

# The Change Agent

*The Newsletter for Millersville University's School of Social Work*



## **A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR**

*Dr. Karen Rice, Department Chair*

I am honored to share with you some highlights from the Fall 2022 academic semester that speak to both the university's (exploration, professionalism, public mission, inclusion, integrity, compassion) and social work profession's values (competence, service, dignity and worth of the individual, integrity, social justice, importance of human relationships). I am fortunate to work with an amazing group of faculty and staff within the School of Social Work who over the past semester have intentionally examined our practices, programs, and curriculum to highlight both our successes as well as our challenges to fully embrace our goals and support the implementation of the university's Strategic Plan. Our team agreed to be both reflective and critical when examining our work to ensure equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism were guiding our decision-making. To support us, the leadership team has read two books that offer us the frameworks to ensure decision making is equity-minded and student-centered.

Learning does not stop upon completion of a formal educational program, and I look forward to our leadership team's continued work. This edition of our newsletter will highlight some of the ways we are fostering our guiding values. I hope you will be just as inspired by what you read as I was. Let us all choose to lead for justice and human rights. It is my honor to serve as the Chair of the School of Social Work. I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to our graduating undergraduate students. I wish each of you a very happy holiday season.

*Karen Rice*

Together, we can, Be The CHANGE.

# EXPLORATION/COMPETENCE

## *BASW Students Share How They are Responding to Food Waste and Insecurity at MU*

On Saturday November 9th, the Millersville University Social Work department club known as Alliance for Social Change (ASC) was invited to and attended the Elizabethtown Regional Conference for Social Work Students. Elizabethtown hosted this first annual conference involving colleges in Central Pennsylvania with social work student organizations. Multiple colleges from the region were in attendance, including Elizabethtown, Shippensburg, and Millersville. ASC's President, **Shelby Robb**, and Vice President, **Kelli Hamme**, attended on behalf of MU and ASC. Shelby and Kelli are both senior Social Work majors at MU. The theme of the conference was to highlight the challenges of different college towns and what social work student organizations can do to provide service and support to their communities.

Each of the participating clubs were asked to prepare a presentation on the challenges faced by their university's community and potential actions they can take to address the issues. One topic ASC chose to highlight was food waste and food insecurity.

Food waste and food insecurity on college campuses is a familiar topic for Shelby and Kelli as they are both on the executive board for another club called Food Recovery Network (FRN) here at Millersville. FRN at MU is a chapter of the national organization and works to help eliminate food waste and food insecurity here on campus and in the community. The ways in which FRN is making a difference are by donation boxes and food pick-ups.

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THE ACCOMPLISHED GOAL OF THE CONFERENCE WAS TO FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS AND CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AND STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS WHILE PROMOTING SOCIAL WORK'S PROFESSIONAL VALUES.-ROBB AND HAMME

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### *MSW Student Awarded Competitive Professional Development Award*

**Dawn Watson**, MU graduate student studying for her master's in social work, has been awarded a professional development training opportunity as a student researcher for the Institute for Research on Poverty. The program is extremely competitive as it only accepts 10 graduate students nationwide, who are usually doctoral candidates. The Professional Development Training Series on Poverty and Economic Mobility Research Program is a federal government-university partnership conducted by the Institute for Research on Poverty. The program seeks to increase the number of postdoctoral researchers conducting policy-relevant research on poverty and inequality in the United States.

**To read more, click here:** [MU Grad Student Selected as Researcher - Millersville News](#)

*(BASW Students Share)*

At the end of each week FRN members recover these boxes as well as food from the Cove and take the items to the Campus Cupboard located in the HUB on campus. FRN has donated over 2,000 pounds of food since 2017.

The event concluded with a presentation from guest speaker TaLisa Ramos-Watts. TaLisa attended Elizabethtown for her Bachelor's degree in Social Work and attended Millersville for her Master's in Social Work. She has been recently hired as the Special Assistant to the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education. During her presentation, TaLisa talked about her background, how macro social work is important and answered any questions we had.

