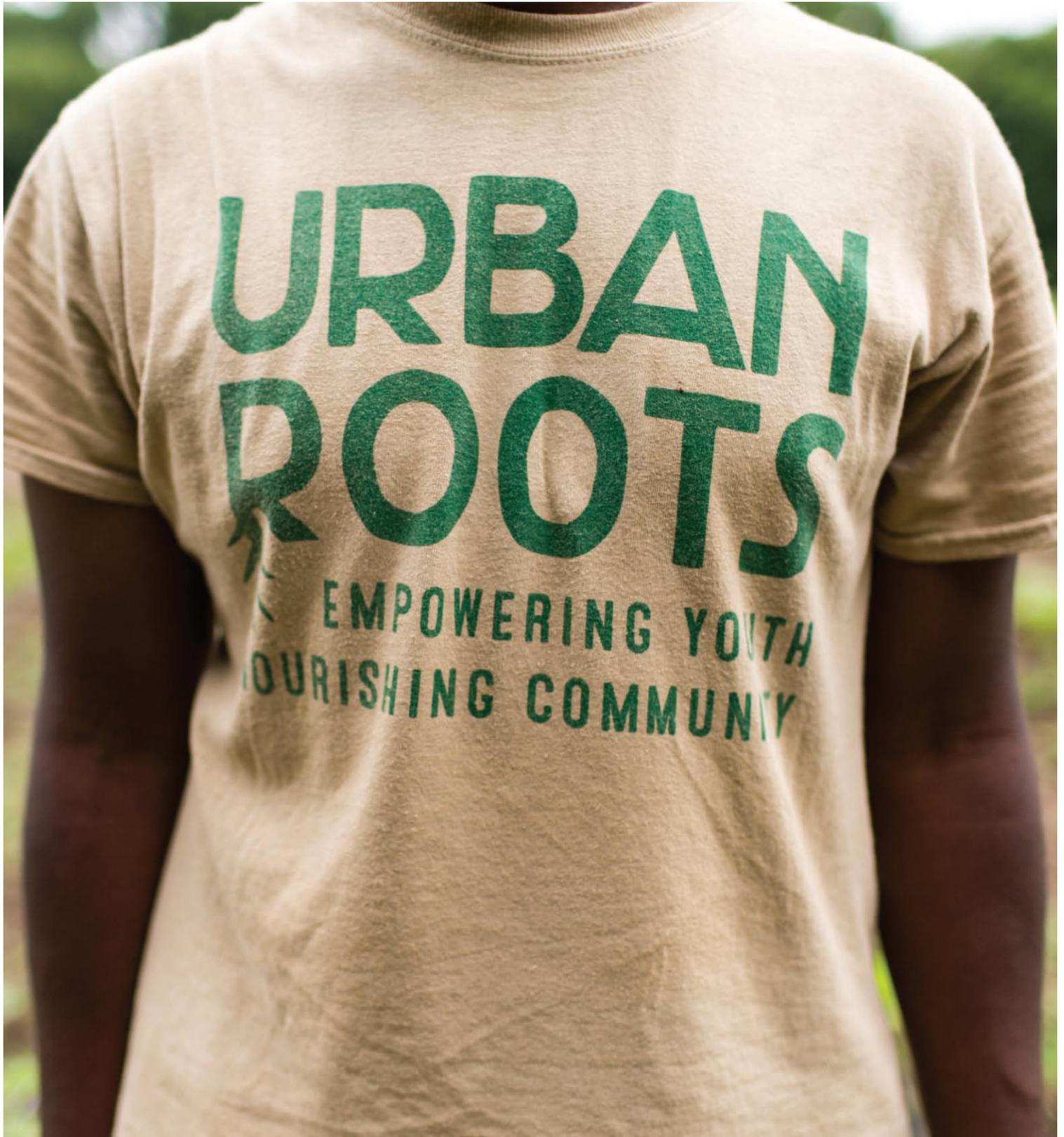


**VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
90 years of social work

**CAPITOL GAINS**  
Elliott Naishtat's legacy

**ASK THE EXPERT**  
Cossy Hough on Medicaid

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN | FALL 2016



# FROM THE DEAN

THE UTOPIAN BORROWED ITS NAME FROM THE OLD JUNIOR HIGH AUDITORIUM, WHERE WE STILL HOLD CLASSES, SCREENINGS, LECTURES, AND THE OCCASIONAL THEATER PRODUCTION.

This year The Utopian turns 20 years old. We are celebrating with a new design that we hope you enjoy.

Volume 1, Issue 1 of The Utopian was published in the fall of 1996, just after the School of Social Work moved into its “new” building at 1925 San Jacinto Boulevard—actually, a renovated building of what used to be Austin’s University Junior High School.

A newsletter to keep alumni and friends updated seemed fitting at that time. The Utopian borrowed its name from the old junior high auditorium, where we still hold classes, screenings, lectures, and the occasional theater production. The curtains are now burnt orange instead of blue and gold, but we hope we still embody the utopian spirit of this junior high that led desegregation in Austin, when it transformed itself from an all-white school in the 1950s to a school that mixed Anglo, black, and Latino by the mid-1960s. We are proud to keep this lineage alive in our newsletter’s name.

Over the years, the name and the mission of The Utopian have remained the same but the way the magazine looks has changed, as you can see in the images below. A group of hardworking people helped us arrive at today’s design. Andrea Campetella, our director of communications, shepherded the project after surveying our alumni and friends about their thoughts on design and content. Most of you said you appreciate The Utopian because it keeps you connected to the school, but made suggestions such as a more updated appearance and more alumni stories. The new design and format try to answer to these requests.

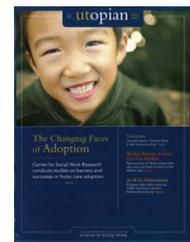
The university’s Creative Services team led us in a semester-long design process. Regular participants in these meetings were Allan Cole, associate dean for academic affairs; Laura Turner, director of development; Carrie Stephens, development specialist; Liz Nowicki, director of professional development; Jennifer Luna-Jackson, director of career services; Carol Lewis, director for research; and Sarah Swords, clinical professor.

In another 20 years The Utopian will most likely look different, and this new design will seem as quaint as that first 1996 issue seems to us today. What won’t change is The Utopian’s mission: to report on the excellence of our faculty and staff, the students we teach, and the alumni and friends we are so proud to have.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Luis H. Zayas".

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



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the **utopian**

The Utopian is published for alumni and friends of The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work.

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# CAPITOL GAINS

After 26 years and more than 300 passed bills, social justice warrior Elliott Naishtat, MSSW '72, JD '82, prepares to leave the Texas House

Article and photography by Martin do Nascimento

## SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI ON NAISHTAT'S LEGACY



### **Michael Lucas (MSSW '98)**

*Deputy Director, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation. Intern for Naishtat, fall 1996-97. Legislative aide, legislative director, and committee director on the House Committee on Human Services, 1996-2002.*

I can honestly say that my time working for Elliott shaped the rest of my career.

When I was an undergraduate social work student, I was planning on just working with youth directly but I was encouraged to take the internship on faith that I would appreciate

working for Elliott in the legislature.

I was told that he was an MSSW with a law degree that cared passionately about the same things that I cared about. But I was skeptical about whether or not that was the path for me when I went there.

I am now an MSSW with a law degree whose whole career to this point is to advocate for the people that I wanted to work with as a social worker, but to do so through the justice system and through more macro-level change. Elliott taught me about those roots of our profession so it's not overstatement at all to say that he shaped my very path.



