A Message from the Field Office

It is hard to believe the end of the semester is here! We have been hearing and seeing great things from the students and are in the process of placing our 1st year MSW students with their new field placements. With a break from internships we hope you are able to practice some self-care and gear up for the Spring semester. To promote self-care, here are some favorite self-care ideas from some faculty:

“Yin Yoga” – Stacey Kolomer, Ph.D.

“Giving my whole self to my family” – Heather Lang, LCSW

“I sing...all year...all the time” – Andrea Jones, Ph.D.

“Clogging or some form of dance or movement” – Noell Rowan, Ph.D.

“Walking the Loop” – Karen Sandell, Ph.D.

“Running!” – Jessica Strong, Ph.D.

“The Wobble. And the electric slide.” – Lori Messinger, Ph.D.
An interview with UNCW faculty member Bob Blundo, Ph.D. (pictured on left) about his research with "Resiliency, Hope, and Happiness" and how it is becoming a growing field in social work!

**How did your interest in this area develop?** I am always curious about new ideas and therefore I am always on the lookout for anything intriguing about us as complex social beings. This lead to readings in the strengths perspective and resilience literature. This was followed by finding the literature of positive psychology and the ideas around happiness, hope, thriving and flow. Further readings and research lead me to neuroscience and social neuroscience which demonstrated that what we refer to as the mind is significantly dependent upon human relationships; that the brain is an embodied social organ requiring social interaction while recognizing that the brain is an element of a whole body complex. As a clinical practitioner as well as an educator, I look for ways of understanding human behavior. This is followed by how I might engage in ways to assist myself and others in understanding and utilizing these findings in helping myself and others find ways of managing life and thriving. I have now begun to apply these findings to working with families in Child Protective Services, children growing up in stressful environments caused by poverty and violence, and individuals and families experiencing traumas from abuse to war or accident.

**What personally do you take away from your research?** As I stated above, I personally utilize these findings in an effort to understand myself and my own life issues and stress. By practicing the treatments revealed by these studies, I am always attempting to know personally how they might work and what obstacles might get in the way for me and others. I participate with students in my classes when I introduce ideas such mindfulness and the many positivity exercises as parts of their assignments.

**How do you apply your research to your work with students and helping them in their learning process?** I recognize that students learn best when they are in positive moods. Positivity enhances and broadens the student’s ability to be creative and open to new ideas. When they are under a lot of stress from papers and assignments in their other classes, I engage them in positive ways. I have, on many occasions, introduced “laughing yoga” at the start of the class. Laughter is a very powerful tool for enhancing positive feelings, reducing stress and the accompanying stress chemicals such as cortisol and adrenalin. It utilizes the parasympathetic nervous system which is the system that calms and relaxes the body system, builds the immune system while producing dopamine. Similarly, I work at trying to make the class a learning place by utilizing, of all things, as much humor and engagement with the students as possible. I also share with them ideas that might be helpful in doing better in school, like sleep. I also, focus on constant engagement with students about what we are learning by demonstrations with students. I also “Keep it Simple” and focus the content on the basic elements that are the important points. I had rather focus and learn some fundamental ideas than to get through the text or syllabus. The brain is not a multitasking machine. In fact, if you think you are multitasking you are actually doing less with more and it is one thing at a time even though you convince yourself that it is not.
Spotlight: Field Instructor Claire McFall

In this issue, the spotlight is on Claire McFall. Ms. McFall has been a field instructor since 1987. McFall, as social Worker at Sunset Park Elementary School, has been named the 2014 Southeast Regional School Social Worker of the Year by the North Carolina School Social Work Association. Let’s put the spotlight on Ms. McFall!

**Congratulations on your recent award. How did you decide on becoming a social work and in particular school social work?**

My family was missionaries in Africa for 3 years when I was a child. I saw a lot of suffering, the beauty of helping others, and the effect it has on all of us when we are part of the solution and support. Once we returned to the US my father went to college to become a Social Worker.

When I went to college it was a fairly easy decision to go into the helping profession and Social Work was a great fit for me. I got my BSW and then went to a University where I could get a master’s degree in two fields at the same time. I opted for an MSW and Masters in Public Administration. I love the versatility of Social Work and how you are not stuck in only one setting if you don't want to be.

