

# WESTERN DIVISION YEARLY REVIEW

2008-2009

## SOCIAL WORKERS RESPOND TO FLIGHT 3407 CRASH

Barbara Demerest  
 Steering Committee Member

Western New York was deeply affected by the tragic crash of Flight 3407 in February. By all accounts our community responded admirably to the crash. Among those helping in the aftermath were social workers who used their professional skills in volunteer work with the American Red Cross Greater Buffalo Chapter (ARC).

ARC deployed volunteers to various locations during the course of the disaster response. Local volunteers were joined by colleagues from other regions during times of peak need. Most social workers who served are Disaster Mental Health (DMH) volunteers, licensed mental health professionals who provide support and “psychological first aid” in disasters. Services were provided to families of those on the flight, residents of the crash site area, first responders, airline employees and others impacted by the event.

Volunteers were available 24 hours/day and had a presence at the airport, at sites where families and/or responders were gathered, and wherever needed, including home visits. They provided support and information to family members, facilitated contact with affected members of the military, accompanied families to the crash site, and provided ongoing support to other responders. They helped to resettle neighborhood families as they returned to their homes. At the request of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), in May volunteers attended hearings on the crash to provide additional support as needed. They will also have a presence at a Red Cross hosted support group initiated by families.

For information on becoming an American Red Cross volunteer, contact Amanda Campbell, MSW at 716-878-2364 or [CampbellAma@usa.redcross.org](mailto:CampbellAma@usa.redcross.org)



*Left: Denise Krause and Ellen Kennedy present a donation to Joe Mesi*

*Right: The Annual Awards Luncheon was well-attended and enjoyed by all*



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This year, the Western Division established a presence on the social networking site, Facebook. Through our Facebook page, we are able to keep members and fans up to date with the latest NASW events and happenings, provide a forum for networking and discussion, and reach out to a new generation of professionals. To find us, search for “National Association of Social Workers-NYS CHAPTER-WESTERN DIVISION” and become a fan!!



## Letter from the Director



Dear Members and Friends,

As I am sure you are aware, there were many exciting events in our Division this past year and it was a pleasure meeting so many of you at them. This is the first time that the Division is reaching out to you with a year-end newsletter. We welcome your feedback. The Steering Committee decided that it was important for the Division to highlight the year’s activities and the direction for the upcoming year.

As Division Director I would like to review our major events, outreach activities, and advocacy efforts. In the fall we conducted a “Meet, Greet, Eat and Speak” open membership meeting with a presentation on Human Trafficking by Amy Fleischauer from the International Institute. Over fifty people attended, and generated excitement about the topic. As a result of the outpouring of attention the International Institute capitalized on the interest and created connections in a number of communities.

The excitement of this year’s election energized the Division’s political advocacy. In collaboration with PACE, the Division actively supported candidates in local, state and national elections. I would like to specifically acknowledge the energy and power of the involvement of MSW students with the campaign advocacy efforts. MSW student volunteers hosted a post-election discussion, moderated by Deborah Merrifield, Executive Director of Joan A. Male Family Support Center and former commissioner of Erie County Department of Social Services. As a seasoned social worker, it is always gratifying to see our young colleagues taking the lead in advocacy work. I feel relieved to know that our profession is in such competent hands.

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At the end of January, the Division co-sponsored a community forum “Behind the Mask: Moving Towards a Trauma Informed System of Care”. This event was hosted by the Community Action for Prenatal Care Project of the Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network. Our Division was graciously recognized with a commemorative statuette and kudos for our outstanding work in the community.

The annual awards luncheon was a resounding success and this year it was preceded by a NYS Licensure workshop. The workshop was presented by Karin Moran, NASW-NYS Director of Policy. Ms. Moran updated the audience on licensure statutes and how they are impacting social workers and social work agencies throughout the state. She received excellent feedback and updates are available on the NYS NASW website.

