



The Advocate

The Newsletter for the MSW Student Organization

October 2000

Rhode Island College School of Social Work www.ric.edu/mswso

...Mid-term time...

Great News for Social Workers!

*From an article entitled "Social Work Jobs Abound" in NASW News, September 2000, volume 45, No. 8
By John V. O'Neill, MSW*

There is a buzz in the social work world that the job market is booming and salaries are moving steadily upward. Some believe there are more jobs than social workers to fill them...

The good news is that opportunities abound in many sections of the country. In California, the market is sizzling, with hundreds of unfilled openings in child welfare, mental health, and other fields. The Los Angeles area alone has about 1,000 openings in child welfare, many that pay in the high 30s or 40s to start, said Janlee Wong, executive director of the NASW's California chapter. Some counties are offering signing bonuses, like those given athletes, though far more modest.

"Perhaps the need for social workers is the greatest since the 1970s, when the War on Poverty and birth of many social service programs created many more jobs than there were social workers to fill them," said Leon Ginsberg, professor of social work at the University of South Carolina, who has studied employment issues. "Graduates have had no significant problem finding jobs in several years," said Tim Colenback, assistant dean of social work at the University of Michigan. "Those who choose social work as a career path can be confident of finding employment. For students, it means more selectivity on the market," stated Frank Baskind, dean at Virginia Commonwealth University.

"Starting salaries have gone up, some by more than \$5,000 in a few years," said Wilma Peebles-Wilkins, dean at Boston University. She cited a survey of 1999 graduates showing mean starting salaries of \$30,000 to \$32,000 for clinical graduates and \$32,000 to \$34,000 for macro graduates, up from the mid to high 20s as recently as 1997.

But there are thorns among the roses, say educators and practitioners. In some places there is still competition for social work jobs and lower wages, especially in mental health. These include areas where some of the highest rated schools are, like Ann Arbor, Michigan and Austin, Texas, where graduates cluster after graduation... Salaries, though improving, are still low for the level of education required as compared to other fields that social workers or aspiring social workers can choose...

Some social work jobs go begging because social workers won't do the work for what government entities and not-for-profit agencies are willing to pay... "In Massachusetts, we still have trouble influencing and getting new MSWs to take jobs at departments of social services," said Peebles-Wilkins. She blamed the reluctance on the poor pay scale compared to the education required, saying people with any bachelor's degree often make as much money... *continued on back page*

□ MSWSO Officers □

Dianne Corbin, *President* Mary De Ruosi *Vice President* Pauline Carlson *co-Treasurer* Deborah Forcelli *co-Treasurer*
Michael Pay *co-Secretary* Sarah Holmander *co-Secretary* Randy Oftedahl *Newsletter editor* Nancy Gewirtz, *Faculty Advisor*



Student Representatives Needed

MSW student representatives needed to attend monthly faculty meetings. The schedule is as follows: Tuesday, November 14, 2000, Tuesday, December 5, 2000, Tuesday, February 6, 2001, Tuesday, March 20, 2001, Tuesday, April 10, 2001, Wednesday, May 16, 2001. Two student representatives per meeting are needed.

All meetings are from 12:00pm-3:00pm in the School of Social Work classroom. Student participation during these meetings will be 1 to 2 hours maximum. You need only sign up for one day, unless you are interested in participating in more than one meeting...

This is a great opportunity to find out, first hand, what's happening behind the scenes of the School of Social Work. Participate in discussions with faculty regarding the new curriculum, field placement news, the Evaluation Standards Survey, and more! **Let your voice be heard!**

Please contact Dianne Corbin or Mary De Rousi for more information.

