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The University of Texas at Austin
School of Social Work
It was in the spring of 1981 that I discovered the subject that would mark most of my professional career. At the time I was a faculty field instructor for Columbia University, where I supervised social work graduate students assigned to internships at the Metropolitan Hospital Center, a public hospital serving Spanish (East) Harlem. It was the kind of hospital that the poor and marginalized went to much of their care and, like other inner-city hospitals, its emergency room was busiest on Friday and Saturday nights when the victims of street violence were brought in. Its psychiatric ER was often flush with patients.

It was at Metropolitan that one of my graduate social work students brought the case of a Puerto Rican girl who had attempted suicide to our weekly meeting. Within a week or two, we learned of four other young Latinas admitted to the hospital for the same reason. These cases, and others that we learned about later, became a focus of our supervisory sessions and, eventually, of my research endeavors for the ensuing decades. Why did Latina teens seem to attempt suicide so often? How could we best help the girls?

Caring for others and helping them through their life challenges was what brought me to social work, and here was a phenomenon that spoke to me. Ensuring the mental wellbeing of children and youth became a passion, maybe a calling, one that I share with many of my colleagues at the School of Social Work. In this issue of The Utopian, we highlight the admirable work done at the School to provide for the mental wellbeing of Texas children with serious emotional disturbances (SEDs) and their families.

In Texas or in any state, the mental health of children is a pressing public policy issue. National data show that children with SEDs make up only 2 to 5 percent of all children yet they use the largest proportion of public funding for services to meet their needs. A study done at our School’s Child & Family Research Institute shows that many Texas families don’t have timely access to the right services for their children with SEDs. The hardship on families is not only that their children are suffering but that they enter into a cycle of seeking emergency help, including costly psychiatric inpatient care. It’s simply an impossible situation for families.

More than just a pressing public policy issue, it’s a tragedy. Few families can afford the expensive services that their children with SEDs need. They face very few options: going broke, facing the wrenching decision of relinquishing their children to juvenile probation or child welfare, or trying to care for their children to the breaking point. No family should have to face these choices. As a society, we have the responsibility to ensure that intensive community-based services, which have been shown to reduce out-of-home placements and juvenile justice involvement, are available to Texas families.

In my years working on the subject of young Latinas and suicide attempts, one humbling lesson I learned is that ensuring the mental wellbeing of our children and youth is always a complex task that requires the collaboration of many disparate partners— not only researchers and clinicians but also educators, policymakers, service providers, families, and communities.

This is precisely the task that our Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health (TIEMH) has taken up. TIEMH researchers have partnered with the Texas state government to lead the implementation and evaluation of intensive, individualized care for children with intensive needs throughout the state. This “wraparound” process embodies social work at its best: it is strengths-based, takes the individual in its family and social context, and asks that families, communities, and service providers come together and be part of the solution.

As social workers, we are very well equipped for this task. We can bridge the sometimes insulated world of research and the messy reality in which people actually live, we are experts at bringing disparate people together to collaborate towards a common goal, and we never lose sight of the big picture while at the same time we keep the individual’s needs and strengths at the center. This is what sets us apart.

I hope you enjoy reading about the difference our School is making for Texas families, and that you feel proud of being our friend and supporter.

Sincerely,

Luis H. Zayas, Ph.D.
Dean and Robert Lee Sutherland Chair
in Mental Health and Social Policy
Restorative Discipline Should be Common Practice to Lower the Dropout Rate for Both Students and Teachers¹

by Marilyn Armour

As another school year goes by, it seems teachers are becoming more and more of an endangered species.

Many teachers-in-training find themselves struggling to master teaching demands with fewer resources, more students, and ever-increasing high-stakes testing and accountability. They also find they are ill-equipped to manage the classroom and student behaviors that hinder their ability to teach. Little wonder that many teachers flee the profession, creating a different kind of dropout problem, particularly among teachers in high-minority or low-income schools.

Eager teachers quickly learn that many of today's students contend with unprecedented hardships. They arrive at school hungry, homeless or exhausted after caring for others, conditions that interfere with learning but clearly manifest in behavior and concentration. Teachers, working under pressure-cooker conditions, often have little time for students whose antisocial behaviors may provoke exclusionary punishment or arrest. Lacking specific training and skills in managing behavior issues, many teachers believe that youths should have the innate skills to manage their own conduct. Unfortunately, frequently used punitive measures send students spiraling toward suspensions, involvement in the juvenile justice system, and diminished motivation to engage in or finish school. Not surprising, student discipline correlates with dropout rates, and that's particularly troubling in Texas where 25 percent of students fail to graduate.

But these patterns for teachers and students can be reversed, and it starts with a radically different approach to school discipline. It is called Restorative Discipline. Instead of asking: what rule was broken, who broke it and what should the punishment be, Restorative Discipline sees wrongdoing as a violation of relationship and asks: what happened, who has been affected, and what are we going to do to make things right? Using a variety of techniques, Restorative Discipline brings together the key players in an incident to learn what happened, listen to each person's perspective, discover the motivation for the harm, and work to identify appropriate and agreed upon actions by which the student who caused the harm takes responsibility and is accountable for the breach of trust. The ultimate goal is to allow the responsible student, after making amends, to belong again as a welcomed, albeit chastened, member of the school community.

What's ironic about the current approach is how we think about learning for both students and teachers. If children cannot multiply fractions, we don’t expect them to figure it out for themselves or stick them in detention to learn how. Yet with behavior, we assume that punishment or the concomitant suffering will teach students what they don’t know.”

¹ Versions of this opinion piece were published in the Huffington Post, the Houston Chronicle, and the Austin-American Statesman.
multiply fractions, we don’t expect them to figure it out for themselves or stick them in detention to learn how. Yet with behavior, we assume that punishment or the concomitant suffering will teach students what they don’t know. We somehow believe that students will correct their behavior after a one-time instruction rather than recognizing that, like everything else, teaching has to be delivered many times using many methods for it to take hold.

In the school districts where Restorative Discipline has been implemented, the evidence of its success is compelling. West Philadelphia High School reduced violent acts and serious incidents by 52 percent in 2007-2008 and an additional 40 percent in 2008-2009. Denver Public Schools showed a 30 percent improvement in school attendance and timeliness to school. In San Antonio, Texas, Ed White Middle School received a star of distinction for student progress and ranked in the top 25 percent in the state after two years of restorative discipline.

