

SPRING 2011 | news from the Messiah College social work program

INTERDEPENDENT

Letter from the department chair

by Charles Seitz, Ph.D., M.S.W., L.C.S.W.



It is with great pleasure that I announce that the Social Work Program at Messiah College has received national re-accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education through 2019. This means that the program is recognized as meeting or exceeding national standards for educating social work students. I want to thank everyone who played a part in the re-accreditation process and in helping to develop a strong program including current students, alumni, advisory board members, field supervisors and College employees, faculty and administrators. It is exciting to experience the high level of commitment so many people have to

producing well trained social workers.

This year, I have come to really appreciate the leadership skills and qualities of our social work students. A part of the accreditation process involves an independent site visit to review our program. During the exit interview, the site visitor noted that he was extremely impressed with the high level of leadership skills that our students exhibit. In talking with students, they identified specific leadership skills learned while in the program including being humble and willing to listen, being mindful of God's leading, being involved in advocacy and policy issues and being more empathetic to the needs of others. Our students are the true ambassadors for the program, and I appreciate the difference current students and alumni are making in the local community and around the world.

Additionally, it is exciting to announce

that starting in the fall of 2011 the social work program (currently a part of the Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice Department) will become The Department of Social Work (Anthropology, Criminal Justice and Sociology will be a separate department). This change will provide the social work program with more visibility and resources. I would also like to note that the program continues to grow. Three years ago, the program had 29 majors and presently we have 65 students majoring in social work.

Please take the time to read through the newsletter and discover more exciting events and happenings within the social work program.

Strength and peace,

Charles

Prayer shawl ministry

by Donna Zack, administrative assistant

Our social work students have been busy with their knitting needles this year with the creation of our own Social Work Prayer Shawl Ministry. We have been knitting with a seed pattern (3 knit/3 purl), keeping in mind the Trinity, and praying for the recipient of the shawl as we are knitting.

The 3-stitch seed pattern was selected as symbolic of planting peace, healing, love, comfort and hope into the shawls by the shawl maker for the receiver.

The added blessing in a prayer shawl ministry is that those who make



the shawls pray for the recipient as they are making them. It is our hope that the praying for another will continue after the shawl has been presented. This is a wonderful service of comfort to those who receive them and it is very reward-

ing to the shawl maker as well.

This ministry is very personal to me, as I have seen what it does for the recipient and I have felt the great rewards of being the shawl maker. My personal life theme is "Go forth and spread God's word ... use words if you have to," and this is a great example of showing how God works through us in so many ways.

If anyone is interested in helping with our ministry, either with helping to knit or crochet or with donations to support the ministry, please contact Donna Zack at dzack@messiah.edu.

A view from the field: A letter from the social work field coordinator

Michelle George, M.S.W., L.C.S.W., B.C.D.



This semester alone, the Messiah College social work program has placed 30 students into 24 different field sites, and these only represent the sophomores and seniors

in the social work program. Students are currently placed in urban sites, rural settings, in the local community, in other Pennsylvania regions and, for the first time, two students are completing a senior placement in Thailand. Our students are making a real impact on the field of social work, but the field is also making an impact on our students. Recently, I asked sophomore students who are engaged in fifty hours of field placement this semester to comment about their experience. Here are a just few of their responses:

- “As scary as it is to be a sophomore and go out into the field, there is such an empowering result ... experience builds confidence and understanding. Despite the struggles, the experience is priceless.”
- “My field experience allows me to use what I am learning in the class now, not in two years when I graduate.”
- “Field placement is an integral part of social work. Without it, I feel I would

not have the same level of confidence consulting with supervisors and clients. A friend of mine graduated from another social work program that didn’t require as much field placement, and she felt completely unprepared. I am gaining confidence and am excited to enter the workforce.”

- “My field placement has been one of my top five best college experiences. I have been challenged academically, ethically and spiritually. I have grown both professionally and in my self-awareness in these last few months.”
- “Field education is vital to our education; there is only so much you can learn about practice from books. We won’t be counseling books ... we will be changing people’s lives. We should be out there with them, learning as much as possible.”
- “It’s the best way to take my education to a whole new level. It provides me with confidence for the future. It brings up questions and situations I would have never thought about in the classroom setting.”

Our students understand the benefit of a strong emphasis on field education because they are experiencing it. Each year, I am impressed by the metamorphosis that I see in the level of confidence and competence of our students as they progress through the field experience. This year is no exception.

