

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! Our reaction is the same year after year as we read your updates -- WOW! We continue to be gratified by the impact being made in such a wide variety of settings by so many outstanding individuals we have had the opportunity to work with. You continue to change the world in small and big ways, and it is great to be able to share what many of you (we hit over sixty updates again) are up to. A special thanks to Erik Penn for writing the feature article.

Feature Article: The Difficulty of Mission Drift by Erik Penn

As social workers we are drawn to help others, and to organizations that facilitate us meeting this goal. So, it was surprising to me when I began working for a local non-profit assisting families and found that the most difficult part of my job was not the clients or their stories but rather my organization's own internal struggle with mission drift. Mission drift is the propensity to deviate from your organization's main driving goal to pursue other programs or services, often as a result of the agency/organization pursuing additional money.

Through the compromise of pursuing agendas that are not mission driven organizations too often sacrifice providing quality services to clients in a timely fashion. The damage that mission drift can cause an organization can have far reaching and long lasting ramifications that, if not addressed can have serious implications for the health of the organization and its ability to perform its original mission.

There are a number of warning signs of mission drift. A high turnover rate in employees can be a sign. Employees who joined the agency because they believed in the mission and get blindsided by the politics of the organization chasing money may become frustrated and choose to move on. Another sign of mission drift can be key staff questioning the non-profit's reason for existing, or expressing frustration at the inability of the organization to allow for creativity, or increase effectiveness. When a core group of individuals, usually board members, volunteers, or donors, push the organization into a direction that is not consistent with the mission that is a red flag.

I have experienced many if not all of these signs and the influence of third parties has not only caused a drift in our mission but ethical dilemmas between staff who work with families and provide services, and donors and volunteers who would appear to exploit their relationship with the organization, and with their ability to front sizable donations to curve the intentions of the organization toward their desires.

It is important in these situations to be an advocate for your clients and to uphold the social work ethics in the face of these dilemmas. I am still surprised by the number of times my organization's management has come to me and asked me to compromise my ethics by putting the organization's desire for money ahead of the organization's reason for existing. Time and time again we will have donors that ask us to do a pet project or develop a new program that

takes time and energy away from our programs serving families and children. Even through this pressure it is important to fight for the needs and the dignity of our clients and for the organization's principles in the face of overwhelming demands that financial pressures can bring.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Nicki Ambrogi (2010)

Hi everyone! I hope you all have been enjoying your holiday! I've been working part time (about 4-5 days a week) since February as a cashier at a local grocery store that sells all natural, local, and organic products. We are owned by a nonprofit that helps people with disabilities find and maintain employment. People come into our store to work as trainees and work on skills needed for the workforce. It is such a great company to work for! Many of our trainees have landed jobs! I'm hoping to inquire about possible full time positions where I can work more one on one with the trainees since I have a Social Work degree. My goal is to save money for grad school. Other than that, I still volunteer as a patient transporter and errand runner at a nearby hospital where I've been at for over 3 years. Even though I do not go as often as I used to now that I'm working, I still try to go as often as I can. I also still do service projects with my Kiwanis group. I look forward to hearing from all of you!

Alyssa Andrews (2012)

I am doing really well actually. I am currently looking at grad schools and applied to a few schools for their online Master's program. But currently I am working as a Narcotics Treatment Specialist at Esper Treatment Center. I work with a population that is addicted to heroin, pain pills, opiates, things of that nature. I do counseling sessions, and I just started helping with running groups focusing on the disease concept. I am trying to look at other D&A programs and pulling components from various studies to help explain the disease concept to my patients. I have a case load of 33 and love every single aspect of my job really. The patients reach me a lot and I continue to learn a lot in the field. After I get my masters I am looking at Maryland for D&A treatment and plan to open a halfway house with specific treatment for opiate addiction. Personally I have just as much going on, I just moved into an apart with Rachel in the beginning of December and in February my nephew is turning one year old. Also in February I have another little nephew who is due. So that will make me a proud aunt to two boys, I can't wait for it all!

Barb Anthony (Bartoszek) 2003

2012 has been a trying year. In review, there seem to be more tough times than not, but I'm using this update as a way to find the good in the bad; the light in the dark. Personally, our family has mostly been focused on getting healthy and undergoing scheduled surgeries in order to do that. Thankfully, health and a good quality of life is on the horizon. We have our two wonderful boys who are growing beautifully and becoming more amazing each day. Professionally, I experienced a group interview for the first time and couldn't help but think of Laura, Peg, and Carl the whole time. It is for a possible part time position and I'm not sure how it will shake out, but we'll see. It was nice to be back in a room with others 'talking shop', if you will. Any of my 2003's going to reunion weekend?

Carl Baniszewski (2000)

We're still in Worcester, MA. I'm working for the City of Newton, MA as a Community Development Planner. This involves oversight of federal funds like CDBG, ESG and the HUD Continuum of Care and working with many social service providers. Just started in August...so far, so good...there was a big learning curve but every day it seems to get easier and the picture becomes clearer. Nancy is working for the Visiting Nurse Association as a hospice chaplain. It's part time and is a good fit for her. Hard work but she has some powerful stories.

Nicolle Bellmore Pierse (2004)

I am currently leading a kindergarten readiness initiative in Elyria, Ohio known as Ready Set Go...to Kindergarten. The goal of the initiative is to increase the quality of early childhood education programs in Elyria in order to prepare children for kindergarten. It is a unique initiative because the school district has partnered with us on it and has made a real commitment to early childhood education. We currently have sixteen different providers who have agreed to the MOU and are working towards quality improvement measures. I'm enjoying the opportunity to do some very important work in a much less stressful setting than at the shelter I was running. It is also quite nice to have one supervisor to report to instead of a board of directors! Feel free to check out our website www.readyssetgotoday.org I am also teaching part-time at Miami Jacobs Career College. I teach sociology and career development and LOVE it! Never would have thought I would have gone from hating public speaking to teaching! Since I enjoy this work so much I have also returned to school and am working on a master's degree in adult education. Eventually I would like to work in adult education full-time. And since I have so much free time, I also have a job as an authorized Disney vacation planner---this is purely for fun and I really enjoy putting my organizational skills to work! Plus I get to earn some extra money for our own trips since our favorite family vacations are to Walt Disney World.

My girls are six (Hailley) and three (Elizabeth) now. Hailley started kindergarten this fall and is loving every minute of it; she is also in Girl Scouts and due to a shortage of troop leaders I get to lead her troop. Elizabeth is in pre-school and has decided that she is the boss there. We also added a new baby to the family---the furry kind, a very cute rescue kitty that the girls named Cleo to go with the Figaro we already had.