To achieve a lasting impact, we must take a much different and larger view of what we are really trying to accomplish — changing a system to support kids and teachers. Restorative Discipline offers an approach to wrongdoing where instead of defeating each other, teacher and student can engage in ways where both feel heard and respected. If we implement this reform across the board, we can take a major step to reduce the dropout rates for both students and teachers.

Marilyn Armour is a University Distinguished Teaching Professor at the School of Social Work and the director of the Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue.

Focus: Keeping Central Texas Children in School

Communities In Schools of Central Texas brings resources and relationships to school campuses, surrounding students with a community of support, and empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. This organization was recently recognized by Greenlights as one of Austin’s nonprofits of the year. We talked with Chief Program Officer Eric Metcalf, MSSW ’95.

How does Communities In Schools of Central Texas work?
We help students be academically successful by addressing the many non-academic challenges they face that make it difficult for them to fully engage in learning. We place professional staff in schools to provide and coordinate an array of social services aimed at supporting students’ success. We create a plan unique to each child that addresses individualized goals and needs. Often a plan will involve focusing on unmet mental health needs or developing social skills that help a student get along effectively with peers and authority figures. Obviously, ensuring that basic needs are met is also a big priority. If basic needs are not met, students simply cannot learn at their highest potential. Ultimately, we are working to ensure that students are coming to school regularly, ready to fully engage in the learning process.

What makes Communities In Schools of Central Texas successful?
We have an incredible staff! Our staff is passionate about the work, have a commitment to professionalism, and do whatever it takes to help students succeed. Part of our success also comes from utilizing data to inform our work. We monitor data and make changes in order to be more effective, and have embraced evaluation to see what is working and what might need to change. Sometimes that’s scary, but why keep doing something if it isn’t working? Ultimately, our model of individualized focus on each client makes us very effective. It allows us to be a safety net for students, and to ensure that no one falls through the cracks.

What did you learn at the School of Social Work that influences your current work the most?
The School of Social Work prepared me fully for what I’ve done with Communities In Schools, but it is probably the core tenets of social work education that have most influenced my work. Something simple, like the importance of systems theory. Nothing happens in isolation, yet I see educational environments struggling with this idea all the time. Does what happens in a student’s life outside the classroom impact his classroom performance? Absolutely! Addressing the many barriers kids face that make learning a challenge must be a critical element of effective education. And no one can do that better than a social worker!
When Dina’s son was three, she had a gut feeling that something was wrong with her child’s behavior, but her pediatrician encouraged her to be patient and try different parenting techniques. When her child was four, he threatened to kill both his parents and himself. At that point, Dina called the pediatrician in tears and asked, “What now?”

Dina’s son is among the five percent of children who are diagnosed as having a serious emotional disturbance (SED) in the United States. Behaviors of children with SEDs are characterized by severe symptoms that could range from suicidal ideation or attempt to harming others, setting fires, running away, destroying property, and exhibiting psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations or delusions.

Parents like Dina find themselves struggling to locate, navigate, and pay for the extensive services their children and family need. These services may include individual and family therapy, medication, respite care, classroom support, and inpatient hospitalization.

But in some severe cases, families reach a point where they cannot care for their child at home any longer. They have exhausted all of the available resources to help their child. Their child may become a danger to him or herself, to others, or might require extensive services that the family simply can no longer afford.

“There are no exact numbers, but anecdotal evidence suggests that some families with children with SEDs reach the devastating decision that the only remaining option is to consider placing their child in the foster care system,” said Dr. Monica Faulkner, co-director of the School of Social Work’s Child & Family Research Institute (CFRI). “After exhausting all options, families begin to view relinquishment as one of the only ways to get their child’s mental health needs met. Other families face the reality that their child will likely be incarcerated.”

For the past five years, CFRI has been producing leading research on child and family wellbeing in Texas, with a strong emphasis on the child welfare system. Recently, following a request from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, the CFRI research team explored the needs of families with children with SEDs and the resources available to them in the Lone Star State.

Led by Faulkner, associate director Dr. Beth Gerlach, and research coordinator Laura Marra, the goal of this study was to understand how systems could better meet the needs of families and prevent the relinquishment of children with SEDs. The study will inform recommendations to the 84th Texas Legislative session.

1 Name has been changed
“Children's mental health is a public health priority, not an issue for child protection,” Faulkner emphasized. “We need to provide the necessary services to children with SEDs so families do not reach a point where relinquishment to foster care is an option.”

A Predictable Trajectory
Like other children, the behaviors and needs of each child with a SED are unique. Nevertheless, after interviewing service providers, families, and caregivers, the CFRI team found that parents of children with SEDs often follow a predictable help-seeking trajectory.

As was the case with Dina, this trajectory often starts as early as toddlerhood with a family taking their child to a pediatrician. The pediatrician may or may not recognize the early symptoms as requiring intervention. However, once the child enters school, teachers and school administrators express concern about the child’s behavior and functioning. Parents usually begin the complex process of advocating for school support and qualifying their child for special education services. They often seek additional help in the community from a therapist or child psychiatrist in order to obtain counseling services, diagnose mental illnesses, and receive medication management services for their child.

“With appropriate therapy, school supports and medication management, children can stabilize,” Gerlach said. “In fact, the parents we interviewed were able to recall a period of relative calm for the family, when there was a particular therapist who was able to develop a strong relationship with their child.”

If a strong therapeutic relationship does not develop, if the therapy is disrupted or if an event triggers the child’s behavior, the family often enters into a cycle of seeking emergency help. This cycle may include law enforcement, often called through 911 during violent episodes or episodes where self-harm is imminent. Law enforcement officers might arrest the child or transport him or her to an emergency room for psychiatric treatment.

Family members might also seek emergency assistance by taking the child directly to an emergency room, but emergency rooms are generally not equipped for psychiatric treatment. Once there, hospital staff might work to transfer the child to an inpatient psychiatric treatment facility—which in some cases may take days. While some families reported the benefits of inpatient care, services in psychiatric facilities vary greatly. The length of stay allowed is often too short, and families in the study felt that these facilities were not well regulated.
After leaving an inpatient facility, some parents described a brief “honeymoon” period when their child was able to reintegrate back into their family and utilize community-based therapy. Unfortunately, the cycle of law enforcement, emergency rooms, and inpatient facilities often becomes a norm for families. The research team found that many parents could not even recall the exact number of times they had been through the cycle described here.

