STRENGTHS

A Social Worker’s Standpoint on School Shootings

By: Belle Brooks and Hallie Feldman

School shootings have unfortunately become a realistic fear for students nationwide. Startling statistics have shown there have been 45 school shootings since the beginning of 2015. The common sentiment among students is that it will never happen wherever they attend. Unfortunately, the reality is different. As future social workers, we should be particularly aware of the repercussions such a tragedy could cause, as well as the warning signs of an incident of this magnitude.

Beyond the political undermining of these national catastrophes, social workers have to look at the broader picture. Perhaps one could utilize the biopsychosocial approach when attempting to make sense of such calamities. While the media may portray these incidences as simplistic and easily diagnosed, they are typically so multifaceted. As social workers, we would have to look at the bigger picture and attempt to analyze the elements of all of the systems involved.

Furthermore, perhaps the most difficult part for a social worker in a situation such as this would be to find the strengths in the shooter. The majority of society would completely rid themselves of any positive views of that person. After all, it seems as though only a complete villain could shoot innocent students. However, a good social worker would look past the stereotypical view of the individual and reveal the resources, understand the inherent capacity for growth and change, believe in their self-determination, take goals and aspirations seriously, keep in mind they are their own life expert, and lastly, great opportunities can stem from the most troubling and traumatic of events.

As unfortunate as it is, school shootings do happen. Social workers have to be the advocates for everyone involved, especially those most in need of our help. Whether that be the victims or the perpetrators, we see the inherent dignity and worth of each human and that is what makes us stand apart from others in the helping profession.

Social Work Club Spotlight

Branch is the treasurer of the Social Work Club! He is a senior from Birmingham, Alabama. The field of Social Work that interests him the most is Medical Social Work. His extra curricular activities include being a member of Farmhouse, reading for pleasure, watching lots of movies, and grabbing a drink with his friends.
Intern Spotlight: Beth Burkett

This fall I have the privilege of interning at East Alabama Medical Center’s Cancer Center. I work under social worker, Chelsea Kroll, and each day is completely different than the next. We assist patients in applying for government assistance and insurance through Medicare and Medicaid, SSI, and SSDI. We also help patients apply for assistance through individual “Patient Assistance Programs” that will pay for their medicines or copay. However, we not only help patients with financial concerns, we also aid patients emotionally.

We co-facilitate two support groups with a psychologist. One is more of a psycho-educational focus on stress management and the other is more of a general support group for oncology patients. As well, we take appointments with patients for all sorts of reasons, but mainly emotional and financial distress. We also provide gas assistance for individuals in need and other types of assistance due to need through a fund the cancer center has.

Each day at the cancer center is challenging, enlightening, and rewarding. We are not confined to one place and move all over the hospital from ICU to the emergency room. Our work here is truly like no other.

This May, I will graduate with degrees in both social work and human development & family studies. I intend to pursue a Master’s degree in either social work or counseling psychology and then a doctorate in one of those areas.

Social Work Summer Story

By: Caroline Allen

This summer I lived in Elba, Alabama as a part of the Living Democracy program, which is a living-learning experience. I was one of five students sent to live in small towns around the state for ten weeks to learn about how communities work and help the residents of our towns become more engaged with their communities. While I was in Elba, I worked with many demographics. An Elba-based nonprofit, Restoration 154, served as my main community partners, and I worked with them on many of their projects.

Part of the experience included writing blog posts and conference calls about different topics and things we discovered about our towns, their people, and ourselves.

Living in Elba this summer was an incredible experience. I was so nervous knowing that I would be spending ten weeks in a place I had only visited once. It was the definition of ”out of my comfort zone.” There were times when it was frustrating, but I feel like I grew so much during my time there. I formed genuine friendships with so many people I met, and had a great chance to practice my social work skills.

While this isn’t a social work internship, I think it is a great fit for future social workers. It is macro social work at its core: approaching communities with open eyes and mind, looking for areas of need and people and places with assets to be utilized. It is a chance to work with groups in any number of capacities. I used my Methods 1 skills by actively listening to people and establishing connections. Living Democracy was a great way for me to build my confidence and social work skills.
The Green Dot Initiative

By: Brooke Kunkle

The Green Dot Initiative is a prevention program aimed at the Auburn University community with the end result of decreasing campus violence. These bystanders are the men and women of the community who are potential spectators of campus violence. The Green Dot program was established by Dorothy Edwards, and has taken flight within many universities, high schools, and other communities. Auburn’s own spin on this prevention and intervention program is called We Dot Auburn, a campaign that will begin with a campus-wide awareness event on October 29th.

