TSSW ALUMNA REIGNS AS QUEEN TUCKS XLVII

By Joseph Halm, TSSW Communications

It is good to be queen.

That’s how TSSW alumna Brooks Zitzmann (MSW ’09) sums up her time as Queen Tucks XLVII, but she added that the experience has been more rewarding than words can describe.

“It’s been a whirlwind but it’s been an amazing experience,” Zitzmann said. “From hosting parties as part of my royal duties to the Coronation Ball, it’s been very special and exceptionally fun. I grew up in Tucks, so this experience feels like a rite of passage for me.”

This year, the Tucks royalty had a decidedly Tulane flavor, as King Tucks XLVII John Randle also is a Tulane alumnus.

Zitzmann has been a float captain for the past eight years, and her father and stepmother previously reigned as royalty in the Krewe of Tucks.

This Carnival season also has been unique

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DEAN’S UPDATE

SAYING FAREWELL TO MS. BROWN

If anytime in the last 28 years you applied to the School of Social Work, you came to know Ms. Gail Brown.

Of course, if you accepted admission to the School, you came to know Ms. Brown even better. If asked, virtually every student at the School over this period of time will tell you how important Ms. Brown has been to them as they made their way into and though the School. She has mastered the delicate art of always maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and delivering this service personally. Ms. Brown will be retiring at the conclusion of this semester and we wish her every happiness.

Ms. Brown has been the face of admissions and financial aid at the School for nearly three decades. Literally thousands and thousands of applications have crossed her desk and several thousand students at the School have been the beneficiary of her efficient and highly effective work in this area. She has managed millions of dollars in financial aid.

As someone who has heard this countless times I can say with authority she has been a very special and respected staff member. We wish her well as she entertains this next

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ZITZMANN SAID FAMILY SUPPORT HAS BEEN AMAZING

because Zitzmann, a licensed clinical social worker, currently lives in Washington, D.C. She serves as a chaplain in residence at Georgetown University while pursuing her PhD in social work at The Catholic University of America. Her academic interest is the spiritual dimension of healing from trauma through clinical social work.

“I love learning about humanity as much as I love helping others,” she said. “I hope those passions will translate into inspired teaching and research in addition to my clinical work.”

Professionally, in addition to her classwork, she serves as both a research and teaching assistant as she helps and supports faculty in their research. In the midst of that, she also co-taught a class on trauma in the spring semester.

“It has been a nice extension of my work at Loyola where I did a lot of work with sexual trauma,” she said. “Of course, this Mardi Gras has been different because I really do know what it means to miss New Orleans.”

Between her royal duties, doctoral work and chaplain responsibilities, Zitzmann said her supportive friends and family have been invaluable.

“I’ve had an incredible number of family and friends support me; it’s been amazing,” she said. “Being queen is really about being lifted up by the members of the Tucks community. I am so deeply grateful for the incredible generosity of my family and friends throughout this process. It’s the collective support of many people that made this whole grand endeavor possible.”

DEAN’S MESSAGE: DR. JUDY LEWIS TO RETIRE IN JUNE

chapter.

After a very thorough and extensive search, the School welcomed Ms. Sheila Gold to fill the newly crafted position of Director of Enrollment Management and Admissions. Ms. Gold began on April 1. Ms. Gold is a graduate of the School of Social Work, having received her MSW in 1999. She is a licensed clinical social worker, board approved clinical supervisor and comes with extensive experience in a number of areas which will serve her well as she takes the reigns.

Prior to her beginning at the School, Ms. Gold worked at the Jewish Endowment Foundation here in New Orleans as the Assistant Executive Director. Prior to that role, she served as the lower school guidance counselor at Newman School for five years. She also has worked at Trinity Counseling and Testing Center as a play therapy instructor and has been a consultant, author and trainer with the Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education from 2010 to the present.

The work of admissions, enrollment management and financial aid is a complex one, and I have charged Ms. Gold with the task of carefully examining our processes within these domains. I am fully confident that Ms. Gold will tackle this complexity with aplomb.

There are many other changes at the School - new developments, and lots of newsworthy announcements. It is with bittersweet sentiment that I write to announce that Dr. Judy Lewis has informed me that she will retire from the School of Social Work effective at the end of this academic year (June 2015). Of course, we can be happy for Dr. Lewis as she prepares for an exciting “life after Tulane” and the many adventures that await her. I, personally, am sorry to see her stellar tenure at Tulane come to an end. We all know that she has made many, many contributions to the School and the University since she began here 23 years ago in 1992.