“After moving through the emergency cycle multiple times, families are emotionally and financially exhausted,” Faulkner explained. “They might consider having their child enter the foster care system, or their child may enter the juvenile justice system. Either way, they are faced with a no-win situation, and a bond is broken between the parent and the child.”

“We need to provide the necessary services to children with SEDs so families do not reach a point where relinquishment to foster care is an option.” —Monica Faulkner

Barriers to Breaking the Emergency Cycle

“Timely access to quality mental health services is essential to help children with a SED stabilize and break the emergency cycle—or better, never go through it,” Marra stated.

There are barriers to this timely access, however. Consistent with national data, the Texas families interviewed by the CFRI team cited cost as the primary reason why they were not able to access quality services for their children.

This might not be surprising in Texas, where an estimated 1 million children do not have health insurance, and less than 33% of doctors accept Medicaid.

Even with insurance, families in the study reported expensive co-pays, such as $400 a month for medication or $8,000 for just one child’s inpatient stay. Caregivers also pointed out that insurance companies, instead of the child’s needs, determine the type and length of available services.

“While mental health services costs are high for both families and taxpayers, let’s remember that the costs of untreated mental health illnesses are even higher,” Gerlach said. “The National Mental Health Association estimates that untreated mental illness costs $105 billion in lost productivity each year as well as $8 billion in crime and welfare expenditures.”

Even when families have the financial resources, they are likely to experience long waits, particularly for child psychiatrists. Interviewed caregivers reported waits as long as two years for an assessment. Delays in evaluation, treatment and intervention result in a progression of the mental health condition, and create a cycle of insufficient available treatment: by the time the child is able to access a service, he or she is often already in need of the next level of service.

Where to Start

Caregivers reported “wraparound,” a delivery model for services that focus on the holistic needs of the child and the family, as incredibly useful. Services under wraparound go beyond therapy and medication to include non traditional services such as respite care, support groups, transportation, employment services, and home modifications. Most parents could also speak of one or two specific therapies, including specialized music or art therapy, that were of great help to their child.

Communities and schools were identified as the most accessible places for parents to obtain these useful mental health services for their children. Even with co-pays, counselors in the community cost families less than inpatient treatment.

A very promising initiative is Youth Empowerment Services, or the YES program, which parents in the study most frequently identified as a needed service. This program started in Texas in 2012, in response to concerns about parents relinquishing custody of children with SEDs to foster care after having exhausted all their resources.

The YES program uses Medicaid funds to increases community–based services and avoid expensive inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations. Eligibility does not consider parental income, and thus removes the need for parents to relinquish their child to foster care in order to access Medicaid-covered treatments.

“The bottom line is that children’s mental health is a public health priority and it is everyone’s responsibility,” Faulkner said. “The purpose of our child welfare system is to serve children who have been maltreated. It is not designed, nor should it be designed, to provide mental health treatment to all Texas’ children. Rather, Texas communities have to step up and help families and children get the support they need.”

Want to know more? Go to CFRI website, www.sites.utexas.edu/cfri
Liz\textsuperscript{1}, a 14-year-old high-school student in Edinburg, Texas, is passing all her classes and enjoying going to school every day. She is thinking about college and professions where she can help other people.

Three years ago, however, these seemingly typical behaviors were very far from Liz’s reality. She was diagnosed at an early age with a range of behavioral disorders, and as she grew so did her challenging actions, both at home and in school. The middle child of five siblings, Liz did not stop and think before acting, did not accept consequences for her own behavior, and showed disrespect to her family members. She talked back to her teachers, skipped classes, was frequently suspended, and regularly engaged in risky behaviors like running away from home. Before she turned 12, Liz had been in a psychiatric hospital multiple times, including a hospitalization following a suicide attempt.

The changes Liz and her family have experienced are due in part to wraparound, an intensive and individualized care planning and management process that helps children like Liz reach their full potential while staying in their homes and communities.

“Wraparound targets children and families with the most intensive needs, many of whom are involved in multiple systems. They have mental health issues, but they might be also in trouble in school or with the law. The goal is to coordinate services, funding, and communication across these different systems, to maximize resources and make a real difference in families’ lives,” said Dr. Molly Lopez, director of the School of Social Work’s Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health (TIEMH).

TIEMH has partnered with the Texas government to lead the implementation and evaluation of wraparound through the state. To do so, TIEMH has been working with the National Wraparound Implementation Center, which offers a strong, evidence-based model to implement wraparound effectively.

\textsuperscript{1} Name has been changed
Feature Story

Wraparound in Texas: A Powerful Engine – Infrastructure for Statewide Implementation

The Wraparound Process
“Wraparound is a process that provides structured, creative, and individualized team planning for children, youth, and families,” Lopez explained. “It draws upon the strengths and resources of a committed group of family, friends, professionals, and community members.”

The wraparound process starts with a facilitator engaging the youth and family, with the intent of understanding their story, culture, and values.

“Families referred to wraparound usually have tough stories to tell and have tried many different approaches that didn’t work very well for them. It’s normal then that they are frustrated about services, and somewhat hopeless about their situation getting any better,” Lopez noted.

The wraparound facilitator takes a wider perspective that includes but goes beyond the crisis- or trauma-centered story that the family might tell. This reframed story emphasizes strengths that family members have, points to how the family has overcome difficulties in the past, and identifies the individuals that have supported them. To build this strengths-based story, the facilitator also gets the perspective of others important to the family, such as extended kin, neighbors, teachers, and counselors. All these people are invited to join the family in the wraparound team.

Once this groundwork is laid, the facilitator calls for a wraparound team meeting. The goals of this first meeting are to reach consensus on the family’s strengths and needs and to brainstorm about how to meet them.

One difference between wraparound and traditional mental health services is the focus on the needs of all family members, rather than solely on the needs of the child or youth. Another difference is that team members are actively encouraged to think outside the box to meet those needs, and to commit to be an active part of the solution for the family by taking part in specific tasks.
“Whereas in a traditional mental health care system a child might be diagnosed and sent to therapy, a wraparound team meeting brings many other possibilities to the table, based on the active collaboration of natural supports such as friends and teachers as well as system supports such as juvenile justice or foster care staff,” said Lopez.