*"This professional development opportunity is intended to connect people with careers outside of academia."*

*-Dawn Watson*

# PROFESSIONALISM/ DIGNITY AND WORTH OF INDIVIDUALS

## *Leadership Lancaster MU College Core Class Launched*

Members of The Learning Institute's Ubuntu Leaders Fellows program participated in the inaugural MU College Core Class, a program led by Leadership Lancaster. Leadership Lancaster is a non-profit organization within our county whose mission is to produce outstanding community leaders who support the needs of our county. Their mission and programming aligned with the goals of the Ubuntu Leaders Fellows program, which is to promote global citizenship by raising awareness about social challenges and fostering advocacy skills.

Members of the Ubuntu Leaders Fellows program work with faculty/staff mentor throughout an academic year to identify a specific challenge and solution(s) that supports the realization of one or more of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Members of our MU College Core Class were able to network, build relationships, obtain hands-on experience, and gain awareness about community challenges and efforts currently in place to mitigate them. **To Learn More:** Ubuntu Leaders Fellows Program | Millersville University

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AS A RESULT OF MY PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP LANCASTER, I HAVE GAINED A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR COMMUNITY. IT WAS WONDERFUL TO MEET SOME AMAZING INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE CONTRIBUTING TO LANCASTER'S SUSTAINABLE GROWTH. THE FEELING OF BELONGING TO A COMMUNITY IS WHAT I TAKE AWAY FROM THIS EXPERIENCE. I ALSO LIKE TO THANK KATE, JOSH, AND MANNIE FOR THEIR EXCELLENT ORGANIZATION OF THE PROGRAM.

-RASHEED OSMAN,  
MSW/MSEM STUDENT

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(Left to right) Kate Zimmerman, ED, Leadership Lancaster; Josh Burke, Program Director, LL; Mannie Rivera, Engagement Coordinator, LL; Mark Rivera-Junkins, BASW Student; Delanie Ouk, EEME Student; Jennifer Voshell, BASW Student; Ricardo Almodovar, MSW Student; Rasheed Osman, MSW/MSEM student

# PUBLIC MISSION/SERVICE

## *PRIME Grant Recipient Completes Internship at F&M Student Wellness Center*

MSW student, **Anita Garber** is completing her specialization internship with Franklin & Marshall College Student Wellness Center. As a PRIME (Promoting Rigorous Interdisciplinary Mental Health Education) grant recipient and Expressive Arts Certificate student, Ms. Garber is applying the knowledge and skills she is learning in the classroom within the college setting to address the emotional wellbeing needs of students.

In her role as a MSW Intern, Ms. Garber:

- Collaborates with mental and medical health professionals
- Maintains a clinical caseload
- Conducts mental health assessments
- Facilitates psychoeducational groups for students
- Completes intakes and biopsychosocial assessments
- Develops and implements therapeutic treatment plans



"I am tremendously grateful to be working at The Student Wellness Center. One of the many highlights of my internship has been facilitating a six-week Expressive Arts group for students coping with stress and anxiety this past semester. I was grateful to have taken Intro to Art Therapy with Dr. Jen Clements over the summer, which was instrumental in preparing me to facilitate the six-week arts group." Photo credit: Heike Martin Photography

LEARN MORE ABOUT  
PRIME: PROMOTING  
RIGOROUS &  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
MENTAL  
HEALTHCARE  
EDUCATION |  
MILLERSVILLE  
UNIVERSITY

Learn More about:  
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# INCLUSION/SOCIAL JUSTICE

## *Mentor Mondays Provides Sense of Community to BASW Students*

Launched this semester, Mentor Mondays, a peer led group offers support, guidance, and mentorship to our BASW students. Students in their final year of the BASW program and MSW graduate students co-facilitate the sessions. The topics of discussion are informed by the needs of the students but have included:

