

# TOURO<sup>®</sup> LINKS

DIVISION OF GRADUATE STUDIES • SPRING 2012

Welcome to... SCRUBS CLUB



FEATURING PROJECT ASPIRE'S OUTREACH PROGRAMS IN THE HARLEM COMMUNITY

story on page 8

# Division of Graduate Studies VP Dr. Anthony Polemeni Appointed to Advisory Council of Education Update



Anthony J. Polemeni, Ph.D.

**D**ivision of Graduate Studies Vice President Dr. Anthony J. Polemeni has been appointed to the prestigious advisory council of *Education Update*, an award-winning New York City newspaper and website focused on education.

Dr. Polemeni joins a 19-member advisory council whose members include Michael Mulgrew, president of the United Federation of Teachers; Dr. Cecilia McCarton, professor and founder of the McCarton Center for Developmental Pediatrics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine; Dr. Christine Cea, member of the New York State Board of Regents; Ernest Logan, president of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators; Dr. Mary M. Brabeck, dean of the NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development; Dr. Jerrold Ross, dean of the School of Education at St. John's University; Dr. David Steiner, dean of the School of Education at Hunter College, and Adam Sugerman, co-publisher of *Education Update* and Palmiche Press.

*Education Update* advisory council members Dr. Charlotte Frank, senior vice president at McGraw-Hill Education, and Sheila Evans-Tranum, chair of the Board of Trustees at Casey Family Programs and former associate commissioner for the New York State Education Department, were the keynote speakers at the commencement ceremonies for Touro College's Division of Graduate Studies in 2011 and 2009, respectively.

"*Education Update* is honored to welcome Dr. Anthony Polemeni to its advisory council," said Founder and Publisher Pola Rosen, a

former assistant professor of special education at CUNY. "Touro College is an important education voice not only in New York City but indeed in the nation. The other advisory council members include education leaders, deans and college presidents from the New York City area. Dean Polemeni brings his wisdom and years of experience to this outstanding group of educators and leaders."

Dr. Rosen said that as an advisory council member, Dr. Polemeni would "express his opinions and voice in terms of the direction the newspaper takes in writing about education in the tri-state area. We always look for and need the opinion of other voices to present a balanced view on education."

Dr. Polemeni said he is very excited to serve on *Education Update*'s advisory council with so many esteemed colleagues from other colleges and universities and leaders in the field of academia in the New York area. "I look forward to bringing Touro College's perspective to *Education Update* and its future coverage of important and timely educational issues."

Among the awards and honors received by *Education Update* or Dr. Rosen are the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce's Best New Business of the Year Award in 1997; Columbia University's Excellence in Education Journalism Award in 2000; the Millennium Mental Health Media Award from Silver Hill Hospital in 2000; the Excellence in Public Service Award from the 100 Year Association of New York in 2002, and the Harlem Dream Award from the Harlem Children Society in 2008.

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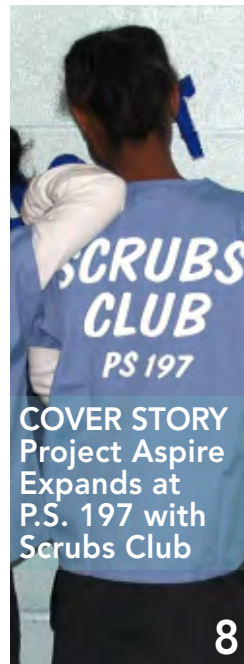
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# Professor and Chair of Graduate School of Social Work Policy Sequence Pursues AIDS-Related Research in South Africa

Dr. Jennifer Zelnick, who joined the Graduate School of Social Work as an associate professor and chair of the school's social work policy sequence last July, has done research in South Africa for over a decade on the rampant spread of HIV/AIDS and drug-resistant TB among health care workers.

She is continuing to pursue that research here at Touro, with the college providing a grant to fund her next research trip to South Africa this summer.

"I'm really excited to have joined Touro College," Dr. Zelnick said. "I think it's a great place to pursue these interests because of the excellent and growing Graduate School of Social Work and the college's many health science-related programs. My work is interdisciplinary. It involves health and social issues and the overlap between them...One of the things I'm really happy about is that Touro has agreed to support my work in South Africa."

Dr. Zelnick, who will also continue to pursue research at Touro on the dangers facing clinical social workers in the United States, was hired by the Graduate School of Social Work to strengthen and lead the part of the MSW program that deals with public policy and advocacy. "It's the part of social work where students come to understand the policies in many social areas that affect the clients they serve and the role that social workers can play in helping to craft or develop policy," she



Dr. Jennifer Zelnick teaching Graduate School of Social Work class

said. "One of the things that MSW graduates from Touro can get involved with is becoming policy leaders or advocates. They can even work on legislative initiatives for politicians."

Dean Steven Huberman, Ph.D., described Dr. Zelnick as the "right academic to lead this effort" due to her vast experience in community organization and policy analysis. "The Touro Graduate School of Social Work is committed to helping those most at risk in New York City—the homeless, victims of abuse and bullying, and returning veterans with combat injuries. Our social work policy sequence will lobby government and the private sector. We will train our students to be passionate advocates for those

most vulnerable in our midst."

Last June, at the 5th South African AIDS Conference in Durban, under the auspices of Touro, Dr. Zelnick collaborated on a poster presentation entitled, "Health Care Workers' Perspectives on N95 Mask Usage in the Context of XDR-TB," which presented qualitative data on why South African health care workers often fail to use respirator masks that can protect them from exposure to drug-resistant TB.

The HIV epidemic in South Africa has sparked a severe TB outbreak because in-

dividuals with compromised immune systems are more susceptible to contracting TB. According to the poster presentation, co-authored by Dr. Zelnick, health care workers are five to six times more likely to contract multi- and extensively drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB and XDR-TB) than the general population because of occupational exposure.

"In general, the policy that protects nurses from XDR-TB is that they are given these N95 masks," Dr. Zelnick said. "What we found from talking to nurses is they didn't necessarily have the information about why they needed to wear the masks, how to wear the masks, or how much the masks would protect them. The nurses were not playing an active role in

safeguarding their own health. We found that in some cases there were poor infection control programs in hospitals and in some cases nurses were not trained properly. There was an overall feeling of disempowerment and the nurses didn't feel supported or recognized by their workplaces."

The poster presentation was based on findings from a series of 12 focus

groups comprised of 58 health care workers at six hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal Province, which has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in South Africa. In 2006, at a rural hospital in Tegula Ferry, KwaZulu-Natal, an outbreak of XDR-TB killed 52 of the 53 people who had contracted the disease. Dr. Zelnick collaborated on the research and the poster presentation with a group of physicians and policymakers from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, the Medical Research Council (MRC) of South Africa, HEARD (Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division), the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and CAPRISA (Center for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa).

**"I'm really excited to have joined Touro College. I think it's a great place to pursue these interests because of the excellent and growing Graduate School of Social Work and the college's many health science-related programs."**

— Dr. Jennifer Zelnick

"Interventions are required to increase N95 mask usage amongst HCWs (health

**Health Care Worker's Perspectives on N95 Mask Usage in the Context of XDR-TB**

**Issue**

In South Africa Health Care Workers (HCWs) are 5-6 times more likely to contract multi and extensively drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB and XDR-TB) than the general population, because of occupational exposure.<sup>1</sup> While infection control is managed at multiple levels (administrative, environmental, and personal respiratory protection), for HCWs the N95 mask offers personal protection that is highly effective, if used correctly and in conjunction with other infection control measures. Yet despite N95 masks being a key tool for HCWs to manage their risk of exposure, data suggests that HCWs remain disproportionately at risk of MDR-TB and XDR-TB and a key contributory factor is lack of use of N95 masks.

**Methods**

We undertook 12 focus group discussions in hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal, comprising 58 HCWs. Hospitals ranged from those designated to provide care and support for patients living with DR-TB through to District hospitals, which occasionally saw patients with DR-TB. We analysed the data using thematic analysis

**N95 respirator**

Dr. Zelnick's poster presentation at South African AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa

care workers)," according to the poster presentation. "At a basic level HCWs need to receive basic information and training about N95 masks, including fit testing. However, for N95 mask usage to increase, training needs to allow HCWs to engage in discussions about N95 masks, MDR-TB and XDR-TB and the wider hospital contexts. Such discussions, as we have seen in HIV/AIDS prevention, allow people to integrate their knowledge of N95 masks and MDR-TB and XDR-TB into their everyday practices and ethic of care."

Dr. Zelnick and her research collaborators have written a paper on the topic entitled "Occupational Risks for Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (XDR-TB) Among Health Care Workers in South Africa: A Focus Group Study of Perspectives on Workplace Safety, Infection Control and Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis" that is currently under review.

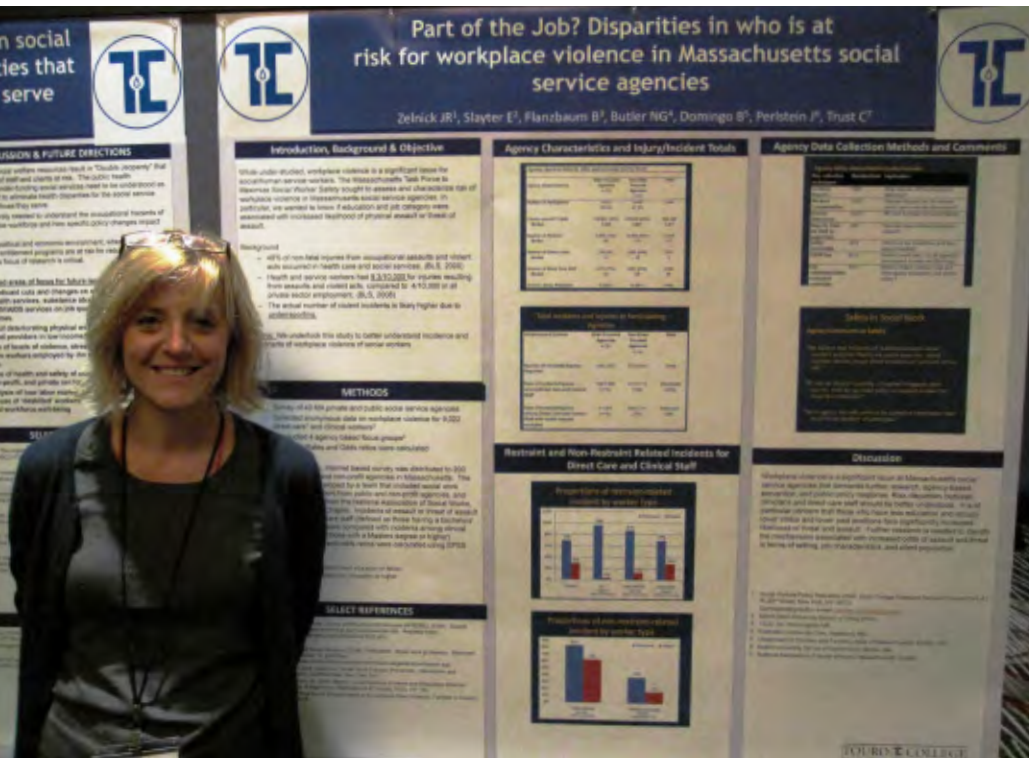
This summer in South Africa, Dr. Zelnick plans to participate in a series of workshops with her research partners to convey to hospitals, nurses and policymakers their findings on the use of N95 masks to prevent the spread of TB. "Based on the fact that the findings showed that there needed to be more awareness among nurses about their role in infection control and more understanding in the health care setting about the

barriers nurses face in protecting themselves and what hospitals have to do differently, we plan to present our findings to strengthen infection control programs," Dr. Zelnick said. She and her research collaborators are also seeking to arrange a stakeholder conference on the issue with South African health care policy makers, researchers and institutions.

"The School of Social Work understands the impact of globalization on our daily lives," said Dr. Huberman. "Professor Zelnick's research in South Africa is precisely the kind of work we need to support. We help our students put America's social problems in a global perspective."

Prior to joining Touro, Dr. Zelnick served as an adjunct professor in the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College for a year and a faculty member for the School of Social Work at Salem State University in Massachusetts for three years. While at Salem State University, Dr. Zelnick expanded her research into safety for social service workers after a social worker at the university who also served as a field instructor for social work graduate student interns was murdered during a client home visit.

"I became active with a group called the Massachusetts Task Force for Maximizing Social Worker Safety," Dr. Zelnick said. "The social worker that was



Dr. Zelnick with poster presentation at Eliminating Health and Safety Disparities at Work Conference in Chicago

murdered...was one of my student's supervisors, someone who we all knew well and was an integral part of our community. It made us take a step back and think about the occupational risks social workers face. The literature, though there is not enough of it, describes stress and violence as the two primary hazards that social workers face."

Dr. Zelnick and her research partners on the task force—social work academics from Salem State University and Boston University, leadership from the Massachusetts chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and representatives from public and non-profit agencies—conducted an anonymous Internet survey on workplace violence at 40 Massachusetts social service agencies and concurrently led two focus groups.

"Forty agencies responded to an anonymous, Internet survey, reporting 1,049 incidents of physical/verbal assault among 9,022 workers, including master's level clinicians (n=2,627) and direct care workers (n=6,395)," an article abstract summarizing the findings said. "Direct care workers faced increased odds of assault and threat compared to clinicians.

Most agencies collected data through incident reports and workers compensation claims, but far fewer used safety committees that involved the workforce in safety planning. Participants were concerned about underreporting and that assaults were seen as 'part of the job.'

"Further research is needed to understand the risk disparities between direct care workers and clinicians, and to assess occupationally generated health disparities among those employed in social services. Agency-wide strategies to create a culture of safety in social services can benefit staff, clients and communities by improving the environment we all share," the article abstract said. The article manuscript has been submitted to the journal, *Health & Social Work*.

Dr. Zelnick and her research partners also presented their findings at the American Public Health Association Conference held in Washington D.C. in November and the Eliminating Health and Safety Disparities at Work Conference, sponsored by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, held in Chicago in September.

At Tuoro, Dr. Zelnick plans to expand

this area of research. In December, she was selected to receive a Faculty Research Fund Award through Tuoro's Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) to conduct a pilot study exploring job characteristics, work organization, and occupational health and safety issues in social service settings.

"I'm looking at developing research and partnerships to explore health and safety concerns for social workers in New York City," she said. "If we want to provide quality health and social services we need to make sure that our workforce has decent working conditions and a voice in the workplace...Our students also work in the field and we need to understand safety and occupational risks to prepare them for their careers and the work environments they're going out to practice in. I look forward to building collaborations at Tuoro College around this topic."

Dr. Zelnick said she is also hoping to collaborate with social service agencies and other stakeholders in New York so that social workers can have some impact on how public policy decisions are being made about city and state budget cuts precipitated by the economic crisis. "It's important to remember these are not just economic questions. We're talking about quality of care and the quality of jobs. It's important to understand what people on the front lines of providing health and social services have to say about how policy decisions are affecting their work. If people are being laid off and services are being cut, there are health and safety ramifications."

