Crisis on Main Street
Bridges is the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work magazine. We selected the name Bridges largely because of its symbolism. The term provides an important metaphor for both our profession and our school. Social work is a profession that has, as part of its mission, the goal of building and sustaining bridges among individuals, families, groups, neighborhoods, and communities, and we felt that the title Bridges captured this part of our professional mission. At the same time, the city of Pittsburgh has more than 450 bridges, and Allegheny County has almost 2,000, suggesting an uncompromising desire of the city’s inhabitants to remain connected with one another. In keeping with this heritage, it is the school’s goal to sustain and build bridges among those needing social work services; our students, alumni, faculty, and staff; the community; and corporate and governmental partners. We believe that the information in this magazine is an important way to achieve this goal.

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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
University of Pittsburgh
Celebrating 100 Years of People, Policy and Practice

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Printed on environmentally responsible paper. PLEASE RECYCLE.
Greetings, alumni and friends,

Once again, another school year is underway. We welcome back our students and look forward to another exciting year.

Unfortunately, our school, like the rest of the country, finds itself humbled by the recent mass shootings and environmental disasters as well as the country’s long-standing racial problems. In many respects, our students will face a society that is experiencing very serious difficulties. It is my belief that social workers will increasingly be called upon to help our nation solve (or at least ameliorate) its present social ills. To this end, our school has even more steadfastly addressed these problems in teaching, problem solving, practice, and policy methods. Society needs the skills we teach now more than ever.

Still, we remain optimistic about the future while not forgetting our past. Almost a century ago, in 1918, our very first social work students were starting on their journey to make a difference in the world. In their courses, they studied subjects such as race and social problems, labor problems and immigration, and child welfare. One hundred years later, we as a country are still grappling with these thorny issues.

The school would not be celebrating 100 years of people, policy, and practice without our excellent students, alumni, staff, and faculty. It is due to their commitment to the school and the profession that the School of Social Work is a top-10 school.

Our dedicated faculty members have played a large role in achieving that ranking, bringing in record numbers of grants to train and provide research findings to the next generation of social workers. This is especially timely given the topic of this issue’s cover story, America’s opioid epidemic.

This is such a pervasive problem that there are probably many of you who are dealing with this issue, in either a professional or personal manner, every day. Social workers are on the front lines of this fight, and the compassion, insight, and training we provide can help to bring new perspectives to this public health crisis. Gerald Cochran, who was recently appointed associate dean for research, is leading much of the school’s work on the opioid crisis.

In addition to the 100th anniversary of the school, this year we also are celebrating 15 years of the Center on Race and Social Problems. What started as America’s first race research center housed in a school of social work has now grown into one of the country’s most well-respected sources of race-related research and information. As I frequently say, having an idea is one thing, but having someone to back it is another. The University of Pittsburgh has been that backer for the center. By supporting a center with “race” in its title, the University was ahead of its time. With the University’s unwavering support, and the support of law firms and foundations, the center has been able to provide the community with lectures and reports that impact regional policies.

Additionally, this year we also are marking 60 years of the Community, Organization, and Social Action (COSA) program. COSA has led the way on issues from grassroots movements in cities to advocacy in government, and our alumni are leading nonprofits across the country. Tracy Soska has done a marvelous job of leading this program.

We began the celebration of our centennial year earlier this fall, and we hope you will join us for our speaker series and alumni events throughout the year. You can share your memories and photos and view a complete school timeline at socialwork.pitt.edu/100th.

Best wishes,

Larry E. Davis
Dean and Donald M. Henderson Professor, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work
Director, Center on Race and Social Problems

“IT IS MY BELIEF THAT SOCIAL WORKERS WILL INCREASINGLY BE CALLED UPON TO HELP OUR NATION SOLVE (OR AT LEAST AMELIORATE) ITS PRESENT SOCIAL ILLS.”
FACULTY PROMOTIONS

Valire Copeland, Daniel Rosen, and Fengyan Tang have been promoted to the rank of full professor.

Valire Copeland is associate dean of academic affairs and associate director of the Public Health Social Work Training Program. She received her BSW from Livingstone College and her MSW, MPH, and PhD from the University of Pittsburgh. Copeland’s research focuses on integrated health care.

David E. Epperson Professor of Social Work

Daniel Rosen received his PhD in social work and sociology, MSW, and BA in political science from the University of Michigan. His research interests include aging, substance abuse, late-life depression, and barriers to treatment.

Fengyan Tang earned her PhD and master’s degrees in social work at Washington University in St. Louis. Her research interests include productive and social engagement in later life, well-being of caregivers for older adults, and aging experiences among immigrants.

Gerald Cochran, associate dean for research, was promoted to associate professor with tenure, effective September 1, 2017.

Cochran earned his PhD at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work and completed postdoctoral training in the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. His research interests are centered on behavioral health services.

WELCOME, NEW STAFF

Laurie Mejia is the school’s new research manager.

FALL 2017 SPEAKER SERIES

All lectures are from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the School of Social Work Conference Center, 2017 Cathedral of Learning. Lunch will be provided; registration is not required.