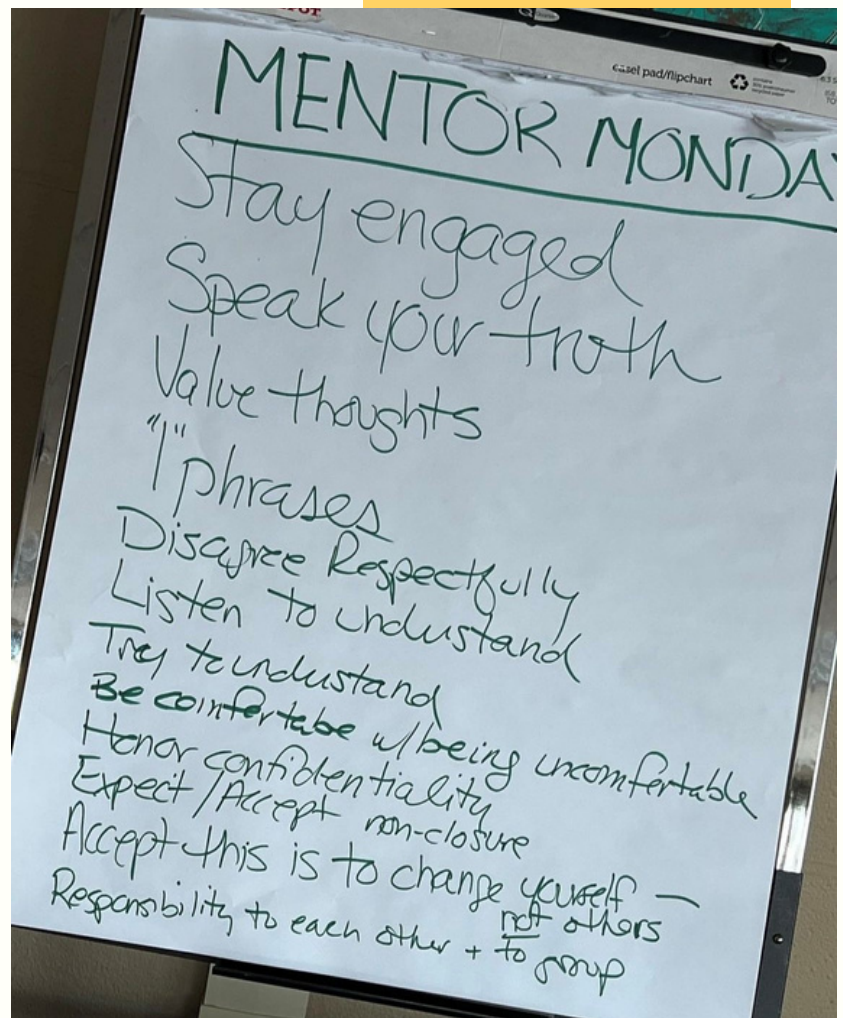
- professional social work identity
- advisement
- practicing through an ADEI lens
- stress management
- courseload
- identifying and accessing resources

This group will continue and is open to all students (in person and online) in the BASW program. More details about day, time, location, and Zoom link will be sent at the beginning of the Spring 2023 semester.

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IT'S IMPORTANT TO  
TAKE CARE OF  
YOURSELF IN ORDER  
TO TAKE CARE OF  
OTHERS

”



# INTEGRITY

## *BASW Students Apply Advocacy Skills Learned*

BASW students enrolled in Dr. Laura Granruth's SOWK 303: Social Welfare and the Law course spent the semester learning how to access significant legislation, court decisions, and regulatory policies related to specific social work issues such as poverty, healthcare, substance misuse, and family law.

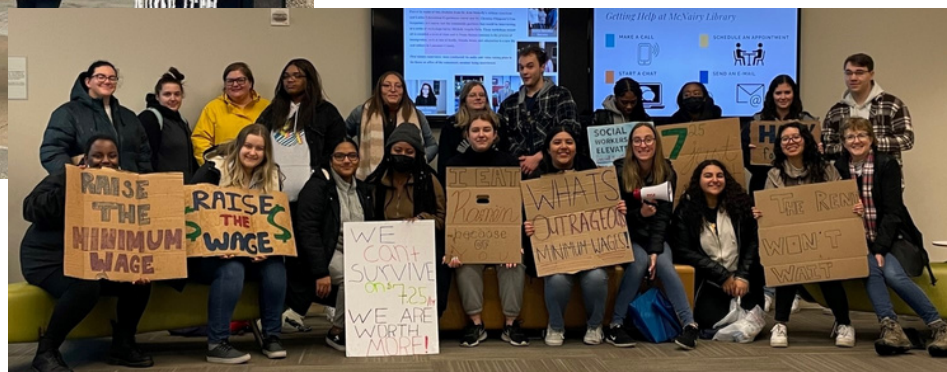
The final week of class involved students organizing a demonstration on the need for fair, livable wages, a topic the students chose. The demonstration, which took place on MU campus, offered our students the opportunity to apply what they learned in the classroom to raise awareness, a key component of fostering positive social change.