Social Work Club Update

By Ashley Bell '13

When Rachel Reed '13 (treasurer), Sarah Mitchell '13 (co-president/secretary) and I met in the beginning of the year, we had a vision to have the social work majors become more involved in the Social Work Club. We felt a strong need for more fellowship among the majors. This is especially because in order to take care of clients, social workers must take care of themselves as well. In order to put this into practice here at Messiah College as students, we decided to have the majors take care of themselves. Meetings have consisted mostly of games, treats, walks, etc. just to relax. A lot of the games we have played were icebreakers so we could also get to know one another better.

In having more fellowship with one another, I feel as though there is a greater trust among group members. We are able to openly bounce ideas off of one another and learn from one another. This newly found strength allows us to welcome newer majors with greater confidence as our numbers continue to grow.

Right now, as a club, we are focused on being recognized by Messiah College and trying to plan a fundraiser for possibly the Harrisburg School District either this spring or next year sometime.

Social work student receives research grant

The social work department would like to congratulate social work student Jessica Quail '12 on receiving a research grant from the Friends of Murray Library. Quail writes about her plans for her research: “In October, I received a \$500 grant from the Friends of Murray Library to research the relationship between adoption and

self-perception. It is my hypothesis that the status and stigma that comes with being adopted results in lowered self-perception and self-esteem and ultimately results in higher levels of juvenile delinquency. Because our library has limited resources on this topic and because of its specificity, I will be travelling to the University of

Tennessee in Knoxville and Nashville and working in the Social Work Research Library there in April. In September, I will present my findings at Messiah College, and in November, I will present them at a national criminal justice conference in Washington, D.C.”

Phi Alpha fun

By Amanda Sigrist '12 and Kelsie Boyd '11



Back row (L-R): Jane DeBoer '12, Kelsie Boyd '11, Amanda Sigrist '12, Sarah Berrios '11 Front row (L-R): Evonne De Jong '12, Jessica Quail '12, Amanda Nissley '11 Not pictured: Kyle Galer '11, Ruth Berta '12, Tara Breitsprecher '12, Laura Lea Peschka '11

So you have probably heard about the Social Work Club, but have you heard about Phi Alpha? Phi Alpha is an honor society program for junior and senior social work majors. The goal of Phi Alpha is to provide a safe and fun environment for members to come together and discuss field placements, classes and life in general. After all, it's always fun and refreshing to spend time connecting with fellow social work majors! In addition to providing support for its members, Phi Alpha also aims to complete at least one community service project each semester and to reach out to younger social work majors.

In order to connect with younger social work majors, during the fall of 2010, Phi Alpha began a monthly program called Cookies & Questions. This is an event for those taking social work classes to come and discuss questions they have related to their social work courses and also as a time where all four grade levels of social work majors can come together and get to know each other better. This has been a main component of Phi Alpha this school year and

has given Phi Alpha members the opportunity to provide support, advice and encouragement to younger social work majors. Through Cookies & Questions, Phi Alpha strives to bring more unity and cohesion into the major. Last fall, the members of Phi Alpha went on a retreat called Living Your Strengths. This retreat was based off the book "Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community." During this weekend, Phi Alpha members reviewed and encouraged each other's strengths, and also learned how to use their strengths to serve others. The retreat was overnight at Camp Eder near Gettysburg, Pa., and was a great time for Phi Alpha members to relax, get to know each other better and learn how to use their God-given strengths to benefit the community.

Phi Alpha is a fun and enjoyable experience! Stay tuned this spring for more Phi Alpha events, including monthly Cookies & Questions, a Phi Alpha hosted picnic and a new community service project.

Through the lens of a child with autism

By Ashley Anderson '11

"God is my friend. Every Sunday I learn about Him. Every Sunday church is at 9:00. One time we went to church late. I couldn't sit in my seat. I was angry and screamed at my parents. If I sit somewhere else, I can't learn about God. Now, we come to church early. Together, we sing happy songs and fold our hands to pray. Sometimes the music is too loud or I see other people not folding their hands. Prayer means folding your hands. Then we read the Bible. I love the Bible. My favorite story is about the man who takes animals on his boat. Did you know he took two animals? After reading the Bible stories, we drink grape juice and eat bread. We don't have juice and bread every Sunday and I'm mad. My mom brings grape juice and bread to church for me. At the end of church, my parents talk to people. I talk to my friends about the man with animals on his boat. Did you know he took two animals?"

In my opinion, this story reflects a typical Sunday morning for a child with autism. Children with autism are literal beings, which raises the question: How can they develop a relationship with God? Taking on the perspective of someone with autism reminds us to remember that for some, they struggle with the idea of God and finding ways to learn about him. Regardless how we seek his love and grace, we are all children of God.