### **Nancy Walker (MSSW '99)**

*Senior Advisor to the Executive Commissioner for Texas Health and Human Services. Intern for Naishtat, 1999. Legislative aide and director, 1999-2012.*

I'll be honest with you, working for Representative Naishtat, working in the Capitol, as a social worker interested in policy — that was the ultimate job. I've never had a job that felt like such a perfect fit. His values and my values were so aligned and so aligned with social work values. That's extremely rare in many situations and especially within the legislative setting.

**E**ven as the contents of well-worn shelves and drawers make their way into cardboard moving boxes, a visit to State Representative Elliott Naishtat's offices in the Texas Capitol feels like entering some redoubt of latter-day Texas liberalism.

Born and raised in New York City, Naishtat has spent the last 26 years representing House District 49 in the state legislature. During this time, he's won the reputation of an unassuming and effective operator best known for his unrelenting advocacy for health and human services in a state often opposed to public spending. Late last year, Naishtat announced that he wouldn't seek reelection come November.

On plum-colored carpets, every piece of furniture in the office seems to be made of dark wood and studded leather. Scattered artifacts and memorabilia fill the office, and every nook, cranny, and surface that can hold a file or brief does. On one wall, framed news clippings commemorate the 2003 Walkout, when Naishtat and over 50 Democrats deprived the House of a quorum and blocked a Republican redistricting plan.

"You know Molly Ivins? She was a dear friend. After she died, her family said 'What do we do with that?'" Naishtat says, pointing across the room at a taxidermied armadillo peeking out from atop a bookcase. "One day, a box showed up here, and the note said, 'Place this where Molly and her armadillo can always keep an eye on you,'" he recalls, chuckling.

Naishtat mentions the armadillo as an aside to the story of how he came to Texas in the first place.

To hear him tell it, the bright-eyed 20-something had been promised a role in President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty with AmeriCorps out in San Francisco. A last-minute change sent him to Eagle Pass instead, amidst the cacti, armadillos, and the acute underdevelopment of the Texas border with Mexico.

As Naishtat recalls, the work was all about "developing local leadership potential" and the mantra was "maximum feasible participation of the poor."

"That's when I learned about being a catalyst for change through community organizing. Today you hear about 'empowerment,' and that's really what it was," he continues.

After AmeriCorps, community organizing brought Naishtat to the historic Clarksville neighborhood of Austin, and from there he found his way to The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work.

As a second-year student in the school's newly minted organizing and planning master's program, he'd never considered straying from grassroots organizing. One day the late dean Jack Otis told him, "Elliott, everything that you've done is at the grassroots level, and that's great, but I need you to understand that there are other battlefields, and one of them is right here in Austin."

With that impetus, Naishtat arranged to have his field placement with the State Capitol's Legislative Budget Board, focusing on health and human services.

After he graduated, Dean Otis hired him to put together and direct the school's first-ever legislative training program. Through the program, second-year master's students were placed in the offices of members of the legislature to gain hands-on experience in the law-making process.

The initial program eventually ran out of funding, but when Naishtat was elected to public office in 1990 he made a point of reviving it and has been receiving office interns and recruiting staff from his alma mater ever since.

"They do great work, and they get hired like that," he says snapping his fingers. "I get absolutely competent full-time professional interns, and they're treated like members of the staff."

Over the years, more than 30 social work students have been placed in Naishtat's office and have gone through

As I see it, his legacy's really standing up for people who otherwise don't have a voice in the legislative process and in politics, because politics tends to drive policy. His whole passion, his whole make-up is about helping indigent populations, low-to-mid income populations, really disenfranchised populations. I believe that's his legacy.



**Doug Smith (MSSW '00)**

*Policy Analyst, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. Intern for Naishtat, 2000. Policy analyst, 2000–2001.*

Why is it that we go into the field of

social work? Why do you serve in public office? He's made service his life's mission. You look at the countless people who've worked in his office as staff members and interns, and they were deeply influenced by that. You look at the number of people who were impacted by the policies that he passed — that's his legacy.

I think that his legacy is also challenging those who characterize those who live in poverty in the most negative way. The battles that he was fighting when I worked for him are the battles that are still being fought today. We want to depersonalize poverty. We want to blame the indi-

vidual who is living in poverty — make it a statement of their character or a statement of their lack of their responsibility — and he knew that that was a lie, and he forced other legislators to acknowledge that.



**Laurie Cook Heffron (MSSW '02, PhD '15)**

*Assistant Professor, St. Edward's University. Intern for Naishtat, 2000-01. Policy analyst, 2001–2002.*

When I was placed at Elliott's office I had no concept, despite my education, of how policy actually gets made — how bills get passed, implemented,



“ One day, a box showed up here and the note said, ‘place this where Molly and her armadillo can always keep an eye on you’ ”

what is arguably the best imaginable crash-course in the state’s legislative process for the socially minded. Interns got to research and draft legislation under Naishtat’s watchful eye — and feared pen, with which he edited line by line anything interns wrote. Some students stayed on as staff members after completing their internships, and the experience convinced many others to take up policy-related careers.

“It’s been a total success,” Elliott says, reflecting. “I’m very proud of where they ended up.”

As we talk, hanging on a coat rack in the corner of the room is Naishtat’s signature Save the Children tie — a tie that he started to wear everywhere shortly after he was first elected in 1990.

Looking around, there’s a conspicuously empty shelf running the length of the room.

“That’s where my awards were,” he tells me, more frankly than wistfully. Now they’re in six or seven large, carefully stacked cardboard boxes lying nearby.

“Early on, I decided to measure my success as a legislator by how many bills I passed,” he says, perhaps sensing the looming question of what the legacy of so many years in office could be.

By that measure, he’s outstripped the majority of his peers with over 300 bills passed in 13 house sessions. Another metric might consider the people — those 30-some interns, the folks in Eagle Pass and Clarksville, friends, fellow legislators, constituents and Texans all over, and the countless more that can’t be mentioned for want of space — whose paths Representative Naishtat’s lifetime of social work through public service no doubt influenced.

By this measure too, the evidence seems pretty positive. ■

and become policies that have an impact on real people. And I say this in a positive way, in the sense of how many opportunities regular citizens and advocates have to shape the process. People literally walked into the committee office, and we would hear anyone wanting to give their insight. I still remember this person, when we were working on a suicide-prevention report. She would come to our office, and every time she had something written to give to us, and it always had attached a picture of her son, who had committed suicide.

Many elected officials check out during the interregnum, but Elliott

was known as someone who was there every day, interregnum or not. I think his legacies lie in his day-in, day-out presence and attentive engagement in public service, and most importantly, in his steadfast commitment to the needs and rights of marginalized communities in his district and throughout Texas. Over the years, he and his staff also created a training ground and mentorship network for social workers, public policy analysts, and advocates working toward social justice.



**Linda Rangel (MSSW '13)**  
*Social Worker, Communities in Schools of Houston.  
Intern for Naishtat, 2013.*

I think his legacy is going to be that for all of the years that he was in office, we had a legislator that the people of Austin, his district, could count on. The staff truly cared about his constituents and the issues that they were facing, and I’m sad that he’s retiring because I think he was one of the good ones.

I think that social work students were lucky to have his office as one of the possible field placements. Personally, it was my favorite field placement. And just getting to know him and learn from him is one of the best experiences that I’ve ever had.

Oh, and his tie! Part of his legacy is also going to be his wonderful tie!

# Ask the Expert



## Cossy Hough on Medicaid expansion (and how it's not happening in Texas)

Health insurance coverage may elicit yawns from most people but it gets Cossy Hough fired up. She credits the 13 years she worked with Texas Medicaid for her conviction that social workers should understand the social justice implications of Medicaid expansion.

