**Stay in Touch**

When your contact information changes, go to our web site, www.usm.edu/socialwork

And update your alumni profile.

Keeping your alumni profile current will insure that we don’t lose touch with you.

Email is the best way to insure that you get information from the school in a timely manner.

If we don’t have your email address, just send it to us and we will add you to our email list.

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**School Welcomes New Faculty**

We are pleased to welcome three new faculty members beginning the fall semester, 2007:

**Dana Harmon, Ph.D.**

Dr. Dana K. Harmon received her B.A. at The University of Alabama, MSW at Loyola University Chicago, and her Ph.D. at The University of Alabama. Her research focus is issues concerning Black males and familial relationships in the Black community.

**Carolyn Hester, Ph.D.**

Carolyn Hester is a visiting instructor who received her Ph. D. in Social Work from Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, and her MSW from the University of Kansas, Lawrence. She received her BSW from Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA. She lives in Ocean Springs, MS.

**Tom Osowski, Ph.D.**

Tom comes to Southern Miss from South Dakota State University, where he earned his Ph.D. He has many years of clinical social work experience in trauma and recovery, and several years teaching experience. Tom earned his master of social work degree from the University of Kansas and his BSSW from the University of North Dakota. He is married to Jane who teaches at Southern Miss in the Nutrition/Dietetics program. They have three young children.
Retiring Faculty

- **Dr. Pat Davis**

**Dr. Pat Davis** joined the Gulf Coast faculty of the School of Social Work in 2001, following a distinguished social work practice career. She served with excellence in a wide range of capacities – able instructor, *de facto* on-site coordinator of the field education program, faculty leader on the School’s Gulf Coast advisory board, and enthusiastic advisor to the student organizations. Most recently, Dr. Davis contributed significantly to the developing Gulf Coast baccalaureate social work program, recruiting students, teaching, and advocating for student concerns. Dr. Davis plans to remain active with social work concerns on the Coast.

New Field Education Coordinator

**Debbie Ford**, MSW, has accepted the position of Coordinator of Field Education. She has been associated with the school since 2003, and formerly held the position of Education and Research Associate.

She received her B.A. from Indiana University and her M.S.W. degree from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Debbie says that she is exited about the opportunities for closer involvement with students that her new position will offer her.

MSW Program Enhancements Made To Improve Accessibility

The School has implemented changes in our MSW program to help address the shortage of social workers in the state by making the program more accessible.

Students may now apply for spring admission and a new weekend master’s degree program will begin in 2008 for practicing child and family service workers.

According to Dr. Michael Forster, Director of the school, “allowing students to be admitted in the spring is about accommodating more students with diverse needs”. He said, “the spring admission goes hand-in-hand with a schedule revision that offers the 60-credit-hour MSW curriculum in both the fall and spring semester.”

The MSW Weekend Program will be offered to public and private sector agency employees working with children and families as a way to earn their master’s degree through weekend courses.

Dr. Forster notes that this is an underserved market composed of individuals, many quite experienced in social services, who find it difficult or impossible to attend classes during the week.
Volunteer Opportunity

The Shafer Center in Hattiesburg is seeking volunteers to man their 24-hour crisis line.

If you are interested, contact the Shafer Center at 601-264-7777 or email them at shafercenter@aol.com

Class meetings will take place on Friday nights and/or Saturdays. Courses will be supplemented by online components to reduce the amount of traditional class time and elective courses will be fully online. Also, agency employees can use their employer as their field placements, which are extensive in social work education.

The MSW spring admission and weekend program will be available on the Southern Miss Hattiesburg campus only.

The deadline for spring admission is October 15, 2007. For information, you may contact admissions coordinator Sherry Gilkey at 601-266-4168 or e-mail her at sherry.gilkey@usm.edu.

Successful Partnership With Forrest County Department of Human Services

As Mississippi confronts the daunting task of reforming and improving services for foster children, a unique partnership between the USM School of Social Work and the Forrest County Unit of the Department of Human Services’ Division of Family and Children’s Services is already yielding results and could serve as a model for the rest of the state.

Lori Woodruff, director of child welfare programs at the Southern Miss School of Social Work, who has helped lead the partnership, says, “This is the only partnership like this that we know of in the nation”.

With School of Social Work personnel helping supervise and train agency personnel, supporting case work, and promoting strong hires, the number of children under agency custody has dropped from 243 last year to about 170 now.