CENTER ON RACE AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

BUCHANAN INGERSOLL & ROONEY PC FALL 2017 SPEAKER SERIES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
“Toxic Inequality”
TOM SHAPIRO, Pokross Professor of Law and Social Policy and Director, Institute on Assets and Social Policy, Brandeis University

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25
“Parental Human Capital, Low-skilled Jobs, and Racial Disparities in Child Poverty in Immigrant Families”
KEVIN THOMAS, Associate Professor of Sociology, Demography, and African Studies, Pennsylvania State University

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2
“Navigating School Inequality: How Parents Pursue Magnet School Admissions”
LITTISHA BATES, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Cincinnati

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7
“Race and Family Dynamics”
KAREN GUZZO, Associate Professor of Sociology, Bowling Green State University

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK 2017–18 SPEAKER SERIES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017
“Place-based Engagement: The University of Pittsburgh’s Engagement Centers”
LINA D. DOSTILIO, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement Centers, University of Pittsburgh

OCTOBER 30, 2017
“Another World Is Possible! A Radical Political Agenda for Social Work”
CARL REDWOOD JR., Vice Chair, Board of Directors, Hill District Consensus Group

FEBRUARY 13, 2018
Raymond R. Webb Jr. Lecture
“Social Innovation and Social Work: Buzzword or Field Change?”
STEPHANIE BERZIN, Associate Professor, Children, Youth, and Families; Assistant Dean, Doctoral Program; and Codirector, Center for Social Innovation, School of Social Work, Boston College

MARCH 20, 2018
WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY
Sidney A. Teller Lecture
JULIA WATKINS, Former Executive Director, Council on Social Work Education
ANNUAL BOARD OF VISITORS MEETING

The annual Board of Visitors dinner and business meeting was held on May 17 and 18, 2017. Attendees are pictured below.

Attending the Board of Visitors dinner on May 17 were (top photo, left to right) Rod Doss, Marc Cherna, James McDonald, Joy Starzl, Thomas VanKirk (chair), Dean Larry E. Davis, Alan Momeyer, Stephen Paschall, and Henry Loubet.

Attending the Board of Visitors meeting on May 18 were (bottom photo, left to right) Vice Provost Alberta Sbragia, Momeyer, James Browne, Davis, Loubet, McDonald, Paschall, Doris Carson Williams, VanKirk, Starzl, Cherna, Glenn Mahone, and Estelle Comay.
**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

**BASW Program**

**UNDERGRADUATE SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM CONTINUES TO ENGAGE SCHOLARS**

Through the generous support of the provost’s office, five undergraduate social work students were selected to work alongside research-engaged faculty members and were supported with a $1,000 fellowship this past summer. Bachelor of Arts in Social Work (BASW) students Cheryl Irwin, Kelly Nissley, Abigail Stern, Brandon Thomas, and Angelica Walker were selected to participate in the Summer Research Fellowship Program.

To learn more about undergraduate research opportunities, visit [socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/undergraduate-research](http://socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/undergraduate-research).

**MSW Program**

**RETIREMENT**

Lynn Coghill retired as director of the MSW program on June 30, 2017. We would like to thank Coghill for her service as the program’s director for the last 10 years and for her service to the School of Social Work and the University over the last 17 years.

Coghill also was named the 2015 Social Worker of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers Pennsylvania Chapter. To learn more about her career, read “Social Work’s Lynn Coghill: A Different Kind of Grace” at [pi.tt/LynnCoghill](http://pi.tt/LynnCoghill).

**PhD Program**

**CONGRATULATIONS, DOCTORAL GRADUATES!**

Rachel Goode (MSW ’06, PhD ’17)
Nahri Jung (PhD ’17)
Yoo Jung Kim (PhD ’17)
Eric Kyere (PhD ’17)
Courtney Queen (PhD ’16)
Celebrating its 25th year, the Consortium for Career Development in Social Work Education gathered in June 2017 at the University of Pittsburgh for a three-day conference focusing on the importance of career services in social work education. Twenty-two career services directors and advisors from social work programs across the United States attended. The conference provided opportunities to share and explore new ideas. Improving career services for social work students was a central focus for the conference, specifically enhancing career development in the social work profession through field education and alumni/employer relations.

Participants represented schools of social work at Washington University in St Louis; the University of Alabama; the University of Pennsylvania; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; the University of Southern California; the University of Chicago; Ohio State University; the University of Texas at Austin; West Chester University of Pennsylvania; the University of California, Los Angeles; Indiana University; Dominican University; the University of Maryland; Boston College; and the University of Michigan.

Conference attendees were exposed to a wide variety of topics, including salary negotiation, coaching, careers in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, alumni relations in career development, career pathways in policy and macro practice, and LinkedIn. The consortium also held its annual business meeting, which included a strategic planning session for the 2017–18 academic year.

Throughout the entire conference, best practices were shared and schools showcased their signature programs to foster collaboration and creativity in career services programming.

The consortium met again in October 2017 at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting in Dallas, Texas.

For consortium membership information, please contact Bobby Simmons at bobby@pitt.edu.

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Director of Career Services/VanKirk Career Center, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work
Crisis on Main Street

When Opioid Addiction Hits Home

By LaMont Jones Jr.

Treetops sway in the breeze on a balmy late summer afternoon in a small rural community about 30 miles northwest of Pittsburgh. On an attractive campus-style complex just off a highway, several adults socialize on a wooden deck while others toss a ball on a nearby lawn as laughter and chirping birds punctuate a serene quietness.

Since 1972, this former farm has been the site of Gateway Rehab, where medical experts, licensed professional counselors, and social workers help people caught in the grips of the national opioid addiction and overdose epidemic. The public health crisis is dominating national and local headlines as the death toll climbs—every 33 days sees a number of deaths comparable to the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

“It’s a national crisis, certainly, and in Western Pennsylvania, it’s absolutely a regional crisis,” says Neil Capretto, Gateway Rehab’s medical director and a national authority on the topic. “I’ve watched it develop literally on a day-by-day basis over the last 20 years. When I finished my psychiatry residency in 1985, there were two drug overdose deaths in Allegheny County that year. There were 650 last year. That’s a nightmare. And surrounding counties are seeing similar trends. If we had a serial killer killing 1/10 of that, the National Guard and CNN would be coming in. We do have a serial killer, and it’s addiction. It’s killing our neighbors, our family members, [and] our coworkers, and it does not discriminate by age or ethnicity or where you live.”

