

the utopian

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN | STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

A DAUGHTER'S LEGACY

Raising a child with complex care needs

ON THE SAME PLAYING FIELD

Social workers in college sports

NONPROFIT CAREERS

Alumni in the nonprofit world

SPRING 2019



Social workers
empower college
student athletes p.6

FROM THE DEAN

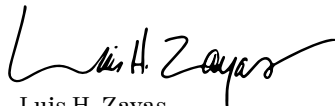
"AS ONE OF
YOU WROTE,
'THE UTOPIAN
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BIGGER.'"

I want to thank our many readers who shared thoughts, reactions and reflections about The Utopian through last year's readers' survey. It is especially heartening to know that you value the magazine and, like many of us at the school, recognize that it keeps our community connected. It was also heartwarming to know that reading the stories on these pages reminds many of you why you got into social work in the first place. As one of you wrote, "The Utopian helps me slow down from the day and realize that the work I do is connected to something bigger. It's a good feeling."

Those of you who are living outside of Texas asked for opportunities to engage with programs here on campus. We are delighted to make that happen! The DiNitto Career Center has opened its Career Coaches Network to long-distance members. Look on the back-cover of the magazine for information on how to join.

A common thread in many responses was appreciation for stories with a focus on community engagement. This issue highlights one of our recent doctoral graduates, Kendra Koch, and her work to improve the lives of children with complex health-care needs and their families in Texas. It also brings light to collegiate athletics, a relatively new but important area where social workers are making a positive difference. As the world of scholastic, collegiate, and professional sports opens up about athletes' mental health, more social work interventions are needed.

As always, I thank you deeply for your support and generosity, which allow us to carry on with our daily work as teachers, researchers, and advocates. Without you, we would not be where we are today.



Luis H. Zayas
Dean and Robert Lee Sutherland Chair
in Mental Health and Social Policy



FROM YOU (ON "A SOCIAL WORK PRECURSOR")

"Thanks for sharing the copy of The Utopian with the article about 'Chubby' [family nickname for Thelma Mitchell Elliott]. Didn't read, started by turning the page, and there she was on page 12. The picture brought me to tears. Thank you for remembering her."

Ora Houston

"The Utopian makes me so proud to have graduated from the UT School of Social Work in 1966. I have identified with several articles but 'A Social Work Precursor' really hit home. In the 1960s we were still trying to get the movies on the drag to admit Black Americans by holding sit ins. I am proud that Gus Swain felt safe at our school."

*Anonymous respondent to the reader's survey
(we would love to know who you are!)*

"Thanks for including this story. Very moving. I knew Gus [Swain] having had the honor to have dinner with him on occasions. I did not know about Elliot. Wonderful to read!"

Cynthia Franklin

Great article!

Katie Malinski (MSSW '99)



CONTENTS

Spring 2019 | Vol. 19 No. 1



2 A DAUGHTER'S LEGACY

Kendra Koch's path from stay-at-home mom to advocate for children and youth with complex health-care needs.

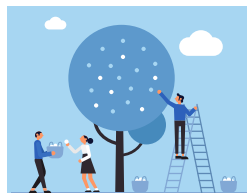
6 ON THE SAME PLAYING FIELD

Social workers in college sports empower student athletes through programming and counseling.



18 ALUMNI IN THE NONPROFIT WORLD

Four alumni with managing positions in nonprofits tell us how they got there, why they are in their line of work, and what added value they bring as social workers.



11 **Ask the Expert**
Patrick Tennant on evidence-based practices

12 **Office world**
Ramón Gómez shares the stories behind his office's décor.

14 **@socialwork**
Ideas, findings, people

21 **First Person**
What makes family, family?

22 **Class Notes**

24 **Community**

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the **utopian**

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A Daughter's Legacy

Kendra Koch's path from stay-at-home mom to advocate for children and youth with complex health-care needs

BY ANDREA CAMPETELLA. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KENDRA KOCH



Above: Kendra Koch holds newborn Caelan in 1996.

When her daughter Caelan was born, Kendra Koch (PhD '17) thought that the surgeries needed for her newborn's cleft lip and palate were all she had to worry about. But a few months later, Caelan began to experience seizures. She was eventually diagnosed with Aicardi syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that also causes problems with vision, spinal abnormalities, and developmental delays.

"In the end, we learned that we would have a beautiful, vibrant child who could not talk, or walk, or do all the things that parents want their child to be able to do, but who could definitely communicate and influence everyone around her," Koch said.

Caelan perhaps influenced Koch more than anyone else. Her birth re-directed Koch's path from stay-at-home mom to grant writer, health-care

services innovator and social work researcher. Caelan died in 2014, when she was 18 years old. But her legacy lives in Koch's work to improve the lives of children and young adults with special health-care needs.

Landing in Holland

"Welcome to Holland" is a parable written in 1987 by the writer Emily Perl Kingsley, of *Sesame Street* fame, to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability. In the parable, a couple plans a dream vacation in Italy but somehow the plane lands in Holland instead. Italy stands for the experience of raising a typical child that all future parents dream about. Holland is where parents find themselves when things don't go as expected; while not a bad place,

it's not the destination they readied themselves for. After the initial shock, Kingsley writes, they must re-orient themselves, buy new guidebooks, and learn a few Dutch phrases to eventually start appreciating Holland.

As Kingsley puts it, the loss of the dreamed vacation in Italy is very significant. But if you spend your life mourning that dream, "you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things...about Holland."

For Koch, landing in Holland meant being catapulted into a world of hospital stays, doctor's appointments, visits to therapists, and constant search for information about her daughter's condition and how to best care for her. Very soon, however, Holland became the new normal.

"Normalizing the situation is a survival tactic for every parent of a special-care-needs child," Koch said. "If you have a child who has breathing issues and twelve seizures a day, you can't live in a heightened sense of crisis, the nervous system just can't handle that. You go through that at the beginning, when whatever the condition your child has is a new diagnosis. But then you normalize the situation to survive. You just focus on what you need to do to make things work."

Making things work meant integrating Caelan's care into her stay-at-home-mom routine, which included homeschooling her other three children.

"We took her everywhere we went: soccer games, choir rehearsals, everything," Koch said.

Making things work also meant learning, by trial and error, how to manage the complexities of Caelan's health care.

"Anywhere you went they would ask questions like, how many hospitalizations has she had? Has she tried this or that seizure medication? And so on. And when you are in the middle of it, it's very hard to keep track of all," Koch said.

Nowadays, parents like Koch can find many useful resources on the Internet. At the time, she used her own ingenuity to, for example, devise a complete medical journal and daily planner out of binders to keep records and coordinate all the service providers involved in her daughter's care — therapists, physicians, early childhood specialists,



Above: The family integrated Caelan's care into the family life and included her in soccer games, choir rehearsals, and any other family event.

pharmacists, insurance companies.

"I was often fighting with insurance companies. It was not unusual to spend days just calling them. My frustration with them in great part led me to the creation of these binders."

Finding community

When Caelan was 11 years old, she had sepsis pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening condition. She became one of the first patients at Dell's Children Medical Center in Austin.

"What I knew about Aicardi syndrome at that point was that most kids died of pneumonia or an infection. This was Caelan's first unplanned intubation, and it was a very scary time for us," Koch said.

Dell Children had launched a pediatric palliative care program, and a member of the team visited Koch's family.

Palliative care focuses on providing relief from symptoms at any stage of a life-limiting illness, and on providing spiritual and social supports to improve the quality of life for both the person and the family. Koch, who was resistant to palliative care at first, found this comprehensive model of care very compelling, and eventually

began volunteering with the program by working with other families with complex illnesses to find out what their needs were.

