

# IN HIS SERVICE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: MARLENNY FRANCO-JOHNSON

Marlenny Franco-Johnson (MSW '14) has been working in the field of mental health since her graduation. She currently holds a supervisory position in the Employment Resources Unit at the AIM (Achievement Inspiration Motivation) Center.

The AIM Center takes a clubhouse model approach to mental health recovery, seeking to contribute to a member's recovery through building relationships and providing the necessary tools for independence. In fostering such relationships, the AIM Center also functions as a family and community where members can be accepted without the stigma associated with a mental health diagnosis.

Marlenny states: "Working at the AIM Center has given me a new perspective in understanding mental health and what it means to be a part of recovery through building relationships. There are different

ways to view the effect of relationships and their impact in recovery, but utilizing theories such as Bowen or Maslow can really shed light on various aspects and layers of importance in having meaningful relationships: needs that go beyond the basics of food and shelter, and relationships that allow a balance that might have been absent until that point. From a spiritual perspective, this is also true. We find comfort and fellowship in our church and establish relationships that help strengthen us in a personal and spiritual manner. It's no surprise at all that relationships are such an important part of recovery." She states: "It's really difficult to explain the environment and culture of the clubhouse, but I would like to extend an invitation to anyone who would like to come and visit. I promise that you will not be disappointed."

Marlenny continues her education through Capella University, as she works toward her PhD in Human Services. "There are many things I would like to do in the future, such as writing and teaching." The School of Social Work has had a tremendous impact in the realization of my continued professional goals. It was not the books or homework that taught me the greatest lessons while working toward my BSW and MSW degrees. It was really the professors and classmates who were particularly loving



*Pictured above: Marlenny Franco-Johnson is an employee at the AIM Center and an alumna of Southern's School of Social Work.*

and insightful. The professors who taught the things that can never be contained in the jailed inked pages of a book."

—Annette Heck  
Associate Professor



## DEAN'S MESSAGE

So many exciting projects have kept us busy in 2016 here in the School of Social Work. I invite you to read through our latest issue of *In His Service* to catch up on all of the School's happenings.

The ongoing partnership with the Family Justice Center (FJC) continues to be an exciting venture for our faculty, students, and alumni. Since the opening of the FJC, Chattanooga is poised to lead the charge to stop family violence and reduce the economic impact of violence in our city and across the state. The School is thrilled to be at the table with law enforcement, legal services, and a myriad of social service agencies to work toward reducing family violence in our community.

An outgrowth from this partnership is an opportunity to conduct research assessing citizen and victim perspectives on police services. The program, entitled "Enhancing Law Enforcement's Response to Victims of Crime," is sponsored by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Office of Victims of Crime. Along with a colleague from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and several alumni, I am honored to be a part of the research

team and look forward to sharing our results with the Chattanooga community in the coming months. This research is a reminder of the great need for well-trained social workers to respond to the problems facing the most vulnerable members of our society.

As we reflect on the 2015-2016 academic year, I also want to recognize the ongoing contributions of our faculty members and staff. This dedicated and talented group works throughout the year to provide the best education and support possible for our students. This team honors students and helps them to explore their sense of calling to serve others. It is with great pleasure that I share that this dynamic team is growing. Please join me in welcoming Professors Nina Nelson and Stephanie Guster. You can learn more about them below!

As always, thank you for your continued interest in the School of Social Work at Southern Adventist University. Please be sure to update your current email address at [swfsalumni@lists.southern.edu](mailto:swfsalumni@lists.southern.edu) so that our event announcements, job posts, and e-newsletters will continue to reach you.

We also are committed to placing a greater emphasis on developing our social media presence and, in particular, enhancing our Facebook page. We are posting information about our students, faculty members, and school activities, as well as broader articles and stories on social issues that we think will be of interest to social workers and other community members. It is a great way for alumni to keep up with the School and social issues in general. It is my hope that if you are not already following us on Facebook at [facebook.com/sauschoolofsocialwork](https://www.facebook.com/sauschoolofsocialwork) that you will as soon as you're finished reading this latest issue. If you have information you would like to post, please contact me at [kwilder@southern.edu](mailto:kwilder@southern.edu).

