

# NASW-TN 2009 Annual Award Winners

★ ★ ★ Congratulations to our Stars ★ ★ ★

## Social Worker of the Year

### Julia Mynatt Axley, BSW

Julia Mynatt Axley, BSW is a role model for other social workers. She demonstrates the highest commitment to social work values in her work with persons in need. She is also an active advocate for the social work profession and the skills and knowledge BSWs bring to the profession.

Julia currently works in the Case Management Division of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department as social worker for two home visiting programs, the Renal Disease Intervention Program and the Adult Health Program. Both of these programs mainly serve aging adults and disabled adults. As social worker for both of these programs, she completes initial assessments on clients and works with them on issues related to Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, supplements, prescription programs, and living situations with possible placements in area facilities. Other duties also include applying for entitlement programs and maneuvering the system to make sure applications are processed, making referrals to a variety of community resources, as well as searching for non-conventional resources and providing emotional support and supportive counseling.

Julia Axley has served as the BSW Representative on the NASW, Tennessee Chapter Board of Directors since July 2005. She worked actively on the NASW-TN Multi-level Licensure Task Force and advocated for passage of this important legislation. She was appointed in July 2008 by Governor Phil Bredesen to serve a five year term on the Board of Social Work Licensure (health related state board.) She is a member and participant of the Tennessee Society of Health Care Social Workers, Southeast Tennessee Chapter and currently serves as chapter treasurer. She also serves as a member of the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, School of Social Work Professional Advisory Board.



**Julia Mynatt Axley accepts Social Worker of the Year Award from NASW-TN President Paula Foster.**



## Lifetime Achievement (Two Award Winners)

### Bob Bernstein, ACSW, LCSW, BCD, Registered Geriatric Consultant



**Bob Bernstein and wife Sharon Rose at 2009 Legislative Conference**

Bob Bernstein is one of the best-known Geriatric Professionals in Shelby County. As a Geriatric Consultant he works with seniors and their families, assists agencies and organizations in developing senior adult services and programs and is a consultant to many local hospitals and senior living facilities.

Bob's passion for social work all began from working at the Jane Addam Hull House Summer Camp for four years. He received his undergraduate degree in health and science from University of Illinois. In Tulsa, Bob established and became the Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center. He later received his Master's degree from University of Tennessee College of Social Work in Memphis. Bob Bernstein's distinguished career includes starting the Orange Mound Senior Center, employment with the Southeast Mental Health Center, serving as the Director of Social Services and Discharge Planning at St. Joseph Hospital, Director of Senior Outreach Services for Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation

Bob played an intricate part in bringing the 'Alliance for Mental Illness' to Memphis. He served on the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging and is a past President of Memphis and Shelby County Council on Aging. **Continued on Next Page**

Currently Bob serves on the advisory councils and board of directors of Professional Network on Aging, Alzheimer's Day Services of Memphis, Jewish Family Services, Mid-South Creative Aging, QualityLife Communities, Memphis Senior Companion Program and Ombudsman Program and many advocacy projects for seniors and their families. Bob is an Allocations Volunteer for United Way of the Mid-South. He also writes for the Jewish Living magazine, The Best of Times and Commercial Appeal.

As a specialist in the field, Bob has served on numerous expert panels and asked to be a guest speaker for multiple workshops and conferences examining the practical aspects of caring for the elderly and hardships seniors face in our society. Bob Bernstein's experience over many years has made him an invaluable asset to the seniors and their families he serves through his professional and volunteer work.

Bob is also dedicated to NASW and the social work profession. He was an officer on the state board and active in many projects. Bob Bernstein is an extremely accomplished professional and has served 60+ years in the profession. He epitomizes what all social workers should strive to be. His service is not a career but a lifestyle. Bob was quoted saying, "Social work is not a job, it's a passion."



## Vince Parish, LCSW

*Prior NASW-TN Executive Director, Kathy Wood-Dobbins, shared the following in nominating Vince Parish.*



**Vince Parish displays Lifetime Achievement Award with Janie Parish, Lindsey & Scott Byers**

Vince Parrish's career has been infused with integrity and demonstrates his deep understanding and adoption of the social work profession's highest ideals. He has served the social work profession as a clinician, a teacher, and a mentor. In these roles, all done with great skill and love, he has helped to shape the social work profession in Tennessee. The fruits of his service will be long-lasting because of the impact he has had on many individuals whose lives he has touched.