"This was more than a decade ago, and in the world of palliative care children with complex illnesses were still an enigma. Until then, most were born with a poor prognosis and would die early. But because of technology, children who may have died at four years of age were living into their teens or twenties, and the infrastructure needed for decision-making, coordination, and social support was not there," Koch said.

She found a deep sense of community with the parents in the pediatric palliative care group that sustains her until this day.

"Those mothers are still my closest friends. Some of them still have their children and some not. They are the people I go have a drink with, have coffee with, they understand, and there is an incredible bond there," Koch said.

Forging a new path

The volunteer work at Dell's Children also opened a professional path for Koch. Her work with other parents inspired her to go back to school for a master's

in counseling at the Seminary of the Southwest. She also began collaborating with a physician at Dell's Children, Dr. Rahel Berhane, in research about health care for families of children with complex illnesses.

"At the time there was little information about service utilization and cost for this population. Dell Children gave us seed money to investigate this issue, and see if a comprehensive care clinic could lower cost and make a positive impact on families' wellbeing."

In 2012, this research collaboration resulted in funding from Seton Healthcare to open the Seton Children's Comprehensive Care Clinic in Austin. At the clinic, families like Koch's receive wraparound care: comprehensive care for the child with the complex condition plus coordination with the many service providers and supports for family members and caregivers.

"That was my first experience with grant writing and research, and I felt it was a gift from God," Koch said.

That same year, Koch was accepted into the Steve Hicks School of Social Work's doctoral program. She found her academic home at the school's Institute

for Collaborative Health Research and Practice, of which she was a fellow.

"I initially thought I was going to do direct service support, emotional support. But then I realized that changing systems was really compelling to me, and that I seemed to be good at doing research and writing grant proposals. I think that if I can make a difference at the systems level, that's where I am best used," Koch said.

Changing systems

On a sunny morning last August, Koch was at the Austin's Ronald McDonald's House decoding a web-like diagram of multicolored ovals connected by lines and arrows for a small group of nurses, social workers and case managers.

Known as "Gabe's Care Map" and drawn by Gabe's mother, the diagram captures what it takes to raise a kid with complex care needs — in Gabe's case, a rare genetic disorder called Noonan syndrome. The map has blue ovals for health care providers, purple ones for assessment services, red for school-related personnel, turquoise for advocacy groups, pink for recreation

"As a nation, we had tried to promote effective transition from pediatric to adult primary care for children with special health care needs for about 30 years."

—Kendra Koch

opportunities, orange for anything related to legal and financial matters, and green for sources of support. The lines to some of the ovals are intercepted by small door icons, which represent barriers. Smacked at the center, a circle marked with a capital "G" stands for Gabe and his family.

Koch explained to the group that since Gabe's mother published the diagram in her blog in 2011, "care mapping" has become a useful tool in the health-care field. The maps literally put the patient and the family at the center, and help



Above: Just after sampling



Above: Caelan amidst sibling silliness

all service providers understand the complex web of which they are only a tiny part.

This was day one of a professional workshop (funded by the Texas Department of State Health Services) that Koch and her team are delivering throughout the state to help providers better understand the needs of youth with complex health conditions, particularly as they age out of pediatric care — as Caelan did.

In most of these cases, Koch explained, youth and their families struggle to find providers of adult health care with enough knowledge about neurological and other disorders primarily associated with pediatric patients. And if they find these providers, there are still obstacles ranging from less-than-effective inter-professional communication to insurance policies that trigger at age 18.

“As a nation, we had tried to promote effective transition from pediatric to adult primary care for children with special health-care needs for about 30 years. There is great work done by an organization called Got Transition, but we still have a long way to go,” Koch said.

During the doctoral program, Koch

had conducted research that revealed that the great majority of nurses, medical residents, and social workers in hospital settings didn’t know enough about the challenges of transition for this specific population. She developed the workshop to address this gap, and is now re-packaging the information into a research project template about transition that medical students and residents can choose to conduct to fulfill their degree requirements.

“The medical curriculum is pretty full and students have very limited amount of time,” Koch explained. “But the organization that accredits medical schools and residency programs requires students to conduct a research or quality-improvement project. My goal is to offer this material as a doable option for them so that they leave medical school with knowledge about the challenges of transitions for children with complex needs and their families.”

Looking back at the beginning of the journey that started with Caelan’s birth, Koch said she is sometimes surprised about how things turned out.

“It took me a while but I found out that I am best at bringing everyone to the table,



Above: Caelan enjoys a rare Texas snow day on the family deck.

gather the data, look at the metrics, figure out the best way to put all that into a proposal and then execute and evaluate it,” she said. “And it’s joyous for me. I love to look at and change systems, and I didn’t expect that. I was getting my master’s to work with people, and now I have a doctorate to work for people.” ☆



Above: Contemplating the tree, 2010



Above: 17 year-old Caelan at her Austin home

On the Same Playing Field

BY LYNDA M. GONZALEZ. ILLUSTRATIONS BY RENEE KOITE

CALORIE
GOAL

4.0



Social workers in college sports empower student athletes through programming and counseling.

The image of the collegiate student athlete is usually one of success and triumph: the roaring crowds, pep rallies, the winning touchdown or tie-breaking score. But in recent years, tragic incidents related to struggles with mental illness have emerged among student athletes across the nation.

In 2014, Ohio State University mourned the suicide of a wrestler-turned-football athlete who had suffered confusion and mood swings as a result of a concussion. A once-promising, former University of Virginia women's

basketball player was discovered living on the streets of Washington, D.C., as she struggled with schizophrenia. And in the fall of 2018, The New York Times disclosed the multiple suicide attempts of a freshman football athlete at the University of Washington navigating his first year as a student and athlete.

“A lot of people have this wrong idea that student athletes have it easy,” said Ashley Harmon (BSW 12, MSSW 13), assistant director of clinical behavioral health in Texas Athletics. “But they are an at-risk population, and it’s important for social workers to understand that these students also need services.”

There aren’t statistics proving that depression and anxiety are higher in student athletes compared to the general student population, Harmon said. But she has noticed that these conditions manifest in student athletes differently.

“I think student athletes’ anxiety can stem from pressure.. Or it may be a part of who they are, but the competitive environment increases it or brings it out,” Harmon said. “Going from being the star high-school student-athlete to a large university comes with a lot of challenges, so it’s important to provide them the resources and support necessary to manage the added pressure.”

As the struggles of student athletes become more apparent on college campuses, schools across the country are prioritizing mental health in athletics programs. Texas Athletics, however, is the first of such programs to establish a partnership with a school of social work in order to accomplish this goal.

Harmon was hired in 2015 to manage clinical services by providing counseling to student athletes and, when needed, contracting specialized therapists to do the same. Emmett Gill, a professor in the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, joined in 2017 as director of student-athlete wellness, with the goal of developing programs that best benefit student athletes — so far these include an injury support group, a transitions programs for sophomores and juniors, and a substance abuse prevention program. Harmon and Gill are the backbone of the Behavioral Health department, which is overseen by Allen Hardin, executive associate athletic director for Sports Medicine.

“As social workers, we bring a person-in-environment perspective, which means that we focus on the student athlete as a whole,” said Gill. “We evaluate and address their needs as individuals, but we also look at how their environment might be affecting them. We look at what is happening off the field as well as on the field.”

Gill said that, thanks to this broader perspective, social workers are able to help student athletes

address challenges that may stem from their own personality and family history as well as from their immediate team and college environment and the larger, systemic context — everything from the many rules and regulations that affect student athletes to the cultural demands placed on sport players and the pressures of being constantly commented on in social media.

The University of Washington noticed how Texas handled mental health services in athletics and wanted to implement a similar model, said Claire Hipkens (MSSW ‘18), the first director for student wellness for intercollegiate athletics at UW. She credits her experience as a social work student intern at Texas Behavioral Health for preparing her to oversee mental health services and programming for the 650 student athletes on the Seattle campus.