Fueled by a rise in the use of heroin and prescription pain medications, opioid abuse has grown quietly into a beastly juggernaut that has thrust itself into the public spotlight. The nation’s foremost public health officials are declaring it the worst drug crisis in U.S. history.

The numbers associated with the impact of opioid addiction and overdose are alarming. Last year, nationwide, the number of overdose deaths caused by heroin (an opiate) outstripped deaths due to gun violence, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). On an average day, 91 Americans die from an overdose of heroin or another opioid and 3,900 people start nonmedical use of prescription opioids. Additionally, heroin-related deaths more than tripled from 2010 to 2015, and approximately 12.5 million Americans abused prescription opioids in 2015.

Closer to home, reported opioid overdose deaths in Allegheny County, Pa., increased from 234 in 2008 to 650 last year, with 480 as of October 29, 2017, according to OverdoseFreePA, a partnership of Pennsylvania communities dedicated to fighting the opioid overdose crisis.

Capretto also highlights a critical need for help for individuals and families impacted by a health issue that demands medical intervention and treatment.

“Social workers are trained and positioned to make a big difference because they are taught to see the bigger picture of not just an individual using drugs but a person in the context of a society with problems and an individual with problems.”

— Neil Capretto
“Capretto, who cochaired a national task force that issued a report on the crisis in 2014, has watched the current crisis unfold over the decades. The needle-injected heroin that once ravaged urban inner-city landscapes in the 1970s eventually became available in cheaper forms imported by drug cartels, variations that could be snorted and over time became a less-expensive, easier-to-get alternative to the prescription pain pills that were the primary causes of opioid addiction among suburban and rural populations.

And so opioid addiction and overdoses “reached a magnitude that was hard to ignore—it hit Main Street, America,” Capretto says. “It’s hard to find anybody who hasn’t been impacted or doesn’t know somebody close to them who has been impacted by the opioid crisis.”

More than a Public Health Issue

Addressing the crisis is a social justice issue in more ways than one and has a lot to do with the issue of race, says Pitt associate professor of social work and associate dean for research Gerald Cochran. Although opioid addiction and deaths cut across all social strata, there is a public perception (with which Cochran agrees) that the issue did not receive significant attention and response until the children of upper-class Whites began dying from overdoses.

Meanwhile, public health issues that primarily affect less-privileged social groups haven’t received the same urgent response, “which is problematic right now in the United States” given recent flare-ups of racial division, Cochran contends.

In the thick of the response are social workers, who witness the ravages and devastation as they work at the forefront of aiding those affected.

“I left school with basic group and individual counseling skills and the understanding of addiction as an illness,” says Ellen Corona, clinical manager at Gateway Rehab’s Green Tree location since 1999. “My degree prepared me to become a therapist at Gateway 32 years ago. At the time, opioid use was not nearly as prevalent as it is now. While we have always educated our clients about the disease concept of addiction and taught them that addiction can be fatal if left untreated, I don’t think anything could have prepared me for the large numbers of clients we’ve been losing to overdose deaths in the last few years.”

Corona’s role is a whirlwind of activity: orienting, training, and supervising staff, interns, and volunteers; providing case consultations; solving problems; performing daily documentation audits of electronic medical records; monitoring staff and managed care authorizations; conducting routine safety and emergency management drills and inspections; and coping with client deaths.

“I think the current opioid overdose epidemic is one of the most serious health crises this country has ever faced,” she says. “We have lost clients of every race, gender, and socioeconomic background. Almost every day, a client comes in and mentions someone dying. People are losing someone all the time. It’s scary and it’s sad. It has reinforced my belief that opiates are too accessible and that alternatives for pain management are needed.”

The crisis has compelled Gateway Rehab and other service providers to think beyond the traditional abstinence-based model of recovery from addiction.

“It became clear in the last few years that the traditional model was not successful with many of our clients addicted to opiates,” says Corona. “Our clients were dying. That was a very powerful realization that caused me to have a shift in my thinking about what we could and should be doing differently.”

A big result was the introduction of medication-assisted treatment, which involves the use of medications such as Revia and Vivitrol alongside long-standing approaches to treatment such as education, intensive therapy, and 12-step programs like Narcotics Anonymous.

“Many of our staff have struggled with this shift, as have many in the recovering community,” says Corona. “For me, I believe that every day we keep someone [who is] addicted to opiates alive and functional is a win.”
The opioid epidemic is an unusual drug crisis in that it significantly impacts all age ranges. While fatal overdoses increased nationally among all age cohorts from 2010 to 2015, according to CDC, the greatest increase was among adults ages 55–64, and the highest overall rates were in the 45–54 age bracket.

Those facts underscore a need for special attention to older persons addicted to opioids, says Daniel Rosen, David E. Epperson Professor of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh, who has an interest in studying addiction in the aging population.

"Older adults who have been overprescribed pain medications are at particular risk," he observes, noting that more than 15 percent of opioid overdose deaths in Allegheny County since 2008 have been people age 55 and older and that nearly one-fourth of such deaths in the county in 2016 were adults ages 45–54.

"Limited resources exist for addiction treatment for older adults, and it is a vulnerable population that is often socially isolated," Rosen points out. "In order to adequately address the opioid epidemic, multiple social service and health care agencies will need to be adequately trained to screen for and treat opioid misuse."

In addition, he recommends that social workers in various social service settings be trained to address the opioid epidemic and its nuances. "There is a ripple effect across the human service sector from foster care to older adult services that are being impacted by this crisis. Social workers, with their training in interdisciplinary care and collaboration, are well poised to play a critical role in addressing this epidemic."