Among these many accomplishments is leading the field office as director for several years. She has been a true champion in her role as chair of the Diversity Coalition, an entity here at the School that she began. Of course, there have been many classes that she has taught over the years which many current and past students will attest to their extraordinary value in preparing them to become professional practitioners. At commencements, for the last 17 years, we are all reminded of Dr. Lewis’ leadership in forming a multi-university coalition (along with SUNO and UNO) to seek and secure funding to establish the Leanne Knot Prevention of Violence Against Women on College Campus program.

These and many more contributions attest to Dr. Lewis’ great commitment to the School. In my mind, perhaps the most important is her unfaltering and steadfast dedication to professional moral and ethical principles of personal interaction. We can always count on her to bring great wisdom to this.

Please join me in wishing Dr. Judy Lewis the very best as she turns the page and approaches her retirement.
Although our alumni are no longer roaming our halls in search of knowledge, our students are just as hungry as those more experienced hands who are reading this. Here are just a couple projects going on in the community, in the classroom and in our faculty’s research arenas.

Sri Lanka recently commemorated the 10th anniversary of the catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami, and among those present were representatives of the Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (DRLA) at Tulane University.

“It was a tremendous honor and an incredible opportunity to see how far Sri Lanka has progressed in their recovery since the tsunami,” said Ky Luu, the DRLA’s executive director, who is a clinical associate professor of social work at Tulane.

For the past three years, the DRLA, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has been working in Sri Lanka to train leaders in disaster risk management through its Strengthening Leadership in Disaster Resilience Program.

The program aims to reduce disaster risk in vulnerable communities through executive short course trainings, interdisciplinary graduate education and the creation of a global network of professional and academic leaders to facilitate the sharing of ideas and best practices.

Because of their impact in Sri Lanka, the DRLA and the Gates Foundation were invited to participate in the country’s National Safety Day, an annual event marking the anniversary of the tsunami on Dec. 26, which left nearly a quarter of a million people dead, including 35,000 in Sri Lanka.

“Significant progress has been achieved in disaster recovery, reconstruction, preparedness and risk mitigation by the government, private sector, academies, civil society organizations and others to enhance community resilience,” Luu said.

As part of the ceremony, Luu joined government officials in presenting 10 National Leadership Awards for Disaster Resilience to individuals for their “exemplary leadership and remarkable individual contributions” promoting disaster resilience since the tsunami.

“To recognize the 10 Sri Lankan disaster-resilient leaders who have made Sri Lanka safer and stronger was an incredibly humbling and rewarding experience,” Luu said.

The commemoration also featured an exhibit highlighting Sri Lanka’s robust participation in the Strengthening Leadership in Disaster Resilience Program, with nearly 200 fellows and faculty participating in executive short course training, faculty development workshops and the program’s Global Network.

Starting on Jan. 30, Tulane University students, faculty and staff members were able to participate in the university’s first-ever Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), and organizer Charles Figley said the moment was historic.

“It’s a very exciting moment for everyone at Tulane,” said Figley, the Kurzweg Chair in Disaster Mental Health at the Tulane School of Social Work. “It’s unique because the enrollment is not limited to four classroom walls and students will be able to customize their learning experience.”

All classes are held online and lesson plans are divided into chunks of learning called “Knowledge Blocks.” Those blocks, or KBs, collectively examine the broad spectrum of events that cause trauma, their consequences, and cross-cultural lessons of resilience and thriving. The KBs will be released once per week and focus on topics including post-traumatic stress disorder, domestic violence, community resilience, sexual assault and systemic trauma.

Students will apply what they learned in a video game, called TraumaQuest, which was built specifically for the MOOC to enhance learning and skills by reinforcing key concepts and encouraging students to use what they’ve learned in a simulated real world. Students guide key characters in quests as they struggle to recover from a disaster much like the devastating flooding experienced following Hurricane Katrina.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for students to learn from experts in the field of trauma,” Figley said. “Not only can students learn from experts at both Tulane and in the community, but they also have a chance to pick their focus. It’s a unique chance to offer a wealth of knowledge to a very large group.”

For now the course is only open to current Tulane students and employees, who can register -- http://traumamooc.tulane.edu/ -- but there are plans to open it up to the public in the near future.

SAVE THE DATE
Homecoming 2015
Saturday, Nov. 7
5 to 9 p.m.
TSSW alumna plans to aid future students

By Kirby Messinger, Development

When Jane Atkinson looks back on a career that spans over 30 years, she is proud of everything she accomplished and she credits her education at Tulane University’s School of Social Work for making it possible. She has made a bequest intention to give back to the school that gave her so much.