USM Honors Grant Writers

Dr. Tim Rehner makes presentation on the Family Network Partnership

Top administrators and city officials were on hand Friday, August 31, 2007 at the University of Southern Mississippi to honor those who have contributed to a record period of funding.

Hattiesburg Mayor Johnny DuPree and Southern Miss President Martha Saunders ate lunch at the annual Letter’s Day celebration at the university's Thad Cochran Center amid a group of professors and graduate students who are actively engaged in cutting-edge research.

Following a series a presentations of research from top minds at the university ranging from chaos theory to the Family Network Partnership, a number of awards were handed out to summer research grant winners.
DuPree said he came to thank the professors behind the *Family Network Partnership*, an initiative of the Southern Miss School of Social Work, who have contributed to the city for years.

"I came because of the great work Michael Forster and Tim Rehner have done on the east side of town with the young people," the mayor said. "The social work department has done such a great job of bringing university resources out to the community and challenging young people to achieve."

**Aspire Center Renovations**

The Aspire Center is a community based youth enterprise facility that is part of the School of Social Work’s Family Network Partnership (FNP). The facility, located at 1105 McInnis Ave, is leased by the School of Social from the City of Hattiesburg. About 30% of the building has already been renovated. The remaining work is being done primarily through the efforts of inmates from the Forrest County Work Release Center under the supervision of Tim Rehner.

Alison Rinehart, MSW is responsible for coordinating the Aspire Center activities. Children and youth from the two other FNP program sites come on a regular basis to participate in either the bike shop, ceramic shop, or PC shop. All the shops are set up as work-to-own programs. Kids refurbish or fix bikes and get to ride them out of the shop as their own personal bikes. The kids also get paid for repairing bikes on consignment. The PC shop, while not as developed as the bike shop is expected to operate in a similar fashion.

In addition to the youth enterprise activities just mentioned, the Aspire Center also has a fitness center that is going to be available to community members this fall on a limited basis. Eventually, the Center will have a stage for performing arts and a community kitchen. The kitchen will provide nutritional instruction for preparing "slow foods" and allow youth and parents to prepare foods for their own tables or to prepare foods that can be sold at the Hub City Farmers’ Market.

If persons have interest in learning more about FNP and the youth enterprise activities, they can call Laurie Risher, MSW at 601.582.3525.

**Kudos**

- Congratulations to **Heather Dickerson**, MSW student, on receiving the 2007 Social Welfare Graduate School of Social Work Scholarship from the Mississippi Conference on Social Welfare.

- Congratulations to **Joohee Lee**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, on being named the school’s BSW Teacher of the Year for 2007.

- **Mike Forster**, Ph.D., director of the school of social work, received the 2007 Individual Merit Award from the Mississippi Conference on Social Welfare at its 80th Annual Forum that was held in Jackson, MS on August 23-24, 2007.

**South Mississippi Community Resource Directory**

The School of Social Work is in the process of compiling a community resource directory for the entire south Mississippi area. Once completed the directory will be posted on the school’s web site for your use. You will be able to access information about community agencies by location or agency type.

You will soon receive an “Agency Data Form” via mail or email in this regard. Please take a few moments to complete and return to us to insure that your agency is included in the directory.
“Finish the Job” Program

They could have watched donations dwindle, wrung their hands and disappointed thousands of Katrina survivors still in temporary housing, but instead they decided to act.

Brian Rivers, a 25-year-old case manager (and USM School of Social Work graduate) with Rebuild Jackson County, came up with the idea a month ago. He talked to the right people and on Friday, before a crowd of recovery workers and volunteers in Gulfport announced a Finish the Job Fund. The idea is to ask everyone in America for $1 to finish repairing and rebuilding homes Hurricane Katrina destroyed.

No official damage estimates exist, but an American Red Cross survey after the storm indicated that Mississippi lost more than 68,000 rental homes and apartments.

Long-term recovery committees in South Mississippi are working to rebuild and repair homes based on need established through caseworkers who screen potential clients. They rely on thousands of volunteers from faith-based and nonprofit groups to get the jobs done.

Tax-deductible contributions to Finish the Job are designed to directly benefit those in need. The nonprofit Gulf Coast Community Foundation will administer the fund. GCCF writes checks directly to vendors to pay for building materials once a project is approved.

How to help

You can send a donation for Finish the Job, a fund to rebuild and repair Katrina-damaged homes, to the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, P.O. Box 3448, Gulfport, Miss., 39505. If you want to donate online, an Internet site should be operating by Katrina's second anniversary on Wednesday at www.finishthejobfund.org. Contributions are tax deductible.

