

The Change Agent

The Newsletter for Millersville University's School of Social Work



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dr. Karen Rice, Department Chair

Fall always brings new changes as it is the start of a new academic year, and with it comes a new cohort of students across all our programs who begin or advance their social work journey. Additionally, after working remotely for the past 17 months, we welcomed you back to campus. The return to repopulated spaces generates mixed emotions, and I am grateful for how our faculty, staff, students, and community partners continued to navigate what this looked like for us to ensure the health and safety of our community. The pandemic has illuminated the health and work inequities within our country and progress toward racial justice has been stalled while other human rights are in jeopardy of being eliminated. Social workers lead for justice and human rights. How shall we respond and lead through these challenging times? Action is essential to foster any change. Throughout this issue you will learn how members of our social work community are leading to foster positive change. 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.

Together, we can be The CHANGE.

Karen Rice

EXPLORATION

MU Prepares Social Workers to Make Impact in Schools

Dr. Leonora Foels

*Associate Professor and BASW
Online Degree Completion
Coordinator*

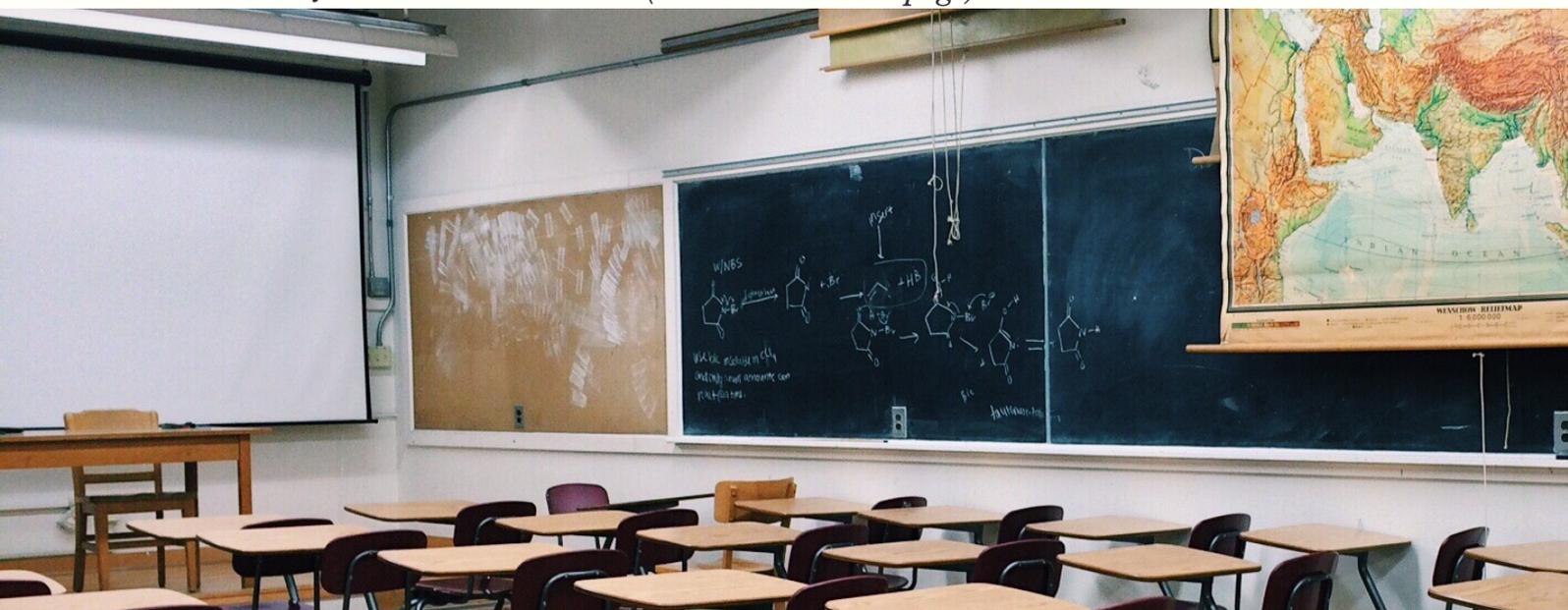
It is so especially important that graduate social work students be on the forefront of being certified as school social workers to provide a full range of services to our PreK-12 students and their families. Because of the School Social Work Certification, school social workers will be able to not just conduct home visitations for truancy but truly engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate many of the impactful life situations experienced by our young people such as death in the family, divorce and separation, homelessness, pregnancy along with mental health issues and special needs that influence academic outcomes. All the issues that affect students' lives and their academic performance that go unattended or contracted out to community health

organizations can now be effectively and efficiently addressed by the integration of highly qualified social workers in the educational multidisciplinary team within school districts across the Commonwealth; thus, making schools unequivocally better equipped to meet the myriad of needs of all general education and special education students and their families. Recognizing, validating, and certifying master's level social workers as qualified school social workers is so vital to the success of our school age children and youth that I have spent my career at Millersville University working with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, governor's office, and legislature to make this certification a realization as well as enacted. Social workers are in a unique position to work within the micro, mezzo, and macro systems, which are exclusive to our profession. The professional
(continued on next page)

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-DR. LEONORA FOELS**

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BASW Alum is New Superintendent of Chester-Upland School District

By Dr. Craig Parkinson, *BASW Alum*

Social work has been at the foundation of everything that I have accomplished over my 30 year career. I was a practicing social worker for 8 years prior to transitioning into the field of education. I tell many that I am a social worker who happens to be a superintendent of a school district. The knowledge that I acquired, both theoretical and practical, while attending Millersville University has been the differentiator in terms of being successful with all stakeholders. I have been able to utilize my social work lens to problem solve and make sound and reasonable decisions, which are always well thought out and in the best interest of our students. There is not a day in my professional career that I do not rely on my background as a social worker.