Social workers, Corona adds, can address the problem before it gets to the point of dealing with broken families, workplace problems, and other repercussions of addiction, overdose, and death. A key component is becoming educated about addiction "so as to recognize the signs and symptoms and make appropriate referrals for treatment as early as possible," she says.

Social workers tend to serve many roles, and the opioid crisis is testing that ability, observes Cheryl Cooper (MSW '00), a therapist at JADE Wellness Center in Monroeville, Pa., which provides outpatient treatment and has been addressing opiate addiction since its opening in 2010.

"We very often wear a number of different hats," notes Cooper. "We are case managers, educators, [and] prevention specialists. We [wear all those hats] for all of our clients. I think the advantage that social workers have over licensed professional counselors is we have more knowledge and avenues about how to access those core basic needs of a client. People come to us with a lot of needs. If someone doesn’t have food or shelter, no amount of therapy in the world will fix the addiction. Basic needs have to be met, like health insurance and a safe place to live."

"I’ve never seen it this bad," Cooper says. "But I love what I do. I focus on the positive outcomes, rather than dwell on the negatives, because if I did that, I would drown—because almost daily, I hear about an overdose death."

Federal help has increased for Cooper and others in the trenches. Medicaid expansion under President Barack Obama’s Affordable Care Act, as well as the standing order for naloxone (Narcan) signed by Allegheny County Health Department Director Karen Hacker in 2015, increased access for many without insurance who otherwise could not afford treatment. The standing order allows any licensed pharmacy in the county that chooses to participate to dispense naloxone to individuals at risk of a heroin- or opioid-related overdose or those who may witness one. And last spring, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced it would award $485 million in federal grants to all states and U.S. territories to address the crisis. In August, following a report issued by the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, President Donald Trump declared the problem a national emergency and pledged more money to federal agencies and states to implement the panel’s recommendations, which included making overdose antidotes more widely available and waiving some health regulations to ease access to intervention and treatment.

The heightened attention and increased resources in recent years have been hailed by those in the field.

"We cannot arrest our way out of this problem," Gateway Rehab’s Capretto warns, echoing other experts. "It’s a public health crisis, which involves many things."

At the Gateway Rehab flagship facility in Aliquippa, Pa., which opened in 1972, Capretto works with multiple patients each day, as about 300 addicts are admitted each month. Administration was moved to a building in a nearby town six years ago so that the space could be transformed into a 28-bed inpatient detox center, which usually is filled and has a
The opioid overdose crisis is as personal as it is professional for many social workers, including Christina Urie (MSW ’09), an outpatient therapist at Pittsburgh Mercy.

“I have known several people who have passed from overdose and had multiple clients who have overdosed and died,” says Urie, a native of Connellsville, Pa. “I have on multiple occasions needed to be the person to tell my group that a group member has passed and then deal with what this brings up in others. It is hard not to become numb because you hear of it happening so frequently, especially in helping clients who feel numb due to the sheer number of people they know who overdose. It keeps me aware that this struggle is real and that one bad choice is all it takes.”

Pittsburgh Mercy regularly provides internships for University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work students, and Urie interned there herself from September 2008 to April 2009. The real-world experiences complemented her classroom education, she says, and allowed her to practice what she was learning from professors who are active in the field of social work and who can “better relate the education to how we would use it in the workforce.” Urie joined Pittsburgh Mercy full time one month after graduating and now is part of a new program created to address the opioid epidemic.

“The Substance Use Disorder Team was launched in November 2016 to have an updated approach to delivering care based on population needs rather than site-based services,” says program administrator Kevin Gallagher. Gallagher’s role has been to build and manage an outpatient therapist team that focuses on serving the rising number of people experiencing substance use disorders. Since its inception, the team has served approximately 1,200 people seeking addiction treatment.

“I would say we are seeing about half of our people, at the least, have some history of issues with opioids,” says Gallagher.

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)—which uses maintenance drugs such as methadone, Suboxone, and naltrexone to ease withdrawal from heroin and prescription drugs that contain other opiates—has become a valuable method of helping individuals to battle opiate addiction, says Gallagher.

Continued on page 12
“We are trying to come up with procedures and work flows for communicating with the doctors who are prescribing the medications but are not part of Pittsburgh Mercy,” he explains. “That is all piggybacking off of our creation and implementation of an integrated MAT program within Pittsburgh Mercy, where we will be able to induce and maintain people on Suboxone while giving psychotherapeutic treatment all under the same umbrella.”

Gallagher also is coordinating the addition of care management and case management services, along with nurse health navigators and peer support, to best meet the varied needs of clients served. He says that he is excited about the potential benefits of the integrated MAT program, which launched in September 2017, saying that it promises to more fully serve people on an outpatient basis while reaching other highly vulnerable populations, such as people served on the streets by Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net and Mercy’s Community Support Services teams.

New and effective approaches to addressing the opioid epidemic require social workers, perhaps now more than ever, to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and to think outside the box.

“We all need to start realizing that we can’t keep our services ‘siloed’ from one another,” says Gallagher. “We need to coordinate our efforts. So whether you are working specifically in drug and alcohol treatment or you are working in community housing, primary care, or in any number of agencies and companies, everyone needs to work together. Addiction can affect every aspect of a person’s life, so it’s not as simple as just focusing on that one form of treatment.”

Additionally, he says, social workers must stay updated about all resources available to individuals affected by addiction, including programs such as MAT and harm-reduction methods.

**Addiction of Body and Mind**

Corresponding with the growth of the opioid epidemic is the demand for social workers to serve individuals who have a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance use disorders. This is clear to Associate Dean for Research Gerald Cochran, who has been studying various aspects of the opioid crisis.

“People with preexisting conditions like substance abuse are at higher risk,” Cochran says, adding that often doctors do not screen patients for mental or behavioral health issues before prescribing medication containing an opiate.