Traci Bender (2006)

Last February, I began taking a 16 year old girl named Faith twice a month for respite weekends in my home. I had become a certified foster parent a few months previous, with the intention of taking babies and young children into my home on a temporary and emergency basis. Faith had been living at a residential placement for the past 2 years. Faith had made so much progress in treatment that she made the decision not to return to the unsupportive and unhealthy environment that existed with her family. In April 2012, I was asked to take Faith into my care fulltime. As her Family Court date was fast approaching, I was faced with one of the most significant choices in my life. I knew my carefree single life would be changed forever if I took on the responsibility of a 16yr old girl. But, Faith had so much potential. I knew I would regret the decision for the rest of my life if I didn't at least try to give her a second chance. Faith moved into my home a few weeks later. My past eight months have been filled with coming into work late, leaving work early, missed happy hours and parties with friends, laughs, tears, driving lessons, shopping, scheduling, cancelations, teaching manners, and open houses, missed buses,

attitudes, anger, visitations, transporting, boyfriends, break ups, girlfriends, girl fights, goal setting, goal achieving, counseling appointments, medical appointments, braces, homework, learning “please”, first holiday celebrations, dance lessons, job applications, road trips, first restaurant experiences, failed driving tests, birthdays, purchasing of a car, piercings, hair dying, a tattoo, college applications and college acceptance! Challenges continue to arise but Faith remains and is doing wonderful!

I also have been the Supervisor of Preventive Services at Gateway-Longview in Buffalo for two years. I supervise the Traditional Preventive, Kinship Preventive Services and Therapeutic Supervised Visitation Services. Due to the success of these programs my agency received a new grant for an Intensive Preventive Services Program that I will be assisting to initiate in 2013!

Joe Betz (2005)

I am still teaching theology at Boston College High School and loving it. I also help with the music program and I am the varsity ultimate Frisbee head coach (yes, we have a varsity team). I am a big brother to a young man in Dorchester, MA where my wife and I live and my "little" and I hang out pretty often. Still working on my master of education degree at Boston College and should be done in 1-2 years. The newest addition to our family arrived two months ago: Cleveland, a boxer/American Bulldog rescue from our local shelter. Life is good! Hope everyone is well.

Kelly Bragan (2005)

Happy New Year to everybody! I hope everybody enjoyed the holidays. After leaving St. Augustine Manor due to budgetary issues, I have been busy looking for a new job. I have several interviews lined up in the area! I have been off my feet for the past couple of weeks due to tripping on a step and twisting my ankle. I am in a new wonderful relationship and we have been dating for about a year and a half. Hope everyone has a blessed New Year!

Jay Breneman (2011)

Greetings fellow social work alums! This past years has been quite busy, but quite rewarding. Our son, Elijah, is now 19mos old and his near 100% percentile for his height. We are truly blessed for his presence, his health, and of course the opportunity to watch him grow and learn. He definitely helps me keep perspective on the important things in life.

In August I graduated from Case Western’s 12mo MSSA program, with a concentration in macro social work (Community & Social Development). It was tough commuting, but thankfully I was able to complete my 1000+ hours of internship with Dr. Lewis and the regional anti-poverty initiative Erie Together. I learned a great deal about social action, policy, barriers to success, and of course the amazing accomplishments of a determined and willing community. I plan to continue as a volunteer serving with the Veteran Dialogue-to-Action team.

Just as I completed the Master’s program, I was hired part-time at Mercyhurst University as their new Veterans Outreach and Admissions Coordinator, ensuring successful transition, academic completion, and community integration for veterans and their family members who utilize veteran benefits. In December I was hired on full-time for the position. I get to travel to each campus and work with so many exceptional men and women, it is truly uplifting.

This month, I announce my official candidacy for Erie County Council, District 4, representing 49000 people in south east Erie, Wesleyville, and Belle Valley. I have a growing group of enthusiastic supporters, and I am really excited about having an opportunity to engage area citizens and take my educational and professional experiences to county government. My platform is on bringing about a more hands-on and transparent county government, with citizen participation in decision-making and budgeting. I really hope to fine tune my community organizing and facilitation skills to encourage greater civic participation at the local level. Apart from that, I do try to have some downtime, going to parks and events with my wife, Jamie, our son, Eli, and our dog Murphy. I do wish you all the very best, and I hope that 2013 is a bright and rewarding one for you and your loved ones!

Amanda Jo Briggs (Davis) (2004)

We are still living and working in Colorado Springs. It has been an eventful year for the city with the wildfire this summer and the rebuilding that is now in full swing. I just hit the two year mark at Pikes Peak Hospice and Palliative Care and I am enjoying my work more than ever on our Inpatient Unit. Preston just finished his first semester at University Of Colorado's MBA program and continues to work at El Pomar. On a personal note, we are excited to welcome our first child in May! Hope everyone is well!

Carla Brown (Balzer) (2001)

What a busy and fruitful year 2012 has been! I've finally settled into my Account Manager role with my current employer (of almost 10 years) and have spent the past year traveling for business meetings and have sat through many painful meetings discussing how healthcare reform will change our industry. On a personal level, life has been very busy. In September I married the man of my dreams and we're expecting the arrival of our first child in June. Hope everyone had a safe, healthy and happy holiday season and best wishes for 2013.

Rachel Brown (2012)

Shortly after graduation I began working at SafeNet, Erie's Domestic Violence non-profit, in their outreach and nonresidential counseling departments. In my outreach capacity I have had the opportunity to develop outreach materials on non-traditional victims of Domestic Violence, Traumatic Brain Injury and Strangulation, as well as material for the college-age population. As a counselor/advocate I assist in staffing our hotline and have taken on clients who seek ongoing services. In addition, I have joined our 24 hour medical response team, responding Erie hospitals anytime day or night to support victims. Since graduation I have also maintained employment as a per diem mental health aide in Safe Harbor's Crisis Residential Unit.

Carla Burrs (2011)

Well things are going good for me. I'm still working at Mercy Center, head of the drug and alcohol ministry at Greater Calvary, volunteering at Gaudenzia/Shout Outreach, working on HIV advisory board, attending different seminars on mental health, homelessness, and drug & alcohol to learn more and stay on top of new research, policies, and budgets. As always I'm just busy, busy, busy trying to make a difference. Melissa wants me to become part of the client care committee and I think I will. Really want to go to Case Western but don't feel ready yet. I really

enjoy working as a social worker and utilizing everything I learned at Mercyhurst. I feel and others agree I received an excellent education.

Regina Clay (Scagnelli) (2007)

Over the last year I have left the social work field to pursue a career as a nurse aide in a nursing home. I love the field that I am working in, and have found great fulfillment in this new career field. On a personal note, my husband and I have enjoyed traveling, so that has been exciting and relaxing. All in all it has been an uneventful year both professionally and personal. Happy New Year to everyone.