“People think I’m doing sports psychology, which is valuable and has its place, but it’s quite different from what I do,” Hipkens said. “As social workers, we’re able to mobilize in a way that looks at all of the possible issues that could be affecting a student athlete. I’m very thankful to Emmett and Ashley, I learned a lot from them that I was able to bring to my position here.”

Silent Struggles

Having a parent with cancer, or working through sexual identity, or struggling with body image — these common challenges that affect students in general also affect student athletes, Hipkens said. The difference is that the latter face the added pressure of performing well in their respective sports.

“I can’t imagine having thousands of people watching me play and tweeting about me missing a field goal,” Hipkens said.

A lot is expected from student athletes at top-tier universities, Harmon said. They perform for their coaches, their families, and crowds of thousands of people, all while making sure to fulfill the requirements for keeping their athletic scholarship — most people don’t realize these scholarships are renewed on an annual basis.

“Lots of athletes have perfectionist tendencies, and the athlete identity is always a struggle,” said Harmon. “Many of them have been doing sports since they were eight years old, and they have been told to do well, get a sports scholarship, go to the Olympics, go pro. There’s a high demand to perform.”

Although anxiety and depression are among the top issues that student athletes struggle with, Harmon said, others might come to college with past trauma from their childhood or home lives. Some struggle financially despite having an athletic scholarship.



“A lot of students fully depend on their scholarship check, and many of them are trying to support their families as well,” Harmon said. “This becomes financial stress for them, because their check obviously is not huge.”

Harmon added that students in sports like rowing, swimming, and track are at risk for eating disorders because they have to meet weight requirements. She also has had the experience of providing support for suicidal student athletes, and helped them to “come out of a very dark place.”

“I’ve seen lots of students turn that around,” Harmon said.

There’s a common misconception that student athletes are tough and not open to talking about their feelings, Hipkens said. While that may be the case for some, she thinks the culture is shifting and has seen many student athletes invested in making mental health a priority. This particular set of students possess added resiliency and adaptation skills because of their sports training.

“You can see a lot of successes with student athletes, when in some other populations it might be harder to see that,” Harmon said. “Some of them are great at using the skills learned in counseling in other areas of their life.”

Empowering Student Athletes at Texas

An array of student athletes from different sports appear in a public service announcement video for the Substance Abuse Prevention Program (SUPP)

launched for the Texas Athletics Behavioral Health department.

A Texas Track & Field athlete warns that getting drunk one time can cause you to lose 14 days of training gains. A different athlete chimes in to add that 50 percent of college athletes never use alcohol while in season.

“Don’t try to be an All-American and all-6th Street,” quips another, referencing the popular downtown bar district in Austin.

Social work student Todd Smith helped write and direct this video during his internship in the Texas Athletics Behavioral Health department in Fall 2017. The SUPP program is one of several initiatives that Smith worked on under Gill’s supervision.

The SUPP leadership board consists of 15 students who lead events throughout the year to promote substance abuse awareness. The students focus on communicating how substance abuse affects athletic performance as opposed to simply highlighting the illegality of it, Smith said.

An additional benefit to participating in the program is that student athletes can combat self-isolation, a potential challenge caused by the strictly regimented schedules of an athletics program.

“Through SUPP, these students get to work with athletes from different sports, and they love opportunities to interact with people from other teams,” Smith said.

Hipkens said that she’s had the opportunity to work with a similar student-led initiative at UW: Student-Athletes Against Sexual Harassment and Assault

(SAASHA). The men's and women's rowing teams formed the group to change the cultural perceptions regarding sexual violence among student athletes.

"It's making a major impact on educating student athletes," Hipkens said. "The student-led aspect of it is very powerful. It's a good example of how incredible it can be to work with this population."

Beyond the Field

Smith likes to think that his job in the Texas Athletics Behavioral Health also includes letting students know that social work is very versatile as a profession, and that one possible career path is to work in athletics.

"When I meet students who want to stay in athletics but also have a social work mindset, I tell them that there are options for them beyond the field, and social work can be one of them," Smith said.

A goal for the Behavioral Health Department is to help student athletes realize that they are more than athletes and give them space to explore other aspects of their identities, Gill said.

"For example, we were working on a branding exercise in which students had to design a logo to represent them after UT," Gill recalled. "And one of the student athletes turned out to be this incredible artist that no one knew about! Everyone ended up asking her to please make their logos."

Exploring and embracing an identity that goes beyond the sport they play is particularly important when student athletes experience an injury and can no longer perform, which can sometimes lead to an identity crisis. At Texas Athletics, Gill launched Team Grit, a support group for injured athletes, to help address these issues.

Gill said that giving student athletes the space to explore different aspects of their identity — a given among college students — is also beneficial to prepare them for a life after college that may or may not include playing a sport professionally.

"These are things that are going to help them off the field and in the classroom," Gill said. "With our transitions program, which is for sophomore and junior athletes, we want to prepare them for life after UT, making sure they have their resumes, they go to job fairs, and help them figure out what they want to do."

A 2017 NCAA rule mandates weekly time off, with no training, for student athletes.

"Before this rule, men's basketball had 20 days off for the whole year. 20 days out of 365 days! And these students are only 18 years old. Then people wonder why they have not developed these other identities," Gill said.

Gill wants the Behavioral Health team to help student athletes use some of this time off to take advantage of the many opportunities on the UT campus for personal enrichment and community engagement.

"The campus calendar comes every day," Gill said. "We are looking for ways to shorten it, give it to our student athletes and tell them, 'You get four days off a month. Go explore the Forty Acres and the great things happening here. If you take advantage of this, you will leave here a more rounded person.'" ☆

EVERYDAY

PRACTICE REGISTER FOR CLASSES PRACTICE
BE. BETTER. ACE EXAM PRACTICE
 MEET CALORIE INTAKE GOAL PRACTICE

5:00 WAKE UP + BRUSH TEETH
 5:30 EAT BREAKFAST

6:00 **TRAIN:**
 6:30 • SPRINTS [x5]
 7:00 • WEIGHTS
 7:30 • ARMS [x3]
 8:00 • BACK [x3]
 8:30 • LEGS [x3]

9:00 **CALCULUS**
 8:30 @ 8:30 - 10:00

10:00
 10:30
 11:00
 11:30 **WORKOUT**

12:00 LUNCH.
 12:30

1:00 **ANOTHER CLASS**
 1:30 @ 1:00 - 2:00
 2:00

2:30 **CALCULUS TUTORING.**
 3:00 **DON'T. FORGET.**
 3:30 @ 2:30 - 4:30
 4:00

4:30 PRE-PRACTICE MEAL

5:00 ☐ DID YOU MEET CALORIE GOAL?

5:15 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 5:30 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 6:05 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 6:20 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 6:30 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 7:15 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 8:50 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 9:25 PRACTICE PRACTICE
 10:00 PRACTICE PRACTICE

7:45 DINNER + SHOWER
 + STUDY FOR EXAM
 + SLEEP +
 SLEEP + SLEEP

ON FINDING THE RIGHT EBP



PATRICK S. TENNANT, PHD, is a research associate with the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing. A version of this article originally appeared in the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing's *Clinician's Corner Digest: The EBP Issue*, <http://tiny.cc/CliniciansCorner>

Not all evidence-based practices (EBPs) are created equal. When a practice or program is designated as EBP, it simply means that there is research showing that it produces statistically significant change in just one short-term outcome — and it may not be the one your clients need. Therefore, when choosing an EBP, it's recommended to go beyond the "EBP label" and actually understand the research behind. Only then you will be able to assess whether or not the practice or program fits the needs of your clients and agency. Luckily, as Patrick S. Tennant explains below, there are user-friendly and informative online clearinghouses that can help with this process.