“To get methadone or one of the other two prime medical treatments, people should also be getting behavioral health counseling,” Cochran says. “So there’s a huge need within the system for providers to meet the needs of this population. And social workers do the lion’s share of that work in most states in the country.”

Urie says that the majority of her clients have a dual diagnosis, and Erin Kelly (MSW ’16) has faced the same reality during her internship at Pittsburgh Mercy and her tenure there since. Kelly says that she feels equipped to meet the challenges.

“I jumped right into doing group and individual psychotherapy as an intern and continued on as a full-time outpatient therapist immediately after graduation,” she says. “If anything, my experiences have strengthened my decision to be a social worker. Going into the field, I had the belief that I wouldn’t really know if I could hack it until I actually experienced being a full-time social worker. The education, self-care, and preparation are important, but the hands-on experience is a whole other level.”

Like Urie, Kelly personally knew people who died from an overdose and has had to deal with that while trying to prevent the same thing from happening to her clients.

“In this day and age, unfortunately, almost everyone is affected by opioid addiction in some way,” says Kelly. “It’s scary, but the more we stigmatize addiction and minimize emotional health, the more we are pushing people away from the help that is out there.”

Both women say that despite the personal challenges of social work and helping people in crisis to navigate choppy waters, they are more committed to the field than ever.

“Having the chance to help others improve themselves has been a wonderful opportunity that I feel social work and being a therapist have brought to me and fuel my desire to stay in the field even when it is difficult,” says Urie. “My education helped to get me thinking and, I feel, has kept me thinking about the roles I can play.”
2016 death of pop star Prince that is 50 times stronger than pure heroin—grew an alarming 74 percent from 2014 to 2015.

Patrick Bibza, a Pitt student who interned at Gateway Rehab under Corona’s supervision, decided to join the fight against the opioid crisis by earning a master’s degree in social work with an emphasis on mental health, particularly drug and alcohol treatment. The journey began with his own struggle with opioid addiction.

After graduating from high school in a small community about 30 miles northeast of Pittsburgh and prior to earning a bachelor’s degree in behavioral health from Point Park University, Bibza joined the U.S. Navy. A week before his deployment in 2008, he sustained a severe knee injury that required two surgeries. During that time, he had his first use of an opiate in the form of a doctor-prescribed pain medicine. Bibza pinpoints that event as the beginning of a long struggle with addiction.

“I saw a lot of substance abuse in and out of the service,” he says, adding that he has witnessed numerous relatives and friends struggle with opioid and various other types of addiction.

Complicating the matter was Bibza’s personal fight to resist the lure of alcohol, which he hopes to do on a broader scale as he witnesses the powerful effect of media images on youth perceptions of drug use and drinking.

“Alcohol has always been something exciting to me, easily available, thrown in your face,” he says. “I developed a core belief that in order to have fun, you need to drink. That message is sent to lots of kids who don’t know the consequences.”

During Bibza’s second internship at Gateway Rehab, he assisted with group therapy for adolescents each day and cofacilitated an adult therapy group once a week.

“The biggest thing I’ve come to learn and completely agree with is that addiction is a disease,” says Bibza.

He counts at least 10 friends, all under the age of 25, who have died from a drug overdose. And with every funeral comes a growing desire to help prevent more overdose deaths.

“I want to see my friends stop dying,” he says. “Every time I go to a funeral, I wish I could have helped them. What confuses them is that [addiction] is their choice, but it is a disease. I have someone very close to me who is in recovery and doing extremely well. Her story started as most do, with the overprescribing of pain medications and without a step-down system from the meds or proper addiction education or therapy. It gets to the point where people aren’t getting high to cope any more, they are buying and using just in order to survive and not be ‘dope sick.’ A lot of people don’t understand just how bad that feeling is and how long it lasts, but also there is always the very real possibility that [what you are about to use] will kill you.”

Bibza is angered by negative public perceptions and stigma about addiction and those who grapple with it. His view, shared by experts in the field, is that compassion, treatment, and support are the cures rather than disdain, disparagement, and imprisonment.

“If you haven’t been there, you don’t know what they’re going through,” says Bibza. “A lot of addicts do terrible things, but that’s not who they are. It’s the drug, not the person. One thing I hear a lot about addicts is, ‘They just need to stop.’ It’s not just stopping but doing other things.”

It’s doing the kind of things that Gateway Rehab, JADE, Pittsburgh Mercy, and similar agencies help to provide. It’s doing the kind of things that Bibza hopes to offer one day on a large scale. As a recovering addict, he says, he has to avoid bars, concerts, sporting events, and other places where alcohol is served—and he knows many people who have to avoid those venues as well.

Armed with education and experience, he says that his life calling is to establish “hundreds if not thousands of centers that allow addicts to come together and watch sporting events, shoot pool, and throw darts—do the things that they love doing but without drugs and alcohol being shoved in their face.”

There is necessarily much focus on the disease of addiction, says Bibza, but he wants to start “a disease of recovery. Recovery needs to be fun. There isn’t a place for people in healthy recovery to live their lives. There should be places where addicts can come together every day and help each other and enjoy life again.”
Expanding Our Research Agenda
by Valire Carr Copeland

The health disparities agenda of the past 20 years has had an important influence on my work. My research agenda initially focused on prenatal care, access to quality gynecological and obstetric health care, childhood immunizations, and community health services. It now has expanded to examine the biopsychosocial impact of chronic disease diagnosis on African American women and workforce training.

Most recently, my collaborators and I have been examining the extent of change in women’s health status given the funded research investigations that would result in findings that would allow us to develop health promotion programs to bridge racial and ethnic disparities in the health status of women of color. Two recent projects whose findings will contribute to women’s health are an examination of major depression and cardiovascular disease and a meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials for breast cancer screening. Both projects focus on African American women. My funded projects focus on workforce training for integrated behavioral health care.