Until we meet again, whether on social media, email or face-to-face, happy reading!

In His Service,



*Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. (Phil. 2:4, NET Bible)*

## CHANGING FACES



**Nina Nelson, PhD**

Assistant Professor

Nina Nelson comes to us from the University of South Carolina, where she recently completed her doctorate in social work in December of 2015.



**Stephanie Guster**

Assistant Professor

Stephanie Guster joins our team after working for many years as a school social worker with the Dalton, Georgia school system and as an adjunct for Southern.



**Amy Boulware**

Advisory Board Chair

Amy Boulware has served as an adjunct professor in the School of Social Work. We welcome her as Advisory Board Chair for the department.

The School of Social Work bids a fond farewell to Magdana Philossaint who has felt God's calling to expand her ministry with her clients, church, and community. In her four years as a professor, Dr. Philossaint's energy and passion for students, healthy living, and integration of faith and learning were a witness to all and will not be soon be forgotten by her students and colleagues.

## MAY 2016 GRADUATES



Andrew Anobile  
BSW



Dinalys Carreno  
BSW



Mary Cordes  
MSW-Trauma



Carla Days  
MSW-Trauma



Joshua Haley  
MSW-Trauma



Natalie Hererra  
BSW



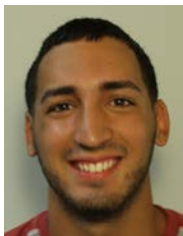
Jaron Hobdy  
BSW



Mariana Kaplan  
BSW



Samantha Mascary  
BSW



Jordy Melendez  
BSW



MacKenzi Nomura  
BSW



Brittany Owens  
BSW



Lachelle Rada  
BSW



Melissa Roda  
BSW



Megan Teeter  
BSW



Cassandra Van  
Barriger - BSW

## JULY 2016 GRADUATES



Candace Abrom  
MSW-Child & Family



Tara Anderson  
MSW-Military/Vet



Alicia Angrand  
MSW-Military/Vet



Amanda Arceneaux  
MSW-Military/Vet



Wendy Coker  
MSW-Trauma



Jenny Dixon  
MSW-Child & Family



Amaad Dowdell  
MSW-Military/Vet



Shawn Hickey  
MSW-Military/Vet



Tiffany Hickey  
MSW-Trauma



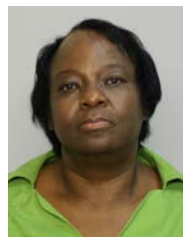
Kenia Ledezma  
MSW-Trauma



Sparka Perry  
MSW-Child & Family



Antonio Simpson  
MSW-Military/Vet



Sonia Smith  
MSW-Child & Family



Sarah Smithey  
MSW-Child & Family



Danielle Stephen  
MSW-Child & Family



Kieara Williams  
MSW-Child & Family



# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK UPDATES

## BSW Updates

### Social Work Club

During the winter semester of 2016, the Social Work Club held events and made community connections. The club hosted a bake sale, selling delicious snacks made by the faculty and staff of the School of Social Work in order to raise money for the club budget. Members also volunteered their time at the Chambliss Home, a local institution that provides care for children. In addition to working together to find new club officers, the club hosted vespers and an end-of-the-year party.

-Bess Helton, social work major

### Phi Alpha Honor Society

Phi Alpha Honor Society celebrated its annual induction in the form of a banquet this year. A total of 33 graduates were inducted, ranging from sophomores to students in the advanced MSW program. Phi Alpha looks forward to cementing its goal of making the society a group that champions excellence and connects students with resources in the coming years.

