Amada Blomberg Receives Dockery Family Reunion Association Award

Amada Blomberg, a spring 2009 graduate of the MSSW program, received the Dockery Family Reunion Association Award last fall for her outstanding volunteer efforts to help the Dockery family in Sevierville, Tennessee, maintain their heritage of many years of service to the community.

Blomberg, one of the inaugural students in the college’s evidence-based practice across systems concentration, volunteered to help the Dockery family last summer through a unit of Legal Aid of East Tennessee (LAET) that focuses on assisting grassroots community organizations throughout the region. “When I learned of the opportunity, I was really impressed with the work already being done by other students,” she states. “I decided that it was something I really wanted to be a part of.”

“I asked Amada to take on a project that had stalled,” explains Bill Murrah of LAET. “An African American group (the Association) wanted to transform a historic church in Sevierville into a cultural center that would highlight the contributions of African Americans to the history and heritage of that town. Somehow, Amada was able to grasp the importance of the project in a very short time and immediately dove into the work.”

Blomberg arranged a meeting between 10 members of the Association and the Sevier County mayor plus a leading judge from the area. Both were committed their support to the project. With little supervision, she planned through research on similar projects in Tennessee and in parts of the country. The result of her research was a 19-page document detailing these projects, contact information, and additional information on other potential resources.

“In a short time, Amada was able to energize the community group and help propel the project forward. I am pleased she is receiving the recognition she deserves,” states Murrah.

Adding her appreciation for the award, Blomberg states, “The Dockerys are wonderful people. I was honored to work with them and be a part of their story, and I was honored to be recognized for my work. The award signifies the meaningful relationship between the Dockery family and LAET.”

Dr. Lyle Cooper Attends MINT Training in Spain

Dr. Lyle Cooper, assistant professor at the Nashville campus, was one of a select group chosen to go to Barcelona, Spain, in early June to attend MINT TNT (Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers—Training New Trainers). The conference consisted of three days of advanced motivational interviewing (MI) training techniques and a two-day discussion forum on future directions for MI research and practice. The number of invitations to attend MINT TNT was limited, and applicants were required to submit counseling tapes as well as provide a history of their MI training.

Dr. Cooper was the only person in the network from Tennessee, Alabama, and Arkansas chosen to attend. He is the only MINT member in the state of Tennessee and, as such, the only person in the state who can provide supervision for persons seeking to become proficient in motivational interviewing.

SWORPS Staff Honored

Two members of the college’s Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS) staff have recently received professional achievement awards.

JoAnna Cheatham, associate director for the Special Development and Management Programs at SWORPS, was presented the Third Annual Deb Neil and Judy Smith Advocate Award by the Tennessee Family Child Care Alliance (TFCCA) at the organization’s annual conference in Nashville this past spring.

The Deb Neil and Judy Smith Advocate Award is presented to outstanding individuals, groups, or agencies whose professional achievements and dedication go above and beyond that which is expected of them in an effort to promote the family child care industry as a whole.

While choosing the recipients for this year’s award, TFCCA focused on individuals who are dedicated to strengthening the knowledge base of family child care providers. In her day-to-day work at SWORPS, Cheatham works closely with the Department of Human Services and its numerous partners, including TFCCA, to plan and implement strategies for improving the quality of child care across the state.

“JoAnna is consistent in her crusade to be a champion for children and the child care industry. She is always excited to hear what our (TFCCA) family child care providers have to say and we feel like she is dedicated to implementing their opinions into tools that will strengthen the family child care community statewide on multiple levels. That is why she received this year’s award,” explains Danpke Cole, executive director of TFCCA.

Jan King, regional coordinator for SWORPS, was presented the Outstanding Member Award by the Tennessee Association for the Education of Young Children (TAEYC) at the organization’s state conference on October 3, 2008, in Nashville. TAEYC is a nonprofit organization made up of preschool, kindergarten, and primary teachers and administrators as well as caregivers, program directors, and individuals who work to promote the quality care and education of young children.

TAEYC organizes conferences and training for child care providers across the state. They also serve as advisors for foster parents, social workers, and day care centers and homes.

The Outstanding Member Award is given to a current TAEYC member who has helped to promote and advocate for the general welfare of children and early childhood professionals and who has taken a leadership role in the association.

King’s involvement with the organization began in 1988, and since then she has served as President and Conference Advisory Chair and has been a member of the board for 12 years. King has also contributed in other ways—as co-chair of several conferences, as Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) representative, and as TAEYC historian.