

WINTER 2023

Action

The Magazine of the Mandel School

Equity. Innovation. Transformation.

Putting principles into practice—leading with action



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY

Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel
School of Applied Social Sciences

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Action

The Magazine of the Mandel School

Winter 2023

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From left: Marjorie Edguer, Zoe Breen Wood, Paul Kubek, David Hussey, Grover "Cleve" Gilmore

From the Dean



Leading the way

Last summer, Dean Voisin was elected president of National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (NADD).

Founded in 1986, NADD is a volunteer membership organization dedicated to promoting excellence in social work education. Voisin was elected to the post by a majority of the members, which include more than 200 deans, directors and chairpersons of graduate school social work programs throughout North America.

During his three-year term as president, Voisin will support social work leaders in their professional development as they seek to promote social, economic and racial equity across the United States and Canada.

“I plan on collaborating with other major social work organizations to address the significant shortage of mental-health providers across the country,” said Voisin, “while ensuring the protection of the public good.”

Dear Mandel School Alumni and Friends,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. It is with great enthusiasm that I share the latest issue of *Action* magazine, and some of the many ways we are championing equity, innovation and transformation.

Over the years, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences has stood for inclusive excellence, producing social work and nonprofit leaders and scholars who have made indelible marks on our field. Our tradition of commitment to social justice and more equitable communities has always been at the heart of our mission, and this continues.

Our new tagline—“Equity. Innovation. Transformation.”—encapsulates the essence of our vision for the Mandel School, building on the strong foundation to which you all have contributed.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to creating a more equitable and just world by fostering leadership in anti-oppressive and anti-racist practices and policies. This encompasses not only the vital work of promoting social justice, but also fostering a climate of inclusion in which every voice is heard and every perspective valued.

We encourage inclusive approaches that challenge conventional practices, and incorporate innovative research and technology to address the evolving challenges facing our society. Innovation that elevates access to knowledge and resources has to be the driving force behind the development of new tools, strategies, and paradigms for social work and applied social sciences.

As you will read in this issue, the Mandel School continues to be at the forefront of transformative change. We inspire our students and alumni to be change leaders by working respectfully alongside individuals, families and communities while elevating their strengths.

Thank you for your enduring support, and for being part of the Mandel School family. I look forward to what we will build and achieve together in the coming months and years.

With gratitude,

Dexter Voisin, PhD, LCSW

*Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean in Applied Social Sciences
Case Western Reserve University*



By the numbers

The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences is a research-driven school of social work and nonprofit management. Our Fiscal Year 2023 statistics are evidence of its strong standing as a top 10 social work school nationally. Here are some of the Mandel School's latest facts and figures.

THE SCHOOL

<p>#9 school of social work in the U.S. and</p> <p>#1 in Ohio, according to <i>U.S. News and World Report</i></p>	<p>9 multidisciplinary research and training centers, including</p> <p>3 Centers of Excellence, covering a range of specialties</p>	<p>6 dual degrees, an option pursued by</p> <p>6% of on-campus master's students</p>	<p>4 of the top 100 most-cited social work scholars in the nation</p>	<p>2 in the top</p> <p>2% of most-cited researchers in the world (from a list of 6 million)</p>
<p>8 American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare Fellows on our faculty</p>	<p>12:1 student-faculty ratio, one of the nation's lowest</p>	<p>3 Distinguished University Professors</p>	<p>10 endowed professorships, among the most of any school of social work in the nation</p>	<p>\$20+ million in research and training grant awards</p>

THE STUDENTS

<p>409 master's students</p>	<p>38 PhD students</p>	<p>39 states represented</p>	<p>29 states where online students are enrolled</p>	<p>38% of students identify as Black, Indigenous or a person of color</p>
<p>400% increase of incoming international students</p>	<p>100% of on-campus students received scholarship support last year</p>	<p>93.2% of recent grads are employed or pursuing further education full time within six months of graduating</p>	<p>9,000+ alumni in all 50 states and 41 countries</p>	<p>114,370 hours of social work provided by master's students in field practicums at 1,000+ partner organizations throughout the U.S.—an economic value of \$3.6+ million</p>

Weighing in

As experts in social work, nonprofit administration and mental health, faculty at Case Western Reserve University's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences are often sought for their takes on topical news stories. Here are just some of the most recent ways well-known media outlets have captured their insights.

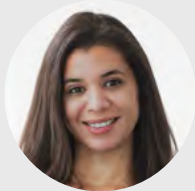
“

This study is definitely confirming what smaller studies have indicated. It's not just random chance that Black children are more exposed to lead.”



Robert Fischer, PhD,

Grace Coyle Longwell Associate Professor in Civil Society, appearing in *U.S. News & World Report*, about a recent study that shows Black children living in racially segregated U.S. neighborhoods are at heightened risk of lead exposure



“ Infant mortality is a symptom of a greater issue, which is racism and social justice—this is a women's rights, civil rights, human rights kind of problem.”

Angela Newman-White, executive director of First Year Cleveland, to *The Landscape podcast* on reducing infant mortality in Cleveland



“ [Hip-hop] becomes a vehicle or catalyst to say, 'Hey, when you were feeling this way, what is a way to manage that emotion?' Through [Peel Dem Layers Back], we were able to identify songs to help them dig out of that space.”

Ivan Conard (SAS '21),

research associate, to *Good Morning America* on Peel Dem Layers Back, a Cleveland nonprofit that encourages mental health support through hip-hop

“

“It's horrible to even think that that's just the way we are right now. People have accepted that [gun violence on school campuses] is a thing that's going to keep occurring, and we're all kind of getting more desensitized to it as a more normal part of our culture.”



Dan Flannery, PhD,

director of the Begun Center for Violence Prevention and Research, to *Associated Press* about gun violence at schools and university campuses

“

The effects tend to be anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorders, and all the psychological dysregulation that you would anticipate.”



Dexter Voisin, PhD,

Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean in Applied Social Sciences, to *Newsy* about the impact of trauma on a community caused by an increase in gun violence

Educational equity

Mandel School to launch innovative approach with tuition-free access to social work education

In 2021, nearly 2.4 million Ohioans lived in communities without enough social work professionals, according to the state's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. With the need for more social workers with graduate-level education increasing in urgency, leadership at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences has announced a new program they hope will help address the statewide problem.

Launching this spring, the Classroom Without Walls (CWW) program will enroll professional social workers with bachelor's degrees to learn alongside traditional graduate students.

Community learners in CWW can take up to three graduate-level courses tuition-free (nine credits). They won't be typical degree-seeking students—many of them would have significant human and life experiences that they can share with their graduate student peers in the classroom. At the end of

the three courses, participants will earn a certificate of completion and can choose to put their credits toward a Master of Social Work program at the Mandel School. Community learners enrolled in the in-person course this spring will be provided with a \$1,000 stipend to offset the cost of their future tuition.