Robyn Colbert (Mast) (2005)

Hi guys!! Hope everyone is doing well!! Not too much new. Our lil boy is 13 months old already!! Time sure does fly!! Christmas was sooo much fun this year and I know that it will just get better every year!! I'm still just working one day a week. Some days I am there 13 or so hours....but it's only one day. I have been at the same nursing home for about 6 1/2 years and now I do all of the Medicaid applications. I still have interaction with the families and the patients/residents, so I really enjoy it. I just love and appreciate staying at home with Braden and being able to watch him grow every day! Being a mom is just the best!!! (ok...I'm definitely tired some days....but nothing can beat hearing him say "Ma Ma"!!) Jason and I are still living in Houston, PA and still have our kitty - Geno. We are hoping for at least another baby....but not quite yet!! I love to hear what everyone has been doing!!! Take Care and Happy New Year!!!

Kate Conochan (2006)

I am currently working as a Chemical Dependency Counselor at an agency in Cleveland - Community Assessment and Treatment Services. I work with clients just being released from the Federal Prison System and also first time offenders that are participating in the Drug Court program. I have been here for 2 years but still work part time at Catholic Charities Parmadale in the foster care/adoption department. I teach foster parent initial and ongoing classes that parents need for certification. I am still living just west of Cleveland in Lakewood and enjoying the last year of my twenties!

Sarah DiPlacido (Kingery) (2005)

I always enjoy reading the newsletter every year! Not much has changed for me this past year. But here is a brief update. My husband and I are enjoying every moment with our daughter Rose who was born in March 2011. We hope to have another baby soon! For the most part I am a stay at home mom but do work a few hours week with Home Instead, as a non-medical caregiver. I love all of the elderly patients that I get to spend time with, it's a very rewarding job. I hope to someday work in a social work setting but wanted to keep doing something with the elderly population that was flexible enough to allow me to stay home with my daughter. We bought a house in Fairview, a little west of Erie last January. It is so nice to have our own house! My husband still works as a children and youth director at Asbury United Methodist Church in Erie. He has started the process to become an ordained United Methodist pastor. I can't think of anything else new or exciting!

Emily Dippold (2005)

I finished my masters at PITT in 2007 and work as a Health Care Coordinator at the Alliance for Infants & Toddlers in Pittsburgh. I am engaged to a City of Pgh firefighter (date to be determined) and we have 2 labs, 10 month old Remy and 5 year old Luke! Happy Holidays!

Lauren Eastman (2009)

In August of 2012, I left my job at the University of Rochester Child and Adolescent Inpatient Psychiatric Unit. I worked there for nearly three years. I learned a great deal about mental illness and how it can permeate not only the lives of those it affects immediately, but also family and friends of those individuals. During my time on the psychiatric unit, I realized that I wanted more for myself, personally and professionally. For a long time, I did not know which direction to take in order to further my education. I thought about nursing, social work, public health, and many other careers. However, after spending so much time in the hospital and with sick patients, I realized that deep down, I wanted to pursue a career in medicine.

Since I was a young girl, I wanted to be a pediatrician. Like many others, I talked myself out of the medical school route due to time constraints and financial burdens. However, I realized that in my heart, I would not feel completely satisfied if I did not pursue this path. I felt a calling and realized immediately that I needed to follow it. So I did!

I applied to a few post-baccalaureate premedical programs in the states. Since I did not take the general science courses needed to apply to medical schools, there are programs that allow individuals with a bachelor's to fulfill these courses in a year, or two. I was accepted to the University of Vermont post-baccalaureate program and moved here with my boyfriend in August. We are currently living in Colchester, VT and attending UVM. I plan to complete the program in the Spring of 2014. I am also working as a Lab Tech in a local Methadone Clinic. Once I am finished with this program, I will sit for the MCATs (or the medical school admission test), and apply to medical schools across the US.

I feel very happy and content in Vermont. It is a beautiful state with great landscape for outdoor activities (I have been skiing 7 times already!).

I hope that everyone is well at Mercyhurst and am looking forward to 2013. Happy New year!

Rachel Ebersole (Meeks) (2008)

It has been a fun and exciting year. Dave and I got married on September 8. It was a beautiful day! We were blessed to take a Mediterranean cruise for our honeymoon! It was a trip of a life time. Professionally September marked my 3 year with Guidestone who transformed their name from Berea Childrens Home. With my adoption certification I have been able to take on a number of new and challenging cases! Best wishes to everyone in 2013!

Kathleen Epler (Opresko) (2000)

I finally did it, I got my LSW in January of 2012. That's my big news!

Still at Caron treatment Centers, a wonderful place for Drug and Alcohol treatment.

If anyone is interested, please call me there 610 743 6224. We have so many services including tx for adolescents, young adults and a relapse specific unit all on our main campus.

I am amazed to work at a nonprofit where we give 8 million a year in charity care.

We have offices in DC, Philly, NYC, Boston that all do outreach. I have been here over 6 and ½ years. I am truly blessed to be married 7 years to my husband and to have a God Daughter Cameron Stephania.

Amanda Fazakas (Crownner) (2001)

Not much has changed in my life since the arrival of my 2nd son Ryan. We have been busy with the boys Ryan (2) and David IV (4). I am still working as a hospice social worker at Hospice of Central Ohio in Columbus Ohio. I have been there 6 years and in hospice for 8. I had the opportunity last summer to work as a grief counselor at our Kids Bereavement Camp and I had a blast. It was such a great experience and I am hopefully going to be able to attend every year now. Now in my personal life we lost my father-in-law suddenly in May-2 weeks before a planned cruise with both of them and my husband to Bermuda. It was very difficult but we're thankfully still able to take the trip and enjoyed ourselves. And now we are enjoying the holiday with my mother-in-law in Bethlehem, Pa.

Michelle Forney (2006)

Happy New Year!

Not too much is happening with me. I'm still living in Maryland with my sister and working at Child Welfare. Although, I'm about ready for a change in my job. If anyone knows of opportunities in the D.C. area for macro level social work- policy, research and such, let me know! Hope everyone has a good 2013!

Kara Gerko (White) 2002

I am still working, just per diem. I work about 2-3 days a week. It's been perfect. Keeps me in and working but I love being home with Viv. I wouldn't trade it for the world. She is just an amazing little being. It's been fantastic watching her develop. It's been a wonderful experience so far being a parent. What an amazing gift she has given me/us.

Meghan Grant (2000)

I'm living in Queens, NY. I acquired my LCSW about three years ago. After more than 10 years working for the same mental health/ homeless agency (named CUCS) I switched to a different field of social work. Currently I am working at a hospital as a medical social worker. It was a big change at the time -- I'd worked at the previous agency full-time since graduating from Mercyhurst. I also went from management back to direct practice again. I really enjoy hospital work and am grateful for the change.