### What is the Affordable Care Act coverage gap?

Due to a 2012 Supreme Court decision regarding the act, Medicaid expansion became optional for states. As of March 2016, 32 states have expanded Medicaid eligibility and 19 have not. States like Texas, which chose not to expand Medicaid eligibility, have encountered a coverage gap of adults who live below the Federal Poverty Line but earn too much to qualify for Medicaid and not enough to qualify for the federal subsidies that those at higher incomes can use to purchase health insurance coverage. Most of the adults in this coverage gap remain uninsured.

### How big is the coverage gap?

Almost 3 million people have fallen into

this gap. One in four of them lives in Texas, which is the state with the largest percentage of uninsured residents in the United States.

### Who are the Texans in the coverage gap?

Some examples:

- A single mother of two children who works at a fast food restaurant and earns \$18,000 per year.
- A personal care attendant who earned \$9,000 in a year, after working the hours needed by his or her employing agency.
- The parents of two small children with one income of \$10.00 per hour or \$20,800 per year (the children may qualify for Medicaid).

### What would have been the cost of Medicaid expansion for Texas?

The federal government would have paid 100 percent of expansion costs for the first three years, and 90 percent thereafter until 2022. Texas turned away approximately \$1 billion in federal funding for Medicaid expansion and

chose not to provide health coverage to almost one million residents. Texas has the option to accept federal funds for Medicaid expansion in the future.

### What does the future look like for Medicaid expansion in Texas?

The Texas Governor's office has stated that the state should be able to address its "unique healthcare situation without federal interference," and that it does not plan to pursue Medicaid expansion. One issue to consider, however, is payment for uncompensated care in hospitals. As we know, many people without insurance end up in emergency rooms, and in many cases the federal government provides assistance to states with the cost of this uncompensated care.

Going forward, the federal government may limit uncompensated care payments for patients who would qualify for Medicaid under Medicaid expansion. This is an issue I will be watching out for here in Texas.

*Want to know more?*

*Visit: [texaswellandhealthy.org](http://texaswellandhealthy.org)*



**ON OPIOID ADDICTION**

**WHY THE COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY ACT DOESN'T GO FAR ENOUGH**

By Jane Maxwell



**T**he opioid overdose epidemic plaguing Texas and the nation includes two interrelated trends: a 15-year increase in deaths involving opioid prescription pain relievers and a more recent surge in heroin overdose deaths.

To help combat the epidemic, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act was recently passed into law. This act will expand medication-assisted treatment, increase the prescription drug take-back program, and train and equip first responders with the overdose-reversal drug naloxone.

It is a good start. But more is needed at the state and national levels. We need medication-assisted treatment facilities that can meet the existing demand and make naloxone more easily available.

The demographic composition of heroin users entering treatment has shifted from inner-city minorities to white men and women in their late 20s living outside of large urban areas. State lawmakers noticed these trends and implemented policies that have started to affect the epidemic. For instance, Texas passed the “pill mill” law, which prohibited prescribers from dispensing opioids from their offices and mandated use of the prescription monitoring program.

An unintended side effect of controlling the over-prescription of legal opioids such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, however, is that those addicted to pain pills do not seek treatment but rather switch to other alternatives. The cheapest and easiest alternative now is heroin.

In Florida, for example, a law similar to the Texas “pill mill” resulted in a 27 percent decline in deaths for opioid analgesics. However, the heroin overdose death rate in Florida increased 122 percent.

Moving forward, more emphasis should be put on medication-assisted treatment options for those addicted to opiates or heroin and on expanding the treatment capacity immediately.

Look at the numbers. In 2012, an estimated 1.5 million opioid users received medication treatment that lessens cravings and help individuals heal. But there were also more than 2.5 million Americans who met the criteria for dependence of prescription pain pills or heroin who weren’t on medication treatment and another 2 million who began using these drugs in 2012. This means we have 4.6 million people addicted to opioids, yet we are providing medication-assisted treatment to fewer than 1.5 million.

We also must also make the over-

dose-reversal drug naloxone more easily available. Naloxone can prevent deaths due to heroin use, but it should also be prescribed along with any pain pill that could cause overdose. Naloxone would be particularly appropriate for patients with cognitive impairments, those on heavy doses of pain pills who may not remember their medication schedule, or those who have previously suffered overdoses.

There has been a 200 percent increase in the rate of overdose deaths involving opioid pain relievers and heroin since 2000. Recognizing that pain pills can be as deadly as heroin and that we can prevent overdoses by having naloxone available will mean saving the life of a young son and getting him into treatment and also keeping granddad alive until his medication schedule is adjusted.

We have treatment options. We only need to remove existing barriers for people to receive them. ■

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Jane Maxwell is a research professor at the School of Social Work and a national expert on drug trends (find her latest reports at [socialwork.utexas.edu/site/ari](http://socialwork.utexas.edu/site/ari)). A version of this article was printed in the *Dallas Morning News*, *Austin American-Statesman*, *Waco Tribune*, and *McAllen Monitor*.



## ON OPIOID ADDICTION

# RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS CAN HELP COMBAT THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

By Julie McElrath (MSSW '14)

**A**s experts and statisticians tell us, drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States. And addiction to opioids — prescription pain relievers and heroin — is driving this epidemic.

I have seen this trend from up close, first as the counselor at a drug and alcohol residential treatment center. I worked with adult heroin users with multiple relapses who, on average, had started using opioids at 15 years of age.

Today, in my role as executive director of University High School, Austin's first sober high school, I again see the human reality behind the statistics. Take Victoria, for instance. She started smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol at age 13. When she was 15, she was at a party and a friend offered her a prescription pain reliever taken from the home's medicine cabinet. This young woman, who describes herself as socially awkward, says that after taking the pill she suddenly felt more relaxed and confident. She liked the feeling. As her use of prescription pain relievers increased, they became too expensive and a switch to heroin seemed the best alternative.

Traditionally, Victoria might have been isolated in inpatient care for treatment and then, after four weeks,

returned to her previous world — the same school, the same friends, the same parties — to face relapse risks and triggers. Studies indicate, in fact, that 60 to 70 percent of students with addiction problems relapse upon returning to their former high schools after treatment.

Sober or recovery schools like ours offer an alternative to traditional treatment by tapping into the innate human desire for connection and being part of a community. At University High School, Victoria has thrived. She found structure, accountability, and met other students “like her” with whom to practice skills learned in treatment, acquire new skills, and have sober fun. After school hours and on weekends we require participation in alternative peer groups in Austin (Teen & Family Services or Palmer Drug Abuse Program), which keeps our students connected with positive peers and adult mentors. We also assist students in repairing and/or replacing unhealthy relationships. We are small, and our specialized school staff can quickly identify and respond to behaviors indicating relapse or symptoms of a co-occurring disorder.

Victoria graduated this past May, and during her time with us she blossomed into an active leader in the recovery

community who shared her story in public high schools and advocated for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. Preliminary studies suggest that Victoria's case is not a fluke, but that recovery high school students experience significant reduction in substance use and mental health symptoms.

We all need to join forces to face the opioid epidemic that is ravaging our country. On our part, as a recovery high school, we are committed to staying abreast of current research, legislation, and evidenced-based interventions associated with prescription opioid abuse, prescription opioid addiction, and heroin abuse among adolescents.

When I started my career treating adult heroin users, sometimes I wished I could travel back in time to meet their adolescent selves and set them on the road to recovery from early on. In my current role, I hope that by helping teens struggling with opioid abuse today, we are making a dent in the number of adults addicted to opioids tomorrow. ■

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Julie McElrath is executive director of University High School. She can be contacted at [jray@uhighschool.com](mailto:jray@uhighschool.com)

# Planting the



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AN URBAN FARM GROWS COMMUNITY LEADERS

By Andrea Campetella  
Photography by Martin do Nascimento



URBAN  
ROOTS

GROWING YOUTH  
IN A COMMUNITY

**W**hen Olivia Dudley brought kohlrabi home, everybody thought the odd-shaped bulbs looked like little aliens. Olivia's mom, who did most of the cooking, had no idea what to do with them. Mother and daughter searched for recipes online and ended up making a sautéed dish that also included Swiss chard — another first for the family.

