

Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

Third Edition

November 2008

GSSS Student's International Experiences Abroad and in NYC

My Summer in Hong Kong

By: **Michael Lynch**
Advanced Year Student

For ten weeks, I worked at the Hong Kong Workers Health Center (HKWHC), which works closely with a center for injured workers in Guangzhou. While most of my time was spent in Hong Kong, I was able to make four visits to Guangzhou to conduct a workshop, help in the training of counselors at a rehabilitation hospital, and participate in a worker safety seminar at a factory complex.

My work in Hong Kong consisted mostly of running small groups and workshops on self-awareness and how to deal with difficult emotions. These were run for members of the staff and for injured workers getting ready to re-join the workforce. Additionally, I provided individual counseling and translation work. It was a privileged experience to work alongside social workers and occupational therapists in Hong Kong and in the Mainland. I learned about the challenges they face in helping minimize the strain of rapid economic development in the lives of so many working class people.

Spanish Language Immersion in Costa Rica

By: **Jacquita Elston**
Advanced Year Student

This summer I went to Costa Rica for two weeks for a Spanish-language immersion program for social workers. The program provided an opportunity for students and professionals to learn Spanish while immersing ourselves in Costa Rican culture. We had the option to either stay with a host family (tico family) to fully immerse ourselves or stay in a villa.

The program also offered lectures about Latin American culture and how social work is practiced in Costa Rica and other countries in Latin America. We visited 2 agencies - a women's shelter and children's shelter to learn about social work programs there. Extracurricular activities were also planned, which included dance classes, cooking classes, yoga, a trip to La Paz Waterfalls, rafting, tours around the local community in Grecia, local shopping in Sarchi, a canopy tour, and a weekend excursion to Manuel Antonio National Park. The staff and family were very hospitable and really worked hard to make sure I enjoyed myself. For more information on the program, visit their website at www.acce.co.cr

Social Work in Rwanda

By: **Betsy Sherwood**
Advanced Year Student

This summer I had the opportunity to work as a volunteer in rural Rwanda. My work focused on program development for an orphanage and goat project. In addition, I took part in a social work course, titled Understanding Social Issues: Agency and Faith-Based Responses, through the University of North Carolina in Nairobi, Kenya. My research focused on issues related to child welfare and traditional care patterns for orphaned and abandoned children. Overall, I was most impressed with the profound role social workers play in addressing social problems in these countries.

The United Nations Internship Experience

By: **Drew Rosenzweig**
Advanced Year Student

My internship at the United Nations is with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), a global social work organization that works toward uniting the development of the social work profession with the fight for social justice and human rights.

Having the opportunity to attend NGO meetings at the United Nations has been a remarkable experience. I have had the chance to be present at meetings hosted by the Committee on Mental Health, the Migration Committee, the Committee on Human Rights and the Committee on the Status of Women.

I have learned about the current migration patterns in the war stricken Middle East as well as the services being offered to those who have escaped or have been internally displaced. At a recent briefing on the Eradication of Poverty, three women spoke about programs they developed to lift people out of poverty. Afterward, a young man from Manila spoke about his personal experience with one of the programs. Many of the meetings I have attended speak to what we, as social workers, need to be doing to meet the needs of the population we serve. Hearing this young man's experience with the services that have been provided and how he has been affected opened my eyes to the work that is being done and how effective it is.

I am looking forward to the year ahead, finding my own niche at the United Nations and discovering what I can do to make a difference.

My Summer in the Dominican Republic

By: **Joy Bittner**
Advanced Year Student

Sunsets over crystal blue water, swimming in tropical waterfalls, sun ripened mangos. These were all part of my summer in the Dominican Republic. But so also was sitting in the dirt with half naked children, frogs in my shower, and realizing how wide that proverbial language-cultural barrier can really be. I went to be the homeroom 5th grade teacher in a bilingual school. However, when summer school was suddenly cancelled I found myself without a job or a place to stay for the second half of the summer. I learned the importance of networking when I began my position as a coordinator for student volunteer trips working with children in poor villages.

The Dominican people have a special way of life. The pace is more relaxed and relationally focused, especially compared to the hectic way of New York. The people I met showed me to enjoy the sweetness that life has to offer, whether that's found in time with friends, dancing to the radio, or sharing a simple meal. I would encourage everyone to spend even a short amount of time in another culture. Your perspective will be transformed and you will better be able to appreciate the blessings of everyday life.