-Melissa Rodas, BSW, '16

### SWIP

Going to our nation's Capitol for a week was an exhilarating experience for our Social Welfare Issues and Policies class! Although we were still students, we spoke as professionals. It wasn't theory anymore; we were speaking to movers and shakers about what was passionately on our hearts. The thrilling experience was so full of purpose, and it reminded many of us why we chose to do social work in the first place. As a unit, our class realized how much we truly cared for one another. We recognized the

value each one of our members brings to the table, and we grew to appreciate each other on a deeper level. Graduation was a couple of weeks later, but going to D.C. was truly our initiation as social workers.

-Andrew Anobile, BSW, '16

### Convocations

This school year, our students enjoyed several informative convocation programs. January's multidisciplinary convocation featured civil rights activist Franklin McCallie, who, along with his wife, Tresa, host home meetings for 40-60 black and white guests who are invited to share conversation with the intent to build lasting interracial friendships. During the January 21 convocation in the Lynn Wood Hall Chapel, sponsored by the Schools of Social Work and Journalism and Communication and the departments of English, History and Political Studies, and Modern Languages, students were inspired to be intentional about finding meaningful ways to improve black and white relations. McCallie's courageous challenge continues to echo through our school as we make strides toward addressing the racial tensions that have surfaced on our campus.

For Southern's university-wide convocation on March 31, the School of Social Work invited Travis Lloyd as the guest speaker. Lloyd is a mental health professional, speaker, hip hop artist, foster care expert, and mentor. The title of his convocation talk was "Just One Person." During that time he encouraged the students to reach out to others, without judgment, just as he was supported during his own foster care system experience. Later that afternoon, BSW majors had a chance to participate in a one-hour Q&A time with Mr. Lloyd.

### Social Justice Retreat

The 2016 Social Justice Retreat celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Chattanooga Family Justice Center under the theme "Different Faces and Voices of Trauma: Doing Social Justice in Our Communities." The retreat focused on the trauma narrative as central to helping individuals, groups, and communities tell their stories of trauma, recovery, and hope. Students were challenged to "think outside the box" in finding strategies and solutions to create trauma-informed healing in our communities.

### Social Work Month

The School of Social Work held various activities in March to celebrate Social Work Month. On campus, awareness booths in the Student Center helped students learn more about the various facets of social work. Along the promenade, posted signs provided various statistics and Bible verses that related to social work.

Celebrations for Social Work Month also took place in the community. Professor Racovita-Szilagyi facilitated the Family Justice Center's monthly Lunch and Learn on March 16. The title of her presentation was "Helping the Helper: When You Need a Lifesaver." Attendees were able to learn more about vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout as well as preventative steps through proper self-care.

### Professor Research

#### Professor Rusu

Post-modernist movements have challenged the notion of "objective" research and the validity of methods that try to measure and quantify the human experience. Of the many different methods developed to

## END-OF-YEAR AWARDS RECIPIENTS

### MSW Awards:

Jenny Dixon - Field Excellence  
Lindsey Crerar - Academic Excellence  
Martin Pita - Community Service  
Olivia Cole - Student of the Year  
Jessica Hill - Rene Drumm Research Award  
Otilia Schimbischi - NASW MSW Student of the Year

### Top Achiever Award Recipients:

Darcee Christensen  
Sam Hamby  
Stephanie Supriyadi

### BSW Senior Awards:

Dina Carreno - Excellence in Field  
Mariana Kaplan - Academic Excellence  
MacKenzi Nomura - Social Work Major of the Year & NASW BSW Student of the Year  
Brittany Owens - Leadership  
Lachelle Rada - Excellence in Field  
Melissa Rodas - Rene' Drumm Research & Academic Excellence

### Ed Lamb Community Service Award:

Carolita Claus

### Distinguished Alumni Award:

Rebecca Peck - Director of Jewish Cultural Center - field instructor & advisory board member; moderates focus groups for research  
Chris Atkins - Advisory board member - helped with MSW emphases; worked with families in aftermath of 2015 Chattanooga shootings

address these issues, I found the participatory research model especially relevant for my PhD dissertation on intentional community living.