Those who intervene when they see acts of violence being committed or a situation in which could lead to an act of violence are referred to as the green dots. Red dots are the actual acts of violence in communities and on campuses. We Dot Auburn’s goal, along with training 6,000 students and faculty on Green Dot practices, is to create a culture shift in the way individuals of this community see violence. Their hope is to instill a sense of responsibility and accountability in all people to intercede on behalf of someone who is at risk for a violent action and for this intercession to become the norm. After the Green Dot Initiative was started at the University of Kentucky, violence decreased by fifty percent. That is what the Green Dot program wants to see on Auburn’s campus. If an individual were to look at a map of this community, We Dot Auburn wants to see it covered with green dots.

Rape Should Not Be Part of the Auburn Experience

By: Kayla Hanrahan

Auburn is listed as “one of the best places to live” by CNN.Money.com, and while there is a remarkable quality of comfort and safety living in the loveliest village on the plains there is a much darker issue that is plaguing our quaint little town. Sexual assault is not an easy topic to discuss and it certainly is not an issue with an easy fix. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center reports that nearly 1/5 women and 1/16 men are sexually assaulted while in college and only 68% of attacks are reported to the police. Here at Auburn, with a student body of over 25,000 there were only 5 sexual assaults reported in the year 2014. With such frightening statistics and evidence of underreporting of sexual assault you may wonder how you can actually make a difference here at Auburn, the best way to do so is simply to get involved.

You can make a difference on our campus by serving on the task force committee for Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April, just attending one of the events or by becoming an informed and aware individual so that you can become an active bystander in potentially dangerous situations. Required by the Clery Act to report all crimes reported on campus, Auburn statistics specific to sexual assault can be found in the Annual Security and Fire Safety Report (http://www.auburn.edu/campussafety). In this report you can find out more on how to report a sexual assault, the University's judiciary process as well as sanctions for offenders as well as how to access resources offered to survivors. Stand up and speak out against sexual assault on Auburn's Campus!
Favorite Parts of BraveHearts

“My favorite part of Bravehearts is that it lives up to the idea: this is Auburn, this is family. It has built a community with the kids, their families, and the AU students. To see everyone’s faces light up and the excitement of everyone involved during club nights is something that will touch your heart and change your life forever.”

- Shalisa Grantham

“My favorite part of Bravehearts is seeing so much growth—growth in volunteers and growth in our club members. I love that it is an organization that allows a safe place for personal development for all people. Also, I love that Bravehearts gives AU students access to an oppressed population of students and teens that are so deserving of our help and advocacy.”

- Madison Goodwin

“Bravehearts has taught me how important having a program for persons with disabilities is to our club members and families. I feel like I’m playing a vital role in their lives by being a volunteer and being involved in the planning process. It is truly a rewarding feeling.”

- Rachel McLain

“My favorite memory of BraveHearts actually happened last session. I was chatting to the child I am matched with about her day at school and she looked at me and said, “It makes me happy that after a bad day at school, I get to come here, to BraveHearts.” I just smiled (wanting to cry because of how sweet what she said was), it was such affirmation to hear that. All the hard work we put in is paying off. To directly hear from someone effected by the organization means the world.”

- Hanna Bjork

Inquiring Minds Want to Know...

What theory did you utilize the most in Social Work practice?

Dr. Werner: Strength’s Perspective

Professor Myers: Strengths and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Here is what Dr. Joyce has to say about her most useful perspective:

I worked at a Dayton Children’s Medical Center in Ohio. I primarily worked with children and families who were impacted by child abuse and neglect. For example, I saw families immediately after a child disclosed sexual abuse and a parent brought them to the emergency room or when a child was admitted to the hospital with severe trauma from physical abuse. These incidents of child maltreatment often created a crisis for the family system meaning their normal ways of coping with problems were not sufficient to cope with the trauma. My interventions with families then were informed by systems theory and crisis theories. As a result, my work was very task oriented as I helped families to more effectively respond to the crisis (e.g., contacting police and child protection agencies, identifying internal and external family resources, etc.)