

We continue to be impressed, but not surprised, by the dedication and commitment of Mercyhurst College graduates to making such positive contributions to their community in a vast array of ways. It brings to mind the Robert F. Kennedy quote: *“Let no one be discouraged by the belief there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world’s ills – against misery and ignorance, injustice, and violence ... Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.”* Your contributions are significant and create a rippling effect that results in positive change.

A special thanks to Jay Breneman for writing the feature article. And, as always, many thanks to all of you who help to keep this alumni e-newsletter going—even if we don’t hear from you every year. (We did hit over 60 responses again this year with what I would consider minimal harassing.)

FEATURE ARTICLE by Jay Breneman

All too often, it is easy to see the negative things facing our lives and our communities. Even with the already challenging circumstances facing our country, the lives and loved ones affected by poverty and illness is sadly even starker. Compounding this, is the relative ease of anonymity or shared helplessness, originating in the contrasting thrust *from* a model of citizenship *to* a model of benefit consumer or provider. Because of such things, it can be difficult to discover or leverage what is good inside and among us. Rarely are our inherent strengths or positive capacity reflected upon in first thought. Some may say that we define ourselves by how much turmoil or struggle we endure, with special kudos given to those that endure the most, yet maintain a greater semblance of normalcy. Elevating such difficulties to such a core prominence can never provide the fullness or truth one's life story deserves.

Sometimes we get so caught up in national politics, 24-hour news cycles, elections, or clashing ideologies, that our community and our neighbors are ignored. Yes, policies in the capital do affect our lives, but rarely do we exercise *our own* inherent ability to affect our communities, and be local change agents. In their seminal work "The Abundant Community," John McKnight and Peter Block discuss how the concept of *charity* is somewhat belittling, in that the term represents a scenario where one says, "you need me, and you have nothing but gratitude to offer in return." Instead, McKnight and Block prescribe (a) kindness, rooted in love and respect; (b) generosity, an offer on its own merits, rooted out of abundance without exchange; (c) cooperation, rooted in the recognition that for one to win, the other must win. Interestingly enough, all of these elements are central to the role of citizenship, a term itself defined by action and interaction, not just merely voting or doing our jobs.

If we really want to make a dent in the structures that confine our lives and communities in a powerless cycle of detached ownership or responsibility, then we must deny the definition of charity or one-way service. To truly win, as citizens, as communities, and as a country, we must win together.

ALUMNI UPDATES (While the majority of alumni on the email list are social work majors, fortunately we also have a some social welfare minors and sociology majors who contribute. If you have an email addresses(s) for anyone who didn't send an update this year please send me their current email address—I have scads of emails requesting updates bounce back due to changed address.

Nicki Ambrogi (2010)

Everything has been well with me. I'm still in the process of looking for a Social Work job. I've had a few temporary jobs along the way to hold me over. I am hoping to work soon, so I can earn money for graduate school. I may consider taking my licensing exam as there may be more job options until I go to back to school. Catherine and I might study for it together, as I get together with her every once in a while. I joined a local Kiwanis group (service organization), and I have been doing projects with them. Some projects we have done include serving dinner in a nearby homeless shelter once a month, and hosting a pancake breakfast at Christmas and Easter. We also help out with the city fair in the summer and have meeting twice a month! I really enjoy it even though, I am the youngest member in the group by far. Most members are in their 60's and 70's. Not only am I the youngest member of our group, I am the youngest member in the region! I am also still volunteering at a nearby hospital once a week, where I have been for about two and a half years. Once again, I am one of the youngest volunteers on Tuesday's. I've really enjoyed volunteering and doing projects with Kiwanis!

Barb Anthony (Bartoszek) (2003)

2011 was a trying year for our family, but a very joyous one as well. May 2011 brought about some unexpected medical issues for my husband around the same time as our second son, Samuel, was born. I may not currently be in the workforce to witness how resilient others are, but I was able to see how resilient my children are and how resilient our family unit could be in the times of serious and unexpected trials. I think we're all a little stronger than we think we are, when we have to be. I am still able to stay at home with my two boys' full time. Admittedly, I always skim the job openings in the area and peek around to see what I want to do when I get back into it. We're still in the Cleveland area and happy to be near family. We are enjoying being part of the Baldwin Wallace family as well and are so thankful that Adam works with such a great group of people at a great school. Happy 2012!

Marisol Arce (2012)

Not much going on this year. I am not working at the Erie Family Center. I am however going to take civil service test and seek a job at OCY. I am also planning on obtaining a Masters Degree in Special Education (bilingual/bicultural education).

Carla Balzer (2001)

Hello fellow Mercyhurst Alum! Hope the holiday season (and winter for you Northerners) has been a good one for everyone! Nothing too eventful going on in my world. Despite last year's claim to seek a new job (with a different company), I found myself accepting an Account Manager position with my current employer of 8+ years. I'm essentially doing the same thing but making more money, so I can't really complain, except that the job requires more travel. At the beginning of October, my fiancé Jason and I purchased a home in northern Lewisville, TX.

We're enjoying being homeowners and I'm already dreaming of remodeling my kitchen (and bathroom...and adding a pool to the back yard). Tentative wedding date set for September 2012, just waiting for the church to confirm the date for us.

Just in case anyone is interested (healthcare issues have always been my focus), there has been a lot of news buzz regarding radiation exposure, especially after x-ray scanners started showing up at airports. My company designed a radiation calculator that helps you figure out how much radiation you've been exposed to (we've even created a free app for your iPhone/Pad). Here's the link to the calculator on the internet: <http://www.niahealthcare.com/consumer-education/radiation-calculator.aspx> It's interesting to see how you stack up to the national average.

Carl Baniszewski (2000)

Carl is still working for the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance in Worcester, MA as the HMIS Training Coordinator and Data Enhancement Manager. He was recently elected to serve on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Chapter of NASW and began a three year term in October, 2011.

Valerie Beall (2003)

I have 4 great kids, 19, 9, 6, and 3. I was working as a medical social worker at Presque Isle Medical Group but resigned and am currently unemployed by choice to work on some medical issues. I still volunteer a lot with Stairways and Sarah Reed. And, I just was accepted into the Master's Program at Case Western.