Mark Your Calendar

- **October 4-5, 2007.** Mississippi Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care: “Meeting the Needs of a Changing World”. Will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Jackson. Registration deadline is September 24, 2007. For more information, contact Jerry Alliston @ jerry.alliston@usm.edu or his phone number is 601-266-5979.

- **October 6, 2007.** Social Work Licensure Exam Preparation Workshop. Fritzche-Gibbs Hall, Room 207, USM, Hattiesburg campus. Deadline for registration is 10/2/07. Contact Jenine at 601-266-5569 or j.housely@usm.edu.

- **October 12, 2007.** University of Southern Mississippi School of Social Work Fall Colloquium. Will be held at the Cochran Center, on the Hattiesburg campus.


News & Notes from Alumni

Robin (Smith) Merle ’97 & ’99

My husband Eric and I on our honeymoon in Mexico.

Upon finishing my MSW, I moved to St. Louis, Mo where I was lucky enough to work for a former professor, Charlotte Christ. I worked as a therapist at Edgewood Children’s Center for 3 years. I then had the opportunity to shift career paths, and began teaching Special Education in a small, rural Day Treatment facility. I have been teaching there for the past 5 years. I recently completed a Transition to Teaching program where I earned a Special Ed. Teaching Certificate.

In other news, I was married in April 2007 to Eric Merle, and am now enjoying my summer vacation with my two step children, William and Beatrice.

I would love to hear from others from my graduating classes.

Email Robin @ robin_n_smith@yahoo.com
Brian Rivers '05

My current position is a Case Manager for Rebuild Jackson County, Long Term Recovery Committee. We have a workable caseload ranging from 25 to 40 cases at any given time. We are looking to assist clients who have been unable to recover from the storm through their own means. The committee is a vehicle to move cases through the approval process for funding from various non-profit groups and the Mississippi Hurricane Recovery Fund in lining up building materials and labor. Presently I sit as Chairman of the Case Management Roundtable for Jackson County. I left employment with the Department of Human Services in January of 2007 where I was chosen as Social Worker of the year for 2006, only 366 days from the first day I walked on the job. Also, I stood on the Chaffee board (independent living program for teens in custody,) for the Dept of Human Services representing Jackson, Harrison, and Hancock County. This position consisted of networking, coordinating, and recording the effectiveness of this program. Initially, this program consisted of two children who were in college or transitioning into college, and no more than 10 or so kids (10%) actively participating in classes on a monthly basis. Upon my leaving this position, the region had 10 clients transition into higher learning programs and 50% program participation for the region. I served a brief stint with the Biloxi Diocese from January to May where I represented this organization at the Hancock County and Pearl River County Long Term Recovery Committee.

Email Brian @ brianrebldjc@yahoo.com

- Lynn Purnell Hagan '96

At my home in Kuwait  
Hosting US Troops for Thanksgiving in Kuwait  
Army Chaplain Brunold accepting phone cards I
Iraq

A general update on where I am and what I am doing:

- Was overseas in Kuwait with my husband from 2001-2006. I provided critical incident stress debriefings to international businesses and the US Embassy in Kuwait related to employee stress, burnout, and war related trauma and conducted international adoption home studies four couples living overseas.

- While in Kuwait, I was employed full time as the Director of Education for the Scientific Center of Kuwait, a science museum/aquarium/IMAX theatre complex.
- Currently, I am in private practice in Houston, Texas with Cohen Associates, PA where I provide individual and family counseling, CISD to local and international businesses related to employee stress, war related trauma, and workplace violence. I also conduct DOT SAP substance abuse evaluations for international businesses. I am also a professional mediator.

Additional educational accomplishments since graduating USM

- Completed Doctor in Psychology while in Kuwait
- Professional Mediator

Email Lynn @ lynn@haganlcsw.com

- Cynthia Bradley ’07

I received my Bachelors of Social Work degree from The University of Southern Mississippi in May of 2006. I was a Dean’s List recipient in the Undergraduate program (5 out of 6), member of the Gamma Beta Phi Society, Officer of the BSW Club (2003-2006), I was nominated for the Who’s Who in Colleges and Universities, interviewed for the McNair Scholar program, and I am a member of the Zeta Iota Chapter of Phi Alpha Honor Society. I received my MSW degree in the spring of 2007.