Once I got into the schools and adjusted to the new environment I learned that this is my sweet spot. I love my work as a SSW and really consider it a ministry and calling...not just a job. I can't tell you how fulfilling it is to find your passion in life. Things are in alignment and you just know that's where you are meant to be. I think Social Work is in my blood. I've been directly or indirectly a part of helping others as long as I can remember.

**What made you want to become a field instructor and what have you learned in this role?**

I knew that when I had enough experience that I wanted to provide a full experience for others who want to do Social Work. I think it's an amazing occupation. I've learned that regular supervision time is very important. The regular communications and check ins benefit all concerned. I've learned that it’s very important to stress to my Interns that my way is only one way. Interns must develop their own style and will with experience.

**With the end of the semester approaching, we teach students about self-care, can you share how your practice self-care?**

- Clear and healthy boundaries throughout my life and in my work.
- Remember that all the work will never get done. There will always be more. I've learned to be OK with that.
- I can't solve every one's problems... but I can do what I can with what I have. It's really about relationship in our work with those we serve. I'm convinced that connection is huge in what we do.
- I don't have to know it all. We're all learning and growing... no matter how long we've been working. Remembering that takes a lot of pressure.
- I'm myself. I don't try to be someone I'm not. That keeps me in alignment.
- Have fun when not at work and have fun while at work!
- Regular and full nights of sleep. Major for me.
Hello and welcome to my little corner of the supervision world! In this issue of Chris’s Corner, I will talk about Creating Safety and Growth Through Support at End-of-Semester Evaluation.

The end of the semester is a time to reflect with the supervisee about areas of personal growth, professional learning, challenges, and to put together goals for the coming semester. Similar to counseling, the most important place to begin when conducting end-of-semester evaluations is to create safety and a space for growth by setting a tone that the supervisee’s best interest is the focus and accomplishments are highlighted.

A commonly overlooked supervisor error that works against safety is presenting the supervisee’s actions as an extension of his/her own supervisory skills. A simple way to recognize this error is to consider if possessive pronouns are being used, “My supervisee is doing a great job on my outreach program.” “My supervisee has shadowed my clients and has assisted me in developing treatment plans.” “I have an excellent supervisee, who is doing a great job of helping me with my projects and getting things off my plate.”

The use of possessive language has the potential to strip away accomplishments from the supervisee and inadvertently place the supervisor in the central position of accomplishments, with the supervisee serving as backup.

A suggested way to avoid this is to adopt an advocate role and promote the accomplishments of the supervisee over the past semester specifically giving credit to the supervisee, “Sarah has done a fanatic job with her clients,” “Chuck developed a support group and facilitated it, he did a great job seeking support when he needed it.” “The agency had a large project and Jane took on one area and learned a lot.”

The supportive role can be used throughout the end of semester evaluation by openly discussing the needs of the supervisee and how to help him/her continue to advance toward goals or to overcome challenges, “What else do you need from me as a supervisor to reach your goals?” “How can I support you and what things do you need to be successful in what you would like to accomplish?” “How can I or the agency support you to get you to where you would like to be by graduation?”

Finally, the role of supervisor can be used as goals are set for the coming semester. Consider the goals of the supervisee and offer expert suggestions, “knowing that there is a merger coming at Coastal Care I think it would be helpful for you to learn a little more about billing, do you think that would be worthwhile?”

In summary, the main focus of end-of-semester evaluations should be keeping the supervisee central, giving credit to the supervisee for accomplishments, helping to overcome obstacles, finding out what the supervisee’s goals are, and offering support in assisting with those goals.

***SAVE THE DATE***

**MSW Field Instructor Orientation:**
*When:* December 5th, 9:00-11:00am
*Where:* Main Campus, McNeill Hall Room 1051
(Parking Vouchers will be provided for field instructors)

**BSW Field Fair:**
*When:* January 31, 2015,
*Where:* Main Campus, Warwick Center
(Parking will be provided for field instructors)
Thank you for all your help this Fall semester! Your dedication to the social work profession is evident in your role as field instructors. We wish you all a safe and happy holiday season! See you in 2015!!!

-Angie Vandenberg & Lori Dugan