

Mid-Hudson Coalition, Inc.

Fall/Winter 2002

An Association for Quality Direct Care Services

International Conference Focused on Direct Care Practices

The State University of New York at New Paltz was the site of a June 2002 International Conference on Social Pedagogy and Direct Care Practice, *Direct Care: Making a World of Difference*.

The conference, co-sponsored by the Mid-Hudson Coalition for the Development of Direct Care Practice & the College of Liberal Arts & Science at SUNY New Paltz, convened international, national and local leaders in the fields of direct care practice and pedagogy to discuss the quality of care for individuals in need of support and assistance.

The intent of the conference was to examine the current status of this work across different cultures, and to foster best collective thinking on how to develop direct care as a respected and esteemed profession.

Led by experts from the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia, this conference drew 500 participants and:

- Engaged direct care practitioners and theorists from around the world in an exchange of views, knowledge and public policy with their counterparts in the United States, providing opportunity to translate respective experiences into global understanding;
- Emphasized the importance of collaborations among human service providers, institutions of higher education, consumers and government, to demonstrate sustainable approaches to increase the educational and professional opportunities for the direct care workforce; and
- Affected positive cultural change regarding direct care in the United States and throughout the world, forming new alliances and opportunities for replication across international boundaries.

Highlights of the conference:

- An executive roundtable on research and initiatives of the direct care workforce

was hosted by MHC board member Frank Mulhern and led by speakers Floyd Alwon, Director from the Child Welfare League of America; Ann Hardiman, President of NYSACRA; and Bill Ebenstein, Director of the JFK Jr. Institute for Worker Education. The roundtable of agency executive directors focused their energy on the potential impact of the professionalization of direct care workers.

- A plenary session on the “Circle of



Courage: Philosophy and Practice” presented by Dr. Martin Brokenleg, professor of Native American Studies at Augustana College, and Dr. Leslie DuToit, Director of Child and Youth Care Development in South Africa and former advisor to Nelson Mandela.

- A keynote panel discussion led by Herb Barnes, Founder of the International Learning Exchange in Social Education, focused on the “International Perspective From Direct Care Workers.” Panelists included Hyacinth Bartley from Jamaica, Frank Nielsen from Copenhagen, Denmark, Sandra Inez Powell from Kentucky and Michael Bassett from Orange County, New York.

A sampling of workshops were: “The College of Direct Support” by Dr. Amy Hewitt; “Culturally Relevant Services” by Roy Scheller of Anchorage Alaska; “Meeting—A Way of Thinking” by Mats

Erlandsson and Jesper Helmer of Roedovre, Denmark; The NYS Family Development Training Program” by Christianne Dean and Katie Palmer-House of Cornell University; “How to Teach Social Pedagogy in the United States” by Mette Christiansen and John Raffaele of SUNY New Paltz; “Direct Care Staff: You Really Make a Difference in Our Lives” by Tony Phillips, Donald Chrisman and Steve Holmes of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State;

“National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals” by Marianne Taylor; European Dimension in Child Care” by Jurgen Hermann and Oliver Bohm of Aachen, Germany; “Enhancing Quality of Life” by Per Holm and Birger Pelt of Copenhagen, Denmark; “Resettlement of Street Children” by Kiui Esther Mwalye of Uganda, Africa; “Intensive Living and Learning” by Glenys Bristow of Victoria, Australia; “Are Social Services in the U.S. Really as Bad as Their Reputation?” by Brita Merklin and Thomas Vollmer of Stuttgart, Germany;

“Intensive Probation” by Tony Maciocia, Phillip Alleyne and Sam Barile of Montreal, Canada; “Sports Related Social Work” by Dr. Bernd Seibel of Freiburg, Germany; “The Girl Child Factor” by Archibald Donkoh of Ghana, Africa; “Indigenous Employment” by Lori Parish of University of Newcastle, Australia.

The conference was closed by the extraordinary performance of Dr. Michael Fowlin who used a variety “characters” to tell stories of discrimination, violence prevention, suicide, gender equity and emotional pain felt by children of special education.

For more than 18 months, a core committee of 20 planned every detail of this extraordinary conference. Another 45 members of the national and international advisory committee contributed their advice and wisdom on this conference and the future of direct care practice.

2002 Direct Care Conference Director's Opening Remarks

The following remarks printed here in their entirety were made at the opening of the Direct Care Conference.

Good morning. I am Harold Jacobs, the chair of the Sociology Department at SUNY New Paltz, the director of its Concentration in Human Services, and the director of this conference.