Note: you do not have to be a member of the

Upcoming Meetings

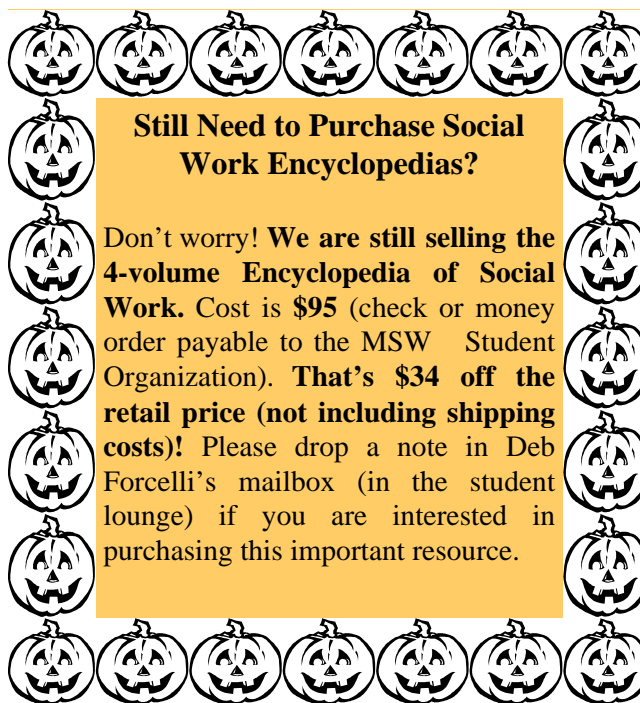
According to responses received, the best day/time for the majority of students to attend MSWSO meetings is on Thursdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Therefore, the meeting schedule for the remainder of 2000 will be as follows:

Thursday, October 12th, 7-8 p.m.

Thursday, November 9th, 7-8 p.m.

Thursday, December 14th, 7-8 p.m.

All meetings are held at the School of Social Work classroom



Still Need to Purchase Social Work Encyclopedias?

Don't worry! We are still selling the **4-volume Encyclopedia of Social Work**. Cost is \$95 (check or money order payable to the MSW Student Organization). **That's \$34 off the retail price (not including shipping costs)!** Please drop a note in Deb Forcelli's mailbox (in the student lounge) if you are interested in purchasing this important resource.

Internet Resources

Don't forget to check out these important resources on the 'Net:

The New Social Worker

<http://www.socialworker.com>

The magazine for social work students has numerous links to social work information on the web.

The Poverty Institute at Rhode Island College School of Social Work

<http://www.povertyinstitute.org>

The latest from our own activist network...including a top-notch news service on poverty-related information

The MSW Student Organization – of course!

<http://www.ric.edu/mswso>

The Advocate is in full-color online!

Check it out at

<http://www.ric.edu/mswso/advocate>



OUTSIDE EVENTS is an opportunity to post information on off-campus activities of interest to MSW students. Drop off your items in the MSWSO mailbox.

THE SOCIAL WELFARE ACTION ALLIANCE (SWAA) formerly The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society announces its **ANNUAL CONFERENCE** Co-Sponsored by The Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Temple University School for Social Administration, The Underground Railroad and Temple Depot **June 29 - July 1, 2001** at The School for Social Administration, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA For more information and to receive future mailings, call or e-mail: Jennifer C. Jones, MSW at (215) 413-2197; jjen70@hotmail.com . Or Laura Rodgers, MSW at (609) 494-3678; lrodgers@csionline.net

From the NASW News (October 2000):

NASW Rhode Island Chapter Executive Director Kate Coyne-McCoy staged a demonstration in front of the offices of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Rhode Island to demand that the insurance company return its \$29 million surplus to consumers. Coyne-McCoy was quoted in the Providence Journal as saying, "Our families are paying too much money for too little health care, while Blue Cross executives are doing the backstroke in a pool of surplus cash."

Blue Cross and Blue Shield reported \$73 million in losses from 1996 to 1998, and CEO Ronald Battista said the company needed the surplus to make up for these losses.

Coyne-McCoy attempted to hand-deliver a letter to Battista demanding that the company lower premiums and expand health care coverage.

All MSW students are encouraged to submit items for OUTSIDE EVENTS or SOUND OFF to the
Advocate.



Why Social Workers Should Care About the 'Democracy Gap'

The story reprinted on the front page of this newsletter paints an upbeat picture of our prospects as social workers. It seems the "booming economy" has finally trickled down even to non-profit service providers. We *have* to be thankful that all our work toward our MSW degrees will not be in vain!

For social workers this is a bittersweet victory, of course. Does this mean the Powers That Be are finally freeing up resources to meet existing human needs? Or does it reflect rising social needs that are not being addressed by our proclaimed 'prosperity'?

There should be vigorous public discussions – especially in an election year – about where we are as a people and where we want to be as a nation. While competing candidates nit-pick about minutia (or worse – celebrate their consensus!), the facts that over 40 million Americans still lack health insurance, the poverty rate among children remains among the highest in western democracies, and that most eligible voters *do not even turn up* at general elections are conspicuously absent from the discussions.

