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## From the Editor

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# Contemporary Rural Social Work

## *Regular Issue*

Volume 7, Number 2 (2015)

*Dedicated to Sarah Hendrix*

**Peggy Pittman-Munke**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

It is with great pleasure that the editorial staff of CRSW bring you the 2015 regular issue of the journal following our special issue on promoting environmental justice.

Before we discuss the contents of this issue, it is with a sense of sorrow and loss that we mourn the death of one of our CRSW reviewers, Sarah Hendrix, and at the same time celebrate her life. Sarah, her husband, and younger daughter were murdered by her son in their home in rural Corbin Kentucky in spring of 2015. Sarah was Kentucky born and bred, grew up in Lexington, and studied at both the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville. She was an urban person, as much as one can be urban in Kentucky, until she accepted a position at Union College in Barbourville Kentucky in eastern Kentucky.

Sarah embraced rural living and her rural students with great joy and curiosity. She became active in her community, not just in social services organizations, but in the Corbin farmer's market as she partnered with her husband to market and sell honey from their own beehives. She became very interested in economic development in the region, especially in the rural empowerment zone legislation and the implications for her area of Kentucky. She worked hard to understand the culture of both the region where she lived and the culture and context of the program where she taught. In her teaching she showcased the culture and achievements of the region.

CRSW was very important to Sarah, and she often assigned articles to her students. She spoke with great pride about her connection to the journal as a reviewer and looked forward to the day when she too would have an article in the journal. At the time of her death she was just beginning a case study on rural empowerment zones. Hers was a life well lived as well as a life cut short. I know she would want us to enjoy the splendid array of articles in this issue, a true buffet of gourmet delights for the mind.

In the first of our feature articles, **Building Collaboratives with Southern Rural African American Churches through the Integration of the Interorganizational Collaborative Framework**, Alex Colvin and Angela Bullock explain the important role that the rural Black church often plays in the lives of many African Americans, frequently functioning as an informal

helping network in meeting emergency service needs for this group. This article provides a review of the constructs of the Bailey and McNalley-Koney Interorganizational Community-Based Collaborative Framework. Additionally, this paper explores action-oriented measures for integrating constructs into practice to build interorganizational collaboratives with southern rural African American churches. This article will be especially useful for social service providers working in small rural areas where there are few professional social service agencies and services.

The second article, **Longitudinal Description of Developmental Youth Assets and Substance Use: A Cohort Study of Rural Youth** by Michael Vimont addresses the need for local data to guide strategies to enhance the well-being of the youth of the area. As a concept, developmental youth assets is increasingly used in measuring the psycho-social health of adolescents. This longitudinal study focuses on a cohort of over 200 youths residing in a rural community located in northeast Ohio. This five-year study observes trends of eight assets and the use of three substances. Results show that a decrease in asset scores took place between the sixth and eighth grade while the use of substances increased between the eighth and tenth grades. Additionally, outcomes show that youths coming from households without two parents have lower assets scores and higher substance use rates compared to youth residing in two-parent households. Strategies used by this community upon obtaining results are discussed.

In the next article, **Evaluation of the Demographics, Socioeconomics, and Satisfaction Levels of Recipients at a Rural Food Bank**, Michael J. Lyman and Jeongah Seo present a study that assesses the demographics, socioeconomics, behaviors, environment, and satisfaction of food bank clients as a way to inform food bank administrators about where their services could be more efficiently focused. Unfortunately, very little has been published in the research literature about levels of recipient satisfaction at food banks in any settings, but especially in rural settings. This descriptive study used existing demographic and socioeconomic data from intake forms at a rural food bank, in addition to the responses of a convenience sample of 44 foodbank recipients to the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ-8). The data were used to assess the socioeconomic characteristics of recipients at a rural food bank and their satisfaction level with services provided. Findings indicate high levels of satisfaction among these food bank recipients. Also, small older-adult-dominated households reported higher overall income than larger households with working parents and children. Findings suggest that food banks focus their efforts, especially outreach, on the needs of young families who do not receive regular government benefits such as Social Security.

Two university professors, Tammy Piche and Keith Brownlee, and a practitioner, Glenn Halverson, from Thunder Bay in Ontario, Canada combine their expertise to bring us **The Development of Dual and Multiple Relationships for Social Workers in Rural Communities**. This article, written from the Canadian perspective, explores the commonalities of practice issues related to ethics on both sides of an international border. They explain that mental health professionals who work in small, rural communities often have to contend with dual and multiple relationships. The more integrated service providers are within the community, the more likely they will encounter overlapping personal and professional relationships with

clients. Although there is extensive literature on the potential risks of dual and multiple relationships, little empirical evidence exists which addresses the contextual factors that specifically lead to these relationships in rural social work practice. This qualitative study explored the experiences of twelve social service providers practicing in northern and northwestern Ontario. Findings provide some insight into the complexity and dynamics of dual and multiple relationships in small towns, as well as worker perspectives on the specific contextual circumstances that result in mental health workers encountering these relationships. The unique contribution of this paper to the literature is to highlight factors that increase the likelihood of dual and multiple relationships when they are not as obvious as a clear and immediate conflict of interest. Greater clarity about such precipitating factors will contribute to supervision, training, and sound policy development informed by contextual sensitivity.