Nicolle Bellmore Pierse (2004)

2011 was full of significant changes for me professionally. After a very difficult year at work I made the decision to resign my position as Executive Director of Family Promise of Lorain County. I have enrolled back in school full-time and am pursuing my teaching license in 7th-12th grade social studies. I am also considering completing the necessary coursework to become a guidance counselor. I am working a part-time job for Horizon Activities Centers developing pre-school programming for the Elyria School District with the hope of giving all 3 and 4 year olds the opportunity to participate in a quality pre-school program in order to be kindergarten ready. (Nicolle was also just hired as an adjunct sociology teacher at Miami Jacobs Career College). Because I'm not very good at only working part-time I am also a Jeweler for Premier Designs! Never thought I would be selling jewelry with a Masters Degree in Social Work!! It was certainly a scary undertaking to make such a dramatic career change but I think I'm headed in the right direction!

My girls Hailley (5) and Ellizabeth (2) are doing well. They are full of personality and I delight in watching them explore the world--even if they sometimes drive me crazy in the process!!

Traci Bender (2006)

I have been working at Gateway-Longview, Inc in Buffalo for 3 1/2 years now. I was promoted from Preventive Services Caseworker to Supervisor of Preventive Services and Therapeutic Visitation Services in January 2011. I supervise two programs and a total of 16 employees. Due to the new position I have had many new roles, responsibilities, and challenges this past year. I am very thankful for the opportunity. I moved to my own 2 bedroom apartment in Orchard Park, NY in May 2011. I have really enjoyed the experience of independence having my own place and space provides. I was blessed with the opportunity to take a 2 week cruise with my family in

August 2011 to visit Ireland, Scotland, Norway, England, Iceland, and Demark. I became a certified foster parent in September 2011. I plan to begin providing temporary respite care for children and eventually care for a full time foster child! I am excited and waiting in anticipation for my first placement!

Joe Betz (2005)

Joe Betz ('05) is living with his wife Kristin in Boston, MA. They just bought their first house over the summer in Dorchester, MA where they both work. Joe is currently trying to fake his way through home repairs as he acquires power tools to make himself feel way more useful than he actually is to the house or Kristin. Joe teaches religion and assists the music program at Boston College High School. Kristin teaches 1st grade at Neighborhood House Charter School. Joe is excited to still be involved in the Big Brother Big Sister program that he started with in college and has just been matched with a new "little" brother from Dorchester. He is also beginning classes for his Master's Degree in Education degree at Boston College. Kristin is in her 9th year of teaching and will soon sit for her National Board Teacher Certification; She actually knows what she is doing compared to Joe, who just looks good trying. They hope to add a big dog to the mix this summer.

Kelly Bragan (2005)

Hi everyone! I hope everybody had a great holiday season! It's hard to believe that 2011 is over and 2012 is here. I graduated last spring from Cleveland State University school of social work with my masters. I am currently working part time at Westbay Care & Rehabilitation Center and part at bed bath & beyond. I recently applied for a full time position at the Wade Park VA medical center where I did my internship during my masters program. In regards to my personal life I am currently dating a wonderful guy named Andy whose sister attended Mercyhurst & who also introduced us to each other. I hope everyone has a wonderful 2012 filled with many good things.

Amanda Jo Briggs (Davis) (2004)

Life has been busy! We have spent the last year getting settled into new careers and me into a new city/state. 2011 was a year of many ups and downs, but each one has taught us another life lesson. Particularly sad was the death of Preston's grandmother just before the holidays. It caught us all by surprise, but has also reminded all of us how important it is to be together as family as much as possible. Preston and I enjoyed a Christmas vacation in Jamaica and have started the house hunting process now that we've decide to stay in Colorado for a bit. We are looking forward to 2012 and the opportunities ahead of us both personally and professionally. I am still working as the Counselor/Transition Planner at Pikes Peak Hospice and Palliative Care Inpatient Unit here in Colorado Springs. I love every second of my job and am truly blessed to be able to utilize both my Social Work and Legal education. Preston continues to work at El Pomar which has opened many opportunities for us. I am hoping to make several trips back East this year and we are planning a trip to Germany where Preston's brother is playing hockey. We hope 2012 is a year of fun and many blessings for all of you!

Jay Breneman (2010)

My wife, Jamie, and I were blessed to welcome our first child, Elijah, born on June 17th. We are so thrilled to share the gift of life, and the joys he has brought us over the past 7 months. I am learning that parenthood cannot be described accurately until it's experienced!

When graduating last spring, I really had no idea where my desire for macro social work would take me. I had been accepted into Case Western's MSSA program (their version of an MSW) concentrating in Community and Social Development... which most of the faculty and students there have no clear understanding of it practice-wise, because it's such a hodgepodge of work, and lacks the uniform recognition that micro social work enjoys... but I've committed to the "community social worker" identity, and feel it's just as appropriate and precise as "school social worker" etc...

Even though my graduate program is in Cleveland, they (and mega-big thanks to Dr. Lewis) allowed me to complete my 12 months of fieldwork right here in Erie, with the countywide poverty collaboration Erie Together. I have met so many great leaders and community members, and everyone's excitement and desire for change is palpable and infectious. Thanks to my fieldwork, and bolstered by an excellent graduate program, I have gained a clear understanding of my professional future (of course with some room for adjustments along the way).

I truly believe that, thanks to the Mercyhurst Social Work Program, that I have a 'leg up' that my fellow MSSA-candidates may not... particularly with the small class size, critical thought, broad exploration, and enthusiastic faculty and fellow students that Mercyhurst SW alums should be proud of.

I look forward to continued, interesting, and challenging work ahead, that I feel life—and Social Work--is taking me, and am excited to serve Erie County in any creative and impactful way.

Robyn Colbert (Mast) (2005)

Hi all!! I can finally say that I have some news in my life!!! My husband and I just had our first child on November 13thBraden Neil. It has been such a wonderful/ amazing experience and I absolutely love being a mom! We are definitely still working on the sleep patterns , but it's totally worth it and he'll get it right soon---I can feel it!!! haha. Jason and I are learning together every day, and I think right now Braden is teaching us more than we are teaching him!!! I am lucky to get to take a 3 month maternity leave. I still work at West Hills Health and Rehabilitation, a nursing home in Coraopolis, PA. I truly love it and they are allowing me to only come back 1 day a week. It will be perfect for me!! I am very fortunate to be able to stay at home but still keep up with my social work position even if it's just one day a week! Jason is still teaching 8th grade science, coaching basketball, and he's very involved with school activities!! We feel super blessed this year and are enjoying every minute with our new little one! I hope everyone had a great holiday and I always look forward to reading all the updates!!

