The Part-Time MSW program was proud to welcome 116 new students into our program in the fall of 2012. Generalists and Advanced Standing students from both the Madison and Eau Claire sites came together at the Memorial Union on the Madison campus to learn about the program, set expectations, receive advice from current students, and meet their classmates.

Director of the Part-Time MSW Program, Tracy Schroepfer, welcomes students

Students prepare for a CYPW breakout session

Students enjoy ice cream in the student lounge at the School of Social Work

Orientation was held at the Memorial Union

Kristi Wood, Megan Parisi, and Peg Banks smile with Julie Bump after presenting on the student panel
Field Advice

Field education is an exciting, challenging, and rewarding experience for students in the MSW program. It has been my experience that each student has individual and unique circumstances regarding field placement interests and needs. We have collected some advice and experiences from students who have either completed a field placement already or are currently in a field placement. I am looking forward to an exciting and successful year with each of you.

Audrey Conn is the Field Coordinator of the Part-Time MSW Program.

Family Comes First

It has been a challenge to balance field, work, family and any type of social life. The best things for me have been to get in a routine, having family support, and to remember that for me, family always comes first. I feel very guilty for not being able to spend all of my free time with them, but spending time each night on school work helps to balance it out.

Ashley Hady is in her last year of the Part-Time MSW Program.

Advice from Kristi Wood

Here are a few tips that I have picked up over the past three years that I would like to pass along:

Don’t be afraid to ask questions!

If you do have a clear vision about what you want, speak up. Make your desires known on your Field Preference form. The earlier you can narrow down your interests, the more likely you will get the placement you want. Contact the field coordinator if you have questions.

Enjoy knowing that you are getting an education from one of the finest Schools of Social Work in the country: a known leader for its field model. Congrats!

Breathe deeply and enjoy the experience! Soak it up and love every minute of it. Embrace the difficult moments and learn from them. Savor the great moments. Before you know it, your field experience will be over. Enjoy it while you can, and know that you are making a difference in the world.

Kristi Wood is a fourth-year student in her second field placement in the Part-Time MSW Program.

Balancing Work, Family, and School

My name is Erin Miess. I am in my fourth and final year of the program and am very excited to graduate! It has been a long and amazing journey! In addition to attending school on Saturdays, I am employed as Lead CPS Worker in Richland County where I have worked for the past seven years. Also, my husband and I live on a dairy farm with our two beautiful boys, ages 5 and 7.

Like many other students, it has been difficult for me to balance work, school and family over the past four years. I have relied greatly on the support of family, friends, managers, co-workers, instructors and classmates, and I am very thankful to have such a wonderful support network. Without this, I would not be where I am today!

I am in the Child Welfare Traineeship Program and am doing an administrative emphasis for my placement. While at my field placement, I have had the opportunity to participate in local and state policy and program development, staff development, collaborative community efforts, and other activities. I have acquired skills and knowledge that are extremely helpful in my current position and for future career advancement.

During second semester I will be involved in the implementation of an evidenced based practice model in the Youth Services Unit. My placement has been an excellent learning experience so far and I am very excited to continue!

Erin Miess is a fourth-year student in her second field placement in the Part-Time MSW Program.
Advice from Sarah Seibold

Balance between classes, field experiences, work, and personal life has been the hardest part about graduate school so far. I have learned to use my support network of peers, field instructor, fellow interns at my placement, and field supervisor to navigate this. It has meant cutting back on work hours, enjoying quality time with loved ones when I can.

The best part of my internship has been the ability to get out in the community and build leadership—that of other interns, volunteers, the youth we serve, and my own. For example, I am now coordinating a volunteer event that brings together Social Work students as well as three student organizations, and I am also helping to put together an action team for district level policy change across the state. Seeing a spark of change through advocacy is something I’ll never forget.

I know advisors tell you this, but do not limit your field experience to what you think you would enjoy or benefit from—be open to new experiences and you will learn even more about yourself and the populations we serve. I am finding that all of the areas of social work seem to intersect; for example, we have found connections across all the areas represented in our field placement seminar: special needs adoption, international adoption, domestic violence services, juvenile supervision, early child education, policy research, and LGBT education and rights.

Sarah Seibold is in her first field placement in the Part-Time MSW Program.

A New Appreciation

During my first field placement, my agency supervisors were held together by mutual respect, common goals and a heart for serving. Together they bring families together and work to provide permanent, loving homes for children.