I now work at a mid-size hospital in Queens, NY called Jamaica Hospital. The hospital is in a low-income, immigrant neighborhood. Unfortunately, we are best known for our treatment of gunshot wounds. We are the closest hospital to JFK airport, so interesting things happen on a daily basis. We had a fair number of displaced individuals after Hurricane Sandy since we are close to the Rockaways.

Hillary Gruss (2007)

Hello all---Things are going well with me... Personally, nothing crazy-fun. I am still living in Columbus, Ohio with the same roommate I've had for the past two years. She is great! A lot of my friends got married over the past year and are having babies- I'm just enjoying life as a single gal :) I have been seeing the same guy for the past year, but not rushing into anything!! Career-wise, I'm still with nationwide children's hospital. I am currently transition out of my old job (MST Therapist) and into a new role with the crisis team. I will not be doing community-based work anymore (which will be a change), but am looking forward to set hours and no on-call!!!

Also, in August I got my LISW!! Looking forward to this new year... And reading the updates from all of you! Social Workers for Life!!!! Xoxo

Aaron Hart (2012)

I'm still working at the Crisis Residential Unit (CRU) and was promoted to a full-time position in September. I help with admissions, facilitate groups on occasion, and work in conjunction with crisis at time to handle unique and complicated situations. I also do a lot of one on one interaction with clients when they seek me out to talk because they're feeling anxious/depressed etc., and I'm responsible for performing room checks for the safety of the unit. In addition I also help out wherever and for whatever I am needed for. As of right now, I plan to go to graduate school at Edinboro in the summer in the advanced standing MSW program. Once I am in the program, I will likely work part time at my current job or find another part time job in order to focus on my studies and internship. I plan to try and get an internship at the VA.

Allison Hellmann (Pitonyak) (2010)

This past year, especially these past couples of months have been pretty crazy and exciting at the same time! I will be graduating in May 2013 from Edinboro University's Advanced Standing Program with my Masters of Social Work. I have been interning full time with the Erie County Office of MH/MR while still working full time with Erie County Juvenile Probation as a Community Justice Officer. For some crazy reason my husband and I decided to adopt another puppy, or I should say a small horse...we now have two English Mastiffs that both weigh more than I do! This next year I look forward to graduating and hope to move on to bigger and better things with my career. Best wishes everyone

Fatima Kelly (Pereira) (2001)

This year has pretty much been my pause year in career and education as I have been focused on family especially my daughter, Vidalia, who will be turning 2 in March. (Time goes too fast and I wanted to enjoy each moment.)

As for big news.. We are moving back to Erie mid-January!!

In 2013, I look forward to going back to work on my doctoral degree and possibly looking forward to going back to work part time.

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday and look forward to hearing everyone's updates.

Jestina Klink (2004)

I graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in May of 2012 with a Masters in Theology. I moved back to Hartstown, PA and am working at Meadville Children's Center as an infant room teacher while I try to discern my next step.

Timothy Knupp (2012)

I am currently working on my Master's degree in AOJ Admin. Criminal Justice... still working at Gaudenzia SARRP as Mentorship Program Supervisor and Recovery Specialist. I love my job because I know that God has me right where I'm supposed to be, for as my Bishop told me 6 years ago, that what I've been delivered from is where my testimony lies ... in helping others who are struggling with addiction. Married life is wonderful too, every day I am reminded just how beautiful life is. We had a new addition to our family as my wife's daughter gave birth to a gorgeous baby girl just before Thanksgiving, which made our visit to Hampton even more

special... so that's about it in a nut shell... I've also taken on another project at my church with sister Carla Burrs as we are starting back up our drug and alcohol deliverance meetings... you know me ... busy bsuy bsuy !!! God bless you and best wishes to 2013 !!!

Karen Kolivoski (2005)

I can't remember when the last update was, so I'll do my best to not be redundant. The last year and half has been quite busy for me. Over this past summer, I finished my PhD in social work at Pitt, with my dissertation titled "Patterns of Justice System Involvement Among Child Welfare-Involved Youth." I also have been excited about the job I got after I finished, although it's come with some big life changes. I'm now a postdoctoral fellow in the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. My research involves a variety of projects related to improving the lives of young people, particularly in areas of child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health settings. Specifically, my goal is to expand knowledge on young people's involvement with multiple systems. Taking the leap to move to Baltimore after living in Pittsburgh for so long has been full of many transitions (they're not as alike as I thought they would be!), but overall has been a good adventure. Also, since I can't remember when I last updated this, Joe and I are still married (in July 2011 at Mercyhurst), and still have our dog, Doug the pug.

Patience Kosaniak (2012)

At the moment I'm looking for a job in my field, so I'm working at Quaker steak and lube at the moment. I am also finishing up with my BA, and I hope to go on with my masters in social work at Edinboro University. I hope to apply to several other schools, but I'm hoping to stay close to home. I also might go for my masters and doc. At the same time at Edinboro, but I haven't decided just yet.

Michelle Lander (Piaggese) (2005)

2012 was a very busy year for my husband and I. We celebrated our first wedding anniversary and bought a new home. We love our new house and are in the midst of renovations to make it our dream home. I continue to work as a social worker in a High School and am truly grateful to have the job that I do. My cousin Natalie was recently given a full scholarship to Mercyhurst to play basketball so I am also very excited for her to begin College at Mercyhurst as I did! I hope all is well with everyone else!

Colleen Lanigan (2007)

I am still working over in Admissions at Mercyhurst North East. Things are just picking up now that the holidays are over! And I am happy to report that I have just finished my MSW J through the University at Buffalo, and will be taking the new few weeks to study for my LMSW. I am excited to see what the future might hold once that is complete, and in the meantime, I am going to continue to work with prospective RN students and possibly some future social work students! Hope all is well with everyone else!

Ellen LaSalvia (Learn) (2002)

Happy New Year's everyone! 2012 was an exciting time for my husband, Rob, and I. On June 6th we welcomed our first child, Patrick Alan, and it's been a wild ride ever since. He is a true blessing.

On a professional note I continue to work at Buckeye Community Health Plan and was fortunate to be promoted to Director of Long Term Care and Home and Community Based Services for our new Duals (Medicaid and Medicare) Product! It is very rewarding to be a Social Worker in this position and promote our profession!!!!
Blessings to all.

Andrea Lindstrom (2010)

I am currently living in VA with my daughters (now 16 and 11). Recently I've been putting the final touches on my thesis proposal about social networking. I anticipate receiving my MS in Sociology by August 2013. I've been working for Virginia Commonwealth University as a Senior Executive Secretary to Dr. Ferreira-Gonzalez, Pathology Faculty and Director of the Molecular Diagnostics laboratory. I absolutely love working for her and for VCU. When I came to Mercyhurst, I knew that I working in a University setting was where I wanted to be because of the opportunity to work with you! My graduation plans are to research and apply to PhD programs with a strong emphasis on social or educational policy and hopefully to begin gaining some teaching experience!