Projects like the Democracy Compact hope to invigorate voter participation, but the lowest voter turnout of any affluent democratic nation indicates the problem is deeper than the usual excuses of voter apathy, complacency, or "satisfaction with the status quo." When citizens become so disgusted by the quality of the political "choices" they are given that they choose not to participate, there is something very wrong with the selection process. When American voters *feel* that big money influence has made their voices irrelevant, their voices really *are* irrelevant – and political leaders act accordingly.

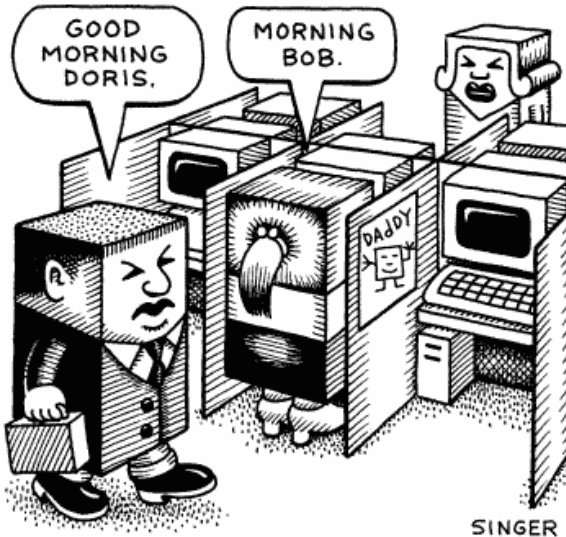
As Phil Akiens and I were petitioning for the Nader campaign at a carnival in Woonsocket in August, one woman's response pretty much summed up the problem. "I don't vote," she responded contemptuously, as though I had insulted her character by implying that she would. Social workers responsibility to empower clients cannot be limited just to resolution of their personal problems. We must also find ways to encourage the civic participation and "social empowerment" that is the only measurable indication that we really do live in a democratic society.

Ignoring this 'democracy gap' would be a tragic way to build social work's future.

-Randy Oftedahl

Cartoon Commentary

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED PEOPLE (FOR MAXIMUM SPATIAL EFFICIENCY)



Reprinted from The Funny Times / PO Box 18530 / Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
phone: (216) 371-8600 / e-mail: ft@funnytimes.com

Speaking Plainly

I was working with a 5 year old boy who I'll call Tommy. After attending a "coed" birthday party, Tommy asked me if boys are smarter than girls, he had been told this by another boy at the party. Being the good SW that I am, I explained to Tommy that boys and girls are both smart, that gender does not make you smarter or dumber than anyone else. I expanded on this topic a little more and Tommy seemed to understand. Tommy then asked, "Who's Gender? was she at the party too?" The moral, use language the client can understand.

-From "Social Work Jokes,"
<http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/~prentice/swjokes.html>

Your ideas, feedback, and comments are always WELCOME!!

Send us your comments on **The Advocate**, MSWSO, or life as an MSW Student. Contact an MSWSO officer, or send e-mail to our Newsletter Coordinator at randy@oftedahl.com and/or put a note in the MSWSO mailbox (located in the School of Social Work building, 2nd floor, across from faculty mailboxes)

-Good News (from Page 1)

A number of factors are leading to an increase in social work jobs, said Ginsberg. Social workers need to be creative in finding where the best opportunities are. "There is a constant demand in child welfare and aging because there is a growing population that produces more children than before, and the increase in the aging population is tremendous," said Ginsberg. Those who know the mental health industry are in demand. Those who know how to run computers and can read and understand audits have possibilities in development, management, and evaluation...A particular growth area will be in service delivery systems that target the aging.

There are emerging opportunities in addition to traditional social work, said NASW's Clark. New areas include genetics counseling, outpatient social work practice in physicians' offices, employee assistance programs, hospice, end-of-life work, and geriatrics."

"If you're a bilingual, culturally competent social worker, you can virtually write your own ticket," said Wong.

Social work wages will remain low until policymakers and the public come to believe that social work is valuable, say educators. Allen-Meares of Michigan hired a director of external relations to work on the problem. "We are trying to translate how the work of our students and faculty research impact on the quality of life in the state," she said. "It is our effort to increase the visibility of the profession to multiple audiences—policymakers, taxpayers, foundations, federal agencies, and the lay community."

How's the MSW program going?

Any comments, questions, complaints, unexpressed feelings of exuberance, etc.?

*Share them with your colleagues in
The Advocate*

Remember:

**The MSWSO is
YOUR
organization!!**

**Get
Involved!!**