I served as a special education teacher for four years prior to transitioning into a leadership role, serving as an assistant principal at an alternative school for eight years. I truly enjoyed serving the children as a special education teacher, but knew that my true passion and calling was to lead educators to ensure that our students were being provided the best learning opportunities possible.

(MU prepares continued)

development and training of social workers includes the ability to see those issues that might be affecting students' academic success and to suggest and guide the educational setting to solve the issue(s) before becoming a true problem. When a social worker is integrated within a school setting, they are interacting with the student body, getting to know all stakeholders, and developing an understanding of their perspectives along with identifying their needs rather than just being called in when an emergency arises. This certification provides social workers with an opportunity to apply all their knowledge, skills, and values to improve the lives of everyone within the educational system as well as work across systems to bring the full scope of all the resources to help the individual child, youth, and their family.

"I knew my true passion and calling was to lead educators to ensure that our students were being provided the best learning opportunities possible."

*-Dr. Craig Parkinson,
BASW Alum*



(BSW Alum continued) That was the social worker in me that led me to make that decision. It is my personal belief that social workers make very strong and companionate leaders. Our ability to see things differently than most is key and allows us to use the outside of the box methods to resolve issues and create a positive environment.

The ability to serve in a school district as a social worker is extremely rewarding. It is the ideal position for those who wish to impact people on many levels. As a school social worker, there are many opportunities to support students with their personal growth socially and academically. In my previous school district and current district, I have utilized the amazing skills of our social workers to ensure that our students have all of the basic needs to be successful. They are true student advocates who assist with family issues, as well as issues that may spill into the buildings. There is a great need for individuals who are willing to serve as school social workers.

Millersville's Post-Masters Certificate in School Social Work:

- Will prepare master level social workers for role as school social worker
- Has been developed according to PDE certification standards and was approved to fulfill the educational requirements for certification as a Pennsylvania School Social Worker, Educational Specialist
- Ensures new school social workers are highly qualified and meet competencies to be certified as a School Social Worker Educational Specialist
- Offers flexible program options



Motivational Interviewing Training Session led by Dr. Kat Walsh as part of the PRIME project

CONGRATS TO PRIME TEAM

The Promoting Rigorous and Interdisciplinary Mental Healthcare Education (PRIME) project

The PRIME project provides clinical training opportunities for graduate students in the Master of Social Work and Clinical Psychology programs. PRIME is co-directed by **Dr. Karen Rice** and **Dr. Debra Vredenburg-Rudy**, chair of psychology. Additional PRIME leadership team members include **Drs. Leonora Foels, Laura Granruth, Karena Rush, Kat Walsh**, and School of Social Work Field Director, **Heather Strohman**. This accomplishment was also featured in the Millersville News and by **President Wubah**.

PRIME is made possible by a \$1.9 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Intended to increase well-trained behavioral health professionals, Millersville University can continue to bring high quality professionals to the central Pennsylvania region. **Dr. Rice**, chair of the School of Social Work

says the project will help to teach graduate students about the unique needs and challenges found in today's behavioral health fields. The grant also provides students with valuable work experience opportunities, and a \$10,000 training stipend upon completion of their specialized training and internship.

The PRIME program offers specialized interdisciplinary training opportunities in the following areas:

- Cultural competency
- Integrating technology into clinical services (such as telehealth), and
- Working with children, adolescents, and transitional-aged youth at risk for behavioral health disorders.

*Interested in applying for the
PRIME Fellowship?
Visit the website!*

PROFESSIONALISM

MSW Student Awarded Positive Energy Grant

As part of her field placement, **Abby Gabner** (MSW student) worked with a team of MU faculty and staff of the Student Access and Support Services (SASS): **Dr. Heather Girvin**, SSW Associate Professor, **Darlene Newman**, Director of SASS and **Christina Williams**, Associate Director of SASS. This group created the Millersville University EPPiIC Academy. **Gabner** and **Williams** were awarded \$2500 from the Positive Energy Grant to fund this project and associated research aimed at reducing drop-out rates and improve college attendance for 8th graders in the School District of Lancaster (SDOL) In an attempt to offer positive pre-college experiences, the EPPiIC

Academy is planning to host participants in January and in May. Programming will include MU student mentors, a student panel focused on our EPPiIC values, information sessions on college admissions, financial aid, and a networking event with MU students, faculty, and staff. The program has already received support from other members of the MU community. **Dr. Len Litowitz** (Department Chair, Applied Engineering, Safety, and Technology) has agreed to help facilitate educational programming for the 8th graders. In addition, several students from the MU Pre-Scholars Summer Institute have committed to participate in the student panel on our EPPiIC Values.

Specific objectives of the EPPiIC Academy are to:

- *reduce barriers to increase access to higher education,*
- *increase student self-reliance, educate students on future life choices,*
- *provide support in navigating the higher education admissions process.*

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I HOPE OTHER STUDENTS KNOW THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES RIGHT HERE AT THE 'VILLE TO HELP BRING YOUR GREAT IDEAS TO LIFE.
-ABBY GABNER, MSW STUDENT

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(Left to right) Christina Williams, Associate Director/SASS, Abby Gabner, MSW Student, and Darlene Newman, Associate Director/SASS pose by MU's EPPiIC Values

PUBLIC MISSION

Grants to Support the Development of a Global Literacy Curriculum and Program Evaluation

Drs. Karen Rice (School of Social Work) and Deborah Tamakloe (Early, Middle, and Exception Education Department) received two grants to support the development of a global literacy curriculum and program evaluation, Global Champions 4 Humanity. Recent calls in the United States for schools to diversify the curriculum in response to the changing needs of 21st century classrooms undergird the importance of exposing youth to global literacy.

