Do you know what a social worker does? Unless you’re majoring in social work, you probably don’t. When I tell people I’m a social worker, the most common response is: “Wow. I could never take people’s children away.”

Guess what? Neither could I. But I could be a mental health counselor or work with rape victims. I could help teenage mothers or assist patients who have Alzheimer’s. I could work at a hospital or a school, or I could set up my own practice.

It’s probably safe to say that many of you interact with social workers quite frequently and don’t even know it. If you volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters, your case manager is probably a social worker. If you used the family resource center at your elementary school, you probably worked with a social worker. If someone in your family gets sick, the person at the hospital who coordinates all the services he or she will need upon release is a social worker.

If social workers are everywhere, doing a little bit of everything, why don’t you see them? Why does the stereotype of taking away children persevere, even when reality paints a different picture? And why don’t more individuals, especially those interested in counseling, choose social work as a career path?

The second thing someone will say to you after you say you are a social work major is: “You know you won’t make any money, right?” Thanks, Einstein, but I knew that already. Is the poor pay one of the reasons people avoid this career? Probably. Social workers are performing crucial jobs in society - why are they so underpaid?

The same bleeding hearts that encourage people to become social workers in the first place are what prevent them from demanding larger salaries. In almost any other field, individuals do not work for less than they are worth; but in social work, it seems selfish to demand any more money than you are originally offered. After all, any money that an agency allocates to your salary is money that is not put directly into services for clients.

But it is not selfish for social workers to demand a higher salary or otherwise equal compensation. It is impossible for a social worker with an enormous caseload to be effective in his or her work without adequate compensation.

The most qualified individuals may not be taking some social work jobs because they cannot support themselves or their families on the salary. Social workers are client services, and paying them does not take away from what clients receive. In fact, paying a competent and qualified social worker increases client services.

In order for employees to feel valued and respected, it is necessary that they be paid according to what they are worth. To do so, that more resources should be allocated to social programs in the first place. Too many social workers are working in conditions where they lack the necessary monetary, in-kind and personnel resources to help their clients and best accomplish the agency’s mission.

Social programs in our society go beyond the welfare or child protection system. Social services - such as rape-crisis services, mentoring programs, job-placement programs and mental-health services - are for individuals of all income levels.

Social workers deserve more respect - and it’s high time that our society help them do their jobs of helping others. If you are interested in mental health counseling, explore social work as a path to achieving that career. If you are working in the business world, make sure your corporation is donating to social-services agencies. Your used computers and other office supplies are like gold to non-profit organizations.

If we are going to help the people in our society who are in need, it is crucial that we have the resources to do so, both monetary and human. Social work is a difficult career path, but one that is chosen because of the tremendous difference one can make in the community and beyond. If you don’t choose this path, do your part and support the people who do.

*Tara Bonistall* is a social work senior.
Outside of a few notable older women, Hollywood is not a great place to age. Many women find themselves out of work when roles they were used to getting go to younger women. Carol Harris-Mannes left Hollywood to pursue her MSW, not looking back at her acting career. Then she received a call back from her former profession – this time offering a much different role. Carol is a social worker at the Actors Fund, a support service for entertainment workers. It was a perfect fit for her because she knows the pressures of the business and can provide insight with her social work degree. She created a support group focusing on career development for older women.

Transgender children often face fears of rejection from peers, but when it is their parents who reject them, the situation is much worse. Caitlin Ryan, director of the Family Acceptance Project at San Francisco State University, is releasing a study about transgender children, finding that they are more likely to be depressed, attempt suicide and experience substance abuse issues when they are rejected by their families. Caitlin notes that one of the reasons for rejection by parents is that they want what is best for their children and fear for their safety. However, she says that the best thing parents can do for a child is to support the child’s gender expression.

People with the early stages of Alzheimer’s struggle to keep some normalcy in their lives. Despite their diagnosis, they still have many useful skills and years ahead of them. The groundwork for the self-help movement among early Alzheimer’s patients is the 20-year-old work of Robyn Yale, a social worker in Northern California, who ran patient support groups when most Alzheimer’s agencies considered them incapable of benefiting. Robyn is now organizing groups for early stage patients in assisted-living centers and nursing homes. “It’s been a long process of changing stereotypes,” Robyn says. “But we’re finally hearing their voices, and we need to respond to that.”