I first met Vince soon after he finished his graduate social work training and we both worked as social workers at St Thomas Hospital. It was during these early days of his career that Vince became interested in employee assistance programs. Since then, Vince has become a respected expert in the field of addiction treatment and employee assistance. He currently works as the Physician Health Program Field Coordinator with the Tennessee Medical Foundation. In this role, he has assisted impaired physicians through out Tennessee as they address their problems, find the best treatment option, enter recovery, and return to safe medical practice. As an LCSW, Vince has maintained an active private practice and is one of very few clinicians trained to address gambling addiction.

Vince is a social worker's social worker. His love of learning and enthusiasm for continuing professional development skill has made an impact in his role as a teacher and facilitator. Through his educational institute, he has provided countless hours of clinical training and ethics training to Middle Tennessee social workers. In fact, when Vince was unable to schedule his December 2008 Ethics Training because of his illness, many social workers wondered how they would meet their continuing education requirements! His training programs are remarkable in that Vince always looks for presenters who are innovative and who can present new ideas. Meticulous in his preparations, participants can count on a high quality educational experience.

In addition to providing continuing education for social workers, Vince has served as adjunct faculty at the Nashville Branch of the University of Tennessee College Of Social Work. A faithful member of NASW, Vince has served on the board and even stepped up to the plate to serve as interim executive director when needed. He has been active on the PACE board for the state.

Most impressive is Vince's relationships with his colleagues as a mentor. His wisdom, wonderful sense of humor, compassion, and trustworthiness has made him a beloved colleague to many. Many social workers have turned to Vince for his wise counsel, referrals for treatment for themselves or their family, or simply as an opportunity to have conversation about a difficult topic with a wise, caring colleague.

During this past year, Vince has faced a cancer diagnosis and a difficult road to recovery. When I invited a group of friends to get together to film a video to wish him well, I was overwhelmed with the response. A lot of people love Vince Parrish!

# PUBLIC OFFICIAL OF THE YEAR AWARDS

*Many states spend years working to improve their social worker licensure laws. Tennessee's Legislature passed Multi-level Social Work Licensure legislation the year it was introduced. That unusual event is a tribute to our Public Official of the Year Award Winners:*

## Senator Thelma Harper



**Senator Thelma Harper**

Senator Thelma Harper is known for providing strong representation for Senate District 19. When Vicki Williams, Director of the Social Work Program at Tennessee State University, and Paula Foster, then chair of NASW-TN's Multi-level Licensure Committee, met with their Senator she wanted to understand why changes were needed in Tennessee's Social Work Licensure Law, asked how Tennessee's law compared with that of other states and then who her staff could check with for additional information. As Chair of the Senate Government Operations committee she wanted to be sure a change in social work licensure was needed.

That initial meeting led to her becoming the prime sponsor and chief Senate advocate for the passage of the Multi-level Licensure Law. This veteran Senator worked to ensure the legislation moved through committee meetings and ensured the legislation's passage in the Senate with 31 Aye votes, 1 present and not voting and none against.

Senator Harper is also an advocate on other issues of concern to social workers. She is the first African American female ever elected to the Tennessee State Senate and has served as a Senate member of the 96<sup>th</sup> through 106<sup>th</sup> General Assemblies. She has receiving the Frances Williams Preston Award for her work on behalf of breast cancer and is a member of the prestigious WALL OF FAME at the Goodwill Manor, a wall dedicated to alumni of Tennessee State University who have made significant contributions or provided outstanding services to their community.

## Representative Joe Pitts

Some members of the Tennessee General Assembly may not know Representative Joe Pitts is a graduate of the social work program at Austin Peay State University. NASW, Tennessee Chapter and Austin Peay's Glenn Carter, though, have witnessed his strong social work practice skills as he served as the prime sponsor and chief advocate in the House of Representatives for the new Multi-level Social Work Licensure Law.

Good social workers:

- have strong assessment skills,
- know the right questions to ask to truly understand a situation,
- exhibit strong critical thinking skills,
- educate others on the importance of their work, and
- build strong relationships with their community and their colleagues.