As reflected in their own words, this learning experience was truly transformative:

*"Dr. Granruth has given us this great opportunity to plan, create, and practice advocacy. This is something that is very important part of our profession as social workers and had been very enjoyable." --Alexis Landis*

*"Dr. Granruth has inspired us to do better and be a better citizen; to advocate for our rights and take care of ourselves." --Lianny Deoleo*

*"This opportunity to advocate both for ourselves and PA workers as a whole is something that will benefit us greatly as we progress in our social work career. Dr. Granruth's guidance and wisdom have prepared us for this demonstration and our careers at large." --BASW Student*



# COMPASSION/IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

## *First Semester BASW Students Engage in Field Trips to Foster Empathy and Compassion*

*by Bekah Whiteman, BASW Student*

During the UNIV 103 class taught by Dr. Frank, my classmates and I had the immense pleasure of visiting local organizations with the purpose of alleviating poverty. The first we visited was The Factory Ministries. After being greeted warmly by the staff we learned about the organization's domino effect theory about poverty. To summarize this theory, there is no one true cause of poverty. Several things can influence someone's economic status including things such as social relationships or transportation. If one essential element is missing, all the dominos will fall. It is important for people to have access to all their basic needs. After this lesson, we had the privilege to eat dinner with members of The Factory Ministries' community. Besides having a very fun time speaking with everyone, we also got a first-hand look into the lives of people living in poverty. One of the major takeaways was that many people fall into poverty thanks to situations no one can control. We heard from individuals who faced medical troubles and car crashes which prevented them from working. A common bias that people in this country have is that people below the poverty line are lazy or do not want to work. Everyone there did want to work. Life is unpredictable and we cannot jump to placing blame on others for their economic status.

The next place we went with Dr. Frank was a few doors down from Millersville to the Loft Community Partnership. This organization specifically serves people who live in the Penn Manor school district. The director, Jenna Graeff (an MU SOWK grad), welcomed us into the space that they share with a local church. She took us on a tour of the facility which involved a food bank, a clothing bank, and toiletries. Here, we learned about the need in our own community. She informed us that they were helping up to 200 family units every week, which translates to around 1,000 people. This experience also provided wonderful insight into a growing non-profit. While The Factory Ministries is a developed organization with several focuses and their own building, the Loft is a much newer organization who is focused on providing food for people who need it. We learned about the importance of volunteers, the process that is setting up and tearing down the food bank, and the food regulations that must be met. We also learned about different organizations focused on other needs such as diapers that the volunteers steer people towards. I think it was extremely beneficial to get an insider's view on two very different organizations: one who has had the time to develop and one much newer that is still growing. Seeing both of these stages helped us to better understand the process of supporting a community from start to finish.





# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

## Dr. Micah Beaston, DSW, '19

Dr. Micah Beaston, LSW is a graduate of the Millersville DSW program class of 2019. She has spent most of her career in the field of school social work. At the start of her career, Dr. Beaston worked as a transition coordinator at an adventure-based special education school in Carlisle, PA called Yellow Breeches Educational Center. After that, she took a position at Central Dauphin School District (CDS) in Harrisburg, PA as a counselor for the k-12 school-based emotional support programs. Although she liked her job, she knew she wanted more out of her career. She searched for an opportunity that would challenge her and help her learn how to make a bigger impact in the lives of the students she worked with in school social work. It was during this time that she decided to apply to Millersville University's DSW program. Dr. Beaston credits the DSW program with building her confidence in the social work field and equipping her with the tools she needs to make real change. When she started the program, Dr. Beaston challenged herself to remain open to the experience and to "trust the process". As a result, she was able to use what she was learning in her classes to make a direct impact in her work. Dr. Beaston used the DSW program as a guidebook to become a change-maker in school social work. The DSW coursework included projects focused on leadership, teaching, and how to conduct research to make systemic change. During the program, Dr. Beaston took on a different role within the school district and began serving as the district liaison to community alternative and special education programs. It was through this role and simultaneous enrollment in the Millersville DSW program that Dr. Beaston