For instance, during one of Liz’s wraparound team meetings, her teacher suggested that she join open gym during the summer and offered to monitor Liz’s school progress. The team also built upon Liz’s good relation with her little sister, and looked for programs they could do together. The fact that the family was about to be evicted from their house owing to Liz’s behavior was also discussed, and the case manager in the team helped Liz’s mother with a housing application.

To access a broader array of services than is usually available within public mental health options, wraparound teams in Texas may have access to a Medicaid waiver called Youth Empowerment Services (YES). “The YES waiver allows wraparound teams to pay for non-traditional services for which there is not much available funding, such as respite care, mentoring, employment services, or non-traditional therapies,” said Dr. Erin Espinosa, who is leading the YES waiver expansion for TIEMH.

Through the YES waiver, for example, Liz had the opportunity to participate in animal-assisted therapy. Her work with horses and an equine therapist helped Liz improve her self-esteem, learn strong communication skills, and gain a sense of responsibility.

Finally, the wraparound team makes sure that the selected strategies don’t bring conflict among the different systems the child might be involved in.

“For example, the child welfare system may require that parents take a parenting class at the same time that the juvenile justice system requires that they or the child fulfill another duty,” Lopez explained. “Well, parents can’t do both, so these conflicting demands really set them up for failure. The wraparound team, which includes representatives of all the systems a child is involved in, identifies these conflicts from the start and finds alternatives.”

The wraparound team meets monthly. The facilitator keeps track of outcomes and progress, checks with team members to find out how things are going with their respective tasks, and makes sure that everybody is able to do what they planned to do.

“In the long-term, the idea is that the family moves away from having these formal system supports, such as case managers and therapists, and towards having more natural supports—friends, neighbors, pastors, etc.,” Lopez concluded.

**Wraparound in Texas**

Wraparound has been implemented in communities throughout the United States with good results. Studies have shown that wraparound reduces costly hospital and residential care, improves youth functioning, reduces emotional and behavioral problems, and results in greater community adjustment.

Like with any complex new practice, the implementation of wraparound in Texas has many components, such as training, capacity building, and evaluation (see graph).

Since 2013, TIEMH has trained more than 500 facilitators or supervisors across Texas, using the curriculum developed through the National Wraparound Implementation Center.

TIEMH also offers both in person and virtual coaching to facilitators and their supervisors, to help them improve their skills, work through barriers, and build community capacity. TIEMH has identified coach candidates from across the state to apprentice under the national expert. The intent is to develop a local cadre of certified trainers and coaches that can provide ongoing support throughout Texas, and train new facilitators as needed.

Finally, TIEMH is also supporting the measurement of practice fidelity and outcomes, so that agencies can identify both strengths and weaknesses in their current practice and work to improve and sustain their programs over time.

Wraparound is currently available statewide in Texas, mostly through community mental health centers. The YES Waiver, available in nine regions now, is expanding to be available statewide by September 2015.

For youth like Liz and their families, the YES waiver and wraparound has offered a new way to strengthen their family and move forward toward the future they all want.

“When organizations embrace a culture of high quality practice, families are more successful,” Espinosa said. “It is imperative that organizations see wraparound as a way of partnering with families in the world they live in, building on the families’ resiliency, and coordinating services and supports to help them achieve their vision.”

To learn more about the YES waiver and wraparound implementation in Texas, visit [http://www.txsystemofcare.org](http://www.txsystemofcare.org)
Have you ever tasted Tostilocos? Or danced to Nortec? They are just two examples of the richly hybrid culture of the United States-Mexico border. The border, conceived not as a line but as a space of mixtures and exchanges of all types (of goods, people, customs, languages), has attracted the attention of scholars and researchers for a long time.

Social work researchers are no different. For the past two decades, the Addiction Research Institute (ARI) at the School of Social Work has been conducting research on the border, focused on alcohol and drug use.

“The border is fascinating for many reasons,” ARI researcher Lynn Wallisch said. “From our perspective of substance use, we wanted to know if the border was its own place, with its own unique patterns, or if the Rio Grande is actually separating two different places.”

In 1996, at the request of the Texas Commission of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Wallisch and colleagues Richard Spence and Jane Maxwell pioneered a large-scale prevalence survey of alcohol and drug use, abuse, and dependence among adults on the United States border. The survey included both urban areas and colonias—semi-rural, unincorporated communities characterized by lack of basic public services such as electricity, drinking water, and police protection. Another survey followed in 2003, to track whether the rapid demographic and economic changes in the area had an effect in patterns of substance use. And finally, in 2012, ARI researchers completed a path-breaking survey in collaboration with the Public Health Institute (Oakland, CA) that studied both the Mexican and United States sides of the border, as well as interior cities on each side. They are now in the early stages of analyzing this latest survey’s data, which provides the most comprehensive view of substance use on the United States-Mexico border so far.

What do these surveys say about whether the border is its own unique hybrid place, or two different places, one Mexican and the other American, separated by the Rio Grande?

“The answer so far has been… yes and yes,” Wallisch smiled.

These are some of ARI’s findings about substance use on the border that explain what Wallisch means—and that might surprise you.
The Border is Not Homogenous

The drugs most used by individuals admitted to treatment and reported to the federal system capture interesting differences along the border. Meth predominates in the western section of the border, and heroin and cocaine in the eastern part. (See figure 1.)

“This west-east use pattern along the border corresponds to trafficking patterns,” Maxwell explained. “Most of the methamphetamine has historically moved up from Baja California and then spread eastward. Cocaine is much more prevalent on the lower, eastern part of the border, because it is trafficked across the Texas border and from there it moves to the rest of the United States.”

Illicit Drug Use is Lower on the Border Than on the U.S. as a Whole

Since the first study in 1996, the percentage of people who report lifetime illicit drug use has been lower on the border than in the United States as a whole. (See figure 2.)

“Drug use levels are lower in Mexico than in the United States,” Wallisch explained. “Mexican culture is very strong on the border, and a substantial percentage of the border population comes from Mexico. This might explain the lower levels of illicit drug use on the border that our surveys have revealed.”

Wallisch added that the lower levels of drug use in Mexico could be considered a protective factor against substance use on the border. Other protective factors are the presence of strong family and social support systems, religiosity, and the “immigrant advantage”—the fact that immigrants tend to be healthier, more resilient, and have strong work ethics and aspirations.

But Misuse of Prescription Drugs is Higher

17 percent of survey respondents on the border had misused prescriptions drugs, as opposed to only 6 percent in the United States as a whole.