At that start of my internship, the extent of my adoption knowledge was based on movies, television shows and the personal stories of some family friends. Like so many in our society, I thought that adoption was the “second best choice” and that it was irresponsible young mothers “putting up” their “unwanted” children for adoption.

The team gently taught me that adoption is just as the word itself indicates: an option. These birthparents are anything but irresponsible; the decision to make an adoption plan for their child may be the most responsible, loving and heart-wrenching decision they will ever make.

Many birthmothers are also not young teenagers but adults in their twenties who sincerely love their children yet realize they cannot provide the life their children deserve. Adoptive families often come to with a history of infertility and feelings of uncertainty as to what the future holds. The adoption team meets both adoptive and birth families with respect, honesty and compassion.

I come away with a new appreciation and respect for this field of work and all those whose lives are forever changed by adoption.

Brittany Shimek is in her third year of the Part-Time MSW Program.

Ask an Advisor

Dear Advisors,

When will the spring exemption exams be given, and how do I prepare?

All students, no matter what their undergraduate degree, are eligible to take the exemption exam for SW 711: Human Behavior and the Environment.

This exam will be held January 12, 2013 at 9:00am at both the Eau Claire and Madison sites.

Additionally, students with a BSW from an accredited social work program can take the exemption exam for SW 640: Social Work with Ethnic and Racial Groups. This exam will be held January 19, 2013 at 9:00am at both the Eau Claire and Madison sites.

Remember, passing an exemption exam allows the student to exempt from an entire course. As such, they are comprehensive, like a final examination. Both of these exams contain...

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Lobby Day

I would like to share with you the invaluable experience I had in attending the National Association of Social Work – Wisconsin Chapter’s Lobby Day on April 13, 2011, and I encourage all of you to attend this empowering event in 2013 and beyond.

Lobby Day is a day-long event held in Madison every two years. It is attended by a plethora of people involved in the social work field: BSW students, MSW students, faculty, and other professionals from all over the state of Wisconsin.

Although the event is normally well-attended, an unprecedented 335 people attended the 2011 event. Every region of the state was well represented; large groups from UW-Superior, UW-Green Bay, UW-Oshkosh, and many other areas attended.

The ultimate goals of Lobby Day are: to familiarize those of us in the social work field with the critical issues we face in the current political climate, to give us a larger and unified voice in lobbying for the betterment of society, and to sharpen our lobbying skills. Being able to proudly and confidently speak with legislators regarding issues that affect our work is invaluable.

Lobby Day 2011 began with a welcome from NASW-WI’s Executive Director, Marc Herstand (pictured left). The keynote address was a rousing message from Eileen Mershart, CEO of the Madison YWCA. Both have extensive experience in the field and are champions of advocacy for those we work with.

Upon registering for Lobby Day, we had the option of selecting two break-out sessions. Topics to choose from this year consisted of: The WI State Budget, Loan Forgiveness for Social Workers, The Child Victim’s Act, Change of Age of Mandatory Referral to Adult Court from 17 to 18 Years Old, Public School Funding, and The Patient Abandonment Act.

I attended the School Funding session, presented by Tom Beebe, from the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES). Tom gave us clear and concise fact sheets explaining the devastating effect the proposed Budget Repair Bill would have on public schools, and a number of solid alternative solutions to Wisconsin’s budget shortfall. One suggestion is Penny for Kids, which is a one-cent increase in the state sales tax, would more than cover the proposed $749 million decrease to general school aid.

I also attended the session regarding the WI State Budget, presented by Jon Peacock, a Project Director at the Wisconsin Alliance Council on Children and Families (WCCF). Jon gave us extensive information regarding the significant cuts to programs that are essential to low and moderate income families in Wisconsin.

Despite my nerves, I felt confident discussing pertinent matters with him; we were provided with compelling information and statistics regarding the people we serve. We also shared personal stories regarding our work at Porchlight. Representative Ripp listened to our concerns, and asked if he could keep a copy of the NASW-WI fact sheet regarding solutions such as Penny for Kids. We will be following up with a letter thanking him for his time.

We also had an hour-long meeting with a staffer for Senator Mark Miller, and other fellow Lobby Day attendees from our senate district. We discussed how we as constituents and social workers can best work together to carry forward the message that best serves all citizens of Wisconsin.