"CWW is an important innovation in social work education that is grounded in promoting access and equity," said **Dexter Voisin, PhD**, dean of the Mandel School. "It will honor the incredible experience and strengths that community workers have to shape social work education, and will provide a more feasible path toward a Mandel School Master of Social Work degree."

The Noble Foundation, led by **Gayle Noble (SAS '88)**, granted generous seed support for CWW. "It's a win-win because it's good for the students and the clients they serve," she said, adding that she hopes the program will



Gayle Noble

serve as a model for other schools of social work.

"This program is so innovative," said Noble, "and it's nice to have a small part in something that could really put the Mandel School on the map."

To support the program, contact **David Miller, PhD**, associate dean for academic affairs, David.Miller@case.edu



"It will honor the incredible experience and strengths that community workers have to shape social work education, and will provide a more feasible path toward a Mandel School Master of Social Work degree."

—Dexter Voisin, PhD

Painted perspectives

How the Putnam Collection advances inclusive representation

“If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.”

The inspiring words of former U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm find their visual expression in Antwoine Washington’s painting *Common Unity*, part of a permanent exhibition that hangs inside the halls of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences building.

The piece is part of a group of paintings recently added to the Putnam Collection, which is made possible by an enduring endowment established at the university by Cleveland philanthropist Mildred Andrews Putnam and her son, Peter. Its primary purpose is to support regional sculptors and raise public awareness of their contributions to the the art world—and enhance the visual environment of the campus, displaying work that advances the university’s mission and vision.

“The Putnam pieces in the Mandel School reflect the 2022 Grand Challenges of Social Work including the Management of Nonprofit Organizations, which focuses on the centrality of racism, poverty and discrimination within society and the profession,” said **Sharon Milligan, PhD**, the Grace Longwell Coyle Associate Professor in Social Work and a member of the Mandel School Art Committee. “The pieces we selected

to be displayed in the school show our intent to address inequality, build community and advance racial and economic justice and healthy families.”

Putnam Collection work can be seen across the university. The Mandel School has been home



Antwoine Washington, *Common Unity*, 2022

to Putnam pieces since the building’s inception in the early 1990s, with sculptures, and now paintings, adorning common areas. The newest the newest additions by



Antwoine Washington, *I Bought My Mom and Pops a Crib*, 2022

Washington, an artist hailing from Pontiac, Michigan, have brought a fresh perspective to the collection.

His art is characterized by bold shapes and vibrant colors that convey a sense of unity despite their imperfect alignment. Washington’s use of recurring symbols—such as the panther and the police helicopter—provides a rich narrative that speaks to his personal experiences as a Black man and father in the United States.

“Our mission at the Mandel School is to advance leadership in social work and nonprofit education, scholarship and service to build a more just world,” Milligan noted. “The work of Antwoine Washington allows the community of scholars and staff to see our mission and values reflected on the walls of the school.”

—Alaina Bartel

“CoHealing” after trauma

Helping teachers with post-pandemic burnout

A recent study, researchers at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences found that educators experienced worsened job-related stress in the midst of the pandemic, leaving the entire profession vulnerable to burnout and direct and indirect trauma.

But with a model called CoHealing, on-the-job stress can be mitigated, according to researchers at the Mandel School’s Center on Trauma and Adversity.

The idea of CoHealing is simple: With support and psychoeducation (information about mental health), teachers—along with other helping professionals—ease symptoms from burnout and secondary stress disorder, which is a mental health condition from working with people who have experienced trauma.

For the study, researchers surveyed 121 participants—a mix of mostly educators and healthcare workers—experiencing stress and burnout. Each participant received eight electronic surveys over a one-year period during their participation in the monthly CoHealing group sessions, which were held virtually or in person. The results, which were recently published in *OBM Integrative and Complementary Medicine*, showed that CoHealing helped alleviate trauma.

“The impact of the pandemic on teachers and education staff has highlighted the need for greater mental health support and resources to help them cope with these challenges,” said

Jennifer King, the lead researcher and an assistant professor and co-director of the center.

“When we’re talking about stress and burnout—which generally involve interventions that occur outside of organizations—we know that getting more sleep or taking yoga classes can help, but solutions that work involve bringing people together to share resources and learn new stress-management strategies they can implement through the workday,” she said. “We want teachers to find joy in their work, but when they’re feeling burnt out, that’s just not happening anymore.”

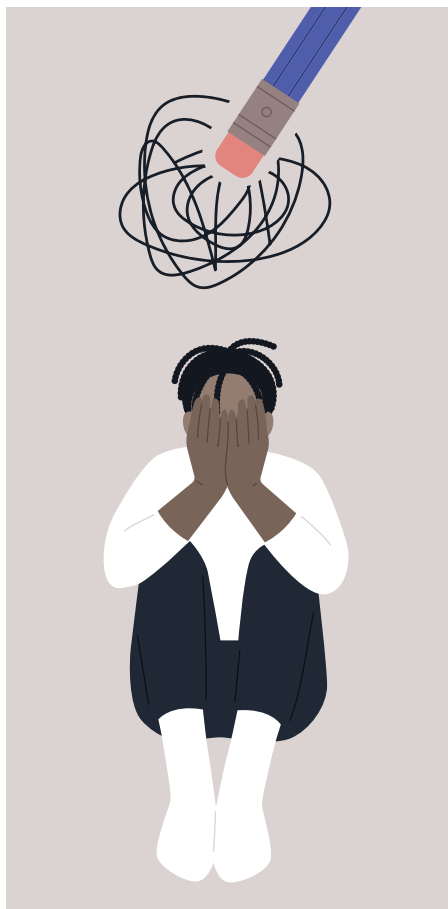


Jennifer King

The researchers noted that stress on the job can negatively affect educators’ physical health—think immune function suppression, high blood-pressure and increased heart rate. Poor teacher wellness and mental health, King said, are linked to lower-quality student learning environments and poorer academic and nonacademic student outcomes.

“We found that [CoHealing] shows promise in preventing secondary trauma and reducing existing secondary trauma symptoms,” King said, “and teachers, healthcare providers and other folks bearing witness to others’ traumatic stress can benefit from it.”

—Colin McEwen



Taking action to scale

Mandel School to establish Substance Use Disorders Center of Excellence

According to the most recent federal data, Ohio had the nation's fourth-highest rate of unintentional drug-overdose deaths last year. Through a new three-year, \$6 million state grant, researchers at Case Western Reserve University's Center for Evidence-Based Practices (CEBP) aim to decrease that statistic significantly.