The GSWSA Holiday Toy Drive

Collecting toys, books and UNWRAPPED gifts

Where: Fordham Lobby (right outside the cafeteria)

Tuesday 11/27 12:00pm – 2pm

Thursday 11/29 12:00pm – 2pm

Friday 11/30 12:00pm – 2pm

Saturday 12/1 12:00pm – 2pm

Tuesday 12/4 12:00 pm – 2pm

Editors: Maya Tsekenis, MSW Student & Dr. Elaine Congress

Please see reverse side.

November 2008 – News & Events

Feature Story

**Fordham GSSS and University College Dublin:
Developing Connections**

**Dr. Mary Ann Forgey
Associate Professor**

During the fall 2005 semester, as a recipient of a Fulbright Scholar Award, I taught two courses at University College Dublin (UCD) School of Social Policy and Social Work. I also conducted research on the domestic violence assessment process used by Irish child welfare practitioners. While there, I had numerous conversations with UCD faculty about how to best promote an ongoing exchange between UCD and Fordham. Out of these discussions emerged the idea to create joint teaching and learning experiences using distance learning technology.

We decided to begin this initiative by selecting one session from UCD’s Foundation Skills Course and one session from Fordham’s Generalist Practice with Individuals Families and Groups to be jointly taught using video conferencing. The theme selected for the joint class session was “Working with the Involuntary Client”. We also decided that each professor would develop a case involving an involuntary client in which a roleplay of a first interview could be enacted by two student volunteers from each class. After each roleplay, students from both classes would share their constructive feedback with each other. The long term plan for this initiative is to increase the number of video conferenced class sessions and to also develop joint assignments where students from each class could work in teams using various distance learning methods.

Since my return, a joint class session using video conferencing has been successfully held in the fall semester of 2006 and 2007. Student feedback has been very positive. I would be interested in hearing other suggestions about how we can build upon and expand this type of initiative. Please feel free to contact me at X6642 or forgey@fordham.edu.

The Student Perspective on Video Conference

By: **Tameeka Lesley**
Foundation Year Student

The experience of partaking in a video conference was interesting and informative. The video conference provided the opportunity to witness how social work students in another country apply interview skills and tasks. This exchange was made both ways. We were able to compare and contrast the different issues, styles and techniques. Interacting with students in another country also provided cultural information. Students were able to learn common terms/words used in the other culture. We were able to experience this in real time and it gave students a chance to connect, as well as give each other positive feedback. I believe that the continued use of these joint sessions would serve as a great learning tool for students.

New Course Being Offered: Spring 2008

**International Social Development and
Community Building in a Global Context**

**Dr. Marciana Popescu
Associate Professor**

Do you have an interest in international social work, a passion for working with diverse population, or a burden for vulnerable populations whose human rights are routinely being violated or ignored? Are you on a quest for a better way to understanding the global village, and building strong communities founded on the premise of equality, justice and a respect for diversity and human rights? Are you considering a career in international social work? Or, do you plan to work with international communities residing in New York?

Then this is a course you will absolutely want to add to your educational development plan: **International Social Development and Community Building in a Global Context**. Offered this spring, this course will expose you to global issues such as the AIDS epidemics; child trafficking; environmental issues and the impact of global warming; child soldiers and the treatment of immigrants and refugees; as well as the current mechanisms developed to address these issues. Using a multi-media approach, the course will employ web materials, video materials, as well as current literature in the field, to provide you with a better understanding of the global context, and to equip you with essential skills for community development and community building. You will be challenged to develop critical thinking, through case studies and class debates, and to further challenge current practices promoting social justice and a respect for human rights. This is a course that will give you a human rights perspective on social work practice both locally, in working with diverse communities, and in international settings.

Offered Tuesdays 3:30pm – 5:20pm

November’s Learned Lunches

Dr. Louise Harms

Senior Lecturer at the

University of Melbourne will host

“A View from Down Under:

Social Work in Australia”

Tuesday November 27th 12:40 – 1:30pm

Room 713

Learned Lunch: **Substance Abuse**

Tuesday November 20th Room 713

12:40 pm – 1:30pm