The kohlrabi and Swiss chard made their way to the Dudley's kitchen via Urban Roots, an Austin nonprofit dedicated to “empowering youth” and “nourishing community,” as their T-shirts say. Olivia, a poised 15-year-old with expressive hazel eyes, has been at Urban Roots for two years. During the spring and summer, she gets paid to work at Urban Roots' sustainable farm in East Austin, and every weekend she takes fresh produce home.

“In my family we don't really branch out and try new things,” she says. “So this has been a new experience for me. I've been able to bring this back into my family, and we are definitely trying new foods.”

Urban Roots is the brainchild of Max Elliott (MSSW '12). Elliott, who has been interested in community work since at least high school, realized early on that food and farming brought people together. A stint as horticulturalist in a community garden in New Orleans affirmed Elliott's belief in food justice — the desire to ensure that everybody, no matter their socioeconomic status, has access to healthy, fresh, and sustainably grown food.

His time in New Orleans also drove him to social work.

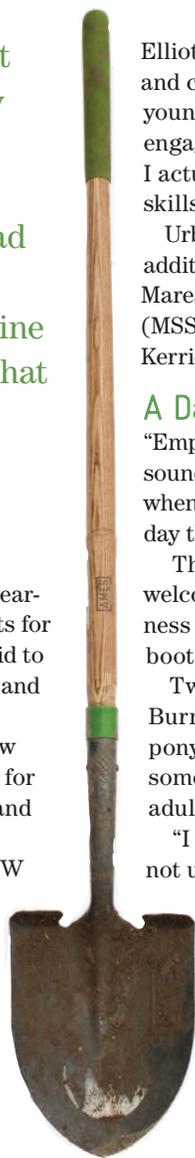
“I realized that my training as a horticulturalist was not enough,” Elliott says. “I could teach people how to plant and compost, but what the community really needed was developing capacity and leadership, and engaging young people. I was really doing social work, and I felt very unprepared.”

At UT Austin School of Social Work, when given the choice between the clinical or policy/program management concentrations, Elliott went for clinical.

“I had already worked for three nonprofits, and I felt that I had enough experience [with program management]. I wanted to round up with clinical skills,” Elliott says.

Social work clinical skills such as understanding human psychology, communicating clearly, listening well, and facilitating co-operation among individuals and groups have been essential for Elliott as executive director of Urban Roots.

“It's interesting, doing group and family therapy actually allowed me to understand organizational systems better,”



Urban Roots is an Austin nonprofit that uses food and farming to transform the lives of young people and nourish the community.

Elliott reflects. “It also helped me to develop a cooperative and collaborative leadership style. Also, we work with young people and their families. Clinical skills are key to engage with them and face any situation that comes up. I actually think that we need more people with social work skills in our local food community.”

Urban Roots is doing its part in this last regard: in addition to Elliott being the executive director, Emily Mares (MSSW '12) is director of development, AJ Ragosa (MSSW '15) is program manager, and master's student Kerrie Shedie was the development intern this past spring.

## A Day at the Farm

“Empowering youth” and “nourishing community” can sound like abstract slogans but they did come alive for me when I visited the Urban Roots farm on a volunteer Saturday this past May.

The two dozen youth interns ran the show: they welcomed and registered volunteers, braved the awkwardness of small talk with strangers — most of them adults to boot — and offered farm facts with assurance.

Two first-year youth interns — Biak, a soft-spoken Burmese with a straw hat, and London, with a blue ponytail at the top of her head — led icebreakers with some hesitation and the gentle support of Urban Roots adult staff.

“I was exactly like them last year,” Olivia says. “I was not used to leading people in instruction. In school, you are told what to do by your teacher, and you do it, and that's the way it is. But here at the farm, you are in that role of the teacher; you are telling people what to do.”

As a second-year intern, Olivia bears with pride the title of assistant crew leader and enjoys supporting first-year interns like Israel, who led our volunteer crew in the tasks of weeding and putting cucumber transplants into the ground.

Israel was highly personable one-on-one: while weeding next to each other we comfortably talked about soccer, the Pope, Mexican food, his love of bugs, and his extended family in Coahuila. But he was still finding his footing as a crew leader. Olivia and Urban Roots staff helped him to show our crew how to attack small weeds with a hula hoe, call water breaks, keep track of time and goals, and challenge us to weed one more row in the last minutes allotted to that task.

At transplanting time, things got more technical.

“We'll be putting these into the ground now,”

Israel announced to the group as he pointed to the beds of cucumber transplants lined next to our patch. A few rows of grown fennel plants with feathery tops separated us from the next volunteer crew, which was still busy weeding.

“Do you want to show them how?” prompted a farm assistant named Julia.

“Okay. One person carries the beds and places the



transplants along the strip, every two feet,” Israel explained as he knelt down with a metal ruler and measured two feet along the black, flat irrigation strip that zig-zagged our patch.

“Do they all have to go on the same side of the strip?” asked Julia.

“Mhhhh... no?”

“Well, yes,” Julia said with a smile.

“Okay, on the same side,” Israel continued. “Then the other person makes a hole big enough, puts some of this at the bottom like this, one-two — he gently shook a plastic cup with bone meal twice over the hole — puts the transplant, and covers it with soil.”

“Do we want to pack the soil at the top?” Julia chimed in.

“No?”

“Right, we don’t want to,” Julia confirmed as she knelt next to Israel.

“At Urban Roots we say we are a modest farm, so we cover the transplants with soil all the way to the shoulders,” she joked as she made sure that the transplant’s root ball was not visible.

When the volunteer shift was over at noon, our crew celebrated weeding and planting six rows of cucumbers by cheering and shaking together. Olivia led the countdown, and to my surprise, cheering and shaking with people I had met that same morning did not feel so strange after working and talking with them for three hours.

“They do a lot to create a meaningful community on volunteer days, with the opening circle, the introductory games, the closing circle,” says Scott Kampmeier, an Austin resident who has been volunteering with Urban Roots for the past six growing seasons. “They don’t have

I was not used to leading people in instruction. In school, you are told what to do by your teacher, and you do it, and that’s the way it is. But here at the farm, you are in that role of the teacher; you are telling people what to do. —Olivia Dudley

to do that but they do it, and you feel like you are part of this little three-hour community. I love that. And I’ve met so many interesting people over the years.”

Before our crew headed back, a volunteer named Bianca asked me to take her picture as she posed in the middle of our neatly planted rows with open arms, muddy hands, and a satisfied smile.

### Future Harvest

Every year, through the work of staff, youth interns, and volunteers from the community, Urban Roots grows about 25,000 pounds of produce. Almost half

is donated to local soup kitchens and food pantries, and the rest is sold at farmers’ markets and through a CSA subscription program.

The Saturday I visited the farm, volunteers left at noon but the youth interns stayed. On Saturdays they eat together — they pack their lunch, which always includes an Urban Root vegetable of the week — and afterwards they attend workshops on subjects such as money management, public speaking, social justice, and sustainable agriculture.

Before I left the farm, I asked Olivia what she has enjoyed the most about her two years at Urban Roots.

“I love something about being at least a semi-boss,” she said and stopped to think for a bit.