“This finding might be explained by the fact that drugs for which you need a prescription in the United States are available without one in Mexico, and at lower prices. In fact, 45 percent of survey respondents said they had crossed to Mexico during the previous year to buy over-the-counter medicines or prescription drugs,” said Wallisch.

The most misused prescription drugs were pain relievers, which include hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine, morphine, and other opiates.
Dual Degree with Latin American Studies Begins Fall 2015

Our school has joined with the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies (LLILAS) to establish a dual degree program at the graduate level, the first of its kind in the United States.

The dual degree will address the gap in services for U.S. Latinos and Latin American immigrants. Graduates of the three-year program will earn the Master of Science in Social Work (MSSW) and the Master of Arts (M.A.) with a major in Latin American studies.

Graduates of the dual degree program will combine clinical social work skills with cultural and linguistic competency suited to diverse Latino and Latin American immigrant populations in the U.S. and abroad.

Dual-degree students must complete 30 credit hours in Latin American studies and 51 credit hours in social work. In addition, they must meet a language requirement (Spanish or Portuguese) and complete research and internship requirements in a Latin American country.

“Latinos are expected to make up close to one-third of the U.S. population by 2050. This dual degree augments our existing programs, particularly the St. David’s Foundation Bilingual Scholarships, to ensure that more graduates are ready for superb culturally competent social work practice with the growing numbers of Latino clients in Texas and beyond,” said Dean Luis H. Zayas.

The need for social workers who speak Spanish and understand the Latino and Latin American immigrant cultures is acute, particularly in Texas, where Latinos are the largest ethnic group. Studies have shown that there is an increasing discrepancy between the growth of minority populations in Texas and the number of social service providers that can meet these populations’ cultural and linguistic needs.

Small but Powerful

The School of Social Work may be one of the smaller units at UT but it is pretty powerful when it comes to bring money to advance research.

During fiscal year 2013-2014, social work faculty and researchers brought $10 million in grants, which places our school in seventh place on the UT campus, just after much bigger units like the Cockrell School of Engineering and the College of Natural Sciences.

Research funding has grown enough that last year the school expanded its satellite office space at Hartland Plaza (1717 West 6th Street,) by almost 5,000 square feet.
Save These 2015 Dates!

APRIL 17: “How the body releases trauma and restores goodness: The art and science of Somatic Experiencing,” by Peter Levine. The Commons Learning Center, JJ Pickle Research Campus.


Continuing Education 24/7

The Office of Professional Development is expanding its online offerings, both live and on-demand. Popular on-demand topics include ethics and clinical supervision, DSM-5 updates, and drug trend and treatment updates. Visit utaustinsocialworkceu.org for more information.

Business for Social Change

TOM’S shoes and Food Recovery Network are well known examples of social entrepreneurship, or the use of business skills and strategies to address social problems. Social work professor Dorie Gilbert has built upon this trend for her new signature course, Social Entrepreneurship: Starting a Business for Social Change, where students design, pitch, and launch an entrepreneurial venture with a focus on social and economic justice.

Interprofessional Education for Better Health Care

Interprofessional education for health-related disciplines keeps gaining momentum on the Forty Acres. This past fall, the School of Social Work joined the School of Nursing in staging a hospital simulation exercise. For two full days, students outfitted with a variety of simulated wounds, IV’s, and monitors served as patients for undergraduate social work and nursing students, who were presented with dynamic patient-care scenarios that tested their abilities to react on their feet, work with each other, cope with real-world situations, and apply critical thinking skills.
Faculty News

Marilyn Armour and the team at the Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue have received a grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to conduct trainings in Restorative Discipline in ten of TEA’s twenty Education Service Centers, which provide support to school districts and charter schools throughout the state.

Noël Busch-Armendariz received the Feminist Scholar Award from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Noël and her research team at IDVSA team have been awarded several new grants, including “Sexual assault victim notification,” a two-year project funded by the Federal Office of Violence Against Women, and “Campus sexual assault initiative: A blueprint for campus law enforcement,” funded by the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, the Criminal Justice Division of the Texas Governor’s Office, and the U.S. Office of Violence Against Women.

Esther Calzada received a grant from UT Office of the Vice President for Research for her project “Test of multigenerational model of Mexican American parenting and early childhood development.”

Allan Cole’s new book, Converging Horizons: Essays in Religion, Psychology, and Caregiving, has just been published by Cascade Books. He has also been invited to serve on the editorial board of the Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought.

Catherine Cubbin and the Community Transformation Team: Working on Wellness (WOW) in Starr County, are recipients of the annual Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Superior Service Awards Program, the highest honor conferred by AgriLife Extension to faculty and staff who excel in job performance. The WOW team seeks to spark local, sustainable initiatives such as community gardens and walking trails to make healthy choices available to Starr County residents.

Susan De Luca received a grant from the St. David’s Center for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Research in Underserved Populations (CHPR) for her study, “Developing a web-based intervention for adolescents in distress: A mixed-method study.”

Yessenia Castro received the National Award of Excellence in Research by a New Investigator from the National Science Network on Drug Abuse. She has also been selected to participate in the NIDA Grant Writing and Research Development Workshop.

Monica Faulkner, Beth Gerlach, and the team at the Child and Family Research Institute received a three-year grant from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention efforts against child abuse and neglect across the state.

Rowena Fong received a 5-year grant from the Children’s Bureau in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Spaulding for Children in Michigan for the National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption/Guardianship Support (QIC). The goal of QIC is to build and disseminate evidence for effective models of permanency planning and post-permanency services/supports for adoptive and guardianship families.

Cynthia Franklin gave a keynote speech on the evidence-base of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy at the annual conference of the Midwest Council of School Social Workers, Louisville, Ky, September 25.

Lauren Gulbas received a grant from UT Office of the Vice President for Research for her project “Immigration-related stress and suicidal behavior among Latino adolescents.” Lauren was also invited to presented the paper “Risk, citizenship, and politics in the wake of the affordable care act” at an invited session at the American Anthropological Association’s annual meeting in Washington, DC.

Lori Holleran Steiker was featured in the virtual panel “Recovery high schools and collegiate recovery programs: Recovery-oriented education supports for youth and young adults,” sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. She was also selected as one of “10 dedicated and deserving social workers” by Social Work Today Magazine.
Yuri Jang received a grant from UT Office of the Vice President for Research, for her project “Stress, safety, and well-being of home care attendants: A pilot study.”

