

News from the Field Director

Happy New Year! The New Year often compels us to look back at the year we have just finished. In the business world, they use a term called “closing the books.” It’s an exercise in which people look at what worked, what didn’t work, and this information is then used to determine strategy to move forward. Taking time to do this allows that business to close the books on that year and apply lessons learned to improve, expand, or build the business. Closing the books is an exercise we can use in social work as well. It is an opportunity for us to look at what were the experiences that acted as “debits” to our personal and professional lives and what experiences acted as “investments” or “deposits” to our well-being. In social work, we bear witness to the human experience every day; in the loss, trauma, hope, and courage of our clients. There are many experiences that can act as debits. However, if given the opportunity to process the experience, consider what resonates for us about that experience, and determine what action we can take to mitigate the debit, that experience can often be re-framed and the information used to invest in our future practice.



Taking the time to reflect will often result in an action, or a shift in thinking that can serve us the next time we are confronted with a similar experience. Take time to close the books on 2015. What were the big surprises in your life in 2015, personally and professionally? Where did big shifts occur? What did you learn from these experiences? How can you use these to move forward in 2016? It’s important to consider how you might minimize the experiences that acted as “debits” and expand the experiences that acted as “investments” in your life. Here’s to closing the books on 2015 and using your investments wisely in 2016! With gratitude for all that each of you do to contribute to our profession, Patty Hunter

Patty Hunter

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VISIT US

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Suicide Prevention Training

Deborah Stewart, the Medical Chief of Staff of the CSU, Chico Health Center, provided a training to Agency Field Instructors (AFI) and task supervisors on October 27, 2015. The training, “Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk: Core Competencies for Mental Health”, focused on eight core competencies representing the essential knowledge, skills, perceptions, and abilities required to work with suicidal clients. The workshop was a mix of lecture, video demonstrations, and exercises.

Stewart is a certified trainer by the [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#) (SPRC). SPRC is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services and is a project of the Education Development Center, Inc.

The School of Social Work is very appreciative of Stewart for volunteering her time and expertise for the Field Education Program’s Fall 2015 Field Instructor Training.

The training was also provided to several Social Work students. MSW student Alysia Miller attended and was kind enough to offer a review of the training from the student perspective. Alysia is completing her concentration year practicum at the CSU, Chico Student Health Center.

“Assessing & Managing Suicide Risk: Core Competencies for Behavioral Health Professionals’ is a practical training for professionals in the field. This training equips attendees with frameworks for understanding suicide assessment and practical applications for managing risk.

This training provided me with a wealth of applicable knowledge and techniques for addressing suicide risk with clients. I have a greater understanding of how to frame suicide risk from a professional perspective, and have the tools to support clients in managing risk factors.

I would recommend this training to any professional who addresses suicide risk. This training is equally applicable to the student intern as the seasoned professional, because it provides practical, applicable knowledge for the field.”

Spring Field Instructor Training Collaborative Conflict Management

The Spring Field Instructor Training will address the topic of conflict management. Constructive confrontation increases accountability and decreases conflict. Taking a collaborative approach can help professionals avoid the crash and burn of un-addressed conflicts. We hope you will consider joining us for this training.

Date: Wednesday, March 30

Time: 9 a.m.—12 p.m.

Location: Colusa Hall 100A

CEU’s will be offered



Board of Behavioral Sciences Licensing Presentation

This spring, Patty Hunter will be providing an orientation for all concentration year MSW students interested in learning about the requirements for licensure. Patty will review steps students will need to take upon graduation to apply for their ASW intern number and answer any questions students may have about the process.

Date: Thursday, April 21

Time: 5:00—6:30 p.m.

Location: Butte 102



The California Commission on Aging

Visits CSU, Chico

The California Commission on Aging (CCoA), established in 1973 by the Burton Act, met on the CSU, Chico campus for a regional meeting on September 17, 2015. Per the website, the commission is the “principal advisory body to the Governor, State Legislature, and State, Federal and local departments and agencies on issues affecting older individuals in order to ensure a quality of life for older Californians so they may live with dignity in their chosen environment.” The 25 commissioners serve through governor and assembly/senate appointments.

The Chico meeting was planned in collaboration with Passages, the School of Social Work, CSU, Chico Interdisciplinary Center on Aging (ICOA), and the CCoA. Commission meetings are public and thus having them on campus allowed over 50 students, faculty, community members, and state and regional officials to attend. It was an honor to host this important commission and to learn the perspectives of members of our region.

