

Nontraditional social work

Unique roles highlight the
diversity of the social work field



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK



COVER STORY

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The Stillman provides the latest news from The Ohio State University College of Social Work and highlights the ways in which our faculty, staff, alumni and students make a difference in our society.

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A note from the dean

“There is nothing like the energy of the faculty, staff and students of the College of Social Work.”

Hello, College of Social Work alumni and friends! I am delighted to introduce myself and share this fall edition of *The Stillman* with you.

My family and I have had a great time getting to know Columbus, Ohio State and the College of Social Work over the past months and indulging in all things Buckeye. I am impressed by the community on and off campus and feel welcomed here.

There is nothing like the energy of the faculty, staff and students of the College of Social Work. The passion we bring to advocacy and social justice, creating new knowledge through research, and impacting the community is palpable. I believe a driving force of this energy is a renewed sense of urgency, post-COVID, to help those most in need. Building on Dean Tom Gregoire's successful tenure, we are well positioned to face the next series of challenges and bring about necessary changes.

As we move forward, we must sharpen our focus on matters of diversity, equity and inclusion in all areas of our work. This focus will reach into our community engagement, our curriculum and all aspects of our research. Our students will look to us as leaders in this area, and we have much work to do.

As you read through this issue, you will see some of my vision for our college and how the strengths we possess will propel us forward to improve lives across the globe. You will also read how our alumni are employing nontraditional methods to expand social work's ability to serve and create change in communities. I am excited and honored to be part of this outstanding College of Social Work.

I enjoy learning what our alumni are doing. Feel free to send me an email at Jenkins.1443@osu.edu to let me know how you're changing the world.

David

David A. Jenkins, PhD
Dean



Continuing education series improves prevention efforts

The College of Social Work's Prevention Training Series is helping social workers and other human services professionals change the landscape of prevention in their communities.

Topics include prevention ethics, leveraging community partnerships, and understanding communications strategies and media in prevention.

The 11-course webinar series started in July and will conclude in December 2022. Participants who enrolled in the complete series could earn up to 16.5 CEs.

"Prevention education is a very important piece of the puzzle for social workers and others working in the human services field," says Sara Friedman, the college's director of continuing education.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Friedman and her team have developed new ways to help those in the field grow professionally. The Prevention Training Series builds upon that success, paving the way for improved prevention efforts across the country.

Learn more at csw.osu.edu/continuing-education/prevention-training-series. ■

"Prevention education is a very important piece of the puzzle for social workers and others working in the human services field."

SARA FRIEDMAN

A psychedelic revolution for the modern world



Dr. Alan Davis, director of the college's newly created Center for Psychedelic Drug Research and Education, addresses attendees at the Psychedemia Conference.

Dr. Alan Davis is conducting eye-opening work in the field of psychoactive substances and their ability to serve as therapeutic remedies for those in need.

While psychedelics have been commonly used and culturally significant throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, hesitation over their treatment effectiveness and natural medicinal properties has sparked vigorous debate, and often criticism.

Davis, who recently led a national survey focusing on the subject, found a disconnect between psychiatrists' perceptions about the therapeutic value of certain psychoactive drugs and the government's scheduling of those drugs.

"The problem is that our drug schedules don't match the scientific

evidence of their actual harm and their actual therapeutic and abuse potential," says Davis.

This disconnect is a battle that medical professionals continually face in their efforts to offer the best treatment for those suffering from a variety of disorders, including depression, PTSD and others.

While the disorders are far-reaching, Davis witnessed a glaring lack of support and therapies for suffering military veterans, including those in his family.

Davis' clinical psychology training in Veterans Affairs hospitals highlighted how veterans' service to their country can result in devastating mental health issues.

The experience led Davis to help shift the landscape and establish the Midwest's first major center of psychedelic research and education at Ohio State.

"Our drug schedules don't match the scientific evidence of their actual harm and their actual therapeutic and abuse potential."

ALAN DAVIS

Launched in March, the Center for Psychedelic Drug Research and Education (CPDRE) has created a new chapter in supportive medicine with an invitation to explore the use of various therapeutic methods and treatments using psychoactive substances.

CPDRE has helped to ignite a vital discussion that psychedelics do serve as a helpful tool for many. Psychedemia, an interdisciplinary symposium held at Ohio State in August, amplified that awareness, with attendees and collaborators attending from around the world.

Psychedemia had met only once before, in 2012 at the University of Pennsylvania. According to the symposium's website, it was the first such conference to be sponsored and funded by an academic institution since the resurgence of psychedelic research.

Davis' research and efforts such as Psychedemia have lifted the College of Social Work into a realm that no other social work program in the country is currently occupying. And with its proximity to the Wexner Medical Center, CPDRE has the opportunity for unprecedented reach and impact.

"If psychedelics are made available at the national level for medical purposes, then there will be a rapid shift in our cultural perspective, one that will need to integrate psychedelics and psychedelic-assisted therapy into our communities, families and mental health system," says Davis. ■

New dean shares vision for the college

Dean David A. Jenkins, PhD and LISW, has a vision to keep the College of Social Work on a path of continued success while helping it move to the next level. He is focused on creating student success, constructing stronger support for research and building a diverse, inclusive college.

"We are such a strong college,"

says Jenkins. "Our goal is to soon be ranked among the top 10 social work programs nationally."

Jenkins entered the profession after several years of working for a business. When the business was sold, he sought career counseling, which encouraged him to consider social work.

After interviewing a social work faculty member, he knew the field would be a great match for his values and interests. His passion for social work is steeped in years of witnessing the struggles of marginalized and vulnerable people, such as those struggling with identity issues and feelings of low self-worth and those coming out as gay or lesbian. Seeing people hurting spurred him to want to help.

Jenkins earned his doctorate in social work with a specialization in family therapy from Florida State University. He previously received a master's in social work from Louisiana State University, where he also had earned his bachelor's in business administration.

He came to Ohio State from the University of Louisville, where he had been a professor and dean of the Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work and Family Science since 2016. Before that, Jenkins served on the social work faculty of Texas Christian University for 25 years, including nine years as department chair.

"There are so many opportunities at The Ohio State University and the College of Social Work," Jenkins says. "We have a strong research infrastructure, and I want to build on it by adding high-level researchers who will help transform the landscape of social work knowledge and inform curriculum and practice."

"I also want to learn about the needs of our community and work across the university to create partnerships to meet



"We have a strong research infrastructure, and I want to build on it by adding high-level researchers who will help transform the landscape of social work knowledge and inform curriculum and practice."

DAVID A. JENKINS

those needs. These partnerships are part of our mission as a land grant institution and reflect our social work values. I am excited about this opportunity."

Jenkins plans to create a position of associate dean of diversity, equity and inclusion to elevate the importance of this work and expand the college's initiatives.

"I look forward to increasing diverse representation and leadership

opportunities in our student body, faculty and staff. Our social justice efforts are important for our campus, Columbus and across the globe," Jenkins says.

Jenkins' vision also includes expanding the college's undergraduate online options while supporting face-to-face experiences that are critical to the campus experience.

He adds, "The pandemic has changed our education and work landscape. We cannot go back to how it was before, but we can adapt, stay nimble, capitalize on hybrid opportunities and be ready to create new ones."

The dean strongly believes in the ability of the college's leadership team, faculty and staff to help make this vision a reality. As a leader who values being kind, respectful and transparent, he is well suited to succeed in moving the college to the next level.

Jenkins succeeds Dr. Tom Gregoire, who returns to teaching and research at the college after serving as dean for 13 years. ■

Patrice Palmer named NASW Social Worker of the Year



LICSW. “Her compassion, strength and perseverance are noteworthy, and her desire to empower the incarcerated to improve their circumstances is certainly worth honoring.”

In 2007 Palmer was one of the first BSSW students selected to take part in an editorial review writing project for the *Journal of Social Work*. The experience opened her eyes to the disproportionalities of people in poverty.

Today, Palmer is CEO of Chosen4Change, a nonprofit organization that she co-founded in 2010. Chosen4Change focuses on helping people navigate the criminal justice system prior to custody, during incarceration and as they reenter society. Palmer works with individuals, families, community partners and elected officials to educate them about the multiple challenges people within the system face.

Palmer also provides guidance to coworkers based on evidence-based practices, the NASW Code of Ethics and the values set forth by the social work community. Drawing on out-of-the-box thinking and personal experiences, Palmer has been able to guide her team across hurdles on both programmatic and administrative levels.

Palmer formerly was a reentry support specialist with the Franklin County Office of Justice Policies and Programs. There, she provided direct services to high-risk, dual-diagnosis women reentering the community from the Franklin County Correctional Center. She developed and implemented the national award-winning Pathway to Women’s Healthy Living program, which addressed females funneling in and out of the county jail with co-occurring mental health issues and opiate addiction.

Prior to that, Palmer worked at CompDrug Inc. as the founding therapeutic communities program director at the Chillicothe Correctional Institution, where she worked with male inmates with a history of criminogenic behaviors and substance abuse. Palmer was the operations manager for NISRE Inc., overseeing a transitional program assisting individuals reentering society with housing and support services.

“With reentry, if we can restore value, dignity and the worth of a person, we can return a more productive citizen back to society,” says Palmer.

“My work has been about educating everyone from state senators, city council members and county commissioners to universities and communities about the criminal justice system, justice reform and the social work profession.”