I want to welcome you to **Direct Care: Making a World of Difference—An International Conference on Practice and Professionalism**. You have come from Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America, Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe, Africa, and the United States to participate in this cross-cultural effort to develop direct care as a profession.

This is the largest conference ever to be held on the SUNY New Paltz campus and among the most comprehensive of its type to take place in the United States. We are approximately 500 strong. Your presence at this conference has been duly noted by the United States Senator from New York, Hillary Clinton, who writes:

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to send greetings to each of you participating in Direct Care: making a World of Difference – An International Conference on Practice and Professionalism on the campus of SUNY New Paltz.

This conference is important in creating awareness of the critical shortage of direct care workers. I have always been committed to strengthening services in the health, education, and human services professions. I commend your efforts to come together for this conference with the goal of building a better future for people in need of care, their families and direct care providers.

Please accept my best wishes for a wonderful and successful conference.

Sincerely yours,

*Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senator*

The work to prepare for the conference has gone on for two years. It has been carried out by a steering committee made up of volunteers from the human services community, the academic community, and various charitable organizations. Would the members of the steering committee please stand, and would the audience take a moment to acknowledge their extraordinary effort. Thank you.

In my welcoming remarks to you this morning, I want to emphasize the relationship between direct care work and the common thread that constitutes our humanity.

From a global perspective, direct care workers are referred to by many different names, such as social pedagogues in Denmark, educateurs in France, child and youth care workers in South Africa, and so on. In addition, the work itself takes place within a diverse array of sub-specialities with their own culturally specific labels.

Whatever labels they go by, the following succinct description explains what direct care workers do: practitioners work in the life space of children, adolescents and adults in such places as residential schools, out-of-home placements, rehabilitation and treatment centers. They provide a wide range of services, including assisting with basic daily living, vocational coaching, and client advocacy. Most importantly, they work with people in need of care to support their empowerment and human development. In short, the work is multifaceted and demanding, requiring education and training to be done well.

Less obvious is the philosophical perspective that informs direct care work. It defines human beings as persons possessing intrinsic value, regardless of their developmental disability, social dependency or level of vulnerability. While it recognizes that people differ from one another in all sorts of ways, this conception maintains that people possess certain

inalienable rights by virtue of being human. It implies that however much and in whatever manner individuals may be in need of care, all persons deserve to be treated with dignity and supported in their effort to develop their human potential. These fundamental notions are neither exclusive to the direct care perspective nor are they universally shared.

The elements of an alternative and competing perspective may be summarized as follows: people are depicted as objects to be manipulated and controlled for the self-aggrandizement of an elite few; value is said to reside only in that which can be observed, quantified, or deemed materially useful; human rights, rather than being viewed as inalienable, are held to be contingent on historical circumstances, cultural relativism, or the exercise of power.

Between the humanized and de-humanized conceptions of the nature of human worth I have described, there is no compelling way to demonstrate the scientific validity of either point of view. Empirically, every instance we observe in the world of love, understanding, and compassion can be countered by observable acts of brutality, exploitation, and depravity. This we do know: from birth to old age, our humanity manifests itself by the cultural norms we reinforce, the values we embrace, the work we do, and the quality of social relationships we build.

Direct care workers should take satisfaction in knowing that by the very nature of their work they not only foster their own and their client's human development, but they also reinforce and project a cultural vision that holds all human beings to be of value regardless of their personal circumstances. Thus direct care workers demonstrate the humanized vision of a future yet to be made fully manifest.

Given the nature of direct care work and its contribution to human betterment, it is indeed ironic and quite disheartening to

(Continued on page 6)

Two Thumbs Up! Says This Reviewer of the Conference

The 2002 Direct Care Conference sponsored by SUNY New Paltz and the Mid-Hudson Coalition for the Development of Direct Care Practice was truly an international event with participants coming from Denmark, the Caribbean, Ghana, Scotland, Australia, Germany, South Africa, Canada, Vietnam and many spots around the United States, mostly from the Northeast.

The conference was opened by two keynote speakers. Martin Brokenleg, Ed. D., Professor of Native American Studies at Augustana College who outlined an ancient Lakota spiritual symbol known as The Circle of Courage. Its four quadrants represent the qualities of Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity.

Lesley du Toit, a youth care worker and Social Worker living in Pretoria, South Africa, related the absolutely spell-binding story of how she was summoned to Nelson Mandela's staff on the eve of his ascendancy to the Presidency of South Africa. The outgoing, De Klerk government Minister of Youth Welfare had determined to set free all at once over 600 young South Africans who had been in a variety of residential placements for much of their young lives.