“I’m not the head person, that’s Max (Elliott)’s role,” she clarified. “But I have some say in some of the things we do, and I love that. I feel that it will help me further in life. I want to own my own marketing firm in the future, and this gives me some experience on how to be a boss. We learn for example to celebrate what we do, to communicate clearly... things that will help me to be an effective boss.” ■

## RESEARCH THAT CHANGES LIVES



### Replacing tradition with science when responding to campus sexual assault

*The Blueprint for Campus Police* guides the 600 police officers that patrol The University of Texas' 14 campuses on how to engage with victims of sexual assault and improve the handling of sexual assault cases. The blueprint, created by the **School of Social Work's Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**, uses the latest scientific research to clarify confusing issues about sexual assault such as the neurobiology of trauma, the role of drugs and alcohol, false allegations, and forensic interviewing.

"We must listen to victims' voices and understand their fears and concerns in the context of current science as well as ensure that our policies and protocols are evolutionary and not stalled in the past," said UT System Police Director Michael Heidingsfield.

*Access the blueprint on the institute's website: [sites.utexas.edu/idvsa](http://sites.utexas.edu/idvsa)*

### To disclose or not to disclose?

LGBTQ patients have many reasons for not disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity in healthcare settings — such as homophobic reactions and confidentiality concerns. At the same time, health equity advocates know that this information is needed to identify and eliminate disparities in healthcare.

Social work doctoral student **Jelena Todic** and **Laura Brown**, communication professor at Western Kentucky University, are bringing LGBTQ voices to the conversation. They conducted surveys and interviews across the country with 300 LGBTQ patients.

So far, results indicate that the majority wants healthcare providers to inquire about sexual orientation or gender identity, but almost a third prefer that the information is not recorded. And less than six percent believe that administrative staff should ask about these issues — which contradicts current best practices.



### 2016 Friend of Field Award: Eric Metcalf, MSSW '95

As chief program officer of Communities in Schools of Central Texas (CIS), Eric has been instrumental in securing internships for social work students. More than 40 students were placed at CIS this past year alone! Thanks to Eric's advocacy, CIS covers the cost of required background checks, which could be a barrier for students. And over the years, Eric has hired many of our alums. Thank you, Eric!

### Let's teach about modern slavery

Modern slavery or human trafficking affects 30 million people worldwide. Social workers can help survivors as social providers and advocates but, because of scant research-based information, human trafficking has been hard to incorporate into social work curricula.

Professor **Monica Faulkner** and co-authors tackle this issue in a recent article published in *Critical Social Work*. They summarize the latest knowledge on human trafficking and provide a college-level curriculum model for educating social workers in this subject.





## March Madness

Every other March, clinical professor **Barbara Anderson** gets fired up as she coordinates Student Day at the Legislature. On that day, social work students from all over Texas come to Austin, learn how the legislative process works, and how to advocate for issues they care about. Then they rally on the Capitol steps and deliver one-minute speeches. Afterwards, students with appointments visit legislators and their staff.

“It’s just a blast!” Anderson says. “Students experience that is doable to advocate for and talk to legislators about something they care about — foster care, closing private prisons, mental health, whatever might be. It’s also empowering for students from all over Texas to connect with each other and find their common voice as social workers.”

## A Twitter storm to #StopTheStigma

Master’s student **Emily Hammer** loves advocacy and social media. She put the two together during her internship at Akins High School, where she worked on a mental health anti-stigma campaign with students. The campaign culminated with a student-produced video about youth and mental health and a Twitter storm directed at Texas Representative Four Price who chairs the Mental Health Select Committee.



## When parents have cancer

Postdoctoral fellow **Farya Phillips** has evaluated an intervention to help children who have a parent or primary caregiver with cancer. The results, published in *Psycho-Oncology*, show that after the six-week intervention, children improved communication skills, reduced anxiety, felt safer at home, and improved school performance. The intervention is currently being implemented by *Wonders & Worries*, a nonprofit agency based in Austin, Texas.

## Transforming teen recovery in Austin

Studies indicate that 60 to 90 percent of adolescents with addiction problems relapse after treatment. In an article published in the *Journal of Alcoholism & Drug Dependence*, professor **Lori Holleran Steiker** and co-authors argue that a continuum of care model that incorporates peer support is critical for successful recovery. They also argue in favor of schools designed for students in recovery, and highlight the case of University High School, created in 2014 as the first recovery school in Austin.



## When clients have families left behind

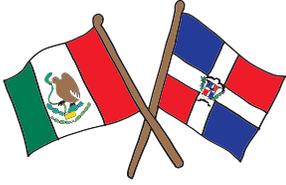
For large numbers of families in Mexico and Central America, immigrant remittances from the United States are the sole source of household income and are used to cover basic needs. Providing for their families back home gives satisfaction and relief to immigrants, sometimes at the cost of their own well-being. Social workers should be aware of this transnational tie when seeing immigrant clients, professor **Yolanda Padilla** argues in a recent article published in *International Social Work*.



## The Utopian is online

Visit [sites.utexas.edu/theutopian](http://sites.utexas.edu/theutopian) to browse main articles online or explore whole issues in pdf format.

News image credits: Chalkboard by Molly Cook; Mexico map and Twitter screen by Carrie Stephens; flags illustration by Anna Scott.



### Viva la identidad

Ethnic identity develops during early childhood and is associated with better adaptive behavior, according to new research by professor **Esther Calzada** focusing on Latino children.

Calzada interviewed more than 600 Mexican American and Dominican American young children (4 to 5-year-old) socially and economically disadvantaged, their parents, and their teachers. She found that most children showed an emerging ethnic identity, and that it was associated with fewer externalizing behaviors such as aggression and hyperactivity, and fewer internalizing behaviors such as somatization and depression, particularly at school. A report on this study was published in the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*.



### What happens to trauma patients after their lives have been saved?

The question nagged **Katherine Houck**, MSSW '98, a trauma social worker at University Medical Center Brackenridge, in Austin. She noticed that many patients hospitalized for severe trauma (due to a car accident, for instance) developed post-traumatic stress symptoms such as flashbacks and nightmares.

Houck (left on photo) put together a research team that is screening all Brackenridge trauma patients for post-traumatic stress symptoms, and assessing them for PTSD at six and twelve weeks. The team also

includes social work students **Meghan Graham** (center) and **Natalie Peterson** (right). Last year, they screened patients, delivered a short bedside intervention, and made follow-up calls. So far, the team has found that almost 35 percent of patients had at least one post-traumatic stress symptom during hospitalization. During follow-up at six weeks, 40 percent of participants presenting with one symptom met PTSD criteria and 72 percent of those presenting with two symptoms met PTSD criteria.

### Digital inclusion with Google

Google Fiber is collaborating with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) to bring free Internet connection and digital literacy skills to the more than 4,300 Austin public housing residents.

Social work juniors **Reginald Smith** and **Addis Gezahegn** joined the program as Google Community Leaders during this past academic year. They helped children and adult residents set up and operate computers they received through HACA's "Unlocking the Connection" program, responded to privacy and safety concerns, oriented parents on how to monitor their children's use of computers, and gave feedback to Google and HACA on how to make this digital inclusion program better.

"I'm very passionate about education equality. I want kids in public housing to have access to the Internet on the same level with other kids. This was a great opportunity to help bridge the digital divide in Austin," Gezahegn says.



**Namkee Choi** received the 2016 SSWR Excellence in Research Award for her work on developing a tele-health intervention for low-income, homebound older adults suffering from depression.

**7 in the nation**  
We are in the Top Ten  
U.S. World & News Report's latest edition ranks the UT Austin graduate social work program #7 in the nation.



## The wisdom of the aged

**Ellen Line**, a master's student specializing in gerontology, started an oral history project this past spring at her internship with Shalom Austin-Jewish Family Service. She has interviewed older adult clients such as Miriam Simmons, who worked as a journalist during the 1920s, had a job at the Works Progress Administration during the New Deal, married a Holocaust survivor, and turned 104 years old in 2016.