Drs. Rice and Tamakloe developed a free two-week summer enrichment program and implemented it during July 2021. Current

Millersville University students and alumni assisted in the development and implementation of specific lessons throughout the two weeks. Youth were recruited from the Lancaster County community.

The program goals sought to foster global citizenship, enhance compassion toward others, and increase knowledge about specific countries that have shaped and influenced the country in which participants reside. Using cultural historical activity theory as a framework, program activities contributed to enhancing global knowledge in the youth and deepened a connection among members *(Continued on next page)*



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SOCIAL WORK IN THE MERCY TRADITION: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

A conference for Conference for Mercy Higher Education BSW and MSW students and faculty

OCTOBER 19 & 20, 2021
4:30-7:30 P.M.

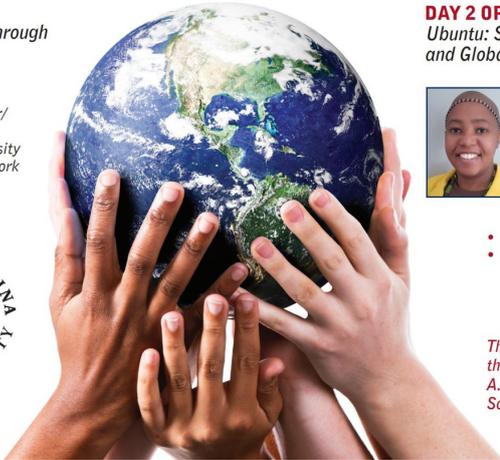
DAY 1 KEYNOTE:

Fostering Global Citizenship through Connectedness



Dr. Karen Rice
Associate Professor/
Department Chair
Millersville University
School of Social Work

HOSTED BY:



DAY 2 OPENING PLENARY SESSION:

Ubuntu: Strengthening Social Solidarity and Global Connectedness



Dr. Wanja Ogongi
Assistant Professor
Millersville University
School of Social Work

- CEU's are available
- Conference is free

This conference is made possible through a grant from the Katherine A. Kendall Institute of the Council on Social Work Education.

(Grants to Support, Continued) of a community leading to an appreciation of others, which is essential to a just world.

Example of global activities included engaging with members of the resettled refugee community; making and sampling various ethnic foods; learning phrases from different languages; participating in various cultural dance and arts activities; as well as exploring the meaning of home, immigration, refugee, citizenship, social justice, and advocacy. The youth participants organized a celebratory event that highlighted key takeaways that they presented to members of their family during the last day of the program. **Drs. Rice and Tamakloe** plan to offer the program again this summer and seek additional funding to further develop their global literacy program.

Global Perspectives in Social Work conference organized by DSW Student

On October 19-20, 2021 more than 150 social work students, faculty and alumni from Mercy social work programs participated in a Global Perspectives in Social Work conference that was organized by 3rd year Millersville DSW student, **Janice Nuss, LCSW**. Janice is an Assistant Professor and Director of Field Education at Gwynedd Mercy University.

Dr. Karen Rice provided the keynote address, Fostering Global Citizenship through Connectedness. The plenary address, Ubuntu: Strengthening Social Solidarity and Global Connectedness, was provided by **Dr. Wanja Ogongi**. The conference was made possible through a three-year grant from the Council on Social Work Education's Katherine A. Kendall Institute. As a part of her dissertation research, **Janice** is conducting research about impact of global learning on social work student values.

Read more about [the conference \(link\)](#).





Rasheed Osman, BASW Student

The Learning Institute's Ubuntu Leaders Fellows Program ([link](#)) was created to educate undergraduate students on relevant global social issues and provide the skills and tools necessary to promote positive social change, reflecting the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. The Learning Institute employed ULFP as an innovative program to prepare and help emerging leaders to develop skills and talents essential to becoming an effective change agent (advocacy and activism skills). ULFP provides our fellows with resources that will improve their knowledge and skills in these four focus areas:

- developing fellows group working skills
- developing fellows leadership skills
- improving fellows social justice knowledge and advocacy skills
- strengthening fellows' sense of community

The ULFP strives to create transformative leaders who are selfless, humble, and willing to sacrifice for the benefit of their

community (applying the Ubuntu philosophy of "I am because we are.") Leaders who work well with others despite differences and work collectively towards achieving sustainable development goals. One unique component of the ULFP is that it is coordinated by BASW student, **Rasheed Osman** as part of his field education experience.

Osman wants to share his gratitude to **Dr. Rice** and all the Learning Institute planning team for the opportunity to intern with the ULFP. He says that this program allowed him "to apply concepts learned in class" and also form "strong relationships with the fellows and their mentors during this period."

Osman expresses that the opportunity to connect and collaborate with different faculty and community professionals has been invaluable. "I have the opportunity to demonstrate and observe the nine social work competencies at work. In addition, I have developed passion to promote the concept of Ubuntu, which are selflessness and interconnectedness. I believe we all need each other, and if we work together despite our differences the world will become a better place for us all."

Osman believes every social worker is a leader, and that all leaders should share social work values. "According to **Dr. Wubah** during a ULFP leadership training event, the world needs transformative leaders now more than ever; Leaders who are selfless, humble and are willing to sacrifice for the benefit of the group. These are essential qualities leaders must possess to successfully serve one's community, work well with others, and to work towards achieving sustainable development goal."