CEBP is charged to use the state support to launch a Substance Use Disorders "Center of Excellence" to help adopt, implement and evaluate evidence-based best practices and policies related to substance-use disorders.

For the past 25 years, CEBP—which is housed in the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences—has provided technical assistance to health and behavioral healthcare organizations that work with people with mental illness, addiction, or co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders.

CEBP Director **Ric Kruszynski (SAS '93)**, who will lead the initiative, said the Mandel School's mission has always been to apply social work education in the community.

"This whole project is exactly that: to get Ohio's workforce better prepared to respond to high-mortality substance use with practice models known to be most effective in treatment," he added. "It's a huge endeavor. Our center has been doing work in that sphere—but nothing of this scope."



Ric Kruszynski

While the initiative has largely been in the planning phase over the past few months, they've hit two significant milestones: They've created a statewide stakeholder committee of

experts across the addiction care field to offer insight into the direction of the project. They've developed four—of an expected 20-plus—trainings to be approved by the state and used by agencies. Plus, they're reviewing literature around evidence-based practices so they can disseminate content that is most relevant.

"Thematically, the objective is for us to go to scale in Ohio," Kruszynski explained, "so that literally any addiction treatment provider in the state—which could be in the hundreds—would have full and free access to our content and our process."

—Alaina Bartel

"This whole project is exactly that: to get Ohio's workforce better prepared to respond to high mortality substance use with practice models known to be most effective in treatment."

—Ric Kruszynski



LEADING THE *Leading*



From left: Paul Kubek, Zoe Breen Wood, David Hussey, Grover “Cleve” Gilmore and Marji Edguer

the change



Photo by Angelo Merendino

With a commitment to equity, innovation and transformation, the Mandel School leads with action

By Daniel Robison

Since **Dexter Voisin, PhD**, assumed leadership of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences in early 2022, he and his leadership have asked alumni, faculty, students and stakeholders: What is the Mandel School all about?

From hundreds of conversations and comments, an answer became evident:

Equity. Innovation. Transformation.

Not only is this the new tagline for the Mandel School, “these are values that capture who we are as an institution—and more importantly—where we’re heading,” said Voisin, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean in Applied Social Science.

While there are countless examples of each of these principles in action during the institution's 108-year history, three recent stories—involving faculty, students and alumni—highlight how the Mandel School community is advancing the social work field, translating research into practice and action and leading positive social change.

Elevating equity

When the Ohio Supreme Court offered **Adrienne Fletcher, PhD (SAS '05)**, the role as its first-ever director of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), she saw a one-of-a-kind opportunity to take her research and expertise into one of the state's oldest, most tradition-bound institutions.

Taking a leave of absence from the Mandel School, Fletcher and her family moved to Columbus.

"I felt a responsibility to try to make an impact at the court, and I felt called to the position," said Fletcher, an assistant professor of social work and faculty member since 2017. "My charge was to bring a fresh approach and new ideas into an institution that stands for equal justice and the public good, but knows it can better uphold those principles."

"No matter who we are—a social worker, a student, a judge or an attorney—biases are a part of the human condition. As social workers, we should be examples for how to work our way forward through our society's thicket of race and culture."

—Adrienne Fletcher

Reporting to then-Chief Justice Maureen O'Conner, Fletcher identified ways that the state's highest and lower courts could better reflect Ohio's diverse demographics and create opportunities for better access—including for people with disabilities and language barriers. She also suggested ways to implement initiatives to promote these goals and values.

For instance, Fletcher updated training on implicit bias for hiring panels throughout courts in Ohio and often worked



Photo by Angelo Merendino

Adrienne Fletcher

with, and taught at, the Judicial College—one of the court's nine divisions—which provides training for judges and attorneys across the state.

"Dr. Fletcher is a perfect example of the many ways our alumni and faculty move into non-traditional spaces and break barriers," said Voisin. "She's done a tremendous job of elevating voices, perspectives and narratives of minoritized communities."

Fletcher returned to the Mandel School last summer and took on an advanced role as its inaugural associate dean for equity and belonging. In her new position, Fletcher is responsible for ensuring the Mandel School can better embody its values—from elevating equity to practicing anti-racism—throughout its internal practices, curricula, hiring and engaging with communities.

"We are building a community of inclusivity, belonging and mutual respect—and diversity, which is more than just race. It's ability and disability, religion and gender, and other natural parts of being human," said Fletcher, who also recently was named the School of Medicine's vice dean of diversity, equity and inclusive excellence. "When we broaden

our perspective in talking about these issues, we touch on aspects of everyone's identity, which helps get buy-in and promotes learning."

Fletcher rejoined the Mandel School just as the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling barring the consideration of race in higher education admissions. The historic decision and ongoing research into effective strategies to strengthen DEII education are shaping how the Mandel School and university approach the subject matter and teach students.

"Our work is undergoing a transformation," said Fletcher. "We're really going to be emphasizing a culture of equity and belonging for students, faculty and staff."

In the near term, the Mandel School is re-tailoring its equity and belonging programming for the differing needs of international students, underrepresented minorities and other groups on campus.

"No matter who we are—a social worker, a student, a judge or an attorney—biases are a part of the human condition," said Fletcher. "As social workers, we should be examples for how to work our way forward through our society's thicket of race and culture."

An institution of innovation

Every time students start their journeys at the Mandel School, they join educational programs that have been recognized for being among the most influential and forward-thinking in their field.

"Curricular innovation in social work education has really been the hallmark of the Mandel School since its founding," said Emeritus Dean **Grover (Cleve) Gilmore, PhD**.

The school's founders and earliest faculty created an atmosphere in which they continually sought the best ways to teach and train students "so they could tackle the problems they'd encounter as social workers," said Gilmore. "It's part of the DNA of the school."

The Mandel School's latest era of educational innovations was captured in a recent white paper—"Competency-Based Social Work Education: 25 Years of Innovation and Leadership"—that chronicled the school's role in advancing curricular planning, assessment and delivery of social work education.

The paper was authored by Gilmore; Associate Professors **Zoe Breen Wood, PhD, David Hussey, PhD, Mark Chupp, PhD**; Assistant Professor **Marji Edguer, PhD (WRC '80; SAS '85; GRS '17, social welfare)**; and Paul Kubek, who served as consulting writer and project manager.

"Our curriculum is continually built on a history of innovations—and it's an evolution that's always ongoing," said Edguer, co-chair of the curriculum committee at the Mandel School. "No matter how successful any effort has been, we can always improve aspects of the education we provide."

"We were leaders in looking at educational outcomes—what students should be able to know, do and believe when they leave. We changed the focus from giving information to students to evaluating how confident they are in performing their career roles."