"I think the coolest thing about this project is the potential for us to learn from our elders and to place them in a context where they are treasured for their knowledge and life experience," Line says. "In our ageist society, older adults are often cast aside as irrelevant, but my work on this project and my internship in general this year have shown me how far from the truth that is."

## Restorative Discipline at Texas schools

Professor **Marilyn Armour** is working with the Texas Education Agency to offer training in Restorative Discipline to school administrators across the state. Restorative Discipline is a prevention-oriented approach that has proven to be effective in reducing student suspensions.

Learn more at [sites.utexas.edu/irjrd](http://sites.utexas.edu/irjrd)



## Simulations for medical social work

Interdisciplinary teamwork is becoming essential for the delivery of good integrated healthcare. Through hospital simulations, clinical professors **Dede Sparks** and **Mary Mulvaney** are preparing social work students to operate in teams with peers in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and other health-related professions.

During the simulations, student teams respond to mannequins or volunteers posing as patients and presenting a problematic scenario, such as a detox patient seeking medication he does not need or an acute-care patient that only speaks a foreign language. As students collaborate to solve the situation, they think on their feet, draw from each other's skills and scope of practice, and make critical decisions under pressure.

## Get your Continuing Education credits with us

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# Veterans

## CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF SOCIAL WORK

On June 16, 1926, General Order 351 established the social work program in what was then called the Veterans Bureau. Staff consisted of 36 social workers placed in psychiatric hospitals and regional offices throughout the country.

Fast-forward ninety years. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, or VA, employs 12,000 social workers — it's the single largest employer for the profession in the country. Every year, VA also trains more than 1,300 social work students (many of our own) through paid and unpaid internships.



We talked about this evolution with **Laura Taylor**, current national director of social work for the Veterans Health Administration. This fall, Taylor will visit the Forty Acres to deliver the keynote address of the **Annual Military Social Work Conference**.

Social Work Department created 36 social workers

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

1926

### Q. What made you join VA?

**A.** I actually started my VA career as a social work intern.

I was surprised when my practicum director suggested VA, because I had accompanied family members to VA as a child but I had no idea that there were social workers there! When I did my internship, I knew that was it; it was like duck to water. I thought, this is what I was put on this earth to do, to serve veterans.

I come from a family of veterans. Both of my grandfathers were in WWII, and I was raised by a Marine who was severely injured in Vietnam at age 19 — he lost both hands and his eyesight as a result of combat — and who has never let that limit him in doing anything.

In the VA where I come from, there is a sign that hangs over main entrance, and I feel it sums up what VA means to me. The sign says, “The price of freedom is visible here.”

### Q. What are recent VA initiatives where social workers are involved?

**A.** Social workers are on the frontline of ending veteran homelessness. About 4,500 of the 12,000 VA social workers are serving homeless veterans. Since the inception of this initiative in 2010, these programs have rapidly rehoused, permanently rehoused, or prevented homelessness for more than 230,000 veterans.

There has also been a phenomenal expansion of support for caregivers of veterans who are seriously injured in the line of duty on or after 9/11. Public law 111-63, under President Obama, allowed VA

# Affairs

1,026 VA social workers  
105 student trainees

4,000+ sw  
800 student trainees

12,000+ sw  
1,300 trainees per year

1947

1950

1953

1996

2016

SSW created

Students Augustus Swain,  
Edgar and Everett Busby  
placed at VA

Nine students  
placed at VA

150 trainees placed at VA  
since 1996 throughout Texas  
and in Oregon and California

to provide services such as healthcare coverage, travel assistance to accompany veterans to their appointments, respite care benefits, monthly stipend to help offset their potential loss of income they have by rendering care, and mental health services. This program has helped more than 30,000 caregivers in the last five years. We get asked from other countries about it.

We are also working hard on breaking the cycle of intimate partner violence. One of the promising practices we are excited about is Strength at Home, a psychosocial group treatment developed by Dr. Casey Taft. We have trained clinicians in 10 VA sites to deliver this program and have started running our first groups.

## Q. What should schools of social work do to prepare students to work with veterans?

**A.** First thing is teaching about military culture. Also, train students to work with people who have experienced trauma. Finally, and this is not necessarily a social work competency, teach students to start from a place of yes, to look at possibilities, and ask themselves what can be done. I see entire social work departments obliterated because people spend their time telling clients no; we can't do that. And VA is complex enough that you can find a policy to let you say no to literally everything. So it's very important to start from a place of yes.

## Q. How can social workers in the community collaborate with VA?

**A.** We have developed an online military culture competency training ([vha.train.org](http://vha.train.org)) that I would encourage all non-VA clinicians to take. When assessing clients, they should ask the question, "Have you or a loved one served?" We have produced a pocket card of questions ([www.va.gov/oa/pocketcard](http://www.va.gov/oa/pocketcard)) that anyone can ask to make sure they are

identifying clients who have served.

It's also important to have a basic understanding of VA services and benefits, so they can articulate why a client who served might want to consider visiting VA. Any agency can have a VA social worker come and give a presentation about services and benefits.

Finally, if they sit on an advisory committee or a task force, say on suicide prevention or sexual assault, I would recommend that they try to make sure that there is a VA person there, and if there isn't, invite one to be at the table. Agencies can reach out to the social work chief or social work executive in their area VA, and they should be able to make those connections.

## Q. What are the challenges for the future?

**A.** We have grown much as a profession in VA, we have tripled our numbers in the last 20 years. I don't think this growth rate is sustainable, and the challenge moving forward is to justify our continued staffing level. When a medical center with a limited budget asks the question of whether hiring a social worker or another professional, we have to be able to show outcomes for our work and the difference we make — not only through good-news stories but through data, metrics, and health outcomes.

This is an opportunity for social work to shine. There is an increasing focus on the social determinants of health, nationally and globally. And there is evidence that when healthcare professionals work together, patients receive better quality care and have better health outcomes. We social workers have been doing this kind of interprofessional collaboration for eons! And we are so good at being an interprofessional team player, that sometimes we don't point the research back to us, and we don't take the credit that we are due. ■

**What's new?** If you have personal or professional news to share with other alumni and the School of Social Work community, please send us an email to [utopian@utlists.utexas.edu](mailto:utopian@utlists.utexas.edu)

**'73 Alexa Levin Markoff**, BSW '73, is the director of development at Rape Victim Advocates in Chicago. This is the only rape crisis center in the city that has a single focus on sexual assault and gender-based violence.

**'90 Dawn Waldron Nelson**, MSSW '90, recently moved her private practice office to Rockwall Counseling, in Heath, Texas, where she enjoys a two-minute commute. Nelson sees children and adults for a variety of issues and provides social work supervision to those seeking advanced social work licensure. She is also a clinical instructor in social work at Texas A&M University — Commerce.

**'95 Herschel Knapp**, MSSW '95, has published the textbook *Practical Statistics for Nursing Using SPSS* (SAGE Publications, 2016). Another textbook, *Introductory Statistics Using SPSS*, will be published in October 2017. Both books come with downloadable data sets and tutorial videos to facilitate optimal learning. Knapp earned a doctoral degree in social welfare from UCLA in 2001.

**Jennifer Luna Jackson**, MSSW '95, recently celebrated her 20th year working at the UT Austin School of Social Work. She continues to serve as director of career services and alumni relations. She loves hearing from alumni at all stages of their careers.

**'98 Norma Gaytan Gonzalez**, MSSW '98, is a medical social worker at El Paso VA Health Care System. "If I help people, at least one person every day — because I might see six or seven people a day, plus all the calls I make and the walk-ins — that gives me a sense of accomplishment," she says.