Dr. Zelnick's interest in the field of health care worker safety began shortly after she earned her master's in social work from the University of Pittsburgh when she worked as a community and labor organizer for the Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (now known as AFT Healthcare), a labor union for health care workers that is a division of the American Federation of Teachers.

"At the time, during the 1990s, there was a lot of restructuring and downsizing happening at hospitals and what this meant was that they were increasing the number of patients nurses had to care for

and at the same time the patients were much sicker,” Dr. Zelnick explained. “Hospitals weren’t admitting people who were less sick because of new insurance restrictions. Many nurses were for the first time seeking the help of labor unions because they saw a threat to patient care.

“I realized that these changes to the working conditions of nurses affected both the nurses and their patients and I got interested in how creating good quality jobs for health care professionals was important to providing quality care for patients,” she added. “That led me to seek a doctorate in work environment policy from the University of Massachusetts-Lowell so I could study how working conditions for health and human services workers affected patient care and the well-being of the work force.”

In 2001, during her doctorate studies, Dr. Zelnick traveled to South Africa and began the HIV/AIDS-related research that would become a focal point of her academic career. She was initially there for a year-and-a-half, researching the provincial AIDS policy in KwaZulu-Natal Province, and then returned in 2003 to do her dissertation field work at three provincial hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal on the risk that nurses face of contracting HIV/AIDS through needle stick injuries.

She initially traveled to South Africa

with her husband—a physician who at the time was a medical student at Tufts University also interested in studying HIV/AIDS. “When we went to South Africa in 2001, they were having this exploding HIV/AIDS epidemic. We were interested in the problems they were having with this disease but we were also interested in the political changes in South Africa and how the post-apartheid government might be shaping social services to help the population. Here was a country that had the opportunity to remake its policies and institutions to serve a historically marginalized population.”

When Dr. Zelnick returned to South Africa in 2003, she worked with the Treatment Action Campaign, an activist group that was fighting to bring antiretroviral treatments to South Africa at a time when the adult population infected with HIV was estimated to be as high as 29 percent and the HIV-infected hospital patient population was believed to be approaching 80 percent, posing an enormous risk for South African nurses.

“These antiretrovirals, which allowed people to live with HIV and AIDS, only became available in South Africa in the fall of 2003, largely through the activities of the Treatment Action Campaign. I worked with them in terms of bringing my perspective and work into the organ-

izing they were doing. What they were advocating for was a social response to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa, where the primary root of transmission is heterosexual activity.”

**“It’s important to understand what people on the front lines of providing health and social services have to say about how policy decisions are affecting their work. If people are being laid off and services are being cut, there are health and safety ramifications.”**

— Dr. Jennifer Zelnick

In the summer of 2008, Dr. Zelnick returned to South Africa, where she gave an oral presentation of a paper she co-wrote with Hunter College Professor of Social Work Mimi Abramovitz at the International Association of Schools of Social Work Conference in Durban. The paper, entitled “Double Jeopardy: The Impact of Neoliberalism on Care Workers in the United States and South Africa,” was published in the *International Journal of Health Services* (Int J Health Serv. 2010;40(1):97-117). She also spent that summer further developing the research project on nurses and XDR-TB.

Despite her seemingly divergent research projects in South Africa and the United States, Dr. Zelnick sees a very distinct link between the two.

“Health care workers and social workers both face the risks and hazards associated with caregiving work. In addition, they often share the feeling that they are not recognized or paid well and that sometimes their work environments are not very safe,” Dr. Zelnick said.

“The link between them is that in both cases the quality of services we’re providing to the community depends on the health and well-being of the providers. We need to be supporting that work through funding it properly but also by making sure the workplace is a healthy, sustainable place.”



Rural hospital tuberculosis ward, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

# Lander Center Awarded Second \$1.9 Million EAC Grant

Touro College's Lander Center for Educational Research has been awarded its second consecutive \$1.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to operate one of 10 national Equity Assistance Centers that help states, school districts and public schools address issues of race, gender and national origin, and provide equal opportunities for all students.

In 2008, the Lander Center, a unit of the Graduate School of Education, received its first three-year \$1.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish an Equity Assistance Center (EAC) to serve Region II, which includes New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Under the previous grant, the EAC served more than 3,000 teachers and administrators. All 10 Equity Assistance Centers nationwide are funded under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to provide equal opportunity for achievement to all students.

"We are extremely pleased that Touro has been awarded this grant for another three years," said Dr. LaMar P. Miller, dean of Touro's Graduate School of Education and principal investigator for the grant. "By continuing to operate Region II's EAC, the Lander Center for Educational Research will be able to maximize its effectiveness in improving equity within the State and local educational systems."

The renewal of the EAC grant helps enhance Touro's reputation as a major academic research institution involved in important national educational issues.

Dr. Miller said the EAC will assist state departments of education and school districts in improving teacher quality, increasing their capacity to ensure that students graduate from high school either career- or college-ready, and supporting leaders to more effectively address student performance.

Other objectives include helping clients develop strategies and plans to hire effective teachers and leaders, particularly in high-



Graduate School of Education Dean LaMar P. Miller, Ph.D.

poverty, low-performing schools; improve school engagement and create environments that are responsive to cultural differences; more effectively identify and address students' unique learning needs; improve school safety, as well as an awareness and understanding of bullying and harassment; increase access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and related areas for minorities, women, English language learners and individuals with disabilities, and build capacity to address equity issues affecting student performance, especially in high-poverty, low-performing schools.

While it is housed at Touro College, the EAC works in collaboration with Learning Innovations (LI) at WestEd, located in Woburn, MA. LI improves education for children by strengthening adult learning and promoting systemic improvement at the state, district and school levels. In addition, LI provides professional

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# Chair of MS in Mathematics Education to Serve as Visiting Faculty Fellow at Israel's Weizmann Institute

**D**r. Brenda Strassfeld, chair of the Master of Science in Mathematics Education Program at the Graduate School of Education, will be a Feinberg Foundation Visiting Faculty Fellow in the Department of Science Teaching at Israel's prestigious Weizmann Institute of Science beginning in December 2012.

The Feinberg Foundation attracts academics from around the world to pursue collaborative research at the Institute, an international center of scientific research and graduate study located in Rehovot, Israel. Participating fellows are expected to give seminars or mini-courses that contribute to the enrichment of graduate student education.

"The Graduate School of Education is extremely proud that one of its faculty members and the chair of one of its programs has been selected as a Visiting Faculty Fellow at the Weizmann Institute," said Dr. Lamar P. Miller, dean of the Graduate School of Education. "This is a tremendous academic opportunity and one that is richly deserved.

"Dr. Strassfeld's profound dedication to the promotion of high quality teaching, and her pursuit of research to maximize all student learning, will serve her well during the fellowship. Touro will also benefit when, upon her return, she shares her experiences and learning with other faculty members."

Dr. Strassfeld has been involved in mathematics and mathematics education on local, national and international levels for over 30 years. Her research interests include the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and students as they relate to the learning and teaching of mathematics and teacher preparation. She has presented at numerous conferences.

During her fellowship, Dr. Strassfeld will research mathematical modeling—the process of choosing and using appropriate mathemat-



Brenda Strassfeld, Ph.D., at mathematics education practicum seminar

ics and statistics to analyze and improve the understanding of empirical situations and decision-making. She will be hosted by Dr. Ruhama Even, head of the Mathematics Group at Weizmann, who holds the Rudy Bruner Chair of Science Teaching at the Institute.

Dr. Strassfeld received her bachelor's degree in mathematics/mathematics education and her master's degree in mathematics from Brooklyn College. She earned her Ph.D. in mathematics education from the University of Plymouth, U.K.

# Project Aspire Expands at P.S. 197 with Scrubs Club Program

Project Aspire, Touro College's public health and education initiative, has expanded to grades 3 and 4 at P.S. 197 in Harlem with a Scrubs Club program that provides students with new curricula, monthly classroom visits by health care professionals, mentors from Touro's Physician Assistant program and special trips and events.

"Following our success with grades Pre-K to 2 in the Operation Lab Coat program at P.S. 197, we have expanded the program to grades 3 and 4 with the Scrubs Club and next year plan to include grade 5 as well so that we can continue to

work with our students all the way through their elementary school graduation and hopefully continue to have a positive impact on their lives today and into the future," said Dr. Nicholas Aiello, education director for Project Aspire.

"Our Scrubs Club students will continue to benefit from Project Aspire programming, curricula and special events that encourage exercise and healthy living choices, boost our students' self-confidence, encourage them to pursue careers as health care professionals and promote a healthy respect for education," he said.

Project Aspire and the Scrubs Club Program are part of the Children's Health Education Foundation, a not-for-profit unit of the Graduate School of Education, led by Dean LaMar P. Miller, Ph.D.

In the 2010-2011 academic year, Project Aspire was for the first time assigned its own classroom at P.S. 197 that was affectionately dubbed the 'Scrubs Club Clubhouse.' Project Aspire now utilizes the clubhouse, which had previously been used to store music and art supplies after those programs were cut at P.S. 197, to teach its interactive lessons to both Operation Lab Coat and Scrubs Club students.

The room is set up to feel like a clubhouse with different size tables, hands-on materials, music and a special photo gallery.

"We created a clubhouse because we wanted the students to have a sense of ownership and be in a different environment than their regular classrooms," said Dr. Aiello. "When the students come to Project Aspire programs, they feel like they're coming to a club not a class. We want them to be in a more relaxed environment. The lessons that we present are based on New York State performance standards but they are presented in a non-pressured environment based on the educational model of the Montessori schools."

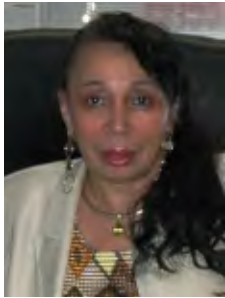
Natasha Spann, the new principal of P.S. 197, said her students were more engaged in and excited about learning due to the clubhouse setting.

"They view it as a special place," she said. "As a school that shares a building with another school, our space is extremely limited and often students have to remain in their homeroom class for the entire school day. It is beneficial for them to experience learning in a different way and in a different physical space. I notice a difference in the demeanor of



Third grade students at P.S. 197 sign wall in new 'Scrubs Club Clubhouse'

the students on Thursdays when they are going to the clubhouse. There is an excitement in their eyes. They view Scrubs Club as fun time and as a result, they are more actively engaged in learning.”



Late Assistant Principal Paulette Johnson

In September, the clubhouse will be officially dedicated to the memory of Paulette Johnson, a beloved former assistant principal at P.S. 197 who passed away last year.

The clubhouse has been the locale for a regular program of monthly visits from health care professionals who speak to the Scrubs Club students about their respective careers. Just this past February, renowned psychologist and media personality Dr. Jeff Gadere visited the clubhouse and taught the students about healthy living and eating habits. He was joined by celebrity fitness trainer and TV personality SusieQ who led the students in an aerobic exercise routine. Dr. Gardere, who is known as America’s psychologist, is also an adjunct clinical professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine (TouroCOM), an author and much sought-after motivational speaker. SusieQ, who supports Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! Campaign, founded SusieQ FitLife LLC in 2007 as a means to motivate people to “Get a FitLife” through lifestyle products and services. She released the popular “Arms of a First Lady” fitness DVD in 2010.

Other guest speakers have included Dr. Deborah Williams, a medical doctor and associate professor at the Touro College of Pharmacy; Dr. Birgland Joseph, also a medical doctor and faculty member of the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine (TouroCOM); Marichie Perez, a registered nurse and the instruction specialist for Project Aspire; Thomasina Hopkins, the school social worker at P.S. 197, and Vanessa Sawyer, a registered dietician at Harlem Hospital’s Hip Hop H.E.A.L.S. program. As an



Project Aspire Curriculum Specialist and Creative Art Director Timothy Bellavia teaches third graders about tolerance as part of Scrubs Club Program

added bonus, Steven Camacho, a professional wrestler who is executive assistant to Division of Graduate Studies Vice President Dr. Anthony Polemeni, spoke to the students about the importance of physical and mental strength.

“In each case, the speakers described the duties and responsibilities as well as the challenges and rewards of their professions, and responded to questions from the children about why they might choose to pursue similar health careers in the future,” said Dr. Aiello.

The Scrubs Club Program began in the

2010-2011 academic year with the third grade, is continuing this academic year with the fourth grade, and will include fifth grade as well next year. When the students graduate from the Pre-K-2 Operation Lab Coat Program, they trade in their white child-size lab coats for the blue medical scrubs of the Scrubs Club.

“As the children mature, we are providing them with new and more challenging learning experiences,” said Dr. Aiello. “Switching from lab coats to scrubs is symbolic of their academic and social development.”



P.S. 197 Principal Natasha Spann, back row third from left, with special guests Dr. Jeff Gadere and SusieQ, back row fourth and fifth from left, surrounded by Scrubs Club and P.S. 197 staff, administrators and students

## NEW CURRICULA FOR PROJECT ASPIRE'S SCRUBS CLUB

The new curricula for the Scrubs Club third to fifth grade classes have a strong emphasis on physical education, literacy and art. The new PE curriculum adapts the philosophy of personal achievement from the well-established 'Physical Best, Personal Best' program used in many public schools across the country.

"We developed a new curriculum in physical education that expanded upon the 'Motion is the Potion' curriculum for grades K-2 that includes the concept of competing against yourself rather than others in a variety of physical activities, exercise and events," said Michael Aiello, health and physical education coordinator for Project Aspire.

"Each child has a personal best level of achievement and keeps a record of his or her accomplishments throughout the year. The children work on improving their athletic skills using seven domains of fitness—flexibility, balance, strength, stamina, coordination, speed and agility. The objective is that the children strive to reach their own potential in the physical arena rather than compete with others."

The seven domains of fitness have also



Touro College of Pharmacy Associate Professor Dr. Deborah Williams uses microscope to study cell structure with Scrubs Club students

been incorporated into the Scrubs Club 'Hands-On, Minds-On' art curriculum on a mental rather than physical level to teach the Scrubs Clubbers practical life lessons such as how to balance their time and how to develop mental stamina so that they can improve their concentration.

In addition to the new 'Personal Best' curriculum, Project Aspire introduced the concept of healthy competition for the first time last spring at its Scrubs Club Olympics at P.S. 197. "Traditionally our

Olympics have been a participatory event in which every child receives a gold medal and is awarded for effort rather than winning a place in a race or other sports competition," Mr. Aiello said. "But last spring, when we ran the Olympics for Scrubs Club, one of the life lessons we taught the students was healthy, honest competition. By the fourth grade, it is time for the Scrubs Clubbers to learn the lesson of good sportsmanship. In life, they're going to find themselves in many competitive situations."