Palmer is a national trainer for PeaceLove, which uses the arts to create safe spaces for meaningful conversations about mental wellness. She serves on the board of the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition, is the former president of Raising the Bar prison ministries and continues to advocate for a variety of social justice issues.

In addition to being inducted into the 2019 CSW Hall of Fame, Palmer has received numerous awards. They include 2021 Ohio Social Worker of the Year, 2020 Ohio Southern Region 5 Social Worker of the Year, 2020 Social Justice Advocate of the Year, 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award from Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, 2018 Franklin County Employee of the Year, 2016 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award, and the 2016 Jerry Revish Restored Citizen of the Year Award.

Palmer, who received a full pardon from Ohio governor John Kasich in 2017, is working on the Expedited Pardon Project in partnership with current Ohio governor Mike DeWine’s office and Chosen4Change’s Campaign Pardon Me to assist others in their quest to obtain a full governor’s pardon.

“Our lives consist of what happens and what we decide that means. Patrice decided long ago to reauthor her life and tell instead a story of service to others,” says Dr. Tom Gregoire, College of Social Work dean emeritus.

“She is a model of courage, resilience and possibility who remains undeterred by stigma and other obstacles persons with her lived experience face in reclaiming their lives. It’s been a joy to watch her develop as a professional and a colleague, and I am grateful for her commitment to do such good in the world.” ■

“I just wanted to not do drugs anymore, not commit crimes anymore and not go to jail again,” says Dr. Patrice Palmer, 2022 NASW Social Worker of the Year.

“Getting an education was my path to doing this. Then it became about serving the people, raising voices and advocating for those who don’t know how to get the resources they need.”

When Palmer graduated from the College of Social Work with her BSSW in 2009 and MSW in 2010, her degrees became a catalyst for changing a past riddled with undiagnosed mental health issues, domestic violence and criminal activity. Instead of using her troubled history as a crutch, she began drawing upon her experiences with addiction, life challenges and the criminal justice system. Palmer also went on to earn a doctorate in divinity and theology from Word of Life Christian Fellowship.

The NASW award—the organization’s top honor—shines a spotlight on stellar achievements in the practice of social work by honoring a member who typifies the best of the profession’s values and successes. Palmer was recognized for her work in helping break the cycle of mass incarceration.

“Dr. Palmer is a true change agent for the incarcerated, their families and communities—particularly for those whom society ignores, stigmatizes, marginalizes or misunderstands,” said NASW CEO Angelo McClain, PhD,

2022 SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI

HALL OF FAME





DISTINGUISHED CAREER AWARDS

1 **LISA DURHAM** BSSW '88, MSW '97

Lisa Durham has helped transform the landscape of social work in Ohio with her contributions to the College of Social Work. Beginning as field director, Durham shifted her focus to overseeing fundraising, alumni connections, communications, continuing education, career services and much more.

Now, as assistant dean of strategic initiatives and community engagement, Durham has helped facilitate new visions and culture changes at Ohio State and in other Central Ohio organizations. She cites the creation of her dedicated team at the college as one of her proudest achievements.

Durham's career also includes 16 years with the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging, along with volunteering with the Suicide Prevention Hotline.

2 **JOHN R. GREGORY** MSW '06

As a licensed independent social worker with supervision designation, John R. Gregory is dedicated to opening doors for the underserved. Most recently, he has impacted the lives of aging members of the population as senior vice president of operations at LifeCare Alliance, one of Central Ohio's oldest and largest nonprofit organizations. LifeCare Alliance provides health and nutrition services to those in need from its service facilities in Columbus.

Gregory previously was the social service coordinator for South Side Learning and Development Center, which assists low-income families in the city.

He is now pursuing a doctorate in health care administration.

3 **LINDA POWERS KUNZE** MSW '90

During her graduate studies in the College of Social Work, Linda Powers Kunze maintained a clinical focus with a concentration in children and families. After graduation she joined MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland, specializing in pediatric abuse/neglect,

pediatric orthopedics, pediatric hematology/oncology and pediatric burn patients. For the MetroHealth Burn Foundation she developed programming for burn survivors, including camps, young adult retreats and mentor and scholarship programs.

Powers Kunze's service to those without a voice has impacted a variety of areas in Ohio, including her longtime work with the Cleveland Clinic in home-based medical social work with a specialty in palliative medicine.

4 **SHARON URQUHART RICHARDSON** MSW '76

After earning her master's degree from the College of Social Work, Sharon Urquhart Richardson moved to Liberia to join the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Her success in establishing the country's first school for the blind brought praise from Liberia's president and led to her appointment as director of family welfare. Her work continued with the creation of the SOS Children's Villages Liberia for orphans.

After she returned to the United States, Urquhart Richardson helped establish the nonprofit medical organization Operation Smile in Liberia. Her efforts were recognized with the Order of the Star of Africa, one of the country's highest honors.

Now retired, she continues to impact lives in her community and far beyond.

RECENT CAREER AWARD

5 **COLLEEN DEMPSEY** BSSW '10, MSW '12

Colleen Dempsey is the practice associate with the Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. She leads legislative advocacy efforts and has helped build support in the community and beyond for those with ethical and practice questions.

Dempsey believes advocacy work should be accessible to every social worker and client. Her dedication to achieving this goal, her work in equine-assisted psychotherapy at PBJ Connections and her previous work with Netcare's Community Crisis Response team illustrate how her efforts have changed lives in Ohio.

Are you sure that's social work?

THE NONCONFORMING DEGREE APPEARS IN THE MOST UNEXPECTED PLACES

*Let's talk about death, baby
Let's talk about you and me
Let's talk about all the good things
and the bad things
that may be
Let's talk abooooout death*

With apologies to hip-hoppers Salt-N-Pepa, who tried to normalize discussing carnal relations in their 1991 hit “Let’s Talk About Sex,” Lizzy Miles (MSW ’10) could easily have appropriated the lyrics as the theme song for her Death Cafes.

Miles and grad school friend Maria Johnson (MSW ’10) brought the Death Cafe concept to the United States in 2012, after it started in Switzerland in 2004. Their goal was to make it easier for people to talk about death.

Miles hosted 50 Cafes in the Columbus area before stepping aside shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic hit in February 2020. She continues to advise others who are interested in hosting.

Visitors to a Death Cafe can expect a little nosh, a little drink and a lot of chitchat about what the end of life looks like and means. It’s not a support group but more of a round-table discussion of how to best prepare for the end before it actually arrives.

Surreptitiously woven into the morbidity-focused klatches are the social work aspects of dealing with end-of-life issues, hospice care and more. Miles and Johnson felt these were important subjects rarely addressed in everyday discourse, and throwing the doors wide open to a death discussion seemed a good way to erase the taboo.



Participants discuss end-of-life issues at a Death Cafe in Columbus.

But Death Cafes serve another purpose—they’re a reminder that social work doesn’t have to conform or appear where one expects it in order to be worthwhile and effective. Think horse farms, veterinary medicine hospitals, the seats of government power and corporate America. It’s an ongoing list that encourages practitioners to use their social work degree in unexpected ways.

“Social workers have the training to facilitate conversations of all kinds,” says Miles. And she’s had them—at a casino table in Las Vegas, in a craft store, on an elevator—when people learned about her background in hospice care.

“Loving someone who dies changes you, and you want to process your thoughts,” says Miles, whose social work

experience helped her develop the Cafe guidelines. “I taught hosts how to be authentic, how to let the audience lead the conversation, how to indirectly facilitate with body language, and how to create a safe place where people felt they could open up to strangers.”

After attracting a lot of media attention early on, there now are Death Cafes in 81 countries. Miles recently consulted with a palliative physician who hopes to open one in Jakarta, Indonesia.

No matter where a Cafe pops up, the needs are the same: People want a safe space to talk and listen to others.

“People who haven’t been to a Death Cafe think they would be sad or morbid discussions,” Miles says. “But there’s usually laughter.”



SOOTHING THE PAIN

At the Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center, where Joelle Nielsen (MSW '98) used to run the Honoring the Bond program, the prescription for pet owners facing grief and loss is understanding and empathetic conversations.

Having a pet euthanized can be emotionally crushing. Making that choice because one can no longer financially support the pet's treatment—a predicament some owners find themselves in—adds a thick layer of guilt.

That's why the burgeoning field of veterinary social work is so important. Nielsen remembers the look on one pet owner's face after she reassured the owner that she knew she loved her dog.

"It's a 'you're not judging me' kind of relief," says Nielsen.

"I feel like my work covers all four pieces of vet social work: animal-assisted interventions, animal grief and loss, compassion fatigue, and the link between animal abuse and domestic violence."

BRITTANY LALLY

Social work involvement in vet med at Ohio State began in the late 1990s when Dr. Wendy Turner (MSW '95, PhD '98) coordinated a pet loss hotline manned by veterinary students. Dr. Jennifer Brandt (MSW '97, PhD '02) continued Turner's work and developed Honoring the Bond in 2001 so owners could talk in person about losing what is essentially a family member.

Nielsen led the program for 15 years, starting in 2007. Two years earlier she had been a client when she made the difficult decision to euthanize her cat.

She still keeps a record of that conversation as a reminder of how Brandt validated her thoughts without offering suggestions about how she should proceed. As an adult facing her first end-of-life decision, "it was helpful to have an outsider with a mental health background to talk to," Nielsen says.

Now that she's the one working with other pet owners, Nielsen understands her role is to help normalize their feelings. Because others also are going through the process, there is a well-worn path they can follow in terms of knowing what will happen and what kind of grief and emotions to expect. Still, it's an individualized approach because the predicament is different for every pet and owner; the situation might involve illness, untreatable behavioral or neurological issues, or the trauma of seeing a pet hit by a car or attacked by another animal.