Sarah DiPlacido (Kingery) (2005)

My husband and I moved back to Erie in August of 2010 after graduating from Asbury Theological Seminary. My husband is the children and youth director at Asbury United Methodist Church. I looked for a job when we first moved but ended up not finding one, I only wanted to work part time since we were expecting our first child. Our daughter Rose Beth DiPlacido was born on 3/17/11. My job as of right now is a stay at home mom. I love being home with Rose and am so glad that I get to watch her every day! For the time being I plan to

stay home but in the future I hope to work again. One final exciting bit of news is that my husband and I just bought our first home, We plan to stay in the area and will be moving west of Erie to Fairview by the end of February.

Lauren Eastman (2008)

I am currently living in Rochester, NY. I moved back home to Rochester in August of 2009, after I completed my Bachelor's degree at Mercyhurst. I have been working on the Child and Adolescent Inpatient Psychiatric floor at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Strong Memorial Hospital, for 2+ years. I work with children ages 5-18. We have the capacity to hold up to 22 patients at one time. We are an acute stabilization unit and many of the patients that we see suffer from acute suicidal ideation, severe depression, bipolar disorder, emotional disorders, and attachment disorders, just to name a few. In addition to working as a Psychiatric Technician on the inpatient floor, I am also a Licensed Massage Therapist. I completed a 1,000 hour program in NYS to become certified as a Massage Therapist in June 2011. In order to receive my license, I sat for the NYS board exam in August of 2011. I received my license mid September and am now working out of a Spa and just recently opened my own private practice within an already established wellness center. My hope is to gain my own clientele so that I am able to practice more frequently. For now, I am located in Rochester, NY but am hoping to relocate soon. I am undecided about location (hoping to be Colorado or somewhere out West) but will not limit myself! I am interested in expanding my life, my practice, and want to gain more knowledge of the world around me. I hope all is well in everyone else's life! Light, Love, and Peace.

Kathleen Epler (Opresko) (2000)

I continue to work at Caron treatment Centers in Wernersville PA as a Recovery Care Specialist II. The end of January I will be sitting for my LSW, please wish me luck.

It took 11 years to decide to sit for it, the time is near. My husband Mario and I continue to enjoy married life and vacationed this past October in Sonoma California. The views are breathtaking and the trees in the Redwood Forest are unlike anything you have ever seen. We completed our trip with a few days in the beautiful city of San Francisco. Wishing Everyone Well in 2012!

Michelle Forney (2006)

Happy New Year Everyone! I'm still living in the D.C. metro area with my sister. I graduated in 2010 with my MSW from the University of Maryland and after working random jobs and searching for a full time position for a year I finally found one. I was hired this summer at a local child welfare services department in Maryland. My job has two parts involving macro and clinic work, so I like the mix. I work as their data manager, dealing with county and state reports about child welfare, compiling statistics for the agency, and other requests for child welfare data. The clinical component involves working with the foster and adoptive parent services unit licensing people to become foster parents. So I work on the home studies and interviews and such. It's been quite a learning experience, especially with the data piece. It's good though to finally have a full time job in the social work field! Also, since my job is all about data I have to include this website that just came out, the child welfare policy database....if anyone is in child welfare or is interested in statistics, policy and the financial piece of child welfare this website is

a good resource. It was developed by the Casey foundation and presents all this information nationwide but also breaks it up per state.

<http://www.childwelfarepolicy.org/>

Anyway, I hope everyone is doing well and has had a good start to the new year!

Kara Gerko (White) (2002)

My husband and I moved to CA in 2009 for a job opportunity for him. Since moving to CA, I have worked at two foster care agencies as a case manager and also a supervisor for foster care workers and currently still write adoption home studies as a contract worker. Since December 2010, I have worked at the local hospital as a medical social worker, specifically on the oncology floor. The newest update is that my husband and I just had our first child, Vivienne Ruth. She was born December 31st and we are overjoyed! Overall, we are healthy, happy and looking forward to what 2012 brings.

Kaela Geschke (2007)

This past August I moved to Chicago to attend Loyola University. As part of a program for former Jesuit Volunteers I am volunteering and living in community again while I work to complete my Masters in Community Development and Social Change. My days are spent at an all-female Catholic High School which provides scholarships to low-income students. There I am the Community Service & Outreach Coordinator and a first year teacher of World Religions.

Jennette Gurto (Perkins) (2010)

Currently, I am attending George Mason University's MSW program, specifically direct practice. I graduate from the advance standing program in May 2012. I am doing my internship at Alexandria, Virginia's Community Service Board working specifically with older adults who have a mental illness. I do both case management and supportive counseling with six clients. I am also expecting my first child in June 2012.

Jackie Jackson (2008)

I can't believe it's been 3 and half years since Mercyhurst! I started a new job about 8 months ago as a clinical social worker for therapeutic foster care. I work for New Directions Youth and Family Services in Amherst, NY. It has been a challenging yet rewarding position. I work with children who have experienced a great deal of trauma. I provide counseling, case management, supervise visitation, work with birth families, and facilitate trainings for foster parents, permanency planning along with much more. I am also still waitressing on the weekends. I live in South Wales, NY about 30 min south of Buffalo with my boyfriend Jake :) Hope everyone is doing well! Reunion in Erie would be fun!

Alyssa Katerberg (2011)

After graduating I went home for most the summer then moved back to Erie where I got a job as an intake specialist at Erie County Office of Children and Youth. It is a really good learning experience. I am looking into graduate school for next year.

Autumn Keller (2006)

Well I do have some pretty big updates. Well first off we moved in August from Shadyside in the City of Pittsburgh to rural Washington County to be closer to my fiancés law firm. He had a

huge commute every day and it was getting to be a bit much. I was working at Resolve Crisis Network doing mental health county mobile crisis. When we moved I took a position as a supports coordinator at an agency called Family Links. I carry a caseload of about 55 clients all of which are MR. It is a very safe job with normal hours so it was a good move for me. I do miss the excitement of mental health crisis intervention but this is a better fit. :) The big news for me though is I am getting married! We are tying the knot in Key West on Jan 27th of this month. I am really excited and cannot wait to start this new chapter of my life. Also we are expecting! I am due July 3rd and we will be able to find out the sex of the baby right before we leave for Key West so it is a really exciting time. I can't believe I am going to be a mom! I need to catch up with Becca and Meg and get some pointers. Hope this email finds you well and if you are ever in Pittsburgh please let me know I would love to see you. xoxoxo!