The keynote speaker for the luncheon was Karen Schmike, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. Ms. Schmike is also a former Commissioner for Erie County Department of Social Services. Her talk, “Jane Addams, Where Are You Now?” recounted her experiences at Hull House and called for social workers to engage in social activism. It was such a treat to have her back in the Western New York area and to be inspired by her commitment to the profession. The recipients of the annual awards are highlighted in this newsletter. Congratulations!

The Steering Committee spent many hours listening to the needs of our constituents and developing strategies to meet those needs. The Southern Tier Social Work Collaborative brings together social workers and mental health professionals in Chautauqua County. Spearheaded by Jana McDermott and Lisa Greely, it meets quarterly to address emerging mental health practice trends and issues affecting the Southern tier.



## *Letter from the Director (cont.)*

In order to recognize the importance of macro level social work practice, a community social workers group was established in the fall. This group is chaired by Diane Bessel and is designed for social workers who want to engage in systemic change, and whose practice is anchored in macro level work.

I am pleased to remind our members about the monthly social work spotlight. This is our way of recognizing our colleagues and their accomplishments. The spotlight appears on our Division website and on our Facebook page. For all of you who are on Facebook, check us out and become a FAN. Facebook is another vehicle for connecting us to the newest generation of emerging professionals.

I would like to personally extend an invitation to join an emerging advocacy effort that is focusing on local policy, government relations, and media response. Contact me for information on this group including our first meeting and agenda.

Now is a great time to be involved in the Division. There are several opportunities for your participation that span the breadth of social work practice. The Steering Committee guides the overall activities of the Division and the sub-committees described above are specialized according to interest. I welcome your input and contributions. Contact me at 716-645-1223 or 1-800-724-6279 ext 35.

Sincerely,

***Denise Krause***

Western Division Director

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*MSW Student Members  
Jessica Cercone and Steffany Kozlowski*

### **DIVISION STUDENT INVOLVEMENT...**

“Being a member of the Western Division Steering Committee has been a great experience. It has allowed me to become involved at both the national and local level. I have had the opportunity to attend committee meetings and events, which have enhanced my knowledge and involvement in the social work community. I also participated in the annual conference in Albany with fellow committee members and truly enjoyed learning about various social work topics of interest. As I have just graduated from my masters program and started my career, I look forward to renewing my membership to the NASW, and continuing to be an active member at the local level!”

Jessica Cercone, Recent Graduate and  
Division Steering Committee Member



## Membership Task Force

Jesse Grossman  
NYS Chapter Board Member-at-Large

In June, 2008, I was elected as a Board member-at-large to the New York State chapter of N.A.S.W. My duties involved attending quarterly board meetings, attempting to represent the interests and concerns of members, and acting as a conduit between the members and the board regarding issues that affect us as practitioners, and as an organization.

Following the Leadership Institute I attended in June as an incoming Board member, Ruth Negron requested that I chair a Task Force on Membership, as declining membership numbers throughout the state, as well as the country, threaten to undermine our viability as an association, and the impact that we are able to make on behalf of the people we serve.

To that end, a state-wide committee was formed with about 10 members. We have communicated throughout the year, via e-mail, conference calls and face-to-face discussions at Board Meetings. We develop and share our thoughts, and our Division practices vis-à-vis membership recruitment and retention practices. Summaries of our recommendations, thoughts and questions are shared with the Board for further review, and/or action.

There was a slight increase in membership throughout New York in the past quarter. This is an area that will require continued focus and energy. The Task Force is open to all members, and seeks input any time.



## Nominations and Leadership

Mark P. Heron  
Committee on Nominations and  
Leadership Identification



The Committee on Nominations and Leadership Identification is a 2 year term in which you participate annually in the recruitment of candidates for leadership positions within the New York State chapter. You work closely with the Division Director and sit on the Divisions Steering Committee as a means of incorporating leadership recruitment and development into Division activities. You are constantly looking for potential candidates for our Leadership pool. Sometimes candidates for Leadership roles find you, but for the most part you have to convince people to take Leadership roles. It is important to find qualified and committed candidates for office, as the organization is only as good as its leadership.