(See next page for this year's UFLP Students)

CURRENT UFLP STUDENTS



Niema Abdullah
Early Childhood Major

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**"EVERY SOCIAL
WORKER IS A
LEADER, AND EVERY
LEADER NEEDS
SOCIAL WORK
VALUES."
RASHEED OSMAN,
BASW STUDENT**

”



Carolina Hidalgo-Ahmed
Social Work Major
(Photo credit: Ben Hasty of the Reading Eagle)



Katherine McLaughlin
Speech Communication Major

INCLUSION

Featured Student Run Organization

The Alliance for Social Change ([ASC link](#))

The purpose of this student-run organization is to promote social justice for marginalized groups and to stimulate interest in advocacy and planned social change. After returning to in-person following events of the pandemic last year, ASC hoped to hold a welcoming and safe space for its members. ASC's goal for this academic year is to educate members on important and relevant topics that impact individuals, groups, and communities. Recent meetings have featured the following topics:

- Mental health and suicide prevention: Attendees discussed risk factors, warning signs, and suicide prevention resources.
- Allyship and qualities of being an ally for marginalized groups:

- Recognition of the History of National Coming Out Day: Education was offered on LGBTQ+ and queer community.

Next semester:

- ASC will attend the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Legislative Education and Advocacy Day (March 22, 2022). At this event, students are given the opportunity to advocate with our local representatives on bills that align with social work.
- CODE RED Drive: ASC will be collecting feminine hygiene products around campus to provide free products in the women's restrooms.

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THE ALLIANCE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IS A STUDENT RUN ORGANIZATION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND TO STIMULATE INTEREST IN ADVOCACY AND PLANNED SOCIAL CHANGE
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(Below) Members were led in an activity where each traced their hands and wrote words they associated with being an ally.



BASW and ULFP Student Shares Community Project Focus

Carolina Hidalgo-Ahmed, a BASW student and fellow of the ULFP says, “I feel grounded and confident in my social work practice because I participate in the fellowship.”

In her ULFP community project, she is focusing on two (out of 17) sustainable development goals: Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; Ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable development goal 1: Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere

“Places like Haiti, which my goal focuses on, como una ciudadana Dominicana, the stabilization of our sister country, is more than a passion project. Haiti is personal to my family and me, especially my grandmother (who is no longer here), whose struggle in being a black woman in the Trujillo era echos through the resilience instilled into all the women in my family. I am calling out the racism and ostracization faced by being Haitian in the Dominican Republic and within charity efforts in the United States.”



Carolina Hidalgo-Ahmed, BASW Student
Photo credit: John Secoges

"Ubuntu is my opportunity."

**-Carolina Hidalgo-Ahmed,
BASW Student**

Hidalgo-Ahmed has chosen to focus on eradicating poverty in Haiti by advocating for transparency and highlighting both strengths and weaknesses of previous approaches. “While there is much information on both topics and suggestions for poverty reduction, poverty remains alive and well today. The gap is growing, especially in places where poverty was already a significant contributor to the livelihood of so many people.”

Sustainable development goal 2: Ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture

Hidalgo-Ahmed is also concerned with developing a supportive method to combat food insecurity. She says, “Food insecurity isn't something that happens in underdeveloped nations. It's in our current, federally funded, well-cut policies in our backyards,” noting also how this was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The reality is that while federally funded programs like SNAP and WIC help alleviate the effects of food insecurity, it does not eliminate them.” **Hidalgo-Ahmed** has pondered what this means for “the millions of people slightly over the federal poverty level, undocumented, or unable to receive benefits because of their living situation. That number makes up one-third of those millions of Americans experiencing food insecurity.” **Hidalgo-Ahmed** points out how complementary her course content and the fellowship have been, stating that they have helped her to approach these topics “from an angle that doesn't lose sight of the person, the individual; whose life this is.” **Hidalgo-Ahmed** *(continued on next page).*

INTEGRITY

Dr. Laura Granruth named New Coordinator of the Walker Center for Civic Responsibility and Leadership

The Walker Center is premised on the view that through civic education students will be awakened and equipped to become active leaders in civic affairs. The Walker Center is actively recruiting fellows for the Civic and Community Leaders Professional Development Program! [Apply here!](#) (link).

Dr. Granruth first became interested in how societal structures can help or hinder while earning her BA in Sociology at Fordham University. This is what eventually lead her to complete her MSW from Virginia Commonwealth University, and her PhD in Social Work from The National Catholic School of Social Services at The Catholic University of America. In addition to being an Associate Professor and MSW Program Coordinator, she is the lead faculty member for the annual NASW-PA Legislative, Education and Advocacy Day.

Granruth finds this new role to be a natural fit for her, as her areas of primary focus in social work have always been policy, policy analysis, advocacy, and political social work. Her passion for policy has also been expressed in her



“I’m very happy to be doing this because it really fits in with who I am.”

Dr. Laura Granruth,

(UFLP student continued) has chosen to focus on child food insecurity in the U.S. with the objective to establish an organization that aids SNAP and WIC with coordinated Hands-On Nutrition Education (HONE). She would like to establish a nonprofit organization, Pecan The HONE Initiative because “food security begins with basic kitchen knowledge.”

Hidalgo-Ahmed reminds all members of the social work community to ask, “who is profiting from poverty, not just what can I do to alleviate it? Who is profiting from food insecurity, racial inequality, inequitable education? Behind all of these questions, there are answers. We should be as versed as we are in policy adherence to the causes and profitability of these problems to serve the clients we vow to serve. Mending the problem is still part of the core of social work, but so is improving our practice and the only way to progress is to focus on the goals that will push us all forward together, side by side no matter what we look like, where we come from, or who we are.” Dr. Jennifer Frank serves as Hidalgo-Ahmed's ULFP faculty mentor.

The Learning Institute, in partnership with The Robert S. and Sue Walker Center for Civic Responsibility and Leadership of Millersville University Welcomes You!

Creating Anti-Oppressive Organizations

Panelists:

Moderator:
Dr. Sarah Jackson



Adam Hosey



Dr. Amber Sessoms



Dr. Charles Barrett

We will begin shortly!

Virtual panel discussion held by the Walker Center in partnership with the Learning Institute for its Policy Advocacy Series on "Creating Anti-Oppressive Organizations."