Barbara Jones was elected to Distinguished Fellowship in the National Academies of Practice (NAP) and the Social Work Academy as a Distinguished Scholar & Fellow. She has also been invited to serve on the advisory committee of “Social Work Healthcare Education and Leadership Scholars,” a five-year grant awarded to CSWE and NASW by the New York Community Trust with the goal of building the next generation of social work academic and practice leaders.

Noel Landuyt was a featured speaker at St. Edward’s University Organizational Development Program, where he showcased the research efforts of the Institute for Organizational Excellence and the unique relationship that the institute has had with the Texas state government for the past three decades.

Ruth McRoy was ranked No. 10 on the online list “The 30 most influential social workers alive,” compiled by Social Work Degree Guide.

Angela Nonaka received a grant from UT Office of the Vice President for Research for her project, “Investigating politeness in Asian sign languages: A collaborative pilot study with the Japanese Museum of Ethnology.” Angela was also selected to participate in the School of Undergraduate Studies’s Writing Flag Faculty Retreat.

Yolanda Padilla gave the plenary address at the 13th Annual Infant Health Summit in Forth Worth this past September. Her address was titled “Pregnancy and birth outcomes among Mexican American immigrants.”

Beth Pomeroy was inducted into The University of Texas at Austin Academy of Distinguished Teachers at the 2014 annual banquet to welcome new members.

Chris Salas-Wright’s co-authored paper, “Violence and externalization among youth in the United States: Is there a severe 5%?,” received the Best Paper Award by Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice. Chris has also been accepted into the National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse’s Early Stage Career Mentoring for NIDA Research program as a Cycle 3 fellow.

David Springer is the lead researcher of Restore Rundberg, a community revitalization initiative in collaboration with the Austin Police Department to reduce crime and build capacity in the Rundberg area of North Austin. The Austin City Council has recognized the project and all involved in it for their dedication and investment in the Rundberg area.

Jim Schwab, the team at the Child and Family Research Institute, and Noel Landuyt from the Institute of Organizational Excellence, produced the report “Texas foster care redesign: Initial insights into foster care reform,” released by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Yolanda Padilla is the co-director of the Pilot & Feasibility Core of the newly awarded NIH funding for a P30 Core Center in Self Management of Chronic Illness, which will be led by Dr. Miyong Kim at the School of Nursing. The funds will develop infrastructure dedicated to facilitate trans-disciplinary collaborative research to improve self-management science.

Kirk von Sternberg with Mary Velasquez, Beth Pomeroy and the team at the Health Behavior Research Institute received a four-year, $1 million dollar CDC grant for the project “National social work collaboration for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).” The goal of the project is to strengthen research-to-practice linkages between the CDC’s FASD Practice and Implementation Centers and practice disciplines that are well positioned to advance FASD prevention and treatment.

New Faculty Appointment

Mary Velasquez is the co-director of the Pilot & Feasibility Core of the newly awarded NIH funding for a P30 Core Center in Self Management of Chronic Illness, which will be led by Dr. Miyong Kim at the School of Nursing. The funds will develop infrastructure dedicated to facilitate trans-disciplinary collaborative research to improve self-management science.

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Alumni & Friends

Class Notes

What’s new? If you have personal or professional news to share with other alumni and the SSW community, please send us an email to utopian@utlists.utexas.edu

‘80s
Gary E. Bachman, MSSW ’82, is an associate professor and the director of field education in the Department of Social Work at Park University in Parkville, MO. Gary was the 2012 recipient of the J.L. Zwingle Student Voice Award, a university-wide award that recognizes a member of the faculty for outstanding teaching, as chosen by the student body. In January 2013 Gary was awarded tenure by the university.

‘90s
Richelle Easley, MSSW ’92, is a licensed clinical social worker in the Austin, TX, area. Richelle has recently opened a private practice, where she offers individual and family counseling.

Alicia Garcés, MSSW ’95, was the recipient of the 2014 Field Instructor of the Year Award from the UT Austin School of Social Work. Alicia serves as the director of social work training at the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center. She coordinates the training of social work students, orchestrates the interviewing and selection of incoming field interns, and ensures that social work interns are treated with equality and dignity as they train with incoming psychology interns from all over the country.

Eric Metcalf, MSSW ’95, is the chief program officer of Communities in Schools-Central Texas. Under his leadership, this organization received the 2014 Greenlights’ Nonprofit of the Year Award. Greenlights presents this award to Central Texas nonprofits whose exceptional delivery of services to the community sets a high standard for effective nonprofit strategy, execution, and lasting community impact.

Mary Dodson, MSSW ’96, is currently working at the Texas Homeless Network as the continuum care manager for the Texas Balance of State Continuum Care. In this position, Mary helps communities to strategically and effectively prevent and end homelessness. Mary is very excited about being a field instructor for the School of Social Work. She received her first social work intern this past January.

Susan Owen (Schauwecker), MSSW ’96, was awarded the 2014 Golden Halo Award from the Children’s Trust of the Roanoke Valley. This award recognizes and honors outstanding contributions to child abuse prevention, intervention, and advocacy in the Roanoke Valley. Susan has a private practice in Roanoke, where she lives with her husband, Benjamin Owen, MSSW ’99, and their two children, Eleanor, 9, and Elliot, 6.

‘00s
Seanna Crosbie, MSSW ’00, currently works at the Austin Child Guidance Center in Austin, TX, where she is the director of program and trauma-informed services. Seanna has been with the Austin Child Guidance Center since 2001, and she has served the organization in an administrative capacity since 2010.

Michelle Ballan, PhD ’02, is an assistant professor of social work at Columbia University. She has recently earned a master’s in bioethics from Columbia, and created a dual degree program in bioethics and social work.

Jennifer Sowinski, MSSW ’03, has recently taken a position as the director of admissions at Cross Creek Hospital in Austin, TX. Jennifer previously worked as a social work supervisor at St. David’s South Austin Medical Center.

Shane Whalley, MSSW ’2003, currently works as a peer support unit manager at ViaHope Texas Mental Health Resource. Shane joins ViaHope from the University of Texas at Austin, where he worked as an education coordinator focused on LGBTQ student issues.

Ashley Katz de Jong, MSSW ’05, was recently named president of the board of directors for Keep Austin Beautiful, an organization focused on litter prevention, beautification and community improvement, and waste reduction and resource conservation. Ashley is also the owner of Casa SoCo and Zen Retreat in Austin, TX.

