Happy 2017! A new year always brings a certain amount of anticipation, change and uncertainty; 2017 will be no exception to that. My hope is that as all of the change unfolds we will find opportunities to stand together as social workers. Our skills and knowledge as activists and change agents will be needed, on a community, organizational, and individual level. In this issue we have included some pictures of social workers that participated in the recent marches in Chico and Sacramento. I know for me, seeing the diversity of individuals that gathered for the Chico march was encouraging and reminded me of all of the good that exists in our communities. My hope is that together, our courage will sustain us during whatever challenges lie ahead for our profession and the populations we serve.

I want to remind agencies that we will be starting our field placement process earlier than usual this year. We have a large number of BSW students that will be entering their field practicum next year and we are working hard to find placements for each of them. We hope you are considering hosting students again and want to remind you to let us know of any other agencies you are aware of that might be interested in having social work students placed with them. In the last few years we have been able to place students in agencies that have not traditionally hired social workers but are seeing the benefits to a more diversified workforce!

Lastly, thank you again for all of your work with our students. Your dedication is appreciated.

With gratitude, Patty
Off the Cuff

The California End of Life Option Act
By Lindsay Hannan

On June 9, 2016, the California End of Life Option Act was signed into law. It allows a terminally ill patient to take his or her own life with the assistance of a physician. This is a subject matter that people are vehemently passionate about, whether they are for or against the passing of the law. Recently, I asked my colleague Kyla Super to share her thoughts surrounding this death and dying legislation. I wanted to inquire how, as a social worker, she might talk with her clients about the options that center around this legislation.

Kyla is very supportive of this legislation, feeling that it is important for autonomy and self-determination in the matter of a terminal illness. She wonders if people might feel opposed to it because it strikes deep emotions in thinking about death and perhaps it’s too uncomfortable to face those personal feelings.

While Kyla thinks that it should be nobody’s choice but that of someone facing a terminal illness to end their life in a controlled manner, she admits that she would feel uncomfortable having to speak to clients about this—not because the topic is intimidating, but because this is not a part of social work that she is familiar with. She thinks that a firm knowledge base is needed to be able to best educate a client about options, and because it is such an important decision in someone’s life, the person who is bridging gaps needs to be proficient in how to navigate all aspects of the conversation surrounding the client’s wishes.

Kyla shared that she has put some thought of her own into wishes she might have surrounding her death, like people in her life knowing some important things from her heart and specific wishes for her remains, but she has yet to make her thoughts on the matter known. Kyla imparted, “It feels like I have more time to make these decisions… but that’s probably what everyone thinks!” Kyla is right, many of us don’t like to think about these things or bring them up with our loved ones. Our culture struggles with the discomfort and fears surrounding death.

Kyla concluded that a person who is supporting a terminally ill client through heavy decisions surrounding one’s death, ought to sort and explore their own personal feelings about death in order to avoid transference or projection. Kyla’s intuitive sensitivity in broaching the subject of death with a client is filled with all of the natural inclinations a social worker ought to have, even if she doesn’t feel she is well versed about the subject—social workers seek to find ways to navigate the toughest talks.

Later 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 27, 2017
Time: 5 p.m.—6:30 p.m.
Location: Butte Hall, Room 109
Lisa Thao

“One day, I will grow up to be a firefighter.” These words came from my younger brother, Jeff Thao, who has a learning impairment, attention deficit hyperactivity disability (ADHD). I know that his dream of becoming a firefighter may never happen, but he never stops believing. His dream is what motivated him despite facing several challenges for not being “normal.”

My brother inspired me to focus my honors project on the Hmong community, specifically families who have a child with a learning impairment. I hope that this research will bridge any gaps that Hmong families may have in understanding the services available to a child with an impairment.

Macro social work fascinates me, and much of the work I do in the community is macro-oriented. So naturally, my honors project is heavily influenced by my interest in community development and substance abuse. The purpose of my project is to research the best practices for implementing 12-step self-recovery alternatives into semirural communities. As compared to larger cities, smaller rural communities tend to have different barriers to recovery for people attempting to recover from drug or alcohol addictions. One of those barriers is that rural and semirural communities rarely have alternative programs to the religion-centered programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, or other 12-step focused groups. The goal of my project is to not only research the best practices for implementation of 12-step alternative programs but to also explore the other alternatives to the self-recovery spectrum and how they could benefit semirural communities.