The agenda of the commission meeting included a welcome by CSU, Chico President Paul Zingg, Dean of Behavioral and Social Sciences Eddie Vela, and Joe Cobery, executive director of Passages (Planning and Service Area # 3). Celeste A. Jones and Seema Sehrawat provided a presentation on the Interdisciplinary Center on Aging at CSU Chico and a unique digital storytelling project. This was followed by Ed Long, deputy director of Long-Term Care and Aging Ed with a synopsis of the *2013—2017 State Plan on Aging Progress Report*.

This eventful day also included panel of community members on “Challenges to Aging in Place”, a presentation titled “Passages Connections Program: A Rural Mental Health Model” by Chris Sims, LCSW, and a multi-generation panel on “Perspectives on Aging.” An introduction to Osher Lifelong Learning Institute was provided by Ann Nikolai, the institute director.

Presenter Chris Sims was kind enough to answer a few questions for us regarding services provided by the Passages Connections Program and the mental health needs of older adults.

What are your views for needed continued services for older adults in behavioral health?

There are some basic and pragmatic things that are needed for older adults seeking treatment, including reliable transportation, service accessibility, and practitioners that specialize in older adult issues.

As important is this: during my work, it became so apparent that older adults are faced with some pretty challenging situations that would be considered traumas if they were any other age group. For example, if I, as a 43 year old guy, had a change in income that forced me to move away from my family and/or friends without my input, or I lost my spouse or child, or I suddenly became disabled because of a health issue, people might use words like “awful” and “tragic.” What I noticed with older adults was that people were more likely to dismiss these events as “just part of getting old.”

The same is true with mental health. Being depressed is awful no matter what your circumstance. For older adults, however, our response is lacking for two reasons. First, people and professionals on the outside can dismiss those issues because they might be “just part of getting older.” Second, the people who suffer are sometimes dismissive of their experience: “Oh this is just part of me getting older.” Or worse, people think that depression and anxiety are something like a character defect rather than a treatable mental health issue.

That stigma in self and society are pretty powerful things and have contributed to shortcomings in services evidenced by the pragmatic needs I first listed. Addressing that stigma is critical in considering needed services for older adults in accessing behavioral health.

What do you feel was the most important takeaway for the commissioners and the audience?

I would hope that people could remember the successes of the Connections program that were highlighted in the presentation. The program has consistently shown a positive impact on reducing suicidal thinking, improving psychological function, and guiding people into a more healthy life and perspective.

The program was built in holistic consideration of the clients we hoped to serve, not around the limits of the agency. I am sure that it was because of this we have had such great success. Due to the outcomes and performance, I believe that this program could not only be part of any community mental health system, but may be should be a part of any community mental health system.

What would you like to see in regards to funding for mental health services for older adults?

Connections benefitted from the flexibility of Mental Health Services Act funds. While there were some guidelines as to how, who, and numbers we would serve, at the foundation of the success was the ability to be creative in the development and application of services.

Older adults might be considered a “non-traditional” population for mental health services. Yet, we are slow in developing systems to accommodate such clients. I would hope that future funding aims to focus not on what we have been doing, but instead on what we could be doing better to provide for the mental health needs of our older adult population.



Rooted in Social Justice

Student interest in an elective option outside of the focus areas of child welfare, mental health, and older adults sparked the creation of an independent study course this past fall. Students were interested in focusing on issues of justice. Nine students signed up for the course to examine justice through a variety of lenses. The class began by taking a general look at ways to define justice, and thinking about what justice looks like in social work practice. Students also looked at what anti-oppressive social work practice is, and why it might be important to have an anti-oppressive focus in their work. The students developed the following class title and description: “Rooted in Social Justice.” Using a social work perspective the course will examine social justice issues through the lenses of the criminal justice system, education, racial and ethnic identities, housing, health care, immigration and the environment. Students will find and assign related reading material and the group will read the Book in Common, *Just Mercy*, and discuss it through a social work and social justice lens. Students will also explore local social work related agencies that are following a justice or anti-oppressive approach to social work practice.

The students chose topic areas to explore in depth from a justice perspective. The topics include the criminal justice system, environmental justice, end-of-life issues, homelessness, juvenile justice, and education. Each student assigned readings for their topic, designed a presentation, developed discussion questions, and lead a discussion. Students are writing papers on their topic areas and will read and evaluate each others’ work. As a follow up to the class, students and the instructor will attend the Book in Common presentation at Laxson in the spring.

The discussions have been thoughtful and have helped all present think about how we can be more effective in moving a justice agenda forward in the field.