... and Representative Joe Pitts definitely demonstrated all those skills during 2008. He understood the implications of the data NASW shared regarding how Tennessee's social work licensure law compared to laws in other states and worked throughout last Spring to ensure other House members understood the importance of this legislative change. Representative Pitts would say he was simply doing his job but we would say he was a "class act" as he served as the prime sponsor for legislation approved by the House of Representatives with 94 aye votes, 1 no and 2 present and not voting.



**Representative Joe Pitts receiving the Public Official of the Year Award from Austin Peay Professor Glenn Carter & NASW-TN President Paula Foster.**

To view additional photos from the  
2009 Legislative Conference please visit  
[www.naswtn.com](http://www.naswtn.com)

**Continued on Next Page**



## MSW Student of the Year

**Latisha Simmons**

Latisha Simmons is employed as child welfare trainer in the UT Chattanooga Social Work Department and is completing her MSW degree through the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. For her field placement, she is co-facilitating the Bridges Project an internal project in the social work department which provides support and mentoring of UTC students and Chattanooga State students. "Tish" consistently demonstrates a passionate commitment to the values and ethics of the social work profession and is a wonderful role model for social work students. She gracefully balances the demands of work, graduate school, and her family.



## BSW Student of the Year

**Sara Ellen Wright**

*Sara Ellen Wright was recommended for the BSW Student of the Year Award by Brian Billings, an LCSW working in the agency where she was completing her field placement. Here's what he had to say about this exceptional student.*

Sara has been our BSW intern with Davita Dialysis in Dyersburg for the past two semesters. She has also been interested in obtaining an MSSW degree for some time and I feel that she would be an excellent candidate for graduate school as well.

During her time here, Sara has consistently demonstrated a strong work ethic and a dedication to success. Her efforts have produced high quality results time and time again. This semester alone, Sara developed and successfully implemented a plan to streamline our transplant referral process for our ESRD population that we serve through Davita. The plan was a major undertaking requiring a great deal of thought and effort on Sara's behalf.

Though Sara is our BSW student, she is also in an unofficial leadership role. Many of our co-workers seek her advice and support. Sara is always there for them and is quite comfortable in the role. I feel her budding leadership abilities will become even more effective in her coming years as a maturing social work professional.



Sara Ellen Wright

**Approximately 400 persons attended the 2009 Legislative Conference**

**Please join us next Spring for the 2010 conference to recognize our Stars  
&**

**Make a Difference on public policy issues  
impacting our profession and our clients.**

**Tentative Date: April 7, 2010.**

# 2009 NASW-TN Social Work Legislative Conference Policy Poster Competition Winners

*A highlight of the Annual Legislative Conference is policy presentations by student groups from University Social Work Programs across the state. We congratulate the winners of the 2009 competition and are pleased to share a brief abstract on their presentation.*

## 2009 MSW Policy Presentation Winner



### East Tennessee State University

#### POLICY PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

**Behavioral Health Crises and Prevention Services:** Kay Collake, Melissa Granger, Ashley Marrs, Michael Phillips

In 2002, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (TDMHDD) began offering State Only and Judicial coverage for uninsured Tennesseans diagnosed with serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Under this plan, state funding allows eligible citizens to receive treatment at community mental health agencies (CMHA's), state hospitals and state-approved facilities. Outpatient services through CMHA's are known as the Behavioral Health Safety Net, while inpatient involuntary treatment at a psychiatric hospital is known as Judicial Coverage. Due to the current economic crisis and state budget shortfall, the state no longer approves or pays private facilities to treat involuntary patients and is planning major cuts to the Behavioral Health Safety Net.



## 2009 BSW Policy Presentation Winner



### University of Tennessee at Martin



**Open Hearts Open Home:** Melanie Brady, Amanda Carroll, Lacey Howard and Catherine Robilio,

The UT Martin Social Work students presented the issue of Senate Bill 78 to those gathered at Tennessee's Day on the Hill. The National Association of Social Workers stand on the foster care and adoption policy was identified, as well as the 6 core values. Senate Bill 78 was defined and examined for strengths and limitations, such as the non placement of children into stable homes based on marital status of applicant families. The UT Martin SW students stated each NASW core value paired with a recommendation