It was Ms. du Toit's privilege and awesome responsibility to come up with a plan for dealing with this calamity. Ms. du Toit and Dr. Martin Brokenleg began an enduring working alliance in this process when the latter was consulted by the new South African government. The Lakota Circle of Courage, in fact, became the unifying vision for youth and child welfare in South Africa.

A theme of continuity running through the conference was that of the general, even international, recognition of the many consequences to our work from the staff turnover rate in our profession. And there is awareness, in turn, of the contributions that both low pay and the relatively low status of our jobs make to our disastrous turnover rate.

Although conference participants acknowledged several points from which

to initiate change in these circumstances, such as political lobbying or broadening the conception of social work in the U.S., a lot of emphasis was placed on the assumption that the economic condition of our profession exists because of the absence of training for direct care workers in this country.

This situation is largely confined to the U.S. The many European representatives of our profession attested to direct care workers in their countries being socially equivalent to teachers, social workers and nurses who are paid a respectable wage allowing them to live decently with one job and annual personnel turnover rates approaching 5 percent. It was a wonderfully curious experience to be attending an international conference where several parts of the rest of the world were committed to uplifting the U.S. for a change.

There were a total of 68 workshops over the span of the conference highlighting bright spots and emerging areas of concern in our profession.

One focused on a joint project of the University of Minnesota Research and Training Center on Community Living and a software company to establish an online "college" for direct support workers. The curriculum of The College of Direct Support is being designed as broadly as possible so that staff working with a variety of populations will find it applicable.

The curriculum is also designed to blend well with existing local college and community college courses in human services. Completion of the 38 courses which will be online by sometime next year will be equivalent to 15 credit hours at the University of Minnesota, for example. Anyone

interested is invited to visit www.collegeofdirectsupport.com and see what they have to offer. You can enroll free of charge for a trial period.



On the last day, we were encouraged to return to the plenary session from lunch because there was something special waiting for us. This was an understatement.

Dr. Michael Fowlin, a young actor who also holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Rutgers, kept us in rapt attention for an hour and a half as he impersonated a series of youthful characters, drawn in part from pieces of his own childhood experiences of being one of eight African Americans attending a northern New Jersey high school of 2,000 students.

This man is a genius at blending humor with pathos and urban street smarts with psychological subtlety. Mykee, as he likes to be known, is a one-man force for creative social healing that no one should ever miss if they have the chance to see him perform. At the end of his performance, he received a roaring, standing ovation. Most of us were blinking away tears from the story of Jose, who was deflected from going through with suicide by his need to return a book he had borrowed from Mrs. Garcia, one of his teachers.

The first half-dozen questions addressed to Dr. Fowlin concentrated on the subject of "How do we get you to perform at our ...?" Visit www.michaelfowlin.com and find out. Mykee does about 400 shows a year. Our nation could use about one hundred of him.

Submitted by: Dennis Sweeney, Ulster Mental Health Association. Dennis has worked in the human services field since 1992 and is currently enrolled in a M.A. Psychology-Counseling Concentration Program at SUNY New Paltz.

MHC's New President Outlines Organization's Goals for 2003

In August I had the honor of being elected as the President of the Mid-Hudson Coalition. Having served on the board for over a year, I am aware of the many achievements made by this hard working group of volunteers and am excited about continuing these efforts.

With this summer's inspirational International Conference behind us, a discussion began regarding setting goals for 2003 that will further our mission of increasing the quality of services for people with special needs through an educated, trained and professional direct care workforce. A survey was sent out to the members of our board asking what they felt should be the focus of our energies for the upcoming year. Below are the results of the survey.

Education

Collaboration with local colleges:

1. At two and four year colleges, we will seek to establish new credit-bearing certificate programs in human services/direct care as well as strengthen the already existing programs (both certificate and degree).
2. At two and four year colleges, we will seek to strengthen the curriculum development based on the trends in the field as well as learn from the new developments and innovations in the academic human services world/sphere.
3. Continue to work with Dutchess and Ulster Community Colleges as well as with SUNY New Paltz (establish certificate program within the Concentration in Human Services).
4. Assist Sullivan Community College in the establishment of its new certificate program in human services.
5. Establish certificate programs at Orange, Westchester and Columbia Greene community colleges.

Financial Support For Students

1. Support direct care workers, who are

students in programs that the Coalition has a collaboration agreement with, by offering (providing) tuition and book reimbursement.

Agency development

1. Assist agencies in developing ways to support the educational process of direct care workers.
2. Collaborate with (local) agencies in an effort to develop more effective models of direct care practice.
3. Continue and strengthen Direct Care and CEO/HR forums.
4. Develop core competencies based on the Community Support Skills Standards.
5. Continue national and international collaboration with other organizations promoting professionalization of the field of direct care/human services.

