LSI believes in giving voice to those who are not heard. They partner with our program to offer field experiences in 21 Iowa communities in the areas of child welfare, mental health, parent education, child abuse prevention, foster care, adoption, disability services, refugee services, behavior management and home health care. Since 2000, LSI has offer field experience opportunities for over 38 undergraduate social work student interns and over 27 graduate social work student interns. For more information about this agency, go to [lsiowa.org](http://lsiowa.org).

### UnityPoint Health Waterloo - Black Hawk Grundy Mental Health Center, Inc.:

UnityPoint Health knows true wellness is much more than physical well-being. They are committed to providing solutions that address all areas of health, including mental and emotional health. UnityPoint Health – Waterloo offers a full continuum of mental health services and treatment to meet the needs of our community, from family and individual counseling to inpatient care for all ages.

They offer highly competitive field experiences to our undergraduate and MSW Foundation social work student interns with Outreach Services and In-Home Health, which include services provided to those with a serious and persistent mental illness to prevent or reduce the frequency and duration of inpatient hospitalizations and/or placement in more restrictive levels of care, e.g. group homes or residential placements.

Services include medication monitoring, daily living skills training, crisis intervention and other related services provided in the home or in the community. MSW Specialization intern students are provided field experiences with the Iowa Department of Corrections First Judicial District to offer mental health services to the women programmed out of the Women's Center for Change in Waterloo, as well as with school-based therapists providing mental health services to students in grades K through 12 in the Cedar Falls and Waterloo Community School Districts. For more information about this agency, go to [unitypoint.org/waterloo](http://unitypoint.org/waterloo).

## AGENCY INSTRUCTOR HIGHLIGHTS



Alyssa Fruchtenicht

Alyssa is currently coordinator for the school-based therapy program at UnityPoint Health-Black Hawk Grundy Mental Health Center and has held this position since 2014. At present, she has teams in two school districts in the Cedar Valley. In addition to coordinating school-based therapy, she is a mental health therapist with experience serving grades K through 12.

These days, she spends the majority of her clinical time in the middle and high schools. "I know firsthand the importance of securing internships, as I interned in this program during my time as an MSW student at UNI, secured a job with the program after graduation and have remained ever since!" said Alyssa.

She is also a youth mental health first aid instructor, training adults who readily interact with youth the importance of recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental health needs, while having confidence in taking the next steps in connecting to resources.

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Megan Isenburg

Megan has provided community-based social support services in Cedar Rapids for 10 years. Eight of those years have focused on high-poverty neighborhoods, such as Wellington Heights and Oakhill-Jackson. With a background in school social work, Megan has served in partnership with the Cedar Rapids Community School district at Polk elementary and Johnson STEAM Academy, bringing in much needed support services and resources to youth and families in these high-risk neighborhoods. She has mentored numerous social workers, educators and administrators in implementing a coordinated care model for integration of education and community-based support services.

Since joining the school district as the Community Support Specialist at Johnson STEAM Academy in 2013, she has developed a framework for consultation, referral, on-going communication and case management services that has increased the coordination between community based service providers and the school district, ultimately reducing barriers to education and increasing academic achievement in high-need schools.

As a Licensed Master Social Worker, Megan currently provides essential support to the administrative team at Johnson STEAM Academy as well as Education Programs throughout the Four Oaks Enterprise. She assists schools across the district with developing a consultation process for educators seeking assistance with students experiencing ACE's, establishing a coordinated referral system utilizing building Learning Support Teams, and facilitating ongoing communication and case management between the school system and community service organizations.

# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



**Melanie Baker**

"Upon graduating from UNI, I started working as a professional counselor at the nonprofit where I had completed my field practicum, Keys to Living Counseling Center. I provided outpatient mental health counseling to adolescents, adults and families for two years in this role. I then transitioned to my current job as an oncology social worker at the University of Iowa Hospital where I work with an interdisciplinary team to coordinate care and provide psychosocial support to cancer patients. In this role, I had the opportunity to attend the Association of Oncology Social Work conference earlier this spring in Denver to gain better insight into social work in other cancer centers in the nation. I have also have a strong interest in palliative and end of life care and attended a training on facilitating Advance Care Planning earlier this year. Since graduating, I have directed a 5k fundraiser for Rapha House, a nonprofit that addresses human trafficking in Asia. This event has raised awareness locally of the issue of human trafficking in addition to raising a cumulative total of over \$30,000 since its inception to providing safe housing for survivors of human trafficking as well as preventing human trafficking in at-risk communities."



**Whitney Roepke (Schipper)**

"I graduated with my B.A. in social work from UNI in December 2013 and then graduated with my MSW in May 2015. I work for child care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) of Northeast Iowa, a program of Exceptional Persons, Inc. I am a Parent Services Specialist and the Infant/Toddler Recruitment & Retention Specialist. I am also a Nationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. I do referrals for parents looking for child care anywhere in our 19-county service area, as well as provide parent education about choosing quality child care, safe sleep, car seat safety and other related topics. I am currently focusing on helping increase the number of child care providers in Northeast Iowa. Iowa is experiencing a child care crisis, meaning that the number of children who need child care far outweighs the number of available child care spots in homes and centers. I am also a member of the Cedar Valley Safe Riders, a collaboration of Child Passenger Safety Technicians. We provide free car seat checks, help with installations of car seats and provide education on car seat safety."

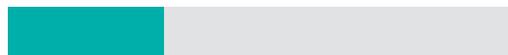
## SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI BY THE NUMBERS

### BA POST GRADUATION:

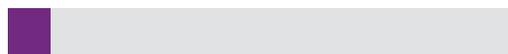
**56%** EMPLOYED IN THE FIELD



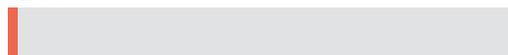
**33%** CONTINUED EDUCATION



**9%** STILL SEEKING EMPLOYMENT OR CONT. EDUCATION



**2%** OTHER



### MSW POST GRADUATION:

**97%** EMPLOYED IN THE FIELD

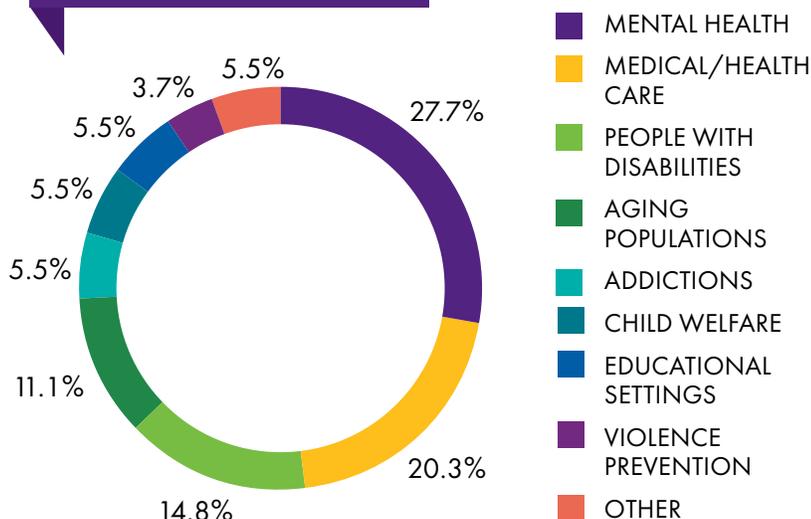


**3%** STILL SEEKING EMPLOYMENT OR CONT. EDUCATION



**0%** CONTINUED EDUCATION

### AREA OF EMPLOYMENT:



- MENTAL HEALTH
- MEDICAL/HEALTH CARE
- PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
- AGING POPULATIONS
- ADDICTIONS
- CHILD WELFARE
- EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS
- VIOLENCE PREVENTION
- OTHER



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
**University of Northern Iowa**

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