In our fifth article, **Self-Efficacy and Mental Health Services Provided by Rural and Frontier Oncology Social Workers**, Lindsey R. Overstreet, Diane A. Kempson, and Carol J. Hermansen-Kobulnicky present a pilot study that explores the relationship between self-efficacy and professional behaviors of a non-random membership sample of the Association of Oncology Social Work (AOSW) who practice in rural and frontier settings (n=19). The New Generalized Self-Efficacy (NGSE) scale was used to measure provider self-efficacy; a researcher-designed questionnaire was used to assess the professional behaviors of conducting mental health assessments and providing supportive counseling to individuals diagnosed with cancer. Pearson correlation and two-sample t-tests were used to analyze data. While study results did not elucidate relationships explored, results revealed a disparity between participants' overall high sense of professional preparedness and comfort conducting mental health assessments and the regularity with which they perform these functions of oncology patient care.

In our next article, **Future Care Planning Practices of Aging Services Professionals in Rural Appalachia**, Natalie D. Pope, Jacquelyn Lee and Diane N. Loeffler discuss a growing area of social work practice. Planning for future care is an important aspect of professional practice with older adults, and social workers play a key role in helping elders engage in future care planning (FCP). This study examined geriatric social service professionals' practices and perspectives on helping older rural Appalachians plan for care needs in later life. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 case managers who live and work in southeast Ohio, a part of rural north central Appalachia. Themes related to efforts made to assist elders with FCP include: 1) valuing client self-determination, 2) developing positive helping relationships, and 3) using initial crises to encourage FCP. Practice implications for rural social work professionals are included.

In our seventh article, **Rural Older Adults and Functional Health Literacy: Testing Self-efficacy, Knowledge and Skills Resulting from Hands-on Health Promotion**, Michele L. Dugan-Day, Susan C. Dollar, and Wafaa A. Kaf introduce us to an increasingly important topic for social workers working with older adults. Functional Health Literacy (FHL) involves the knowledge, skills and belief in self-efficacy to use health care information in self-care. FHL is critical for rural older adults since they are at risk of poor health care outcomes. As part of the Senior Health University project, we measured the FHL of rural older adults before and after educational sessions that included hands-on skill building. Ninety-eight participants aged 60 and

older were recruited from five rural congregate meal sites over two years. Survey methods allowed for paired sample *t*-tests of FHL variables. Findings included significant post-training increases in FHL, suggesting the potential benefit of FHL training for rural older adults. Andersen's (1995) Behavioral Model of Health Services Use guided this study of the effects of health promotion on health services use, standardization of practical measurement tools, and examination of modalities in rural settings. Research is needed to test the relationship of increased FHL and use of health services by rural participants and to explore the role of online resources and service use in vulnerable older adult populations.

In the eighth and final article of the issue, **Qualitative Experiences of Rural Postpartum Women and Implications for Rural Social Work**, Christopher D. Gjesfjeld, Addie Weaver and Kathy Schommer bring us rural women's often overlooked perspectives about their access to maternity and associated health care services during pregnancy and the postpartum period. Semi-structured interviews with 24 mothers residing in a rural North Dakota county were conducted to understand their perspectives about both accessing healthcare services and parenting children in a rural context, with emphasis on understanding these mothers' experiences using non-rural maternity care. Thematic analysis of qualitative interview data led to the emergence of three core themes. First, mothers in the sample minimized geographic barriers they had to overcome to access healthcare despite describing significant travel and weather challenges. Second, mothers expressed concern over the lack of affordable and flexible childcare in their rural community. Finally, mothers described different experiences within rural and non-rural settings, noting specific advantages and disadvantages of each. Although these findings cannot be generalized to other rural mothers, this article points out how local qualitative inquiry can inform and improve the competency of social work services within rural communities.

In an important area of CRSW, the Practice Note section, Margaret F. Sloan, Karen A. Ford and Daisha M. Merritt bring us critical material related to the impact of policy on practice. In **Shifts in Practice Based on Rapid Re-Housing for Rural Homelessness: An Exploratory Study of Micropolitan Homeless Service Provision**, based on interviews with rural homeless service providers, the authors examine how policy has created shifts in practice for organizations serving homeless populations. Homeless individuals find a decreasing opportunity for assistance while awaiting Rapid Re-Housing. Some organizations, dependent on Rapid Re-Housing monies, are facing a lack of funding to pay for general homeless care provision. Organizations are creating care networks to address requirements of the new policy in addition to pooling resources in underserved areas.

In the Teaching Note section of CRSW, Peter Kindle, CRSW's hardworking book review editor, shares his rationale for **Teaching Students to Write Book Reviews** and includes a book review assignment that has been effective in developing student authors. He argues that one value associated with his work for CRSW preparing book reviews for publication is the increased capacity to develop this skill in undergraduate and MSW-level social work students. After graduation, student authors ( $N = 21$ ) agreed that acceptance for publication improved their self-confidence, increased attention to their studies, and enhanced their practice.

Another important Teaching Note is contributed by John Miller in **Integrating Service, Community, and Teaching: Inspiring Students While Building a Mentoring Program for African American Youth**. This author shares the various social work practice skills he used to design and effectively implement a community-based local mentoring program for African American adolescents. This program served as a case study for social work students who practice in rural areas to learn about community development since his program lacks formal rural community practice training module in its curriculum. He details the process of building the assignment and provides practical examples and recommendations for social work faculty on how to infuse community service experience into the classroom.

I think you will agree that this issue is truly a gourmet feast for the mind. And as everyone knows, gourmet feasts require great desserts. For dessert, Claudette Lynn Grinnell-Davis reviews Leah Schmalzbauer's *The last best place? Gender, family and migration in the New West*, Peter Kindle reviews Michael R. Daley's *Rural Social Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Karen Harper-Dorton reviews Don E. Albrecht's *Rethinking Rural: Global Community and Economic Development in the Small Town West*, and our Poetry Editor, Dr. Danielle Dubrasky selected nine poems for our delight.