Students participate in Agape gift drive

By Katie Williams '12



Gifts collected by Messiah College students wait under the tree.

"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

—John 3:17–18

During every Christmas season for the last nine years there has been a community outreach called the Agape Gift Drive. This outreach was started in the south hills of Pittsburgh, Pa., for a high school project, and developed into so much more. It has grown to be a consistent annual ministry to the surrounding communities of Pittsburgh, offering multiple services to people in need. The beginning of this outreach was a way to get presents to inner city children for Christmas, to help them feel remembered and important. It was supposed to be a way to remind them that there are people thinking of them who want to show them the meaning of love and selflessness during the special season.

Collecting presents for these children is still a major part of the ministry, and there has not been a year since it was started that we have been disappointed in what we received out of people's generosity. The children range from infancy to 18 years old and are always thrilled with the kindness of those who chose to give. On top of gift giving, we now offer clothing and food to the families and case workers of these children. All of the children and their siblings are under the care

of social workers/case workers with their parents either being incarcerated or absent. The items we are able to provide for these families are essential, as well as physically and emotionally fulfilling. We have multiple schools in the greater Pittsburgh area that help contribute with this aspect of the drive as well. When the case workers come to pick up the bags of presents that have been collected for their children, they are given the opportunity to collect clothing from a clothing bank and take home garbage bags full of non-perishable food items, as well as whole turkeys.

This ministry, until recently, has been focused in the suburbs of Pittsburgh only. This past Christmas (2010), the ministry was able to branch out to the Harrisburg area and get Messiah College involved in the collection process. The students and faculty at Messiah were such an incredible help to the outreach this year and were able to make around 50 children and their families incredibly happy and blessed. We took a leap of faith in extending the gift drive to the Harrisburg area and were rewarded fully for that. God was able to use each hand, each heart, each cent to touch the lives of many of his children this season and we are incredibly thankful to everyone who participated.

This gift drive will surely be brought back with enthusiasm next year in hopes that we can bless just as many. "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" John 3:17–18. Let us continue to pour out the love of Christ, not just during the Christmas season, but every day, always, so that the world can continue to witness the incredible undying passion He has for his children.

Student experiences revolution in Egypt

By Tara Breitsprecher '12

I left at the beginning of January for my semester as a part of the Middle East Studies Program. With this program I would be living and studying in Cairo for three months and have a monthlong travel component in Syria, Jordan, Turkey and Israel. Although I was a little nervous about leaving everyone and everything I knew for an entire semester, I knew it would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn firsthand about the culture, history and current struggles in the Middle East.

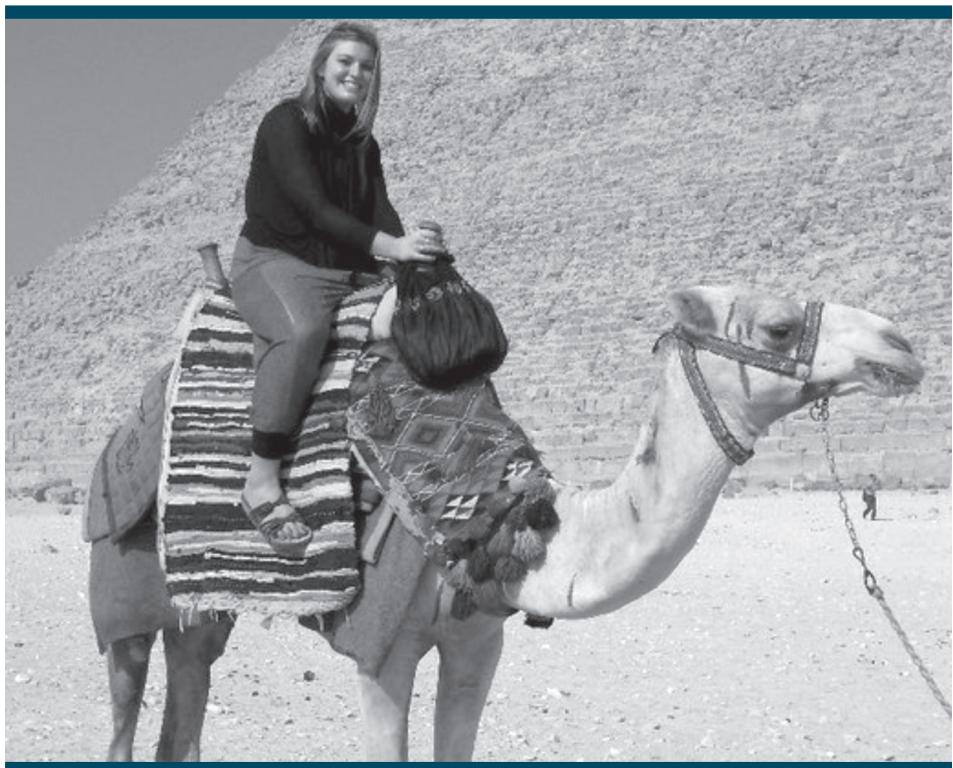
When I first got to Cairo, I was surprised by how busy and vibrant the city was. There were always people out in the street. Anytime of day you could find men sitting outside of coffee shops smoking hookahs, tons of food vendors, donkey carts and people walking around. Everyone was extremely friendly and welcoming. Egyptians loved to practice Arabic with us; they were so excited that we were trying to learn. Just as we were beginning to get used to this new city, the protests began. The protests started on Police Day, January 25th. The staff of our program had expected some protesting, but no one thought it would end up as large as it did. Friday and Saturday of that same week saw even larger protests. The city was given a curfew of 7 p.m. on Friday, then 3 p.m. on Saturday. Although protestors did not comply with the curfew, most people in our neighborhood were off the streets unless they needed to be somewhere. By Sunday morning the neighborhood was dead; the only people on the streets were men from the neighborhood who were out trying to protect the neighborhood from potential looters. I had never seen our neighborhood so empty.