Project Aspire has also introduced a literacy corner into its Scrubs Club curriculum, supplementing the students' traditional reading program with literacy lessons and readings focused on health, exercise and nutrition. While the Project Aspire curricula have always incorporated math, art, science, health education, physical education and English language arts, there is now an even stronger emphasis on reading, vocabulary, literacy and writing skills to help prepare the children for New York State standardized tests.

Principal Spann said Project Aspire's most important contribution to her students' education has been the integration of literacy skills within all of the activities in the program. "The members of Touro College have made a diligent effort to align the students' learning experiences with the (New York State)



Scrubs Club members practice the baton exchange in preparation for annual Project Aspire Olympics



Touro physician assistant student Jenn Spisak serves as role model for Scrubs Club members

Common Core Learning Standards. Each learning experience is followed up with a focused written reflection.”

Beyond literacy, she said that Project Aspire has provided new possibilities for the students and contributed to their overall health and education in many ways. “Many of our students have family backgrounds of diseases associated with obesity such as diabetes. As a result of the program, students are making better choices of what they eat and the activities that they select to participate in, and they understand the reasoning behind their decisions.

**“I have yet to see a program as extensive and committed to holistic learning as Project Aspire. Not only are the students educated on how to live healthier lives, they are exposed to various career opportunities in the medical field aside from physicians such as veterinarians, medical technicians and pharmacists. Were it not for the Scrubs Club, these experiences would be absent from their lives.”**

### TOURO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT GRADUATE STUDENTS SERVE AS PROJECT ASPIRE INTERNS

One of the most significant developments for Scrubs Club as well as Operation Lab Coat students in grades K-2 has been the weekly participation of at least four to six students from the Touro Graduate School of Health Sciences’ Physician Assistant (PA) Program who volunteer as interns and serve as mentors for the children.

“The PAs have become partners in the program,” said Dr. Aiello. “They function as teaching assistants and help out with all the Project Aspire curricula and activities. The PAs always come to Project Aspire with their scrubs and stethoscopes. They have become mentors and role models and big brothers and sisters to our students. They are reinforcing the importance of a solid education and are showing our students how education opens doors to personal success.”

Dr. Nadja Graff, associate dean of the Graduate School of Health Sciences and director of the PA Program in Manhattan, described the partnership as “inspirational” and said her PA students have benefited “immeasurably” from the experience that provides “invaluable lessons” for future health care providers.

“Our PA students started participating slowly, with a handful going on a regular basis,” she said. “The feedback was astonishing and the reported sense of reward and accomplishment motivated subsequent classes to take on this project on a fuller, more organized basis.”

Dr. Graff said that through their volunteer work with Project Aspire, her students “have come to realize that they have the ability and skills to influence and expand young minds, to broaden



TouroCOM mentors provide demonstration for Scrubs Club members in anatomy lab

aspirations, and to hopefully make a difference in the lives of young children.

“The eager young faces of the children of Project Aspire and Scrubs Club have a powerful impact on our students,” she added. “I see students transformed into finer human beings, becoming less self-centered and more giving, and possessing a clearer sense of self and self-confidence...In realizing the potential of these young children, our students develop a better sense of their own potential as health care practitioners.”

Principal Spann said the PA internships were extremely beneficial for her P.S. 197 students as well as the interns. “In addition to having new career paths presented to them, the students have a real-life example. I have directly heard many of the fourth grade students say that they want to go to college just based on conversations with the interns.”

While some of the PA students who volunteer for Project Aspire use the experience to fulfill their minimum 25-hour community service requirement that is part of a one-credit independent study, most students give much more than 25

hours to Project Aspire despite their heavy curricular load, Dr. Graff said. “Working with the children is its own reward.”

Many of the PA students echoed Dr. Graff’s sentiments. “I absolutely loved Project Aspire and I loved going every week,” said second year PA student Jenn Scisak, who moved to New York from Chicago to attend Touro’s PA program and volunteered last year. “You make such a strong connection with the kids. They recognize you and they kind of depend on you being there. You get so caught up in studying in the PA program and Project Aspire helps you remember exactly why you’re doing it—to help people and reach out to people.”

PA student Michelle Maier said she initially declined to volunteer for Project Aspire because she lives on Long Island, quite a distance from P.S. 197. “I originally did not volunteer to go but my classmates came back with such positive feedback and such good things to say about the kids, I really felt that I also needed to reach out,” she said.

“I think Project Aspire is a great op-

portunity for these kids to think outside the box of what they’re capable of. Sometimes they have a narrow scope of what they can achieve and Project Aspire has opened their eyes. I’ve never heard third graders talk about some of the jobs they are talking about aspiring to so it’s a really great thing that we’re educating younger children to become future physicians and practitioners.”

### SCRUBS CLUB HOSTS SPECIAL TRIPS AND EVENTS

The Scrubs Club had one of its first major events last spring when the students came to Touro College for an exciting ‘PA for a Day’ program. (See story on p. 13) This past October, the Scrubs Club students went on a field trip to the Bronx Zoo where they learned about the various career possibilities at the zoo and practiced being veterinarians for a day.

In December 2010, the Scrubs Club students visited TouroCOM in Harlem, where they had the opportunity to learn about the circulatory and respiratory systems in special lessons taught by faculty and medical students.

“With our Scrubs Club curricula, field trips and activities that now take P.S. 197 students through fifth grade graduation, we expect to have an even more positive and lasting impact on their outlook on life, self-esteem, healthy living choices and future career choices,” said Dr. Aiello. “We want them to develop healthy life patterns physically, mentally and emotionally. The ‘Yes I Can!’ motto, which begins and ends all of our lessons, is not just a slogan; we want it to become a way of thinking throughout their lives.”



Scrubs Club student studies x-ray of injured turtle during field trip to the Bronx Zoo

# President Alan Kadish Gives Scrubs Club Students a Heart Lesson

At a special 'PA for a Day' program last spring, over 50 students from Project Aspire's Scrubs Club at P.S. 197 visited the Graduate School of Health Sciences, where they learned about the heart from Touro College President and renowned cardiologist Dr. Alan Kadish, and a variety of other medical topics from more than 20 physician assistant student volunteers.

Dr. Kadish taught three classes of third grade children about the heart and how it functions. He showed the children where the heart is in their bodies, explained that the heart is a muscle about the size of their fists, and demonstrated how doctors use stethoscopes to listen to their patients' hearts. Dr. Kadish instructed the children to listen to their heart beats with the help of disposable yellow stethoscopes—the same kind as those used by medical students at the Touro College of Medicine (TouroCOM)—and to say “beep” when they heard their heart beats. “So everybody's got a heart beat but they're not all beating together, which is okay because it means we're all just a little bit different and we've all got hearts and we're all doing well.”

To show their appreciation, the students made Dr. Kadish an honorary member of the Scrubs Club and presented him with a frame containing one of their scrubs, a yellow stethoscope and photographs from the program. (See cover)

Dr. Nadja Graff, associate dean of the School of Health Sciences and director of the Physician Assistant Program in Manhattan, encouraged the Scrubs Club students to follow the example of the PA students at Touro.

“My students have a very big dream. Their dream is to make a difference in the lives of other people,” she said. “They care so much about people and they want to take care of people. They want to treat them medically; they want to make them healthy; they want to make them better if they're sick.

“So how do they get from that big dream to actually doing what they're supposed to be doing, which is practicing medicine? They do that through a lot of hard work, through a lot of



Dr. Nadja Graff, associate dean of the School of Health Sciences, speaks to Scrubs Club and PA students at 'PA for a Day'

studying, through a lot of education,” she added. “What I'd like to tell you today is to dream big, to work hard and to climb that educational ladder because you can do it; you are the future. You're going to make the world a better place. You're going to make people healthier and you can do it all.”

Dr. Graff also told the 'Scrubs Clubbers' that her PA graduate students continually praise them. “When my students come back from the Scrubs Club, they can't stop talking about you. They say you are so smart, you are so curious, you are so delightful, you are so talented. You have all these fabulous qualities and you have so much potential to be anything that you want to be.”

Presenting awards to the four PAs called the Core Four, who started the volunteer program and came to P.S. 197 every week in the 2010-2011 school year, as well as nine other PAs who volunteered on a regular basis, Project Aspire Education Director Dr. Nicholas Aiello said, “I'd like to acknowledge the Core Four and all the PAs who came this year to be with us because the children bonded with all of you and looked forward to being with you. You are ideal role models and we appreciate your dedication and enthusiasm.”

After the award presentation, the Scrubs



Scrubs Club members and PA faculty, staff and students dance to “Circulatory Song”

Club students and PA faculty and staff danced, sang and clapped to the “Circulatory Song” about how the heart pumps blood throughout the body.

Then the P.S. 197 students separated into four groups led by PA volunteers who taught them how to take their pulse, read an x-ray and use a stethoscope to listen to the heart from the chest and the lungs from the back. The volunteers also demonstrated how doctors write prescriptions and how x-rays of the hip and jaw are similar to actual skeletal models.

“I like the activities that we do and the PAs,” said Kemora Ashley, 8. “I like doing the bone stuff and the sit-ups and I like learning about the heart and lungs. I like all the Scrubs Club activities and exercise.”

Nine-year-old Jayson Lorenzo, who said he wanted to be a PA when he grows up, added, “I like Scrubs Club very much because it teaches you about healthy foods and lots of good stuff. Today I learned about the heart and it was very interesting.”

The PA volunteers seemed to enjoy the ‘PA for a Day’ program just as much as the Scrubs Club students.

“The kids energize me so much. It makes my day to go and play with the kids once a week and teach them

about health care,” said Shelly Farahan, who as president of her first year class last year was instrumental in developing the partnership between the PA program and Project Aspire, and part of the Core Four group that first started to volunteer.

“The kids always ask intelligent questions and they always blow my mind,” she added. “It’s very intense being in graduate school so it’s refreshing to be with kids for a day and it reminds me of why I’m going to graduate school, which is to help people. I think the kids actually help me more than I help them... Project Aspire is great. You never know how you’re going to affect someone’s life or what they’re going to remember or what will make a difference in their lives.”



The Core Four Physician Assistant Student Interns with their Sage dolls. From left to right, Patricia Johnson, Jennifer Spisak, Rachel Farahan and Meaghan Roberts



PA students give Scrubs Club members anatomy lesson at ‘PA for a Day’ program



# Touro's IHRH Hosts High-Profile Conference

Former Arkansas Governor and U.S. Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel, former New York City Mayor Ed Koch, Academy Award-winning actor Jon Voight and over a dozen other high-profile speakers criticized the U.N.'s anti-Israel Durban III event at a full-day conference co-hosted by Touro College's Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust and the Hudson Institute this past September.

Speaker after speaker at the conference entitled, "The Perils of Global Intolerance: The United Nations and Durban III," called on the United Nations to return to its "original mandate" of protecting human rights and promoting world peace for all. They alleged that some of the world's most brutal tyrants, guilty of the most egregious human rights abuses, have hijacked the U.N. human rights agenda and turned it into an anti-Israel crusade, while the U.N. has largely ignored the plight of millions of people around the world suffering from some of the worst violations of human rights.

Anne Bayefsky, an international human rights lawyer, organized and chaired the conference as director of Touro College's Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust (IHRH). The author and editor of 11 books and a



Jon Voight speaks to reporters at IHRH conference with, from left to right, Anne Bayefsky, John Bolton and Elie Wiesel

recipient of Canada's premier human rights fellowship, Professor Bayefsky noted that the U.N.'s top human rights body, the Human Rights Council, has adopted almost as many condemnations of Israel as it has for all other 192 U.N. member states combined, and that in 2010, Israel was the most criticized country in the world by U.N. bodies for human rights violations; the United States was fifth, and Iran was 11th.

"We are here to shine the light of day upon the perversion of human rights and freedoms by those we charged to define and promote them," she told some 200 conference attendees. "We are here because we refuse to stand by while the defenders of the Jewish people are demonized because make no mistake about the purpose of such a slander: It is the rejection of a Jewish state, the antithesis of the protection of human rights."

Welcoming the attendees to the conference held at the Millennium U.N. Plaza Hotel, Touro College President and CEO Dr. Alan Kadish described Durban III as "another example of the painful loss of honesty and mutual respect that must inform the relationships among ethnic groups...The citizens of Israel are



Anne Bayefsky delivers opening remarks at IHRH conference



Dr. Alan Kadish welcomes conference participants

entitled to access to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which ought to be basic rights for all human beings. To pillory them for attempting to achieve these goals is not only an attempt to distort the truth, but it is in and of itself racist.”

Other high-profile speakers at the IHRH conference included former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton, World Jewish Congress President Ron Lauder, Harvard Law Professor and best-selling author Alan Dershowitz, Israeli Minister of Information and Diaspora Yuli Edelstein, Canadian Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney, former Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Dore Gold, Harvard Professor and National

Humanities Medal recipient Ruth Wisse, Sudanese human rights activist and child slave survivor Simon Deng, Hoover Institute Fellow and National Humanities Medal recipient Shelby Steele and best-selling British author and award-winning journalist Douglas Murray.

In opening the conference, Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Ron Prozor said that the so-called Durban Declaration has been “contaminated by the taint of racism that it claims to fight. Time and again, this Durban Declaration and its conferences have been used as vehicles to advance prejudice. They have thrust open a door for anti-Western, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic extremists to spread their views under the cloak of so-called U.N. legitimacy. We cannot and we will not ignore such a willful misuse and abuse of the United Nations,” he said, praising the leading democratic nations that had joined Israel in boycotting the latest incarnation of Durban including the United States, Canada, France and the United Kingdom.

The Durban III event, held on Sept. 22 during the annual opening of the U.N. General Assembly, commemorated the 10th anniversary of the U.N.’s Durban Declaration, which accused only Israel, among 192 U.N. members, of racism. The Durban Declaration emerged from the U.N.’s “anti-racism” conference in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001.

The U.N. held an “anti-racism” review conference, also known as Durban II, in Geneva in April 2009. The vehemently anti-Semitic opening governmental speech was delivered by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who also spoke at the U.N. General Assembly this past Sept. 22, the same day as the Durban III event. Diplomats from more than 30 countries walked out of the General Assembly as Mr. Ahmadinejad repeated his Holocaust denials in a speech laden with anti-U.S. and anti-Israel rhetoric. Iran’s foreign minister spoke at Durban III itself.

Ron Prozor, Ron Lauder and Elie Wiesel, from left to right





## IHRH CONFERENCE FEATURES PROMINENT MUSLIM SPEAKERS WHO DEFEND ISRAEL

The IHRH conference also featured several high-profile Muslim speakers who defended Israel and accused the United Nations of ignoring human rights abuses of women, gays, Christians and other minorities living in Arab countries while focusing on alleged violations of human rights by Israel. Among them were Syrian-born psychiatrist and political commentator Wafa Sultan who was named one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in the world in 2006, award-winning Israeli Arab journalist Khaled Abu Toameh and American Islamic Forum for Democracy President and Founder Dr. Zuhdi Jasser.