“Tulane is such a beautiful place. It was a pleasure to go there,” Atkinson said. “I felt so grateful that I wanted to leave a gift.”

Social work wasn’t originally in Atkinson’s plans. She took classes on the encouragement of a sorority sister, and social work eventually became her passion. After graduating from TSSW in 1960, Atkinson began working with the Louisiana Department of Public Welfare as a caseworker. She worked her way up through the ranks, moving from their New Orleans office to Baton Rouge and eventually managing a staff of 23 in planning and policy formulation.

She credits the teachers who mentored her for her ability to handle difficult assignments and jobs.

“I just had some marvelous teachers at Tulane,” Atkinson said. “The stories they told me helped me handle the difficult clients and think on my feet.”

Atkinson plans to leave a scholarship gift in her will for TSSW students. She hopes her gift will help future students learn the benefits of a career in social work under the skilled instruction of Tulane faculty members.

“I really want to pass on the gifts I received to future students,” Atkinson said. “I had a wonderful career and I loved helping people and being a part of an administration.”

To learn more about how you can leave a gift for TSSW in your will, contact Tatine Frater at tmfrater@tulane.edu 504-314-7331.

Z Smith, an adjunct associate professor in the Tulane School of Architecture and the principal architect for the Elks Place renovation, quickly saw the potential of the space.

“The excitement regarding the building is that it had character on the outside but was a modern space on the inside,” Smith said. “It has been really rewarding as an architect to work with an organization going through huge changes.”

Eugene Cizek, Tulane architecture professor and member of the Louisiana Landmarks Society selection committee, believes the renovation promotes environmental consciousness and is incredibly well built.

“This is the kind of example we feel needs to be set for all of our buildings in New Orleans,” said Cizek.

The 2015 awards presentation and reception took place on Wednesday, April 15, at the Peoples Health New Orleans Jazz Market.
TSSW Alumnae Alix Tarnowsky (MSW ’12) and Sara Gershen (MSW ’11) have a long history of working together to help others, and now, they’re writing another chapter.

Both were interns at Family Service of Greater New Orleans, and both are now full-time employees. In fact, Tarnowsky was an intern during Gershen’s first year as Family Service’s Violence Intervention Program Manager.

“I think we’ve always worked well together,” Gershen said. “I think the main reason that we work well together is because Alix has really big ideas, and I’m detail oriented. It works well because if I don’t shoot down an idea, we know that it’s something that can really help the community.”

That something is the newly minted Healthy Relationships program. Using the Relationship Smarts Plus curriculum put out by the Dibble Institute, Healthy Relationships is a 12-week, co-ed psychoeducational program for 16- to 26-year-olds.

“It works with youth to better understand how to recognize red flags in relationships, to develop better conflict resolution skills, and understand that violence isn’t necessary or the answer when dealing with personal and professional issues,” Tarnowsky said.

Tarnowsky added that the drive to create Healthy Relationships actually came from her work with NOLA Dads. The 12-week program follows a curriculum called “24/7 Dads” created by the National Fatherhood Initiative and is provided free of charge for men who are expectant fathers, new fathers or have taken on the father role in a child’s life. The program provides group and individual counseling, case management, resume writing, interview skills and additional resources.

“There are plenty of studies that show the more involved the father is, the better off the child will be,” Tarnowsky said. “We decided that by focusing on providing fathers with resources that it would help the entire community.”

But one day, Jessica Irving, who is a part-time TSSW student and intern at Youth Empowerment Project, asked a simple question: “Is there something like this for women?”

Tarnowsky did some research, consulted with Gershen, and thus Healthy Relationships was born. The program’s focus is to teach area youth how to communicate better with not only their romantic partners but also their peers and their family members and work colleagues. The program is now just a couple of months old but has been well received in the community.

“It was just something that fit really nicely with NOLA Dads and the Violence Intervention Program,” said Gershen, who also serves as a TSSW field instructor. “Our programs are very closely linked, and we work with very similar populations. What we really liked about Healthy Relationships is the prevention piece.

If we can get this program out to young people early on so they don’t have to see me about domestic violence later, that’s the ultimate goal.”

The first groups have been held at Youth Empowerment Project, Liberty’s Kitchen and the Cowen Institute’s Earn and Learn Program.

“People have been really excited about it because it is something unique that we offer,” Gershen said. “People were really excited about NOLA Dads too, so it helps make Family Service a little more unique. It also works with men who don’t normally seek help.”

Tarnowsky said her relationship with Gershen has always made tackling issues to help others that much more rewarding.

“I could always go to her when I was nervous about something,” Tarnowsky said. “It’s just wonderful knowing that she has a background in education. We just get along really well, and it makes taking on new tasks that much easier.