Tiffany Meyer, MSSW ’05, has recently taken a position at Houston Methodist Hospital in Houston, TX, where she assists patients and their families with discharge planning needs. Tiffany is also a certified yoga instructor at the 200-hour level.

Johnny Kim, PhD ’06, received the Research Recognition Award from the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Association for his contributions to solution-focused brief therapy over the years. Johnny is an associate professor at the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver.

Michael Romero, MSSW ’06, BSW ’05 currently works as a site coordinator with Communities in Schools of Central Texas. Michael was recently the recipient of the 2015 Unsung Heroes Award, presented to site coordinators who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to students. To help students succeed on his campus, Michael facilitates individual and group counseling, supports parents, and works with a variety of community partners to bring in additional resources.

Hannah Jones-Lewis, BSW ’07, is currently a licensed social worker in the Chicago, IL, area. She has recently taken a position at Live Oak Inc., offering trauma-informed psychotherapy and clinical workshops to individuals, couples, and families. Hannah has joined Live Oak Inc. from the Erikson Institute.

Paul Gutierrez, BSW ’07, was thrilled to join the producers of Your Fellow Americans and mayor Sly James of St. Louis for a free panel discussion on race, immigration, and the American Dream this past February in Kansas City, MO.

Claire McCullough, MSSW ’07, is currently working with the Austin Police Department Victim Services as a victim witness counselor on the crisis team.

Alysa Rosen, MSSW ’07, is the membership services manager for the Greater Seattle Business Association, an LGBT and allied business and professional chamber in Seattle, WA, with over 1,100 members and the mission of combining business development, social action, and leadership to expand economic opportunities for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and those who support equality for all. Alysa is very excited about this position, which she started last September.

Edlin Maldonado, BSW ’08, also received master’s degrees in international relations and business administration from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, TX. Edlin has recently taken a position with Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc., where she works as a collaborative grant specialist.

Amelia Popham, BSW ’08, received her master’s in social work from Columbia University in 2010. She is currently working as a social science research analyst in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of
Planning, Research, and Evaluation. In this position, Amelia studies ACF programs and the populations they serve, with a particular focus on economic self-sufficiency for low-income families.

‘10s

Linda Pham, MSSW ’10, is a medical social worker at Houston Methodist. She is co-author of “Ventricular assist devices: A review of psychosocial risk factors and impact on outcomes,” published in the Journal of Cardiac Failure.

Emily Goering, MSSW ’11, is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in social work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. She lives in the Washington, DC, area.

Benjamin Heefner, BSW ’11, is currently working as a clinical social worker with Texas Health Resources. He lives in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Katherine Sanchez, PhD ’11, MSSW ’92, received a two-year, $200,000 grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to screen Hispanic patients for depression and educate them about the disease and treatment options available.

Jennifer Schmalz, MSSW ’11, also holds a master’s degree in public affairs from The University of Texas at Austin. She currently works as a program specialist in the Office of Refugee Resettlement in Washington, DC. Jennifer received a prestigious Presidential Management Fellowship in 2012. During her fellowship she held positions with the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Sara Baird, MSSW ’12, has taken a position as a therapist with the Austin Child Guidance Center in Austin, TX. In this position, Sara will work to improve the mental health of children and their families through early intervention, diagnosis, and treatment.

Erika Bitar, MSSW ’12, has recently taken a position as a senior placement specialist with Goodwill Central Texas in Austin. Erika has been with Goodwill in the Central Texas area since 2013.

Clarissa (DiSantis) Humphreys, MSSW ’12, has recently relocated to Durham, United Kingdom. She has taken a position as an independent researcher with the Durham Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse. In this position, Clarissa works closely with Project Mirabal, a study conducted out of Durham University that seeks to discover effective tools and strategies for perpetrator programs.

Emily Pulley, MSSW ’12, was recently named the director of instructional programs for the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas. Emily is especially interested in expanding access to education for immigrant and refugee populations. Emily graduated from the School of Social Work with a concentration in Community Administration and Leadership.

Christy Camp, MSSW ’13, is working as a group therapist at Eating Recovery Center in Denver, CO, providing services to female and male adults, adolescents, and children suffering from eating disorders. Christy is currently planning to relocate to the San Francisco, CA, area.

Julia Sanford, MSSW ’13, has recently been hired as a senior social worker with the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources. She comes to the Department of Human Resources from the Young Women Christian Association of Central Alabama.

Jessie Lewis, MSSW ’14, BSW ’11, has recently accepted a position with the Seton family of hospitals (Shoal Creek and Brackenridge) in the psychiatric emergency department.

Claudia Peterson, MSSW ’14, has taken a position as a medical social worker at the David Powell Clinic in Austin, TX. The David Powell Clinic provides HIV care, primary care, and psychiatric services to the Austin community.

Wendy Whipple, MSSW ’14, BSW ’13, graduated with a concentration in Community and Administrative Leadership. She has recently been hired as a placement specialist with Goodwill Central Texas in Austin.

Erin Willig, MSSW ’14, took a position with Communities in Schools of Central Texas in September 2014. Erin is currently a caseworker at Dobie Middle School in Austin, TX. Erin joins Communities in Schools from Cal Farley’s, where she worked as a counseling intern.

Susan Kraus, MSSW ’78, has recently published two novels, Fall From Grace, and All God’s Children. In disguise as thrillers and mysteries, these novels delve into the ambiguity and complexity of polarizing social issues like custody battles over children and gay bashing. Susan has had a private practice (therapy and mediation) in Kansas for decades. She lives in Lawrence, KA, with her husband, Frank Barthell. They have two adult children, Sarah and Ben. Susan has completely lost touch with anyone she knew at UT Austin, and she would love to re-connect. Email her at susan@susankraus.com.

Julia Aziz (Glick), MSSW ’99, has just published the book Lessons of Labor: One Woman’s Self-Discovery Through Birth and Motherhood, with MSI Press. Rather than giving advice on how to labor or how to parent, Julia consistently offers the message that a woman can grow through the challenges that life presents her and learn to trust herself.

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Members of the MSSW class of ’80 gathered in Austin this past November, when they joined the School of Social Work for the presentation of the theatrical performance “Wild & Precious,” a one-man show written and performed by class member Steve Cadwell.