Rebecca McCalligan (Spena) (2000)

My life has taken several turns in the past few years. I am a special education teacher in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. I'm at Oxford Elementary (for those of you that are familiar with the district). I teach 4th and 5th grade kiddos with Emotional Disturbance (angry, violent, mentally ill...etc). This is my 6th year in the district. Before that I taught at Educational Alternatives , in Willoughby, Ohio and also at the Positive Education Program (PEP) in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Both schools are alternative schools for Children with Emotional Disturbance. I originally started at PEP as a social worker in the classroom and realized that I missed teaching. I went back to school and got my Master's in Special Education at Notre Dame College. While in school I met a boy, fell in love, got married and had a baby. Unfortunately the marriage didn't last but the kid and the bills did ;). My daughter Grace, is 6 years old and is a first grader and attends school in Eastlake, Ohio. (ugh, so not my choice but it was not a battle worth fighting). She is doing really really well in school. All A's, totally unlike her mother. She also does dance (ballet, tap, and Jazz). She is also dancing competitively. She takes violin as well. She has the patience of a Saint...again which she did not get from me. I am living in Highland Heights, in a development down the street from my parents (shoot me). I also manage a kids clothing store and work at a hair salon. I'm also in school taking continuing Education credits. Needless to say my life does not stop. I'm ALWAYS doing something. I have very little down time....thank goodness because it generally means I'm getting myself into trouble.

I am a member of the HRC, the Human Rights Campaign. It's an organization that works on getting the same rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community. I became involved with them because of my best friend Ryan Hug (who was a graduate from Mercyhurst). Grace tells everyone that Ryan is her best friend. The two of them are super cute together. Ryan has moved to Columbus and Grace and I are both very sad.

Overall I have no complaints. I have a great family and a wonderfully amazing group of friends. I work very hard and a lot but I play even harder. I'm on vacation right now in Florida visiting my parents (they are snowbirds). My brother and sister in law are also here with their 3 kids. Oh

yeah, and I brought my baby too. The kids are having a blast. I get to relax and sleep! My favorite. I hope everyone is well. I can't wait to hear how everyone else is.

Sonia Moore (Spore) (2010)

This has been an especially busy year for me and my family. I bought my first house in April of this year. That was pretty exciting!!! I changed jobs this year as well. I am now working as a drug and alcohol counselor at Pyramid Healthcare here in Erie. I have to admit, this is the hardest job I've ever had. It is very challenging, but very rewarding. There is not one day that is the same as the last. And then, of course, there is the paperwork!!! I am seriously contemplating going back for my Master's, but I have to find the time to fit it in. Another piece of exciting news is that my oldest daughter will be having our first grandchild in February of 2013. We are really excited and anticipating his arrival! We are hoping and praying 2013 is just as fun and exciting as 2012 has been.

Mary Morris (2008)

Happy New Year Everyone, What an eventful year it has been in the world of Social Work. Between the massive funding cuts in 2012 and the election I feel we Social Worker's deserve a weeklong vacation to the land of "Hush"!

Till then, I continue to work for UPMC as a medical social worker in the wonderful city of Pittsburgh, PA. I work in a skilled nursing and rehab center, which serve both short and long term care needs since the spring of 2008. It's truly an honor to serve and work with the patients and staff here at the Heritage Place.

On a personal note my family, I'm blessed to say are entering the New Year happy and healthy. My husband Jason still works full time as a sale representative for Volvo Construction Equipment Company. My oldest daughter Faith is now 10 and my youngest daughter Charlie Lynn is 2 years old. My kids and husband are my world and God's ultimate blessing. Where ever the road takes us this 2013 may we all continue to improve and change lives day by day.

Addendum: Although Mary did not include the following information in her update I think her former classmates would be interested in hearing about the honor she received this past fall. She received the Award for Commitment and Excellence in Service (ACES). The award honors staff whose everyday actions, personal acts of courage and compassion exceed the high level of service. Each year, fewer than 1 percent of UPMC staff from across the health system receive this honor. CONGRATS MARY!

Jennifer Noe (Palladino) (2002)

I have exciting news to report I am pregnant with twin girls due the end of January! It was a complete surprise and total shock! I had my last day of work as a school social worker last Friday and am staying out the remainder of the school year and all of next school year to be with my three year old son and twin girls. So hard to be away from work for so long I will miss it tremendously but feel very blessed to have this special time with my family.

Lilly Parker (2010)

I am working full time as a nanny for a wonderful family with two girls, 20 months and 4 1/2 years and a third girl due in April. Just began looking into the Masters in Counseling at Wake Forest University in Winston Salem, about thirty minutes from where I live now in Greensboro, NC. My boyfriend and I are moving into our first apartment together on Monday, hoping all continues to go well.

Erik Penn (2009)

I have been doing well. I have recently been offered a new position with the City and County of Denver. The position is a Case Management Coordinator position that will allow me to work more with families. I look forward to the experience this will provide me. I'm also excited as my wedding to Nadine Beres is coming up in May. I visited outside Rochester, NY for the holidays with Nadine's family and got to drive a snowmobile for the first time (although it didn't begin too well with the mobile falling over onto my leg). I've been spending a good amount of time with my recent roommate Zach Pekor ever since he moved to Denver. I recommend the Butterfly Pavilion to anyone who is visiting Denver and I hope everyone's holidays went well.

Alicia Peterson (2010)

I'm still living and working in Jacksonville FL as a student advocate for low achieving 6th graders. I provide one on one and small group sessions, tutoring and enrichment. I also coordinate with volunteer mentors who are matched with my students. Only big announcement is that I've been officially accepted to Florida State's MSW advanced standing online program! I start fall of 2013 and I'll be able to continue living in Jacksonville and take classes part time online! I'm excited to get that chapter completed to so I can continue on to the next step in my career. I love my job, but want to try working in other areas!! I'm still really interested in policy so we will see! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday!

Dayna Pitzer (Papania) (2005)

Can't wait to hear from everyone and see what's new. I'm not sure if I updated last year, I think I forgot so some things that are not new to me may be to you. I am still here in Lowell, Ohio and happily married. Our two year anniversary will be coming up in April. We have a loving, cuddly cat who happens to be 22#. We rescued him about 2 years ago and he is a wonderful addition. I have been the medical social worker for a hospice in Marietta, Ohio for almost five years. I still feel every day is a challenge in this type of work. I love hospice like I never thought I would. The demands are becoming Wearing. If it was just hospice and not have to deal with corporate and #'s it would be perfect. Though I have my masters I have not gotten my LISW for the state of Ohio. My goal for 2013 is to find the time to study and take the test. That's it about me, can't wait to hear about everyone else.