Fatima Kelly (Pereira) (2001)

Happy New Year Everyone!! I am currently not working and I put my Ph.D. on hold to focus on the most amazing thing in my life.... My daughter. Vidalia Payton was born on March 25, 2011, and I am enjoying motherhood (lack of sleep and all). My biggest projects at this time revolve around Vidalia learning to stand and walk, figuring out how to remove whichever toy she stuck in the VCR and DVD player (lol), and planning her first birthday tea party which is proving to be more fun than I could have predicted. I attached a picture of my bundle of joy. I hope everyone is doing well.

Mary Kohler (1999)

I have transferred from the Harborcreek Youth Services Multisystemic Program to the Wagner residential unit as the Clinical Therapist. I am learning even more in this new role on the therapeutic technique that is needed in all environments.

Megan Kyle (Busch) (2006)

2011 has been an amazing year full of changes for me! My husband, Zak & I welcomed our sweet little girl, Jane Kathleen Kyle to the world on March 13, 2011. She is a very active and happy baby. She has surprised us from the very beginning. We were so sure that we were having a brown eyed, big baby boy. Jane is a petite little girl with bright blue eyes (you just never know when those recessive genes will kick in!). We have truly been blessed. Of course with a new little one comes a lot of adjustments for us. I am still working full-time as a high school youth minister at St. Peter Chanel Catholic Church in Roswell, GA. I can hardly believe I've been there 5 and half years now. It has been a wonderful place to work and they have been so accommodating. They have allowed me to work part-time from home and part-time in the office. I couldn't ask for a better situation. This has allowed us to have a nanny come to our home on the days that I am in the office.

Professionally speaking, our youth group has grown significantly over the past two years. We are dedicated to not only fostering the teen's faith life, but also serving others. We do a variety of service projects throughout the year. We have done everything from visiting local nursing homes to raising money for wells in Africa. Our teens have such a passion for helping others and we are always looking for new ways to serve those in need. If any of you guys ever need help with something you are working on please let me know! We have a very large parish and like I said our teens are always willing to help. For example on one Sunday this fall our teens

collected over \$700 worth of diapers, \$700+ in spare change and over 200 additional baby supplies- including cribs & car seats to donate to a local crisis pregnancy center. Anyways, I hope to catch up with you all soon. I miss you all and hope to get back to Mercyhurst one of these days for a visit.... hopefully to see you all in person!!!

Michelle Lander (Piaggese) (2005)

I had a very exciting year in 2011, first and foremost because I got married! I married Jason Lander on July 8th who I met while I was at Mercyhurst. The wedding went beautifully and I had SO much fun. We took our honeymoon to Hawaii and visited Maui and Kauai. I have never experienced such beautiful places in my life. We went zip-lining and biked down a volcano! I am still working in a high school in Pittsburgh. This is the second year in my current school district. I think I will probably be here for a very long time. I recently became sponsor of our Interact club, and the club is going to be volunteering at Pittsburgh's empty bowls event in March. Anyone who graduated in 2005 will know that Empty Bowls is a great event! ;) I hope all is well with everyone else!

Colleen Lanigan (2007)

Well I am still living in Erie (North East actually) and working as an admissions counselor at Mercyhurst North East. Last January, I started my MSW at the University at Buffalo, and I am looking forward to graduating this coming August. The nice thing about this program is that it's part time, many of the classes are online, and it has allowed me to continue to work full time. I am currently interning at the Mercyhurst College counseling Center 2 days a week, under the supervision of Michelle Tobin. She's the best, and I am really learning a lot from this experience! I am hoping that getting my MSW gets me back into the social work world, and hopefully out of the Erie area to someplace warm (no offense to Erie). No other life news to report... just looking forward to being done with graduate school and excited to see where this leads me! Hope all is well with everyone else!

Kimberly Masterton (2011)

Since graduating in May I accepted an assistant coaching position at Nazareth College in Rochester, for their women's lacrosse team. I have more recently accepted a job being a child care aide also in Rochester, where i will be working with kids ages one to six. Although I ultimately want to make a career from working with the elderly, this job is what works best for me at this time. I plan on going to grad school within the next year or so, hopefully getting my masters in Social Work at Nazareth College. For the Social Work Seniors enjoy the time you have with your classmates and professors because when you graduate you will realize how special they were to you in helping you through your classes and internships.

Catherine Mathews (2010)

Social work student involvement in the greater community has been ever important, as economic hardships seem to be very widespread. My graduation date from the Master's of Social Work Program at Cleveland State University is on May 12, 2012. I began my graduate program at Goodrich Gannett Neighborhood Center working on behalf of children with behavioral and academic performance problems to build social, emotional, and intellectual capacities. As a community advocate, I have spent time at Senior Citizen Resources, Inc., which serves the needs of low-income elders through congregate and home-delivered meals programming and co-

orchestrated the Senior Olympics for counties in Ohio. I implemented the Oral Life Histories Project with the Old Brooklyn Historical Society and a fundraiser in collaboration with local Old Brooklyn businesses and nearby agencies.

I also actively worked with the Cleveland Foundation towards grant research in areas of aging and at-risk population needs assessments.

Currently, at Spring Hill Villa Apartments, I serve the role of a broker linking health care systems and community and/or geriatric referrals to low-income elderly, persons with physical and developmental disabilities, and individuals with mental illnesses. My involvement in the Old Brooklyn community provides me with an opportunity to become a part of Connect Your Community internet, jobs, and computer trainings as well. I look forward to seeking employment in geriatric avenues upon graduation.

Rachel Meeks (2008)

Things have been going really well in Cleveland! I am still working for Berea Children's Home and Family Services as an Early Childhood Therapist and Incredible Years treatment group and classroom teacher. My case work continues to be exciting and challenging. I recently have taken on a couple of really interesting cases focusing on attachment and failure to thrive. We are always looking for talented new therapists at Berea Children's home so if you are looking for work in Early Childhood just send me an email.

On a personal note, the end of the year has been an exciting one! Dave asked me to marry him on December 26th while we were on a small vacation! We are looking forward to a fun year ahead full of planning and family! Hope all is well!

Beatriz Miranda (2011)

I am the Community Manager for the American Cancer Society in Savannah Georgia. I organize Relay for Life in Effingham and Liberty County and build relationships to develop Relays in SCAD and at Savannah State. I am really enjoying my job, it's very versatile and doesn't always tie me down to office all the time.