Dr. Sultan, who immigrated to the United States from Syria, spoke about being indoctrinated as a young child to "despise and denigrate Jews. Killing Jews was always presented to me and my classmates as a religious obligation...When it is planted in the mind of a child, tragically this hatred generates dangerous actions and even death...Durban III harbors deep anti-Semitic sentiment, the same sentiment with which my mind was poisoned, sentiments that are still taught to hundreds of millions of Arab kids throughout the Middle East."

Claiming that Israel stands alone in the Middle East as a nation that grants all its citizens—men and women alike—equal rights, freedom of religion, speech and the press, Dr. Sultan also accused the U.N. of neglecting its fundamental mission under pressure from "totalitarian Muslim regimes that put their full faith and the credit of their oil wealth behind this anti-Israel campaign. While the United Nations obsessively attacks Israel, it has merely revealed its own abysmal human rights record."

Dr. Jasser, who served as a medical officer in the U.S. Navy for 11 years and regularly briefs members of the House and Senate congressional anti-terror caucuses, said Durban "will go down in history as one of the most blatant anti-Semitic, anti-Israel demonstrations that have happened under the auspices of the U.N." Referring to the brutal killings of pro-democracy protesters by the Syrian government, Dr. Jasser, an American of Syrian descent, said that the U.N. has been "missing in action when its leadership and sponsorship of democratic values has been needed the most."

Shelby Steele, Ph.D., with from left to right, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, Douglas Murray, Ruth Wisse, Ph.D., and Dr. Wafa Sultan

## U.N. CRITICIZED FOR GIVING IRAN'S AHMADINEJAD PLATFORM TO PROMOTE HATRED AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Abu Toameh, who writes for *The Jerusalem Post* and serves as a producer and consultant for NBC News, said the General Assembly speech by Mr. Ahmadinejad promoted the same hatred and anti-Semitism that Palestinians hear every day in Gaza and the West Bank. "But what worries me is that the U.N. provides a platform for people like this. Today, this is a victory for Hamas, for Islamic Jihad, for Hezbollah, for Syria and for all the jihadists. Their message has actually been spread with the help of the United Nations."



Anne Bayefsky with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee

Governor Huckabee said Mr. Ahmadinejad should have been "laughed out of the U.N. General Assembly rather than tolerated... What an absolute absurdity to allow that man to walk into a building not far from where we sit today and to give him a forum and allow him to spew the venomous hatred, the venomous bile that he was able to, and get worldwide attention for it. As a nation, our policies over these past couple of years has been to put more pressure on Israel for building communities and essentially building bedrooms in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) than we have put pressure on the Iranians to stop building a nuclear bomb that is pointed at Israel and ourselves. This is absurd."



Canadian Minister Jason Kenney

## ISRAEL'S ENEMIES ACCUSED OF DISTORTING U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA AND PROMOTING ANTI-SEMITISM

Canadian Minister Kenney, who has been re-elected to Canada's House of Commons five times, said he was proud that Canada was the first country to pull out of both Durban II and Durban III, far in advance of other countries. "We will not be part of this event which commemorates an agenda that promotes racism rather than combats it" he said. "The government of Canada will not lend Canada's good name to the organized exercise in scapegoating that is the Durban process. As long as the international community persists in rewarding serial human rights abusers with seats on its Human Rights Council and giving them microphones at conferences like Durban III, it cannot expect Canada's endorsement of the process."

Professor Dershowitz, the author of 27 books and the recipient of numerous humanitarian awards and honorary doctorates, accused the United Nations of becoming "the main advocacy arm for one group of people, the Palestinians, while neglecting the rights of so many other people, whether they be the Kurds or the Armenians or the Tatars or the Chechens or so many others who have been brutally repressed." He accused the United Nations of encouraging anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry by "giving its imprimatur to that disgraceful word called Durban, which will go



Alan Dershowitz

down in history next to another city called Nuremberg...Does no one recognize the need for a single, neutral standard of human rights? For shame, for shame."



Former NYC Mayor Ed Koch

Former Mayor Koch, who is also a best-selling author and civil rights advocate, noted that the IHRH conference challenge to Durban III and its message of intolerance in the name of combating racism was a success. "I think we beat them. I think there is more attention being paid to what we're saying than what they're saying (at Durban III)."

Mr. Murray called the U.N. anti-racism Durban process a "bad but very serious joke. No organization can be serious if it has Iran on its Commission on the Status of Women, has Saudi Arabia, China and Cuba on its Human Rights Council, has China on its Committee on Information, has Sudan on the Executive Board of the Children's Fund, and has Iran on the U.N. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice," he said. "What is happening in this city at this moment matters because it is stripping people in countries around the world of their ability to use the terminology of human rights and the terminology of racism."

Dr. Wisse, an author and professor of Yiddish and Comparative Literature at Harvard, noted that there were lessons to be learned about the United Nations from the three Durban "anti-racism" conferences it has hosted. "In the same way that Arab and European leaders long before Durban had attacked the Jews to deflect attention from their own abuses...the 2001 Durban conference allowed racist governments and societies to defame Israel, and secondarily America, to perpetuate the racism and intolerance of their own societies. Durban III is surely the time to ask whether the remedy, the United Nations, has not become worse than the condition that it came to cure."

Dr. Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, author, human rights activist, and professor at Boston University, called Durban III a "disgrace" and noted that the United Nations principles of equality and dignity for every human being have been perverted. "One thing is clear...anti-Semitism is still a subject that we must deal with."

Mr. Voight, who won an Academy Award for his role as a paraplegic Vietnam War veteran in the film "Coming Home" and has also won three Golden Globe Awards, labeled Durban part of a political campaign to "wipe Israel off the map. Terrorists and killers are trying to find new ways to bring hatred toward the Jewish people once again...I'm here today to express my outrage."

## SUDANESE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND FORMER CHILD SLAVE SAYS SUDANESE PEOPLE SUFFER FROM U.N.'S ANTI-ISRAEL STANCE

Recounting his chilling life story as a child slave in Northern Sudan and as a Sudanese refugee who survived the slaughter of some four million Sudanese between 1995 to 2005, Sudanese human rights activist Simon Deng provided some of the conference's most compelling testimony about the shortfalls in the U.N.'s human rights performance.

Mr. Deng, who recalled that he was nine years old when an Arab man tricked him into boarding a boat to the Northern Sudan and then forced him to serve as his family's slave for 3-1/2 years, alleged that there are people suffering from the U.N.'s anti-Israeli positions even more than the Israelis. "I belong to one of those peoples," he said, explaining that for 50 years, the indigenous black population

of Sudan—Christians and Muslims alike—has been victim to what he called "brutal racist Arab Muslim regimes" in Khartoum.

"In southern Sudan, my homeland, about four million innocent men, women and children were slaughtered from 1995 to 2005. Seven million were ethnically cleansed and became the largest refugee group since World War II. The U.N. is concerned about...Palestinian refugees. They dedicated a separate agency for them and they treat them with special privileges. Meanwhile, my people who are ethnically cleansed, murdered and enslaved are readily ignored...What Israel does is being portrayed as a Western sin but the truth is that the real sins happen when the West abandons us—we the Africans in



Simon Deng with Jon Voight



IHRH conference attendees listen to speaker at Millennium U.N. Plaza Hotel

Sudan, the victims of Arab Islamic apartheid.”

Mr. Deng, who launched the Sudan Freedom Walk in 2006, trekking 300 miles from U.N. headquarters in New York to Washington D.C. as a call to action to end slavery and genocide in Sudan, said that based on the shelter and protection that Israel has provided to Sudanese refugees, it is “absolutely absurd” to call Israel a racist state. “I have been to Israel five times visiting Sudanese refugees...The black Muslims from Darfur choose Israel above all the Arab Muslim states of the area. In Israel, the black Sudanese Christians and Muslims were welcomed and

treated like human beings. Israel is racist? To me and to my people, the people who know racism, the answer is absolutely not.”

The IHRH conference was webcast live and is now archived on the institute’s website at [www.touro.edu/ihrh/](http://www.touro.edu/ihrh/). The webcast has been watched by 200,000 viewers.

The Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust is a Touro-wide center that emphasizes Touro College’s many contributions to the field of human rights education and embodies Touro’s deep commitment to developing and conveying the lessons of the Holocaust.

# Jewish Studies Professor Dr. Natalia Aleksiu Awarded Three Research Fellowships

Marking an outstanding achievement in academia, Graduate School of Jewish Studies Associate Professor Dr. Natalia Aleksiu has earned three research fellowships for the current academic year at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York and the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, Ukraine.

“Professor Aleksiu is an internationally renowned scholar, and the prestigious fellowships recently awarded to her serve as eloquent testimony to her status as one of the preeminent contemporary academicians in the fields of Eastern European Jewish history and the history of the Holocaust,” said Graduate School of Jewish Studies Dean Michael Shmidman, Ph.D. “Dr. Aleksiu is a master teacher and mentor to students, and an ideal colleague. The Graduate School of Jewish Studies is privileged to count her among its faculty members.”

Dr. Aleksiu, associate professor of modern Jewish history at Touro, said she was both thrilled and surprised to be awarded three different fellowships in one academic year. “It has been a wonderful year for me professionally. These fellowships give me the opportunity to spend time in archives and libraries on my research projects and to collect material I will be working on for quite a while. In a way, it is just the beginning.”

This spring, Dr. Aleksiu, who was born and raised in Wroclaw, Poland, is continuing a research project at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum that she started during another fellowship in 2009 at the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The research will be focused on the daily lives and ‘micro history’ of Jews who lived in hiding during the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia, which is today part of the Ukraine.

Dr. Aleksiu’s interest in the research on Galicia was sparked by a chance meeting in Israel a few years ago when she was introduced to survivors who shared stories about their daily lives in hiding. “They talked in great detail about their experiences hiding together in a bunker in terms of who cooked the food, how portions were divided and who took the risk to go out to try to find food,” she





said. “They also spoke about the complex relationships between parents and their grown children. These seemingly mundane aspects of daily life caught my attention so I started collecting testimonies on the subject. I will continue working on the project at the U.S. Holocaust Museum using its rich collection of oral and written testimonies. Hopefully, I will write articles based on my research but possibly a book as well.”

Dr. Aleksium said that while Holocaust scholarship has been thriving at research institutes and university centers in recent years, a great deal of attention has been paid to the perpetrators of the killings and in that research the Jews often become “a collective and rather generalized victim.

“The Jewish experience during the Second World War is often missing from the picture,” she said. “To the degree that was possible, the victims tried to respond to what was happening to them in their lives and in their deaths. I would like to try to understand what life was like for Jews trying to survive in hiding in Galicia. These were Jews who had survived ghettos and labor camps and then escaped to go into hiding. I’m also interested in their interaction with their non-Jewish surroundings and researching whether they were assisted in any way.”

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum awards fellowships to senior scholars and advanced graduate students who do their own independent research in the archives and library of the museum and meet together at a weekly seminar for fellows. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to meet and discuss research with academics from all over the world as well as eminent scholars working at the museum,” said Dr. Aleksium, noting that the project on Galicia marks her first research project on the Holocaust itself rather than its historiography,



United States Holocaust  
Memorial Museum

or Jewish history in Eastern Europe before or after the Holocaust.

This past fall, Dr. Aleksium researched the work of Eastern European Jewish historians before the Holocaust through the Dina Abramowicz Emerging Scholar Fellowship at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in Manhattan. In a further exploration of her research on the topic over the past few years, Dr. Aleksium is now examining “Aspirantur,” a non-accredited graduate program in pre-war Vilna, Poland, in the mid- to late 1930s that trained young Jewish scholars through coursework and individual research projects in various fields including philology, economics, statistics, psychology, education and history.

The YIVO Archives are in possession of 14 boxes of materials from the Aspirantur program, which are mostly in Yiddish. “As a fellow, I have been given a chance to look through the archives of this program. I believe my research can shed new light on the vision of Jewish scholarship in Eastern Europe on the eve of the Holocaust,” Dr. Aleksium said, noting that she hopes to publish her research on the topic.

Founded in 1925 in Vilna (which is today Vilnius, Lithuania) as the Yiddish Scientific Institute, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research



Dr. Aleksion in front of the Archives of New Documents in Warsaw, Poland, where she conducted fellowship research

has been headquartered in Manhattan since 1940. It is considered one of the world's pre-eminent resource centers for East European Jewish Studies, Yiddish language, literature and folklore, and the American Jewish immigrant experience.

For her final fellowship at the Center for Urban History in Lviv, Ukraine, Dr. Aleksion began her research last summer while also teaching a course on the history of Jews in Galicia. She returned to Lviv during the semester break in January to continue her research on the so-called cadaver affair, in which Jewish medical students in Eastern Europe in the 1920s and 1930s were told during the course of their studies that they had to dissect only Jewish cadavers provided by the Jewish community, a violation of *Halacha*, or Jewish law.

Although scholars of Polish Jewish history and researchers of anti-Semitism in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe have mentioned the affair, it has not been researched in-depth, Dr. Aleksion said.

She said her research would focus on the

discourse about the Jewish presence in the medical profession at the time and the opposition to the cadaver affair, which included signed petitions and letters of protest sent to university authorities in Warsaw, Vilna, Krakow and Lvov, now Lviv. "The cadaver affair combined religious prejudice with economic competition. Radical student organizations used religious terms, speaking of Jewish and Christian corpses, not Aryan and non-Aryan corpses," she said.

Only five applicants were chosen for the fellowship program at the Center for Urban History. "The fellowship in Lviv is certainly a great opportunity because Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov between the two world wars, which is now Ivan Franco National University in Lviv, was one of the main sites of the cadaver affair," said Dr. Aleksion, who is also teaching graduate courses and guiding students who are writing their master's theses in Jewish studies at Touro this year.

Having earned her MA and doctoral degrees in history from Warsaw University, Dr. Aleksion received her second Ph.D. in modern Jewish history at New York University's Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies in 2010. During the course of her graduate studies, she was a Junior Fulbright Fellow at NYU and a Lady Davis Fellow at Hebrew University. She joined the faculty of Touro's Graduate School of Jewish Studies in the fall of 2006.

Dr. Aleksion has pursued her studies of Jewish history on three continents. Her fluency in Polish and intimate knowledge of Poland enhance her research of modern Eastern European Jewish history. "Without a doubt, my personal connection draws me to East European Jewish history and especially to topics in Polish Jewish history," she said. "It adds to my passion as a scholar and a teacher."

# MS in School Counseling Launches Internship Program for At-Risk HS Students

**A**s part of its MS in School Counseling Program, which aims to recruit students from underserved communities, the Graduate School of Psychology has launched an internship program for at-risk teenagers that allows them to graduate from high school by earning vocational training credits through studies at Touro's Digital Media Arts (DMX) Program.

The high school internships are being coordinated and implemented by Touro graduate students in the counseling program, who are doing their own internships as school counselors in New York City schools.