Adriana Rodriguez (Almaguer) (2005)

Happy New Year!

Greetings to everybody! My family and I did have a great year and we are so grateful for that. My little Rudy keeps me busy and happy; it is delightful to see him grow and develop so beautifully. I continue to work for child welfare at the Office of Children and Youth and my

learning experiences continue to be as exciting. Even though it is sometimes draining to work with conflictive families there is always a lesson to learn from them and has enhanced my skills as a caseworker so I can better deal with my families' issues at work. I never get bored at work, that is for sure.

May all of you receive abundant blessings for this 2013. Adriana & Rudy Rodriguez

Aaron Rowe (2005)

Things have been good. Still the Home and Community Based Services Supervisor working for Community Resources for Independence out of our Allentown, PA office. Dealing with the changes/cuts to different programs with the state has been annoying and a challenge but I've learned a lot. I started running a youth wrestling program for kids 5-10 years old. Getting back involved with wrestling has been great, especially coaching these kids. I spend most my time laughing at them, it's been a great experience thus far. Besides this nothing else new or interesting has been happening. Take care!

Mia Sanner (Amatangelo) (2007)

Hi, everyone! I hope all is well. A quick update for me. I am still working for the Millcreek School District as a teaching aid in an emotional support classroom. I also just finished my second semester at Edinboro University. I continue to work towards achieving a Master's Degree in Education Counseling K-12. It's a pretty long program (60+ credits) so I won't even be doing my internship until the Fall of 2014. Slow and steady wins the race, so "they" say. Personally, I am still married to the love of my life, Aaron, and live in our little home in Erie with our dog Quinn. Life is good. Again, I can't wait to read everything else going on in the world with all of you wonderful people!

Leatrice Schoolcraft (2011)

I am still working for the Erie County Office of Children & Youth (15 months now!). I was transferred into the Sexual Abuse Unit in May 2012 and carry a much higher case load with a great deal of Court Involvement. I still live with Alyssa & Conor and enjoy my life in Erie! :)

Nicole Seelbach (2004)

I hope you had a wonderful holiday!

I am still working at the Office of Children and Youth, although my responsibilities changed over the summer, as I was moved into the Court unit. I am now overseeing all of the Drug and Alcohol testing/results etc. for the Agency, and am also the Treatment Court liaison. While I have always been involved in the DA stuff at the Agency, I am enjoying my "new" position. On a personal level, my husband and I are thoroughly enjoying raising our (now 15 month old) son. He has LOTS of energy and spunk (I guess that's a nice way to say that he's a crazy man with an attitude!)

I have also been busy traveling back and forth every weekend to my hometown in NY as my mother was recently (11/16/12) diagnosed with terminal lung and brain cancer and was given 4-6 months.

Needless to say we have been pretty busy, taking things one day at a time, and trying to enjoy what time we have left with my mom.

I hope everyone had a great holiday season!

Julie Smith (2007)

I have chosen to take a break from human services work for awhile. I am currently living in Carlisle, Pa. Still 24 credits shy of my MSW I have 30 clinical credits from Widener and 6 in Management & Planning of Health & Mental Health from Temple Univ. I volunteer at an animal shelter thrift shop and Chapel Pointe which is a very up and coming retirement home in Carlisle, Pa. I am hoping to get hired for the activities liaison position there for the folks living in personal care. Some of my other volunteering efforts are happening in housing and homelessness at a place called Safe Harbour. It is a wonderful place housing single folks as well as families. All together I average a total of about 8-10 volunteer hours each week give or take.

My current employment is at T.J. Maxx part-time and I enjoy working in "retail therapy" right now living the dream as a "Maxxinista." Lol. I made out very well over the holidays though and am thinking that perhaps in 2013 or 2014 I will complete the MSW. I don't want to put it off too long, but right now I am trying to work on making some lifestyle changes and that includes living much more simply and giving back more. My goal for the upcoming year is to do a great deal of stepwork and continue living my own life of recovery.

Thanks for all the wonderful tools that Mercyhurst offers. I hope to come back if not this spring for alumni weekend then perhaps within the next 4-5 as that would bring me closer to my 10 year anniversary. Hard to believe.

I also do a great deal of work with my church and probably the most enjoyable internship I have had as of recently was working at an organization called Church World Services where I helped Cuban Refugees to attain employment in the U.S.

Christine Somera (2008)

Greetings all!! Happy 2013! 2012 was sure a whirlwind for me! I started my first post-grad school job this past February and things have just been taking off since. I'm working in a PRTS (psychiatric residential treatment services) facility for youth and adolescents, ages 7-17. It's a 24 hour locked facility, which treats youth with general psychiatric disorders and a specialized CSEC (children of sexual exploitation) program. My position (Emergency Safety Intervention Specialist) is licensed through the state of Oregon to authorize and evaluate any/all holds and seclusions, which occur during my shift. I'm part of a crisis response team that is called when a youth begins to escalate, staff need assistance or a situation is becoming unsafe. A majority of behaviors I encounter are: self-harm, physical and verbal aggression, property destruction, and unhealthy peer and adult interactions. Most youth have significant abuse and trauma histories and many are not in the custody or contact with their families. Some shifts are much tougher than others. Naturally, the job started a little scary, but I have truly grown to love it! Just prior to the holiday season, I was promoted into a supervisory position, which requires some on-call duties and supervising a number of staff. It's pretty exciting! The organization I work for is based out of Memphis, TN and has multiple locations along the east coast. We are the only facility West of the Mississippi River, currently. The organization (Youth Villages) has a strong core of values and principles, which I enjoy working under and my teammates are phenomenal.

Aside from work, I'm still swimming as much as possible. This job has definitely made me appreciate the fact I have an outlet and coping skill to help me leave the stress and heartache at work. Also, I have recently started dating this amazing guy who has added a branch of happiness into my life I did not expect. I also found out, just before Christmas, that I will be an aunt again this summer! 2012 was fantastic, but I'm very excited for all that 2013 will bring!

Hope everyone had some glorious 2012 memories/experiences as well! Take Care!