My project seeks to explain what processes need to be taken in communities such as Chico to ensure that the various pieces of the self-recovery spectrum are being offered, and identify how to implement such programs to meet the needs of lower income or geographically distanced residents. I am excited to learn more about how alternative programs can utilize existing tactics to become sustainable in all types of communities, and my hope is that one day Chico will have a plethora of alternative programs available for people suffering from alcohol and drug abuse.

Tara Ames

BSW STUDENTS SHARE THEIR HONORS PROJECTS
My grandmother was diagnosed with severe Alzheimer’s and dementia, and I witnessed firsthand some of the struggles that come along with that diagnosis. Not only did I witness the abuse that our elderly are facing as they get older but I also realized how hard it was to access the resources that were in place to help her. I knew I could not sit back and not do anything; I needed to find a way to make a difference in the lives of our elderly.

I am completing my field practicum at Yuba County Adult Protective Services, and through my placement I am able to see what services are in place and which ones are needed so that our elderly can be safe in their own homes. My honors project is titled “Growing Old Should Not Be So Hard” and focuses on the needs of the Latino aging community of Yuba County and getting the resources to them. I read a quote once that said, “Do a little bit of good where you are: it’s those little bits of good put all together that overwhelm the world.” That is what I love about social work.

I am a Title IV-E Honors student completing my final semester of the BSW program. As a Title IV-E student I have been fortunate to remain focused on a career in child welfare by completing my internship at Yuba County Child Welfare Services. As a result of my experience with the families of Yuba County and through the guidance of my amazing advisor, Kathy Cox, I determined that for my honors project I wanted to focus on how natural supports are identified and utilized in the beginning stages of the child welfare process.

Child welfare social workers are given the unique opportunity to meet and empower families at a time in their lives that can feel vulnerable and overwhelming. I have found that it is important to remember through the case planning process that as child welfare workers we are only in the lives of families providing support and guidance for a short period of time. Utilizing the natural support systems that the families already have in place or by helping them build a natural support network has the potential of increasing support not only throughout the child welfare process but to continue support, empowerment, and direction after the child welfare case is completed. To further my knowledge in this area I will be gathering data from three sources including direct observation, documentation review, and interviews with experienced social workers. It is my hope that through data and research I can show the positive impact of natural supports in the child welfare process.
I have chosen to complete a thesis project where I have collected student voices through an online survey. My study is titled *Exploring First-Generation College Students at Chico State*. I am currently exploring first-generation college student involvement on Chico State campus. The survey collected student voices regarding their participation and involvement on campus, as well as their overall perceptions of the classroom and campus climate.

As first-generation college students balance their academics and personal life, school involvement may pose a challenge for some students who actively seek to engage themselves on their college campus. Therefore, this study primarily focuses on the classroom and campus climate in which students reported feeling unsafe, unwelcome, or invisible on Chico State campus (Rodriguez, et al., 2016). This project has two main goals. The first goal of the project is to explore how classroom and campus climate impact student involvement and participation on campus. The second goal of the project will be the development of a campus report for the University. The campus report will focus specifically on making faculty, staff, and departments aware that our campus is changing demographically and allow student voices to be heard. The campus report is also a way to foster inclusivity in the classroom and on campus.

With more and more first-generation students entering college, I thought it would be of value to explore this population further. Being that I am also a first-generation college student, I hope to provide more insight about this population and further advance the success of all students seeking to overcome adversity.

My research will examine the awareness of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Score by working professionals in the fields of medicine, education, and social services serving Butte County. It will also incorporate awareness of trauma-informed practices across these settings. Traumatic events experienced in childhood have lasting implications on an individual throughout their lifetime; impacting health, education, and social development. Through a mixed-methods approach, my research will gather data through an online survey that will be administered to Butte County professionals over a two-month period. This study will address questions pertaining to the level of awareness of ACE scores amongst professionals, how they vary among disciplines, and how trauma-informed practices are being implemented or not within Butte County service providers.

Following eight years of working with children in classrooms, I was placed at Sutter North Children’s Bereavement Services and spent some time working in Home Health and Hospice. For my concentration year, I am interning at Student Health Services here at the Chico State campus. My experiences working with different age groups over the last 10 years have made me more aware of the complex and difficult ways exposure to trauma impacts people over their lifetime. The prevalence of trauma exposure adds increased urgency to understand and improve our interactions with the populations we serve, and to integrate more compassionate and supportive approaches found within trauma-informed practices.
Women’s March

Social Workers Stand Up
Earlier this month I had the opportunity to talk with Heather Fox and Tami Ritter from the Chico Youth Court and learn more about this wonderful program serving Butte County. The Chico Youth Court offers help to youth and adults through its Restorative Practices Program. Restorative Practices is used in education, social services, counseling, and running groups. In addition, it is being used in the criminal justice system where individuals who have caused some kind of harm have the opportunity to repair that harm and to become reconnected with the community. Restorative Practices addresses the needs of the person who was harmed—the victim—and also addresses the needs of the person who caused the harm.