We left Egypt after three weeks and will not be returning. We flew to Turkey and spent a week and a half there. We just arrived in Israel and will most likely be staying here for the remainder of our semester. Although we were also supposed to visit Syria and Jordan, after the events in Egypt, much of the region is unstable. It is disappointing that I will not be returning to Egypt, but I learned more about politics within the Middle East in one week than I

have ever learned about politics in my life. I am proud of the Egyptians for what they are doing. They have been oppressed by an authoritarian government for so long now and they are at last being heard. There has been so little violence throughout all the protests which I think the people should be commended for. Egyptians would come up to us and apologize for the disturbance. What is often not shown on the news is how peaceful much of the protests have been; Christians and Muslims would form circles around each other during times of prayer to protect one another. They would chant things like "Muslims, Christians, we're all Egyptians," signifying a unity that did not seem apparent in the media reports of a recent bombing of a church in Alexandria over New Year's Day. I hope this unity is something that people realize and remember. Many Egyptians said that this is the first time in their lives that they are proud to be Egyptians. I am excited for them as they are beginning to see progress, and am so grateful to have been able to witness the beginning of what they are calling a "revolution."

"I am excited for them as they are beginning to see progress, and am so grateful to have been able to witness the beginning of what they are calling a 'revolution.'"

—Tara Breitsprecher '12



Social Work and China?

By Jane DeBoer '12



Jane DeBoer '12 and her class pose for a class picture.

你们好！我姓狄，叫简洁。我是弥赛亚学院的学生。我学习社会工作专业。我也学习汉语。我去过中国。我很喜欢宗国。

Hello everyone!

My name is Jane DeBoer. I am a Messiah College student. I am majoring in social work. I am also studying Chinese. I have been to China. I like it very much. I would like to go back.

I am currently studying Chinese for my second semester, and as you can see, I am still unable to say very much about myself. You may ask, what does Chinese have to do with social work? To be completely honest, I'm not entirely sure yet.

I have had an interest in China for quite some time, but last summer, I spent a month in China, teaching English to high school students. I have since fallen in love with China and have a strong desire to return there. However, this has raised a lot of questions for me: How does one go about being a social worker in China? Do they have social workers in China? What does this mean for me? How can I be a Christian social worker in China? Is that even possible?

I will be the first to admit that I haven't quite figured out the answers to some of these questions. But in my quest to find these answers, I've learned quite a bit about myself and about the world. For example, I had no idea that there is an entire organization dedicated to social work in China, called the China Association of Social Work, or that there is an academic journal published specifically about social work in China.

My interest in China has sparked in me a desire to take various classes related to Chinese language, culture and religion. At first, I thought that these classes would simply be my "fun" elective classes; however, they have been very enriching for me as a future social worker, as a student and just as a person. I have realized that I have a strong interest in religion and spirituality and cross-cultural issues. I have a greater self-awareness and am developing the skills of cultural competence.

I have no idea where my interest in China will lead me. I have no idea if and when I will return there, or what I would be doing there. I do know, however, that my current experiences will positively affect my future social work practice.

The 7th Annual Ethics Conference

FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2011

9 a.m.–Noon

Hostetter Chapel
Messiah College
Grantham, Pa.