Maribeth Moks (2008)

Since my last update- I was let go after eleven years of service from my employer and have been collecting unemployment ever since. It has actually been one of the biggest blessings going through this process of filing for anything from scholarships for my daughter to waiting up to 3 hours to be seen by one of the caseworkers at DPW. This process has been an eye-opener and has made me truly appreciate the little things I over-looked or just down right took for granted before. Still on the pursuit for employment but am a big believer that God will, like any other time, place me in the spot I need to be. As far as my personal life, my daughter is turning 14 next week and her only request is finally to get a Facebook account :) Kurt and I have set our wedding date for July 6, 2013 :)

Conor Monaghan (2011)

Life is good I am working at the Crisis Center and learning a ton every day. I really am enjoying it. Life out of school is great because I do not have to do any homework or worry about tests. Instead I get to help people every day and a lot of days really make a difference.

Jennifer Mongenel (Manieri) (2001)

This past year has been one of great joy for me & my family. We welcomed our son Jordan to our family! It has been so great to see Jordan & his sister, Gianna change & grow throughout the year. On top of raising a family I continue to work in the social work field. I am still working as a school based therapist for a local agency. This past year I learned a great deal by being asked to work out of my comfort zone which was working with Elementary school students to also working with middle school & high school students. It has been a great experience & I have learned so much. I hope that all of you are doing well. My advice to those that are just starting off or asked to try something new, don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone you'll find that if you do you will grow so much.

Christina Ohmer (2001)

I moved back to Erie (my hometown) in May 2011 after the end of a long term relationship. I worked at a garden center upon my return "home" which was truly lovely. Recently I started working at Pulakos Chocolates learning just about all aspects of the business from making confectionaries to working the chocolate line to building spreadsheets and doing inventory. I'm continuing to explore the chocolate/confectionary/baking field (while perhaps eating a bit too much chocolate if that's a possibility!). I've also had the pleasure of reconnecting with Laura who has been a great source of support during this stormy season of my life.

Lilly Parker (2010)

I am currently living in Greensboro, NC. I love it here! I am working as a nanny for a 6-month-old boy and 22-month-old girl full-time and also work at a server at Print Works Bistro at the Proximity Hotel. I love it there-- Obama stayed with us last month when he visited the area. Definitely put my study skills to the test when in training we had to memorize the 70 wines by the glass. UNCG has an MSW program and also a Gerontology certificate that I am looking into. I'm still very interested and passionate about pursuing my MSW but for now it's a matter of time, money, and ah- the GRE.

Erik Penn (2009)

I have been keeping busy working for The Adoption Exchange as the Colorado Post-Adoption Resource Center's Project Coordinator. The Adoption Exchange was awarded a grant to provide post-adoption services to the state of Colorado as part of a federal to state initiative to keep adoptive families from dissolution. I work to coordinate the programs main programs such as family funding grants, support group and mental health professional coordination, and our lending library program. We also offer classes and trainings as well as pre-adoption counseling and coordinate and refer families to other local services. My focus right now is actually not only on maintaining this programs but I've been doing a lot of restructuring of positions and tasks to make our program more efficient and introduce new projects. We actually have an opening right now for one of Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters through the Dave Thomas Foundation in case you know of anyone in the area who would like to help children find their forever families. I recently got engaged to Nadine Beres and I'm really excited about that! I think that's about all that's new going on in my world.

Melanie Peters (2008)

Hey everyone! I hope all of the alumni are doing well. This year has been one of change (but in a good way)! I took an educational leave from my previous employer at the Children's Aid Society (Child protection) in May 2011. I am currently enrolled in the full-time Advanced Standing MSW program at University at Buffalo. My placement is at Pathstone Mental Health, which is an organization that services *all* of Niagara (Ontario) for children with mental health needs. The program that I am specifically assigned to is their STOP (Sexual Treatment Outpatient) Program. I complete treatment and counseling for kids aged 12-18 years old that have sexually offended against others in the community when treatment may be mandated or as a recommendation to reduce re-offending in the future. There is a lot of collaboration with the local authorities and families. I expect to graduate in May 2012 so we will see how things pan out after this! On a personal note, my boyfriend, Nick, and I bought our first house (a real "handyman's dream") in December and have a Bernese Mountain dog puppy scurrying about.

Alicia Peterson (2010)

I hope everyone had a great holiday and a Happy New Year with family and friends. I am currently working for a non-profit organization called Communities in Schools in Jacksonville, FL. Throughout the 2010-2011 school year I completed an AmeriCorps term with them as a reading tutor in an inner-city elementary school. This past August the agency hired me full time as a Student Advocate in their middle school program called Achievers for Life. I have 75 6th grade students on my caseload and I am responsible for tracking their attendance, grades, and disciplinary referrals. I meet with students individually and in small groups to work on academic and life skills. I work closely with teachers and staff to promote the students success both in and out of the classroom. The Achievers for Life program also staffs full time Family Advocates who work closely with the parents to keep them engaged and connected to their child and to the school. Together as a team we host family nights and do various events to promote student success and family engagement. I've been on a huge learning curve since I started working with students in Jacksonville. The family and school cultures are so different from Erie/Buffalo. I really am enjoying my position and I know it is going to be a great stepping stone for my career in social work. In the next year I am planning on going back to school to get my MSW from Florida State. There is a distance learning program where FSU professors teach courses at a Jacksonville campus (FSU's main campus is in Tallahassee--about 2 hrs away from Jacksonville). It may be a slow process, but I really have the itch to get back to the classroom and continue learning, especially that I have some real experience!

Besides my job, I'm LOVING Florida! Highs in low 70's in January--can't beat it! And on a side note I'm running in my first half marathon on Feb 12th!! Since graduating from Mercyhurst and realizing that my body needed a permanent break from rowing, I started running and playing soccer again. Life is good in the South! Looking forward to hearing what others are doing!

Becca Piechocki (2006)

Things are going great on my end. I am currently working on my MSW at Marywood University at Scranton, PA through the CWEL program. I'm on educational leave from Bradford Co Children and Youth. I will be graduating this May. My field placement is at It takes a village, inc. (ITAV) who is contracted with the county for family group decision making conferencing. My big field project has been getting FGDM implemented into the schools truancy elimination plan protocol. It's been going really well. We have been able to get truancy under control in some school districts by being actively involved with the students and including their natural

support system to develop a plan of how the child will attend school, daily. Amazing what can happen with strengths based practice!

My BIG news is that I was blessed with a baby girl, Hannah Kay, this past July. She is a healthy, happy, beautiful blond hair and big blue eye baby girl :) Her Daddy and I are engaged and moved into a beautiful house a few months ago.