— Zoe Breen Wood

Since the mid-1990s, faculty and administration have collected data measuring student achievement in particular abilities and competencies. In some cases, the data has led to entire initiatives—years in the making—to be set aside.

"We've made mistakes and corrections. Ultimately, we follow the lead of students," said Gilmore. "At times, we've had to be very honest and acknowledge that simply because we're content experts, hard changes are necessary if students aren't achieving."

In 2002, the Mandel School was the first of its kind to launch what's known as a competency-based, or ability-based, social work education.

"We were leaders in looking at educational outcomes—what students should be able to know, do and believe when they leave," said Wood. "We changed the focus from giving information to students to evaluating how confident they are in performing their career roles."

Gilmore, who served as dean during most of the era covered in the paper, said the school aimed to “avoid having a catalog of courses that are individually very good but may not hold together very well,” he said. “Instead, we worked backward from the outcome of a competent social worker.”

The competency-based approach, first pursued at the Mandel School, has been influential on a national level. In 2008, the Council on Social Work Education proclaimed that all social work schools needed to develop such a program.

“It challenges social workers to think and learn beyond one’s expertise and pursue lifelong learning,” said Kubek. “As this approach has become widely adopted, it’s having a significant impact on the field.”

The scholars also cite the 2020 launch of the school’s Change Agent Intensive as a recent innovation. This one-week, cohort-based intensive program offers all new students a range of experiences, before classes begin.

“We’ve created a powerful way to welcome them into the professional world of social work,” said Chupp. “It builds a community of learning and support, and it introduces them to the neighborhoods and people they’ll be working with in Cleveland.”

Added Chupp, “Immediately, we see them asking the kinds of questions that can foment changes in how programs are run and services are delivered. We see a presumption in them that we can do better, and they take that into the field and their careers.”

Over the last quarter-century, the school’s faculty continually returned to a foundational aspect of its curriculum—the student-learning experience—to ensure each course and semester built on the next, in an organized and coherent way.

“We can’t expect our students to connect and integrate the different parts of their education unless we do,” said Hussey.

The Mandel School’s level of emphasis on curriculum development is rare—not only for a school of social work—but for any school in higher education, said Gilmore, who launched the white-paper project as dean.

Its authors view the work as part historical document and as

a testament to current and future faculty “so they realize this is an important mission,” said Wood, “and that engaging in this activity is valued here.”

Ultimately, it’s the profession that benefits, the authors agree.

“We’ve always aimed to empower students to create change,” said Edguer, “while at the Mandel School and as social workers.”

Transforming trauma

In Cleveland, pronounced socioeconomic and racial disparities, which disproportionately affect Black and Hispanic residents, correlate with traumatic occurrences—including violent crime, child maltreatment and food insecurity.

In 2018, researchers at the Mandel School’s Center on Trauma and Adversity helped launch a project to address the issue and offer support. Every worker at the city’s 22

“It’s one thing to say you’re in the community—it’s another thing to be of the community.”

—Eugenia Cash-Kirkland

recreation centers—nearly 300 individuals, from desk staff, custodians, security personnel and others—have been trained in trauma-informed care, which means they can identify signs of trauma and address it constructively.

The initiative has become the country’s first system of trauma-informed recreation centers.

“This is a creative way of addressing unmet needs that stem from racialized poverty in low-resourced neighborhoods,” said Voisin. “We aim to meet people where they are. We partner with them, listen and respond in ethical and culturally appropriate ways.”

A dozen social workers and counselors also rotate among the rec centers, working directly with patrons—kids, adults and seniors—to process and work through trauma.

“It’s one thing to say you’re in the community—it’s another thing to be of the community,” said **Eugenia Cash-Kirkland**



Recreation centers in Cleveland have become places for residents to work through trauma and healing.

(SAS '92), support services director at Cleveland's Division of Recreation. "Our social workers and counselors build relationships in neighborhoods and help people who otherwise aren't likely to receive mental healthcare anywhere else."

At the outset of the initiative, the center's faculty teamed with nonprofit Frontline Services to teach rec center staff about trauma's causes and its lasting effects on behavior and well-being. The staff also received training on how to integrate trauma-informed care into everyday operations. The approach is characterized by several key principles and practices—safety, trustworthiness, peer support and flexibility.

"We want these spaces to feel safe, restorative and healing across all interactions and the environment," said **Megan Holmes, PhD**, professor and co-director at the Center on Trauma and Adversity. "We want everyone—kids and adults—to walk in and be greeted and treated in a way that doesn't further trigger trauma and can help promote healing from difficult experiences."

As a sign of the city's commitment to the endeavor, the rec centers are now known as Neighborhood Resource and Recreation Centers.

"A patron showing signs of trauma isn't going to have their first interaction be with a social worker or counselor," said **Amy Korsch-Williams (SAS '04)**, faculty affiliate of the center and senior instructor at the Mandel School. "All workers are trained to respond in ways that are compassionate, that perhaps will flip negative interactions, so people are moving together rather than apart."

When counselors and social workers work with a patron, "it's not just a referral; we do a 'warm handoff,' where we support you in whatever you need," said Cash-Kirkland, "which was not there before."

Faculty from the Center on Trauma and Adversity recently summarized findings from the project's first phase in the journal *Behavioral Sciences*. The paper details how a trauma-informed approach has promoted a range of positive interactions at centers.

Having mental health professionals meet with patrons after family members or friends have been hurt or killed is one way in which this approach has proven especially effective.

"It's made a huge difference," said Cash-Kirkland, "It mobilizes support at difficult times in the community."

During the project's next phase, ongoing evaluations will continue to inform efforts to fine-tune the approach until it's "woven deeply into the fabric of the centers," Holmes said. "Our goal is to provide the tools to do this work on their own, and step back."

Added Korsch-Williams, "In some ways, you could say we are trying to create an accumulation of good."

Charting a course

Moving forward, the Mandel School will continue to integrate principles of equity, innovation and transformation into its curriculum, research, student experience and other areas as part of an "anti-oppressive, anti-racist and decolonizing approach to social work," Voisin said.

"We will be more proactive about influencing our profession through equity, innovation and transformation. These have been the soul of our school for years, even if we just put this into words," he continued. "We've inherited a legacy of dedication to these principles, and our future will be built upon them."



Crystal Sledge (far left), Toni Shoyinka (fifth from left), Allysia White (seventh from left) pose with their study abroad cohort at Cape of Good Hope in South Africa last summer (Photo courtesy of Toni Shoyinka)

Cape Town, South Africa, is a bustling, shining city—but just minutes away, homes are made from corrugated iron, there is a lack of running water and signs around the area warn of gang violence.

