Over Spring Break, I went on a trip with one of my very best friends to Pennsylvania. 28 hours of driving and 9 days of non-stop interaction later, here I am finishing up this article for Strengths. My friend’s name is Natalie and she is studying Engineering at Auburn University. She is the current president of Engineers Without Borders (EWB).

During the trip, Natalie talked about EWB often. She specifically spoke about their involvement in Rwanda. The group has recently created and implemented a clean water source for a community in the country. As Natalie began explaining the full range of what they do, I realized that a large portion of their work includes social work. While the words “social work” are never used, things we do in social work practice are applied to what they are seeking to do in Rwanda and other target communities.

To begin, the organization must meet protocol and criteria in each community they do work with. Communities must want and need the resources being provided. In this case, the group is providing a water well to bring clean water to the community. There is a lot of collaboration between the host community and its leaders and the EWB team here in Auburn. To ensure that the community has a voice, Auburn students create and conduct surveys within their target communities. Back in Auburn, the EWB team fundraises and gets others on board with their mission. Students have supervisors (often professors) who oversee and review their work. Members of EWB frequently interact with the community leaders for evaluation of the current water system and its impact on the community. The team also makes trips back to the site to further evaluate the system implemented as well.

So where do we fit in? Social workers in macro practice settings do all these things. In communities, we conduct and do research through surveys and interviews. We collaborate with leaders in communities and organizations to implement change. We work as liaisons between people and service providers. Talking with Natalie helped me realize that we can use our skills and knowledge in settings that seem unlikely. Who knows? We could find ourselves working among several engineers, educating communities, coworkers, and ourselves.

STRENGTHS

Finding Social Work in Unlikely Settings

By: Anna Clark

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Spring 2017

Guest Speaker: Robyn Gobbel, LCSW
Zooming Out: Seeing Behaviors Through the Lens of Trauma, Attachment, and Regulation
Monday, March 27th 9:00-11:00 am
Student Center 2222/2223

Guest Speakers: Sara Romano, LICSW & Kacey Keeton, JD
Death Row Stories: A Social Worker’s Role in the Capital Appeals Process
Monday March 27th 5:15 pm
15 Lowder Hall

Camp Good Grief
Saturday, April 1
To volunteer, contact Anna Klopack
aek0036@auburn.edu for more information

BraveHearts Final Performance
Monday, April 3rd 5:30-7:00
Opelika Sportsplex

Social Work Faculty Panel
Wednesday, April 5th 11:00 am
Location TBD

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Intern Spotlight: Reagan Brack

Hello all! My name is Reagan Brack. This semester I’ve had the pleasure of interning with Circle of Care Center for Families in Valley, Alabama. The Circle is a family resource center serving Chambers County in many different facets, in an effort to provide services for all parts of the family. They offer the Parents as Teachers program, a home visitation program that provides parents with the opportunity to grow in how to better care for their children during each developmental stage. Small Wonders is a program for Medicaid eligible mothers giving them education and support. For youth, they offer GED classes and the Youth Employment Services Program, which connects individuals to employment options. Renew Hope Initiative is a human trafficking prevention effort that started within the last year. The center also offers case management and marriage and relationship classes. Anna Thomas and I get to be a part of all of these areas. We have gone into elementary schools to teach a Safe Students curriculum, participated in home visitations, assisted with Renew Hope trainings, and attended quality assurance meetings with our case manager. My time learning through experience at Circle of Care has truly been invaluable to my education.

Nana’s Corner

For this edition of Strengths, we have a guest columnist for Nana’s Corner. Please enjoy this excerpt on career by Emily Meyers:

My absolute favorite aspect of being a social worker is connecting with people and helping them to connect with others. I feel privileged to enter into relationship with persons on any level during their life journey, especially during the times of struggle and triumph. During these encounters, I frequently get to witness personal growth and enhanced quality of life, which in turn reaffirms my faith in the profession of Social Work. This is a profession that combines a caring heart and a penchant for seeking positive solutions for many of life’s sticky problems. We seek to find strengths in all persons and help them embrace their strengths or find ways to connect with those who can help them do so. As a professor, my greatest joy comes in making similar connections with students and witnessing their passion for making a difference in the lives of others. As a teacher of macro practice, I get pleasure out of seeing students hone their skills of meeting the clients “where they’re at.” As they learn of the challenges that are faced by so many in society, they enter into relationship with individuals, the community and institutions, and discover how empowering it feels to work alongside them towards positive change. Watching students embrace the values of social justice, self determination, respect, dignity and worth, and advocate for these values, makes me proud to think I played a part in insuring that future Social Workers of the world continue to strive to give a voice to the voiceless. This reminds me of my favorite quote from Anthropologist Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”
Creating a Better Today
Center For Place and Purpose
By: Katie Newberry