WHY USING EBP CLEARINGHOUSES

The best EBP clearinghouses report on degrees of evidence rather than simply stating the "EBP-or-not" designation, which is in fact a false dichotomy. They display a wide breadth of EBPs, indicate the degree of research supporting each, and give users the ability to cross-reference the degree of research support by target population, program focus, and program features.

HOW TO DO IT

A variety of public and private organizations have taken up the call to create curated databases of information about program and practices and the evidence supporting them. There are many databases out there, varying in their focus, review procedures, user-experience, how often they are updated, and so on. This amount of choices can be overwhelming and stall well-intentioned searchers.

A great place to start is the Results First Clearinghouse Database: <http://tiny.cc/ResultsFirst>. This database functions as a clearinghouse of clearinghouses, where users can effectively sort through the findings of eight EBP clearinghouses at the same time.

More information on other high-quality databases and clearinghouses can be found at campbellcollaborations.org and evidencebasedprograms.org.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE INFORMATION

There are many aspects to consider when selecting and implementing an EBP, several of which are outside of the clearinghouse's purview. For example, searchers may want to consider:

- **Fit with the population:** Does the EBP fit with the background, characteristics, and culture of your clients?
- **Outcomes:** Does the research indicate that there was clinically significant change in the outcome? Is this the change you want to see in your population?
- **Fidelity vs. adaptation:** Do you have to read a script word for word? Can you modify the content or tailor the program while maintaining the primary components? For example, can you include cultural references to increase relevance and engagement for a particular population? Do you have to get any modifications approved?
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Some EBPs come with costs to purchase materials and trainings. Are you able to budget for this? Can you sustain training when there is staff turnover? Bear in mind that some EBPs offer materials and trainings for much lower cost than others.
- **Implementation:** There is a variety of implementation strategies, which can lead to meaningful differences in program outcomes, and should be reviewed during the EBP selection process. The variation among programs, settings, and their interactions makes it difficult to recommend a "best" implementation strategy, but finding the appropriate one for your program could be crucial for the program's success. These are two useful resources to navigate implementation:

Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., & Friedman, R. M., *Implementation research: a synthesis of the literature* (2005).

Nilsen, P., "Making sense of implementation theories, models and frameworks," in the journal *Implementation Science*, vol. 10, issue 1 (2015).



RAMÓN GÓMEZ (MSSW '01)



If you passed through the school in the last 13 years, you probably know this office and its denizen. Since 2006, in his position as director of student and community affairs, Ramón Gómez (MSSW '01) has shared his passion for social work and UT Austin with countless students, and has inspired colleagues with his upbeat attitude and Texas spirit. Many of these students and colleagues have made a mark on Ramón — and on his office décor, as you can read below.



1 . UNITED STATES MAP

“One of my main roles is to meet with prospective students to tell them about social work and UT Austin, and answer any questions they may have. If they can visit, I meet them here in my office, which I usually share with a graduate assistant. Martha Santillan (MSSW '18) was one of those assistants, and she noticed that prospective students came from all over the United States. She thought it would be neat to keep records of all the places students come from, and she gave me this map before graduating. Now, every time I meet with prospective students, once we finish with all their questions, I tell them, ‘Now, go ahead and put a pin where your hometown is.’”



2. CESAR CHAVEZ

"When working as a graduate assistant in my office, Jeanette Cordero (MSSW '12) got to know me and learned that Cesar Chavez is one my heroes. She made this painting for me as a parting gift. She used burnt orange of course, because she knew it's my favorite color."



3. TEXAS AND THE WORLD

"One of our Hogg Foundation Bilingual Mental Health Scholars, Denise Baxindine (MSSW '11), got a teaching job after graduating — I think it was in the Rio Grande Valley. One day she asked children to draw pictures of the world, and one of them drew this globe with a big state of Texas smack in the middle. She immediately thought of me and thought I would appreciate the drawing."



4. LATINOS POR VIDA

"One of the many times my brother was incarcerated, he had someone in prison make this for me and my wife Sally. I have always kept it close, it keeps me grounded and does not allow me to forget where I come from."



5. BIRDHOUSE

"This was a gift from professor Jane Kretschmar, who probably saw it and thought 'Hey, Ramón may not have something like this.' And I wouldn't, because I am scared of anything with feathers, whether it is a little bird or a big turkey or a condor. I am okay with seeing them from afar but I prefer that they don't get too close to me because I get a little nervous. And I would definitely not touch them!"

6. NEON BEVO

"Professor Roberta Green gave the neon Bevo to me when she retired and emptied her office here in the building. She thought that if anyone would appreciate this, it would be me. And she was right. It is cheerful on cloudy days."





PROJECT HOPES

Project HOPES is a state-funded, community-based initiative to prevent child abuse and neglect across 35 Texas counties determined to be high-risk areas, with the aim of empowering local communities through education, skill development, and capacity building.

The Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing is evaluating the project's effectiveness. Researchers are experts in the risk factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect, and their social work background brings additional value towards interpreting and understanding the results.

During the evaluation, the research team also saw the opportunity to strengthen social services practice in the targeted areas. For example, the team found that agencies were resistant to collect sensitive adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) data from the parents they were serving. To address this missed opportunity, the team delivered training for more than 1,000 social workers to empower them to address multi-generational transmission of trauma with their clients, have a compassionate conversation to help remove shame, and help them understand why it's important, as parents, to choose a more protected path for their own children than what they experienced. Learn more: tiny.cc/projectHopes



Neighborhood and health

Is neighborhood poverty harmful to every child? In a recent study that uses national data, alumni Yeonwoo Kim, Sharon Lee, and professor Catherine Cubbin show that neighborhood poverty is associated with lower social cohesion and safety, which lead to greater externalizing behaviors (such as disobedience, destroying own things, and outbursts) among children from poor families. The study was published in the *Journal of Community Psychology*.



Washington Calling

In 2018 the DiNito Career Center launched "Washington Calling," a week-long, career development seminar during spring break in Washington, D.C., for undergraduate and master's level social work students. During the week, students meet with alumni, explore federal internship opportunities, and learn more about job prospects in policy, advocacy, clinical work, and professional organizations.

Want to help with this initiative? Contact Jennifer Luna-Jackson, jlunajackson@austin.utexas.edu



Public transit advocacy

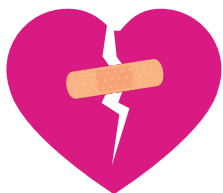
Last year, social work major Danielle Redhead got tired of shuttle delays on Cap Metro route 670. The UT shuttle serves Riverside, where many low-income students and students of color live, according to Redhead. After June, when Capitol Metro rearranged routes, the delays worsened and led to severe overcrowding. As the social work representative in Student Government, Redhead attended Cap Metro board meetings, met with key stakeholders, and wrote an opinion piece in the *Daily Texan*. In early January, as a result of these advocacy efforts, the shuttle went back to its original route, and stakeholders are monitoring results to implement further improvements.



Showing up for black mothers

Black women in Texas are 2.3 times more likely to die while giving birth than white women. To address this disparity, professor Michele Rountree founded the Black Mamas Community Collective, an organization comprised of black mothers, activists, leaders and advocates with the goal of saving the lives of black mothers in Travis County through education and awareness. The collective hosts sister-circle-support meetings, advocates for ethnic diversity among health-care providers, and provides training sessions on how to identify and mitigate institutional racism in health-care settings.

Learn more: <http://tiny.cc/BlackMamasATX>



ProtectHer

The Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault received the 2018 ProtectHer Award from New Friends New Life, for its work on raising awareness about human trafficking.