Faith, Ethics and the Helping Professions

Keynote Speakers:
John Lemoncelli, Ed.D.
& Samuel Knapp, Ed.D.

The Messiah College Departments of Psychology, Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice, as well as Philhaven Behavioral Healthcare Services have joined together to co-host a half-day ethics conference for both professionals in counseling fields and lay counselors wanting to explore ethical issues related to addressing religious issues in therapy. This conference is approved for continuing education units in the ethics category for various disciplines.

For more information, please visit the ethics conference website at messiah.edu/departments/socio/swconference.html.

Senior highlights

Name	Field placement and responsibilities	Plans after graduation
Ashley Anderson	Grandma Cares Partnership Program (G.C.C.P) Chiang Mai, Thailand <p>Currently, I am teaching English three days a week to grades one through six. Throughout the rest of the week, I am working on a fundraising project involving canisters. The canisters will be sent into schools around Chiang Mai to raise money for our "Adopt an Orphan" program. In April, I will construct a life skills training class/workshop with another volunteer on issues of HIV/AIDS, drugs, alcohol and other significant issues that impact the daily lives of the Thai children. The program we develop will ultimately be used in welfare facilities, delinquent centers and so forth. Furthermore, I am also constructing a new website for GCCP.</p>	Unsure
Kelsie Boyd	YWCA of Greater Harrisburg (Housing and Homelessness Services Department) <p>I work in the Housing and Homelessness Services department where I lead life skills classes for residents, interview homeless women for housing opportunities at the YWCA and conduct intake interviews for our 30-day emergency shelter. I also have a small caseload of my own.</p>	I plan to use my experiences both at the YWCA and my internship during the summer of 2010 at United Way of the Capital Region for my career upon graduation. I really enjoy working with the homeless population, as well as the community-level side of social work, so these are things I will look for as far as employment after graduation. I plan to attend graduate school possibly at the Baltimore School of Social Work starting in the fall of 2012.
Bev Donahue	Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth	I am not graduating in May; however, after this semester is over, I will be moving to New York to finish my last semester before getting my degree. There are so many professions in this field to choose from and I have not chosen yet, however eventually I would like to work with an agency that empowers underrepresented populations.
Kyle Galer	PA Treatment and Healing	I do not have an exact plan after graduation, but I do plan on following Christ to the best of my ability. Currently, I am not sure where this is going to lead me. I know that wherever God takes me I will be finding Jesus in the poor and the broken. I am excited to see God's plan for me and ready for him to start pushing me outside my comfort level.
Amanda Nissley	Interfaith Shelter of Harrisburg <p>The Interfaith Shelter of Harrisburg is a 30 day crisis shelter for homeless families. During a family's stay at the shelter, they work on accomplishing their goals, which usually include finding housing and finding a job.</p>	I currently do not have any plans after graduation.
Laura Lea Peschka	Rajanagarindra Institute of Child Development Chiang Mai, Thailand	At this point, I have no idea what my future plans will be, but I am waiting for God to open the right door.



SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

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INTERDEPENDENT

news from the Messiah College
social work program

Little red trucks and bright orange robes

By Ruth Berta '11

It's a typical weekday afternoon in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and I pile into a little red truck with about nine other students to head off to our internships. I arrive at my location with four other friends and wave goodbye to the other students going to teach English at an elementary school. I cross the busy street and see the sign for "Wat Suan Dok." This is the temple where a large Buddhist University is located. As we enter the classroom we're helping in today, we catch the eyes of about 25 monks clothed in bright orange robes and huge smiles. As usual, I become very aware of my gender as all Buddhist monks in Thailand are males. I choose a chair, always being cautious of its location as monks are not permitted to touch women, and I wouldn't want to cause anyone to stumble! After listening to a presentation on sociology in heavily-accented English, I head downstairs to a shady patio where I am greeted by a few more monks, eager

to talk to us foreigners who are now more like friends.

It is in these conversations with unlikely friends that I feel a connection like no other to someone who is not even allowed to touch me. I have learned a lot at Messiah about how my Christian faith connects to my social work practice. One day, however, sitting on that shady patio talking to a Buddhist monk who also planned to become a social worker, I came to the realization that any faith can influence one's decision to practice social work. Everyone's looking to change the world, not just Christians, and my heart rejoices that others are working to decrease the suffering of those around them. I have no idea where God will lead me on my journey through life, but I know that social work has taught me to love and help people and that it extends beyond my tiny view of this vast world.



Ruth Berta '11 (left) and Diana Hunn '11 (right) attend a traditional Thai dinner.