My colleagues and I examined the co-occurring existence of major depressive disorder (MDD) and cardiovascular disease (CVD) in a nationally representative sample of African American women. Our secondary data analysis of the National Survey of American Life found high rates of MDD and CVD in the sample, and African American women with MDD were 1.59 times more likely to have CVD compared to those without MDD. High rates of MDD/CVD comorbidity appeared for those African American women living in and not living in poverty. These women demonstrated greater functional impairment and were high users of mental health services.

In another project, Effectiveness of Interventions for Breast Cancer Screening in African American Women: A Meta-analysis, my colleagues and I conducted a meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials in breast cancer screening for African American women. Our findings suggest targeted screening interventions are at least minimally effective for promoting mammography among African American women, but research in this area is limited to a small number of studies. Although no patient or study characteristics significantly moderated screening efficacy, the most effective interventions were those specifically tailored to meet the perceived risk of African American women. More research is needed to enhance the efficacy of existing interventions and reduce the high morbidity and mortality rates in this underserved population.

The School of Social Work continues to strengthen its health curriculum with funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to integrate adolescent substance abuse screening, brief intervention, and treatment throughout our MSW program, and our Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training for Social Work program continues to prepare MSW students to meet the needs of youths in integrated health care settings.

“MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED TO ENHANCE THE EFFICACY OF EXISTING INTERVENTIONS AND REDUCE THE HIGH MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY RATES IN THIS UNDERSERVED POPULATION.”

Valire Carr Copeland, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Associate Director of the Public Health Social Work Training Program, and faculty affiliate in the Center for Health Equity at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health
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BOOK CHAPTERS


BOOKS


PRESENTATIONS


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FACULTY NOTES

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Mary L. Ohmer with Ivery, J., and Allegra, S., “Preparing Community Practitioners to Collaborate with Communities to Address Global Issues,” CSWE 62nd Annual Program Meeting, Atlanta, Ga., November 2016.


WEBINARS


Christina Newhill, “Client Violence and Practitioner Safety,” invited interagency webinar presentation sponsored by Austin Travis County Integral Care, Austin, Texas, July 2016.

OP-EDS


GRANTS

Jaime Booth received a grant for “Neighborhood Risk and Protection for Substance Use among Low-Income Adolescents (K01)” from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Booth received a grant for “Exploring the Role of Ethnic Identity in Latino Youths’ Experience of Acculturation Stress and Its Health Outcomes in an Emerging Latino Community” from the Center on Race and Social Problems.

Gerald Cochran is the principal investigator on the Opioid Epidemic: Practice and Policy Efforts, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse for 2017–19. The purpose of the project is to develop, assess, and demonstrate feasibility/acceptability of a community pharmacy-based intervention for opioid medication misuse.

Valire Carr Copeland is the principal investigator on Gender, Disability, and Religion: An Interprofessional Training Workshop, which received Year of Diversity funding from the University of Pittsburgh Office of the Provost in spring 2017.

Mary Ohmer and Booth are the coprincipal investigators on Barriers to Fair Housing Choice in the City of Pittsburgh: A Qualitative Study, funded by the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations from April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018.

Ohmer, Booth, and Rosta Farzan are the coprincipal investigators on We Are Strong! Leveraging Information Technology to Empower Marginalized Communities, funded by the University of Pittsburgh Office of the Vice Provost for Research’s Integrative Social Science Research Initiative from March 1, 2017, to May 31, 2018.

Ohmer was the principal investigator for the Hewlett International Grant Program, funded by the University of Pittsburgh University Center for International Studies for international research in Ghana in spring 2016.

HONORS/AWARDS

Gerald Cochran received the 2017 New Investigator/Educator Award from the Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse.

Larry E. Davis received the 2017 Richard Lodge Prize from Adelphi University School of Social Work.

Davis received the 2016 National Distinguished Social Work Leadership Award from the Touro College Graduate School of Social Work.

Davis received the 2016 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Significant Lifetime Achievement in Social Work Education Award at the CSWE Annual Program Meeting in Atlanta, Ga.

Mary E. Rauktis received a fall 2017 Core Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program grant to teach and conduct research at the University of Porto in Portugal.

Rauktis will receive the inaugural Florence Stier Research Development Award for her research proposal, “Animal Ownership in Food-insecure Households: Is There a Relationship between Human and Animal Food Insecurity?” The Florence Stier Research Development Award is an endowment that has been provided to the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work to support faculty research and development with a two-year $15,000 research award.

Rauktis was coeditor of a special issue of the Journal of Emotional and Behavior Disorders published in March 2017.
PUBLICATIONS


PRESENTATIONS

**Valerie Hruschak**, “Integrated Psychosocial Interventions for Chronic Pain and Comorbid Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders” and “Psychosocial Predictors in the Transition from Acute to Chronic Pain: A Systematic Review,” International Association for the Study of Pain 16th World Congress on Pain, Yokohama, Japan, September 2016.

Hruschak with Cochran, G., and Wasan, A., “Psychosocial Interventions for Chronic Pain and Comorbid Opioid...


PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Kai Wei served as cochair, ECPN Session II: How Do You Use Social Media in Prevention Research? at the Society for Prevention Research 25th Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., in May/June 2017.

HONORS/AWARDS

Valerie Hruschak was a finalist for the 2017 Pain Research Challenge through the Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) at the University of Pittsburgh. Awards are funded by the Virginia Kaufman Endowment Fund and CTSI.