Toni Shoyinka and her fellow classmates—including **Crystal Sledge** and **Allysia White**—from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences participated in a study abroad program that is designed to deepen students’ understanding of social work in other countries. They learned they were seeing the long-lasting effects of apartheid, which continues to create inequality and economic disparities for the people of South Africa.

Before the travel abroad experience, Shoyinka recalled having “a very narrow view of social work” and what it could accomplish. During her visit, she job-shadowed at the Department of Social Development, which she compared to child protective services in the U.S. (though the South African department oversees cases for people of all ages). She learned about efforts to break down barriers and pull people out of poverty.

The experience showed Shoyinka how social work is practiced in other countries—a critical lesson for Shoyinka, who wants to work internationally.

FAR FROM HOME

International travel provides different views of social work

By Rachel Abbey McCafferty



Bringing the world to life

Study abroad programs get students “out of their comfort zone,” and help them see what day-to-day life is like for others, said **David B. Miller, PhD**, associate professor and director of international education programs at the Mandel School. It can show students the world in ways that books or social media can’t, he explained, giving students perspectives they might not see in the U.S.

“Our exposure is so limited,” Miller said.

To grow that exposure, the Mandel School offers short-term study abroad opportunities designed to build upon their on-campus education. Students travel to countries such

as South Africa, Ecuador and Poland, where they visit and sometimes shadow employees at hospitals, prisons, social work agencies and universities. There, they gain perspective on the resources that may or may not be available in other countries. The programs typically last one to two weeks, with classes taking place in Cleveland before and after the trips to help deepen the students’ experiences.

Getting uncomfortable

Second-year master’s student White said the study abroad program in South Africa pushed her out of her “comfort zone” and encouraged her to speak up to learn more about apartheid and the efforts to address inequalities. It’s



Various photos of the South Africa study abroad cohort
(Photos courtesy of Toni Shoyinka)

a topic she felt had never been taught in her schools in the U.S., though she observed that both countries share similar challenges with racism and inequality.

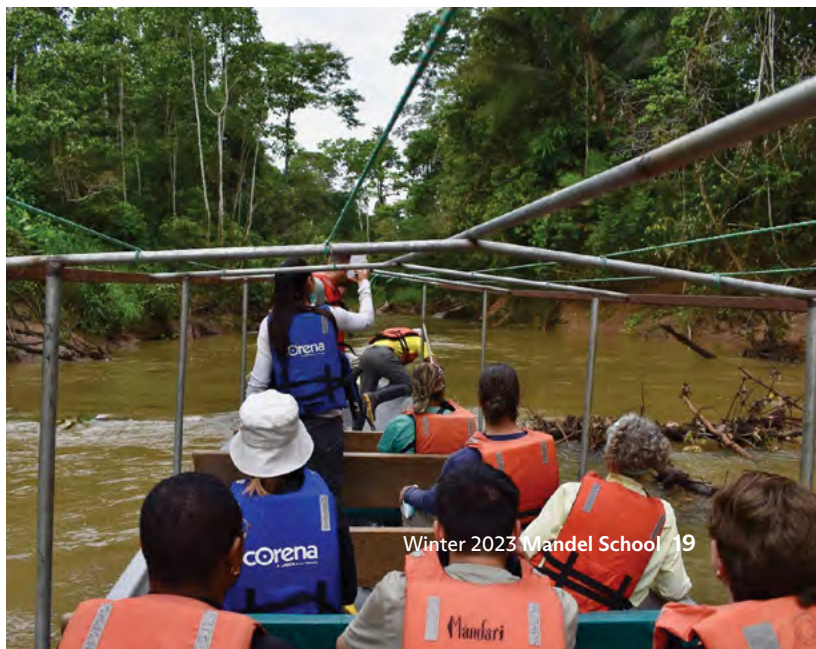
Sledge, a graduate student on the mental health track in the school's weekend program, said the trip sparked a lot of self-reflection. It was an "affirming" experience, she said, one that gave her "confidence" and "clarity" in her work going forward.

They spent cold, uncomfortable nights in the mountains, she said—an experience that left her longing for home at the time but later served as a metaphor for her career.



“Being a social worker is very uncomfortable,” she explained. “Do we continue as the status quo? Who’s going to speak up and be the one to challenge what’s going on? Who’s going to be uncomfortable speaking about the elephant in the room?”

When Sledge, White and Shoyinka returned home to the U.S., they did so knowing how a career in social work could support social justice, healthcare and more. In short, the three aspiring social workers have new insights and global perspectives—and are better prepared for the challenges their social work careers will present.





A new class of change leaders

Mandel School graduates celebrate their next steps

Eager students sat in Milton and Tamar Maltz Performing Arts Center's Silver Hall as the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences held its commencement ceremony last May. The graduates-to-be were about to collect their diplomas for their Master of Social Work, Master of Nonprofit Organizations or PhD in Social Welfare degrees.

"Whatever the path to your future, you make us all proud," Dean **Dexter Voisin, PhD**, told them in his opening speech. "My encouragement to you today is to claim and stand confident in your professional identity. As Mandel School graduates, you are all change leaders."

Next, **Sydney Evans (SAS '23)**, the student speaker elected by her peers, addressed her fellow graduates with some advice.

"Stay curious," she said. "As social workers, we have devoted ourselves to being lifelong learners. But most importantly, ask questions—even if you are scared of the answer. You never know what impact it may have."

Before delivering the diploma ceremony address, **Amy Main Morgenstern (SAS '80, MGT '88)**, president of nonprofit consulting firm Main Stream Enterprises, accepted the Distinguished Service Award for her outstanding contributions to the community, the social work profession and the Mandel School.

Morgenstern then shared her personal guiding principles: to always "push beyond your lane;" that no matter how effective we are, we can always be better; and to invoke the Jewish concept of tikkun olam—to repair the world.

She concluded by asking the graduates: "What are—or will be—your guiding principles?" and added how she hoped to soon learn what they would do "to champion improving the world."

Photos on pages 20-21 by Matt Schiffler unless otherwise noted.



Photo by Tony Gray

Amy Main Morgenstern delivered the commencement address



Jasmine Myers (left) receiving the Norma C. and Albert I. Geller Student Award from Dean Dexter Voisin (right)

Photo by Nick McLaughlin



Kimberly McFarlin (left) with Sydney Evans (right) who is accepting the Sylvia and John A. Yankey Community Service Award





Amy Main Morgenstern, commencement speaker, with David Wittkowsky, recipient of the Dean's Discretionary Award



Photo by Matt Schiffer



Photos on pages 22-23 by Nick McLaughlin unless otherwise noted.





Honoring students and faculty

The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences honored the following students and faculty with annual awards during the commencement ceremony in May.