The lack of spending on children has led to an “unfolding crisis in the lives of children and families,” he says.

Each year 20,000 children age out of the foster care system with out a meaningful connection to a family. Senior Director of Research at Casey Family Programs Peter Pecora notes that foster children need to establish relationships with their birth families or build a new family with those around them. They need a connection to and encouragement from caring adults in their lives. More than anything, Peter encourages people to not give up on foster children.

In honor of National Professional Social Work Month and World Social Work Day, several members of the House of Representatives celebrated the contributions of social workers with House Resolution 266, supporting the goals and ideals of Professional Social Work Month and World Social Work Day. Introduced by Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, this resolution was supported through comments from Reps. Ciro Rodrigues, Stephanie Tubbs-Jones, Danny Davis, Barbara Lee and Ed Towns. These representatives noted the dedication and committed service social workers provide to their clients and to the community. To read the full transcripts of the statements and vote on the House floor, please visit www.socialworkers.org/advocacy.
TRAILBLAZER DOESN’T THINK SHE’S SUCCESSFUL – BUT SHE HELPED CHANGE THE FACE OF SOCIAL WORK IN S.D.

Sioux Falls Argus Leader (SD)
By Jill Callison • March 1, 2007

Fern Chamberlain, 95 years young and long retired as a social worker, is particularly passionate about mothers receiving government assistance and how they are, in her opinion, too often unfairly targeted for criticism. “What society is not doing,” say Fern, “is offering mothers good child care, medical care and transportation.”

POLICE CRISIS COUNSELOR TACKLES SOLDIER’S CRISIS

Fox 4 News at 7 (Dallas, TX)
By Tim Ryan • March 6, 2007

Back home in Texas, Melissa Kale, a crisis counselor for the Arlington Police Department, can talk freely about the army and her role as a social worker. She notes, “Getting ordinary guys to talk is difficult enough. It is particularly tough on soldiers to admit that they need help.” Army social workers try to help the soldiers to understand how their feelings are normal and to allow them to talk through what they are feeling.

INVEST IN SOCIAL WORKERS

El Diario
March 14, 2007

The shortage of Latino social workers is threatening to undermine how well our families can overcome challenges like mental illness and substance abuse. The Latino Social Work Task Force in New York City is working to increase the number of professionally trained Latino social workers to reflect residents of the city. The Task Force is a joint project of the Puerto Rican Family Institute and the New York City Chapter of NASW.

TRIBUNE EXCLUSIVE REPORT: THE FAITH OF A SOCIAL WORKER

San Luis Obispo Tribune
By Sarah Arnquist • March 25, 2007

Shari Roberts, a child welfare social worker, noticed the efforts that Kenn Hackett was making to regain custody of his children. For nearly 18 months, she connected Kenn and his sons to community programs that gave them support and taught them skills to be a successful family. This month Kenn was awarded full custody of his sons. “The one thing I appreciate more than anything is that you’ve taught my boys some things that I wasn’t able to teach them,” Kenn told Shari.

SURVIVING CANCER IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP

The Delaware News Journal
By Hiran Ratnayake • March 27, 2007

Lance Armstrong beat cancer to win the Tour de France. Most survivors aren’t reaching that high. But, they do want to be able to make a smooth transition back into the work force, says Michelle Bailiff, a social worker with the Christiana Care Center Survivorship Program. She helps survivors with financial and insurance issues, as well as changes in family roles. “People are trying to regain what they lost,” she notes. “They’re trying to re-establish themselves.”

SOCIAL WORKERS HAIL ‘BONI BILL’

The Louisville Courier-Journal
By Deborah Yetter • April 6, 2007

Nearly six months after a Western Kentucky social service aide was killed on the job, Gov. Ernie Fletcher signed a bill meant to keep state social workers safe. Called the Boni Frederick Bill after the worker fatally stabbed and beaten in Henderson last October, it will provide $6 million to hire more social workers, improve security at local offices and create secure sites where parents can visit children removed because of abuse or neglect. “This will means so much to the workers,” says Karen Ivie, a state social worker from Kenton County who spoke at the signing ceremony. “It just brings up morale so much.”