Independent Study for MSW Students With Sue Steiner, PhD

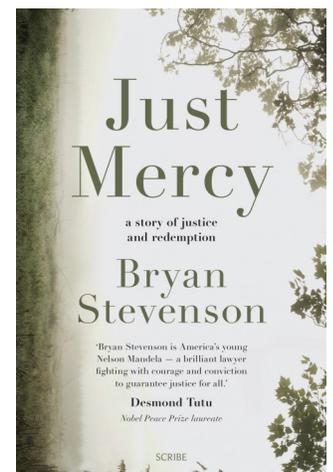
“What I enjoyed most about the justice course was the way it was student-led. Each of us took an aspect of justice and taught our classmates. We were able to use our own personal interests or internships to guide the topics we chose.

In one of the classes, we learned about justice in terms of homelessness. Since I am doing an internship related to housing and homelessness, I was very interested in this class and I learned a lot. We were taught to think about the words home, house, and homelessness, and what ideas society has constructed related to these terms.

I learned that homelessness is a justice issue because shelter is a basic human right, yet we are telling people that they must live a certain way before they can have a home. Society also tells people that even if they served time in jail for a crime, they still may not be able to find affordable housing because their criminal record restricts them from housing benefits. There are injustices related to housing and homelessness on many levels, and through this class, we explored many of them.”

Lilith Iversen

Students enrolled in SWRK
697 read the CSU, Chico
2015–2016 Book in Common,
Just Mercy.



Student Highlights



*Emma
Clancy*



*Lindsay
Hannan*

The focus of my internship and studies for this year has been the issue of homelessness in Chico. This focus extends to my practicum placement, where I am an intern with several local agencies working with the homeless population. Currently, I am working with the Housing Authority of the County of Butte, the Continuum of Care Council, the Chico Housing Action Team, and the City of Chico to learn more about the causes, and the consequences, of homelessness at all levels of practice, from direct service to policy creation.

My internships have influenced the topic of my masters thesis, in which I am working with faculty member Susan Roll to explore the possibility and value of opening a low-barrier homeless shelter in Chico. There are many services in the area targeted to help individuals without homes, however there are many people who do not or cannot access those services, most typically due to having a substance use disorder, owning a pet companion, or having a criminal background. A low-barrier shelter would eliminate many of the current barriers, or rules, to accessing services and offer a second chance to many individuals who are living without shelter in our community.

There is an under utilization of hospice care among minorities on a national level as well as a local level. While statistics back this up, I didn't need statistics to see this as a volunteer at Feather River Hospice, and I was intrigued to delve deeper. My focus gravitated to the local Hispanic community, and my approach would be a qualitative investigation of how this culture regards end-of-life, terminal diagnoses, traditions surrounding death, and the role of caregivers, in my research for honors in the major.

I am drawn to the multiple facets of medical social work with an interest in gerontology and hospice care. As a future practitioner, I value the importance of assisting minorities who are tentative or unaware of options in hospice and palliative care. My research explores barriers that a practitioner should know about in order to suitably approach and assist a family struggling with or are unaware of options. Social workers empower people by offering knowledge and assistance to cultivate education and understanding about probable choices. What better way to educate myself and promote the education of future practitioners than to exercise research as a tool to cultivate awareness and promote changes in practice.

Stay Plugged In *Spring Semester*



Just a few quick reminders about the spring semester. The annual field fair will be held on Wednesday, March 9 from 12—3 p.m in the Bell Memorial Union Auditorium. Agency staff please consider attending to represent your agency. It is a wonderful opportunity for our students to be able to interact with potential placement agencies and learn more about the internship experience. We have emailed out a survey to inquire about your agency's plan to attend the field fair and also to get some idea as to how many students and what level you might be interested in hosting this next year. We have a **very large** BSW cohort entering practicum in the 2016—2017 year, so we look forward to working with agencies to place all of our students. All questions regarding the field fair can be directed to Nicole Davis at nmdavis@csuchico.edu or 530-898-5632. Thank you!

If your agency has not yet completed the 2016—2017 Field Placement Information Survey, please [click here](#) to submit.

IMPORTANT DATES

- BSW Junior Field Introduction Meeting, Thursday, March 3, 2—5 p.m. in Colusa Hall 100A
- Field Fair, Wednesday, March 9, 12—3 p.m. in BMU Auditorium
- Field Advisory Board Meeting, Wednesday, April 20, 10:30 a.m. —12 p.m.
- Field Instructor Training, Date TBA
- Annual Field Reception, Thursday, May 12, 5:30—7:30 p.m. in the BMU Auditorium

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