Brittany Lally (MSW '20) sees such difficulties firsthand as community programs coordinator at Columbus Humane. Clients come through the door seeking pet food from the free pantry, more than 10,000 pounds of it a week overall. Or they use the Safe Haven and Charity Boarding programs when experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence or other circumstances.

As a social worker in a front-line position, Lally counsels people through tough decisions at perhaps the lowest point in their lives. For her, it's about ensuring that they can make it through that one day. That's also why she's thrilled that the College of Social Work plans to offer a veterinary social work certificate (see story on page 15).

"I feel like my work covers all four pieces of vet social work: animal-assisted interventions, animal grief and loss, compassion fatigue, and the link between

animal abuse and domestic violence," Lally says.

"I definitely didn't see lifting 50-pound bags of dog food in 90-degree heat in my five-year plan," she adds. "But working with animals and running a program that helps so many people at one time, I can feel the difference we're making here."

FINDING A FIT IN CORPORATE AMERICA

Demondre Peak (MSW '21) always wanted to serve the underdog. At first he thought he could do it as a lawyer, but he landed on social work as a better way to pursue his passion to help people from marginalized groups find opportunity.

Peak had a career path mapped out. As a first-generation college student through the Young Scholars Program, he wanted to create a pipeline so students of color could realize their dreams via postsecondary education. His plans changed when an ex-colleague threw Peak's name into the hat (unbeknownst to him) for a new position at Korn Ferry Charitable Foundation in Houston, Texas. More than 500 people applied to be the foundation's community engagement manager. Peak got the job.

"I always thought working in corporate America was the 'dark side.' It turned out to be the perfect fit," he says.

Leadership U for Humanity (LUFH), the free six-month program Peak oversees, provides underrepresented professionals with the tools and resources to take charge of their career progression. Peak is pleased with how many ways social work fits into his role.

CONTINUED, NEXT PAGE



Demondre Peak (MSW '21) found his social work home in corporate America.

Participants come from various underrepresented groups, including ones based on gender, sexual orientation, military service, neurodivergent status, minority status and more.

LUFH, which is valued at \$10,000 to \$15,000 per student, teaches “overlooked and undervalued professionals they deserve a life by design and not by default,” says Peak. Many graduate into new roles within their current company, in other companies or in totally different industries.

When Peak arrived at Korn Ferry, just two cohorts had finished LUFH. Now the 19th cohort is underway.

“From a macro-level perspective, social work has taught me how to build a program from scratch, particularly one that has the target audience in mind,” Peak says. “We have also made many program pivots from our assessments and surveys, which I’ve designed in part through my experience with evaluation projects.”

And finally, LUFH is infused with empathy, which is essential for the participants to feel they are in control because of their varied industries, geographies and backgrounds. Peak says social work taught him how to build authentic relationships. “This is necessary to transform them into the leaders they aspire to be.

“My advice to young social workers: Never box yourself in,” he says. “The world has a very limited view about where social workers can excel and inspire change. But the world needs you in every industry.”

TO THE CAPITOLS YOU MUST GO

The government, by its own definition, exists to serve all people. So it makes sense that social workers would and should be ensconced in the political arena.

Lucy Gettman (MSW, MPA '81) made a career out of informing and engaging others in government and policy—a spark lit during her second-year field placement in the Ohio Statehouse. She saw how everything was interconnected and how political leaders needed social work’s influence to break down the many silos and make social justice the center of public policy.

After five years in the Statehouse, Gettman moved to Washington, D.C., where she advocated for education policy on behalf of the Inter-University Council, the Ohio Student Aid Commission and the Reading Recovery Council of North America. That led to positions with the National School Boards Association and

“I have found that most people (in politics) appreciate social work as a background—not only as a way to envision more empowering and holistic policymaking, but as a way to humanize the process and recognize that policy is made by people.”

LUCY GETTMAN

ultimately with Women in Government, a national association of and for state legislators. It is the type of path that she hopes others will be inspired to follow.

“I have found that most people (in politics) appreciate social work as a background—not only as a way to envision more empowering and holistic policymaking, but as a way to humanize the process and recognize that policy is made by people,” she says.

Gettman acknowledges that polarization in the current political climate has put a deep freeze on the notion of parties working together. But that’s even more reason for social workers to be involved in the process and in the eventual solutions at the local, state and national levels.

The good news for social workers following this path is that many roads lead to legislative influence, including policy analysis, strategic communications, campaign work and constituent service.

A perfect example and role model is state Sen. Susan Talamantes Eggman in California’s 5th District. She’s a social worker and staffs her office entirely with social workers. Having that type of presence is critical, Gettman says, because staff and legislators can influence the culture of the institution as well as provide insider perspectives for advocates on how to engage and impact the political process.

Other insights: State leaders are more accessible than their federal counterparts, and more can happen at the state level than anywhere else because of the wealth of issues addressed.

“When I’m on the Hill, I invariably hear that federal policymakers should be guided by what states are doing well and successfully and then support that,” says Gettman, who is now an adjunct professorial lecturer at American University and a guest lecturer and faculty in residence for the women’s political leadership programs at Ohio State’s John Glenn College of Public Affairs. She also coaches social work students before CSW’s annual trip to Washington with the D.C. Advocacy Immersion Program.

“I celebrate that according to NASW, there are more than 250 social workers in local, state and federal offices. Let’s get more social workers engaged in public policy and service,” Gettman says.



Lucy Gettman (MSW, MPA '81) found her way to a career in government following a field placement in the Ohio Statehouse.



Clients benefit from interactions with horses at PBJ Connections in Central Ohio.



A HORSE, OF COURSE

If government work isn't appealing, there's always the farm.

Or the stable, to be precise. That's co-owner Holly Jedlicka's (MSW '06) home office for PBJ Connections, an equine-assisted psychotherapy program in Central Ohio. When she's asked, "Can a horse positively alter your outlook on life?" her answer is always yes.

She's a bit biased, Jedlicka admits. She grew up with horses and believe they shaped who she is.

Jedlicka has many stories that attest to the healing power of horses.

When "Sara," a PBJ client, arrived a year ago, her mental health was at rock bottom. Her Adverse Childhood Experiences score was 9 out of 10 thanks to an alcoholic father and an unsupportive mother. Drinking had become Sara's coping mechanism while she raised two kids. After her son died from an overdose, she cratered, going on short-term disability. Her daughter-in-law turned her granddaughters against her.

After a couple months of weekly therapy sessions at the PBJ farm Sara was ready to return to work, but her job was terminated. She was denied unemployment. She ate rice and potatoes daily on a meager budget and borrowed money so her car wouldn't be repossessed.

Now, Sara's outlook is beginning to brighten. "More weeks than not, she

comes in crying, distressed, saying she can't figure out why there is something so 'bad' within her that she keeps getting punished," Jedlicka says. "Reliably, by the end of every session, she is smiling and saying she must not be all bad because the horses and donkeys come up to her."

PBJ uses a team approach promoted by Eagala (the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association), which allows clients to roam freely in a field or arena with the donkeys and horses, always with a licensed clinician and equine specialist on hand. Clients aren't asked about their feelings; rather, they are asked about their experiences with the animals as a way to open up and be expressive.

"It's pretty hard to ignore feedback from a 1,200-pound animal," Jedlicka says.

PBJ, founded in 2006, serves ages 6 and up. As the program has added social workers with varied experience, it also has added new client groups, such as veterans, the elderly, substance abuse treatment groups, youth from schools that do leadership training, and programs with a focus on healing from trauma.

The talent PBJ brings in breeds innovation, such as adding an expressive arts group, a free four-day trauma intensive program, and a professional development and team-building learning experience.

PBJ's two main locations are in Pataskala and Johnstown, with a satellite at the Ohio State Equine Center in Dublin.

"From our clients we hear gratitude for the horses, for the beautiful farm venues that create peace and for our caring professionalism."

HOLLY JEDLICKA

The horses, donkeys and facilities are rented by the hour to save on overhead.

Because PBJ employs seven equine specialists, clients don't need to have had experience around horses, and the same goes for the eight contract clinicians. There are treatment goals and progress tracking, and PBJ uses measures and interventions approved by the American Psychology Association.

"From our clients we hear gratitude for the horses, for the beautiful farm venues that create peace and for our caring professionalism," Jedlicka says. "Our staff and contractor retention rate speaks volumes, as do the word-of-mouth recommendations from clients."

Whatever path social workers choose—and the options, it seems, are endless—Jedlicka says there is no right or wrong.

"If we focus on using our individual skills and passions, no matter how we apply them, we can change the world." ■

Child's play

ADVENTURE THERAPY HELPS KIDS DEVELOP BETTER COPING MECHANISMS



The best way to get children's attention? Walk into a room with a rubber chicken dangling out of your bag. That's Beth Sandman's (MSW '08) go-to when starting a new Adventure Therapy class for kids needing trauma-informed care.

"I automatically have buy-in from the kids," says Sandman, the clinical supervisor at Buckeye Ranch, which provides emotional, behavioral and mental health services at six locations in Ohio. "It's funny and interesting, and there are lots of activities you can do with a rubber chicken."

Another favorite: "Sometimes I'll bring a stuffed Winnie the Pooh and crack jokes about them throwing Pooh at each other. I score a lot of cool points that way," Sandman says.