Josie Tiberio (2004)

This past year I moved to White Plains, NY in Westchester County. I'm about a 30 minute train ride from NYC! My new job is a Clinical Services Coordinator. I market a sub-acute brain injury program up north in NY. It's called the Northeast Center for Special Care. My role is to work out of my apartment to drum up referrals to go to the program. I go into various hospitals and rehabilitation facilities to meet with case managers to see if there are any patients that can benefit from The Northeast Center for Special Care. Once I get a referral there is a screen assessment (a form) that I complete and fax into the admissions department at The Northeast Center. Also, over the past year I wrote a book, but it's not social work related. It's called "Single...Now What?!" The book was meant to be a coffee table like book, but is set up more like a novel. The beginning starts as a narrative and then there are activities listed on the right side of the page and an affirmation on the left. The book is designed to help a newly single person to find happiness again. It's all about staying busy and doing activities that are going to promote positive thoughts which then will create positive feelings. The affirmations provided are to be used to have positive self-talk. If a person is constantly thinking negative thoughts then that is how they will feel. It's available at www.barnesandnoble.com and www.amazon.com. My goal this coming year is to market the book more since there is no money in my budget for a publicist! I want to be on the Today Show!!! :)

Ashley Trevena (2006)

I am still working at Washington Communities Human Services in Washington Pa doing clinical assessments on children in need of mental health services. I see children from the age of three all the way up to 18. I truly love my job, my boss and all of my coworkers. I am fortunate that I get to collaborate with psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health professionals on a daily basis and my knowledge of mental health keeps growing! I am still working on my LPC - my counseling license - and only have a few more hours of supervision until I'm done. It's been a process to get to this point and I can't wait till I'm done! I'm excited to see what other doors will open for me upon completion. I would love to one day open my own practice doing therapy with children and young adults.

I suppose that's it for now. I'm still living with my boyfriend, Doug and his daughter, Katie. My life has been even more blessed because of them! Oh yes, and we have a new addition to our little family....her name is Molly and she's a schnauzer/poodle mix. Seriously the cutest thing ever! I never thought I could love a dog so much!

Amber Vance (2001)

I have recently accepted a third grade teaching position at New Castle Christian Academy. It is my first time teaching in a private school, but I absolutely love it. I have a small class of 13 and the freedom and flexibility to do learning activities and projects with my students, as well share my faith in the classroom. Even though I am not technically in the social work field anymore, I use what I have learned and practiced at Mercyhurst every day with my students. Hannah is in second grade and I recently transferred her to my school. She also loves it and has made a quick transition. Having her with me every day is a real blessing.

Jodi Waldron (Prichard) (2003)

Hello all. Since our last update my family has moved once again. We are now living in Nazareth, PA. My husband started a job at St. Luke's Hospital in Bethlehem, PA in August 2012. We bought a house and we are feeling like this is a great place to call home. We learned not long after the move that we are expecting our second child in April 2013...a boy. Our son, Brady is now 16 months old and he is so much fun! I was planning to look for a social work job (part-time or per diem) once we moved, but with another baby on the way I have decided to "stay-at-home" for a while longer. It has been wonderful to have this time with my son and I look forward to watching another little one grow before my eyes. I hope that everyone is doing well and I wish you all a blessed new year!

Tiffany Ways (Miller) (2005)

The past year has been extremely busy, but nothing in comparison to what 2013 is slated to bring. After graduate school, I went into the social work field as a mental health therapist. However, I had bigger dreams for my career (all of which required HUGE risk). In September 2011, I left my full time position as a child and adolescent therapist to take a huge step to follow my big scary dream. I dreamed of starting an after school program for at-risk youth. I actually wrote my undergraduate research paper on after school programs. Since I left my position, I have volunteered full time at a local elementary school. Over the past year, everything has come together. I have recently obtained the funding necessary to start a pilot after school program at the elementary school. I will begin working as the program director on January 22nd! This opportunity has (and will continue) to forced me outside of my comfort zone, especially with the extensive amount of grant writing required. The after school program will be a collaboration between the elementary school and my church. It is my dream to have the school function has a resource hub for the community. The students, parents, and surrounding community have limited access to resources. As the program grows, we will be providing adult programs, mental health/substance abuse services, physical activity programs, community gardens, medical services, and other programs to be determined by the community. I have developed so many positive relationships throughout the development process and I look forward to all of the opportunities (and challenges). The program development has been a slight challenge as full time mom to my wonderful 19 month old son, Tiffin. He brings so much joy to my life. He has become identified as the school mascot because he started volunteering with me at the school when he was 2 months old. My husband and I are also expecting our second child, a little girl, at the end of April. My husband continues to work as a science professor at a local college. We have so much to be thankful for in our lives. I also have a new email address if people desire to have contact: tiffanyways@gmail.com.

Becca Walters (Piechocki) (2006)

Life is good on my end! STILL at Bradford Co CYS. I graduated this past May with my MSW from Marywood University in Scranton, PA. I passed my licensure exam last month! On a personal note, I got married this past October and our little girl Hannah was the flower girl! We are expecting baby girl #2 in March! Life is very busy, but so good! Definitely very blessed!

Zachary Walters (2006)

Greetings, still working in Los Angeles, if things pan out I'll be moving DC sometime this year

and be looking for new work! This is the last year of our TUPE grant (Tobacco Use Prevention & Education).

Amy Wienand (Pieczynski) (2000)

Ryan and I are the proud parents of two sons (Miles who is 5 and Jake who is 3 ½) who were born and being raised in Pittsburgh, PA (and don't say anything Christine, because at least we beat the BrownsJ). I have been the Clinical Supervisor of the Child/Adolescent Partial Hospital Program at Mercy Behavioral Health for going on 3 years. It is very challenging at times but I love every minute of it! I wish all of you a wonderful 2013.

Maggie Wilkins (2008)

2012 was a very good year for me. I am currently working at Lorain County Children Services effective in October, I went from Summit to Lorain which I feel has been a very positive change. Lorain is a very well run agency and I very much like my supervisor and my unit mates. I have found how important it is to have a good supervisor. I do direct service work at Lorain, we have a one worker one model approach which is interesting. We do intake and protective worker, which coming from an alternative response approach at Summit is very similar and I have blended my working knowledge in nicely with Lorain. I turned in all of my LISW hours earlier in the year and received my LISW which has been one of my greatest accomplishments thus far. I started seeing children at a local private practice agency (the same one my mother works at) two days a week. I love doing therapy with children and it has been a good balance with my child welfare work. My goal for 2013 is to get the S to add to my LISW. Everything with my personal life is going great. My family is all doing well, and I got a nephew in 2012, baby Wesley who is as cute as can be. My boyfriend and I recently celebrated our one year anniversary and are currently sharing a home in the city I grew up in (in Ohio) with our three dogs. The dogs and work seem to keep us very busy. I am very happy and I think 2012 was an excellent year for me and I look forward to seeing what 2013 has in store! I hope everyone else is doing well and I wish you all a happy 2013!

Nicole Zeak (2012)

After graduation, I moved home to Pittsburgh to be closer to my family and look for a job. In August I was hired at Habitat for Humanity of Greater Pittsburgh through AmeriCorps. I am currently a National AmeriCorps member serving as a Community Outreach and Faith Relations Coordinator at Habitat. I focus on planning days of service, connecting with faith organizations in the community, and assisting with the Veteran's Program. I am currently working on our "Adopt a Family" Christmas Program, where we provide gifts and groceries to all of our partner families. After I started work, I moved into a new apartment with my older sister in the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh. I'm using what little spare time I have to stay involved in theatre and I'm considering starting grad school classes next summer!

