APPLIED ARTS IN SOCIAL WORK

Theatre for Health Promotion
Cathy Plourde, M.A., Program Director, Add Verb Productions

The School of Social Work (SSW) focuses on challenging structures and relationships that foster the inequities that undermine the promotion of health. Several on-campus SSW students have been taking advantage of their opportunity to work with Add Verb—UNE’s unique and dynamic program that uses the arts for health and wellness promotion and in the curriculum—including Carin Stromgren (SSW ’13), Elisa Orme (SSW ’13), and Lilia Bottino (SSW ’14). All of the students describe how being a part of the research process has supported their academics.

A team has conducted three years of a longitudinal study looking at Add Verb’s programs, The Thin Line (on coping with eating disorders) and You the Man (bystander engagement in dating violence/sexual assault prevention). Team members include Nancy Shore, Ph.D., associate professor, School of Social Work; Peter Herrick, M.S.Ed., adjunct research professor, College of Graduate Studies; Allison Morrill, J.D., Ph.D., research associate professor; Gary Cattarbuga, director of Analytics, and Cathy Plourde, M.A., director of Add Verb.

Stromgren appreciated the chance to study an issue in depth and, in the process of a literature review and focus groups, discovered a better sense of the issues and their application within interventions. “If the problem of dating violence is already happening it is hard to stop. By reaching kids, the hope is that we are preventing the problem.”

Elisa Orme (SSW ’13) was a research assistant for the longitudinal studies about theatre’s impact on bystander behavior and attitudes.

Orme presented some of the preliminary findings to the Board of Trustees. She spoke with Robert McAfee, M.D., Trustee Emeritus, and learned about his efforts in domestic violence as the President of the American Medical Association over 30 years ago. “He was super excited about the research and that we are doing prevention on this level. It’s great to see how this has progressed.”

Reflecting on her involvement in Add Verb’s research during her first year of the MSW program, Bottino shared with Interim School of Social Work Director Clay Graybeal that “As a writer and a musician, I have seen firsthand the power of arts as a tool for education and advocacy. It has had a powerful impact on me, and I am so grateful. It has complemented my classroom experience and has had an impact on me as a future social worker.”

Plourde presented findings at the American Public Health Association in November 2012, reporting that the research subjects have an increased likelihood of taking action either for themselves or on behalf of another person; furthermore, these findings persist over time. This presentation led to a collaboration with Deakin University of Melbourne, Australia, and resulted in the development of a cultural adaptation of the play and the education program, as well as a new research study, now underway in the Australian state of Victoria.

Emily Dennis, Portland-based actor, at her debut in The Thin Line for UNE graduate students and the Portland Community.

Brian Chamberlain, Portland-based actor, performing You the Man for an Interprofessional Education event at Ludke Auditorium.
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