When children experience trauma, it's often hard for them to build healthy relationships. Some kids don't have the verbal processing skills necessary to express their feelings, perspectives and insights. So Adventure Therapy sessions become the clinic.

"To succeed you have to have curiosity, a willingness to experiment and fail, and a strong desire to play."

BETH SANDMAN

"It's a relationship-based modality that holistically engages clients to optimize learning," says Kim Sacksteder (MSW '20, LISW-S), who ran the Buckeye Ranch program before Sandman. "Adventure Therapy can activate and change brain areas impacted by trauma as we support clients with emotional regulation that comes from physical engagement and rapport that buffers stress."

Without saying a word, kids can reveal how they cope with stress and build relationships, Sandman says. "I combine watching and listening closely and finding the opportunity in the moment to ask with curiosity what is happening

with them. Adventure Therapy gives them an experience to talk about as they're experiencing success or failure, and I can help them move that forward. Those relationships and interactions are the fodder for therapy."

Such moments may last all of two seconds, but they add to the thousands of interactions that allow the brain to build trauma-healing neural pathways. Progress can take many forms. Children who struggle to self-regulate may walk away from a conflict instead of responding with aggression. They may take responsibility for their actions instead of passing blame. They might help someone who has fallen instead of laughing at them.

Sandman's "adventures" have taken place in hallways, classrooms, living rooms and gyms. "The kids often mistake me for the gym teacher," says the former volleyball player. She works primarily in Columbus' Hilltop neighborhood, where intravenous drug use is high and broken glass litters the streets.

Sandman challenges clients to work collaboratively with running, throwing, catching, retrieving and physical exertion. She trains others to use Adventure Therapy primarily as a group intervention and emphasizes the importance of being flexible and adaptable in sessions. Responding to how clients show up and being able to address what's important to them is also helpful for engagement and relationship building.

Sandman began working as an adventure therapist at Camp Mary Orton in Columbus and now oversees the program's four-person staff at Buckeye Ranch. She says the therapy can be effective in early childhood when paired with individual, family and discussion-based therapies.

"To succeed in Adventure Therapy, you have to have curiosity, a willingness to experiment and fail, and a strong desire to play," Sandman says. "The field has changed a lot in understanding trauma, and Adventure Therapy allows us to get that jump start on mental health issues early." ■

Veterinary social work

A SPECIALIZATION THAT HONORS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS

In the past two and a half years, the number of veterinary medical centers in North America that offer social work services to pet owners facing difficult decisions has more than doubled to 75.

That's according to Joelle Nielsen (MSW '98), who ran the Honoring the Bond program at Ohio State's Veterinary Medical Center for 15 years. Nielsen also coordinates an international, online peer meeting each month for social workers employed in veterinary hospitals.

"I tell clients, you don't need to be embarrassed in seeking help; you aren't the only one. There's a reason there's a full-time paid social work position here, and they're hiring more and more," says Nielsen, who worked with abused children at Nationwide Children's Hospital before coming to Ohio State in 2007.

There's opportunity for veterinary social workers in nonprofits and private practice as well, especially because 70 percent of U.S. households include pets (69 million families own dogs; 45.3 million have cats), according to a recent survey by the American Pet Products Association.

Nielsen usually acts as the first contact with pet owners seeking social work services. She often refers those who need ongoing therapy to Sue Mocniak (MSW '10) of Restore Counseling LLC. Mocniak treats a variety of issues and specializes in helping clients who are grieving the loss of a pet.

Because of the special nature of the bonds between humans and animals, there is an ongoing need for social workers who can navigate the meaning of these connections.

"Clients experience a very disenfranchised grief when facing pet loss," Mocniak says. "Even the most well-meaning people will say things they don't realize are hurtful: 'It's just an animal.' 'It's too bad you lost your pet, but you can come visit my dog or cat.' Even though it's gotten better, I still hear this on a regular basis."

Age can affect how loss is experienced and treated. Mocniak is a Medicare provider and sees the tighter bonds older



Joelle Nielsen (MSW '98), left, works with a client and her pet.

adults, especially those who are isolated, have with their pets.

"We had one client whose dog was with her for 16 years," Mocniak says. "She lived alone. Her family was not supportive and didn't live in Ohio. She spent most of her time with her dog. He was woven into the fabric of her life."

The client chose euthanasia for her pet, but afterward she questioned if it had been too soon. To cope, she started drinking and eating excessively before ending up in the hospital with serious medical issues.

"She didn't have anybody she could trust to talk to about this," Mocniak says. "No matter where you're working as a social worker, part of the assessment is the family system's point of view, and pets are included in that family system."

The College of Social Work plans to offer veterinary social work training through a license with the University of Tennessee. Associate Professor Joe Guada will be the lead faculty member, while Katie Klakos, director of field education, will develop field experiences that build on the materials.

"There is a clear need for social workers to be part of this outreach and care," Guada says. "If a family or individual is struggling economically and psychosocially, it can reflect in the treatment or care the pet receives. What can we do for these people that would create a more stable environment for the pet?"

The human-animal bond has been shown to create positive health outcomes for both pets and owners, and life expectancy for pets is higher than for strays, Guada says. Research also shows animal-assisted therapy can outperform more traditional treatments for patients with dementia, Alzheimer's, post-traumatic stress disorder and developmental disabilities.

"Social workers often engage with pet owners who come from marginalized communities," Guada says. "The presence of certified social workers as well as students seeking this certification is a critical step in raising awareness of the importance of the needs of pet owners and their pets." ■

A little bit of country, a lot of healing

EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY SHOWS THE VERSATILITY OF A SOCIAL WORK DEGREE

Preshuslee Thompson (MSW '22) considers herself a city girl. So she surprised herself when she found her career path in a barn in Pataskala, Ohio. That's where she finished her MSW1 with PBJ Connections, an equine-assisted psychotherapy practice.

"Immediately I felt it was a place for me," says Thompson, who also completed her MSW2 at PBJ before being hired as a licensed clinician. "Working with the horses has really shown me there are so many different avenues to approach healing, and it's important we don't have a one-size-fits-all approach."

Being at PBJ also has her thinking innovatively, such as how to include her previous macro work with diversity and inclusion training and consultation. Her idea: have horses and donkeys facilitate our understanding of cultural differences and help us build better connections.

Thompson had a very personal experience while going through an intensive four-day PBJ pilot program called Healing Connections. She had been diagnosed with PTSD at age 16 after experiencing childhood sexual abuse. Those traumatic feelings came rushing back at age 17 when her mother died unexpectedly. She learned to recognize her triggers by going through EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) during college.

"When I went through Healing Connections, I found more intimate parts

"Working with the horses has really shown me there are so many different avenues to approach healing, and it's important we don't have a one-size-fits-all approach."

PRESHUSLEE THOMPSON



Preshuslee Thompson (MSW '22), a self-proclaimed city girl, found her career path while working in a barn in Central Ohio.

of myself and felt more connected to my old feelings because of my interactions with the horses," Thompson says. "We didn't have words, so it was all feeling and connection and trying to silence my thoughts and pay attention to what was showing up in my body. My mind was truly blown, and I want to see how these resources could impact other people's lives."

Holly Jedlicka (MSW '06), co-owner of PBJ, said many social workers are choosing to go into equine therapy because of its effectiveness. And Thompson's arrival was a welcome surprise.

"Preshus always shows the highest level of professionalism," Jedlicka says. "She brings a depth of conversation and thought to our team and to her work with clients that we don't always see in social workers who have just graduated. Her previous work and life experience make her a valuable part of our team and the social work community."

Thompson says she is always amazed by her clients' transformations after they spend a short time in nature with the horses. They see the behaviors and actions of the horses and donkeys as a reflection of what they're dealing with internally. Or as Thompson likes to say, they find the metaphors for their life without any coaching or guidance.

"They get a stronger sense of calm being in nature and feel less pressure to express what they're feeling versus being in an office setting," she says.

Her two years at PBJ have convinced her that social work might be the most versatile degree.

"Social work is relevant in every space you go into," Thompson says. "It's a great degree for dreamers, for innovators, for people who want to do something different or just connect with other humans. For me, there aren't any limits to what I can do with that degree." ■

RESEARCH IN THE MOST UNEXPECTED PLACES

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

For many Americans, it's not a question of *if* they're going to be impacted by a disaster, but *when*. That's according to Dr. Smitha Rao and PhD student Fiona Doherty of the College of Social Work, and Boston College's Dr. Samantha Teixeira.

Their research found that households led by women, by renters, by those with children under age 18, by those of low socioeconomic status, and by African Americans and Asians were all less likely than others to be at least minimally prepared for disasters.

Lead author Rao and her colleagues considered people minimally prepared if they had on hand the most essential elements necessary for immediate evacuation or for sheltering in place multiple days. These include emergency funds, nonperishable foods, important medications, a flashlight, access to enough supplies to get through three days without power or running water, and access to transportation.

In addition to looking at preparation status, the researchers examined sociocognitive factors that could be associated with preparedness.

Those who had less confidence in their personal ability to act in the face of an emergency were less likely to be minimally prepared. Socially vulnerable groups found less likely to be prepared may also lack confidence in institutions that are supposed to help during disasters.

Findings showed that even a slight jump from the lowest income group was associated with a higher readiness score in the study's sample.

"Disasters don't affect everyone evenly," says Rao. "We need to find ways to help those who are most at risk of the consequences of disasters so that no one is left behind when disaster strikes. Those who are struggling to meet day-to-day needs often don't have the ability and resources to plan for everyday events, let alone for disasters."