ADVOCATING FOR FOSTER CARE YOUTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Millersville University School of Social Work, MSW Program

ASHLY DUIN, ABBY GABNER, JOSEFA HERNANDEZ,
DANIELLE HORNUNG, & DANIELLE MCFADIEN

MSW Students Published in MUsings

Inspired by an assignment in Dr. Jennifer Frank's research methods course, MSW students Abby Gabner, Ashly Duin, Josefa Hernandez, Danielle Hornung, and Danielle Foster (McFadien) co-authored and were published in MUsings 2021. Their article, titled "Advocating for Foster Care Youth in Higher Education," also prompted an invitation to present at the 2021 "Made in Millersville."

Co-author, Abby Gabner (MSW student) reflects on this topic and says, "Fair access to higher education is why I picked the field of Social Work. Social Work is about social justice and this arena is not just. It is difficult to navigate the higher education admissions and financial aid process even with support. Also, the outcomes for emancipated foster care youth are unacceptable. We must do better."

View full article
here: [MUsings 2021:
The Made in
Millersville EDITION](#)
(pg. 20).

MUsings
THE GRADUATE JOURNAL
Made In Millersville
EDITION

(Dr. Granruth continued)

involvement with Influencing Social Policy (Board Member since May 2018), and Research Fellowship for Millersville University's Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change (CPSSC).

It is important to note that the Walker Center has historically been led by Professors in the School of Government.

Granruth's leadership brings an exciting opportunity for the School of Social Work. She comments, "I'm very happy to be doing this because it really fits in with who I am."

Granruth wants to give a special shout-out to her colleague Dr. Mary Glazier (Professor Emerita/Former Director of the Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change) for encouraging her to become involved with community research when they first met in 2013.

COMPASSION

Dr. Frank receives PASSHE Faculty Professional Development Council Award for “Stepping Stones”

In his congratulatory article last month, **President Wubah** commended this team on their scholarly and creative endeavors leading to the grant, which will fund “Stepping Stones.” **Dr. Jennifer Frank’s** proposal was one of 44 that were funded by the highly competitive PASSHE Faculty Professional Development Council (FPDC) Award. In addition to the PASSHE Professional Development Grant, the project is also supported by the Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change.

Dr. Frank heads up a hard-working team of other faculty and social work students including:

Dr. Laura Brierton Granruth

Dr. Heather Girvin

Dr. Mary Glazier

Brittany Leffler, MSW Candidate

Rachel Preibisch, MSW Candidate

Dawn Watson, MSW Candidate

“Stepping Stones” grew out of a prior research project called “Bridging the Gap together,” that had the goal of forging connections between students and participants at a rural social service agency through a shared meal. Initially launched to decrease social distance between students and community members who may not usually interact, this was a popular feature of **Dr. Frank’s** course “Perspectives on Poverty.”

At one point they instituted a brief pen pal exchange to help enhance participation at the dinner, which worked well, but it also seemed that community participants wished these letter exchanges lasted longer. Further, the team’s understanding of social isolation and lacking infrastructure in poor rural areas warranted some type of intervention that was not overly dependent on technology to help address human connection needs. Prior research informed the structure of their new project, which will involve a more intentional relationship cultivated over a longer period of time, 12 months. These ideas gave birth to the new project: Stepping Stones.

“Stepping Stones” is at first glance, a pen pal project that pairs community members from rural and urban areas with masters-level social work students. *(continued on next page)*

(Below) Stepping Stones Team Meeting



Rachel Preibisch, YCSD

Jennifer Frank

Dr. Laura Granruth, MSW

Dawn Watson

Heather.Girvin

Mary H

Brittany

("Stepping Stones continued)

Partnering agencies include Tenfold, the Factory Ministries, and the YWCA. One goal of the project is to increase social connection and in doing so, decrease loneliness and increase generativity. The "Stepping Stones" project is a mixed methods design in which the research team will analyze both the letters that are being written (qualitative), as well as the results from the surveys about loneliness and generativity (quantitative). Initial analysis indicates that pen pals have shared their personal experiences through their letters.

Frank and her team anticipate using narrative inquiry as a methodological framing for their analysis, with the pairs themselves being seen as the unit of analysis. **Frank** shares, "It seems that the stories that we tell about our experiences, and the ways in which we tell those stories, are shaped by the relationships that we cultivate. Therefore, looking at the pairs (as the unit of analysis) makes some sense in that regard." Pen pals will exchange letters for 12 months and hopefully be able to gather together at the end of the exchange for a shared meal. The details of this event are yet to be determined.

Brittany Leffler, (MSW 2022) represented the team to share her perspective on being a student research assistant. Leffler described herself as "a very unlikely researcher" who found her first research paper in the MSW program "intimidating." She went on to explain that her undergraduate degree is in theatre, and she transitioned to working

in human services a few years before starting her MSW at Millersville. However, she soon realized the strengths she had to draw from when she drew a connection between theatre and research: the study of human behavior. She says, "With theatre, you have to look at a script and immediately make the world and characters your own. Making the transition to social work, I already had the social background and curiosity about relationships. This project is so socially involved. It's really about connecting people and stories. It was a natural fit for me." **Leffler** expressed gratitude for the chance to share the stories of people who may not otherwise have a platform to share them.

In addition to searching for themes of connection in her research, **Leffler** found herself better connected with the School of Social Work. "We have a lot of great faculty members. I appreciate working with faculty and other MSW students on this project. As a student, I learned to lean into my own strengths and communicate that to the research team—they assigned me projects that aligned with that as a result. Sometimes as a student, that's the best thing we can learn how to do. Being a student who has had this unique experience of student-faculty collaboration has been truly one of the highlights of my time at Millersville. Being able to take what I am learning in the classroom and apply it in this research project has made my education so rich and valuable."