The hope is that the DMX training, which provides high school students with the opportunity to learn hands-on about audio production for the music business in recording studios and special labs, will not only entice the teenagers to stay in high school until they graduate but interest them in attending college as well.

"This is a one-of-a-kind program that ties in school counselors with at-risk youth and music audio production in a way that is hands-on from start to finish," said Dr. Yair Maman, chair of the MS in School Counseling Program and associate dean of the Graduate School of Psychology. "When we tied in school work with music production activities, these kids had the ability to graduate from high school and improve their self-esteem."

The high school internship program began last spring when Malissa Reeder, an MS in



Dr. Yair Maman, second from back, with MS in School Counseling student and high school interns in Touro DMX studio

School Counseling graduate who was still a student doing her internship at the William H. Maxwell Career and Technical Education High School in Brooklyn at the time, identified a couple of students who were at risk of dropping out of high school and approached Dr. Maman about how Touro might be able to help provide them with the vocational credits they needed to graduate.



Dr. Maman

"We're taking students who might not have necessarily been exposed to college and we are getting them to see that there's life outside of high school," said Ms. Reeder. "Some of our students have really difficult lives and come from low

socio-economic backgrounds. We wanted to take them out of that reality and broaden their horizons. Learning how to do a drum beat in the DMX studio is a creative way to accomplish this goal."

Following Ms. Reeder's inquiry, Dr. Maman contacted Jeff Humphrey, an administrator and faculty member of the DMX Certificate Program, who agreed to teach the William H. Maxwell students about audio production and

allow them to use the DMX studios to record their own rap song.

In a thank you letter to Dr. Maman, Fran Karul, assistant principal of the William H. Maxwell High School, wrote, "I am happy to report that your guidance and instruction with our at-risk students not only led to issuing them enough career and technical education credits to enable them to graduate from high school but also led to increased individual self-sufficiency and self-worth among the students."

Mr. Humphrey, who is also a musician, singer/songwriter and audio engineer who has released six EP recordings and a full-

length CD of original music, said it was a wonderful experience working with the high school students.

"Our program is rooted in the arts and technology, which are two areas where we can find a meaningful connect with students and engage them in their studies," he said. "Engagement is a key factor in the academic success of any student, especially those who are struggling. Engagement was actually what I witnessed when students in this program were creating their own electronic music using professional-level audio production software after only several short lessons."

Many of the audio engineers in the DMX program are also former professional musicians who worked with top music talent like Cyndi Lauper, Fleetwood Mac and Trent

Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, as well as id Software, producers of the Doom series of video games, and The Onion Radio News Network. Mr. Humphrey, who is currently working on completing his Master's in Educational Technology thesis on how to use technology to effect student engagement in order to increase the success rate of at-risk and nontraditional college students, has worked with Artisan Entertainment on the John Turturro film "Illuminata" and punk rock band H2O on their latest album released this past November.

While last year the William H. Maxwell High School used their students' internships at DMX as a means to provide them with enough vocational credits to graduate, Dr. Maman is working with Touro's New York School of Career and Applied Studies (NYSCAS) on a plan to offer at-risk high school students college courses for which they could earn college credits.

NYSCAS Executive Administrative Dean Eva Spinelli-Sexter said the high school students would have to commit to a 15-week college-level course just as other high school students who earn college credits through NYSCAS' Freshmen Center do. For the past six years, the Freshmen Center has been offering students at several New York City high schools the opportunity to take one or two college-level courses with Touro faculty at their schools. Several hundred students a year have registered for the courses, which are transferable to most colleges.

"We feel that it is a wonderful idea for the high schools to get their students involved in a college environment, especially in something they are interested in," said Dean Spinelli-Sexter. "It encourages the students to realize that college can be exciting. We are looking forward to being involved with many more high schools in the future, and hope to see these students again as they enter their college years. The goal is to open their eyes and their hearts to a college education."

Dr. Maman said he hopes to expand the offerings to undergraduate programs at Touro in which at-risk high school students could be exposed in fun or creative ways to math, the arts and sciences, and other academic subjects. DMX is a certificate program that can lead to an associate's degree from NYSCAS.

This year, in addition to students from



DMX faculty member, audio engineer and musician Jeff Humphrey

Maxwell H. S., there are four high school students planning to do internships at the Touro DMX studio from the Academy of Finance and Enterprise in Long Island City, Queens, which has one of the highest graduation rates in the city at 94 percent and recently earned the highest score of any high school in Queens—89.5%—on its annual high school progress report.

One of the students, Shawn Carmona, 17, said he is very excited to be able to earn the credits he needs to graduate by learning about music produc-

tion. "I actually want to dedicate myself to creating music. I want to be an up-and-coming artist in the industry and I want to know how to do everything myself so I don't have to depend on anybody else," he said. "But I don't want to just go into the music industry without a college degree because if it doesn't work out then I have nothing to fall back on."

Delia Leon de Cameo, a guidance counselor at the high school and an alumna of the Touro School Psychology Program who helped coordinate the DMX internships with Dr. Maman and the Touro school counseling graduate students currently interning at her school, said because the Academy of Finance and Enterprise strives to maintain its high graduation rate, the administration is always looking for ways to help students earn enough credits to graduate.

"Our school is a school of finance and enterprise but not everybody likes business so the idea is to provide students with other opportunities," she said. "If we see that the students have potential in other areas, we try to help them follow that route. This is the perfect way to grab the students' attention, keep them in school and keep them motivated because they know that if they don't do well in



DMX high school interns with Dr. Maman and audio engineer Mike Marcucci, front center

school, they cannot graduate and they cannot do something like DMX."

Ms. Leon de Cameo, who worked for NYCAS as coordinator of hispanic studies and an instructor in the department for 15 years before earning her MS in School Psychology at Touro, noted that students who are struggling academically usually do not have the opportunity to earn college credits in high school as they might be able to through the DMX program at Touro.

"The college-credit programs like Advance Placement (AP) and College NOW courses are for the top-ranking students," said Ms. Leon de Cameo, who also has a master's degree in history. "This program is unique because it's for students who are not doing well academically but have other talents."

Dr. Maman said he hopes to involve more high schools in New York City, and even nationwide, in the internship program. "This type of program is so important due to the increased dropout rates in high schools and the lack of interest among high school students to complete their high school education in an environment that is often not conducive to their self-esteem or building their career prospects," he said.

## MS IN SCHOOL COUNSELING FOCUSES ON BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP BETWEEN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

The high school internship program underscores the focus of the MS in School Counseling program for grades K-12, which was launched with a full curriculum in September 2010, on bridging the communication gap between school and community counselors. “There is little to no communication between the school counselors and community counselors and there’s a disconnect between the school, the community and the outside services that could be offered such as academic interventions and career opportunities,” said Dr. Maman.

After launching Touro’s MS in Mental Health Counseling in 2006, Dr. Maman saw the need to create a program to train school counselors as well. “We wanted to take a broader point of view to look at the schools and the community as one system. We are one of the few programs that promote interactions between the counselor in the school and the counselor in the community in order to foster academic performance, mental health and the overall well-being of the student.

“We wanted to look at the big picture where preventions and interventions take place in the school and outside the school with the children’s families and where the community comes together to make sure that everything is tackled—the family issues, the academic issues and the mental health issues, where all stakeholders come together to benefit the child. This is the mission of the program.”

To implement this community-based model in the DMX internship program, Touro school counseling interns work with the high school students while interns in Touro’s MS in Mental Health Counseling Program work with the parents of the at-risk students.

In addition, some of the coursework in the school counseling program focuses on developing the community-based model, a goal of Dr. Maman’s since he developed the concept for his second doctoral thesis in psychology in 2008.

For example, there is a course in the program called School and Community Relations in which students explore the connection

between the support of parents, community leaders and community counselors, and the academic functioning of high school students, as well as the support mechanisms that need to be in place for students to succeed in high school.

“What’s unique is community outreach is discussed in this course through experiential learning where students are actually asked to perform outreach activities and get exposed to our ongoing DMX project,” Dr. Maman said. Other examples of outreach activities that have been coordinated by Touro school counseling students are support groups for high school girls who are pregnant or who have a parent in prison. “Our students are encouraged to reach out to the community in creative and exciting ways to help kids stay in school until they graduate.”

Dr. Maman said he first became aware of the lack of communication in the mental health field when he did his first doctoral thesis on residential treatment for the rehabilitation of patients suffering from addiction and mental disorders, and realized that the treatment facilities’ efforts were hindered by a lack of communication with hospital staff who had just treated and released the patients to them yet considered themselves part of a separate system.

In addition to bridging the communication gap with community counselors, the MS in School Counseling is focused on serving underrepresented communities by recruiting students from underserved areas that can be trained and then return to work in those communities.

“We specifically recruit students interested in becoming change agents in their communities who understand the systemic flaws,” said Dr. Dan Sharir, deputy chair of the MS in School Counseling Program. “There are people like teachers and paraprofessionals who are already involved in schools and are seeing community needs but are untrained. We train them so that they can respond to community needs, and through our internships, we can place them in schools that need more assistance.”

# Project Aspire Partners with Touro-Harlem Medical Library and Touro College of Pharmacy on Medication Safety Program

After winning a \$30,000 federal grant to create a health literacy program for underserved populations, Touro-Harlem Medical Library partnered with the Touro College of Pharmacy and Project Aspire to develop Healthstart!, a new curriculum that teaches medication safety to young students and features an animated rap video created by seven-time Emmy Award winner Ian Ellis James.

Under the community outreach grant from the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services, the curriculum was taught for the first time in March 2011 at P.S. 197 in Harlem, where Touro's Project Aspire public health and education initiative teaches students about the importance of exercise and healthy living choices and encourages them to pursue professions in the health care field. Touro was one of only two recipients of the competitive grant in the mid-Atlantic region, the other being Drexel University.

"This was an effort from three different types of units of Touro: the library, a service unit; the College of Pharmacy, an academic unit, and the Children Health Education Foundation's Project Aspire, an outreach unit, and it also involved cooperation with P.S. 197," said Shelly Warwick, Ph.D., director of the Touro-Harlem Medical Library. "It's a very interesting model for a grant."

Dr. Craig Kovera, an associate professor at the Touro College of Pharmacy and co-project manager of the grant with Dr. Warwick, said Touro-Harlem Medical Library received the grant partly due to the collaborative effort. "We utilized the childhood education expertise of Project Aspire Directors Nicholas Aiello and Stephen Phillips who have a relationship with P.S. 197 in Harlem that allowed us to go



Scene from Healthstart!  
"Medi-Ready" DVD on  
medication safety

into the school and disseminate our program. This was a great opportunity for interdepartmental collaboration."

The curriculum included interactive group learning sessions and a brief DVD called "Medi-Ready" that utilized rap lyrics and animation to teach children in grades K-2 about the dangers of taking medication without their parents' permission and mistaking prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicine and vitamins they might find on a dresser or countertop for candy.

According to literature from the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC), there were 36,029 U.S. cases of children under the age of six who took or were given the wrong medication in the year 2007. According to AAPCC's National Poison Data System (NPDS), which includes the New York City Poison Control Center and

the Long Island Poison and Drug Information Center, the pharmaceutical poisonings most frequently reported to the NPDS for children five years and younger are analgesics like acetaminophen, cough and cold medications and vitamins, totaling more than 229,000 exposures per year.

The “Medi-Ready” video instructs students to be proactive and ask questions about their medications and to tell their parents or guardians about symptoms they experience when taking medication.

“We adored the video but more importantly you can see how engaged the kids are when they watch it,” said Project Aspire Executive Director Stephen Phillips. “No matter what class we showed it to, you could see the kids were totally absorbed by it. And the initial efficacy of the curriculum was terrific, more than we could have ever hoped for.”

Project Aspire had previously worked with Mr. James, also known by his theater stage name Electric Black, through its partnership with Harlem Hospital’s Hip Hop Stroke and Hip Hop H.E.A.L.S. programs. (See story on p. 32) A former Emmy Award-winning writer for

“Sesame Street,” Mr. James created an animated DVD called “Stroke Ain’t No Joke” for Harlem Hospital and the National Stroke Association that features legendary rapper and beat boxer Doug E. Fresh rapping about how to recognize the symptoms of stroke.

In addition to the video, the grant covered the creation, reproduction and dissemination of posters, flash cards, handouts and other materials that included information about pharmaceutical safety such as how to read medication labels or recognize medicine look-alikes, as well as the phone number of poison control. The grant also funded the creation of an e-mail information line to provide the community with a continuing resource on medication safety.

Pre- and post-assessment data that compared the children’s understanding of how medications in the home can lead to accidental poisoning before and after the curriculum was implemented are still being analyzed, but Dr. Kovera said a preliminary review of the data suggests the results will be positive.

In addition, a series of drawings the children made when asked to draw their favorite part of the “Medi-Ready” video is being analyzed. “We’re trying to figure out an evidence-based standardized way to score these drawings,” said Dr. Kovera. “In other words, how do the images drawn by the children pertain to key safety messages presented in the video and reinforced in the curriculum?”

The goal now is to expand the program to other schools in Harlem and eventually throughout the country, and also to focus on successive age groups, up through high school seniors.

“We’re looking into some other grants now to implement pharmaceutical safety curricula for older children in middle school and high school but what we would hope to do in terms of this particular curriculum is to get other schools or people to underwrite delivering it,” said Dr. Warwick. “The development of the curriculum was the expensive cost but to

From left to right, Dr. Craig Kovera and Dr. Shelly Warwick conduct pharmaceutical safety workshop for teachers at P.S. 197







deliver it to other schools would be very inexpensive and involve only reproduction of the materials.”

When the Healthstart! program launched, Project Aspire took six classes of P.S. 197 students in grades K-2 to the Touro College of Pharmacy in Harlem where pharmacy staff and graduate students collected pre-assessment data from the children. The P.S. 197 students pressed numbers on electronic clickers that corresponded to their answers to multiple-choice questions about pharmaceutical safety, posed via photographs and images projected on a screen.

Dr. Kovera said he was so impressed with the use of the technology to collect the pre-assessment data on medication safety so quickly from so many young students—162 children in less than three hours—that he is planning to publish an academic article about the issue.

“It was one of the most remarkable things I’ve ever experienced in an academic setting,”

he said. “I’ve never seen something like this done with children that young before. With very brief training on how to use the device and minimal assistance from one doctoral pharmacy student paired with each child, these students with very basic literacy skills answered questions about medication safety via clicker devices so that all the data was then captured electronically.”

The Touro-Harlem Medical Library, which opened in September 2007, provides information and resources in the areas of basic science, bio-medicine, health, pharmacy and public health to support the curriculum and research goals of the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, the Touro College of Pharmacy and Touro’s Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies.

“Given that the College of Pharmacy and the library are so new, we are very proud to have received such a prestigious award,” Dr. Warwick said.