DANCE TILL YOU DROP

Dancing may be fun, but studies show it also influences mood and stress levels in older adults.

As a bachelor's honors student, Natalie (Gillespie) Elliott (BSSW '19) examined the effects of dance classes on adults aged 60 years and older. Dance therapy uses

movement to further a person's emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration.

With nearly 17 percent of the world's population expected to be older adults by 2050, finding ways to increase physiological and psychological interventions that ensure healthy aging is especially relevant.

Elliott's intervention consisted of three weeks of twice-a-week dance classes. Each class lasted approximately one hour. Week one focused on jazz, week two on ballet and week three on a themed dance incorporating movements from weeks one and two. All classes included a warmup with four songs totaling 15 minutes and incorporated the same movements each time.

Results suggested that movement dance classes may decrease stress and increase positive affect of older adults. Classes also appeared to increase physical movement and provide a sense of belonging and friendship development.

Dr. Holly Dabelko-Schoeny served as Elliott's advisor.

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

A new tabletop role-playing game similar to Dungeons and Dragons was part of a pilot study to address the struggles some adolescents experience as a result of their LGBTQ+ identities. BSSW honors student Christina Bayes (MSW '22) led the study.

The online game magnifies themes like anxiety, depression, microaggressions, internalized stigma, prejudice and discrimination (both interpersonal and structural). Navigating through the game, players collectively learn and implement coping mechanisms to overcome challenges that lead to stress and increased risk for mental health issues.

The study found that adapting an LGBTQ+ focused tabletop role-playing game was well received by participants.

While more research is needed to validate preliminary results, the pilot study confirmed the potential for online tabletop role-playing games to reach a wide audience and help reduce risk factors while also building resilience and coping skills in minoritized adolescent populations.

Dr. Lauren McInroy served as Bayes' advisor. ■



PHOTO, GORDON LASH

Digital labs mimic reality

Renowned conductor Marin Alsop always rehearses before concerts.

Basketball superstar LeBron James still practices before games.

Taking a cue from professionals such as these, students in the College of Social Work can now prepare before and parallel to their field placements through digital field education labs.

Recent participants Candy Clymer (MSW '22) and Sarah Steinbrecher (MSW '22) both endorse the digital labs.

"It is really such a great opportunity to not only practice in a safe environment, but it also challenges you," says Steinbrecher, who like Clymer earned her degree through the college's online program.

That is what the faculty and staff behind the initiative hoped for when the digital field education labs were conceived of and offered as pilots earlier this year. The goal is to use the labs to build knowledge, provide perspective and develop hands-on skills as students start their field assignments.

"For our students, the field internship is still the most significant hands-on applied learning experience," says Dr. Lauren McNroy, the faculty lead on the project. "But it's no secret that a lot of our students feel ill-prepared or nervous about working with real clients. These labs offer them the opportunity to learn new practice skills and rehearse those skills in safe, supportive environments. That makes them more confident going into their placements or trying new things in their placement settings."

Katie Klakos, director of field education and a staff lead on the project, says the idea was born when students were pulled from their field placements at the start of the COVID-19 shutdowns. The college immediately looked for other opportunities to supplement the field education experience.

In addition to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on field education, the college was in the midst of implementing the Opioid Workforce Expansion Program—a \$1.3 million federal grant to increase the number of social work practitioners trained to work with individuals with opioid use disorders.



Simulations, like those where clinicians pose as clients, help to prepare students for real-world situations.

"It's no secret that a lot of our students feel ill-prepared or nervous about working with real clients. These labs offer them the opportunity to learn new practice skills and rehearse those skills in safe, supportive environments."

LAUREN MCINROY

The synergy resulted in the development of a digital field lab specifically focused on building knowledge and skills for clinicians who work with individuals experiencing substance use disorders.

Two additional labs were created to address working with older adults and their caregivers, and working with individuals who are navigating barriers caused by economic inequality. Overall, the three content areas focus on populations in which social work is growing and graduates will be needed to meet the demand.

The labs on substance use and older adults have gone live, while development continues for the lab on economic inequality. The labs are currently open to graduate students, but the hope is that they will become available to all students.

Klakos says the labs simulate the real world. For instance, the digital aspect of the substance use lab includes clinicians who practice in that area. Some of them pose as clients such as those the students will face in their field placements, and they then provide feedback to the students.

This part of the training is invaluable, says McNroy, who has a background in simulation. "The portrayals have been extremely realistic, even more so than we had expected."

Klakos says that in the lab on aging, practitioners from the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging sit on a panel of experts to share their experiences and provide feedback and guidance to students. As part of the training, students complete a live case presentation to the practitioners.

McNroy and Klakos say the responses of students who have taken the course have been overwhelmingly positive. But on the front end, there often is some hesitation.

Julie Holston (MSW '02), program manager of the Opioid Workforce Expansion Program and a staff lead on the course, says some students may be deterred by its rigorous nature, which includes assessment documentation, modules and other requirements. Once students are enrolled, however, their view becomes positive, she says.

Clymer and Steinbrecher viewed the digital field labs as an opportunity to gain positive experience in addition to the work they were doing in their field placements.

"It's kind of nerve-racking to go from coursework to a real situation, and this helped prepare me for that," says Clymer.

Both she and Steinbrecher encouraged students to take the lab in part because it's similar to doing genuine field work and builds confidence.

Klakos agreed with that assessment: "For our students, just to be able to have that experience prior to working directly with a client can really be beneficial because they can work through some of those challenges before they're one-on-one with clients." ■

CSW in D.C.

CONNECTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLITICAL SOCIAL WORKERS



O-H! Participants in the 2022 D.C. Advocacy Immersion Program show their school spirit outside the Capitol.

Fencing surrounds the U.S. Capitol Building, a reminder of the events of January 6, 2021. Visitors can no longer walk the halls of the Rayburn House Office Building without a staff escort. The gravity of this political moment was not lost on CSW students, and they rose to the occasion.

In March, the College of Social Work D.C. Advocacy Immersion Program (formerly the D.C. Fly-In) returned to in-person visits for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began. With a cohort of 20 students from the BSSW, MSW and PhD programs, College of Social Work dean emeritus Tom Gregoire and staff conducted 18 legislative visits, covering Ohio's congressional delegation. Choosing their own bills and focus areas, cohort members promoted legislative action on criminal legal system reforms,

disability rights, housing, mental health and abortion access.

"One of the things that makes our experience unique is that we let our students' passions drive the process," says college advocacy director Steve David.

"We give students the tools, and they bring their personal and professional stories into the offices. You can see the power of social work stories firsthand in these meetings."

Over the course of spring semester, students go through a training program that reviews policy analysis, legislative meeting preparation and the role of social workers in political settings. The 2022 training program also included simulations where experienced

political advocates played the role of legislative staff to allow the students to practice their approach and receive real-time feedback from their colleagues.

While the legislative visits remain the centerpiece of the Advocacy Immersion Program, many students pointed to interactions with their peers as a highlight of the experience. "I really enjoyed the legislative meetings, and especially this chance to connect with other social work students who are passionate about these issues and making a change," says BSSW student Audrey Leopold.

Enabling students to envision a future in political social work is another key function of the program. This year's trip featured a D.C. Careers Panel with social workers from the National Association of Social Workers, the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy, and the Health Resources and Services Administration, and staff from Ohio State's Office of Government Affairs.

"My favorite part was being able to explore the role social workers have in politics and realize the plethora of job opportunities out there," says MSW student Caroline Sippin.

"We hope that by giving students a chance to touch the political process directly, we can create a new generation of practitioners ready to build a democracy that works for everyone," David says.

Learn more about the Immersion Program and apply for the 2023 cohort at u.osu.edu/cswadvocacy/dc. ■



CSW advocacy director Steve David, left, prepares participants for the immersive D.C. experience.

Next Step Ministries

PARTNERSHIP FOSTERS GLOBAL COMPETENCE FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

“Do not wait for them to show up at your agency, but seek them out, begin to build relationships, and truly meet them where they are at in their journey.”

ALISA PRESARCHUK

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Social work students are gaining valuable international experiences through a field placement with Next Step Ministries, a charitable organization based in Calgary, Canada, that is dedicated to helping women leave situations of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

“What sets Next Step Ministries apart is their relational commitment to all their participants,” says Alisa Presarchuk, a master’s student in social work. “This is seen both throughout their outreach and recovery programs and in how they ensure that when a participant graduates from their program, the door is always open for them to return.”

Next Step Ministries provides a range of services to the women in recovery, including (but not limited to) therapeutic, educational and vocational services. To better understand the needs of the women it serves, the organization works hard to build relationships within the community and with fellow agencies and public services.

“For those wanting to emulate this project, my recommendation would be to first understand those you serve. Strive to understand their culture, their communities, their environment and their lived experiences,” says



Presarchuk. “It is of critical importance to be a community-based practice. Do not wait for them to show up at your agency, but seek them out, begin to build relationships, and truly meet them where they are at in their journey.”

In 2021 the College of Social Work formalized the partnership with Next Step Ministries to create the opportunity for students in the MSW program to undertake the field placement—in-person or hybrid.

The values at the heart of this collaboration are the global perspectives gained by everyone involved. Anna Stewart, assistant director of field education in the College of Social Work, explains, “I work with students living outside of the U.S. to establish field placement agencies in their countries that will provide them with an appropriate learning experience in the student’s area of interest. This creates the opportunity to see what social work practice looks like across the globe.” ■

Joining the front lines to affect government policies



Left to right: Anna Bowersox (MSW '19), Leslie Carson (MSW '18) and Pat Gleydura (MSW '21).