Beth Piotrowicz (2001)

I hope this year is going well for everyone so far:) I won't even ask about resolutions, we're constantly in flux, so that to me is a mute point. But on the other hand it is a time to reflect, and this, as always, is a great time to catch up and see what is new (or not so new) with everyone. On my end, I have just marked my 1 year at the Cleveland Clinic. In September, I changed from heart transplant to Kidney transplant and liking this much better. I have continued instructing an on-line class once a semester for Cleveland State; Functional Performance of Older Adults (fall) and Palliative Care (spring and summer). In addition, continuing the counseling at a nursing home. Full plate as always but something has to pay those private student loans..and it's certainly not 1 social work job. Despite all that, I do have a life and enjoy it. Hope all is well with everyone; can't wait to hear what everyone has been up to.

Frank Rodriguez (2003)

I am still a BCM at Stairways and counselor at Perseus House. I am also approaching my 8th year coaching baseball at Mercyhurst Prep. Hope all is well.

Aaron Rowe (2005)

Hope all is well! No new major changes going on with me. I'm still working for Community Resources for Independence. I'm the Home and Community Based Services Supervisor for our Allentown, PA office. I've been in the Allentown office for just about 2 years now. One cool new thing is that about 6 months ago I was voted by an 80+ member coalition called "The Partnership for a Disability Friendly Community" to be part of the steering committee getting the coalition up and running. It's a group whose goal is to use resources from area agencies, community leaders, advocates and people living with disabilities to make the Lehigh Valley part of PA better accessible, understanding and "friendly". With this and my full time job at CRI I do not have much free time but in the spring I am going to take some time off and a buddy and I are going to start hiking the Appalachian trail beginning in Maine. So at this point I'm trying to work ahead so I can do it as stress free as possible. Again hope all is well with you and at the Hurst.

Mia Sanner (Amatangelo) (2007)

Hi, everyone! 2011 really was a great year! Starting with how I am using my social work degree, I continue to work my butt off at two jobs. I work full time in Millcreek Township School District, at Grandview Elementary School as a special education assistant, in an emotional support classroom. In the evenings, I work as a community and home TSS through the Achievement Center. Fortunately, working for Millcreek has its benefits. They will pay for me to go back to school. Beginning in January, I will be heading out to Edinboro University to obtain a Master's Degree in Elementary School Counseling... something I am both excited and nervous about, but know it's what my next step needs to be, professionally. Personally, Aaron and I got married in June (at Mercyhurst), and of course Hillary was in the

wedding :) We bought a house in Erie, and have had a lot of fun turning it into our first little home. No kids, yet. If you see my mom, make sure you tell her that... she doesn't really hear me if I tell her :) Once I am done with school and get settled into a career, we will start working on that. But, for now, life really is great, and I continue to take it one day at a time! As always, I can't wait to hear from everyone else. I hope all is well, and that everyone had an amazing holiday!

Leatrice Schoolcraft (2010)

I have been employed with the Erie County Office of Children & Youth for four months now as an Ongoing Caseworker. I live with two fellow grads, Conor & Alyssa. Still single with no children. Looking to apply to graduate school within the next year (looking at Case Western and Columbia) :)

Christine Somera (2008)

I wish I had more exciting things to report since last year's newsletter, but not too much has changed for me. I did graduate with my MSW in June, which was very exciting and relieving! Since then I have been searching for that one career opportunity to get me going. I have been in communication with a few agencies in hopes to begin my work as a child and family therapist. Since completing my graduate internship with a therapeutic preschool and working with many foster children, I strengthened my professional goals to work with children and families, maybe even dabble in the adoption realm someday. I'm also hoping that as soon as I begin working I can start my process toward licensure, which can open many other opportunities for me. The job front has improved with the start of the year, but the Portland economy is still a tad slow. I returned to my pre-grad school job with a public school and have been doing some substituting in the elementary schools. I'm still an avid member of my masters swim team and enjoying that hobby as often as possible! Hope everyone is doing well and the Hurst's SW program keeps growing!!

Erin Schultz (2001)

Hi everyone. So, I had my second daughter in July and decided to quit my job as a CPS worker and stay at home. My husband's job requires us to travel and we just moved to New York City for the next six months. So far the city has been exciting, though I could do without the crazy drivers and high prices on everything, but it is an adventure. Being a stay at home mom has been interesting, every day my children find a way to surprise me...sometimes good, sometimes bad! Just joined the YMCA, which is great for me to get in shape and for the kids to go to daycare:) Hope this finds everyone well, Happy New Year!

Angela Schumerth (2009)

I am currently living and working in a small city in southern Ecuador as a Peace Corps volunteer. I have been here for a year and a half now as a Youth & Families Special Needs volunteer. My placement is with a special needs school of about 60 kids. It has been a struggle for many reasons. I came with next to no special needs experience and was matched with a school that at first was requesting a volunteer to work with the parents on themes such as nutrition education, but when I got to site it became clear that they really wanted another teacher and did not have the time to work with me on developing new projects. So this year I am co-teaching in a classroom of about 6 pretty severely handicapped teenage and pre-teen boys. The

diagnoses vary, but most of them are nonverbal and often aggressive. It has been a very intense learning experience for me as both my co-worker and I came young and inexperienced. It has been frustrating, to see how misunderstandings between the school and the parents generally only harm the kids, to learn how few safety nets Ecuador has for people with disabilities and families in poverty (which describes the majority of families in the school), and to become aware of all my own personal flaws. Language and culture has also been a barrier, but this year I am much more confident maneuvering this than I was last year. I have been disappointed that the projects I began planning last year never went anywhere, but I have been a part of a lot of cool things going on here with other volunteers, and I know the lessons I am learning are invaluable. I should be back in the States toward the end of this summer coming up, but I am still unsure what I will be doing when I get back.

Nicole Seelbach (2004)

I am still working at OCY (8 ½ years later!) although am no longer working on the front lines. Last January I accepted the shelter liaison position, and now assist in facilitating placements for children in shelters/residential treatment facilities/group homes etc; amongst many other duties I am also training new employees on the Agency's drug and alcohol policy, programs, methods of testing, and treatment facilities

On September 22, 2011 my husband and I welcomed our little man, Gino Robert Lombardozzi, who weighed in at 9lb 3oz and 22inches (and was taken early because he was so big!) He is the best thing that has happened to us and we absolutely LOVE being parents. I took 3 ½ months off for maternity leave and just returned back on 1/3/11 – which was one of the worst days of my life!! We can't wait to watch our little man grow and learn new things every day.

