December 2015

Winter Greetings

On Nov. 6, 2015, I had the extreme pleasure of attending the gala celebrating 50 years of the Council of Colleges of Art and Sciences at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. I was being honored as an influential past president of the organization.

Where I am standing in this picture is the podium where famous dignitaries and heads of state make official statements and take questions from the press. You will notice there is no glass behind the podium. In fact, the wall behind the podium is five-feet thick with reinforced concrete and steel. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr., Lyndon B. Johnson, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have stood in that very spot. It was a special experience I will always treasure.

This latest newsletter features the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences and Social Work’s commitment to children and families through our teaching, research and regional outreach. I hope you enjoy our news and I also wish you a joyous holiday season!

Vickie Shields

News

Fostering Washington State

The College of Social & Behavioral Sciences and Social Work’s Idaho Child Welfare Research and Training Center (ICWRCT) was recently awarded just over $1.2 million in funding from the state of Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The intent of this contract is to provide services to increase the number of safe, quality foster families to children in eastern Washington during the next two years.
**FosteringWA** is a program of Eastern Washington University, and under the guidance of the ICWRTC, is adapting its successful foster parent peer mentoring program to meet the needs of eastern Washington’s families, as it’s been doing in Idaho since 2007. Since its implementation, the Recruiter Peer Mentor (RPM) Program has been highly successful, increasing the demand for foster parent training by 60 percent throughout the state of Idaho. With the program being highly adaptive, its strategies have been sought by other states. Because it is a regional and local approach to foster parent recruitment and retention, regional staff and advisors are able to focus recruitment and retention strategies on the needs of local children.

The RPM Program builds on best practice by insuring that foster parents receive consistent messages on practice principles, roles and responsibilities from initial inquiry through assessment, selection, preparation, first placement and beyond. The main purpose is to train, develop and support the needs of children and families.

The ICWRTC continues to provide recruitment and retention service to the entire state of Idaho, and was recently awarded $1.14 million for continued services through June 2016. Additionally, the ICWRTC has received $157,700 for Family Group Decision Making, and an additional $10,000 for Foster Care Licensing TEAM Support. Funds received by the ICWRTC since July 2015 total $2,553,356.

**Spotlight on Faculty**

**Tim Hilton, PhD**, associate professor of social work, held spellbound a sold-out audience of 250 community leaders in Providence Auditorium, Nov. 3. He was presenting research that he and **Deanna Trella, PhD**, assistant professor in the EWU Children’s Studies Program, conducted for Priority Spokane.

The study was launched last spring after EWU received a $40,000 grant from Priority Spokane, a civic leadership group working to generate measurable improvements in community health and Spokane County.

Hilton and Trella conducted interviews with homeless families, policy makers and service providers, and analyzed homelessness prevention service models around the U.S. The findings reveal Spokane County’s rate of homelessness is very high – 33 percent higher than the state average. Of the nearly 3,000 homeless children in Spokane County schools, 76 percent are doubling-up with family and friends due to eviction or other financial issues. Experts believe this type of stressful situation is the most common precursor to entering a homeless shelter, and increases the chances of dropping out
before high school graduation.

Key recommendations to serve homeless families with children in Spokane-area schools include:

- A homelessness prevention and diversion program targeting families at-risk of foreclosure or eviction and families who are doubling-up with family and friends.

- School-based services to address homeless students’ unmet academic and mental health care needs. As with the first recommendation, there is an expected return of more than $2 for every $1 in program investment based on reductions in number of students who must repeat a grade.

Increasing existing public funding sources for these programs was among the issues discussed at the forum.

**CSBSSW Development Officer Mary Ann Murphy sat down with Hilton and Trella and posed the following questions:**

*Is homelessness a problem in Spokane?*

An emphatic "Yes!"

*Why are people homeless?*

It’s complicated: there is no one reason leading to a precipitating event of eviction or foreclosure, usually accompanied by unemployment or underlying conditions of the twin evils of poverty and racism.

*How many homeless are there?*

It depends on how you count. The federal calculation for housing assistance is very narrowly defined: you must be homeless for a period of time. For this calculation, there is a point-in-time count, once per year. The most recent number is 1,149 persons at any one time are homeless in Spokane, a number comparable to the rest of the state.