Being closer to the front lines. Making sure elected officials are in touch with the people they represent. Building a nation that respects every one of its citizens.

That, according to three recent College of Social Work graduates, sums up why social workers are vital to the operation of government at all levels.

"We're willing to listen and understand other people's problems and how government decisions impact people's lives," says Anna Bowersox (MSW '19), who is an aide to Ohio State Rep. Brigid Kelly. "I think there are a lot of people in power who may be out of touch with the people they represent."

Bowersox collaborates with constituents to understand their issues and promote policies that address them. She says one of Kelly's major achievements was sponsoring legislation that ended the tax on menstrual hygiene products.

Leslie Carson (MSW '18) sees the direct impact of social workers on government policies. She is a public health analyst at the federal Health Resources and

"We're willing to listen and understand other people's problems and how government decisions impact people's lives. I think there are a lot of people in power who may be out of touch with the people they represent."

ANNA BOWERSOX

Services Administration and oversees grants that help community organizations fight COVID-19 by increasing education, outreach and vaccination.

Carson previously was a highway safety specialist with the Impaired Driving Division of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, where her

training in substance misuse and mental health was relevant, she says.

Now she's having an even bigger impact by battling COVID-19. "I'm closer to the front lines, which I enjoy," she says.

Social workers also shape government policies in other ways. Pat Gleydura (MSW '21) does so as a youth organizer for Honesty for Ohio Education. According to its website, the statewide coalition believes "every child deserves an honest, high-quality education grounded in truth, facts and diverse perspectives."

Gleydura communicates with high school students across Ohio. Part of the task is to show students they have political power to affect education policies.

"My work has an influence on the communities I work within," Gleydura says. "The students tell me they're more informed about the impact of government on education."

As social workers engage with government, Gleydura says, "we're trying to build a better community by working toward a government and nation that is life-affirming for every citizen." ■

The new wave: Nontraditional student field placements



Top row, left to right: Jonace Alexander (MSW '22), Kari Burnett (BSSW '22), Madelaine Smith (BSSW '22) and Haley Gerken (MSW '20).
Bottom row, left to right: Tyler Guminski (MSW '22), Megan McCrary (MSW '22), Mikayla Shaffer and Greg Fink.

Whether the assignment was in Turkey, in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction or in the Columbus Metropolitan Library, students from the College of Social Work accepted the challenge of expanding the boundaries of field placement in the college. They gained valuable experience while providing a range of assistance to a broad segment of clients. As one student noted, “I quickly learned so much about the functioning of prisons and became even more passionate about prison reform.”

JONACE ALEXANDER, MSW '22

When Jonace Alexander joined Motivated Wellness Solutions in Central Ohio, she found more than the usual field work.

The private practice provides mental health therapy to adolescents and adults, and her task was to help clients via telehealth. “I was able to conduct appropriate interventions and complete documentation using an electronic health records system,” Alexander says. “It helped prepare me as a social worker by teaching me all the pieces of social work, from the interventions to insurance to running a practice. One of the major highlights was creating a six-week postpartum support group for new moms.” She praised the online aspect of her training. “Everything was online,” she says. “My supervisor and I talked often through various means, which increased our intentional communication. It also allowed me to connect with so many different people and career

fields.” Alexander is now a community readiness specialist at Airman and Family Readiness Center in Germany.

KARI BURNETT, BSSW '22 **MADELAINE SMITH, BSSW '22**

Kari Burnett is focused on prison reform, and in two field placements with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, she sharpened skills such as case management and planning and leading group sessions while addressing needs of incarcerated people. Her first assignment was at Teaching Opportunity Unity by Connecting Hearts (T.O.U.C.H.), a unit of Metropolitan Community Services that helps formerly incarcerated individuals. “We linked our participants to jobs, housing and food services, among other things,” she says. She next

“It helped prepare me as a social worker by teaching me all the pieces of social work, from the interventions to insurance to running a practice.”

JONACE ALEXANDER

was an intern at the Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility, where she really found her footing. “Being able to spend so much time with the youth directly allowed me to build rapport with them and to see the beginnings of changes in their thinking patterns and behaviors,” she says. The placements were on point, she adds. “I quickly learned so much about the functioning of prisons and became even more passionate about prison reform.”

Interning at the Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility helped Madelaine Smith learn a couple of lessons. First, running group sessions is hard, but it gets easier with practice. Second, social work is about more than impact. “I thought it was incredible that we had the opportunity to work in a correctional facility because that environment is very misunderstood,” she says. “That population is also very misunderstood in general.” Smith’s main goal was learning about group sessions, and she’s now confident in that area. “I also learned a great deal about perspective,” she says. “In social work, we sometimes get wrapped up in our impact. But this is not exactly the most important thing. As a young social worker in training, I believe the most important thing is learning from and understanding the population you are working with.”

HALEY (GERKEN) BERTOLINI, MSW '20 TYLER GUMINSKI, MSW '22

Haley (Gerken) Bertolini’s field placement took her to the Hilltop Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library. “Each day brought different challenges,” she says. “When I began my placement (in 2019), no one knew what social work would look like in the library. This forced me to step outside of my comfort zone and quickly become acquainted with community agencies and resources to advocate for the underserved

Hilltop population.” For example, she connected clients to the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children and cash assistance benefits. She gathered donations and each week hosted a Community Clothing Closet where individuals received free clothing and toiletries. “Being able to provide drop-in services at a place where people come for help and safety has been truly life-changing for many of our customers,” Bertolini says. She has joined Columbus Public Health as a community clinical counselor.

Tyler Guminski also interned at the Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Hilltop Branch. “I worked with many different kinds of people and populations,” says Guminski, who specialized in mental health and substance misuse. “I was never sure who I would talk to. I collaborated with people struggling with mental health issues, substance misuse, homelessness, poverty, a lack of health care and food resources, and issues related to the elderly. No two problems or needs were the same.” Guminski says the experience brought him professional and personal satisfaction. “The best part was when the people I helped came back into the library and stopped by to see, thank and update me on their situations,” he says.

MEGAN MCCRARY, MSW '22

The Olive Tree Counseling Center in Antalya, Turkey, beckoned Megan McCrary for field work, and using her expertise in mental health and substance misuses, she excelled. “I co-counseled adults, couples, children, adolescents, families and groups,” she says. “Working with clients involved engagement, assessment, intervention and evaluation, which critically prepared me to enter the social work field with confidence.” McCrary was excited to share this: “I had the opportunity to develop, lead and evaluate a psychoeducation program geared toward cross-cultural middle-schoolers and high-schoolers focused on the concepts of identity and belonging.” She was introduced to play therapy and got to practice it. “Play therapy opened up a whole new world of communication to me and in many ways caused me to have a big paradigm shift in working with children,” she says. McCrary remains in Turkey, “spending some time in my own creative practice.”

MIKAYLA SHAFFER, MSW STUDENT

Mikayla Shaffer has two passions: caring for humans and caring for animals. As an assistant at a veterinary clinic, she wondered, Why not combine the two? Thus her unusual internship at Ohio State’s College of Veterinary Medicine. “A good way to describe the essence of veterinary social work is that it is caring for humans who care for animals,” Shaffer says. She is gaining experience in crisis intervention, grief support and helping clients navigate tough decisions. It’s part of her vision as a social worker who goes beyond the commonplace. “My field placement differs from a traditional field placement because veterinary social work is an up-and-coming field,” she says. “There are very few programs and few vet hospitals that have a social worker. This is changing as the field continues to grow. Many people, including other social workers, are not even aware of this subspecialty within social work.”

GREG FINK, MSW STUDENT

As a former staffer with the U.S. Department of State who has lived abroad, Greg Fink seemed a natural for a field placement with American Adoption Professionals Abroad. AAPA is a global network of licensed social workers and adoption professionals who serve U.S. families overseas seeking to complete domestic and international adoptions. Debbie Driessen-Grika, director of AAPA’s Europe, Africa and the Americas Division, says Fink began his internship while he was living in Ukraine. However, the war there forced him and his wife, a U.S. government employee, and their children to relocate. Fink expects to complete his field placement once he is relocated to Australia. “What makes Greg a unique student for this internship is the fact that he has lived abroad for years and knows what it feels like to be abroad when building your family,” Driessen-Grika says. Only a handful of social workers engage in this specialty area and Fink excels at it, she adds. For instance, when the two visited Kenya together to meet with prospective adoptive families, “Greg was a natural and fully engaged with our clients in a comfortable manner,” she says. “He has been an excellent student intern, invested and determined in his desire to learn, grow and develop the skills required to become a practicing social worker.” ■



One path to freedom

A COLUMBUS COURT GIVES VICTIMS GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES TO PURSUE LIVES THEY DIDN'T THINK POSSIBLE

BY MARY ALICE CASEY, REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM OHIO STATE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

Former judge Paul Herbert remembers the exact moment he began to understand the dynamics and brutality of human trafficking. He was on the bench in Franklin County Municipal Court, and he mistook the female defendant before him for a victim of domestic violence.

"She had been beaten up by her trafficker. She had a black eye, her nose looked like it'd been broken. Just awful. I looked down at the file and it said 'prostitute.' In my middle-American, white-male brain, it finally got through to me."

