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UNH Professor, Student Of Social Work Honored At March 28 Dinner

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DURHAM, N.H. - University of New Hampshire associate professor of social work L. René Bergeron will receive the Social Worker of the Year award from the New Hampshire chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) at its annual awards dinner March 28. Bergeron, a member of the UNH faculty for 19 years, was honored for her teaching as well as her advocacy and research on behalf of elders.

"Rene' has touched the lives of many seniors and their families, including my own father, who participated in one of her support groups and raved about her," said Casey Family Services social worker Bernadette Pelczar, who nominated Bergeron for the honor. "Her current job as a professor has allowed her to touch the lives of many students, shaping the careers of hundreds of practicing social workers."

Also at the awards dinner, UNH senior Kate Gannon will receive the Student of the Year distinction.

"We are honored to have both a valued faculty member and an outstanding student receive these awards," said Jerry Marx, associate professor and chair of the department of social work at UNH. "René’s most admirable social work trait is her advocacy. She is an outstanding role model in this arena because her advocacy is always noble and focused on the greater good, both in social work and academia."

Bergeron worked as a hospital social worker for 11 years; for 25 years she taught part-time while working in elder issues. She received a 2007 Excellence in Teaching Award from UNH. She received her master of social work degree from Connecticut College and her Ph.D. from Boston College.

Gannon, who is interested in working with people with developmental disabilities, was chosen in part for her thoughtfulness about her career direction and her pursuit of it in and out of the classroom. She is currently completing her 450-hour field practicum with Community Partners in Dover, providing aid to families of children with developmental disabilities. In addition, she was selected to participate in the UNH Institute on Disability's Project LEAD, a leadership training program supporting children and youth with autism spectrum disorders. She has been a volunteer with Rhode Island Special Olympics since 2002.

"Kate is creative, hard-working, diligent, quick to connect the dots when examining systems and their implications for those in need," said UNH clinical assistant professor Martha Byam in her nomination. "Her intellectual strength, clear commitment to social work values of social and economic justice make her an outstanding student and bode well for her future contribution to our field."
The NHNASW annual awards dinner is Friday, March 28 from 4:30 - 9:00 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Concord. In addition to the presentation of awards, Rep. Carol Shea-Porter will deliver remarks. For more information, go to www.nhnasw.org.

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Read the Faculty Excellence profile of René Bergeron here: http://www.unh.edu/facultyexcellence/2007/excellence.cfm?image=bergeron