Leffler adds to this that she knows she is probably not the only student who was initially intimidated by research. She encourages current and perspective students to keep an open mind around research and take an opportunity to work with a research team. "Every single one of us has the capability to be a researcher if we're curious about something. If you identify the things that are constantly churning in your brain—that's your research question."

**"EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US HAS
THE CAPABILITY TO BE A
RESEARCHER IF WE'RE CURIOUS
ABOUT SOMETHING."
-BRITTANY LEFFLER,
MSW STUDENT**



Red Cross Disaster Action Team and Disaster Mental Health Associate Service

An Interview with Dr. Kathleen (Kat) Walsh, Associate Professor/BASW Program Coordinator who recently completed her certification as a Disaster Mental Health Therapist and Crisis Responder

What made you want to earn this certification?

I approach every aspect of my personal and professional life with a social work lens, attuned to our core values of service, integrity, competence, importance of human relationships, dignity and worth of the person, and social justice. My professional values are my personal values. Over the past 24+ years as a licensed clinical social worker, I have vast experience facing many complex challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic and the related health, community and societal challenges impacted me in ways nothing has previously.

When the first shutdown occurred, and I taught my last class on March 13, 2020; I tried to be a face of hope and a voice of comfort to my students and those around me. Inside I was terrified and felt hopeless. I was honest about my fears and decided it was best for me to isolate for those first 2 weeks to get grounded and transition to virtual 'everything.' I continued to work what felt like around the clock to get my classes in order, offer support to students, colleagues, family, and friends. I kept going but I felt like I should be doing more. I knew that the best that we could

**"I tried to be a face of hope and a voice of comfort."
-Dr. Kat Walsh**



(Red cross continued)

was to stay home, stay safe, and listen to science. But this was really hard.

I empathized with the frustration, uncertainty, and jumbled emotions my students and everyone around me felt and I kept coming back and trying. I tried to be gentle to those around me, convey grace and compassion. Still, I wanted to do more and I didn't know what. So, I derived inspiration and encouragement from my students. They were experiencing the most difficult things in their lives, possibly even their world view. And they kept coming back. They kept trying. They came to zoom "class" from their cars, closets, underneath kitchen tables and beyond. Many also worked around the clock to continue in school, care for loved ones and many had essential jobs (many paying inadequate wages). They were in a global pandemic, persevering and not being stagnant-- but enhancing their human capital while simultaneously working to better the world. I decided I should do the same. First, I started by designating my daily commute hours to professional and/or personal growth.

Like so many others, each day could be an emotional rollercoaster filled with so much uncertainty, thinking, planning, thinking, and overthinking. Through all the feelings of helplessness, one thing helped me to persevere and be more at ease with being still and staying put. This was the promise that as soon as I was able to, I would be able to get back out, do more direct service in the world and make meaningful contributions. It was then that I decided to pursue my lifelong dream of being a disaster mental health responder.

What was involved in earning your certification as a disaster mental health therapist and crisis responder?

In terms of my involvement with the Red Cross, I started doing the online orientations and then meeting with volunteer coordinators who have served in various capacities so that I could understand more about the work and

where I might fit in. During 2020, responses were all virtual, so I focused on attending trainings and virtual synchronous sessions so that I was best prepared to respond in person as a Disaster Action Team member when I was able to. By 2021, I had completed my required virtual trainings and was able to start responding on-call to local emergency situations including fires, flooding and even a bomb threat evacuation. I also got to help in our Canteen to provide food, water, and brief respite to those first responders who are involved in fighting the fires.

After gaining experiences as a Disaster Action Team member, I continued my training and pursuit of the Disaster Mental Health volunteer certification. This involved more training and real-life experiences responding to disasters and providing support to those impacted including those who were involved in the fire or flood as well as those first responders who provide intervention to assist them. I continue to participate in trainings and opportunities to volunteer on scene when there are fires, flooding or when there is a need. I believe that our professional skill set transcends and that we can provide support and comfort in many ways.

One of my favorite experiences so far has been volunteering on a canteen call where residents of an apartment building had to evacuate due to a bomb threat. Folks were positioned in a parking lot far enough from the apartments and had convened to wait it out. We arrived with water and snacks to help those impacted and intervene if housing or another emergency assistance was needed. I decided to walk around and offer water

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bottles, and snacks for the evacuated people and pets. This lasted several hours and eventually we handed out blankets and other comfort kits to those still waiting. To me what was so beautiful and natural about the experience was that in the first hours, folks were sitting in the parking lot clustered with their household members, but as the night waned on folks shared the snacks, blankets, pet water bowls and support. By the end of the approximately 5–6-hour endeavor, folks had moved closer together and truly embodied a sense of community/family. In that last 30 minutes, we were not sure if the building would be cleared or if we would need to identify housing options for the night. As we walked around gathering household information, I loved that those neighbors who had limited interactions before, were making plans to recover together and identifying ways that they could help each other (like family). As a community organizer, this filled my heart and my soul. It inspired me to want to do more to help build these opportunities outside of crisis and disaster.

I continue to serve in whatever capacity that I can in response to our community needs and disasters. Those that know me, know that my professional and personal values are one in the same. One thing about being a Red Cross volunteer that resonates as a distinction from social work direct practice is that when I am wearing my straight Social Work hat, folks are not always jumping up and down to get to meet with me and seek our help. It is understandable. I still dream of the world where people wake up and say, "Dang, I sure would love a social worker in my business today." The reality is, however, folks have mixed feelings when they see social workers and are often ambivalent.