Within the program, one of the more formal processes used is called a circle or conference. It is addressing the harms that were created so that the person who was harmed feels fulfilled and feels that the other individual understands the impact of what they’ve done. Together a solution is reached that satisfies all of the parties while making sure the person who caused the harm is ready and able to take responsibility for what they have done. An example of a more informal aspect of Restorative Practices would be a series of questions that a teacher asks a student.

With restorative practices they have learned that people who have had their voice heard are more likely to go along with those in positions of power even if the outcome is not what they originally hoped for. Being able to voice concerns and the impacts that experiences have had on them is extremely important and adds to the overall success of the program. A goal of the Chico Youth Court is to have individuals who have gone through the program end up facilitating groups and becoming the leaders. A primary request of the Chico Youth Court has been for trainings on how to do restorative trainings and circles, how teachers can integrate this into the classroom and how social workers can integrate this into their group work.

The Chico Youth Court will be recruiting an MSW Concentration year student intern for the upcoming 2017—2018 academic year. This placement will be mostly macro social work practice so a student who will be a good fit will have an interest in community outreach and engagement. The student intern must be able to work independently, take initiative, and network with the community. The expectation of an intern would be that they go through the trainings for facilitating the life skills and anger management classes that are both targeted for juveniles in addition to the substance abuse class. This placement would provide for a flexible schedule because some of the activities are in the evenings and on weekends. Second year MSW student who are interested in a placement at Chico Youth Court should discuss it with Patty Hunter during your field placement meeting.

Fox is a 2013 graduate from the School of Social Work’s MSW Program and is the director of Chico Youth Court. She would serve as the agency field instructor to the student intern. Ritter is the founder and advisor for the program and is a licensed trainer for the International Institute for Restorative Practices and offers the two—part training “Introduction to Restorative Practices” and “Using Circles Effectively.”
On November 14, 2016, the Love Chapmantown Community Coalition celebrated completion of its project to bring new playground equipment to the transitional kindergarten and kindergarten playground at Chapman Elementary School. The coalition raised money to purchase a great slide combination, swings, a balance beam, spinning chairs, a kid-sized basketball hoop, trikes, and picnic tables.

The dedication ceremony was attended by Chico Unified School District administrators, donors, teachers, parents, and Chapman Elementary alums. The event was the culmination of a two-year campaign raising over $41,000 to purchase swings, slides, a balance beam, mini-basketball hoop, and other equipment sized to fit the youngest students at the school. “Until now, our kindergarteners were playing on aging, oversized equipment that was installed when the school opened in 1953,” says Laura Manning, one of the teachers who launched the campaign through the Love Chapmantown Community Coalition. “Laura came to us and said the kids needed their own equipment,” says Stephen Tchudi, who coordinated fundraising for the coalition. “We took on the assignment and were delighted with the response of individual community members as well as local foundations—we reached our goal and had enough left over for picnic tables and some kid-worthy tricycles.”

The opening ceremony was led by the children, who climbed, swung, slid, and played, offering the grownups an opportunity to appreciate the new equipment. Speakers at the ceremony included representatives of Chapman Elementary, the Love Chapmantown Community Coalition, and Chico Unified School District, which contributed installation of the equipment. The project was completed with major funding from the Discovery Shoppe Foundation plus individual contributions and support from Truck-a-Roni, Chico Velo, the Safeway Foundation, Soroptimists of Bidwell Rancho, Chico Rotary, and the Chico Breakfast Lions Club.
On February 17 the School of Social Work hosted its annual Field Fair, where students had the opportunity to connect with over 50 community agencies and take their first steps in the field placement process. The fair provides a wonderful opportunity for students to meet with agency representatives on an informal basis and learn about what a placement at that agency might look like. We would like to give a huge thank-you to all the agencies that took time out of their busy schedules to attend!

We are now in the process of meeting with the BSW and MSW student groups to identify agencies they would like to interview with. If your agency has not already completed the Field Placement Information Survey to let us know how many students you would like for the 2017—2018 academic year, please click here to submit your response or email Nicole Davis nmdavis@csuchico.edu.