SOCIAL WORKERS PROVIDE COUNSEL AFTER VT SHOOTINGS

This became a Hokie Nation on April 16 when a gunman killed 32 students and teachers and then himself. On local news programs, social workers were profiled as experts in trauma and recovery:

• Nancy Smyth talked about the warning signs that the tragedy was seriously effecting students and what peers and parents can do to help with the recovery (News 4 at 11 – Buffalo, NY)
• Joan Brass discussed the security that students feel on campus and how this incident could change their perceptions of their school (Fox 25 Morning News – Boston, MA)
• Diana Garland discussed that this tragedy can bring up past violence and make people relive a traumatic event (News 10 at 5 – Waco, TX)
• Art Daglow noted that students will need to participate in celebrations of the lives of the lost and then begin to create a new normalcy in their lives such as going back to class and participating in graduation festivities. (WZZM 13 News – Grand Rapids, MI)
Each year social workers celebrate National Professional Social Work Month in March. This year’s theme – Hope and Health: Help Starts Here – focused on the important practice of health in social work.

Social workers involved in health work within a multidisciplinary team, hand in hand with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals to ensure quality care for their clients. Social workers in health are advocates for their clients. This high level of care starts when a client enters the health setting and continues through recovery.

The most important role of a health social worker is to help the client and his or her family to understand the illness, to work through the emotions of a diagnosis and to provide counsel about the decisions that need to be made.

NASW Chapters and individual social workers across the country worked with their local media to highlight Social Work Month. Many Chapters had their annual conferences and local organizations hosted events to celebrate the practice of social work.

Social workers used the NASW Social Work Month toolkit to write letters to the editor and Op-eds about the importance of social work, particularly in health. Here is an excerpt from newspapers across the country:

*Social workers have the right education to help clients navigate the confusing world of health options. With more than 110,000 social workers trained and employed in hospitals, their clients have access to the resources and hope that social workers bring.*

*As an integral part of many interdisciplinary teams, working closely with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, social workers become the advocate for the client for the right course of action.*

Social workers’ commitment to a client starts with diagnosis and continues through recovery and beyond.

Here is an example of some of the newspapers using the Letter to the Editor or Op-ed:

- *The Champaign News-Gazette* (IL)
- *The Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin* (NY)
- *The Odessa American* (TX)
- *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* (SD)
- *Kearney Hub* (NE)
- *The Galveston Daily News* (TX)
- *The Ponca City News* (OK)
- *The Elizabethtown News-Enterprise* (KY)
- *The Tuscaloosa News* (AL)

Other media outlets chose to highlight local stories or issues during Social Work Month:

- Wayne State University Honored Maryanne Mahaffey for her commitment to social work – *Michigan Chronicle*
- Judges Valeriano Saucedo, Charlotte Wittig and Hugo Loza wrote a guest article to appreciate the social workers in their courts – *Visalia Times Delta* (CA)
- The Director of Human Services in Hawaii highlighted the important work that social workers do and to focus on the good work of the department – *The Molokai Times*
- Social worker Joe Truelove, from the Walter Reed Social Work Department, promoted the important services provided to soldiers and veterans in their department – *DC Military*

March 27 marked the first annual World Social Work Day. Organized by the International Federation of Social Workers, countries across the world celebrated the theme of “Social Workers: Making a World of Difference,” including the United States, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, the Philippines, and New Zealand.
Social workers assist seniors’ quality of life
The El Paso Times • March 2, 2007

No one understands the dynamic needs of seniors like social workers. The elderly are often stereotypes as a homogeneous group, but social work takes a different approach to advocate for this truly diverse group of individuals by accessing and utilizing the multiple talents of older adults. Social work, as a profession, understands that aging is not a disease and therefore takes a more proactive approach to helping the elderly.

- Donna Cude-Islas, LMSW, El Paso branch chairwoman for NASW

Official language bill shows lack of compassion
The South Idaho Press • March 5, 2007

Social workers oppose establishing English as our state’s official language. We spend a lot of our education learning about the dynamics of oppression. When one group that is idealized and has political clout devalues another that is exploited, it creates an oppressive society. Life is too brief to spend it making laws that push us apart. We need compassionate wise leaders to bring us together. Perhaps it’s time to elect social workers to the Idaho Legislature.

