



PHD PROGRAM IN
CLINICAL-COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

PhD Program Newsletter

February 2011
Vol. 1, Issue 1



Practicing heart-to-heart: November Brownbag with Pepsi

By Valerie Hewell

The program's November brownbag lunch featured "Pepsi," a Yup'ik woman who was born in Bethel. Pepsi's accomplishments are abundant and range from involvement in the social work system to her current work in the court system. Pepsi strives to be an advocate for the Alaska Native children in the court system, and her perspective on life and the treatment of individuals place her in an ideal position to accomplish this. Throughout the brownbag, Pepsi stressed the importance of understanding those around us, "heart to heart," by limiting discrimination and understanding the root causes of their struggles. She also encouraged students to not just treat problems on the surface, but rather to treat all aspects of the person: the emotional, the physical, the social, and the mental. Pepsi has a genuine and compassionate approach to the helping professions and students would benefit greatly from integrating some of these principles into our conceptualization of psychological well-being.



Student Spotlight: Rebecca Robinson

I arrive at 844 Hoyt Street on a snowy November morning in Anchorage. Pulling open the door to the building, the scent of cloves and chai tea greet me accompanied by a chorus of hellos in English, Somali, and Nepalese. Here I am again, in the middle of everywhere.

My community practicum placement is with the Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services (RAIS), Alaska's only refugee resettlement program, directed by Dr. Karen Ferguson. Each year, we resettle over 150 people in Alaska who are permanently displaced from their home countries due to a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Most of the people I work with are from Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, Bhutan, and the Ukraine. My appointment in the program is with the employment services department and the refugee education services.

I conduct new refugee employment assessments, facilitate job skill training, enjoy community outings and re-learning about the wonders of our community that I take for granted.

My broad goal for this community practicum experience is to gain knowledge of refugee resettlement policies and procedures in the United States and to learn about cultures, customs, and sociopolitical contexts of various refugee groups settled in Alaska. By exploring mental health conceptualization, idioms of distress, and community strengths, I hope to begin the process of developing a community-based mental health intervention for refugee populations in Alaska. *Rebecca Volino Robinson is a PhD Clinical/Community Psychology student, at the UAA Campus*



Faculty Spotlight: Inna Rivkin

By Laura Lemire

Faculty member Inna Rivkin has been working within the University of Alaska system for four years, spending her first year teaching at UAA before joining the faculty at the UAF campus. She is currently teaching community practicum.

"It's really exciting because students are really applying skills that they have learned throughout the program," Rivkin stated.

Born in Russia, Rivkin moved to California with her family when she was 5-years-old. Rivkin's parents still live in San Jose.

While in California, Rivkin earned a degree in social psychology at the University of California UCLA campus. After graduation, Rivkin began work on HIV intervention and prevention.

Rivkin has worked as the chair of the Cultural Committee with the goal of helping to integrate the knowledge of the program's Cultural Advisers, elders of indigenous communities, into the student experience and larger aspects of the program itself.

"The goals of the Cultural Committee are really to address the cultural indigenous focus of the mission of the PhD program and to help expose students to traditions, values and practices through our cultural advisers who bring in their cultural experiences," Rivkin

said.

The integration of cultural knowledge into curriculum is one challenge for the Cultural Committee. "On the one hand, the PhD program really has a strong rural mission. On the other hand, it's really so time-intensive that it's hard to integrate these experiences early-on in the program."

Rivkin is currently working on CANHR research with Ellen Lopez on the Yup'ik experience in stress and coping and how traditional practices and values can help. The study is being conducted in collaboration with rural communities.

According to Rivkin, the research is geared toward the ultimate goal of informing interventions to help reduce stress, depression and alcohol abuse and to help forge connections between generations.

"The broader focus of my research is really on coping and adaptation in a socio-cultural context," Rivkin said. "Through my career I have done research on how people cope with HIV, coping of students facing intergenerational conflict and also the experience of rural students transitioning to urban universities."

Rivkin's interests are aligned with the overarching focus of the PhD Program, making her a valuable addition to the faculty and resource to the students.



Announcements

Cultural Advisor & Brownbag Speakers search:

In an effort to enhance the cultural component of our program, the Cultural Advisory Committee is hoping to expand upon the already established and remarkable members that we already have.

If anyone has any suggestions of potential Cultural Advisor members or brownbag speakers who can bring perspective, encouragement, and motivation to our students, please contact Cathy Morgan at cjmorgan@alaska.edu with their name and a brief description. Your assistance in enhancing our program is greatly appreciated.

"Name our Newsletter" Contest:

To enhance communication among cultural advisors, students, faculty and staff, the Cultural Committee has decided to create a newsletter.

This newsletter is intended to keep everyone up to date with program events, recognize the efforts of students and faculty, and is intended to increase overall morale and enthusiasm within our program. Another important aspect of the newsletter is to keep Cultural Advisors informed and to recognize our appreciation for their role in the program.

We are hosting a contest to "Name our Newsletter"! Please submit your ideas for names by March 4th to Cathy Morgan at cjmorgan@alaska.edu. The winner will receive a \$50 gift certificate to the restaurant or store of their choice - not to mention mad bragging rights! We look forward to your participation and input!

February Brown Bag:

Our next brown bag will be Wednesday, February 16th - speaker is TBA.

Compiled by Valerie Hewell

As the semester begins, we continually thank all of our Elders, Cultural Advisors, faculty, and staff for all of their support and encouragement!

Co-Editors: Valerie Hewell and Laura Lemire

Cultural Committee: Ellen Lopez, Chair, Inna Rivkin, Patrick Dulin, EJ David, Matt Sena, Laura Lemire, Valerie Hewell and Cathy Morgan