Katie Zinn (2008)

I am still at the Cleveland Clinic working as an inpatient social worker with post solid organ transplant patients and general liver/kidney/gastro issues. I perform psychosocial evaluations and discharge planning for when patients need home care, skilled care etc. It's very busy, but I love it!

Led by fellow student Marissa Zastowa SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS ACTION

Mercyhurst students shine light on overdose deaths



By LISA THOMPSON, Erie Times-News
lisa.thompson@timesnews.com

Espadrilles and spangled red heels, gum boots and hiking boots and cartoon-decorated Chuck Taylor high-tops lay piled in pairs next to the Christmas tree in the lobby of Mercyhurst University's Old Main building.

The shoes and boots and sandals and slippers -- all donated -- were destined for the needy in Erie.

The footwear stash, though, marked more than a show of holiday charity from the students who collected and displayed them Tuesday.

These soles also stood as a reminder of the 98 souls who have died from drug overdoses in Erie County from 2011 to the present, organizer Marissa Zastawa said.

Passers-by in the busy lobby Tuesday were asked to observe a moment of silence for the overdose victims.

"Don't be a statistic," said the flyer advertising the event.

Zastawa, 22, a senior social work major at Mercyhurst, created the shoe drive and display to bring attention to the problem of prescription drug abuse and the lives drug overdoses claim every year.

She and a team of nine classmates launched the drive in November as part of Zastawa's work with Erie-based Coalition Pathways' Lead and Seed program, which aims to raise awareness about social problems, including drug and alcohol abuse and drunken driving.

At first, only a handful of shoes trickled into their collection boxes.

"We thought, 'Oh my gosh, it is going to be a fail,'" Zastawa said.

But then word of the shoe drive spread via the Mercyhurst website, social media and a feature in the Mercyhurst student newspaper, the Merciad.

Zastawa started hearing from other students and others in the community. A man whose wife overdosed offered his help.

As of Monday night, Zastawa and her team estimated they had collected 130 pairs of shoes. The same night, a woman called and pledged 100 more.

They planned to dismantle their display and start distributing the footwear Tuesday evening to the Mercy Center for Women, the St. Martin Center and Stairways Behavioral Health Crisis Residential Unit.

Zastawa and some members of her team said overdose deaths affect those in all segments of the community, including many in their age group.

"We wanted this to be a memorial," she said.

FACULTY UPDATES

Peggy Black

As always, life's journey consists of many twists and turns and 2012 was no different. As I write this note, I am on my second term of sabbatical – carried over from last year. My proposal for research on elder gambling was not accepted for funding, so I have shifted my focus. I am using this sabbatical to begin the transition from a term system to semesters, as well as working on the social justice research Laura and I began last year. In the spring, we completed surveys with students regarding social justice curriculum, and Laura and I hope to develop an article and a conference presentation with the results. I will also do continuing education training on social work ethics in late January for area social workers. There is no lack of projects to fulfill☺. We have welcomed Bora Pajo as a new faculty member, and she is adjusting to our program and learning the ins and outs of a full-time educator. She has resided in Florida for many years, and has just recently determined that 19 degrees with snow is *cold*. Hopefully our welcome has been much warmer than the weather!

On the family front, my youngest son Andy got married in November and now I have two daughters! I also learned over Christmas that Ben and Sarah are expecting our first grandchild in late June. I hear grand parenting is great fun....can't wait! As always, we had wonderful

vacation time with our family, traveling to Florida, Seven Springs, PA, Norfolk, VA and the Outer Banks of South Carolina. Not certain where we will travel in 2013, but to Pittsburgh in July for sure! Thank you for keeping in touch with your newsletter entries and emails. We love to hear from all of you. Have a blessed and Happy New Year.

Mandy Fauble

Greetings to all of you! I don't have much of an update to give, but wanted to at least say hello to everyone in our Mercyhurst University social work community. Perhaps the biggest news is that things have been reorganized for me at work. I am not the Vice President of Clinical Operations at Safe Harbor and oversee all of our service programs. That's been a great turn of events, because it enables me to work with all of our programs-no more trying to pick what I like to do most! In the community, I have joined the board at LifeWorks in Erie, and am teaching at Edinboro University in the MSW program now, too. I actually had my first Mercyhurst Alum in an MSW course this fall, which was just a joy. My best to you and your families!

Laura Lewis

Glimpsing behind and ahead -- The biggest change in the Social Work Program this year has been the addition of a third full-time faculty member, Bora Pajo, whose update is included in the newsletter. Bora brings new energy and enthusiasm to the program and it is good to have her on board. Next year we undergo a transition to a new calendar and a new core. I am excited about the new calendar, a 4-1-4 system, which consists of a three week January term where students take one course, wrapped around by two 14 week semesters. Jan term provides the opportunity for creative course offerings or packaging existing courses differently. It also will be a time when some students will study abroad with Mercyhurst faculty. In 2014 Peg and I are tentatively planning a trip to Guyana with students which will combine service with an academic course.

This past year was particularly enjoyable for me as I spent spring term in Ireland. The hospitality extended by people we met, and the more relaxed culture were good for the soul. The scenery was spectacular, new places to run and explore were great, and the history lessons during our traveling were so very informative. Three social work students work for two different organization during our time in Dungarvan, Ireland and were enriched by their experiences, as was I. Staying connected to students back at Mercyhurst and my work with Erie Together through Skype worked out well (for me). I also spent two months out in Washington which has become the norm. This past summer much of my time there, when not out on the water or trails, was focused on research for a case study book I am working on.

Again this year rather than traveling to Washington for Christmas with extended family our kids came to Erie. While I miss seeing siblings and other relatives it is wonderful just to hang out here together. Wishing you a very fulfilling 2013.

Bora Pajo

I joined the Sociology and Social Work Department at Mercyhurst University this past fall of 2012 and I have been happy ever since. My area of specialization is children's behavioral problems and the use of psychiatric medications to control these behaviors. After successfully defending my dissertation in July at Florida International University, I arrived in Erie to join the Sociology and Social Work Department.

These last few months I have had many new experiences from the wonderful change of seasons in Erie to figuring out my way around campus and getting to know social work students. I have gotten to better know Dr. Black and Dr. Lewis, the most considerate and supportive people I could dream of. As I am slowly getting involved with our students, I have noticed their impressive willingness to help others. We had a very successful Christmas gift collecting for refugee children at the Multicultural Center this last December. I have also tried to help students with their application packages, as they get ready to apply for MSWs at various schools. It makes me happy to see how determined, bright, and humble students in social work program are.