Based on this research model, I approach the participants in the study as experts on their own lives and work together with them at each stage of the study. From the beginning of the project, these community members have been involved in the process of deciding the research topic, defining the purpose of the study, creating the interview questions and collecting the data. This summer, I traveled back to the community to present a preliminary report, receive feedback from the members, and identify ways in which the research findings could be used to improve community living.

### MSW Updates Scholarships for DCS Employees

Our hybrid Masters of Social Work program can be the ideal fit for working adults. The MSW degree better equips employees for the work they do within their agencies. Through scholarships, our MSW program helps Department of Children's Services (DCS) employees realize their goal of achieving their master's degree in social work. The MSW program waives the tuition for three credit hours each fall and winter semester for qualifying DCS employees. Historically, the cost of these three credit hours, required by the guidelines under the Title IV Tuition Assistance Program, were a major obstacle to attending graduate school.

Over the past year, we have provided scholarships for five DCS employees for the state of Tennessee. This coming school year, we will be including DCS employees in the state of Georgia in our scholarship program.

Scholarship recipients shared the following:

*"As a recipient of the DCS/MSW Title IV Tuition Assistance Program, I have been afforded an opportunity to advance my education. I have my employer, DCS, and the MSW program at Southern Adventist University to thank for assisting me along this journey in a profession that will enable me to give back to my clients and community."*

—Adrian Boyd, MSW student

*"Knowing that the DCS supports and encourages workers to continue their education was a great incentive for me to return to school. Attending Southern Adventist University was a decision that*

*has been very beneficial for me."*

—Tiffany Hickey, MSW, '16

### Social Work Day on the Hill

Along with over 500 other social work students and practitioners from across the state, our students attended the NASW "Social Work Day on the Hill." This provided an out-of-the-classroom opportunity to apply the learning of policy and advocacy. MSW students entered the policy presentation competition to advocate for improved state policy for addressing bullying in schools. Students returned from the experience having demystified the legislative process and been empowered to be policy change agents.

### Licensure Preparation Training

On May 22, 26 participants attended our first LMSW licensure preparation workshop. The all-day workshop was held on Southern Adventist University's campus and taught by Rhonda Edwards and Matt McUmber. The content covered in the workshop included test taking strategies, licensure requirements and processes, review of substantive areas, and resource materials. The response of participants was overwhelmingly positive. The workshop was offered at an economical price of \$50 for students and alumni and \$60 for community members.

### Military Social Work and Veteran Services

"While attending the military emphasis classes, a lot of useful information was taken in to use for future practice. I was able to better understand military culture, how deployment affects the family and the service member, visible and invisible injuries, as well as several other important topics. This was the first semester the military emphasis has been offered at Southern and I believe they are on the right track to helping advanced social workers better understand the military environment, challenges, best practices, and lingo. Important skills were gained, including feeling more comfortable asking about suicide ideation when speaking with a client, understanding the interventions that worked best with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and other mental diagnoses, as well as understanding moral injury. Overall, this emphasis has better prepared me to work with the military/veteran population on a more confident level."

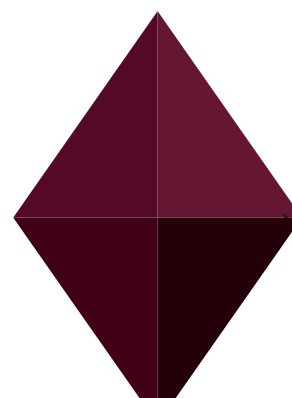
—Amanda Arceneaux, MSW, '16

### Child and Family

Social work is practice-driven, but too often we think of direct practice in social work as only clinical. "Unfortunately," one student said, "I thought of direct practice as only micro. But, after this week, I have learned that there is nothing indirect about macro practice. We are directly focusing on communities, organizations, and policies." This is what a student from the (macro) Child and Family emphasis shared after spending three days in the community confronting challenges faced by children and families living in poverty. As a part of this course, students conducted community agency visits, neighborhood walking tours, interviews with community activists and policymakers, and attended city council meetings. These experiences allowed them to come face-to-face with conditions of economic inequality, racial divides, structural oppression, and blighted neighborhoods that taught a valuable lesson: surviving and thriving as a social worker requires a true appreciation for humanity.