**Touro College of Pharmacy staff and students help Project Aspire students register electronic responses to questions about pharmaceutical safety**

# Creator of Touro “Medi-Ready” Video is Award-Winning TV Writer, Playwright and New York Theater Director

Ian Ellis James, the creator of the “Medi-Ready” video that teaches pharmaceutical safety to young Project Aspire students in Harlem, is a seven-time Emmy Award-winning writer for his work on “Sesame Street,” an accomplished playwright and New York theater director-producer.



Ian Ellis James, also known by his theatrical stage name William Electric Black

Mr. James, whose first name is pronounced Yon and is also known by his theatrical stage name William Electric Black, also had two screenplays optioned—one film about combat basketball that was optioned by Warner Bros. and Silver Pictures, owned by famous Hollywood film producer Joel Silver, and a second about an R&B music manager that was optioned to former music manager Jerome Ade, with MCA Records on board for the music.

Mr. James has also written, directed and produced two independent features, one called “Copy Shop” about the eclectic multi-racial characters who frequent a copy store, and another “All Fall Down” about a teenager

who goes on a shooting rampage in his school.

In addition to “Sesame Street,” Mr. James has written for numerous other children’s shows produced by Nickelodeon, Scholastic Productions, Warner Cable, Topstone Productions and Lancit Media Entertainment. He is also a faculty member of the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU and has taught at various elementary and high schools concurrently while working in the arts.

The combination of experience teaching as well as writing, producing and directing over the past 20 years has led to Mr. James’ success in creating entertaining and engaging educational videos for children including the recent “Medi-Ready” DVD for Touro as well as a series of successful videos for Harlem Hospital’s Hip Hop H.E.A.L.S. (Healthy Eating and Living in Schools) program, a partner of Touro College’s Project Aspire public health and education initiative.

“All this professional experience and teaching experience became a perfect marriage,” Mr. James said. “I realized that I have this talent in children’s television and in producing theater and small film projects, and if there is something I need to create I can do it.”

Project Aspire Executive Director Stephen Phillips described Mr. James’ work as a “shining example of a new form of learning that can best be described as ‘edutainment.’ He combines contemporary music, video, animation and science for school-age learning. Students are easily engaged and remember their edutainment lessons....Hip Hop Stroke and ‘Medi-Ready’ DVDs are examples of his unique talent that has earned him seven Emmy awards and lots of school-age fans.”

Dr. Craig Kovera, an associate professor in the Touro College of Pharmacy and co-project manager of the federal health literacy grant that funded the production of the ‘Medi-Ready’ video for Touro, said, “Electric was

wonderful. He's an amazing creative force and I can see why he's award-winning. He knows how children think and he knows how to make adult-type messages very simple and translate them into images children identify with and remember."

Once he realized his talent for creating educational and entertaining programming for children, Mr. James, who exercises regularly and used to run five miles a day to stay in shape, began to focus on health care issues and preventing childhood obesity due to his personal passion about the topic.

His first project was an animated episode made for TV called "Fighters for Fitness/Fitness Fighters" about teenagers who work in a gym and encourage young children to eat right and exercise. Mr. James received funding to create the episode from Dr. Kenneth Olden and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. "This became my calling card for other health-related projects," he said. "What I'm doing now in terms of combating obesity—the timing and the topic—is just so important and I'm hoping it can somehow make an impact on children's health and on health in general."

Mr. James' animated "Hip Hop Stroke" and "Go Slow Whoa" videos featuring hip hop artists Doug E. Fresh and Chuck D were recently presented to First Lady Michelle Obama's childhood obesity team at the White House by Dr. Olajide Williams, associate director of the department of neurology at Harlem Hospital and mastermind of the Hip Hop H.E.A.L.S./Hip Hop Stroke initiatives.

"My understanding is the program was well received," Mr. James said. "It's nice to have had my works presented at the White House. I'm very proud of the work I've been doing with kids."

Mr. James credited Mr. Phillips for embracing his work and introducing him to Dr. Williams, and praised the work of Project Aspire. "I owe Stephen Phillips a lot of thanks. I think it's great to be able to go out in the community and engage young kids in a world of medical professions they may not have otherwise been exposed to. Project Aspire is going to change some kids' lives and if they change one life, my



Scene from Healthstart!  
"Medi-Ready" DVD

hat's off to them."

Mr. James, married with three children, works with animator Bill Davis, who he worked with on "Sesame Street" and other TV shows, on the Touro and Hip Hop H.E.A.L.S. videos. Mr. James said he hopes to continue to work with Touro as well as other schools and universities on creating animated videos with health-related messaging because "it's a great way to reach kids.

"The 'Sesame Street' model has proven itself over 40 years," he said. "With the way they marry educational content to narrative, kids not only get entertained but walk away with some type of lesson from the story. I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing now if I hadn't worked for 'Sesame Street.'"

Mr. James wrote for "Sesame Street" from 1992 to 2002, and won Emmy Awards for Outstanding Writing in a Children's Series seven of the 10 years he worked for the show. He also wrote for Nickelodeon's "Allegra's Window" and Lancit Media's "Backyard Safari."

Rosemarie Truglio, senior vice president of education and research at Sesame Workshop who worked with Mr. James from March 1997 until he left "Sesame Street" in 2002, said, "Ian loved learning about the needs of preschool children and used his creative talents to develop stories that were brilliantly funny and age-appropriate while providing young children school readiness skills. I am thrilled that Ian is now applying his creative talents to help educate targeted audiences about



From left to right, Dr. Craig Kovera, Dr. Shelly Warwick, Stephen Phillips and Ian James at “Medi-Ready” DVD pre-production meeting

public health issues in an engaging way to have a meaningful influence in their lives.”

Born in Oyster Bay and raised in Oyster Bay and Westbury, Long Island, Mr. James studied acting at Nassau Community College and Brockport State College and playwriting during his graduate studies at Southern Illinois University.

Mr. James’ numerous theater projects—30 plays over 25 years—have been seen in New York City, Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles. For the past seven years, he has written, produced and directed plays at La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in the East Village and currently runs their ‘Poetry Electric’ series, in which he showcases spoken word artists and poets, one-person shows and poetry readings once a month.

His musical “Betty & The Belrays” was performed at Theater for the New City in 2007, and he re-imagined Shakespeare’s classic works as edgy musicals with “The Hamlet Project” at La MaMa in 2002 and “Romeo and Juliet: Tribal Rock Musical” at La MaMa in 1999.

In 2009, Mr. James directed “The Lonely Solider Monologues” about women soldiers in Iraq being sexually harassed. The powerful play based on the book, *The Lonely Soldier* by Columbia University Journalism Professor Helen Benedict, received positive reviews in *The New York Times* and other media outlets when it ran for over a year.

Just this past September, after teaching as an adjunct professor for five years, Mr. James became a full-time faculty member at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts in the Goldberg Department of Dramatic Writing.

Mr. James also currently teaches acting at The Collegiate School on the Upper West Side, and previously taught acting, playwriting or TV writing at The Riverdale Country Day School, Southern Illinois University and Westbury High School. He has conducted acting

and writing workshops at the 92nd Street Y, Teachers & Writers, TheatreWorks USA and the New Jersey Arts Consortium.

“Along the way in this whole process, I’ve always been involved with teaching and substitute teaching,” Mr. James said. “And I always had a good rapport with students in the classroom. That led to me teaching at NYU.”

Currently, Mr. James is working on a new animated video for Hip Hop H.E.A.L.S. with hip hop artist Joseph “Run” Simmons of Run-DMC, writing and directing a new musical “STAR!,” scheduled to open in New York City this coming fall, writing and producing an EP recording “ElectricElectricElectric,” and writing and directing a music video, “New York Kickin’ It.” A reality show that will follow him as he writes, directs, and produces his next musical is in development.

“My goal in life is to keep creating music, plays, film, videos, screenplays, and educational television that will help all children grow up to be healthy, positive, compassionate and caring members of our society. A great artist once said, ‘We’ve got to make this world a better place.’ Without a doubt, that’s what I want to do.”



Photo Credit: Jonathan Slaff

Electric Black, director of “The Lonely Solider Monologues,” with actor/choreographer Jeremy Lardieri at Theater for the New City

# Project Aspire Curriculum Specialist Takes His Book and Tolerance Workshop to Africa

Timothy D. Bellavia, author of the award-winning *We Are all the Same Inside*® children's book and corresponding Sage doll-making workshop that teaches children about tolerance, traveled to Sierra Leone, Africa, last spring to teach the curriculum to about 1,000 students at five different schools.

Mr. Bellavia, who is an assistant professor of general education and special education and also serves as the curriculum specialist and creative art director for Touro's Project Aspire public health and education program at P.S. 197 in Harlem, was so moved by the warm welcome and appreciation he received from the students in Sierra Leone that he decided to make it his mission to translate his book into as many languages as possible and travel abroad as much as he can to teach the lessons of tolerance and appreciating one another's differences contained within his book and Sage doll-making workshop.

"I had never been prouder to be a teacher in my life because I felt so much appreciation, trust and excitement from the children in Sierra Leone," said Mr. Bellavia, who is also an artist, illustrator and author of six other children's books. "All the students I worked with throughout my trip had such a strong desire to learn, which made me feel even more passionate about educating the underserved. It is my hope to continue to share my teaching talents, and to collect and donate my supplies to children around the world who don't have the right to an education. In between semesters here at Touro and with Project Aspire, I want to be a global educator."

In the meantime, Mr. Bellavia remains committed to teaching the same lessons of tolerance here in the United States and just recently accepted an invitation to serve on the program committee of the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation, a not-for-profit organization created to continue the work of the late teen poet and peace activist who penned seven *New York Times* best-selling books of "Heartsongs" poetry and peace essays, and

served as an ambassador for many peace- and disability-related organizations before he died in 2004 at the age of 14 from complications of a rare neuromuscular disease.

Mr. Bellavia also took part in a peace celebration at the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Park in Rockville, Md., on Sept. 3 to commemorate peace in honor of the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks.



Assistant Professor Timothy D. Bellavia with students in Makeni, Sierra Leone, displaying their Sage dolls

In the cities and towns of Makeni, Freetown, Lungi, Pepel, and Lunsar in Sierra Leone, Mr. Bellavia led his hands-on Sage doll-making workshop, as well as his Paper, Scissors and Magic bookmaking workshop. During a 15-day trip, about 1,000 children participated in the workshops at five different schools including the Hope Day School, the Makeni Home Economics School and the Marc Bolan School of Music & Film.

Mr. Bellavia traveled to Sierra Leone with the Light of Love Foundation and singer/songwriter Gloria Jones, who created the foundation and established the Marc Bolan School of Music & Film in memory of Marc

Bolan of the rock band T. Rex. They had been a couple when Mr. Bolan was killed in a car accident in 1977.



Helen Formah, left, headmaster of Northern Polytechnic College in Makeni, Sierra Leone, participates in Sage doll-making workshop led by Timothy Bellavia, right

“We are appreciative of Tim’s concern for our children in West Africa,” said Ms. Jones. “I was introduced to the Sage doll-making workshop via (songwriter) Janie Bradford, who thought it would be a great idea for the students at The Marc Bolan School of Music & Film. Tim’s arrival in Makeni, Sierra Leone, was the children’s first contact from the West.”

The inspiration from the Sierra Leone trip led Mr. Bellavia to arrange for *We Are All the Same Inside* to

be translated into Spanish and French, and to hire translators for upcoming versions in Italian and Hebrew followed by Hindi and Mandarin. The Spanish and French editions were published in September and Mr. Bellavia hopes to have all six translations available later this spring.

He has plans to donate some of the Spanish language books to a school funded by the We Are Family Foundation in Maderas Negras, Nicaragua, and the French language books to schools in Sierra Leone through the Light of Love Foundation. He intends to travel next as a “global educator” to Haiti and Central America with his French and Spanish translations.

“I enjoy lecturing and teaching here in the United States yet it’s exciting to realize that I can teach anywhere in the world,” he said. “The trip to Sierra Leone made me feel so proud to be an educator. I gave and got more back than I ever thought I could as a teacher. My hope is that I can inspire the students I teach within the Graduate School of Education to realize that being a teacher is limitless.”

School supplies and educational materials for the Sierra Leone trip were donated by Sesame Workshop, the New York City Department of

Education, Dr. Elaine Nikolakakos, chair of the Master of Teaching Literacy Program at Touro, Hunter College Elementary School, The Fashion Center, and Mr. Bellavia’s own *We Are All the Same Inside* (WAATSI) Sage doll-making workshop.

During Mr. Bellavia’s trip, his acclaimed children’s book and accompanying Sage doll were distributed to the children of Sierra Leone. His workshop teaches tolerance by having children read *We Are All the Same Inside*, discuss it and then create their own 12” Sage doll, which represents the character Sage on the inside. The children stuff the doll made of material, sew it up and then design and paint a removable outer covering depicting skin color, clothing and hair.

Over the past decade Mr. Bellavia, who won the Young Institute Teacher Recognition Award in 2003, has presented his workshop in hundreds of schools, museums, cultural institutions, churches, synagogues and shelters in the tri-state area, as well as venues in California, Vermont and Canada. In addition, as curriculum specialist and creative art director for Project Aspire, Mr. Bellavia has implemented the Sage workshop with hundreds of students at P.S. 197 over the past several years. The workshop is one of the most popular and anticipated Project Aspire activities among both students and teachers.

At the Sept. 3 peace celebration hosted by the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation, Mr. Bellavia ran an arts and crafts “Heartsongs” station where he helped some of the hundreds of children visiting the park—most of them suffering from muscular dystrophy—make

peace plates and Sage dolls.

He donated all of the Sage dolls, materials and supplies and traveled at his own expense to the event. And he even brought along a sample of a WAATSI doll of Mattie, complete with a trach tube, glasses and a wheelchair, that he had made.

“I cannot say enough good things about Timothy’s generosity and good will, and I do hope that he comes back to be a Peace Guide during the 2012 Peace Celebration, and that our Board of Directors is graced



by his membership in a future year," said Jeni Stepanek, Mattie's mother and executive director and secretary of the foundation. "Timothy is incredibly responsible and loyal, and clearly, a young man who role models Mattie's 'Three Choices for Peace'—to make peace an attitude, a habit and a reality so that we become peace seekers, peace makers and peace bringers. Timothy is clearly all of that and then some. He is the real thing."

Ms. Stepanek said that after the peace celebration, feedback forms sent out to participants came back with very complimentary comments about Mr. Bellavia.

"More than half of the folks who offered specific feedback on 'people or activities' mentioned Timothy—either by name or by the activity," she said. "So many people said how wonderful the 'Heartsongs' station was with so many unique crafts and inspiring materials, and folks loved the opportunity to create their own WAATSI doll. Comments reflected Timothy's cheerfulness, his creativity and resourcefulness, his clear understanding of the mission and purpose of this event, and more."

Mr. Bellavia's connection to Mattie Stepanek dates back to 2003 when they were both scheduled to speak at the United Nations as part of the U.N.'s International Day of Tolerance, though Mattie was unable to speak in the end due to his illness. Mr. Bellavia and Mattie and Jeni Stepanek have all been involved with the We Are Family Foundation, founded by Nile Rodgers of the hit 1970s disco group Chic, who was instrumental in recruiting both Mattie and Mr. Bellavia for the U.N. event.