“At this time in my life, I could return to the supportive, engaged cohort who helped me find more of my voice during an earlier transitional time in my life,” Cadwell said. “My favorite part, now and back then, was schmoozing and our warm regard face to face.”

Beth Malitz was delighted to spend time with a group of people she went to graduate school with.

“I was influenced and learned so much from them during those two years. Our class was an eclectic group of dedicated people who wanted to make this world a better place,” Malitz said. She also reflected on the changes in graduate education since then.

“I was fortunate enough to go to school at a time when access to higher learning was easier than it is today. I had a stipend from the State of Texas, a very inexpensive place to live at Deep Eddy Apartments, and I was able to borrow money with a no-interest loan that I paid back over ten years. I was as single parent with two children, and I left graduate school owing only $5,000,” Malitz explained. “Without even one part of the help I received, I would not have been able to accomplish my dream of having my master’s degree and the career I love.”

For Alan Silverman, the events were a chance to reconnect with his classmates and the School of Social Work.

“It was wonderful to see how the school has evolved over time—grown in both what it offers and the number of students,” Silverman said. “And it was equally wonderful to see the paths my fellow MSSWs have taken, and how much they have contributed through social work!”

As a result of this gathering, the group decided to rekindle their financial support to the 1980 MSSW Class Student Emergency Support Fund, originally created in 2000 in memory of classmates Dennis Mulligan, Amelia Resendez and Ken Stringer.*

*If you are interested in supporting this effort, contact the Development Office at swgiving@utlists.utexas.edu or call 512-232-8376

Nominate the 2015 Charles I. Wright Distinguished Alumni of the Year

The School of Social Work is requesting nominations for the 2015 Charles I. Wright Distinguished Alumni Award.

This annual award is presented by the School of Social Work and the Social Work Alumni Network (SWAN) to a distinguished alumna/alumnus who reflects social work values, demonstrates dedication to the social work profession, and a commitment to clients, public policy and/or the community.

The deadline for nominations is March 31, 2015. All graduates of the School are encouraged to submit a nomination by completing this online form: www.utexas.edu/ssw/deansoffice/alumni/wright.html

The award, established in 1990, is named in recognition of its first recipient, Charles I. Wright. Wright received a master’s degree in social work in 1961. He later served for many years as director of the Texas Baptist Children’s Home in Round Rock, Texas.
School of Social Work Tailgate 2014!

A great time for everyone at the 5th Annual Social Work Tailgate last fall, with music by The Band in Black and surprise guest singing by assistant dean for field education Tanya Voss.

ANNUAL ALUMNI RECEPTION

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2015
5:00-7:00 p.m.

WHERE: Thompson Conference Center—Under the Oaks Cafe
The University of Texas at Austin, 2405 Robert Dedman Drive
(Southwest Corner of Dean Keaton and Red River)
FREE Parking in Lot 40 (enter from Red River)

TICKETS: Alumni and Friends-$10, Students-$5
(Includes one drink and heavy appetizers)

RSVP: Order ticket with credit card: (512) 232-7362

Reconnect with alumni, network with social work professionals, visit with faculty and staff and celebrate the 2015 Charles I. Wright alumnus of the year.

Sponsored by the Social Work Alumni Network (SWAN)
Kim Heilbrun Endowed Scholarship in Social Work

This endowment was established by Kara Nordstrom Wells, BBA ‘91 and Shawn Wells, BBA ‘86. Kara and Shawn have been strong supporters of the university for many years, most recently devoting time and attention to the Horns Helping Horns program, which assists students with limited family and financial support. After learning more about School of Social Work initiatives and challenges to reduce student debt, they decided to step up and help.

Their scholarship honors Kim Heilbrun JD ’81, wife of UT Austin president Bill Powers and dedicated champion of the 40 Acres. Ms. Heilbrun was instrumental in bringing the Horns Helping Horns program to the university and has supported countless other initiatives. This scholarship will forever honor her legacy of empowering students to succeed in higher education and in life.

Jeanne and Terry Sartzel Endowed Scholarship in Social Work

Startzel’s work was presented at an international symposium hosted by the Center for Social Work Research at the LBJ Library, to the Mexican Government in Mexico City, and later at a Sociology Convention in New York City under invitation from IBM. During this time, Terry discovered his aptitude for computing which helped forge his professional path. Today, he serves as a Chief Systems Architect for Visa Inc.

Due to his hard work as a master’s student and earning a 4.0, he was inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi and was awarded the Charles W. Laughton Endowed Presidential Scholarship, an honor he still highly values today. Jeanne and Terry look forward to helping other social work students experience this prestigious honor while providing financial support for their studies.

Want to learn more about how to establish an endowed scholarship? Call the development office at 512-475-6840 or visit http://giving.utexas.edu/how-to-give/endowments/
40 Hours for the Forty Acres: April 8 and 9, 2015

Now in its second year, this annual, university-wide, time-sensitive online fundraising campaign is designed to energize and inspire students and alumni to donate to programs and initiatives on campus that are meaningful to them.

One example: this year, the School of Social Work is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the doctoral program, and we invite all alumni with doctorates to give to a special initiative that will support our Ph.D. students on their paths to becoming world-class teachers and researchers.

As this is an online giving campaign, make sure you’re on our email list to receive more information in the coming months.

Then from 4am April 8th to 8pm April 9th, click, give, and share. Wherever you choose to donate, don’t miss your chance to join thousands of other alumni and students in showing your support for quality education.

Thanks to all of our donors who participated last year!!

Celebrate Social Work Month 2015

Make a minimum donation of $10 per honoree and SWAN will send a personalized card to a person of your choice stating that you have made a gift in his/her honor.

The 2015 tribute card design features “The Family Group,” a statue by Charles Umlauf located on The University of Texas at Austin campus.

All contributions go to the SWAN Scholarship fund. Gifts can be made now and until March 31, 2015. Questions? Call the Development Office at 512-475-6840.

WHY I GIVE

First, it is a way of giving back to a school that provided me the opportunity to attain a degree in a profession that I love and has since empowered me to continue in my pursuit of helping our nation’s growing aging population, many of whom are veterans.

Second, as a minority student, I appreciate the active role UT has taken to be inclusive of those who are often the first generation in their family to attend college. For this, the LONGHORNS will forever have my support. “To whom much is given, much is expected” (Luke 12:48)

— Kia Watts, MSSW ’02, Case Manager, HUD-VASH (Housing Urban Development Veteran Administration Supportive Housing Program)