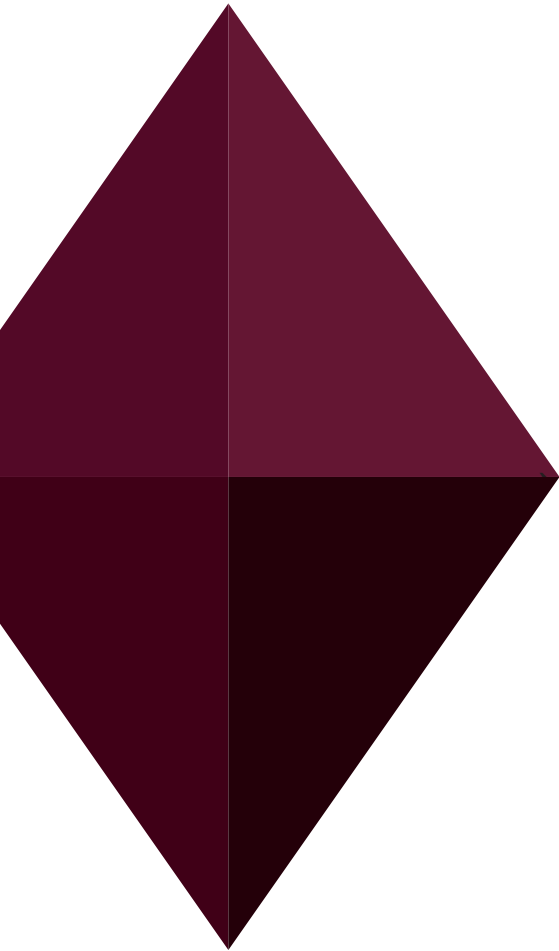
### Trauma and Emergency Management

For an entire week, the 14 students enrolled in the Trauma and Emergency Management emphasis wrestled with concepts related to different aspects of trauma: psychological first aid and crisis intervention; grief following critical events; and suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. In addition, students learned about recognizing and working with survivors of human trafficking, as well as understanding the intricacies of compliant behavior in trafficked and kidnapped victims. Students were given the opportunity to attend training in CPR, Infant CPR, and First Aid provided by Campus Safety Life Safety Specialist Brooks Kirschmann in conjunction with We R CPR, LLC. In addition, students participated in a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.



## FIELD AGENCY FOCUS

Chattanooga Autism Center (CAC) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization and a parent/advocate-driven center providing lifespan support and services for people with autism spectrum disorders and their families. The center also serves as an advocacy resource, building awareness about autism by creating programs, connecting families, and providing autism education in the region through their annual conferences, ongoing free workshops, and a parent mentoring program.



The concept of the Chattanooga Autism Center was developed in 2009 by professionals who listened to the concerns of parents who met together for support and discussed the needs for the autism community. In 2011, the Chattanooga Autism Center chose to become a nonprofit organization, supporting the lives of those impacted by autism.

When the leaders of the CAC were asked what drives the work they do, Executive Director Dave Buck, PhD, replied: "I think about the people our programs serve and those who provide the services all the time. I feel responsible for them....I hate to see people go without help or support or resources....I get great pleasure when a program or therapy or guidance shows progress or pays off in some way."

Alyce Benson, LCSW, feels that the individuals with autism and their families are what drive her to do the work she does at the Chattanooga Autism Center. "The individuals work so hard to overcome challenges while still praising their strengths, and their families give everything to ensure that their children have the best opportunities possible. The autism community is like family. They understand each other without having to say anything."