Marijuana's long term impact

In the context of the increased prevalence of marijuana use among youth and the movement towards legalization in many states, it is important to understand the long-term impact of marijuana-use initiation. Doctoral student Hydeen Beverly, professor Yessenia Castro and colleagues examined whether age of first marijuana-use is associated with educational attainment and employment status. Controlling for demographics, they found that individuals with late first use had significantly higher odds of graduating from high school and being employed when compared to individuals with early first use. Results, published in the *Journal of Drug Issues*, underscore the importance of early prevention for youth aged 15 and younger.



Mentoring award

Diana DiNitto received the 2019 Donna Harrington Award for Excellence in Mentoring from GADE (Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work.)



New research institute

The new Institute for Military & Veteran Family Wellness is a joint effort of the Steve Hicks School of Social Work and the Dell Medical School Department of Psychiatry. The institute focuses on researching best practices to help service members, veterans, and their families; training current and emerging professionals with evidence-based practices known to effectively serve this population; and working closely with service providers and stakeholders in military and veteran communities. Learn more: sites.utexas.edu/imvfw



Champion for Life

Social work undergraduate Jamarquis Durst is one of the Big 12 Champions for Life. This campaign highlights student-athletes with life-changing stories from each of the conference's ten universities. Selected students embody the defining characteristics of a champion — leadership, perseverance, community service, and discipline — and serve as role models both on the field and in the classroom. One of 11 siblings, Durst will be the first in his family to graduate from college when he finishes the requirements for his social work degree.



LinkedIn for social work

Jennifer Luna-Jackson's article "Why LinkedIn for social work?" made the Spring 2019 editor's pick list in *The New Social Worker*.



Field and FASDs

The Health Behavior Research and Training Institute developed the free webinar “Women, risky drinking and alcohol-exposed pregnancies: A framework for field instructors,” as part of its work with the Collaborative for Alcohol-free Pregnancy, a CDC-funded initiative.

The webinar describes risk factors for alcohol-exposed pregnancy, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), and what social workers can do to support preventive services. It also includes case studies and clinical practices that support social work field instruction and supervision.

Access the webinar:
<http://tiny.cc/FASDwebinar>



Doctoral award

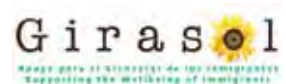
Sehun Oh received the 2019 SSWR Doctoral Fellows Award for his dissertation proposal, which focuses on mindfulness-based interventions in the context of opioid misuse during pregnancy and mother-infant relationships.



Girasol

The Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing has launched Girasol, a program to help Texas immigrant children and families to heal from trauma through support, education, and connection. Girasol projects include a social work team that collaborates with legal teams to provide support to women and children in detention; a social work team to provide direct support to families separated at the U.S.-Mexico border; training on trauma within the immigrant experience for lawyers, mental health professionals and others; and *Navegando Austin*, a website that compiles resources accessible to the Austin-area undocumented community.

Learn more at
<http://tiny.cc/girasol>



Poverty simulations and social justice

Susan De Luca and Adam Benden (MSSW '17) studied the impact of the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Challenge on undergraduate and master's level social work students taking social justice classes. The SNAP Challenge is an innovative simulation designed to increase empathy by challenging students to adopt a SNAP food budget (\$4.50 a day) for a week and record their observations. De Luca and Benden found that, as the week goes by, students progress from skepticism about the difficulty of the exercise to feeling fatigued, irritable, and stressed and finally to making connections among poverty, food access and overall quality of life. The article was published in the *Journal of Poverty*.



New AASWSW Fellow

Sandy Magaña, Professor in Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, has been inducted into the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, an honorific society of leading researchers and practitioners. She joins nine Steve Hicks School of Social Work professors who hold the same honor: Namkee Choi, King Davis (retired), Diana DiNitto, Rowena Fong, Cynthia Franklin, Yolanda Padilla, Mary Marden Velasquez, Barbara White (retired), and Luis H. Zayas.



Depression and primary care

Depressive and anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental disorders in primary care systems — they occur at rates higher than common illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes. What are the best evidence-based treatments for these disorders in these settings? In a recent systematic review, alumni Anao Zhang, professor Cynthia Franklin, and doctoral student Audrey Hai found that both Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Problem Solving Therapy (PST) were effective in primary care settings. They also found that the interventions were more effective when delivered outside primary care, and that individual treatment had greater effects than group treatment. Results were published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*.

VOICE survey

The VOICE Survey (Victim Services Occupation, Information, & Compensation Experiences Survey) examines the experiences of people working in the fields of intimate partner violence and sexual assault services. The survey asked questions about turnover intention, job satisfaction, resiliency, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. This survey was conducted by the Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) in collaboration with state and community partners, and with funding from the Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division. Access the main findings, which include recommendations to improve workplace wellness: sites.utexas.edu/idvsa.



SSWR President

Dean Luis H. Zayas is the new President-Elect of the Society for Social Work and Research. He will serve a one-year term starting February 1, followed by two years as President, and one year as Past President.

Dedicated to Advancing
Excellence in the Field of
Social Work and Social Welfare
Through Research, Practice, and
That Address the Needs of



Field instructor of the year

Sara Green-Otero, LCSW, is the recipient of the Field Instructor of the Year from the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. Sara is doing an amazing job with our students completing their internships at KIPP Austin Public Schools.

Looking for CEUs?

**APRIL
10-12**

Perinatal Mental Health and Wellness Conference

**APRIL
26**

Gerontology Resources Symposium

**JUNE
21**

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SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE NONPROFIT WORLD

Almost half of our alumni find careers in the nonprofit world. But only a small fraction — less than five percent — take management positions. We asked four alumni who currently occupy these positions how did they get there, why they are in their line of work, and what added value they bring to the table as social workers.





During the past 65 years, the needle has not moved for people with disabilities when it comes to employment. That's a significant challenge that I enjoy running straight into, every day.

MARSHALL HENSON, BSW '00

WHERE: NW Works (Winchester, Virginia), an organization that expands employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the tri-state area of Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland.

WHAT: President and chief executive officer

HOW: Henson always knew he was committed to service but a degree in social work helped him professionalize the desire to help others. After graduating he spent two years in Malawi with the Peace Corps, and upon return he moved to the Washington, D.C. metro region and began working in services for individuals with disabilities. He saw that employment was the key sustainability factor to help these individuals live productive, meaningful lives. He wanted to translate his successes in metropolitan D.C. to a tight-knit community that looked more like the rest of the United States. He is happy to have been doing exactly that at NW Works since he joined in 2016.

WHY: Henson realized that when individuals struggle with employment, there is often an underlying cause related to a disability that may have not been uncovered. He knows by experience that when these individuals are matched with the right resources, they can thrive and contribute to the local economy. From his perspective, disability is one of the key factors to target when trying to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty, an issue he is passionate about. He is excited about taking NW Works' decades of institutional experience in working with people with disabilities and apply them to help solve the issue of multigenerational poverty.

ADDED VALUE: His social work education — which Henson warmly refers to as “diplomacy 101” — has allowed him to build strong teams during his career in the nonprofit world as well as navigate difficult situations with clients, employees and those involved in policy-making.

LAURA ELMORE SOVINE, MSSW '01

WHERE: Austin Recovery (Austin, Texas), a nonprofit substance-abuse treatment center that offers residential and outpatient options to all in need.

WHAT: Executive director

HOW: Sovine wanted to be a therapist, but while in the social work program a family member was sent to prison, and this sparked her interest in criminal justice. She graduated wanting to reform the Texas criminal justice system, and got her first executive director position in 2006 with a small nonprofit focused on prison re-entry. In 2016, after Austin Recovery went through a major re-structuring, she joined as director of operations and eventually became executive director. She credits social work professors David Springer and Darlene Grant with seeing the leader in her while she was in school. Leadership has now become part of her identity as a social worker, and she says she is “unabashedly nerdy” about it.