began to understand the importance of having social workers in leadership roles. After moving to Southern Maryland, Dr. Beaston was hired to be the Mental Health Coordinator for Calvert County Public Schools. This was an opportunity for her to have a seat at the county leadership table and the ability to direct and coordinate mental health supports for all students. Recently, Dr. Beaston has moved back to Harrisburg and was able to bring the Mental Health Coordinator role back to her former district. In addition to serving in this role at CDS, she works as a research assistant within the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State University. The Clearinghouse is an applied research center that helps professionals identify, implement, evaluate, and improve programs that strengthen military service members, veterans, and their families. Micah says that her experience during the DSW program helped her grow both personally and professionally and has prepared her to take on leadership roles in the profession that she loves, even more, since her graduation from the program.

## Dr. Christina Helfrick, DSW, '19



As social workers we are to be competent using research to inform our practice and using our practice to inform research. However, this competency did not come alive to me until enrolling in the DSW program.

As a school social worker for nearly a decade, I was confounded by an ever-increasing homeless population and the lack of resources to respond to the needs children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Through the course work in the DSW program and community collaboration, I developed an advocate program for homeless youth: “Champions for Teens”. In the development process I had emailed one of the authors of a curriculum to ask if I could use it in my intervention. I thought it would provide a good foundation for the relationship between the youth and their advocate. To my surprise, the author wrote back, and we set up a phone call. The author was a researcher at the Kansas University Center for Research on Learning, and he was intrigued by my project. This phone call turned into strong support from the research team for the development of my program as well as opportunities to present together at conferences.

What started as frustration in my field of practice, turned into a research interest, the outcome of which was *Champions for Teens*. Fast forward, past the dissertation, and *Champions for Teens* is now being implemented in several school districts, after gaining the support of Pennsylvania’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness.

Champions for Teens was also a way to gain community support for homeless youth in my own community and has grown into a grassroots initiative called “Friends of Donegal”, whose mission is to “harness the collective impact of our neighbors experiencing

homelessness and poverty”. Most recently, the research team from Kansas University has begun to develop a research track specifically for homeless youth in school systems. I have been invited to participate as an affiliate. What this means is that I, as a social worker, will be adding our professional social work lens to educational research. What is meaningful to researchers? My practice experience. Ergo: practice informed research, and research informed practice.

The best word that I can think of to describe my experience in the DSW program, is that it was a “catalyst”. Every piece of the course content was used in my practice and in my research. The process gave me the confidence to reach out and develop and lead collaborations. It was certainly far more than a doctoral degree to me. The DSW program launched me into developing real innovations to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP ACTIVITIES

## 10th Annual Global Well-Being and Social Change Conference

Within a Sustainable Development framework and embracing a human rights approach (Androff, 2016; Declaration of Human Rights, 1984), we at the Millersville University Learning Institute are dedicated to the interrogation of global social issues that violate or compromise individuals' ability to live with the freedoms and protections to which they are entitled. The fundamental assumption embodied by human rights is that each person is a moral and rational being who deserves to be treated with dignity (United for Human Rights, 2017).

The Learning Institute's 10th Annual Global Well-Being Conference will focus on using the social justice advocacy theoretical approach to enhance our global connectedness as we navigate an evolving world. Global connectedness ensures our awareness of the wider world, sense of our own role as a world citizen, respect and value for diversity, and engagement in intergroup dialogue and cultural humility. With the interconnected and interdependent nature of our world, the global is not 'out there'; it is part of our everyday lives, as we are linked to others in our own country and on every continent. As individuals and as leaders in larger organizations, how can we foster global connectedness to achieve a sustainable world?

This year's conference, *Global Connectedness: Achieving Sustainable Change in an Evolving World* invites presentations (paper, roundtable, and workshop) that explore the realization of social justice and human rights and its myriad dimensions and manifestations. Our conference welcomes research that identifies barriers to social justice and human rights, as well as strategies (policies, programs, and practices) to promote social justice and human rights across diverse populations.

**Learn more and submit a proposal:** The Learning Institute | Sponsored by Millersville University School of Social Work



The Learning Institute  
*"Advancing Global Social Justice and Human Rights"*

Millersville University

Congratulations to our BASW Fall 2022 graduates!!



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## MU SSW ALUMNI

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