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From the Editor

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Contemporary Rural Social Work

Volume 6 (2014)

Editor's Introduction

Our journal continues to flourish, attracting new ideas and new features, as well as continuing to expand the knowledge base of the profession on rural practice. The journal is an important resource for both practitioners and educators.

It gives me great pleasure to announce a new feature for *Contemporary Rural Social Work*, our Poetry Section. Ably edited by Dr. Danielle Beazer Dubrasky from Southern Utah University, this issue contains several evocative submissions as well as an eloquent introduction to the new Poetry Section by our new editor.

Article submissions continue to increase. Volume six contains a number of thought-provoking articles that explore important aspects of rural social work. Liz Blue and coauthors in *Ethical Guidelines for Social Work Supervisors in Rural Settings* fill a gap in the literature on ethics in rural practice. The authors interviewed supervisors in rural and small communities in two Midwestern states and used the interview data to develop guidelines for ethical supervisory practices in rural environments as they add to our knowledge base on ethical rural practice.

Trella and Hilton explore the seldom considered issue of rural homelessness in their article "*They Can Only Do So much: Use of Family While Coping with Rural Homelessness*" through an exploration of individual and family reliance on non-homeless family members in coping with homelessness in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Findings include the fact that while almost all participants relied on non-homeless family members for assistance, there was variation in the amount of help sought and received depending on whether or not participants were childless and single or were homeless with children. Implications for policy and services are presented.

Ryan et al. compare the differences between children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders in their article *Differences between Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders: Rural Social Work Implications for Prevention, Assessment, and Treatment*. They reviewed nine quantitative research studies published between 1992-2013 that compared children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to identify: (a) the differences between these children (e.g., intellectual, behavioral); and (b) the diagnostic tools that may be used to distinguish between them, thereby providing a differential diagnosis. Special focus was placed on rural treatment implications.

Mingun Lee and coauthors discuss an important aspect of rural practice in their article *Impact of Providers' Cultural Competence on Clients' Satisfaction and Hopefulness in Rural Family Services: A Pilot Study*. This article is especially important since there is limited work on cultural competence of rural social work providers. The study examined relationships between families' perceptions of cultural competence, therapeutic alliance, and practice outcomes in rural practice settings. Research participants were drawn from 45 youth and their parents who were receiving

intensive in-home family preservation services in Appalachian Ohio. Utilizing the results of their research, the authors provide suggestions for enhancing social work practitioners' cultural competence in rural settings.

Ida and Mark Mills in their article *Gun Control: College Student Attitudes and the Meaning for Appalachian Social Workers* share timely information on an important topic from their survey of rural Appalachian college students and explore an aspect of rural culture that is rarely examined in the literature. This study explored gun control attitudes in order to consider what makes compromise and consensus on the issue of gun control so difficult. The authors discuss the influence of culture on this issue and the implications for rural social workers.

Flanagan and coauthors in their article, *Black Gold and the Dark Underside of its Development on Human Service Delivery*, reflect the changing environment in rural North Dakota as a result of a boomtown economy stemming from oil production growth. This paper examines perceptions of human service workers regarding their employment experiences and adaptations in oil-impacted rural communities in the Upper Missouri Valley of North Dakota. This study is part of larger pilot project designed to better inform health and human service professionals and elected officials about the nature of human service delivery systems in boomtowns. Qualitative methodologies were employed to analyze information gathered by interviews conducted with 40 human service workers. Both individual interviews and focus groups were conducted. Study findings indicate that the impact of oil on the human service network is complicated. Human service workers in the study were burdened with new and more complex challenges than before the boom, and had fewer resources to address these additional challenges. Their burden was eloquently summarized by one worker who stated, "While somebody else benefits, we carry the burden of oil boom repercussions." Smaller scale local strategies appear to creatively meet many needs, and show signs of worker resilience in strategy adaptation.

Volume six also offers readers a provocative Practice Note. O'Neill et al. in their Practice Note, *Mental Health First Aid USA: The Implementation of a Mental Health First Aid Training Program, in a Rural Healthcare Setting*, provide readers with a description of the implementation of an evidence-based certification program designed to teach lay citizens to recognize certain symptoms of common mental illnesses, offer and provide first aid assistance, and guide a person toward appropriate services and other support. The program targets a broad audience, from teachers, police officers, clergy members, and healthcare professionals to the average citizen volunteer. This Note made me wonder how many other communities have programs like this that should be shared with other rural practitioners and educators. We look forward to more submissions like this one.

This issue has a number of interesting Notes that will be useful to those of us who teach. The Teaching Notes section of *Contemporary Rural Social Work* contains useful materials that are especially applicable to education in rural areas. Rice and Walsh in *Building University-Community Partnerships in Rural Settings through a Community-Based Learning Assignment* point out that universities located in or near rural settings are uniquely positioned to partner with their communities to offer important resources often lacking within rural social service agencies. This Teaching Note describes a community-based research assignment implemented within an MSW advanced research methods course. In their Teaching Note, *Iterative Ethical Discussion in Hybridized Practice Classes*, Blake and Davis present their experiences in conducting online

ethics discussions and provide suggestions for incorporating online scenarios that reflect practice dilemmas for students to consider critically before responding to posted questions. Praglin and Nebbe in their Note, *Introduction to Animal- and Nature-Assisted Therapies: A Service-Learning Model for Rural Social Work*, discuss the teaching philosophy and practices of a university service-learning course in nature- and animal-assisted therapies. The course took place at a wildlife rehabilitation center, and students engaged as counselors, put academic theories into action by facilitating an “animal camp” for 25 at-risk children.

The Book Review section continues to provide thoughtful reviews of books related to rural social practice. This issue of the journal features reviews of books dealing with rural mental health, immigrant experiences, rural social work and community capacity, and the organization called the Minutemen.

We hope you enjoy reading these works as much as we enjoyed reviewing them. Hopefully you will discover materials to use in your practice and share with your students as we continue to celebrate the richness that is rural social work practice.

Peggy Pittman-Munke, Editor-in-Chief