CNLI members develop at least a double slate of candidates for chapter elections.

The total number of men, women, and minority candidates is fairly structured based on Division membership. Sometimes in small Divisions, we cannot double the slate candidates because of the small number of m e m b e r s .

The CNLI is also responsible to inform all candidates of the duties and responsibilities of the positions for which they are running. I try to make sure that candidates know what their duties consist of and the time commitments involved.

The last function that the CNLI is responsible for is overseeing the chapter election process and finalizing election results.

My 4 years as Western Division CNLI chair were very interesting and enjoyable. I have met many Social Workers who are committed to the field, and I will miss holding this position .



## *Political Action for Candidate Election*

Ellen Kennedy  
Chair, PACE Trustees

PACE, a separate organization, is the political arm of the NASW. There is one representative (trustee) appointed from each region. PACE is authorized to help elect candidates to public office who support legislation and policies consistent with the profession, to promote our advocacy agenda, and to promote political education and full participation in the political process.

2008 was a busy year for PACE, since all members of the NYS legislature were up for re-election. All candidates (incumbents and challengers) were sent a questionnaire

and information regarding our endorsement process. PACE voted to endorse 42 candidates. Here in Western New York we endorsed Sam Hoyt, Bill Stachowski, Joe Mesi, and Chris Schaeffer. We held a local fundraiser for Hoyt prior to the primary, and organized social work volunteers to make phone calls on behalf of Mesi. Unfortunately, Mesi and Schaeffer did not win their races.

2009 will not be as busy, since there are no state races. We do, however, have a social worker in Amherst running for Erie County Legislature, so stay tuned for details about that race.



## *Advocacy and Government Relations*

Ann Sullivan LCSW-R  
Chair, Advocacy and Government  
Relations

The NASW-NYS Advocacy Committee continues to work with the Education Department, the Governor's Office, and the State Legislature in resolving the licensure implementation issues identified during the past year by NASW membership.

The mission of the Advocacy Committee at the State level is to work to promote the strength, unity, identity and the status of the social work profession, and also to embrace social work practice. We also advocate for policies in state legislation that promote social and economic justice.

The committee is active in annual Lobby Day in Albany, at which committee members meet with their elected officials to explain and promote the NASW-NYS agenda.

This year, Lobby Day was held in April. Topics discussed included:

- Social Work Licensure Exemption (no current bill number)
- Amend Chapter 748 of the laws of 2006 (Timothy's Law) for the purpose of making such statute permanent (S.1646 Huntley/A.5659 P. Rivera)
- Corporate Practice of Professions and Illegal Practice Settings (no current bill number).

Up-to-date information on advocacy issues is available at [www.naswnys.org](http://www.naswnys.org), and member input is always welcome.





### *Southern Tier Social Work Collaborative*

Jason Tonon

A new venue for networking and education in the Chautauqua County area has been created through the efforts of recent University at Buffalo School of Social Work graduate and Director of the Child Advocacy Program in Chautauqua County, Jana McDermott. The Southern Tier Social Work Collaborative is a fledgling semi-formal group that currently meets bi-monthly in the Clarion Hotel in Jamestown. These meetings combine an informal social period with a formal educational presentation in an intimate setting complete with food and drink. Designed to bring area professionals from diverse settings together through common interest topics such as trauma-informed care and grief work, the group is open to all human service professionals regardless of title.

The collaborative has grown organically over the past year mainly through word of mouth and the work of fellow MSWs Jana McDermott, Roberta Thompson, Lisa Greeley, and Jason Tonon.

Social workers are forever inundated with rigidly structured systems that often require mountain-moving endurance to navigate and impact. In contrast, the flexible nature of the collaborative allows it to quickly and responsively evolve to the ever-changing needs and makeup of its constituents. Because the collaborative is directed by a volunteer group, anyone who has ideas or wants to lend a hand is welcome to directly impact the evolution of the group. In you have questions, suggestions, or would like to be notified of the next meeting, please email Jana McDermott at: [mactrue@gmail.com](mailto:mactrue@gmail.com).



