

A Month of Action & Celebration

Social Work Month 2014

By Celisia Street, Communications & Professional Development, NASW-NYS Chapter

Amid what was hopefully the final episode in the series of polar vortexes that was the winter of 2014, NASW-NYS was heating things up at the NYS Legislature. Our Director of Policy was hard at work garnering support for the expansion of the NYS Social Work Loan Forgiveness Program and continuation of funding for the Chapter's Veterans Mental Health Training Initiative. At this moment state legislators are voting on budget bills that contain an additional \$250,000 in funding for loan forgiveness and \$150,000 for the NASW-NYS VMHTI (more updates to come when the budget is final).



The case for expansion of the loan forgiveness program was bolstered by a very successful Social Work Student Lobby Day event held on March 4th sponsored by NASW-NYS, NYS Association of Deans of Schools of Social Work and NASW-NYC Chapter. Social work leaders and delegations of students and faculty from 14 graduate and

baccalaureate social work programs from across the state converged at the Capitol. They received a legislative briefing on the issue before engaging in constituent visits with their respective representatives. The legislative event underscored the program's pivotal role in recruiting and retaining social work professionals in critical service areas across the state.

NASW-NYS also mobilized members through our Stand Up Against Social Work Debt Postcard Campaign, enabling social work students who were unable to participate in the Lobby Day event, as well as our colleagues from the greater social work community to send a postcard to their legislators in support of our initiative to expand the loan forgiveness program. The Chapter delivered more than 600 postcards to NYS legislators prior to final budget deliberations from social work advocates



Center L-R: Karin Carreau, NASW-NYS Director of Policy, and Jennifer Zelnick, Associate Professor & Social Welfare Policy Chair, Touro College School of Social Work Co-Presenters on the Nuts & Bolts of Lobbying for Social Worker Loan Forgiveness with attendees from Touro College

across the state. Thanks to everyone who participated in these advocacy activities for putting the power of social work into action!

On March 21st the Chapter held our annual Power of Social Work Conference which garnered 200+ attendees. New this year was a Pre-Conference Networking event co-sponsored by NASW Assurance Services, which was also well attended and afforded attendees the chance to mingle and connect. Popular sessions of the day included: Emotional Intelligence, Wellness Recovery Action Planning, Energy Wellness, Developmental Trauma Disorder and a session on the Affordable Care Act presented by NASW Senior Practice Associate Stacy Collins. The conference also featured the 2014 *Spirit of Social Work Awards Luncheon* celebrating the work of this year's honorees:

Bonnie Collins, EdM, LCSW-R, 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award
Sister Janet DiPasquale, SSJ, 2014 Social Worker of the Year



Avi and *Julie Israel*, 2014 Public Citizens of the Year are joined by their daughter Rachel (center) who is



currently pursuing her MSW from NYU Silver School of Social Work

Vera House, Inc., 2014 Agency of the Year- Executive Director *Randi K. Bregman, LMSW (center)*
surrounded by agency staff members and NASW-NYS leadership from Central Division (back row L- Chapter
Treasurer *Marilyn Sharron*, back row center- Central Division Director *Carrie Jefferson-Smith* and back row R-
Bertha Jacobs, Chapter Diversity Committee Chair)

Across the State... Many of our divisions hosted their local awards celebrations, workshops and wellness events in recognition of Social Work Month. We hope that you took the opportunity to gather with your social work colleagues for some well deserved merriment or professional development to feed your soul. While there may be a seemingly unyielding onslaught of challenges to deal with along our journey through life, progress is not only possible... IT IS HAPPENING, right now... because of YOU. That is worth celebrating.

Happy Spring... FINALLY!!!