When he finished court that day, the judge went straight to the internet. What he learned then, and in later conversations with women charged, led him to establish the nation's third specialized court for human trafficking in 2009. Herbert presided over the court for a decade, becoming the first man many of the women ever grew to trust, says Judge Jodi Kotzin Thomas (BSSW '98).

When Herbert retired in late 2020 after 17 years on the bench, he turned his responsibilities over to Thomas with full

confidence. In nearly two decades as a public defender, Thomas had represented most of the women who came before the court. She was one of the first people Herbert shared the original concept with, and he knew she had the compassion and connections to take the program to the next level.

The court is known as CATCH, for Changing Actions to Change Habits, and as the name implies, it truly is a safety net.

Participants meet in court weekly to share their struggles, successes and deepest personal stories with Thomas and one another. The two-year program covers basic needs such as housing, food and eventually job opportunities, all of which the women had previously relied on their traffickers for. They must undergo trauma counseling and drug treatment—in recent years, nearly all have been addicted to opioids—and later can apply to have their criminal records expunged.

For Thomas, the opportunity to help women break the bonds of sexual slavery fulfills a calling to use the legal system to improve lives.

"We are planting seeds. We're building a foundation. Not everybody gets through it, but there are a lot of things we want to celebrate that the women are doing right, and that's the point of this program."

JODI KOTZIN THOMAS

The realities of sex trafficking are horrific. A majority of women enter the lifestyle as teenagers. Many are trafficked by relatives, including parents. Histories of sexual abuse, poverty and mental illness are common. All have suffered deep trauma, making them vulnerable to traffickers' common scheme of first caring for and then exploiting their victims.

CATCH Court was started by former Franklin County Municipal Court judge Paul Herbert, now retired, and today is overseen by Judge Jodi Kotzin Thomas (BSSW '98).

"These women were seen as the throwaways of society. But they're not. They are survivors," Thomas says of those involved in CATCH. "Every week when the participants come in, we basically have a group meeting. We talk about issues and themes, what they're doing, how their treatment is going. It's very therapeutic."

Sixty-nine women have graduated from the program, and many of these Butterflies, as they're known, remain active to encourage and guide women who follow. Nearly 350 women have participated but not graduated. Still, they have benefited.

"As I learned from Judge Herbert, we will have a lot of women who will not complete this program. We look at recidivism—they're not picked up on new charges, that's the No. 1 thing we look at. A lot of women get their kids back because they're doing so well and can't meet the demanding requirements of this program. Some get full-time jobs or return to school."

As Thomas considers ways to evolve the program to meet changing needs and circumstances, recognizing women as they complete phases of the program is one possibility.

"We measure success differently in CATCH," she says. "We are planting seeds. We're building a foundation. Not everybody gets through it, but there are a lot of things we want to celebrate that the women are doing right, and that's the point of this program."

Thomas is grateful for the work of her predecessor, and her commitment to the women of the CATCH program—through her work as a public defender and for the past two years leading this court—is obvious.

"Judge Herbert's legacy is here. I can't replace him, and I won't ever try. What I can do is carry on his work and bring my passion and what I know, what I've worked on, and continue to make it better and to grow it. I will never fill his shoes, but I can follow his footprints. And make my own as well. That's what we're doing for these women. We're giving them footprints to walk in." ■



PHOTOS: DARRON SILVA (TOP), JO MCCULTY

ALUMNI | ACROSS THE



DE'ANNA BENSON
MSW '18

 **Nashville, Tennessee**

Current position:

Nephrology social worker and therapist (part time)

Current social work issue in your city:

The gap in services for families and the lack of community-based, fully funded enrichment programs.

What have you or your city been doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?


Providing personal protective equipment, hosting virtual events, offering food drives and free testing at the local community center, and volunteering with youth. I've been assisting with the implementation of a study on a Women's Health Collaborative Grant with the College of Public Health and the School of Social Work at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

What do you miss about Ohio State?

The academic experience. I truly enjoyed my professors and my internship placement at the Nisonger Center. I've been blessed to have long-lasting friendships from the program.



PETER LU
MSW '20

 **Seattle, Washington**

Current position:

Health care social worker

Current social work issue in your city:

Hate crime, health inequities.

What have you or your city been doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

I originally moved from Shanghai to Ohio State because I wanted to advocate for LGBTQ rights with the academic resources I acquired there. However, the pandemic changed everything and thwarted my plan of making a memorable graduation speech about my coming-out journey. Also, the use of the term "Chinese virus" led to a big increase in anti-Asian hate crimes. As a result, I felt sad for a long time. But finally, adversity turned into an advantage. Currently, I'm proudly working on the health care frontlines in Seattle. I'm using my own example to tell people that love and care go beyond national origin. I can be a healing power.

What do you miss about Ohio State?

Big smiles from staff such as Katie Justice and my classmates, and also yummy Chinese food from Joy's Village restaurant.



DAVONTI' D. HAYNES
PHD '18

 **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Current position:

Assistant professor, Temple University School of Social Work

Current social work issue in your city:

As gun violence increases in the city, there's a need for additional wraparound support services and programming for our youth.

What have you or your city been doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

I'm involved with various initiatives across the city and Temple University to address some of the inequities within our community. At the local level, I have engaged with the city of Philadelphia's Millennium Advisory Committee, a mayoral-appointed committee tasked with advising the city on policies, programs and actions affecting millennials; assisting in the development of initiatives focused on attracting and keeping millennial residents within Philadelphia; connecting this generation to engagement opportunities with the larger community; and creating a mentorship model to engage those who are new or returning to the city. At the university level, I'm working with campus partners to address educational access and equity issues for Philadelphia youth by creating pipeline programs to educate, attract and retain Philadelphia youth at Temple.

What do you miss about Ohio State?

Football Saturdays and the community that came with being a part of Ohio State!



COUNTRY



STEVEN MAJDECKI

MSW '18

Waynesville, Missouri

Current position:

Therapist working in an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) clinic under a Substance Use Disorder Workforce Grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration

Current social work issue in your city:

My colleagues and I provide IOP services for a rural community in the two counties between Fort Leonard Wood and Lebanon, Missouri. Resources are scarce, and many of our clients being referred for IOP don't have food, shelter or transportation. Many referrals involve court mandates, which lead to high rates of incarceration, recidivism and losing custody of children.

What have you or your city been doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Our IOP is a one-stop shop—we offer therapy, case management primary care, dental, pharmacy, psychiatry and nursing services. We were the first in the state to begin administering vaccines when COVID-19 broke out and haven't stopped. Additionally, we work to prevent high rates of overdose and suicide deaths through safety and a multidisciplinary approach to wellness.

What do you miss about Ohio State?

Studying at Ohio State helped prepare me for the fight against large systemic problems that social workers and those we serve face every day. Poor law and policy aim to punish instead of protect. By providing opportunities to continue serving outside of the military, Ohio State gave inspiration and hope to a veteran who could have easily become another statistic.



PARISA AFIGHI SEYMOUR

BSSW '16

Maricopa, Arizona

Current position:

Elementary school mental health counselor

Current social work issue in your city:

Mental health support. Maricopa, Arizona, is a small city 30 minutes south of Phoenix and is the only city in the nation that borders two Indian communities. Due to its remoteness, addressing mental health and other basic necessities is more difficult. Chronic absenteeism in schools is another issue. Last year, nearly 50 percent of students in our secondary schools were chronically absent.

What have you or your city been doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

The pandemic really highlighted the need for more mental health care, especially for students, families and staff in our schools. In response, Maricopa Unified School District was awarded two grants that focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL), increased mental health services in schools and partnerships with many different community agencies. Each campus now has a full-time mental health counselor on staff, a schoolwide SEL curriculum and calming corners in each classroom; and in my school I've created a therapy dog program. The district also created a virtual academy for those families wishing to remain in online schooling.

What do you miss about Ohio State?

I could go on for ages about the things I miss about Ohio State! I LOVED spending a cool spring day on the Oval. I miss scarlet and gray EVERYWHERE, spending a cold, rainy day in the Union, rubbing William Thompson's head after a huge study session at the library, and of course, Buckeye Donuts!



MEGHAN MORGAN, PHD

MSW '06

Pensacola, Florida

Current position:

Social worker, Department of Veteran Affairs, and adjunct faculty in social services at Capella University

Current social work issue in your city:

The biggest social work challenge in Pensacola is accessing clients. Since the pandemic, many face-to-face resources have shifted to protect staff and community members. It has been a challenge to reengage clients for in-person care. Another ongoing challenge is being aware of resources within a three-state territory near Pensacola, including Florida, Alabama and Mississippi. Pensacola's proximity to Alabama and Mississippi makes knowing what resources are available to clients in all three states imperative to being fully able to serve populations in need.

What have you or your city been doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Pensacola Beach has tremendously expanded outdoor dining options. The city has also made vaccinations and testing for COVID-19 readily available in drugstores and quick-access points such as grocery stores.

What do you miss about Ohio State?

I miss the comradery and sense of community. Being among social workers—individuals who are like-minded and motivated to help and support each other and their communities—is such a great feeling!

Time and Change agents

CELEBRATING OUR MILESTONE DONORS

In this issue, we are proud to highlight our milestone donors—those who have chosen to give back to the College of Social Work year after year. With the largest number of milestone donors across the university, we are grateful to receive such incredible support from these inspiring leaders.