Advanced student Otilia Schimbischi reflected on her practicum experience and said: "My experience in this agency was greatly positive. I have been exposed to meaningful clinical and administrative experiences, and my time in the agency was enriched by the genuine, professional, open and friendly relationships that all of the staff members share. Every week I have been provided with meaningful opportunities to practice and grow my social work skills. I also had flexibility in initiating new activities from which both the agency and I benefited. It really was a great experience, and I highly recommend the Chattanooga Autism Center for any student who is interested to work with the autism population."

When asked what the agency would like our readers to know about the autism community, Buck replied: "I want everyone to know that people with autism and their families want to be included. They want to be understood and accepted. As more people gain knowledge and experience regarding autism, more obstacles will be removed. Ultimately, this improves quality of life and dignity." For more information regarding the Chattanooga Autism Center, go to [chattanoogaautismcenter.org](http://chattanoogaautismcenter.org).

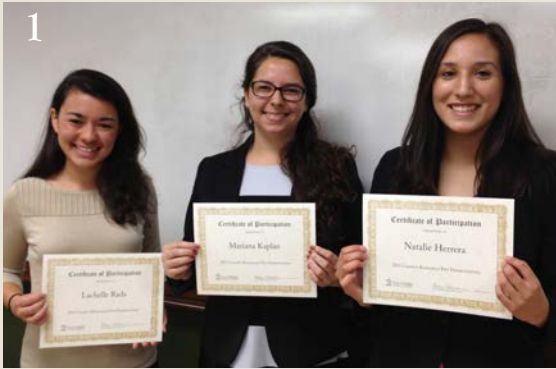
—Evie Nogales-Baker  
Associate Professor



Otilia Schimbischi, MSW student (center)  
Dave Buck, CAC Executive Director (left)  
Alyce Benson, therapist (right)



## SOCIAL WORK HAPPENINGS



1. BSW students pose with their certificates after participating in Campus Research Day presentations. 2. Stephanie Supriyadi and Lindsey Gagnon work at the PR booth during Social Work Month. 3. Carolita Claus interviews with a news reporter on Community Service Day. 4. BSW student Melissa Rodas receives her social work pin in anticipation of becoming a social work graduate. 5. Phi Alpha inductees pose for a group picture after their induction ceremony.

## UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIONS

During the fall and spring semesters of this past academic year, the Christian Service Program initiated and conducted a program evaluation. Laura Racovita-Szilagyi, PhD, assisted the program in crafting the evaluation design, survey, and data analysis. Formal presentations and reports regarding preliminary results, which were made to the Christian Service Committee and University Senate, will be followed by presentations to the University Assembly in the fall of 2016.

Another highlight of the 2015-2016 school year was the implementation of a number of collaborative projects on campus. Interprofessional collaborative practice (IPCP) is defined as the partnership between helping professionals with different backgrounds, working together to assist individuals, families, and com-

munities to deliver high-quality response and care following mass casualty incidents and disasters. Professor Racovita-Szilagyi, participated in an IPCP planning team with Ronda Christman, PhD, Beth Scott, PhD, and Sonia Wrate, MSN from the School of Nursing; Faith Laughlin, EdD of the School of Education and Psychology; Cynthia Gettys, PhD, of the Center for Teaching Excellence; Brooks Kirschmann from Campus Safety; and Maureen Baksh-Griffin, MSN from Cleveland State Community College. The goal of this IPCP was to help prepare nursing, elementary and secondary education, and social work students enrolled in the Trauma and Emergency Management Emphasis to collaborate and respond together to mass casualty incidents. Two exercises were conducted on campus, one during each semester, that

gave students the opportunity to share their thoughts and self-assessment of their level of preparedness through a research study. Qualitative analysis revealed that students “felt it was eye-opening.” Others said that “it was realistic for us. I would do it again” and “really beneficial to have simulations.” The IPCP team plans to continue collaboration on future exercises to prepare students to respond in critical situations.

–Laura Racovita-Szilagyi  
Associate Professor



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Nina Nelson  
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Comeliu Rusu  
Kristie Wilder

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