

Advisory Board Notes

May/June, 2005

Presentations—

Professor Thomas Blank, attended the Society of Behavioral Medicine meetings in Boston on April 13-16. He was a co-facilitator of a round table discussion that was part of a pre-conference workshop sponsored by the Cancer Special Interest Group on decision-making on April 13. On April 15, Tom also presented a poster that was co-authored by **Keith Bellizzi, Ph.D.** on the impact of support groups on the well-being of prostate cancer survivors. Keith, a recent graduate from our program who is now a postdoctoral fellow at the National Cancer Institute, also presented at the conference research that is currently in progress.

Jeanne Chadwick, Ph.D. presented a talk on April 25 entitled “The Seven Factors of Awakening as They Apply to Undergraduates’ Relationships”, at the request of several undergraduate students from the Psychology Club, a group sponsored by Dr. Crystal Park, of the Psychology Department.

Master’s Candidate Mariana Guzzardo, presented her oral defense “Challenges Faced by Resident Service Coordinators in Elderly Housing”, on April 28. Her advising team was Nancy Sheehan, Ph.D., Thomas Blank, Ph.D., and Steven Wisensale, Ph.D.

Ph.D. Candidate Kim Petrovic and Mariana Guzzardo, presented their preliminary research on May 4, at the School of Family Studies Deans’ Lounge, in conjunction with Thomas Blank, Ph.D., Center on Aging and Human Development.

Doctoral Candidate Coleen Anne Richard, presented her oral defense “Older Lesbians in Connecticut: Experiences and Attitudes toward Accessibility of Social Services”, on May 6. Her advising team was Marysol Asencio, Ph.D., Thomas Blank, Ph.D., and Anita Garey, Ph.D.

Ronald Rohner, Ph.D., Director for the Ronald and Nancy Rohner Center for Parental Acceptance & Rejection, is invited to participate in the United Nations Secretary-General’s North American Consultation Conference Study on Violence Against Children (Round table on Violence Against Children in the Home), Toronto, Canada, June 2-3.

Doctoral Student Lily Alpert, and **Associate Professor Preston Britner**, will present “Writing Policy Briefs: A Pedagogical Approach to Teaching Undergraduate and Graduate Students” at a panel presentation at the Society for Community Research and Action conference in Urbana-Champaign, IL, on June 9-12.



The School extends its congratulations to the 17 Graduate Students and the 193 Undergraduate Students who received their diplomas this month! Commencement ceremonies and receptions were held on Saturday, May 8 (Graduates) and Sunday, May 9 (undergraduates), and despite the inclement weather, all had a joyous time in celebration.

Doctoral Student Lily Alpert won the 2005-2006 Edward V. Gant Scholarship, awarded each year to one graduate student at UConn who best exemplifies academic excellence, professional potential, dedicated service, and exemplary integrity. Lily was nominated by her advisor, **Associate Professor Preston Britner**.

After an extensive review and interview process, she was named the 2005-2006 recipient and presented with the award at the University’s “Student Life Awards” banquet on April 27th. She is the first Family Studies student to win this prestigious University-wide award.

Noteworthy—

Professor Thomas Blank’s extended commentary on “Gay Men and Prostate Cancer: Invisible Diversity”, was published in the April 20 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. The *JCO* is one of the top journals in the field of oncology and reaches several hundred thousand clinical oncologists as the journal for the American Society of Clinical Oncology. This article is literally the first published article highlighting the specific issues of gay men dealing with prostate cancer and the lack of attention to those afflicted. Over 230,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer this year and over 1.5 million American men are living as prostate cancer survivors and so many thousands of gay men are dealing with this issue. However, they have been ignored by researchers and clinicians alike. Thus, this article represents a break-through. **Professor Blank** and **Professor Marysol Asencio** (Family Studies) with colleagues at other institutions, are currently developing research projects which will address this population.

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Noteworthy-

For the second consecutive year, **Professor Thomas Blank** served as a Consumer Reviewer on April 10-12, for scientific proposals to the Prostate Cancer Research Program, which is part of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, within the Department of Defense. The congressional mandate for these programs includes the unique requirement that each scientific review panel includes three Consumer Reviewers, defined as “persons who have had the specific disease or are family members of those who have, and who are active advocates in their communities for research and education in their disease”. Along with the Scientist Reviewers, the Consumer Reviewers participate fully in critiquing proposals and scoring them. Professor Blank was nominated by the Hartford Hospital Prostate Cancer Support Group that he has attended for over eight years. As he notes, each year has been “both exhausting and exhilarating.” This year he was part of a panel that reviewed almost 70 proposals in the basic biological sciences along with 18 Scientist Reviewers. At the same time, he and a colleague in the School of Psychology, Crystal Park, Ph.D., submitted a proposal to the same program on quality of life aspects of men dealing with prostate cancer.

Jeanne Chadwick, Ph.D. organized an event for her HDFS 201 Cultural Diversity class called “International Partners”, on Friday, April 15 in Rm 304A and B of the Student Union Center.

Approximately 150 students from the International community attended this event. Those in attendance included students from the University of Connecticut American English Language Institute (UCAELI) as well as faculty and students from the School of International Affairs, and the International Student Center. The group represented 25 different countries as each person took turns standing up and saying “thank you” to their new friends and conversational partners in their own language.

Assistant Professor Laura Donorfio received a UConn UCRF Large Grant for the upcoming year. The title of the grant is “Psychological Stages of Informal Caregiving: An Examination of Daughters Providing Care to Widowed Mothers”.