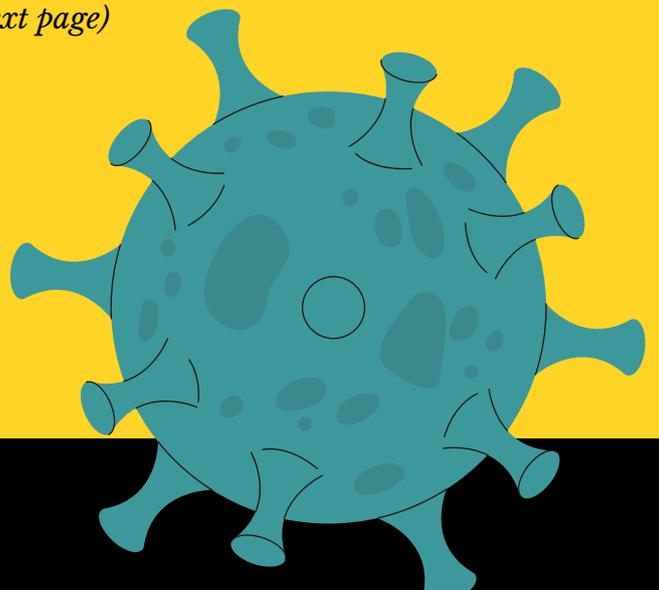
With the Red Cross, when I come on scene with my vest and badge, I notice that immediately, first responders, community

comfort and relief. I have the honor to sit with people through their absolute worst day and offer some sort of comfort. Sometimes it is words, sometimes it is tissues, sometimes it is a referral or financial support to get through the night. Often it is just being there as a presence to convey that someone cares, and they are not alone. This is why.

Now that you are certified, how are you using this certification?

Over the last 18 months, I have continued my training with the Red Cross (completing over 1500 hours of direct and on-call service and over 100 hours of training) as a Disaster Action Team member and Disaster Mental Health Responder. I have continued as an on-call Disaster Action Team member with the Central PA Region of the Red Cross.

My plan is to continue to serve on-call when I can and to participate in as many trainings as possible to help me prepare for the next academic year. I have been awarded a sabbatical that will enable me to continue to serve on a semi-full-time basis. As such, I will be able to deploy to other areas of the country in need. In addition to the direct services that I will be able to provide to those impacted by disasters and the first responders, I hope to continue to work with our local chapter and leadership to enhance our local capacity, increase community partnerships, and build field/volunteer opportunities related to the local community and university. *(continued on next page)*



Why is it important that social workers be involved in this area of work and why should students consider the dual degree in emergency management?

Our capacity to build relationships and community, advocate, communicate, collaborate, and enhance social functioning across all levels of practice in various capacities are among some of the plethora of reasons. I believe that this role is aligned perfectly with the social work profession, and we are uniquely prepared to serve in such capacities because of our skills, knowledge, values-orientation and overall competencies.

Yes, being a social worker and a disaster/emergency responder is not for everyone and I would never want to push my perspective onto someone else. I will say that sadly, there is an increased need for communities and our society to be able to respond to the natural and human-made crises and disasters. There are great needs for those who can respond to these needs at a variety of levels from the immediate physical/safety needs to the short-term crisis needs, and so on. Social workers have a great foundation to be able to serve in such a capacity.



MU'S MSW-MSEM DUAL DEGREE

[MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK & MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT \(LINK\)](#)

This dual degree program allows students in the MSW and MSEM programs to pursue a dual graduate degree. Students will need to apply and be admitted to both programs in order to pursue this dual degree.

The dual degree is flexible and allows students to begin and/or finish one of the programs before enrolling in the other. Students may also choose to enroll in both the MSW and MSEM program and complete them simultaneously.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

BASW Nicole Cornick

BASW (2020) Nicole Cornick pursued MSW and now working as psychotherapist and medical social worker.

Nicole Cornick graduated from MU with a BASW in May 2020. When asked about her experience with the MU SSW she says, “My professors were thorough and intentional in our classes. Not only did they teach us an evidence-based curriculum, but they also connected the curriculum to real case examples from their careers. I felt confident in my abilities to apply what I learned in a real-world setting. I did not know it at the time, but in hindsight, I now see how my service-learning hours contributed to this confidence.”

Cornick also decided to pursue a Master in Social Work with the University of Michigan. Reflecting on the foundational skills she learned at MU, she believes that the BASW program set her up for success. She notes how “intimidating” it was initially to begin at a top program in the country. She comments that, “Luckily for me, the adjustment was not too difficult. I had the knowledge and experience that made me a regular class contributor. Much to my surprise, though, not many of my new peers were BASWs. I could see how my background knowledge allowed me to understand the material on a more critical and clinical level, while my classmates were just starting to become familiar with the NASW Code of Ethics.”



Nicole Cornick at University of Michigan’s MSW Graduation Ceremony in July 2021

When **Cornick** reminisces about her experience at Millersville, she has a sense of gratitude for her peers. “Our experiences, passion for social justice, and between-class hangouts made my experience even better.”

Our class discussions still linger in my mind as I navigate the world. I also want to give a special thanks to **Dr. Granruth** and **Dr. Foels**. **Dr. Granruth** encouraged me to apply to my dream schools and challenged my imposter syndrome. Also, I am so thankful for the SW writing course I had with her. **Dr. Granruth** and **Tatiana** (Social Work Librarian) taught me how to utilize databases, and write about research. **Dr. Foels** was the best advisor I could have asked for. She had the answer to every question I had. I greatly miss my meetings with her. She provided *(continued on next page)*

Sara Musser, BASW and MSW Alumna

Sara Musser, an MU SSW alumna from the BASW (2016) and MSW (2017) programs is the current Clinical Director for White Deer Run, a 50 bed, male, inpatient drug and alcohol facility. She manages a team of counselors and two case managers in addition to overseeing day-to-day programming. One important aspect of her work is ensuring documentation compliance to the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs and other licensing boards.