WHY: Sovine enjoys being able to set culture and policy in order to create a healthy organization where people like to work. She loves developing people, seeing them grow and find their passion and their niche. With Austin Recovery specifically, she enjoyed the challenge of helping put the organization back together after a crisis. By working to make addiction treatment accessible to marginalized populations, she feels that she has come full circle to her original goal of helping reduce incarceration.

ADDED VALUE: Social work values are a key component of Sovine's leadership style. She consistently uses her professional use of self and ethical decision-making frameworks; she is able to look at systems, and also at the people who work in those systems as human beings with strengths. Thanks to her social work training, she can move easily between micro and macro levels, and is able to create authentic relationships and bring people along, which she does both with staff and board members.



I've found that I need to either be at the top to influence the organization or at the front line to influence clients. In the middle of an organization, it feels like nothing I touch seems to move.



ELIZABETH PEÑA, MSSW '12

WHERE: Central Texas Food Bank (Austin, Texas), a nonprofit with the mission of nourishing hungry people and leading the community in the fight against hunger.

WHAT: Director of Development

HOW: Peña got her first nonprofit job when she was in high school, working at the Habitat for Humanity resale store in her native Texas town. During the master's program, she chose the administration and policy track and completed the nonprofit portfolio through the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. She knew fundraising was her calling — as opposed to program development — when she heard a development director in one of her classes describe the work and how she interacted with clients to convey their stories to donors.

WHY: Peña loves connecting people with causes they care about. Plus, fundraising is a practical career choice. Raising money is a very specific, transferable skill always needed in the nonprofit world. More personally, she is very data-driven and results-oriented, and with fundraising she can always know when things are working.

ADDED VALUE: Peña has subtly worked to encourage person-centered language across her organization — for instance, switching from “hungry people” to “people experiencing hunger”. She reads every written piece, from grants to reports, asking herself, “If a client reads this, would they be embarrassed about the way we portray them?” She wants to share authentic client voices with donors, and make sure that clients are an integral part of coming up with solutions at her organization. Thanks to her social work skills, she builds rapport quickly with donors and adapts to other people's communication styles in and outside of the organization.

It's easy in philanthropy to fall into a “starving children vs. donor hero” complex and that's not how I want our fundraising department to function.

SHUBHADA SAXENA, MSSW '16

WHERE: SAIVA- South Asians' International Volunteer Association (Austin, Texas), a nonprofit that promotes the sense of well-being, belonging and fulfillment for older adults of South Asian heritage.

WHAT: Founder and president of the board

HOW: Saxena had been working as an IT engineer for 20 years when her mother-in-law developed dementia. She became her mother-in-law's primary caregiver and realized it was hard to find the right resources, services, and supports. She started SAIVA as a volunteer association where people like her mother-in-law could come together with others and volunteer, thus developing connections in their lives — research shows that connections and movement are very important to prevent and delay dementia symptoms. In 2012 SAIVA became its own nonprofit and Saxena was dedicated full time to it. She felt she needed new skills for this career turn, and decided to go back to school. She found the portfolio programs in Nonprofit Studies and in Aging and Health at UT Austin to be a very good fit for the skills she wanted to acquire.

WHY: Simply put, Saxena found her passion. She went through an existential process with many changes, and made the decision that she wanted to spend her life in service to others. She feels she has been blessed with many opportunities, and wants to make sure these opportunities are available to others too. In Marathi, her native language, and in the original Sanskrit, the word “seva,” which is very close to “saiva,” means “service.” That is the focus of the organization she started. It is an ongoing process to figure out what the services are that make more sense for the community she wants to serve.

ADDED VALUE: Social work education gave Saxena a deeper understanding of and great connections in the Central Texas nonprofit world. She also learned how to advocate, a skill that she uses very intensely. Growing up in India, she was not aware of advocacy as a distinct form of politics and was unfamiliar with the practice of seeking legislators out and talking to them.



My social work education gave me the confidence and the ability to speak out and ask without feeling ashamed, because I am not asking for myself. I am asking on behalf of vulnerable populations for which we need to come together and help.

What makes family, family?

BY TYMOTHY BELSETH

How do we determine who is in our family? The easy answer is that family is the people we are related to. But for kids living in foster care, the answer is not so easy. As someone who aged-out of the Texas foster care system, I have firsthand experience with the difficult journey that many other foster youth face when familial ties are severed. More importantly, I have experience with the beauty of new relationships forming, and eventually flourishing.

I grew up in rural South Texas, where I spent my entire childhood living in poverty. My relatives all struggled with a variety of unfortunate issues, ranging from chronic health ailments to engaging in criminal activity and substance abuse. As a kid, I could not fully understand the burden my relatives held or comprehend how difficult their lives must have been.

But others noticed for me.

I lived in a tight-knit rural community, where everyone knew everyone. My friends' parents knew that my relatives were struggling and helped me as much as they could. They let me do laundry at their place when we did not have electricity or running water. They always invited me for meals. And they generously offered me a space to stay in their home for as long as I wanted. I was always treated like part of the family. The more time I spent with my friends' families, the more I realized how their family dynamic was vastly different from mine. I saw love, acceptance, and harmony — all things missing from my life.

Unfortunately, shortly before my fifteenth birthday, circumstances deteriorated to the point that I had to go into foster care. Although my biological relatives were not in a position to help me, my friends and their parents were there for me.

One morning, residential staff at the emergency shelter I was living at awoke me. My friends and their parents were throwing a surprise birthday party for me. They had packed all my friends in a van and driven for nearly two hours to visit me at

the shelter. They took me out to eat, gave me a cake, and sang happy birthday to me in a restaurant (which was somewhat embarrassing). It was the first real birthday party I had.

The timing could not have been better. Going into foster care is rough, to say the least. But being separated from my friends and their parents, whom I viewed as my family, was the most difficult aspect of being placed into care. Truth be told: I did not miss my own relatives as much as I missed them, because at this point I had been virtually living with my friends for three years.

The gesture of throwing a birthday party may seem small. But it was huge for me. It reaffirmed my beliefs that these people truly cared about me, loved me and considered me as part of their family. I understood then that family is more than just the people that you share genetic material with. Family is forged through compassion, authenticity, and love.

Today, I am a child welfare researcher on a quest to distill a formula for success for other teens in the foster care system. The research project I conduct, the Texas Youth Permanency, closely examines the experiences and relationships youth have with others while in foster care. In 2018, we published the findings from our pilot study and found that authentic relationships with others, combined with a sense of normalcy, leads to positive wellbeing for youth and can yield positive transformations and improve successful transitions in young adulthood.

As I was interviewing participants, analyzing interviews, and writing the report for this study, I could not help but reflect upon my own experiences in foster care. I am eternally grateful for all that my friends and their families did for me and I credit all of my success to their presence in my life. The importance of these relationships cannot be understated. They are incredibly powerful factors that can ward off many of the problems we see with teens in foster care and can thoroughly enrich their lives.

More about the Texas Youth Permanency Study:
<http://tiny.cc/TexasYouth>



What's new? Share your personal or professional news with us: utopian@utlists.utexas.edu

'67 Wade Wilson, MSSW '67, would love to hear from members of the class of 1967. Wade has recently closed his practice and is enjoying retired life. You can contact Wade at wadewilsonlaw@gmail.com. He promises not to visit without notice!

'69 Charlotte Cooper, MSSW '69, closed her practice as a psychotherapist in 2014. Since 2010 she has worked as a consultant for NASW/TEXAS assisting members who are psychotherapists with reimbursement issues, and consulting on proposed legislation that affects patients and providers. Charlotte wrote, "This is one of the jobs I have had that is the most fun."