- Delmar Stone, Boise, executive director of the Idaho Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and a Minico High School graduate

A clear definition of social work profession
The Indianapolis Star • March 23, 2007

The Star’s article about social work in the Careers section on March 14 was likely an accurate perception of the work of a Department of Child Services family case manager. To use the name of our profession in a generic manner for anyone else is misleading and erroneous. Social workers are held to a strong code of ethics and a specified educational curriculum that prepares us for work with all levels of society. We are a profession with a proud heritage and commitments to society and to social justice.

- Marion Wagner, executive director, Master of Social Work Programs, Indiana University School of Social Work

Protect victims of domestic violence
The Arizona Daily Star • March 27, 2007

As a graduate student at Arizona State University in social work, the issue of protecting victims of domestic violence is a top priority for me. Allowing the victim of domestic violence to leave a previously leased property immediately for their safety and well-being without penalties is very appropriate. This encourages them to make an already difficult decision to leave the abuser.

- Amanda Carlson, Student, Tucson

Moving in the right direction: Pay raise will help state recruit the most qualified social workers
The Charleston Gazette • April 16, 2007

Salaries for state-employed social workers in West Virginia rank at the bottom of the scale nationally. That is, until now. Recent action taken by Gov. Joe Manchin, III, at the urging of leaders from the National Association of Social Workers West Virginia Chapter and others, had resulted in a $2,000 pay increase this year to state social workers and other employees of West Virginia’s Department of Health and Human Services. In recognition of the crucial role social workers have in protecting the lives of West Virginia’s most vulnerable citizens, the governor’s actions will help the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services recruit and retain the most qualified individuals.

- Elizabeth Randall is president and Sam Hickman is the executive director of the West Virginia Chapter of NASW
NONPROFIT PUBLICITY TIPS

If your nonprofit is strapped for time, money, or both, follow these 10 tips for generating thousands of dollars in print, broadcast and online publicity.

- Create one-page press release templates for frequent news items such as new employees or board members, events you’re sponsoring or hosting, or when you’re searching for volunteers. Then simply fill in the blanks.

- Write letters to the editor and op-ed columns for local, regional and national publications. Always adhere to their length limit, and submit the author’s photo.

- Call talk show hosts at radio and TV stations and offer to have someone from your staff fill in if a guest cancels.

- National Public Radio can be a great resource for nonprofits. Go to their website at and use their search box to see which NPR programs have aired programs about nonprofits.

- Create one show, or an entire series of shows, for your local cable TV company’s public access channel. Air time is free, and you can usually rent the camera equipment for a small fee.

- Regularly publish “Top 10” tips lists (just like the one you’re reading here) that explain how to do something, or solve a problem. Include the name of your agency and contact information at the end of the list.

- When pitching a story, suggest other sources who reporters can contact and who you know would agree to be interviewed, along with contact information. This makes the media’s job easy.

- Use Google Alerts to find out which media outlets are reporting on topics associated with your nonprofit. Then pitch ideas to those media outlets, or respond to the stories.

- Create a blog and post items several times a week. The search engines love blogs, and blogs pull traffic (including journalists) to your website. Also, post comments on other blogs devoted to your topic.

- Write 500-word “how-to” articles for article directories such as EzineArticles.com. Editors and publishers frequently use these directories to search for content.

Source – Joan Stewart, The Publicity Hound
**PRESS RELEASES**

**NASW PRESS RELEASES (MARCH-APRIL 2007)**

- National Association of Social Workers Celebrates National Professional Social Work Month in March 2007 (March 1, 2007)

- Online Portal to Extensive Social Work Content Launches on World Social Work Day (March 27, 2007)

**Individual Story Pitches/Press Requests**

- Donna Ulteig and Lynn Hagan were interviewed by People Magazine for a story on women who always need to have a baby in the house for a potential upcoming story.

- Mirean Coleman was interviewed by a writer from Diabetes Forecast about mental health issues and finding the right therapist.

- Elizabeth Watkins spoke with a producer from Retirement Living TV about homes for unwed mothers from the 50s and 60s.

- Judith Schagrin and Paul D’Agostino spoke with a reporter from the Associated Press on a story about legal representation of children in foster care.

**COVERAGE STATISTICS**

March/April 2007

- Total Articles for March – April 2007: 459 articles