CHRISTINE BAILEY-KELLOGG

An alumna and 25-year donor with a generous spirit, Christine Bailey-Kellogg should serve as an inspiration to all. After earning her MSW in 1996, Bailey-Kellogg immediately began giving back. With a her firsthand understanding of how vital financial aid can be to a student's success, she didn't think twice about donating.

"There wasn't really a consideration not to support the college because I had really valued my education there," Bailey-Kellogg says. "I thought donating was a way to show my appreciation."

Bailey-Kellogg spent most of her career working for Listen Community Services in New England, with additional roles at Habitat for Humanity. A lifelong volunteer and leader in the social work field, Bailey-Kellogg has never lost sight of what it means to be a true agent for change.

"Everybody needs help sometimes. This is why we exist as a community—to help each other."

THERESA EARLY, PHD

Dr. Theresa Early has been with the College of Social Work for more than 25 years. Now an associate professor and director of international programs, Early previously served as director of the college's doctoral program and has been awarded more than \$1 million in grants and contracts. She remains committed to charitable giving, with more than 23 consecutive years as a donor to the college.

"About 10 years ago I started giving to a study abroad scholarship because this is something I really wanted students to have an opportunity to do," Early recalls.

Currently, Early's research focuses on immigration and how social workers can provide substantial relief to New Americans seeking support. She's



Left to right: Christine Bailey-Kellogg (MSW '96), Theresa Early and John Hamilton (MSW '79).

passionate about helping social work students understand the importance of cultural immersion and awareness.

"If we stay in our own culture and local area, we don't truly understand how culture affects every aspect of what we do, how we interact with people and how our families function," says Early. "Study abroad programs really help students when they come back and encounter somebody who is from a different culture."

JOHN HAMILTON

Nationally known for his impact and leadership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS), John Hamilton has been a College of Social Work donor for 18 consecutive years. His decades of service have taught him the secret to true social change.

Hamilton earned his bachelor's degree in social sciences from Ohio State in 1972, then returned to earn his MSW in 1979.

Following graduation, Hamilton worked in direct service at the Franklin County Welfare Department. He often wondered what happened to his clients after they passed his desk. With so many people in need, it occurred to Hamilton that drastic changes were needed at the macro level.

"I wanted to look at systemic change rather than individual change," he says.

After serving as an academic counselor with the College of Social

"There wasn't really a consideration not to support the college because I had really valued my education there. I thought donating was a way to show my appreciation."

CHRISTINE BAILEY-KELLOGG

Work, Hamilton worked with BBBS of Central Ohio, BBBS of America and BBBS of Central Arizona as vice president of programs. In this role, he created some 40 site-based mentoring programs, expanding BBBS's traditional model of community-based mentorship. One of his programs received the Points of Light Award from President George H.W. Bush.

Hamilton remains rooted in the traditional values of social work. Having established a connection with the College of Social Work Alumni Society, he began donating to the Alumni Scholarship Fund shortly after completing his master's degree.

"I thought about where my passion lay, and it was with the College of Social Work," he says. "In order to help the community we needed to have the best-qualified professionals doing the work, and that starts with the college." ■



Carolyn Wrage (BSSW '61, MSW '63)

“I’ve always enjoyed working in the field of mental health to help people learn how to make good decisions for themselves.”

CAROLYN WRAGE

The Sarah R. Wrage Scholarship

INVESTING IN CONNECTION

Carolyn Wrage was born to be a social worker. Growing up in Toledo, she admired the career of her mother, Ohio State graduate Sarah R. Wrage, who was a case manager with the Lucas County Child Welfare Board. When Carolyn opted to follow in her mother’s footsteps and enroll in the social work program at Ohio State, the decision came naturally: Her grandparents, two aunts, and siblings also attended the university.

“I couldn’t have gone anywhere else, not with this family,” she says.

After graduating with her BSSW ('61) and MSW ('63), Wrage immediately

embarked on a career as a mental health professional. She relocated to California and accepted a position at Napa State Hospital. She worked in the county system in California, progressing from case worker to supervisor to manager of a clinic in the mental health division.

In her 41 years in the field, Wrage worked with children, adolescents, adults and seniors. In addition to providing a supporting presence, she helped clients analyze their behavior and determine the origin of their problems in order to guide her recommendations for treatment.

“I’ve always enjoyed working in the field of mental health to help people

learn how to make good decisions for themselves,” says Wrage, who retired in 2004 and now volunteers as a counselor at a high school.

Over the course of her life, she has been equally passionate about animals, spurring her interest in equine therapy. According to Wrage, the bond established during this treatment can be especially therapeutic for nonverbal clients.

Wanting to share this experience with others, and to honor her mother’s legacy, Wrage recently established the Sarah R. Wrage Scholarship at the College of Social Work. The scholarship supports students planning to work in child welfare and/or equine therapy.

Based on her insights into human and animal behavior, Wrage encourages all CSW students to focus on understanding. “We have to be more tolerant,” she says. “Humans and animals can have powerful connections, so think of all that could be possible between humans.”

To donate to the Sarah R. Wrage Scholarship, or to start a scholarship of your own, contact Melanie Wehmeyer at 614/688-2385 or wehmeyer.8@osu.edu. ■



A push to the finish line.

Social work students have chosen a career putting others before themselves. They've chosen a career that demands discipline, competency and unwavering devotion to social justice and the common good—all to leave the world better than they found it.

As social work students reach graduation, they are faced with one of the most important steps in their education—getting licensed. Every year, our students rise to meet this challenge with confidence and focus.

However, there are many cases in which the cost of licensure prohibits students from entering the workforce. With your support, you can help propel our newly graduated students into a world that so desperately needs their expertise and compassion by giving to the Social Work License Exam Support Fund. This newly established fund supports social work students of any level who need to take the social work licensure exam but show financial need in doing so.



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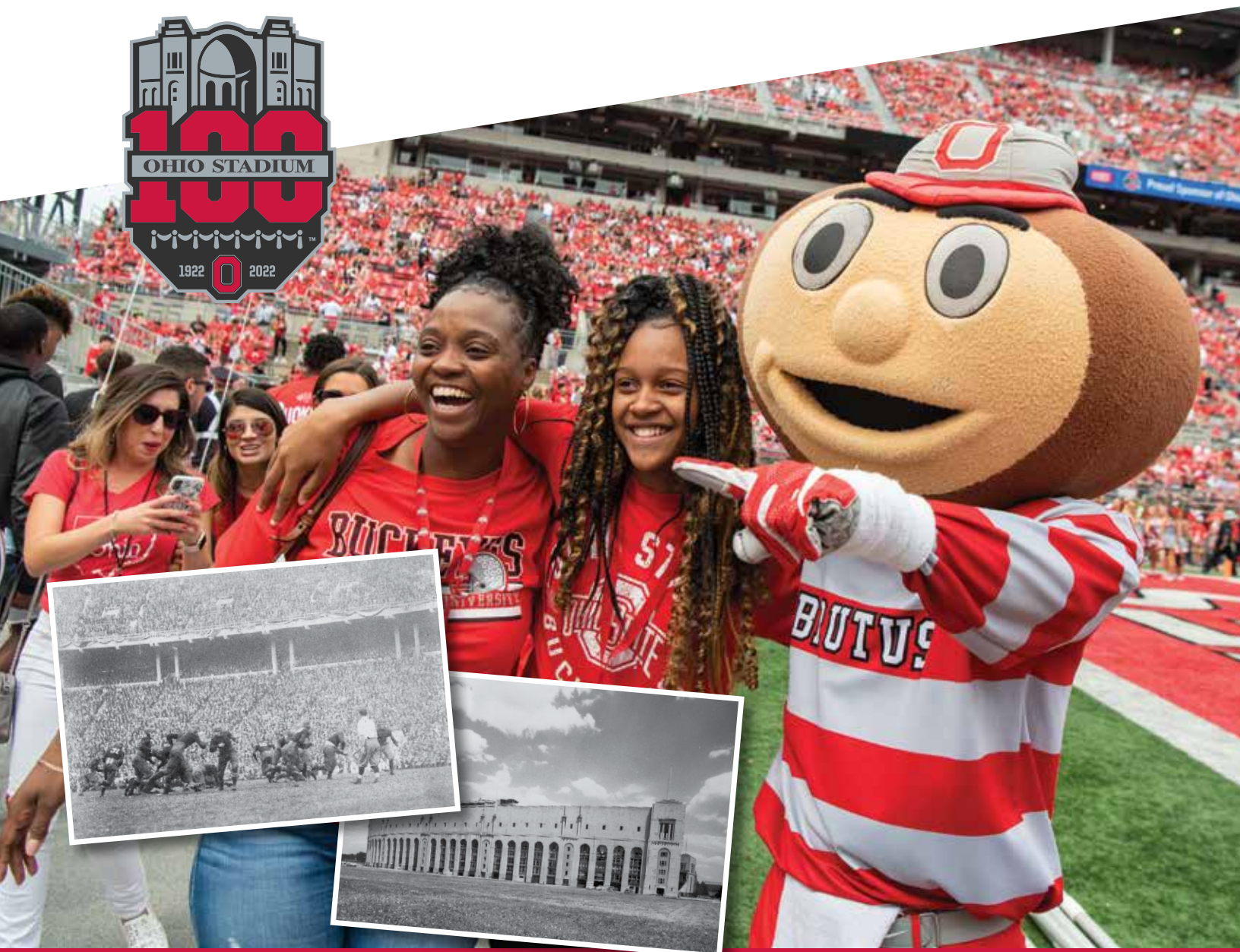
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