“At Family Service, we try to work with the populations that others either can’t or don’t want to work with. We work with a lot of underserved, low socioeconomic clients. All of the employees here are very concerned with our clients, and it just didn’t seem like many people were working with this population. We have a lot of organizations that are working with them to get jobs or continue their education but not at understanding how to better resolve issues.”

Tarnowsky said her focus is to keep reaching those that need help.

“We just want to keep expanding these programs,” she said. “We’re already the No. 1 referral source for the court system in Orleans Parish for the violence intervention program. It just shows that the work we’ve done with violence intervention is really great, and the courts recognize it. We want to be in every school and community organization that wants it.”
Q & A with 2013 TSSW alumna Sarah Miller

Sarah Miller (MSW ’13) earned a Global Social Work Certificate (GSWC) along with her MSW. The Office of Global Programs took a few minutes to catch up with Sarah, and the interview is below.

What have you been up to since graduation?

Right after graduation, I took a job as a refugee health caseworker for a new Refugee Health & Wellness Program in Columbus, Ohio, that started in October 2013. This refugee resettlement agency has been operating for 25 years, but this was a new program. Another employee there, a program coordinator at that time, was a Tulane School of Public Health graduate 10 years earlier, so my hire was very Tulane-related!

Until recently, no mental health screening existed for newly arriving refugees. It’s a huge gap, because the needs are so great. There’s a physical health screening but no mental health component. So this program started a mental health screening using a tool developed by a team in Oregon. The work involves connecting clients with referrals for services, along with providing wellness activities. Many clients aren’t familiar with western style counseling and therapy, so we administer the screening and conduct home visits. This screening is predictive, not diagnostic; anyone who screens positive, I follow up with a home visit. We check in and do some strengths-based case management, which involves discussing how things are going, challenges and issues they are facing, and go from there. Also, our agency is starting up yoga and music therapy, leadership training for youth, different health screenings; nutrition screening; and other supplemental type activities. That was my job for the first six to eight months.

Then I’ve come into more program management. I’m doing half and half now – managing the program and doing some more intensive case management.

Have you been able to integrate some of the GSWC learning into your work?

A lot of the work I do is focused on trauma and the different reflections of trauma, and how that might have been experienced so it is relevant with my work with refugee clients. Their backgrounds are so diverse, but there’s always some level of trauma – even if it’s just the resettlement process itself. Even though I’m not seeing clients in the clinical sense, it’s informed the interactions that I have. I’ve found it to be helpful to bring that perspective.

What nationalities of clients do you work with?

We exclusively see newly arriving refugees, because we’re under the umbrella of refugee resettlement programs, our funding is through those programs. We don’t have a strict timeline on our funding, but it’s generally 30 days after arrival until five years. All of our clients are refugees. Three main groups we see right now are Nepali, Iraqi and Somali, so it’s roughly a third each of these three groups. This city has the largest Nepali community in the U.S.

In what ways has the GSWC prepared you for the work you’re doing currently?

I remember taking a class on women’s health through the School of Public Health, and that I think about a lot in terms of how trauma can show up in physical health conditions. We don’t have our clients coming in and saying, “I’m anxious or I’m depressed.” It’s so often somatic expression of symptoms. That class helped me get a broader understanding of mental health and how it can impact the body. Also relevant were some of the basic principles of social work practice, being strengths based, and how those apply specifically to diverse cultural background.

What kind of stumbling blocks or challenges have you faced as a global social worker working in the U.S.?

I would say definitely language. Not speaking one of the three major languages that our clients do is always a challenge. Though it may not be realistic for me to be fluent in Nepali or Somali, I do wish that I had one of those language backgrounds. I can see what a difference it makes in the types of interactions you’re able to have with clients. Supervision is another thing. I remember Dr. Jane Parker talking about how people so soon after graduation get thrown into management positions. It’s one of those things that you hear at the time and you think “I’m just graduating and that will probably never happen,” and it happened within three months of my new job! I’m the only licensed social worker in my organization, so it’s been a personal and professional challenge.

What is something that has surprised you about working in global social work?

This is maybe more specific, but I’ve been surprised at the lack of understanding in the community. Columbus is a diverse city for its size, and there is such a disconnect in the broader populations and the diversity that is in the city. Refugees are such a small percentage of that, but immigrant groups and refugee groups are very separate from the broader community. It’s important to not operate in silos and reach out to each other and coordinate services when possible. It’s been a surprise and discouraging in some ways to see a lot of great services, but a lot of gaps as well as it relates to refugee and immigrant clients, and a lot of disconnect too.

