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From the Editor

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Contemporary Rural Social Work

Regular Issue

Volume 8, Number 2 (2016)

Peggy Pittman-Munke
Editor-in-Chief

It is with great pleasure the editorial staff of *Contemporary Rural Social Work* presents volume 8, for 2016. There are six feature articles; one teaching note; four book reviews; and eight poems. As always, this volume should be very useful for those who are in education as well as for those who are in practice. The articles are rich and varied, the teaching note lends itself to replication, the book reviews offer important perspectives on rurality and crime, on aging in rural areas, and on rural poverty. *Contemporary Rural Social Work*, volume 8, is rich in resources for the social work educator who wishes to infuse rural content across the curriculum. The articles and other features are challenging and provocative and bring us as social work educators in rural areas and as rural practitioners valuable materials that will enrich our teaching and our practice.

Daley and Munke in their article *Over the Hill to the Poor Farm: Rural History Almost Forgotten* offer a perspective on rural social welfare history that has been all but forgotten and has implications for modern service delivery. In more modern times, social services have become impersonal and relatively uncaring about the personhood of rural clients. There is much to learn from the wrap-around service model of the rural poor farm.

Clevenger and Navarro explore sexual victimization of students at a rural university as they discuss *Putting it on the Radar: Investigating Students' Experiences with Sexual Victimization at a Rural Institution*. Their study examined sexual assault of both females and males attending a mid-sized rural southern college campus with less than 12,000 students. Their research findings indicated that sexual victimization occurred at this university, and that this social problem is not isolated to large urban schools. This is an important study for rural social work educators because little has been done to raise awareness that sexual assault is also prevalent on rural campuses.

Barnett et al, in their article, *Systematic Review of Veterans' Coping Strategies: How can Rural Veterans Improve Their Quality of Life?* examine the empirical literature on an emerging body of coping strategies (CS), both civilian readjustment and health-risk related, experienced by United States military veterans exposed to combat stress and other military lifestyle stressors. Studies that met inclusion criteria were selected among quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies published in peer-reviewed journals. Data were synthesized to investigate two research questions informing evidence-based practice. What coping strategies do veterans use to deal with past military experience(s)? What are the health-risk coping strategies that veterans employ to adjust to past military life? The findings from this article may assist social workers in collaborating with rurally located veterans in selecting optimal strategies to protect their health and advance their post-military service life goals.

Moore et al present a case study in their article *Reinventing Social Work Education and Service Delivery in Rural Areas: An Interprofessional Case Study* that provides an interprofessional case study approach to serving the social service and health needs of vulnerable persons living rural communities. This project, the Congregational Social Work Education Initiative (CSWEI), is funded by a health care foundation. Persons in rural areas are often at risk for poverty, homelessness and lack of access to needed health and social services. The case study demonstrates the opportunities for collaboration between professional social work, religiously affiliated organizations (RAOs) and nursing in order to reduce health and behavioral/mental health disparities among residents in rural areas. This article underlines the importance of collaboration in improving life for people in rural areas who suffer from mental and physical health issues.

Randle presents a model for social work leadership in rural social work programs based on emotional intelligence. His article, *Social Work Leadership: Emotional Intelligence in a Rural BSW Program*, addresses scarcity of empirical research regarding social work leadership within academic settings. More specifically, limited literature is available that discusses the philosophical prisms, perceived realities, and behavior principles in which leaders in social work academia conduct themselves. This article adds to the literature of social work leadership in academia and provides an emotionally intelligent theoretical framework for leadership practice from a rural BSW program director's perspective.

Starks et al in *An Innovative Approach to Community Behavioral Health Service Delivery* present another collaborative approach to working with behavioral/mental health issues common in rural areas. Project EMPOWER was a grant funded initiative designed to positively impact a rural community by providing behavioral health services and case management to low-income families. An interdisciplinary service team comprised of behavioral health specialists and graduate level interns in the fields of social work, psychiatric nursing, and counseling worked to provide services under the supervision of a doctorate level clinical social work professor. Community partnerships were forged to increase opportunities for community members to have accessible, affordable services. Using an empowerment model rooted in systems and integrated practice, the services included assessments, referrals, group, individual and family counseling, child care, and psychoeducational workshops.

In a teaching note, Davis and Carswell present *Teaching Macro Practice Through the Use of Experiential Instruction and Collaboration: A Formula to Create Sustainable Community Resources*. The project utilized evidence-based learning strategies focusing on experiential instruction and collaboration with local community agencies. Using aspects of the flipped classroom as well as service learning, the course was particularly interested in engaging with community stakeholders to identify issues arising from the realities of a rural service environment. The teaching note discusses all aspects of the project and provides an outline to assist social work educators to integrate similar projects into other programs. The project was completed in and is especially well suited for rural areas, where services, resources, and expertise are often lacking. The authors specifically discuss the challenges and strategies of completing a project of this type in a rural setting.

The poetry section complements the articles and teaching note in the journal. Danielle Beazer Dubrasky, poetry editor, has selected a variety of poems that will stimulate the emotional as well as the cognitive in the reader. She has written a masterly introduction to a range of poems

that chart various aspects of rural life. New to this issue are questions at the end of each poem to help guide discussion for use in class for students to help students utilize assessment and analytical skills. Poetry often moves us in ways that prose cannot. These poems will be especially useful in helping students cultivate empathy. They also are reflections of rural life that have strong micro and macro practice and policy implications.

The book review section presents books related to rural practice and education for rural practice. The selections range from works dealing with rural crime and rural aging to rural poverty. These books would make excellent additions to course syllabi in courses ranging from courses on gerontological social work, social policy classes, and macro practice classes.

Peg Munke, *Editor-in-Chief*