'72 Judy Schlotzhauer, MSSW '72, retired from community mental health work. She currently volunteers with Texas State Advocates and Texas NASW, as the Region 7 Board Representative. She wrote, "If you retire, consider volunteering your time with NASW!"

'75 Rebecca L. Hegar, MSSW '75, recently retired and is professor emerita with The University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work. Her daughter, Anna N. Hegar, is a UTA BSW '18, and granddaughter Emmy Neal, age 5, can whistle *The Eyes of Texas*! They all now live around La Grange.

'82 Ilene Federman, MSSW '82, has recently retired after 34 wonderful years as a LCSW.

'86 Sharon McCauley, BSW '86, was a full-time social worker at Robinson Development Center and Mexia State School for 12 years. She switched to long-term care for 14 years, and during the past six years she has worked in skilled home care. She has two sons, one of whom has been diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. Sharon has been actively involved in the PTA at her son's school, and has served on multiple committees in leadership roles. Her goal is now to serve as the social worker at her son's school, and to obtain her master of social work degree. She is proud to have done all of the above while working full time as a social worker and mom. Her motto is, "If you care enough, it can be done."

'87 Lynn Marie Thompson, MSSW '87, is a visiting scholar at the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health at the University of California, San Diego. She researches factors that lead to long-term, drug-free remission of autoimmune diseases.

'90 Martha Mosier, MSSW '90, has been appointed to the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners. She is the vice president and chief operating officer of Hospice Brazos Valley in Bryan, Texas.

'96 Catherine Benavidez, MSSW '96, has retired as a social work case manager from Del Sol Medical Center in El Paso, where she worked for almost five years. She is now planning to volunteer for a community-based organization or agency that helps meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

'99 Jessica (McDeavitt) Knudsen, MSSW '99, has recently relocated

back to Texas to become president and CEO of Clarity Child Guidance Center in San Antonio (claritycgc.org), which provides inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services for children ages 3-17. She can be contacted at jessica.knudsen@claritycgc.org.

'04 Adam Redd West, MSSW '04, is an assistant professor at Western Kentucky University. He received his PhD in Human Development and Family Sciences from UT Austin in 2013. His research focuses on premarital and early marital relationships, romantic relationship education programs, and parenting in the context of chronic illnesses.

'05 Raina Whitfield, BSW '05, is a senior manager with Transperfect, a family of companies providing language services and technology solutions for global business.

'11 Erika Lindsay Flax, MSSW '11, is excited to announce that, in addition to serving as the program director with Center for Discovery in Fairfax, Virginia, she has opened her own private practice in the northern Virginia area. She is seeing clients of all ages and supervising LCSW candidates.

'12 Clarissa Joy DiSantis Humphreys, MSSW '12, joined Durham University (United Kingdom) in August 2016 as the student support and training officer for sexual violence and misconduct. Hers was the first position of its kind in the UK. Clarissa is also registered with the Health & Care Professions Council in England, and is an accredited sexual violence liaison officer. She maintains her LMSW and LCDC status in Texas. In her free time, Clarissa volunteers as the mental health advisor for American Veterans Archaeological Recovery.

'Courtney Stollon, MSSW '12, BSW '09, joined the Social Work Alumni Network (SWAN) Board in June 2018 and is now president-elect.

'13 Jill Fiorillo, MSSW '13, BSW '12, received an award from the Central Texas African-American Family Support Conference in February 2018 for her work as a forensic social worker at Austin State Hospital.

She is thankful for the mentorship she received from professor Mitch Sudolsky, who was her clinical supervisor, and for the opportunities she received as a research assistant for professors Mary Velasquez and Kirk von Sternberg.

Jaclyn Griffith, MSSW '13, moved to Virginia Beach, Virginia, in 2016 and became an LCSW. She worked for two years as a therapist at an inpatient psychiatric hospital, on a unit with people who had recently attempted suicide. She now provides therapy in a private practice that focuses on integrative wellness. Jaclyn takes a humanistic approach and specializes in working with people suffering from intrusive thoughts, depression and anxiety disorders, and suicidal ideation. She is thankful every day for the strong clinical foundation that she received at UT Austin.

'14 Jocelyn Chamra-Barrera, MSSW '14, is a bilingual support coordinator at the Christi Center. She has recently joined the Social Work Alumni Network (SWAN) board.

'15 Lizzy Ball, BSW '15, is a senior case manager at Curalinc Healthcare. She got her master's degree from Texas State University in 2016.

Eden Hernandez Robles, PhD '15, is director of Empower Change, the Paso del Norte Center for Mental and Emotional Wellbeing. The center promotes collaboration among expert faculty and mental health professionals at The University of Texas at El Paso, New Mexico State University, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, William Beaumont Army Medical Center and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The center also provides professional development opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

Sydney (Ramirez) Zuiker, BSW '15, got married, moved to Houston, and works as a community education specialist for Crime Stoppers in the Safe Schools Institute. With her team, she educates students, school staff and parents on topics such as cyber safety, bullying, and teen-dating violence. She is proud that the safe schools program, since its inception in 1997, has removed more than 300 weapons from school campuses before they could be

IN MEMORIAM

George Benjamin Brown, MSSW '02

Faculty
Sonja Berry

used to harm any students or faculty. She feels privileged to get to work every day to make Houston and Texas safer places.

'16 Adam MacDonald, MSSW '16, found his calling in research and therapy after working in emergency rooms and state hospitals. He is now part of a UTHealth research team that focuses on new ways of delivering person-centered, strengths-based, non-traditional mental healthcare. He also works with individuals and couples at a local group practice in Austin.

Molly Platz, MSSW '16, has stayed within the Steve Hicks School of Social Work family, working for the Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health and the Institute for Military & Veteran Family Wellness. Her duties include mostly management, outreach and communications. She has worked in collaboration with Texas HHSC to implement an adult mental health program throughout the state, and contributed to a number of projects aimed at integrating research and practice to support military/veteran-connected families. Molly has really enjoyed blending her clinical, person-centered training with her administrative, "big picture" skills. She is also thankful for having been able to pursue her personal passion for supporting community initiatives associated with reproductive/sexual health and safety.

Ellen Barg-Walkow Wilder, MSSW '16, is currently a middle school social worker at Austin Discovery School (ADS). She provides individual and group counseling to students, facilitates restorative justice circles, and provides referrals for staff and families. She is passionate about collaborating with other mental health professionals to provide better services to students and families at ADS. Ellen has recently completed EMDR training to increase her skills to support survivors of sexual trauma. She also manages a small client caseload as a volunteer intern at Capital Area Counseling. Ellen married her husband, Thomas, in January 2018. They are enjoying married life in Austin.

Erica (Sheley) Woodall, MSSW '16, got married and has a new name! She is completing her third year as a school-based, mental-health provider with Intervention Services

in Williamson County. She is excited at the prospect of completing her supervised hours in May, and hopes to be an LCSW by July of this year.

'18 Cynthia Alonzo, BSW '18, is the direct support provider supervisor to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities at Down Home Ranch. She is starting to look into graduate social work programs. As a first-generation college student, she is finding the graduate school application process challenging to navigate. You can contact her at cynthiaalonzo@utexas.edu

Kcie Driggers, MSSW '18, is working as a geriatric care manager for Senior Services of Austin. She has recently joined the Social Work Alumni Network (SWAN) board.

Kimberly Garcia, MSSW '18, BSW '17, is a bilingual therapist with the Children's Assessment Center in Houston. Kimberly provides therapeutic services and promotes holistic healing for children and their families who have been impacted by sexual abuse.

LaDawnya Hooks Gonzalez, MSSW '18, is working as a therapist for Waterloo Counseling Center's Project VALOR (Veterans and Loved Ones Restored). Veteran mental health is a personal passion of LaDawnya, who has many connections to the military/veteran community, including both of her parents, who are Texas veterans. While she was in the master of social work program, she was fortunate to complete her final field placement at the VA Outpatient Mental Health Clinic.