What are your longer-term social work career goals?

I’m working towards licensure right now, and that’s longer term. Then sort of always balancing if and how I want to do international work. Really wanting to be conscious about not doing a position that a local person could do better, and not taking those jobs and being aware that I don’t have the specific language skills or cultural background. I would love to continue in this work. Often in this type of field I’m in now, rising up means becoming more management level, and I don’t want to stop working directly with clients. I want to keep working with refugee clients, but I’m not sure whether it’s domestically or abroad and in what context. [Photo submitted]
Jeanne Marshall (MSW ’11) currently resides in New Jersey and has been working for Catholic Charities since 2012 as a Disaster Case Manager assisting people who were affected by Hurricane Sandy in Staten Island. Jeanne, who also received a Certificate in Disaster Mental Health while at TSSW, said much of what she does involves presenting her clients’ needs to an Unmet Needs Roundtable sponsored by New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS). Jeanne, along with several of her fellow Disaster Case Managers, received a “Tenacity Award” for her work during the NYDIS Annual Meeting. Jeanne added that her ability to help others is due in large part to the lessons learned from her certificate, such as how to build a rapport with people who have been through a disaster.

Dorinda Noble (MSW ’71) currently resides in Kyle, Texas, and is the Director of the School of Social Work at Texas State University (in San Marcos, Texas), which educates about 650 BSW and MSW students, both on campus and online. Dorinda serves as President of the Board of Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). This organization owns and operates the social work licensing tests used across the U.S. and Canada, as well as various U.S. territories. With almost half a million social workers licensed in the U.S. and Canada (the vast majority being in the U.S.), this organization touches a lot of lives. Dorinda said she has really enjoyed and learned from being a social work regulator over the last 20 years, serving on the first social work boards in Louisiana and later in Texas, and now working with regulators across the world. She added that ASWB is a terrific organization which has taught her so much about ethical, competent, legal practice with clients and client groups. And she added that she got her start on a rewarding professional journey at Tulane, which holds a special place in her heart!

TSSW alumna Tona Zwanziger (MSW ’14) was recently selected for the Tulane 34 Award.

The Tulane 34 Award is presented to 34 graduates who have distinguished themselves throughout their collegiate life. Students are recognized for their exemplary leadership, service and academic excellence. Named for the year the university was founded, 1834, Tulane 34 is among the most coveted university-wide honors bestowed upon students.

Zwanziger currently is pursuing a second Masters in Tulane’s Disaster Resilience Leadership Studies.

“I am truly honored,” Zwanziger said. “I am honored to represent TSSW with this award and at the award ceremony. It was the amazing faculty and staff who helped to make my experience at TSSW so memorable. I made lifelong friends and met colleagues that I hope to continue to work with for years to come. The award is faculty nominated, and TSSW faculty said in the award application letter that Zwanziger is an outstanding, exceptional and mature student, especially seen in her careful scholarship and writing.

Her focus on Disaster Mental Health is reflected in an article she is submitting to The Journal of Traumatology and Military Science entitled “Resiliency and the Knowledge of PTSD Symptoms in Military Spouses.”

Zwanziger has natural managerial and leadership skills and consistently helped other students in organizing their work, according to her faculty nomination. She is described as “a service and action-oriented problem solver.” She consistently exemplified the behavior and attitude of a social work professional and is trustworthy, ethical and passionate about her academic experience.

She brought significant work experience to Tulane, including 10 years as a Field Medic in the U.S. Army where she provided hurricane-related preparedness and conducted rescue and recovery missions in Honduras, Belize and New Orleans. With her continued interest in disaster preparedness and concern for children and adults in traumatic situations, she intends to pursue PhD research in resilience.

She also has interests in photography, other expressive arts and is raising two children.
WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

Please share your thoughts, ideas, and information to be used in Postscripts. You can also visit our web site at http://tulane.edu/socialwork and click on the alumni tab to complete this form or for additional alumni updates.

Name: ________________________________________________ Year of graduation: ____________

Address: ___________________________________________ City: __________________ State: ______ Zip code: ____________

E-mail address: ______________________________________ Phone number: ____________________

Degrees/certificates earned: _____________________________

1) What are you currently doing professionally?

2) Have you received any special awards or honors, or have you been published? Please specify.

3) Have you been involved with Tulane School of Social Work since graduation? If not, what events or special services would draw you to become involved?

4) Do you have special news that you would like to share with other alumni (marriage, children, relocation, hobbies, new projects)?

5) Is there anything you would like to start seeing in Postscripts? Is there anything you think should be omitted from the newsletter?

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