Jessica Wojtalik was presented with a New Investigator Award at the American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology 2017 Annual Meeting, held May 29–June 2 in Miami Beach, Fla.
The University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) hosted a reception on September 12 that celebrated its 15th anniversary. Many friends and supporters, including Chancellor Patrick Gallagher, Chancellor Emeritus Mark Nordenberg, Provost Emeritus James Maher, and law firm and foundation partners, as well as many other friends, were in attendance.

2002–2007

In 2002, CRSP was founded in partnership with the generous support of then Provost James Maher and the University of Pittsburgh. By 2007, the center had a full staff, with Larry E. Davis as director, an associate director, an administrative assistant, and three postdoctoral fellows. Through the generous support of two Pittsburgh law firms, Reed Smith LLP and Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC, the center was able to begin offering two of the most popular lecture series at the University, the CRSP Fall and Spring lecture series, which highlight race scholars, community leaders, and award-winning writers and attracts some of the most diverse audiences seen at Pitt.

During its first five years of operation, the center established its seven core areas of focus: economic disparities; educational disparities; mental health; interracial group relations; families, youth, and the elderly; health; and criminal justice.

In its first five years, CRSP funded 29 pilot studies and completed 19 externally funded projects. It hosted 22 Summer Institutes that delivered relevant and practical research into the hands of policymakers.

2007–2012

In association with Springer International Publishing AG, the center began publishing the journal *Race and Social Problems* in 2009. The journal has become tremendously successful, and in 2016, it was ranked in the 92nd percentile of anthropology journals.

In 2010, the center hosted the national conference Race In America: Restructuring Inequality, which featured the most solution-focused dialogue on race ever held. During 2012, the center began its community partnership with the Homewood Children’s Village in Homewood, a predominantly Black neighborhood in Pittsburgh. Each year, CRSP supports up to eight fellows who work one on one with children who struggle with social, emotional, and family issues that adversely affect their ability to function in school. The fellows are able to provide these children with resources, coping strategies, and practical help.

2012–2017

During the summer of 2017, CRSP offered three Summer Institutes. The annual Race and Child Welfare Summer Institute was held June 7 and 8 to a sellout audience of child welfare professionals from across the country. This year, the topic was national and local perspectives on the intersections that highlight race scholars, community leaders, and award-winning writers and attracts some of the most
among immigrants, human trafficking, and social services. Featured speakers included Pittsburgh City Councilman Dan Gilman and Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, who both spoke about Pittsburgh’s commitment to immigrants and refugees as a matter of principle and policy. Yolanda Padilla from the University of Texas at Austin and Rowena Fong were keynote speakers on days one and two. Diego Chaves-Gnecco described his experiences in setting up a medical/social work clinic for immigrant children at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and Dawn Brubaker of Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Pittsburgh conducted a workshop on understanding immigrant cultures.

The Policy and Community Summer Institute also attracted a full-capacity crowd of law enforcement professionals and featured City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Chief Scott E. Schubert; acting United States Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania Soo C. Song; and University of Pittsburgh law professor David A. Harris, who also hosts local 90.5 WESA’s Criminal (In)justice podcast. Presentations and workshops on recognizing and avoiding bias were provided by the Pittsburgh Police academy training team.

The segregation Summer Institute focused on national and local perspectives on residential segregation and its related issues: education, health, and the law. Jacob Rugh of Brigham Young University, and Claudia Colton of Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University provided the keynote addresses. A diverse audience attended a variety of panels and workshops offered throughout each day.

This fall, CRSP welcomed the new cohort of Homewood Children’s Village fellows—Tulleesha Burbage (MSW), Abbey Hall (MSW), Aisha Pier (MSW), Felicia Campbell (MSW), Lora Kay (MSW), Belen Montanez (MSW), and Rachael Popcak (MSW). We wish them well in their important work.

We also congratulate the winners of the Annual CRSP student paper awards. The undergraduate prize went to Devin Rutan (MSW/JD) for a paper titled “Food Oases: A Case Study of East Liberty” and written for a course taught by Waverly Duck. The master’s prize went to student Allison Hall, whose paper, “The Language of Osama bin Laden: How Language Is Used as a Proxy for Race in Discrimination Against Arabic Speakers in the United States” was written for a course taught by Jasmine Gonzales Rose. The doctoral-level prize was awarded to Kess Ballentine for his paper, “A Theoretical Analysis of Oppositional Defiance Disorder and Attention-Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder by Race,” written for a course taught by John Wallace of the School of Social Work. Congratulations, students and faculty!

When the center began operating, many people questioned the need for a center devoted to race-related issues, falsely believing that we had become a postracial society. The presidential election of 2016 and the subsequent recent events clearly show that the work of the center is needed now more than ever. During 2016, we held a memorial reception and panel discussion honoring the late civil rights leader Julian Bond, who said in a speech he made at the center in 2010:

“The truth is that Jim Crow may be dead, but racism is alive and well. That is the central fact of life for every non-White American, including the president of the United States, eclipsing income, position, and education. Race trumps them all.”

THE FUTURE

In some respects, it seems that race relations in our country have gotten worse. Yet, if we take a broader, more historical perspective, there clearly has been significant progress. However, what many of us have come to realize is that the problems of racism were greater than we had thought. Those of us who are at the forefront of this struggle must refuse to be demoralized. It is true that racism is still very much in the fabric of our society, but we at CRSP believe that the arc of justice is on our side.

The center is committed to sustaining its focus and efforts. We do sincerely appreciate the support we receive from so many of you, and we promise to continue to do our part to help make America a more just and equitable society.
A Message from the Office of Development

As you may now know, the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work is celebrating its 100th anniversary this academic year. Our centennial celebration is truly remarkable when you reflect back on the significance and impact of our school and of our graduates. We are so fortunate that you are a part of our history!

But we need your help.