**Elva Gaytan Smallwood**, MSSW '98, is a social worker in the special exempt unit at El Paso VA Health Care System. She does registries for exposures hazards during military service, does intakes for patients who

are being considered for organ transplants, and runs a support group for them. She loves it when she runs into old clients in the hallways, and they tell her what's new in their lives.

**'00 Amy Gaudet**, MSSW '00, accepted a position as a medical social worker at Texas Children's Hospital last year after a fifteen-year-long career with Communities in Schools Houston and KIPP Houston Charter Schools.

**'01 Ramón R. Gómez**, MSSW '01, recently celebrated his tenth anniversary with the UT Austin School of Social Work, where he currently serves as the director of student and community affairs. He loves his job and is grateful to work with colleagues that truly want to make this world a better place!

**Diane Yentel**, MSSW '01, has been named as the new president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, an organization dedicated to preserving existing federally assisted homes and housing resources, expanding the supply of low income housing, and establishing housing stability as the primary purpose of federal low-income housing policy.

**'03 Teri Geffner Schroeder**, MSSW '03, married fellow counselor William Schroeder in 2014 and opened a group counseling practice, Just Mind, in Austin, Texas. As co-directors, Schroeder and her husband enjoy a busy practice and are looking forward to opening a second location in late 2016 or early 2017.

**'04 Izabel Caetano Francy**, MSSW '04, loves working as a faculty and staff therapist at the University of California San Diego. In March, she and her husband purchased their first home, where they live with their two young boys.

**Carlye Levine**, BSW '04, received her MSSW in 2005 from Columbia University, returned to Austin in 2008, and joined Jewish Family Service in Austin in 2012. She received her LCSW earlier this year, and was recently promoted to senior adult services director. On March 23rd, she gave birth to her second son.

**'05 Marian Mahaffey**, MSSW '05, began in her current position as graduate program coordinator at the UT

Austin School of Social Work in June 2006, and recently celebrated ten years of service with the university. She joined the Seton Social Work PRN pool in 2011 and earned her LMSW-AP in 2012.

**'06 Jessica Ramos**, MSSW '06, is the public policy director for the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities.

**'07 Sharlie Velasco** (formerly Gabb), MSSW '07, is a senior social worker at Pathfinder, The Menninger Clinic's community integration program in Houston. She has also maintained a small private practice for several years. In order to keep with the level of stress endemic to the social work field, she has resorted to running. To date, she has run four marathons in the United States, and one in Belize.

**'08 Carly Bassett**, MSSW '08, took a position at Family Eldercare in 2015 as an in-home psychotherapist for home-bound older and disabled adults. Carly has also opened a private practice in Austin focused on helping clients experiencing grief, loss, and trauma. The practice offers clinical supervision as well. She has one daughter, Ruby, and will welcome a son in October.

**'09 Jessica Poor**, MSSW '09, works in mental health in rural Australia and recently got married.

**Rebecca Shue**, MSSW '09, has a private practice in south Austin where she provides in-home and community-based counseling for children, teens, and adults. She has completed evidenced-based training in trauma-informed and EMDR therapy. An adjunct instructor for Indiana Wesleyan University's online social work program, she enjoys educating future social workers from a Christian worldview.

**'10 Brittany Bouffard**, MSSW '10, has returned from working in international mental health in Palestine, Jerusalem, and rural Tanzania. She landed in Denver, Colo., where she is a therapist in community mental health and is opening a private practice.

**Pamela A. Malone**, PhD '10, recently had her book, *Counseling Adolescents Through Loss, Grief, and Trauma*, published by Routledge. She has presented at the

Association for Death Education and Counseling for the past three years. She maintains a private practice in Austin, where she provides LCSW supervision. She can be contacted at [pammamlone@austin.rr.com](mailto:pammamlone@austin.rr.com).

**Katy Marvel**, MSSW '10, currently works as a primary program therapist at Meridell Achievement Center, a residential treatment center specializing in psychiatry and neuropsychiatry for children and adolescents in Liberty Hill, Texas.

**Leesa Oliver**, MSSW '10, is a social worker with the Fort Bend County Mental Health Public Defender's Office in Richmond, Texas. Oliver collaborates with other providers, community organizations, and stakeholders to advocate for, develop, and improve access to social services for people in the criminal justice system dealing with mental health issues.

**Anna Parris**, MSSW '10, has recently accepted a position as researcher at the University of Texas' Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. She left Child Protective Services after over six years of working as a child welfare and education collaborator.

**Eden Robles**, PhD '10, received a fellowship award from the Interdisciplinary Training Institute on Hispanic Drug Abuse at the University of Southern California. Robles is a BUILD postdoctoral scholar at the School of Psychology in The University of Texas at El Paso.

**'11 Robin Drell**, MSSW '11, recently embarked upon a fruitful career as a social worker in the Cook County Health and Hospitals System in Chicago.

**Affie Eyo-Idahor**, MSSW '11, has served as a program administrator at Western Oregon University since 2012, supporting first generation and culturally underrepresented students to reach their higher education goals. Eyo-Idahor married in 2013 and will celebrate her daughter's second birthday this year.

**Seth Horton**, MSSW '11, accepted a job as a social worker at the Durham VA Medical Center, N.C. After earning his LCSW in 2014, Horton served in both the primary care and supportive housing divisions at DVAMC. He currently works in a newly established community-based case management program, ERANGE, which serves veterans living with serious mental illness in rural communities. Horton

married his wife in 2011, became a father in 2012, and enjoys creating and performing electronic music.

**Margaret Hughes**, MSSW '11, has worked as a medical social worker since graduating. She currently works for Humana in Austin, Texas.

**Mia Roldan**, MSSW '11, provides therapy to children, families, and adults from her private practice in central Austin. She is also the co-author of *Voices of Strength: Sons and Daughters of Suicide Speak Out* (New Horizon, 2008), a self-help book addressing parental suicide. You can learn more at [MiaRoldanAustinTherapy.com](http://MiaRoldanAustinTherapy.com).

**12 Jill Apilado**, MSSW '12, lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., and provides short-term therapy at an outpatient primary care clinic located in the Bronx.

**Amber Hunter**, MSSW '12, received her LCSW in 2015 and opened a private practice in Austin, Texas. She also works with adults experiencing life transitions and relationship struggles, and with survivors of trauma at Safe Place. She has completed her training in EMDR and is beginning a year-long training program in interpersonal neurobiology with Bonnie Badenoch.

**Ossenia Jeff**, MSSW '12, recently obtained her clinical social work licensure and opened a private practice, Acuity Psychotherapy Solutions, in the Houston area.

**Elizabeth Peña**, MSSW '12, was promoted to the position of development director at the Central Texas Food Bank.

**13 Kelly Erin Chirhart**, MSSW '13, lives in Victoria, British Columbia, and has worked as a manager in the Health Services Policy Division at the Ministry of Health since 2014. She focuses on aging adults with developmental disabilities and their health needs.

**Adrienne Diaz**, MSSW '13, recently left a full-time position at Hospice Austin to begin working for a startup hospice agency in Round Rock. Since graduating, she has also been busy raising two young children.

**Emily Fenves**, MSSW '13, is pleased to return to Austin after a two-year absence. She has joined the social work team at North Austin Medical Center's Kidney Transplant Center, where she works directly with

potential kidney recipients as they await transplantation.

**Desiree Ramirez**, BSW '13, is an administrative assistant at the Baylor Center for Developmental Disabilities, where she contributes to the Baylor CARE program. She is also enrolled in Baylor University's Diana R. Garland School of Social Work.

**Emily Knox**, MSSW '13, plans to open a franchise of Assisting Hands In-Home Care Services in the Austin area this fall.