BraveHearts Center for Place and Purpose is a program that was developed to meet the needs of young adults with moderate to severe disabilities who have aged out of the traditional school system through education, vocational training, health and wellbeing activities, and community outreach. The program works together with both Auburn University and First Presbyterian Church of Auburn in order to include our students in both the university and faith communities. Community inclusion is one of the main goals of BCPP because we want to bring more awareness to our population, but more importantly because we want to provide them with a purpose in the community, which they are often excluded from. This semester we have started several new programs to help meet our goals of community inclusion including Art Helps and Heals the Heart, the BCPP Movie Theater, the Souperbowl canned food drive, and the Warm Hearts Blanket Drive. In Art Helps and Heals the Heart our students make cards and artwork that are sent to homebound members of First Presbyterian Church of Auburn. The BCPP theater is held every two weeks, open to the community, and run by our students. This year we collected over 100 blankets for Unity Wellness, Auburn Housing Authority, EAMC Cancer Center, and Davita Dialysis during our blanket drive. We also have volunteers and sponsors from both the university, faith, and regional community who come to BCPP and work with our students every week. BCPP is the perfect volunteer opportunity for any social work students who would like more experience working with a vulnerable population or who would like to learn more about community outreach.

Campus Kitchen Project
By: Anna Klopack

The Campus Kitchen is a student-led food recovery network to fight food insecurity in the local community, as well as fighting food waste. The first step of the Campus Kitchen is to recover unserved food from campus dining. From there, the food is repackaged and sent to people who are fighting food insecurity. There are many different forms of volunteering. The student-led shifts include picking up food, repackaging the food into nutritious meals, and then finally delivering to people in the community. It is empowering for students to be a part of this organization, so they can be aware of the amount of food that could have been wasted, and the impact that recovering the food will make on their local community. Last semester, I got involved with the Campus Kitchen by becoming a shift leader for the Esperanza House. The Esperanza House was created to address the needs of Latino families in the community. We started serving them meals last semester after their children had tutoring at the public library. As the semester went on, I grew in deep relationship with the woman who helped create the Esperanza House. She has told me arduous stories of how the many families made it to the United States, and left everything behind so their children could be safe and have better opportunities. Still, I was told that the families are being taken advantage of due to their struggles speaking English, specifically by their landlords. The Esperanza House has become a great advocacy organization for these families to empower and educate them. When Campus Kitchen became involved with Esperanza House, the director told me about how many of the families did not know when or where their next meal would come from, and how these meals served to them on Tuesdays and Thursdays are ‘god’s work’ in a sense. This was the first time I ever truly worked with a group of people based on their needs, to help come up with a solution to their problem. As a Social Worker, I feel that I get to implement the values of service and social justice, and the importance of human relationships in my work with CKP.
Social Work Month on Auburn University’s Campus

By: Savannah Blow

Social Work Month is celebrated every year in March. It is an opportunity for Social Workers to shine a light on what they do in their profession and how they contribute to society. Social workers tackle some of the most challenging issues that people deal with today. The theme for Social Work Month this year is ‘Social Workers Stand Up!’ Social workers stand up for millions of people every year, but people still have a misconception on what it is that social workers do. Social Work Month’s main goal this year is to help educate people about all the things Social Workers do to improve the quality of others’ lives. To help meet this goal, social work students were on the Haley Concourse sharing information on the profession with students as they passed by.

Social Workers have 5 core values, and one of the values is service. This value is important because a Social Worker’s primary goal is to help people in need and address social problems. It is important for them to serve people no matter what. For Social Work Month, Auburn University’s Social Work Club helped to clean up a woman’s garden and front yard because it was something she was unable to do. Social Workers must always be ready to help and serve all people by helping to meet their needs, to cope with stress, and to help obtain needed resources. Social Work Month is an opportunity to show how important it is to be a Social Worker and help people get back up on their feet. Another core value is social justice. Social justice is so important for the Social Work profession because Social Workers must pursue social change for their clients. This is especially important for vulnerable and oppressed groups because often times their voices go unheard. A Social Worker’s job is to be a voice for the voiceless. Social Work is much more than what most people think and these core values coincide with what we do in our profession every day.

Pictures:
Top – Savannah Blow and Emilee Truitt on the concourse for Social Work Month
Bottom – Savannah Short, Savannah Blow, Emilee Truitt, Ferendez Lowery, and Shannon Pettus at the Big Event
The Auburn University Social Work Program mission is to make a positive impact on the social problems within the State of Alabama by training generalist social work personnel who are capable of addressing the problems unique to Alabama’s poor, advocating on behalf of the disenfranchised, including children and families at risk, and dealing with diverse populations, by establishing and maintaining community partnerships, and by developing and implementing research techniques and evaluative strategies designed to address these problems in a collaborative manner.

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform students of the happenings around campus and provide articles detailing events the social work department hosts each month. This newsletter is written and edited by current social work students.

If you would like to contribute to Strengths, please contact

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or

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