In education, the definition for students K-8 is broader and adds those who are "doubling up" with friends and family members to those who have evictions and foreclosures. Spokane schools count 3,000 students, 4 percent of the student population. This is 23 percent higher than the state average. (It is possible that Spokane schools have been proactive in identifying the children.)

*Why is being homeless so hard?*

The No. 1 issue is mental health that is the emotional toll of stress, anxiety, and fear for personal safety for self and family members, which follow from irregular daily routines, food insecurity, shabby clothing that invites ridicule from peers, crowded sleep conditions and inadequate rest. Often, the children must change schools; the cost of school mobility is a four-six month setback in academic progress.

Each grade repeat costs $10,000. Each homeless family costs $16,000 per year.
The families who are "doubling up" are not eligible for housing assistance. Prevention: helping them stay, avoiding evictions, avoiding the stress and anxiety cannot be addressed by federal dollars. In turn, for the staff who can only react, never be proactive, takes its toll on morale. The experience of numbing our compassion as we see a person suffering in front of us has made us feel that we are helpless to solve this problem—in the richest country of the world. We have not even found a way to give financial incentives to the hosts of these families who are "doubling up."

About Priority Spokane

Priority Spokane serves as a catalyst and convener in Spokane County for data-driven and focused improvements in economic vitality, education, the environment, health and community safety. Its current priority is to help stabilize the lives of homeless and at-risk of becoming homeless children in grades K-8 and their families in Spokane County. By stabilizing these students now, the goal is to prevent significant trauma to the student and to their communities in the future. Learn more...

Russell Kolts, PhD, professor of psychology, explains the impetus behind his research interests in compassionate-based therapies for anger management in his TEDx talk.

Professor Kolts is in his 16th year of teaching at EWU and he has been awarded the Associated Students of EWU Faculty of the Year award twice (2002, 2014).

Kolts is a licensed clinical psychologist and his current professional focus is on researching, disseminating and training people in the application of Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT). Kolts is one of the world’s experts on CFT.

Kolts is best known for applying CFT to the treatment of problematic anger and has developed a treatment manual applying CFT to anger that is being used in numerous different facilities around the U.S., and in multiple countries, including England, Singapore, France and New Zealand.

Kolts has authored or coauthored several books, including: The Compassionate Mind Approach to Managing Your Anger Using Compassion-Focused Therapy; Living with an Open Heart: Cultivating Compassion in Everyday Life. The foreword was written by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. And forthcoming: Buddhist Psychology and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: A Clinician’s Guide.

Spotlight on Alumni
Jessica Vigil (2010, sociology) currently works as a program coordinator in the TRiO Student Support Services Program at Yakima Valley Community College (YVCC). She provides individualized services to students, similar to the ones she received at EWU, on academic advising, transfer planning and university visits.

Before this position, Vigil worked at YVCC in the financial aid department, where she developed a passion for educating students on financial aid and financial literacy.

Last year, she developed a workshop, *How Much Does College Cost*, and has already reached more than 200 student attendees. Outside of her work, she took time to give back to her community by organizing *Financial Aid and College 101* nights and serving as an assistant coach at White Swan High school.

As a student at EWU, Vigil was an active student leader and served as an officer of the Native American Student Association. She credits the network of strong women at EWU, including Deidre Almeida and Nicole Devon from the American Indian Studies Program, for helping shape her into the professional she is today.

Yvonne Sherwood (2011, sociology and women’s studies) is currently a doctorate student in the sociology program (with an emphasis in feminist studies) at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where she is a UCSC Dean's Diversity Fellow from 2011 to 2016. She was advanced to candidacy for her doctoral degree in fall 2015.

Sherwood is currently an intern at the Center of World Indigenous Studies, where she is conducting research on the Radiation Exposure Risk Assessment Action Project with Rudolph Ryser, PhD. During her time at EWU, she was an active student leader and served as an officer of M.E.Ch.A. and a McNair Scholar. She was the Frances B. Huston Medallion Recipient and Jeffers Chertok Dean’s Honor Award for Outstanding Graduating Senior in 2011.

*Both Vigil and Sherwood are from White Swan, Washington.*