Julie Smith (2007)

Still in grad school. Grad date December 2013 with 30 clinical credits from Widener, 30 from current program: Temple University - both Harrisburg schools, with Health and Mental Health Managements and Planning. The clinical was concentrated in IDD over mg/Mr approaches in human services, they had a Certification Program there. I've been involves and active in SWAA Social welfare action alliance -Widener and BOB beyond our borders - TUH...

I'm also a lifetime girl scout still with Girl Scouts in the Heart of Pa ; formerly Hemlock Girls Scout Council and lifetime member of HyP+ Hbg young professionals where I volunteer w social committee and OUTREACH, where we ate getting ready to teach "financial literacy" to 4 5 &6 graders at The Neighborhood Center inner city Hbg. Is basic banking and age appropriate which I took a major part in planning.. family is healthy and life is good.

Christine Spikes (2000)

Hello everyone. I am still working (10 1/2 yrs) for a prevention of child abuse agency which recently merged with the Cleveland Domestic Violence Center. The merged agency is now known as the Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center. I continue to provide individual and family counseling for children, teens, and adults who have experienced trauma and teach 3 parenting classes. This April I will finally be able to say that I too am a parent. I am expecting a baby boy this spring, my friends refer to him as my little prince since my office is completely decorated in Disney Princess decor. I also bought a house this summer in a suburb of Cleveland and I am just enjoying life. Wishing everyone a Magical year.

Sonia Spore Moore (2010)

This last year has definitely been a busy one for me and my family! I am still at GECAC and still love my "participants" and my coworkers. The state has made many many changes which have really made care managing for the Waiver program much more difficult. My supervisors liked my assessment skills enough to quickly move me into a new position. I now do more "opens" to services for the program. I carry a smaller case load to keep up on all of the changes that are implemented as well. It is definitely interesting. I always thought that I was flexible before, but this job has really stretched the meaning of being flexible. Every day is different, and when you make plans, you might as well plan on changing them.

My other big news for the year is that I was married to Lee Moore on June 14th, 2011 and my daughter, Megan, was married on 11-11-11.

Mary Teonchuk (Beck) 2003

Professionally, I am still working at Lakewood Senior Health Campus as the Director of Admissions and Marketing and just recently took on my old job as the Director of Social Work as well. Holy cow am I BUSY! But I would not change it for the world! I love what I do....except for the marketing part, but even that has grown on me:)

On a personal note, we recently welcomed our second child to this crazy world....Lilly Therese in August. She is just perfect and already has my husband wrapped around her finger:) Lil George will be turning 3 in April and loves being a big brother! It was definitely an adjustment for us all to add to the family.....especially Lil George. I was able to get back into running soon after Lilly was born and I currently training for my 3rd half marathon in February. Hope everyone had a blessed holiday and Happy New Year to all!

Josie Tiberio (2004)

This past year nothing is new. My new goal though is to try and get a new full-time job hopefully in the medical sales field. I hope to combine my medical social work experience with my part-time furniture sales experience. Hopefully next year I will be reporting that I am in a new position making lots more \$\$\$ living somewhere fabulous!

Ashley Trevana (2006)

Happy 2012 - I also hope that this email is finding all of you well!

Hmm...as I sit in my office and stare out the window at all of this snow - I can't help but to be reminded of all the winters I spent in Erie trudging to class (I truly do miss those days). As for the present, I'm finally coming into my own as an adult in this world - as a person and as a professional. Within the past year, I've moved in with my boyfriend, and started a new job. My boyfriend, Doug - has a daughter with autism, whom we have with us 50% of the time. Her name is Katie, and she truly is a joy!

My newest job (I've job hopped a couple of times within the past few years) - is at Washington Communities MH/MR, a non-profit mental health clinic. I'm currently working on the children's unit as the Intake Coordinator - which basically means that the kids come in, I do an assessment, then I refer them for services whether it be in house, or somewhere else within the community. I also take crisis calls as well. It's definitely a change of pace for me - as I'm so used to doing in home services, and working out of my car. But this job is great - I have an office, I'm learning a ton, and I love the people that I work with. So I think this one is a keeper.

I'm also working on becoming licensed in the state of PA. Unfortunately, we don't have an LPC at Washington Communities to do my supervision. So I literally had to hire an LPC from a neighboring agency to do my supervision hours. It stinks having to pay for supervision - but it will definitely be worth it in the long run.

All in all, life is treating me well, and I'm beginning to realize how lucky I am to have such amazing friends/family in my life. I know that a couple of my fellow 2006'ers have had some pretty significant changes in their lives as of late as well! I miss you ALL and can't wait to read the news letter :)

Amber Vance (2001)

I graduated from the University of the Cumberland in May 2011 with my Masters of Arts in Teaching Elementary Education. This year I am subbing in several local elementary schools while job hunting. I absolutely love it! As a bonus, I get to apply my social work skills in the classroom, which is always helpful. I also enjoy spending time with my daughter Hannah who will be seven in a few weeks!

Jodi Waldron (Prichard) (2003)

Well since our last update a lot has changed in my life. My husband, Brian and I moved from Burlington, VT to Providence, RI. In June Brian started a second year of pharmacy residency, specializing in oncology. About a month after we moved, we welcomed our first child - Brady Kellan Waldron. I have been enjoying my new job of stay-at-home mom. I am planning to get back to work part-time or per diem once we figure out what the next year will bring (possibly another move?). Until then I am feeling very blessed to be spending my days with my little one.

Zachary Walters (2006)

My life has not changed much since last year, I still work as a drug and tobacco interventionist for middle and high school students in the Los Angeles area. Also, I now work as a Link Crew Coordinator at my high school, helping incoming freshman acclimate. Last year I married my college sweetheart Heather Huesdash and we just celebrated our one year anniversary in October.

Maggie Wilkins (2006)

Hello Everyone!! I hope everyone had an amazing 2011 and will have an even better 2012! Let me see where did I leave off last time. I had applied for a supervisor position within my agency (which I did not get due to someone with 10 years of supervisory experience getting it- so it was pretty understandable). I have recently applied for another supervisor position that I am very hopeful and excited about. It would be over the TDM (Team Decision Making) unit. The purpose of the unit is to place the children taken into agency custody within the least restrictive placement possible, and also to link the child(ren)/family to needed resources. I am keeping my fingers crossed & hope to hear something soon!