Colleen Maher, MSSW '18, is currently working as a school-based therapist for Integral Care. She has recently joined the Social Work Alumni Network (SWAN) and has been elected treasurer.

Amanda Shea Mills, MSSW '18, is a clinical social worker at Foundation Communities in Austin.

Kayla Richards, MSSW '18, is working as a pediatric neurosurgery social worker at Dell Children's Medical Center. She has recently joined the Social Work Alumni Network (SWAN) Board and has been elected board secretary.

FRESH OFF THE PRESS



Susan Kraus, MSSW '78, has had a busy life in Kansas since graduation. She worked at Washburn University's counseling center, taught graduate level classes and supervised social work interns at the University of Kansas, and maintained a private practice with a focus on women and relationship issues. She also wrote, as she puts it, "pretty much anything I could manage to complete in-between work, teaching, raising two kids (including a daughter with autism), house chores, carpool, marriage... basically a few decades of the working-mom tightrope." She is an accomplished travel and fiction writer. She has published three novels (*Fall from Grace*, *All God's Children*, and *Insufficient Evidence*), a series in a Kansas university town with a social worker protagonist. *Insufficient Evidence* tackles campus sexual assault in the hookup culture, Title IX, the legal system, and social media. Her writing has been described as genre-bending: a combo of socially responsible fiction, mystery thriller, and relationship/family dynamics. Learn more at susankraus.com



Ron Ayer, MSSW '91, is the author of a new novel, *Skubalon Storm: Secession, God & Country in a Possible World* (Milwood Books, 2018). The novel is a futuristic comic satire on Texas politics and religion. Kirkus Reviews notes, "the plot is ingeniously inventive..." Learn more at <https://skubalonstorm.com>



Tonya Lippert, MSSW '03, is the author of *Goodbye, School* (Magination Press, 2019), a picture book that shows children that there are ways to say goodbye that honor their love for something. She is also the author of a short story, "Misreadings," which is part of the anthology *Strongly Worded Women* (Not a Pipe Publishing, 2018) and co-author of *Transforming ADHD* (New Harbinger Publications, 2017). Tonya received her PhD from UTD. As a licensed clinical social worker, she works for Kaiser Permanente running mental health therapy groups and interviewing children and teens about concerns of abuse. During her free time, she writes for all ages.



Giving back to the community you come from

Denise O. Nixon Scholarship in Social Work

In 2016, Denise and Ray Nixon created a fellowship for eight social-work, master's level students from the Dallas area. The Nixons, who are from Dallas, want to share their passion for giving back to the community you come from. They have since extended their generosity through the creation of the Denise O. Nixon Endowed Scholarship, which will support Steve Hicks School of Social Work students for generations to come.

Denise studied psychology and social work at UT Austin and started as a case worker in her native Dallas, knocking on doors and connecting families to much needed resources. This experience fueled her passion for helping low-income communities. She and Ray continue to make a difference by supporting nonprofits such as Serve West Dallas and volunteering with multiple local organizations. Denise seeks to live by her favorite mantra: "Unity in diversity with humility."



An investment in our collective future

Leslie and John David Moritz Endowed Scholarship in Social Work

The moment Leslie and John David Moritz learned of the Steve Hicks Challenge, they knew it was time for their family to do its part.

"This very generous challenge leverages new funding to enhance educational opportunities for more students in pursuit of a degree in social work. We need more educated professionals working for social change. We consider this endowment an investment in our collective future," they said.

Their advice to social work students? "Embrace this remarkable educational opportunity in a nationally recognized social work program: study hard, get your degree, and then go make a difference in this world. Help as many people as you can."



Serving the needs of individuals with mental illnesses

Utley Education Foundation Endowed Scholarship in Mental Health

Through her involvement with the Mental Health Association in Texas, Ann K. Utley saw the need for well-trained, passionate social workers that can provide services to individuals with mental illnesses.

"Steve Hicks has been a long-time friend. When he committed to invest in social work students at UT Austin, the board of the Utley Education Foundation wanted to honor this commitment and help support students dedicated to the field of mental health and mental illness," Utley said.

Utley hopes that the students benefitting from this endowment will help individuals with mental illnesses live joyful, fulfilling, and productive lives. Her advice to students is, "Be a mentor to those you serve and allow them to be a mentor to you."





Steve Hicks Matching Gift Challenge

Steve Hicks likes to say that the real secret of being a philanthropist is that you receive much more than what you give. Because he wants others to share in the joy of giving to social work, he has issued a \$5 million matching challenge to create endowed scholarships. The rules are as follows:

- Give or pledge \$50,000 or more (to be completed within 5 years).

- Steve Hicks will match the amount.
- Your name — or that of a family member, friend or organization — will be linked forever to scholarly excellence at The University of Texas at Austin.

To participate in the challenge, visit sites.utexas.edu/steve-hicks-challenge or call 512-475-6840.



Welcome Cassie Alvarado!

Cassie Alvarado has joined the Steve Hicks School of Social Work as development director. She comes from The University of Texas at Austin School of Information, where she was the main point of contact for all fundraising and alumni-relations efforts.

“I’ve been extremely impressed with the mission of the Steve Hicks School of Social Work and the passion of its people,” Alvarado said. “I have experienced, first-hand, the critical help of social workers during challenging times, and I have seen the positive impact of the applied research conducted at the school. I am honored and excited to be part of this team and caring community.”

Why I Give

Major Joe H. Giles, Sr., MSSW '65

“It is with gratitude that I support the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. I recall the two-story World War II building and helping carry a paraplegic class member up the stairs; professor Laura Lee Pederson’s decorative orange; professor Charles Laughton (the image of a movie actor of the same name); acting dean Anne Wilkins and her sharp wit.

It was while a regional director of Child Welfare in El Paso that I was able to be a catalyst in the establishment of the first child-abuse-prevention program in the Army. As a result, I was asked to return to active duty and returned in 1986.

Through *The Alcalde* and *The Utopian*, I have watched the expanding impact of social workers around the world. Thank you.”



Why your support matters

Luan Tran

John and Jennifer Gates Endowed Scholarship in Social Work

While volunteering at a student-run clinic that serves homeless individuals in Austin, social work student Luan Tran noticed that socks were frequently listed on donation requests. He decided to create Socks for the Sole, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that raises funds to purchase socks for the homeless. He hopes Socks for the Sole inspires other students to make a positive impact during their time on the Forty Acres.

Tran said that receiving the John and Jennifer Gates scholarship was a great source of affirmation for him.

“The scholarship has helped reaffirm that I am indeed going on the right path with my career and that my achievements are being noticed,” Tran said. “I am deeply grateful for this support, and I hope to return this investment in me back to society once my studies are over.”



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

YOU ASKED, WE RESPOND!

Want to stay connected and engage in school initiatives but live outside Austin?
Not a problem! Join the Career Coaches Network.

This is an active network of alumni and other professionals who provide assistance with career service activities for our students. As a long-distance member of the network, you can choose to participate in any of these two events:

1

Career exploration workshops using

Zoom: An informal session with social work students where you share your personal experience with your career, agency, or membership in a professional organization.

2

Online interviewing prep and coaching:

Get connected and help students prep for interviews by asking them a question (we will provide it for you) and giving them feedback on their answer and interview skills.



The Career Coaches Network is an initiative of the DiNitto Career Center. Interested in joining? Complete this form to get started:

<http://tiny.cc/DiNitto>

First five long-distance members to join the Career Coaches Network receive a Texas Social Work t-shirt!*

* When you complete the form, please mention that you saw this announcement in the "Brief Bio Statement" section. Form must be completed by April 15, 2019 in order to be eligible to receive a t-shirt.