### *Community Social Work Group*

Diane R. Bessel, PhD, LMSW, CNM

The National Association of Social Workers - New York State Western Division chapter has recently launched a Community Social Workers group for social workers working within community and faith institutions, coalition-based groups, political entities, and non-profit organizations. The primary goal of this group is to increase the availability of support to Community Social Workers and to provide opportunities to learn skills, share experience, and increase advocacy efforts.

The group began meeting in fall 2008 and established several interest areas including learning more about local social issues (especially poverty), developing a platform, and engaging in policy advocacy from a social work perspective. In the spring of 2009, the CSW group held a panel discussion on poverty in Buffalo

which included Bill O'Connell, Executive Director of the Homeless Alliance of Western New York; Dr. Danis Gehl, Associate Executive Director/Director of Education, University at Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center; and Doris Corley, a community activist, social worker, and Director of Basic Needs Services at Catholic Charities. Panelists shared their experience working with impoverished individuals and made suggestions for ways to improve the current situation.

The CSW group meets on a quarterly basis with our next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, July 28th at 5:30 at the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County. For more information or to have your email included on the mailing list, please contact: Diane R. Bessel (716-887-2717; [dbessel@buffalo.edu](mailto:dbessel@buffalo.edu))





## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The Western Division is seeking feedback from ALL of our members. Please consider the following questions and email your responses to Denise Krause, Division Director at [Western@naswnys.org](mailto:Western@naswnys.org). You can also respond by leaving a voicemail at 1-800-724-6279, ext 35.

- What are the primary reasons you joined the NASW?
- What factors do you consider when determining your level of involvement in the Western Division?
- How should the Western Division support its members?
- As professional social workers, on what should we focus our collective efforts on?
- What topics are you interested in seeing addressed at NASW workshops and trainings?
- Is it important for you to:
  - Have opportunities for networking and meeting colleagues?
  - Have opportunities to engage in political activism?
  - Have opportunities to advocate for social and economic justice?
  - Have opportunities to discuss clinical issues?
  - Have opportunities to discuss issues related to private practice?

## NOT A MEMBER?

For more information on enjoying the benefits of NASW membership, go to [www.naswnys.org](http://www.naswnys.org) or contact Denise Krause, Division Director, at 1-800-724-6297, ext. 35.

## SAVE THE DATE!

The Western Division Steering Committee has been hard at work planning events for the upcoming year. Be sure to mark your calendars now and watch for more information!

**Monday, September 21, 2009**—Meet, Greet, Eat and Speak Fall Kick-off

**Monday, December 7, 2009**—“What’s the Latest?” Winter Update

**Thursday, March 4, 2010**—Annual Social Work Awards Luncheon and Celebration of Social Work Month

### NASW-NYS WESTERN DIVISION STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Denise Krause, Director  
Jennifer Adams  
Diane Bessel-Matteson  
Jessica Cercone  
Doris Corley  
Barbara Demerest  
Cheryl Eberl  
Sibel Ercan  
Jesse Grossman

Shirley Havice  
Mark Heron  
Ellen Kennedy  
Linda King  
Chris Lunsford  
Kristen Luppino  
Cosimo Mautone  
Brooke McKenzie  
Jana McDermott

Cheryl Mills  
Alecia Morrow  
Petrina Piro  
Christina Polino  
Ellen Silver  
Ann Sullivan  
Rita Turkiewicz

*Our Division thanks you all!*

**The next steering committee meeting will be held on Saturday, July 25th, 10AM, at 210 Parker Hall on UB’s South Campus.** All members are invited to attend and become involved. Please RSVP to Denise Krause: [western@naswnys.org](mailto:western@naswnys.org)

*Newsletter Layout: Petrina Piro,  
Division Steering Committee Member*



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Albany, NY 12210

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