MANDEL SCHOOL AWARDS

Irene Sogg Gross Award and Sylvia and John A. Yankey Community Service Award
Sydney Evans (SAS '23)

Dean's Award for Outstanding Student Achievement
Anju Kotwani (SAS '23)

Norma C. and Albert I. Geller Student Award
Jasmine Myers (SAS '23)

Outstanding Field Instructor Award
Gulnar Feerasta (SAS '16)

Outstanding Field Practicum Organization Award
Crossroads Hospice and Palliative Care
Magnolia Clubhouse
Project LIFT & St. Herman - FOCUS Cleveland

JOHN A. YANKEY OUTSTANDING TEACHER AWARDS

Jessica Wojtalik, PhD
Zulma Zabala

DEAN'S DISCRETIONARY AWARDS

Advocate for Human Rights Award
David Wittkowsky (WRC '85)

Distinguished Service Award
Amy Main Morgenstern (SAS '80, MGT '88)

2023 CWRU GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Arol Schack Dissertation Award for Outstanding Social Welfare Doctoral Student

Ruth Barber Moon Award
Emily Miller (SAS '15)

Marie Haug Award
Piper Sereno (SAS '23)

Richard A. Zdanis Fellowship
Kari O'Donnell



Homecoming highlights

Alumni reconnect on campus for a weekend to remember

Hundreds of alumni, family members and friends came to Case Western Reserve's Homecoming and Reunion Weekend in October, taking part in the university's more than 100 events—from football and fireworks to luncheons and networking sessions.

At Friday's Alumni Association Homecoming Luncheon, five members of the university community were recognized for their accomplishments and service. Among them: **Grover “Cleve” Gilmore, PhD**, dean emeritus at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, who received the Newton D. Baker Distinguished Service Award.

During the Alumni Awards and Reunion Celebration at the Mandel School, Dean **Dexter Voisin**, Interim Provost Joy Ward, and Vice President for the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Engagement Robert Solomon presented **Geneva Johnson (SAS '57)** with her own CWRU Trailblazer portrait. Johnson joins five other CWRU Trailblazers from the Mandel School. In addition, Dean Voisin and Alumni Board President **Adrienne Hatten (MNO '96)** presented the Alumni Association Awards (see page 35).

On Saturday, the Mandel School hosted its first carnival. It showcased representatives from its research centers to show the important work they are doing and also included fun, music, a food truck and games and activities for Mandel School alumni and their families, students, friends, staff and faculty.



From left: Portraitist Thomas Hudson, award winner Geneva Johnson, Dean Dexter Voisin, Interim Provost Joy Ward and Robert Solomon, vice president for the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Engagement



Geneva Johnson with portrait and artist Thomas Hudson



Rachelle Milner (center) and her family



The Alumni Awards and Reunion Celebration took place in Noble Commons in October



From left: Alumnae Christine Young and Teresa Schleicher with sister Anne Schleicher



Erin Upchurch, executive director of the Kaleidoscope Youth Center in Columbus, led the Transformative Justice as Social Work Practice Seminar



Left to right: Rachelle Milner, Interim Provost Joy Ward, Dexter Voisin, Indigo Bishop, Teresa Schleicher, Adrienne Hatten



Portraitist Thomas Hudson (second from right) and his family



Alumni attended the Transformative Justice as Social Work Practice Seminar with Erin Upchurch during Homecoming and Reunion Weekend

Support for survivors

Two alumnae share their fight against human trafficking

By Carey Skinner Moss



In 2021, the National Human Trafficking Hotline identified 10,359 cases of human trafficking involving 16,554 likely victims in the United States. But those are just the cases reported; the true number is estimated to be much higher.

The crisis is personal for two alumnae of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University, who have dedicated their lives to fighting human trafficking and dismantling the systems that enable it.

Searching for liberation

When she was a child, the discriminatory practice of redlining—which denied Black people access to credit even if they qualified for loans—pushed **Celia Williamson, PhD (SAS '94)** and her family to live in an impoverished area of Toledo, Ohio.

“Racism changed the entire trajectory of my life,” said Williamson. “North Toledo had the highest crime rates of the area at the time, and I was mandated by law to go to an underperforming school.”

The devastation of poverty and systemic racism was inescapable, so when it came time for Williamson to choose a career path, social work—and the Mandel School—seemed the obvious choice.

During her studies, Williamson discovered her passion for helping trafficking victims. She spent six months on the streets of Toledo, developing relationships with women being exploited for sex. Later, she was named one of the 30 most influential social workers alive by the Social Work Degree Guide and inducted into the Ohio Women’s Hall of Fame.

In 1993, she worked together with the women and a Toledo City Council member to develop Ohio’s first direct service program to give trafficking victims convicted of related

crimes a second chance—years before the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 was passed, which established trafficking as a federal crime with severe penalties.”

Over the years, Williamson has helped pass four laws—three in Ohio and one federal—to protect human trafficking victims.

Williamson joined the social work faculty at University of Toledo in 2000 and, in 2004, enlisted the help of students and colleagues to launch the Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference, which continues today and is the largest academic conference on the subject in the world. In 2014, she was named director of University of Toledo’s Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute—a title she still holds today.



*“Education is
key, and always,
always, believe
children.”*

—Celia Williamson

In all of her endeavors, Williamson aims to dispel harmful myths about trafficking and educate parents, teachers and the general public on what makes someone susceptible.

“Everyone is not at equal risk. Can anyone be trafficked? Yes. But the research is very clear on who is most vulnerable,” she explained. “Children of color and LGBTQ kids; kids from poverty, with disabilities or from foreign countries; any child involved with Child Protective Services or juvenile court; and any kid active on social media without supervision.

“Education is key,” she concluded, “and always, always, believe children.”

Life after exploitation

That advice rings true for **Jasmine Myers (SAS '23)**, who didn't have the words to describe the abuse she experienced growing up, but would later come to learn she was a victim of child sex trafficking.

“I didn't know life before exploitation,” she said. “All I knew was that bad things kept happening and my parents were on the other side of the wall, not doing anything about it.”

Today, Myers is a program coordinator with the Collaborative to End Human Trafficking in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. She, like Williamson, set out to work in direct service, but has since expanded her focus to include social work on the macro scale.

Myers' role at the collaborative is multifaceted, allowing her to train individuals to recognize the signs of trafficking; convene partners across the county to collaborate on advocacy and legislative efforts; and even work with the federal government to develop innovative strategies to protect youth from online abuse.

“The only way to truly stop human trafficking is to address the macro,” said Myers, “but I told myself that if I made it out, that no one should have to go through it alone. So I



“Human trafficking doesn't happen in silos, and neither does healing.”

—Jasmine Myers

find creative ways to maintain a foot in both worlds.