"What always impressed me about Mattie was that he helped heal a turbulent world with his prose, all the while finding success in his own uniqueness," Mr. Bellavia said. "His mother Jeni is amazing. She doesn't let her disability stop her or limit her because she has a diamond mind. She looks adversity straight in the face and says, 'Yes I Can.' I love her strength. She's an advocate for children with muscular dystrophy and for all those who suffer with the disease, as well as for her son's message of peace."

Among his other most recent activities in the United States, Mr. Bellavia held a Sage doll-making workshop at a Sesame Reads event in Harlem aimed at encouraging underprivileged children to read; co-taught a series of UFT workshops for Materials for the Arts for con-



Mr. Bellavia conducts Sage doll-making workshop on tolerance with Project Aspire Scrubs Club students at P.S. 197

tinuing education; led a paper crafts How Do You Know a Hero? workshop at the Greenwich Historical Society in which children designed their own police officer, firefighter and paramedic action figures, and participated in the Seventh Annual Kite Flight event, sponsored by the Fashion Center Business Improvement District, in which hundreds of children let loose kites from the roof of the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Manhattan.

Last year, Mr. Bellavia's Sage doll-making workshop celebrated a landmark 10 years. To mark the anniversary, he teamed up with singer/songwriter and former Motown Records producer Sherlie Matthews on the release of the "We Are All the Same Inside: 10th Anniversary Commemorative Single," which ranked nationally on children's music listings as did a special DVD, "The Inside Story." Both the CD and DVD were shared and distributed to several educators in Sierra Leone.

In addition to his work with Touro College and the Sage workshops, Mr. Bellavia serves as a consultant for the Museum of the City of New York in East Harlem, preparing special public programs and exhibits. Prior to joining Touro, he worked as a kindergarten and art teacher at the Hunter College Elementary School for gifted children and served as a museum educator at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, creating special tours and exhibits including the Chamber Pot Show, which was written up in *The New York Times*. A multi-talented artist, Mr. Bellavia also served as a background dancer for Cyndi Lauper, Tina Turner and Cher during their summer concert tours in the mid-1990s.

# MSW Student Presents Internship Research at International Trauma Conference in Jerusalem

Graduate School of Social Work student Chana Lazar recently co-presented research at an international conference on trauma at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem based on her success in creating an effective support group for residents of a Brooklyn rehabilitation and residential center during her first year internship.

The two-day conference, "Trauma Through the Life Cycle from a Strengths-Based Perspective," which took place on Jan. 8-10, drew researchers and educators who are experts on psychotrauma and violence, as well as practitioners, international and Israeli students, policymakers and other members of the general public. It was co-sponsored by the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare at The Hebrew University and the New York University Silver School of Social Work.

Ms. Lazar did her 20-week internship last year. Ms. Huggins, who is a Ph.D. candidate in social work at NYU, also served as an adjunct professor in the Touro Graduate School of Social Work last year during Ms. Lazar's internship.

Their research presentation was one of only a select number chosen from hundreds of submissions. It examined how traumatic events early in life are revealed through participation in a support group, and showed how group therapy can enhance recall of trauma, communication, feelings of acceptance and worthiness, social intimacy, and generally help younger trauma victims make decisions about improving their lives.

"I think Chana's work was groundbreaking because she really encouraged the residents to participate and become involved in their own care and to get in touch with their feelings," said Ms. Huggins. "It's very hard to get together a group of younger adults in a nursing home because they're isolated and depressed but that did not stop Chana from consistently encouraging them to join the group. She really did an amazing job," said Ms. Huggins, noting that it was highly unusual for a master's student to present at a high-profile international conference.

Graduate School of Social Work Dean Steven Huberman, Ph.D., described Ms. Lazar as "an exemplary graduate student whose presentation of research at the Hebrew University advanced our understanding of trauma. Chana's research reflected her excellent clinical MSW field work experience at Touro's Graduate School of Social Work."

Ms. Lazar and Ms. Huggins have also co-authored a paper on their research findings that is due to be published in an upcoming issue of the scholarly *Journal of Clinical Social Work*.

Now a second year MSW student, Ms. Lazar came up with the idea of establishing a psycho-educational skills-building group for some of the younger residents at the Brooklyn facility who were undergoing rehabilitation therapy for a variety of serious or life-threatening ailments including cancer, paralysis, multiple sclerosis,



Touro MSW student Chana Lazar with her poster presentation at international trauma conference held at Hebrew University

Ms. Lazar co-authored her poster presentation entitled, "Uncovering Traumatic Events in a Mutual Aid Support Group for Young Adults with Permanent Disabilities in a Rehabilitation and Residential Care Setting," with Camille Huggins, LCSW, her supervisor and the director of social work at the Brooklyn Center for Rehabilitation and Residential Health Care, where



stroke and traumatic brain injury, as well as emotional disabilities such as suicidality, substance abuse and other mental illnesses.

According to federal data cited by Ms. Lazar, 14 percent of the long-term care population in the United States is younger than 65, with adults ages 31 to 64 making up the fastest-growing population in nursing homes over the past 10 years. Younger adults living in long-term care settings more frequently suffer from traumatic events, have very complicated care needs, and experience higher rates of re-hospitalization and unmet psychosocial needs, she said. And research is limited on successful mutual aid groups facilitated by social workers in general, and specifically for this population and their needs, she added.

Ms. Huggins said she decided to submit the findings on the support group to the organizers of the trauma conference because there is so little research in the literature about younger populations in rehabilitation and long-term care facilities and because the impact of the support group was so unexpectedly positive in improving the quality of the residents' lives.

Ms. Lazar, who previously worked in human resources at the Orthodox Union, drew from her personal experience in teaching the rehab residents skills such as resume writing, how to dress and prepare for interviews when re-entering the job market, and how to apply for government programs such as SSI, Access-a-Ride, Section 8 housing and food stamps.

As the residents increasingly began to trust Ms. Lazar, not only did the group grow in size but the residents started spontaneously sharing traumatic events they had experienced during their lives.

"In its inception, it was intended to be a psycho-educational group," said Ms. Lazar. "But then somewhere around the midpoint of my internship, the residents started talking about different traumatic events they experienced recently and in their pasts such as physical and sexual assaults, the crime and drugs with which they grew up, combat exposure, serious accidents, and natural disasters.

"These residents, who wouldn't talk to anybody beforehand, kept coming back every single week to learn something new," Ms. Lazar added. "...They began to socialize and really interact with one another; they began to see that their trauma did not have to define

who they are; they began to realize others were going through the same sort of thing and that they had support from other people; they developed a sense of hope and felt like they had a new lease on life."

Ms. Lazar noted that for many residents, it was the first time in their lives they had an opportunity to process their pain. She and Ms. Huggins utilized the evidence-based practice models of Reminiscence and Problem-Solving therapies to help counsel the residents once they began opening up about their life traumas.

The residents in the support group included a man in his 20s paralyzed from the neck down after he jumped out of his Manhattan apartment building following a panic attack and a 21-year-old man from Queens who lost his leg and shattered the bone in his arm after his foot got stuck between subway cars when he was running away from the police.

One of the biggest success stories to emerge from the support group was a 46-year-old woman suffering from stage 4 esophageal cancer who at the start of the group was very withdrawn and being fed through a tube. "She started to become very talkative and would always say she wants to one day be able to eat," Ms. Lazar said. "Toward the end of the group, her cancer went into remission and she no longer needed to be fed through a tube. The group really gave her a new lease on life and a sense of hope, which helped her fight the cancer. Now she wants to move out of the facility and live on her own."

Ms. Lazar was the only presenter from Touro College at the conference. Other presenters included professors, LMSWs and LCSWs from the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, Brown University and NYU as well as Tel Aviv University and Ben Gurion University in Israel. "I really put my whole heart and soul into the project and presenting at Hebrew University felt like such a huge accomplishment," Ms. Lazar said.



From right to left, MSW student Chana Lazar with her field internship supervisor Camille Huggins, LCSW, and NYU Silver School of Social Work Assistant Dean Helle Thorning

# Bullying Experts Call for More Positive Role Models Change in School Cultures

At the Graduate School of Social Work's annual Community Day this past November, national bullying experts said children need more positive role models and blamed violent video games, reality TV shows and politicians that partake in nasty name-calling for exacerbating a national epidemic.

The experts also urged schools to help solve the problem by transforming their cultures into supportive environments in which bullying is not tolerated at all by the students, faculty or administration.

Roni Benson, co-founder of the bullying prevention programs "BullyFrog" and "Cyberbullies Beware," said children today have been raised on violent video games and desensitized to violence. "They maim, shoot, explode and destroy," she said of the video game characters. "Kids play the game and turn it off. Magically, the next morning when they turn the game back on, everyone is alive again with their faculties back intact."

Ms. Benson also said that reality TV shows like "American Idol" that "couple humiliation with elimination" have had a "really severe impact on the behavior of this generation of kids."

Ginger Lieberman, who co-founded the "Bully Frog" and "Cyberbullies Beware" programs and co-wrote three award-winning children's books on bullying with Ms. Benson, said that beyond the entertainment media, children are also being affected by all the name-calling and slinging of accusations in U.S. politics.

"Kids are being inundated," Ms. Lieberman told the audience of roughly 100 students, faculty and staff gathered at Touro's main Manhattan campus on West 23rd Street. "They believe the name-calling and the accusations are part of their lives now, and if we're saying you have to respect each other and speak nicely and civilly to each other, and then...there's nothing civil on TV, it's hard for kids to get the right message. The hope that we have is that we can all get together and just give one message and sometimes talk the talk and walk the walk. We have to be real role models."

Dr. Jessie Klein, assistant professor of sociology and criminal justice at Adelphi University and author of *The Bully Society: School Shootings and the Crisis of Bullying in America's Schools*, said the focus of anti-bullying efforts needs to be on transforming school cultures so that bullying doesn't happen in the first place.

"Many U.S. anti-bullying programs focus on helping students stand up for themselves and talk back to potential bullies," said Dr. Klein, reading excerpts from her book, which was published in March. "Research has shown, though, that developing bonds among school faculty and students and helping students and faculty support one another is more effective."

From left to right, Dean Steven Huberman, Ph.D., speakers Roni Benson, Ginger Lieberman and Amy Burzinski, and conference organizer Professor Allison Bobick





Dr. Jessie Klein

Dr. Klein said gender prejudice and gay bashing have played a major role in many of the school shootings in the United States and noted that there are “inextricable connections between school shooting outbursts, the everyday violence of bullying, and the destructive gender prejudice and social demands created by the larger culture.

“Almost all the kids who committed school shootings said they had been called gay...or something of that nature. They all identified as heterosexuals but they were effectively gay bashed,” she said, noting that through her research and interviews for the book she also uncovered a tremendous amount of sexual harassment, dating violence, racism and other prejudiced behaviors in U.S. schools.

Dr. Klein read suicide notes left by school shooters that blamed teachers, parents, principals and other adults in their lives for allowing the bullying that precipitated their massacres.

“The conditions that have helped trigger school shootings are not aberrations but the norm and school cultures need to be transformed to stop school shootings as well as the culture of despair in our schools,” Dr. Klein said.

“The most important thing is for the school to say...‘What can we do as a school to change our social values so that people feel it’s important to care about one another, support one another and do everything they can to create a community?’”

Ms. Benson agreed, advocating for anti-bullying programs that embrace and empower the silent majority—“the kids who see what’s going on but do nothing to help the kids who can’t stand up to the kid who is bullying them. The very important component of any successful bullying prevention pro-

gram is empowering the bystanders,” she said. “It’s about teaching them the difference between tattling and telling...and promising them anonymity. They absolutely must trust you if they tell you something.”

The bullying experts also provided various statistics on bullying as well as practical advice for dealing with bullying situations in schools.

Ms. Benson said that 160,000 children stay home from school every day in the United States because of fear of being bullied.

School social worker Amy Burzinski, citing various studies, said bullying is the most common form of violence in our society, with almost 11 percent of the 50 million students in schools in the United States bullied frequently. She noted that bullying occurs every seven minutes on the playground and once every 25 minutes in the classroom; peers are present during 85 percent of bullying episodes but intervene only 10 percent of the time, and 57 percent of the time bullying stops in less than 10 seconds when someone intervenes on behalf of the victim.

Ms. Burzinski, whose website [www.bullyingpreventioninjds.com](http://www.bullyingpreventioninjds.com) serves as a resource to help parents and teachers combat bullying, cited one study that found



“BullyFrog” and “Cyberbullies Beware” co-founders Roni Benson, right, and Ginger Lieberman, left, address Community Day conference on bullying

that children who bullied at age eight had a one in four chance of ending up with a criminal record by the age of 30, compared to the one in 20 chance that most children have. These children were more likely to be convicted of serious crimes and were more abusive to their wives and children. She cited another study that found that 30 percent of adolescent depression could be attributed to peer harassment and noted that bullies were significantly more likely than non-bullies to report engaging in physical and social aggression with their boyfriends and girlfriends.

The bullying experts said the Internet and cell phones have exacerbated the national epidemic by providing bullies with anonymity and constant access to their victims.

“We feel freedom when we’re online to talk in different kinds of ways...because we can’t see the other person’s reactions,” said clinical social worker and doctoral candidate Liz Lasky who specializes in what she calls ‘electronic aggression.’

“Schoolyard bullying is finite. You have a fight in the schoolyard but you get to go home afterward,” she said. “For someone who’s experiencing some kind of electronic aggression, we know the bully has 24-hour access to the victim.”

Ms. Lasky said that anywhere from nine to 35 percent of students are victims of electronic aggression, with more than 20 percent acting as perpetrators and seven to 14 percent both victims and bullies. “Kids who are both the victim and the bully are the biggest growing group.”

She said children and teens are afraid to talk about being bullied via technology because they are worried their parents will take their cell phones or computers away. “I personally don’t think this is the best option. Kids are going to use technology whether we like it or not...The issue is not the technology; the issue is learning how to be a good digital citizen and learning how to communicate online.”

Ms. Lasky said that to address the problem of cyberbullying, social workers should ask their clients numerous questions about their use of the Internet such as what websites they visit, how many online friends they have and how many of those online friends they know. In addition, social workers should notice or find out from parents if their students are upset after using technology.

The bullying experts encouraged the social workers in the audience to show compassion for bullies as well as their victims. “What’s interesting is that the bullies, the perpetrators of the violence, are two times more likely to be suicidal than the victims so this has very important implications for the field because...we’re very quick to swoop in and save the victim when in truth the bully needs our help as well,” Ms. Lasky said.

# Touro Conference Held to Help Unemployed Teachers Find Jobs

The Graduate School of Education hosted a conference this past January to help unemployed New York State-licensed teachers who lost their jobs due to the current budget crisis find work outside of the public school system.