Otherwise things are going very well; I will have been with the agency (Summit County Children Services) for three years in February. The agency recently completed its first year with our Alternative Response unit (which I am a part of). I am happy to say it has so far been a huge success, and I look forward to the program continuing to grow. Also in February I will have completed all my needed LISW supervision hours! So I will turn those in and have my LISW at which point I plan to start practicing on the weekends, doing individual therapy with teenagers.

2011 was a great year for me, I got two sisters (in-law) J Who are wonderful and I am so happy/proud to have them be a part of our family. I also purchased a beautiful home in the town I am from in Ohio this past year. I look forward to what 2012 has to offer me within my personal and professional life. I will be an aunt (of a baby boy) in June!! So there is a lot of excitement within the Wilkins family. I hope everyone is well and I wish everyone a wonderful, healthy 2012! My dog and I are continuing to enjoy our new home and our thankful for all that we have!

Kristen Yakawiak (2002)

After two long years of graduate school, and many, many, many papers, I graduated in May 2011 from Syracuse University with my Master's in Social Work with my concentration in Individual, Families, and Groups. I did my field placement through The Salvation Army and was fortunate enough to land a job with them after graduation as a Functional Family Therapist. I traveled to Denver, Colorado on two different occasions to become trained in the model. Unfortunately, after about six months of employment, I realized clinical social work was not where my heart was, but rather case management was what I wanted to do. Therefore, I left and took a position with Elmcrest Children's Center working in their Bridges to Health program. This program was just created in 2009, so is still pretty new but is rapidly growing on a daily basis. I am a Health Care Integrator, working with children and adolescents in foster care. They have to either have a developmental disability, serious emotional disturbance, or are medically fragile. It has been a positive experience thus far and Elmcrest is a fantastic agency to work for with plenty of room for advancement. I hope everyone else is doing well and has a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2012!!!

Katie Zinn (2008)

Things are going well and nothing major happening on my end. I work full time at the Cleveland Clinic as an inpatient social worker on a transplant specialty unit. I work with liver kidney pancreas face and intestinal organ transplants. I also deal with general liver kidney and stomach issues. I see a lot of pain seekers, drug abusers, home safety nightmares, mental health issues, financial difficulties, and coping issues. I also get my fair share of wonderful patients who just need someone to talk too! Social workers are also doing discharge planning so if a patient needs to go to a skilled nursing facility or home care I am arranging that which is a learning experience but going well!

FACULTY UPDATES

Peggy Black

This past year has been hectic but productive. Reaccreditation efforts consumed most of the year, which included the site visit in April and successful accreditation notification in October. I have a new appreciation for this process and I now know that 8 years is too soon to have to repeat the experience! Last spring and this fall included interviewing candidates to add a new position in the Social Work/Sociology department. We have hired a young Social Work PhD candidate from Albania: Bora Pajo. She will join our faculty in the Fall 2012. She has a strong sociology background and we look forward to her energy and enthusiasm! I am writing this while on sabbatical for the winter term. I am researching the impact of gambling casinos on older adults, restructuring my social work intro and practice classes, and furthering the research

on social justice curriculum in BSW programs Laura and I began last spring. I enjoy not having the rigors of the classroom, but miss the students...I'll be back in March 2012! Our family is doing well; both boys are managing their careers successfully. We had a great family vacation last July in Maine (Southwest Harbor – Acadia National Park) and will take another trip together to Florida this Spring! I am content! May 2012 be a blessed and happy year for all.

Laura Lewis

The years really do go by faster the older I get—yikes. On one hand 2011 seems like little more than a flash, and yet upon reflecting it was quite full and quite rewarding. Dr. Black successfully brought the program through the arduous and time consuming reaccreditation process. And, as she mentioned we have a third full-time faculty member coming on board this next fall which is very exciting. We have some excellent adjuncts who have added tremendously to the program and they will continue in their role after we become a three person department. Enrollment in the program still ebbs and flows but this year we have 22 students in the junior class alone which is the largest since I began teaching at Mercyhurst almost 14 years ago.

I am still very involved in Erie Together, a community driven initiative with the aspiration of *Working Together to make the Erie region a community of opportunity where everyone has the opportunity to learn, work, and thrive.* It entails so much of what social work is all about. I think I included the website link last year but will do so again. Thanks to Jay Breneman, it has received a major face lift, www.erietogether.org. A couple other endeavors, outside of teaching, I am involved in are: the research Peg mentioned in which we are assessing how effectively accredited BSW programs prepare students to be change agents in regard to poverty; and, a book project. The book will be a compilation of case studies about challenging social issues faced in urban America. Dr. Ripley and I have written several case studies already that we have used in our team-taught Urbanology course but have many more to research and write about for our contract with Pearson Publishing Company. Housing, Immigration, Sprawl, Eminent Domain, Gangs and Education are some examples of cases.

The very out of the ordinary experience I am about to embark on is traveling to Ireland for spring term with 28 other Mercyhurst College students, three of whom are Social Work students. Dungarvan is Erie's sister city. Mercyhurst College has developed a relationship with city officials and this will be the third year Mercyhurst College students will spend spring term there. The Social Work students are going to complete internships at a youth center in Dungarvan.

On a personal note—it was great to have both Jack and Katie with us in Erie over the holidays. And, they are both going to be able to get away and join us in Ireland for about ten days!

Mandy Fauble

"The really happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery when on a detour"-- unknown

My life took quite a joyful detour over the last couple of years, and there are some major updates. These wonders have included the birth of a third child, Chloe, who is now two. Big brother Bryce and Big Sister Reid are both dutiful and doting. Following this, my full time job at Safe Harbor Behavioral Health allowed me to pursue a dream of completing an RFP to start a Crisis Residential Unit. The unit opened in May of 2011 and it serves as a hospital diversion unit and respite for those in crisis. Something that I love about working Crisis has been the ability to

help provide opportunities to Mercyhurst students and grads. In our crisis program alone we have close to ten undergraduates working and/or interning with us, and there are at least four alumni working there at the Bachelor level! *As a side note, there's just no doubt that Mercyhurst students are the **best!***

The most unexpected thing happened in December, when a longtime administrator at Safe Harbor resigned. At this time, I was asked to take over as a Vice President of Clinical Operations, so, now I am overseeing all of our programs. I'm still adjusting to the newness of the job. At the same time, I work with such great people, it's been pretty smooth.

I am now in my eighth season at Mercyhurst (wow) and I continue to be grateful to have the experience of working in this environment. My warmest sentiments to all of you, who have helped the program be as strong as it is and who have created the collegial culture we all enjoy.