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From the Editor

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Contemporary Rural Social Work

Special Issue

Volume 7 Number 1 (2015)

Editor-in-Chief's Introduction

This special issue of *Contemporary Rural Social Work* is a call to action as well as to scholarly perusal. Environmental justice is a critically important topic for rural as well as urban survival. *Contemporary Rural Social Work* is pleased to bring a special issue to the profession under the able editorship of Pamela Twiss highlighting the complexity of the issue. The articles featured in this issue present both practical guidelines for change useful for both educators and practitioners as well as a commitment to a philosophy of stewardship of the environment. Rural areas and rural practitioners are in daily touch with the issues raised by failure to protect the environment and offer leadership in best practices to stem the tide of the results of inattention to the environment in which we live.

Young, Teixeira and Hartnett present a case study of a rural West Virginia community organizing effort called Citizens Actively Protecting the Environment [CAPE] that utilized social media in its response to the Elk River chemical spill of 2013. Some excellent ideas for use of social media for environmental organizing in rural areas are presented. Researchers, practitioners, and educators will find this article helpful. Harper-Dorton and Harper discuss social and environmental issues that arise in rural areas where access to clean water and affordable energy are denied. They provide examples of innovative grassroots ideas to “ameliorate daily deprivation of necessary resources.” Vividly, the interconnections between water and energy are highlighted, along with the local and global consequences for a sustainable future if this interconnectivity is ignored. Willett presents the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations through the use of an ethnographic approach to the effects of climate change on two rural poor Kenyan communities. She details the effects of drought, deforestation, failed governmental and foreign aid responses and local adaptive responses. She makes a compelling case for the involvement of social work in mitigating the effects of climate change and presents a number of ways for effective involvement.

In a thought provoking article, Scherch frames permaculture design principles and methods as a modality for social work professionals to begin with their own personal and professional practices and emphasizes that social workers need to acquire and model the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable lifestyles. He points out that the prioritization of “multi-modal skills of sustainable living may well be the most effective means to realize and sustain environmental justice advancement.” Implications for social work research, practice and education are presented. Dylan designs a course that responds to the social justice aims of the profession through the lens of environmental social work. Her course moves well beyond theory to a discussion of best practice interventions and alternative practices. Book reviews by Chakradhar and Perone round out the issue.

In summary, this special issue of *Contemporary Rural Social Work* presents concepts, issues and practice implications of issues related to environmental justice in ways that should compel rural practitioners and educators to thoughtful action. This issue makes clear that rural practitioners have the opportunity to be on the cutting edge to provide ideas for solutions, articulate implications of failure to act now, and present important case examples to bring home to policymakers the serious consequences of inaction while there is still a reasonable chance to ameliorate the potential for the destruction of the universe in which we live. We are given the tools to mount a campaign for environmental justice. As editor of *Contemporary Rural Social Work* I hope we use this special issue of our journal as a springboard for us as rural social workers to lead the charge for environmental justice based on our firsthand knowledge, experience and competence.

Peggy Pittman-Munke, Editor-in-Chief