I attended Lobby Day with my Field Agency Supervisor. I highly recommend attending Lobby Day with your fellow supervisor/student(s); it is an excellent opportunity to work together in a very empowering capacity. My Agency Supervisor and I happened to be the only ones from our Assembly district attending Lobby Day this year, so she and I had the opportunity of having a personal meeting with our Representative from the 47th District, Keith Ripp. In the past, I had been fairly politically involved; however, I had never met with a legislator before.

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I recently went on a vacation to Ireland with my partner. Since it was our first ‘real’ vacation (meaning without kids) in fourteen years, I particularly did not plan to go wearing my social work hat. The day we arrived, however, we were inundated with social issues messages.

As we drove from the airport to our hotel, there were signs attached to streetlights on every block that read: “Every child should be seen…and heard: Vote YES.” I did not need to do any research to discover what the issue was: it was in every newspaper I picked up and on many radio programs. We even watched a televised debate that looked very much like our presidential debates.

On November 10 (yes, they vote on Saturdays!), Ireland voted on an amendment to their Constitution, which proposed that children have more of a voice in court. The amendment sought to remove many barriers that currently exist regarding children in long-term foster care being able to be adopted by their foster parents.

Approximately 2,000 children currently in long-term foster care are in this situation, many of whom would like to be adopted by their foster parents.

Based on the results of the election, these children may have their wish granted; the referendum passed, with 58% of voters supporting the measure.

It was incredibly refreshing to be in a country that allows their social issues such a commanding presence in everyday life. As social workers, we can learn from the Irish by assuring that children have a strong voice, that prominent social issues are addressed on a regular basis by our social media, and that children who wish to be adopted by their foster parents can do so.

Ireland is about the same size geographically as Wisconsin and has roughly the same population. The number of people who are homeless in Ireland is about the same as Madison. Although they have their share of social problems, they appear to me to take care of their own better than we do. Sounds like the makings of an excellent change agent project, fellow students!

As my field instructor Julie Phelps says, we never really take off our social work hat. Although my hat was on, I was still able to thoroughly enjoy my vacation and learn about Irish social issues at the same time. May the road rise to meet you...

To learn more about this issue, visit www.childrensrights.ie/campaign/childrens-rights-and-constitutional-reform.

There is also an article in the Irish Times that summarizes the referendum: http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2012/0919/breaking5.html

Lobby Day (continued from page 4)

I can say without hesitation that Lobby Day ranks as one of the best experiences I have ever had. Whether you have had no experience lobbying for those we serve or you are a tireless advocate, I highly encourage everyone to mark your calendars for Lobby Day in 2013. I thank Mark Herstand and all those who made Lobby Day 2011 possible.

Lobby Day 2013
Saturday, April 17, 2013
9:00am-3:30pm

Madison Masonic Center
301 Wisconsin Ave,
Madison, WI 53703 and
Wisconsin State Capitol

Website:
http://www.naswwi.org/legislative-advocacy-political-actio/lobby-day/
Kaitlyn Nabholz—Accepted School Social Work position with the Eau Claire School District

Sophie Netland—Was offered a job as a Mental Health Practitioner at Heartland Kids in Duluth

Alder Swanson (pictured)—Married David Natvig (grad student in the UW Scandinavian Studies Department) on June 2nd on the rooftop of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art

Dear Advisors,

I’m graduating in May 2013! I’m excited to be certified as an Advanced Practice Social Worker (CAPSW). When can I take the National Exam and how do I register?

In Wisconsin, you are allowed to take the National Exam (ASWB) up to six months before graduation.

To begin the process, you will need to fill out an application for Advanced Practice Social Worker at http://dps.state.wi.us/home. Select Licenses/Permits/Registrations > Health Professions > Social Worker—Advanced Practice > Application forms. The Academic Verification form (#2576) will allow you to take the national exam prior to graduation. Complete the top half of the form and give it to an advisor.

The advisor will complete the bottom half and will send the Academic Verification Form directly to the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS).

For information specific to your circumstances (Minnesota licensure, etc.), please make an appointment with an advisor: socwork.wisc.edu/appointments.

Ask an Advisor (continued from page 3)

You are given two hours to take each exam. You may take an exam only once. There is a fee of $25 for each exam, which is payable to the School of Social Work at the time the exam is given.

If you have further questions or wish to register for one or both of the exams, please contact an advisor: socwork.wisc.edu/appointments.