**Arlette Rangel**, BSW '13, has recently enrolled in the University of Houston's Master of Social Work graduate program, where she will begin attending classes in the fall.

**Sarah Ryan**, MSSW '13, is a social worker in the emergency department of University Medical Center Brackenridge in Austin's only Level 1 trauma center. She also works at St. David's North Austin Medical Center, and assists professor Marilyn Armour in ongoing Restorative Justice research and outreach. She recently celebrated her first wedding anniversary with her husband. They are looking forward to moving into their first home this summer, along with their beloved basset hounds.

**14 Kaylee Currie**, MSSW '14, works as an inpatient medical social worker on a Level 1 one trauma unit. Currie has nearly completed her clinical supervision hours and looks forward to earning her LCSW in the near future.

**Jillian Kolb**, MSSW '14, recently completed her clinical supervision and is studying for the LCSW exam. Kolb has spent the last two years working for the Hope Alliance Crisis Center in Williamson County as a therapist for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. She happily anticipates her marriage and completing her licensure this fall!

**Donald "Keith" Montgomery**, MSSW '14, has earned his LMSW and LCDC and is working toward his LCSW in a supervision group led by Arlene Montgomery alongside four classmates from the UT Austin School of Social Work. Montgomery also sees clients at Capital Area Counseling on a full-time, volunteer basis.

**Megan Morgan**, BSW '13, MSSW '14, accepted a position as the sexual assault advocacy coordinator for the SAFE Alliance in April. She supervises about 30 volunteer sexual

assault advocates who provide crisis intervention, referrals to community resources, and a calming presence to recent sexual assault survivors in Travis County.

**Ciera Ray**, MSSW '14, returned to her hometown of Zephyr, Texas, upon graduation and began working as a case manager for the Center for Life Resources in Brownwood, where she provided psychoeducational training and basic needs assistance for adults with severe mental health issues. Ray married her husband in September of 2014 and in the same week took a position as a therapist at a juvenile correctional facility, where she provides individual counseling, group counseling, and family therapy to young men. She looks forward to completing her supervision and becoming an LCSW this year.

**Christan Reed**, MSSW '14, began her career in the non-profit sector as a residential treatment center program manager for conduct-disordered youth. After two years in this field, Reed recently resigned and founded her own nonprofit, Be Mindful Inc., dedicated to educating the public about the benefits of mindfulness, meditation, and other holistic health practices. She leads psychoeducational groups with at-risk youth in Dubuque, Iowa, at no charge. To learn more, please visit [www.bemindfulinc.com](http://www.bemindfulinc.com).

**Wendy Whipple**, BSW '13, MSSW '14, accepted a position with University Operations HR Services at The University of Texas at Austin in February of this year.

**15 Esmirna Corona**, MSSW '15, works as a medical social worker and is looking forward to obtaining her LCSW.

**Kathryn Lewin**, MSSW '15, recently earned her LMSW and works with the Austin SAFE Alliance as a parent-child specialist to prevent child abuse.

**Collin Jevne**, MSSW '15, recently relocated to Seattle to work with the mobile crisis team at the Downtown Emergency Service Center.

**Stephanie Terra**, MSSW '15, is a recent recipient of a ten-month long New York State Senate Legislative Fellowship.

**16 Grecia Ramos**, MSSW '16, has been accepted to the University of Southern California's School of Social Work and will begin a doctoral program this fall.

# BECKY MORALES

2016 Charles I. Wright Distinguished Alumna



**Hometown:** El Paso, Texas

**Current position:** Project coordinator for off-site services, Austin Child Guidance Center.

**Most influential professor:** Tammy Linseisen trained me to be the social worker that I am. I learned from her the importance of supervision, and that to best serve clients we have to learn about and challenge ourselves.

**Memory from field:** September 11 happened the morning that I was in my first field placement, with Child Protective Services. It was so raw. In many ways this set the tone in terms of how to be in the field — the professional use of self, and learning to process and manage your emotions to be most effective serving your clients.

**Social work insight:** Trust the process. I remember getting frustrated with this at school because I didn't know what it meant. I wanted to know exactly how to help my client and what was the right thing to say. And then with time I could really make sense of it: the fact that you will learn from your clients, and they will tell you if you are asking the wrong questions. That's the epitome of being client-centered.

**Do you bleed burnt orange?** I do! I sucked it all up when I was in graduate school I had season tickets for football and everything. And beyond sports, the university is incredibly reputable, and I had a very positive experience at the School of Social Work. I don't know how I could not be proud of being a Longhorn.



## An American story

*Dora Gonzalez, 2015-2016 Tu-Ting and Rachel Tsan  
Endowed Presidential Scholar*

Dora Gonzalez grew up listening to her Mexican father and Honduran mother talk about their stories of immigration to the United States. But her parents never discussed openly that they were undocumented; Gonzalez found out the hard way when her father was deported.

As a social work student with a passion for research, Gonzalez spent her junior year interviewing parents like hers to find out what drives them, how they cope with the difficulties related to their legal status, and whether they have plans for their families in case of deportation. She graduated this past May as a College Scholar with a double degree in social work and American studies. She will be pursuing a Master of Social Work.



## Social work at the courthouse

*Judge Pat Shelton and family:  
Elizabeth, Hayley, Ian and David  
Scott Shelton Endowed Fellowship*

While at Houston’s 313th family district court, Judge Pat Shelton encountered many cases involving child abuse and neglect.

“I relied on social workers for their hands-on experience with these cases. They obviously play a crucial part in looking at the best interest of the child, but they also educate folks at a hearing, including the judge.”

This experience inspired Judge Shelton to support the School of Social Work, first by giving annual scholarships and then underwriting an annual training for Child Protective Service social workers. He has now established an endowed fellowship for students interested in medical social work.

“With the cost of education today, I thought that an endowment to help defray some of that cost for social work students, every year, was the logical way to help. It is an honor to recognize the special people who give their professional lives to such worthy and consequential causes.”

## Hidden Austin treasures

*Daniel B. and Vicki Ross  
Endowed Scholarship in Social Work*

What do the historic Allan House in downtown Austin and the School of Social Work have in common? Dan and Vicki Ross discovered both, gave them some TLC, and want them to be recognized and appreciated.

The Rosses, who met on the Forty Acres while in Plan II (Dan) and film (Vicki), found and restored the Allan House in the late 1990s.

They discovered social work two decades later when Dan learned through his legal practice how essential social work researchers and expert witnesses can be in the successful and efficient prosecution of sexual assault cases.

The Rosses have now created a scholarship that will fund social work students with a passion for ending sexual assault or helping individuals struggling with addictions.

“We wanted to give back by supporting a school that is under-recognized despite its high ranking and despite how important social workers are for society,” Dan says.

“Through the scholarship, we will be supporting someone who will be coming up with real solutions to these problems,” Vicki adds. “We can’t wait to see who the first student recipient is.”



## Why I give

*Kathy Rider (MSSW '69) came to the Forty Acres in the early 1960s as a pre-med student.*

Back then they only gave one recommendation per year to a woman to go to medical school. “It would have been three more years before it was my turn, and I didn’t have the time to spare!” she remembers.

A stint as dorm counselor stirred her interest in mental health, and she traded medicine for social work. She has practiced for over 45 years, was active in NASW and the Texas Society for Clinical Social Work, is a fellow of AGPA, and a past president of New Milestones Foundation. “I donate to the school every year because I believe in giving back, and that we have a responsibility to help new social workers on their journey,” Rider says.

# THE UTOPIA SOCIETY

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The Utopia Society is comprised of alumni and friends who assist in providing excellent educational programs for our students. Listed herein are those who made personal contributions of \$100 or more between September 1, 2015–August 31, 2016. We deeply appreciate the generosity of all of our supporters!

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