Musser says that her experience at MU's SSW was invaluable to the work she does today. In particular, the opportunities she was given to develop hands-on experience in the field helped her direct her course of study and career. For example, she states, "I had the opportunity in my BSW internship to explore my love for macro level social work- in which I now am able to make changes within my own agency and partake in our capitals advocacy day. My MSW internship introduced me to my love for treating co-occurring disorders."

One of her most memorable experiences from her time at MU is of working on financial and demographic analysis projects with **Dr. Laura Granruth**. She also appreciates being provided with the skills for an "elevator talk" or presenting a pitch in under a minute with **Dr. David Johnson**. She was able to draw from these skills in a recent opportunity to present to a board of marketers.



Sara Musser
standing outside
Deer Run
Sara Musser

(Nicole Cornick, *continued*)
guidance, support, and encouragement when I needed it the most, and I owe a lot of my success to her. The curriculum she taught in Practice 1 and 2 stayed with me years later and significantly helped me in my MSW courses."

Cornick is working under a Michigan Limited License in Masters of Social Work (LLMSW) as a psychotherapist at Pietruck Therapy Services, a private practice in Ann Arbor, MI. Her clientele are adolescents and young adults. She has also begun working as a contingent medical social work position with Michigan Medicine, a major health system in the community and country. Some typical job responsibilities she has between both jobs are psychosocial assessments, care coordination, school advocacy, insurance advocacy, adjustment counseling, and other resource referrals as needed.

"My time at Millersville prepared me much more than I expected. My experience and knowledge led me to earn all As in my classes, as well as a very competitive placement at a major health system here. I built on the foundation Millersville laid for me, and now I will be graduating with two awesome jobs. Overall, I could not have been better prepared for my MSW program, my MSW field placement, and my new positions in the field."

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP ACTIVITIES

Welcome Assistant Coordinator of Field Education



Jostalynn Parry, *Assistant Coordinator of Field Education*

My name is Jostalynn Parry and I am so excited to be a part of the School of Social Work as the new Assistant Field Coordinator. I have a long history with Millersville University, starting with receiving my Bachelor of Social Work in 2013 and my Master of Social Work in 2019. I spent the last almost seven years with Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County where I was able to gain a lot of experience working with individuals and families in poverty, crisis management and long-term goal planning support, community advocacy and education, and program development and management. I am not originally from Lancaster County, but we have been here for about 13 years, and I currently live in Lancaster City with my husband, our daughter and three cats. Thank you for welcoming me to the team, and I am looking forward to supporting students in the PRIME program as they go through their field placements and being able to witness their success and growth!

PRESENTATIONS

Felizzi, M. Individual & Community Resilience Post Hurricane Maria: Applying a Bioecological Framework. Presented for the 26th Annual Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma Conference in San Diego California. August 30, 2021.

Felizzi, M. Emotional Abuse and Athletes. Presented at the 7th Annual International Alliance of Social Workers in Sport Conference. October 14, 2021.

Frank, J. M., Granruth, L. B., and Ogongi, W. Joining the Conversation: Using Technology to Enhance Student Engagement in Policy Practice. Presented for The Power of MACRO Social Work: Forging Pathways Toward a More Just and Equitable World.

Felizzi, M., Rice, K. and Hagelgans, D. (of the Center for Disaster Research and Education). Promoting Community Resilience in Rural Areas Following a Natural Disaster. Presented for the 22nd biennial International Consortium of Social Development Conference, held in Johannesburg, South Africa. July 12, 2021.

Frank, J. M. Invited as speaker for affordable housing panel with the Global Shapers HUB in Lancaster.

Rice, K. and Tamakloe, D. (EMEE). Global Champions 4 Humanity. Developed and implemented a two week summer youth summer program at The Ware Center. July 5-July 16, 2021.

PUBLICATIONS

DiNitto, D., and Johnson, D. (University of Texas at Austin) (2013). "Social welfare policy: overview." Encyclopedia of Social Work. Updated version (2021).

Felizzi, M. and Rice, K. (2021). Chapter on "Correlations Among Childhood Abuse and Family Violence: Prevention, Assessment and Treatment from a Trauma Focused Perspective," in "Handbook of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Across the Lifespan."

APPOINTMENTS AND RECOGNITIONS

Felizzi, M., Named "Alliance of Social Workers in Sports' licensed clinicians" allowing him to become a licensed clinician with the United States Olympic/Paralympic Committee.

Frank, J. M., Granruth, L. B., Girvin, H. and Glazier, M. Awarded \$8000 for the Stepping Stones Project through the PASSHE Professional Development Grant Program.

Ogongi, W., Assistant Professor, Promoted to tenure

Redcay, A. Promoted to Associate Professor

Rice, K., Department Chair and DSW Program Coordinator Promoted to full Professor

Granruth, L. B. appointed as the first social work professor to serve as Faculty Coordinator for the Robert and Sue Walker Center for Civic Responsibility and Leadership for academic year 2021-2022.

Rice, K., in collaboration with faculty and staff of The Learning Institute's DEI Champions Team were invited by the Lancaster STEM Alliance to conduct 2-day DEI training for members of the Lancaster County STEM community.

Rice, K., Vredenberg, D. (Psychology), Rush, K., Walsh, K., Foels, L., Granruth, L. B., Proctor, C., Strohman, H., Smith, C., in collaboration with the Center for Civic Engagement. School of Social Work and Department of Psychology were awarded a \$1.9 million 4-year HRSA BHWET grant. The project, PRIME (Promoting Rigorous & Interdisciplinary Mental Healthcare Education) will award \$10,000 stipends to 29 (19 master's of social work and 10 clinical psychology students) graduate students to offset subsistence costs while they complete their respective programs.



MU SSW ALUMNI

Stay connected! We love to hear from our alumni and feature the great work you are doing! [Click here to give us an update!](#)