Advocacy

1. Continue to advocate on behalf of service participants and their direct care workers at the local, state and national levels.
2. Facilitate advocacy mentoring of both service participants and direct care workers.
3. Collaborate with state offices to expand direct care incentive initiatives currently underway in the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).
4. Work toward raising awareness of the value of work of the direct care practitioner to the community.



MHC President Gerry Dohrenwend

Mentoring

1. Establish formal mentoring program for all worker-students receiving tuition and book reimbursement from the MHC.

Board Activities

1. Expand the MHC board to include more direct care workers.
2. Ensure mentoring of direct care workers.
3. Raise funds to hire a part-time person to be responsible for the day-to-day activities of the MHC.
4. Expand the membership of the MHC.
5. Organize and provide the Mid-Hudson Direct Care Coalition 2003 Conference.
6. Refine and expand our web site to include agency linkages.

These are ambitious goals that can only be achieved with the help of our member agencies. We look forward to working with you over the next year to realize these goals in an effort to increase the quality and professionalism of our direct care workers.

**The time is now
to become a member of the
Mid-Hudson Coalition
Join Today!**

Thank You to All the International Conference Volunteers

DIRECT CARE: Making a World of Difference—An International Conference on Practice and Professionalization.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this conference a HUGE success! This great accomplishment could not have been achieved without the participation of each one of you.

Your dedication to the field of Direct Care and your own professional growth and development is shining through.

You have made a world of difference and we thank you!

- Wanda Acevedo*
- Michael Aucone*
- Silka Benz*
- Allison Blasko*
- Regina Bohan-Dixson*
- Annie Buckvold*
- Doris Butterfield*
- Eileen Carlin*
- Kerine "Tina" Colley*
- Judy Corrigan*

- Mariana Cunningham*
- Jamie Cupolo*
- Leah Danziger*
- Graziella D'Avpla*
- Dottie DeNunzio*
- Dawn Dowd*
- Diane Hayes*
- Charlene Kaba*
- Philip Klein*
- Meredith LaFave*
- Jacelyn Lucente*
- Jamie Mailloux*
- Thomas McCluskey*
- Thomas Mclain*
- Wendula Mordhorst*
- Cindy Mowris*
- Roswita Noll*
- Carol Njenga*
- Lydia Petrosky*
- Neil Pollack*
- Anisca Pop*
- Kathy Prinz*
- Sue Quimby*
- Amanda Rhodes*
- Lori Rose*

- Kimberly Sawacki*
- Joyce Schonmann*
- Patricia Smith*
- Laura Staerker*
- Wendy Stage*
- Jean Tansey*
- Michelle Vicks*
- Kristina Volberg*
- Suse Volk*
- Carol Weber*
- Mike Wheatley*

Thank You



Volunteers At Work

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Address Correction Requested

Conference Director's Opening Remarks *(continued from page 2)*

see that in some countries direct care workers and their clients are not as valued as they should be. In the United States, for example, the wealthiest nation in the world, the direct care work force tends to be relatively low paid and taken for granted. Moreover, the glaring absence of comprehensive education for direct care practitioners negatively impacts on their status and on the quality of care provided to clients. Although the United States is something of an anomaly in this regard when compared to numerous other countries, these problems are certainly not limited to the United States.

Regardless of how poorly direct care workers might be paid, these workers often remark on how much job satisfaction they receive from empowering people and helping them gain a greater degree of control over their lives. These views admirably reflect the

humane sensibility of direct care workers. But social justice demands that they also should receive a salary commensurate with the meaningful, difficult, and socially beneficial work that they do. Hopefully, the cross-cultural exchanges that take place at this conference and the new ideas and innovative approaches that emerge will help to foster such progressive social change.

As you glance through the conference program, the broad variety of workshops, panels, and keynotes manifests the values of our common humanity. The best practices that practitioners and clients from around the world have come to share provide a vision of direct care in all its creative potential. When you return to your communities, I encourage you to bring the knowledge disseminated at this conference to the attention of the

established professions, government officials, policy makers, agency directors, front-line providers, consumers of services, and the general public. This will help to make direct care's contribution to human betterment more visible and compelling and take us a step closer to gaining professional recognition for direct care workers throughout the world.

In conclusion, this conference presents an historical opportunity to raise consciousness about the nature and significance of direct care work as well as about the challenges that need to be addressed as we build on the successes already achieved. I welcome your participation in this international exchange of knowledge and experience.