I received the USM Afro-American Student Organization (AASO) Academic Excellence Award (3.80 GPA) for graduate students in March, 2007.

I am currently the evening counselor for Pine Grove Recovery Center’s Intensive Outpatient Program. The program offers group counseling to individuals referred by the Forrest-County Drug Court and private employees as well as those who need voluntary chemical dependency treatment. The program is formatted around the "Twelve Steps".

Email Cynthia @ brdl64@aol.com

- Mary McKinley ’05
Following my graduation with a BSW in May, 2005, I moved to New Jersey to live with my sister, with the intention of attending Rutgers University for my MSW. Although I got here too late to start in the MSW program, I ended up with the best job in the world for a Policy geek.

Prior to the 2006 mid-term elections, I was chosen by the National Association of Social Workers, to be one of six, Field Organizers hired to assist in the campaigns of candidates who support issues of importance to Social Workers. I was placed in New Jersey, to aid the campaign of Senator Bob Menendez, in his first Senate bid, and to help State Assemblywoman Linda Stender challenge Mike Ferguson for his Congressional seat.

The campaigning was great! Starting with our initial training in Washington DC, to my personal favorite, an intimate campaign appearance by Carole King. In November, 2006, Bob Menendez was elected, becoming the first Hispanic to represent New Jersey in the Senate. Although, Ms. Stender lost her election, it was the closest race in Mike Ferguson's history, and she’s vowed to come back to win in the next election.

Following the elections, I was hired to stay on with NASW-NJ and continue as their Field Organizer. In addition to working on political campaigns, I have been privileged to work with our members, and state legislators on issues of importance; such as passing legislation for Student Loan Forgiveness for Social Workers, Needle Exchange Pilot Projects, aimed at lowering the incidence of HIV/AIDS, and currently, we are in the final stages of passing Mental Health and Addictions Parity legislation.

My BSW from USM has allowed me opportunities far beyond what I first imagined when I stepped onto the campus in Hattiesburg. I have lobbied US Congressmen to support the Social Work Medicare Equity Act currently up for consideration, I have given testimony to the State Assembly, and I got to sing, "You've Got A Friend," with Carole King!

My time in the Garden State has been a wonderful experience. I have met many wonderfully talented, social workers who are committed to this noble profession. They embody my favorite part of the NASW Code of Ethics:

6.04 Social and Political Action

(a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.

As wonderful as my time has been, it is time to come home to Mississippi. I will be returning to the Gulf Coast at the end of July, ready to start the next part of my journey.

Carol King & Union Unit
Jim Dean, Linda Stender
(Photo 1 caption: left-to-right) Pat Barnett, Carole King, USM Alumni, Mary McKinley, and Harry Reid.

(Photo 2 caption: left-to-right) Pat Barnett, Jim Dean (Howard Dean's brother) USM Alumni, Mary McKinley, and 2006 Congressional Candidate Linda Stender.

Email Mary @ mmckinley@naswnj.org

- **Kristin Ammon Powell '07**

A general update, well I graduated with my masters in May of this year; started working on the 14th at The Child Development Clinic working with children with autism; I got married on July 28th (don't have pictures yet) and I am about to start a new job at SON Valley on August 20th. Oh and I will be starting my LCSW supervision in September. My new name is Kristin Ammon Powell and my new address is 1102 N. Azalea Dr. Madison, Ms 39110. Thanks, keep in touch!

Email Kristin @ kammon728@hotmail.com.

- **Lacey Nunnally ‘82**

I am the Social Work Program Director at Evangel University where I joined the faculty in 1995. Prior to that I practiced in the area of medical social work. I serve on several community boards focusing on underage drinking, and mental health issues related to juvenile offenders. Since graduate school I have lived in a variety of places including Jackson, MS, Israel, Cincinnati, OH, and now Springfield, MO.

Email Lacey @ nunnallyl@evangel.edu

- **Carlas Ballhagen ’06**

I currently living in Tennessee and I am the Program Coordinator for an in-home Counseling service. I supervise 13-15 therapists, and I love what I do.

I am attending graduate school, and will graduate in the summer of 2008.

If you are ever in Tennessee, give me a call, and we can meet and catch up on news.

Email Carlas @ ballie@bellsouth.net

- **Carol (Peyton) Ripley ’93**

I graduated from USM School of Social Work with a BSW in 1993 under my maiden name of Carol Peyton. My married name is Carol Ripley.
Email Carol @ john_ripley@bellsouth.net

Note: “CTRL + click” to follow links