“Most importantly, I want to uplift and empower others to be leaders,” she continued. “I try to live that mantra—to reach back, grab people and pull them up, even further than me.”

At the Mandel School, Myers' mentors and professors encouraged her to embrace her unique experience and acknowledge that she was already an expert on the subject of human trafficking.

“They poured back into me,” she recalled. “They said ‘we see you, you're welcome, you deserve to be here.’”

Myers said there are a number of ways people can help prevent trafficking, from educating youth about consent to creating safe spaces where they can confide in trusted adults. She added

that the most important factor is “building a community that looks out for each other.”

She also wants to remind survivors that they are not alone. “Human trafficking doesn't happen in silos,” she said, “and neither does healing. There is a community out there, willing and ready to support you. Get involved—reach out.”

If you suspect exploitation or forced labor, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888.373.7888. Advocates are available 24/7.

Other resources include:

- polarisproject.org
- sharedhope.org
- *Emancipation Nation* (Williamson's podcast)

Spreading the news

Dean's new podcast shares alumni stories and expertise

In March, Dean **Dexter Voisin, PhD**, launched his podcast, *Change Leaders*, with the intention of raising awareness of the transformational work alumni from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences are doing around the world.

“Mandel School alumni are advancing important change across a wide and diverse array of human service, nonprofit, government and corporate sectors,” he said.

There was perhaps no one better to kick off the podcast series than distinguished alumna **Geneva Johnson (SAS '57)**. A leader for change herself, Johnson broke barriers throughout her career by serving as the first woman and Black executive at organizations such as United Way and Family Service



“I want prospective and current students—all of our alumni, friends and the public—to know and be inspired by their stories and contributions, as I have been, too.”

—Dexter Voisin, PhD



Dexter Voisin and Susan Sternad-Basel pose in the studio while recording the second episode of the podcast

America, two of the largest social service organizations in the country.

Susan Sternad-Basel (SAS '81), recipient of the Mandel School's Distinguished Service Award in 2021, was the guest for the podcast's second episode.

A self-described natural leader, Sternad-Basil is the former deputy chief data officer of the United States Defense Intelligence Agency.

“My philosophy is that the world is run by those who show up,” she told Voisin during the podcast as she described her career journey from social work to the armed forces.

She said is now in “giving-back mode,” and mentors students at the Mandel

School, and shared some of the guidance she provides to her mentees.

“I want prospective and current students—all of our alumni, friends and the public—to know and be inspired by their stories and contributions,” Voisin added, “as I have been, too.”

Listen to *Change Leaders*:



Class notes

Reported to the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences from March 1 through Sept. 8, 2023.



Geneva Johnson (SAS '57), winner of the CWRU Trailblazer and Grace Longwell Coyle awards, and **Susan Sternad-Basel (SAS '81)**, president of S&B Solutions LLC, were featured on recent episodes of the Mandel School's podcast, *Change Leaders* (see p. 33). In their respective episodes, Johnson and Sternad-Basel discussed their long and distinguished social work careers with Dean Dexter Voisin, PhD.



Darlene Grant, PhD (SAS '84), appeared in the spring issue of Case Western Reserve University's *Think* magazine, discussing how she came to be the senior advisor to Peace Corps Director Carol Spahn. Grant shared her mission to cultivate diversity in

the worldwide agency and help remove barriers for underrepresented volunteers and staff and create a more just and equitable organization.



Joanna Hardis (SAS '96) recently published *Just Do Nothing: A Paradoxical Guide for Getting Out of Your Way*, a self-help book on changing your relationship with distress and discomfort using cognitive behavioral therapy principles.



Philip Tavill (SAS '96, MNO '96), chief executive officer of Children First Inc. of Sarasota, Florida, received the Sargent Shriver Excellence in Community Service Award for his innovative achievement in community service work at Head Start and Early Head Start. Children First

Inc. provides quality early childhood education and family strengthening programs.

Jennifer Johnson (SAS '07), executive director of CANOPY Child Advocacy Center in Cleveland, was a panelist at "It Takes a Village," a child abuse prevention discussion hosted by Case Western Reserve University.

Ashley Withrow (SAS '08), **Katie Russell (SAS '18)** and doctoral student **Braveheart Gillani** recently published "Mindfulness training for law enforcement to reduce occupational impact: A systematic review and meta-analysis" in *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*.

"Pioneers" in their profession

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Foundation recognizes social workers with exceptional contributions to the profession through service, teaching, writing, research, program development or legislation. These NASW Pioneers are honored during the annual luncheon in October, and this year, three Mandel School alumni were among their ranks. They join 22 other Mandel School alumni who have been selected in years past.



Gary Bess, PhD (SAS '78), principal, Gary Bess Associates, Lincoln, California



Diane Elze, PhD (SAS '94), associate professor and associate dean for academic affairs, University of Buffalo School of Social Work



Scott Ryan, PhD (GRS '01, social welfare), professor and dean, University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work

Class notes, continued

Bethany Friel (SAS '11) was featured in the spring issue of Case Western Reserve University's *Think* magazine about how she applies her social work experience to help manage affordable and mixed-income housing in Pittsburgh.

Brenda Glass (SAS '13), founder and executive director of Brenda Glass Multipurpose Trauma Center in Cleveland, received the Hidden Figure Award from the City of Cleveland and the Special Courage Award from the Ohio Attorney General's Office for her dedication to supporting victims of trauma through cultural inclusivity and innovative recovery practices.



Jazmin Long (SAS '15, MNO '15), chief executive officer of Birthing Beautiful Communities in Cleveland, received CWRU's Alumni Innovator of the

Year Award for her consistent creative leadership to transform jail-based prenatal care.

Lindsey Bressan (MNO '20) began a new role as the development coordinator for T1International, a global advocacy organization in the United Kingdom for individuals with Type 1 diabetes.

Jordan Wells (SAS '23) is now the development associate for major gifts at the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health in Palo Alto, California.

In memoriam

Death notices reported to the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences March 1 through Sept. 8, 2023.

Anita Langsam Cohen (SAS '47), of Princeton, New Jersey, died Feb. 23. She was a social worker in the Lawrence Township New Jersey School District for 19 years. Cohen was active in many local organizations, including Princeton Senior Resource Center, Littlebrook School Grand-Pals, the Princeton Jewish Center and the Jewish Center Senior Drop-In Lounge.

Elaine Nussbaum (SAS '51), of Delray Beach, Florida, and Beachwood, Ohio, died May 12. She was a teacher and social worker, and a member of Fairmount Temple and its sisterhood. Nussbaum was also very involved in Hadassah, an American Jewish volunteer women's organization, and volunteered at Menorah Park in Beachwood.