E-mail me at tony.gacek@ia.pitt.edu to share your Pitt Social Work story with us. We’re collecting testimonies, reflections, and pictures of your time at Pitt and what social work means to you. By sharing your thoughts and images, you can help us to put together the tapestry of 100 years of Pitt Social Work and set a course for our future.

We know that you have great memories from your time at Pitt, and we are sincere when we say we want to hear them. Please take 10 minutes out of your schedule to share with us what Pitt Social Work means to you. Then take a few more to dig back through your old photos—we know you have them! Nothing tells our story better than the personal feedback and pictures from you. We’ll be sharing alumni responses throughout the centennial celebration, and we can’t wait to see what you have to share.

And as for the pictures, well, we hope you were having a good hair day!

In celebration,

Tony Gacek
Director of Development
412-624-8604
tony.gacek@ia.pitt.edu

COSA Alumni Receive Major Awards

Two Community, Organization, and Social Action (COSA) alumni from the School of Social Work received major awards over the summer for their outstanding work. The School of Social Work congratulates them on their well-deserved honors.

David Coplan (BASW ’91, MSW ’93) received the Human Services Management Exemplar Award for “excellence in human service organization leadership and management” from the Network for Social Work Management. This international organization seeks to advance social work management competencies, and the Exemplar Award recognizes a human service leader whose work reflects and advances those competencies. Coplan was nominated by his friend, colleague, and mentor at the school, Tracy Soska. In addition to practicing excellence in social work management, Coplan also teaches an MSW course in social administration that he developed at the school that embodies the network’s human services management competencies. Coplan was recognized for his leadership and management of the Human Services Center Corporation, which also has received awards for excellence as a nonprofit organization, including the Forbes Funds’ Wishart Award for Nonprofit Excellence. Coplan received his Exemplar Award at the Network for Social Work Management’s Annual Management Conference on June 15, 2017, in New York, N.Y., at Fordham University. In July 2017, Coplan was featured on the Network of Social Work Management’s Monday Morning Manager weekly blog. You can learn more at socialworkmanager.org.

Carl Redwood Jr. (MSW ’87) was the recipient of the Thomas Merton Center’s NewPerson Award for 2017 for his outstanding community, labor, and progressive organizing in the region. The Thomas Merton Center is a leading catalyst for social and environmental justice in the region. Redwood was feted at a dinner celebration on June 26, 2017, at the jam-packed National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 84 hall on Pittsburgh’s North Side. For many years, Redwood taught community organizing at the School of Social Work. His award recognized his work as a community organizer codirecting the Hill District Consensus Group and leading the One Hill Coalition to secure a community benefits agreement with the Pittsburgh Penguins around their development in the lower Hill and for his tireless work for affordable housing, racial and economic justice, and labor/community coalition building, including adjunct and faculty organizing at Pitt and in the city. Redwood presented a stirring acceptance speech on the need for a new progressive political party in our city and the current effort to establish it. Redwood will be a featured speaker this fall in the School of Social Work Speaker Series.
IN MEMORIAM

Eileen Carlins (BASW '00, MSW '01) passed away on March 24, 2017, after a long illness. Following her graduation from the MSW program at the School of Social Work, Carlins joined Sudden Infant Death Syndrome of Pennsylvania as its director of support and education. There she developed a safe sleep curriculum that she taught to nursing students, childcare providers, hospital and health department employees, and other members of the community, and she was part of the organization’s effort to create Cribs for Kids, Inc., a program aimed at providing educational resources on safe sleep and cribs to mothers who could not otherwise afford them. She also developed the Healing Hearts Infant Bereavement Resources program, which provides support to families who have suffered the loss of an infant.

Carlins was a field instructor for the School of Social Work and served as president of the School of Social Work Alumni Society from 2014 to 2017.

Stay Connected to the School of Social Work!

Pitt Career Network

Register to serve as a mentor to a current student or to network with fellow alumni.

The Pitt Career Network is an online networking service for Pitt alumni and students that provides the opportunity to discuss careers and job prospects, learn about your field in new places, have a positive impact on someone’s future, and make valuable connections with other alumni.

For more information and to sign up, visit alumni.pitt.edu/alumni/resources/career-resources.

We Are Looking for You!

The School of Social Work is seeking alumni who might be interested in becoming field instructors for our students.

BASW and MSW interns provide more than 300,000 hours of service to agencies and organizations like yours every year. Being a mentor is a very rewarding experience and gives you a hand in educating and preparing the next generation of social workers for service.

If you are interested in becoming a field instructor, please visit socialwork.pitt.edu/academic-programs/field-education for more information.

Keep Us Updated!

Have you become a member of the Pitt Alumni Association’s online community?

This online service exists to help alumni connect with each other and with the University. Here you can locate and reach out to other Pitt alumni. If you have been out of touch with your alma mater, you can update your contact information to begin receiving Pitt news and other materials.

Check out the Pitt Alumni Association online community at alumni.pitt.edu/alumni/resources/alumni-resources.

Did You Know?

The VanKirk Career Center is open to alumni as well as students from the School of Social Work.

Our specialization in social work careers will provide you with the information and connections necessary to empower people, lead organizations, and grow communities. The VanKirk center hosts student and alumni networking events and career development workshops throughout the year. Our free job posting service provides employers with a direct connection to the region’s top talent.

Visit socialwork.pitt.edu/student-resources/career-services.php for full details on upcoming events or to schedule an appointment.
• **Ranked 10th** among graduate schools of social work by *U.S. News & World Report*

• Center on Race and Social Problems

• First community organizing program in the nation

• **Second-largest** child welfare program in the country

• Home to an **Innovative Community-Based Research Project**—the Homewood Children’s Village
All lectures are from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the School of Social Work Conference Center, 2017 Cathedral of Learning.

Lunch will be provided; registration is not required. For more information, visit socialwork.pitt.edu or call 412-624-6304.