The election results are in! **Administrative Assistant Carla Gomez** was elected as UCPEA Area 5 Union Representative on April 20. Congratulations, Carla!

The 4th edition of the *Handbook for the Study of Parental Acceptance and Rejection*, edited by **Ronald P. Rohner, Ph.D., and Abdul Khaleque, Ph.D.** was published in May by Rohner Research Publications. This book is used by researchers and clinicians around the world for the study of interpersonal acceptance and rejection issues. The measures contained in the book are translated into more than 30 languages.



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has presented a 2005 Children’s Environmental Health Recognition Award to the **University of Connecticut’s Healthy Environments for Children Initiative (HEC)** for its “commitment to

protecting children from environmental risks, fundamental to making the world a healthier place, now and for future generations.”

Recognition awards are presented to groups or individuals who have demonstrated a level of commitment to protecting children from environmental risks. The awards are designed to increase awareness, stimulate activity, and recognize efforts that protect children from environmental health risks at the local, regional, national, and international levels. Recipients must show that they have initiated outreach, education, or intervention activities.

HEC received this award for its development, in cooperation with the Penobscot Indian Nation, of *How Mother Bear Taught the Children about Lead*, a lead-poisoning-prevention curriculum for Native American children in grades 3-5. HEC received a certificate of recognition, signed by the Acting Director of EPA’s Office of Children’s Health Protection, and the use of the children’s environmental health awards logo.

Midge M. Lenihan ‘74, a graduate in Home Economics Education, has been elected as the new president of the Connecticut Affiliate of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (FSC). For the past five years, she has taught FSC at East Hartford High School. Earlier she was the Teacher/Coordinator for the Teen Parent Program at Windham High School in Willimantic, where she and Cheryl E. Czuba of the UCONN Cooperative Extensions system developed the highly successful Mentor Mom Program. It included a manual that has since been used by a wide variety of other social service programs who support young single mothers. We congratulate Midge on her election and thank her for assuming this significant leadership role!



Family Studies majors, (as seen in photo L-R) **Emily Johnson, Natalie Murch, and Jennifer Soffayer**, all received Awards for Excellence in Family Studies at the Annual Awards Ceremony of the University of Connecticut **Stamford Campus** on April 21. The Welcome was given by Dr. Michael Ego, Associate Vice Provost, and the Guest Speaker was Jack Condlin, President of the Stamford Chamber of Commerce.

The Center for the Study of Culture, Health, and Human Development recently awarded its first Graduate Certificates, recognizing students for their extended interdisciplinary studies and completion of a related research project. The certificates were presented by **Professor Sara Harkness** to **Danijela Korom Djakovic, Ph.D., Xin Feng, Beth Russell, Ph.D.** (all of Family Studies), and John Shaver (Anthropology), following students’ presentations of their work to an audience of faculty and graduate students.

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The School of Family Studies recently co-sponsored the *2nd Annual Conference on Leading Change: Rethinking Juvenile Justice* on May 10th, at the Storrs Campus of UConn, with keynote speaker Joseph. J. Cocozza, Ph.D. The goal of the conference was to build stronger working relationships among stakeholders in Connecticut's juvenile justice system by sharing ideas and initiatives in order to prepare professionals for the future.

Dr. Cocozza is Director of the National Centre for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, Co-Director of the National GAINS Centre for People with Co-Occurring Disorders in the Justice System and expert in the areas of children and family services, juvenile offenders, mental health services and forensic evaluation.

Those attending the conference had a choice of workshops in both the morning and the afternoon sessions, as well as a plenary session with a panel of experts — young men and women — who addressed the conference regarding their first-hand experiences with a variety of services in Connecticut. These articulate young people gave an insightful account of what worked, what didn't, how the system failed them and what they hoped would be implemented in the future.

All facets of the conference, including the plenary presentation, the panel address and the multiple workshops were very well-received and everyone in attendance agreed that the conference achieved its goals and was a remarkable success. Congratulations to School alum Cathy Foley Geib who was one of the main organisers.

SPOTLIGHT

We're very proud of our graduates and take great pleasure in showcasing their achievements.

First in this series is Renee Saltzman, '04, who tells us about her work for the Norwich & New London Judicial District. Well done Renee!

Renee Saltzman, '04, B.S.



"During my final semester at UConn, about to graduate with a degree in Human Development and Family Studies, I began to realize that I was unsure which career path I wanted to pursue. That question was answered when I participated in an internship in the New Britain Superior Court. During this internship, I was able to obtain a holistic view of the legal system and became very

interested in the Family Relations Division. Upon graduation in May of 2004, I accepted a position as a Family Relations Counselor for the Norwich and New London Judicial District.

The Office of Family Relations serves both Civil and Criminal Court. In the Civil Court, our purpose is to assist in the fair and timely resolution of family and interpersonal conflicts through a comprehensive program of negotiation, mediation, evaluation and education. Our role in Criminal Court is to assist in the fair and timely resolution of family violence criminal cases through a comprehensive assessment and intervention plan to prevent, reduce and stop the frequency and severity of violence against the victim. While each day at work proves to be a learning experience, I have found that the educational background I received in the School of Family Studies provided me with an ample foundation, and I have been able to utilize that knowledge and apply it to the work that I do as a Family Relations Counselor."

Please submit any SFS "happenings" (interesting news, upcoming events, announcements, etc.) ASAP for the next issue of this newsletter to janice.berriault@uconn.edu.