H Bernard Smith (SAS '54), of Beachwood, Ohio, died March 6. Throughout his career, he worked for the Jewish Children's Bureau/Bellefaire and what is now the Center for Families and the Center for Community Solutions. In partnership with the Ohio Legislative Services Commission, Smith helped write legislation that established community mental health boards, and served as executive director of Cuyahoga County's for 10 years. He was also the first director of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, which is now a significant mental health lobbying and support group in the country.

Barbara Seiler Byrne (SAS '68), of Plymouth, Massachusetts, died May 14. She spent her professional career as a therapist focused on helping children and their families.

Maurine Moody Scott (SAS '71), of Mount Vernon, Ohio, died March 17. She pursued her career as a psychiatric social worker at various mental health agencies and, in 1991, received an award for her work with Akron Jewish Family Services.

Carolyn White Barr (SAS '73), of Shaker Heights, Ohio, died Feb. 28. As a social worker, Barr provided counseling and guidance to young women. She also worked in advancement and alumni relations at Case Western Reserve University before retiring in 2003. Barr was a dedicated volunteer and board member for many local nonprofit organizations, including Visiting Nurses Association, Hathaway Brown School and Shaker Lakes Garden Club.

Michael Dolly (SAS '80), of Akron, Ohio, died June 1. He was devoted to helping families and children in his community, working for 30 years at Summit County Children Services and four years at Akron Child Guidance Center.

Jonathan Allan Natko (SAS '80), of Mayfield Heights, Ohio, died April 30.

Timothy A. Shuckerow (CERT '91), of Cleveland, died July 22. He spent more than 32 years at the Ohio Art Education Association, where he was the department head and director of art education and teacher licensure, and also served on its board of directors.

Barbara J. McCall (SAS '97), of Akron, Ohio, died July 20. She established Miracle Village, a residential treatment center providing women and their children a chance to heal and rebuild their lives. She also founded Beginning to Heal, which provided grief and addiction counseling, and worked in trauma counseling, providing support to victims of violence.

Nancy Turner-Berry (SAS '01), of Lakeside, Ohio, died June 26. She worked for various nonprofit agencies in the area: United Way; Private Industry Council; Firelands Counseling and Recovery Services; and the Lakeside Association. She served on the Danbury School Board and was a member of Port Clinton Kiwanis and the Lakeside United Methodist Church. She volunteered her time at Otterbein University and the Lakeside United Methodist Church Library.

Diane Marie Kilroy (SAS '02), of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, died May 22.

Remembered for her legacy



Debra Fields

Debra Fields, who worked at the Mandel School for more than 30 years and at CWRU for 36 years, died in March. Throughout her tenure, she worked as registrar and participated in the development of the Online Master of Science in Social Administration program, as well as many other school and university initiatives.

Sharon Milligan, PhD, remembers her colleague, Fields, as “compassionate and serious”—but also as someone who knew how to have fun.

“Early in my career, she helped organize a talent show among school community members,” Milligan recalled. “She got me on stage as a backup singer and I had no talent, but I loved the lip-syncing moment we had singing ‘Stop in the Name of Love’ by The Supremes.

“Over the years, we often laughed about that talent show,” added Milligan, who is also the Grace Longwell Coyle Associate Professor in Social Work at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

“Debra was generous with her time and dedicated to doing her best for students and faculty,” said Milligan. Fields looked at her role as a way to help others, Milligan said, especially students.

“They knew she cared about their well-being,” Milligan noted.

When Fields retired in 2020, she emphasized that the students were the highlight of her career. “It has been an honor to work with such wonderful people from all walks of life,” she said.

“I hope I gave to students half of what they gave to me.”

Change leader in training

U.S. Army veteran finds new calling at the Mandel School

On September 11, 2001, **Janette Kautzman** was a lieutenant stationed in a military police battalion in Germany—far from her home in the United States. Despite her distance from the traumatic events of the day, Kautzman felt the world shift as she watched video footage of the the planes hitting the Twin Towers.

“I knew war was imminent and my life in the military would be forever changed,” she recalled. She felt a deepening commitment and sense of duty to her country, “but more importantly, my love of family and friends increased as the uncertainty of what tomorrow brings lingered.”

The United States Military Academy at West Point graduate spent the next 20 years as a military police and civil affairs officer in the U.S. Army. She served as a conduit between the military and civilian organizations, focusing on areas of instability in the Philippines, Afghanistan and Iraq. Much of her work involved supporting displaced people by working with organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme and the U.S. State Department. She didn’t know it at the time, but working with people of vulnerable communities set her on a path to a career in social work.

While deployed in Iraq, Kautzman assisted in the protection of civilians who fled Mosul after ISIS took control of the city. “The coordination and effort of all organizations was critical in the liberation of Mosul,” she explained, “and that inspired me to see that planning and coordination are keys to change.”



Kautzman in Mindanao, Philippines, taking a break to interact with children during a community outreach mission in 2007



Kautzman (far right) during her deployment to Afghanistan, working on the Women, Peace, and Security mission in 2011

After more than two decades in the military, Kautzman was ready for her next challenge. She took a break to travel around the United States, and then found her way to the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Sciences.

“I had a few friends who are social workers and they provided me insights to community practice,” Kautzman said. She saw the connection between social work and her civil affairs work supporting vulnerable populations. She wanted to find one of the top schools from which to learn social work best practices, and settled on the Mandel School—in part, because of its national top 10 ranking.

Today, Kautzman is a first-year dual Master of Social Work and Master of Nonprofit Organizations student specializing in Community Practice for Social Change. She brings unique background and skills to her field work as a caseworker at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants in Cleveland.

There, she helps refugees adapt and orient themselves and their families in the area, supports community outreach and helps refugees work toward self-sufficiency. The experience—along with her military career—has inspired her to focus on refugee and immigration policy.

When she’s not busy with academic and field work, Kautzman volunteers with Compassionate Contact Corps at the Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center, where she provides companionship and support to veterans and their caregivers.

If given the chance, she shares the advice that guides her own journey: “Find your purpose and continue to give back to society. Every day is a day to make a difference in someone’s life.”

Congratulations to the 2023 Alumni Award Winners

The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences
recognized the following alumni during
Homecoming and Reunion Weekend in October.

Distinguished Alumnus Award
Elaine Nichols (SAS '80)

Early Career Success Award
Indigo Bishop (SAS '12)

Professional Achievement Award
Rachelle Milner (SAS '00)

*Louis Stokes Community Service
Leadership Award*
Megan Meister (SAS '04)

Nonprofit Leadership Award
Teresa Schleicher (MNO '07)



Alumni Award winners from left: Rachelle Milner, Teresa Schleicher, Dean Voisin, Indigo Bishop (not pictured: Elaine Nichols and Megan Meister)



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