Speakers at the conference entitled “Alternate Teaching Opportunities” included representatives from parochial and charter schools that have job openings for teachers. Among the speakers were Rabbi Dr. Martin Schloss, director of the Division of Day School Education at the Board of Jewish Education; Rafeek Mohamed, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic Schools Association of New York and principal of Al-Ihsan Academy in Queens; Dixon Deutsch, executive director of the NYC Special Education Collaborative, New York City Charter School Center, and Dr. Anthony J. Polemeni, vice president of Touro College’s Division of Graduate Studies.

Last June, a last-minute compromise between the UFT and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg averted mass layoffs for the current school year. However, public school budgets are still \$178 million less than they were last year and a hiring freeze is in place, leaving many qualified teachers without jobs.

“According to the Department of Labor, there are approximately 6,000 teachers out of work in New York, even though they are well-trained in education and special education,” said Dr. Polemeni. “We wanted to give them an opportunity to see what else is out there

beyond the public school system and I think they found that there are a number of avenues worth exploring.”

The conference speakers discussed issues such as job qualifications and how to submit applications as well as the type of students that attend their schools, salary expectations and positions that teachers with specific specialties should consider. About 60 unemployed teachers attended the Jan. 13 conference held at Touro’s Manhattan campus.

Dr. Polemeni, who taught in Catholic schools earlier in his career, spoke about job opportunities in Catholic schools and the credentials needed to teach in them. Dr. Melissa Earle, director of professional social work education and online learning at Touro’s Graduate School of Social Work, spoke about job opportunities in play therapy, and Dr. Charles Ettinger, a student teaching adviser in the Graduate School of Education, identified private agencies that are engaged in placing teachers in various home and institutional settings.

The conference was the brainchild of Dr. LaMar P. Miller, dean of the Graduate School of Education, who wanted to tackle the growing problem of teacher unemployment. Dr. George Cohen, professor of education, and Esther Ingber, director of alumni relations and special projects, coordinated the event. Dr. Donne Kampel, associate dean of faculty for the Division of Graduate Studies, served as moderator.



Dean LaMar P. Miller, Ph.D.

# Graduate School of Technology Hosts Forum on Emerging Technologies

The Graduate School of Technology held a forum on emerging technologies this past November during which faculty members and Touro College academic computing department employees delivered presentations on the latest trends in technology software and hardware, with a special emphasis on web-based technologies that are revolutionizing the way we live.

Microsoft Senior Academic Developer Andrew Parsons also attended the forum, adding his insights and responding to specifics in each presentation. The conference, the first of its kind hosted by the Graduate School of Technology, was attended by members of the Touro technology community including faculty members, administrators, alumni, students and invited guests.

“Technology, especially computer technology, has always experienced rapid change, yet today, the speed of these changes has

increased dramatically,” Graduate School of Technology Dean Dr. Issac Herskowitz said in opening the forum. “As technology educators, we need to keep abreast of where technologies are heading in the near and distant future so that we can give our students the benefit of the most up-to-date and industry-relevant subject matter.”

The emerging technology topics addressed during the presentations included Cloud Computing; the online file sharing and collaboration solution Sharepoint; Microsoft cloud solutions Sky Drive and Mesh; the data communication networking concept of virtualization; web applications Microsoft Silver Light, Adobe Flash and HTML 5; web development technologies Lightswitch and Expression Studio and a comparison of PHP, ASP, JSP and .Net technologies, and the types of software that now run on mobile devices as well as the development life cycles of various mobile applications for the iPhone, Android, Symbian, Blackberry and Windows phones.

In addition to the conference, the Graduate School of Technology hosted a number of high-profile guest speakers in various classes this past fall. Among the speakers were Rajive Jain, Ph.D., senior vice president at Bank of America Merrill Lynch; Philippe Liautaud, chief financial officer at Coleman Research Group; Robert Kariyev, data communications manager at Touro College, and Bernard Plagman, managing partner at TechPar Group. Guest speakers last spring included Donald Davis, senior information technology director for the City of New York Department of Finance, and Abraham Cytryn, chief technology officer at Time Inc.



Dean Issac Herskowitz, second from left, with Andrew Parsons, Microsoft Senior Academic Developer, far right, and other forum speakers from the Graduate School of Technology and Touro academic computing department

# School of Health Sciences Offers PT Continuing Education Program

The Graduate School of Health Sciences' physical therapy department has initiated a continuing education program that enables physical therapists to enhance their professional practices while fulfilling required coursework to maintain their licenses in New York State.

The Touro College program is unlike most other physical therapy continuing education offerings, which routinely hold courses over the weekend, including Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath. The Touro physical therapy (PT) continuing education program offers courses on Sundays and weekdays, making it possible for observant Jews, and anyone else who may be unavailable on Saturdays, to attend.

"The purpose of the continuing education program is three-fold," said Jill Horbacewicz, Ph.D., chair of the physical therapy department. "First, following the mission of Touro, we want to serve the community by providing the professional community of PTs with access to excellent courses. It is a newly mandated requirement that PTs in New York State earn 36 continuing education hours every three years to maintain their PT licenses so we serve as a resource for that.

"Second, the program will also promote the Touro name and reputation in the PT community as a source of excellent continuing education," Dr. Horbacewicz added. "We strive to graduate lifelong learners and we strongly encourage all PTs to continually refine their skills.

"Third, and perhaps most important, it is very difficult to find courses that are not held on *Shabbat* (the Jewish Sabbath). Most courses are weekend courses spanning Friday through Sunday. Touro serves a unique need for observant PTs because our courses are not held on *Shabbat*. This is a big deal. Where else could they go to take these courses?"

Dr. Horbacewicz said seven continuing education courses are being offered this year at



Physical therapists learning advanced techniques for cervical spine in continuing education course

Touro, including Kinesio Taping—using tape to facilitate and inhibit muscles; women's health, which covers issues such as incontinence, pelvic pain, pregnancy and strengthening; spinal manipulations; back education training; pediatric incontinence; PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation), a technique helpful in restoring function in patients who suffer from neurological dysfunction as a result of a stroke or other brain injury, and PNF for gait. There are about 20 to 50 PT students in each course.

The continuing education program is being implemented by Laura Hagan, DPT, director of clinical education for the physical therapy department at Touro College's School of Health Sciences, and Emil Euaparadorn, PT, D.Sc., associate director of Touro's Doctor of Physical Therapy Program.

The continuing education offerings are listed on the school's physical therapy web page and are updated on a regular basis. For more information please visit [www.touro.edu/shs/pt](http://www.touro.edu/shs/pt).

# A Teacher and Aspiring Filmmaker, Touro Alumnus Hopes to Impact Education Beyond the Classroom

Shila Jones, an alumnus of the Graduate School of Education who worked with Touro's Project Aspire public health and education initiative last year as a teacher for P.S. 197 in Harlem, is also an aspiring filmmaker who had her first film, a short entitled "William's Payne," screened at the Martha's Vineyard African-American Film Festival in the summer of 2010.

Despite being considered an exceptional teacher who is adored by her students, Ms. Jones has suffered as a result of the massive budget cuts at the New York City Department of Education, as well as the influx of charter schools in Harlem. After teaching second grade in central

Harlem for four years, she was excused from her position at the end of 2009 and wound up serving as an Absent Teacher Reserve (ATR) teacher for the third grade at P.S. 197 last year. ATR teachers are paid by the city rather than the school they are working at because they are not considered to be on the school's payroll.

Ms. Jones was offered a staff position at P.S. 197 but turned it down because she had expected to be rehired by her former school in Harlem this past fall. Due to further budget cuts the school had not anticipated, she was never rehired and found herself back in the ATR pool last summer. Fortunately, she man-

aged to find a staff position teaching at a public school in Washington Heights the day before the 2011-2012 school year started.

Having experienced firsthand the consequences of drastic state and city budget cuts on New York City public schools, Ms. Jones is deeply concerned about the future of education and hopes to utilize her filmmaking talent to impact education in her own right.

"I love children and I love teaching, and filmmaking is the perfect way to marry the two," she said. "Film, TV and social media are raising our children. Kids today have traded outdoor sports for the Wii, blocks and Legos for the controller and books for the Internet. These days if we want to fully educate kids and really peak their interest, we have to go to where they are, and that's in front of a screen. As a filmmaker, I can make an impact and extend my reach in 90 minutes or less."

Ms. Jones said she plans to create entertainment content with positive role models for children to emulate. "It's about imagery and the characters I portray. I want to give life to characters that are cool but value education, have a moral compass, style and grace," she said. "We need entertainment that is innovative and current with the times. So many of today's issues plaguing our children like bullying are symptoms of low self-esteem. We need programs featuring characters children can relate to tackling and overcoming these problems."

Born and raised in Harlem, Ms. Jones moved to California for college, graduating from California State University, Bakersfield. She returned to Harlem after college and worked for a few years at the day care center she attended as a child, where she discovered her talent for working with children. She decided to go back to school to become a certified teacher and enrolled in Touro to earn her graduate degree in general education and special education with a specialization in



Shila Jones



early childhood development.

"Ms. Shila Jones is an energetic, compassionate and caring teacher," said Dr. Nicholas Aiello, education director for Project Aspire. "It was obvious to us in Project Aspire that she loves her work because she cares so deeply about her students. And the children, in turn, love and respect her. Beyond her teaching skills, Ms. Jones possesses that intangible quality of charisma that separates an outstanding teacher from a good teacher. We at Project Aspire miss her participation in our program's activities."

For her part, Ms. Jones also loved working with Project Aspire, which she described as a unique program that teaches and inspires the students at P.S. 197 in "fun and creative" ways. "I think the program is awesome because in an atmosphere that is so test-driven, we still have programs that are hands-on. The kids really enjoy it. What I love most about Project Aspire is that it teaches children what they can be, all the while giving them the incentive to want to be. Kids are told almost from birth that they can be a doctor, but no one really shows them how, not until now, with this program. The program is also unique in that it returns year after year. The emphasis in education is to serve the whole child and Project Aspire definitely does that."

Ms. Jones is also a fan of her alma mater Touro College, crediting her professors for encouraging her to complete her studies and make it through an extremely difficult time when her mother and maternal grandfather died on the very same day.

"That set me back. I wanted to drop out," she said. "My professors said, 'Take your time and try to catch up with your work.' If not for them, I would have probably dropped out of school. I ended up with almost a perfect GPA that semester because it was the one concrete thing I could hang on to...I will never forget the kindness and compassion I received from not only my professors, but the staff and my fellow classmates at Touro College."

While Ms. Jones' father, grandfather and aunt were all involved in the entertainment industry when she was growing up, she didn't become interested in writing and making films until a

couple of years after she started teaching.

Ms. Jones' father, who raised her as a single parent from the time she was six after her mother, a former model, became ill, wrote for the TV shows "What's Happening!!" and "Good Times," as well as off-Broadway theater and Shakespeare in the Park. He also worked as an actor, and his roles included playing the conductor in the original "The Taking of Pelham One Two Three." Ms. Jones' maternal grandfather was a celebrity photographer and her aunt was a camerawoman for NBC for over 40 years, working on many shows including "The Cosby Show" and "Saturday Night Live."

"I was basically raised in theater and television," said Ms. Jones. "But you kind of rebel against the things you're used to so I didn't start to write until after I finished my bachelor's and master's degrees and was teaching for two years. All that has been in my family. I just didn't appreciate it until now."

Ms. Jones was asked by a friend who is a media professional to write a script from the male perspective about being heartbroken, a topic he felt was underrepresented in film. The



Ms. Jones works with Project Aspire Scrubs Club students at P.S. 197

result was "William's Payne," a 35-minute short that she wrote, directed and co-produced. The film starred Lawrence Saint-Victor, who plays Remy Boudreau on the CBS soap opera "Guiding Light," and Sonequa Martin, who has

had guest or recurring roles on the hit TV shows “The Good Wife,” “Law & Order: Criminal Intent” and “Army Wives.” Musician, composer and recording artist Genovis Albright scored the film.

“William’s Payne” received positive reviews when it was screened at the Martha’s Vineyard African-American Film Festival co-sponsored by HBO in the summer of 2010, Ms. Jones said. Since then, she has written a full-length feature film and a TV pilot based on the same characters.

Ms. Jones said she also started filming another short in the fall called “Fragile Beat of the Heart” based on a poem by the brother of filmmaker Philip Knowlton, who co-directed the documentary “Lift Up” about the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti with Huguens Jean, and also recently directed a Nike commercial. Ms. Jones co-wrote and is co-producing “Fragile Beat of the Heart” with Mr. Knowlton. It is a film about domestic violence with music serving as the dialogue, she said.

Ms. Jones studied film one semester at NYU as a non-matriculating student. And in an effort to increase her visibility, during her time off from teaching, she has traveled around the country working for the talent departments of award and other TV shows that air on major cable networks like MTV, VH1, Lifetime, BET, the Food Network and Comedy Central.

While working with Mr. Knowlton, Ms. Jones hopes to expand her filmmaking knowledge and skills, which she can then apply to making her own films that both educate and entertain.

“We all know education is the key to success, the great equalizer,” she said. “And teaching is an art form. It’s a craft. It’s not just about knowing the facts; it’s about knowing your audience and how they receive their information. A great teacher can teach anywhere to anyone, in a classroom of 30 or from behind a camera to millions. I’m a teacher; that’s what I love and that’s what I do and no amount of budget cuts is ever going to be able to stop me.”

Stay tuned for news about Touro College’s upcoming alumni program! For more information, to get involved or to show your support for your school, contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at [giving@touro.edu](mailto:giving@touro.edu) or call 212-463-0400, ext. 5203. Email news about your professional accomplishments, story suggestions, comments or letters to the editor to [gail.schiller@touro.edu](mailto:gail.schiller@touro.edu) or [Nicholas.aiello@touro.edu](mailto:Nicholas.aiello@touro.edu).

## Lander Center Awarded Second \$1.9 Million EAC Grant

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development, research and evaluation that bolster teacher quality and leadership, address the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities, and improve learning in science, math and other areas.

Established in 2005, the Lander Center for Educational Research works closely with districts and schools in their efforts to promote student achievement, school leadership, team-building capacity, teacher quality, school reform strategies, and the overall professional development of district and school personnel. The Lander Center also plays an important

role in Touro’s commitment to serving as a major research institution of higher education and assisting the underserved.

Individuals representing school districts, state education departments and other state or local education agencies interested in obtaining EAC services may contact Dr. Velma L. Cobb, director of the EAC and associate professor at Touro’s Graduate School of Education, at (212) 463-0400 ext. 5386 or [velma.cobb@touro.edu](mailto:velma.cobb@touro.edu), or write to Dr. Cobb at Equity Assistance Center, Touro College, 43 West 23rd Street, 8th floor, New York, NY 10010.

Congratulations DGS Class of 2011-2012



Commencement Ceremony

Monday, June 4, 2012

10:00 a.m.

Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center



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