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UNH Professor, Student Honored By Social Work Association

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DURHAM, N.H. – Martha Byam, clinical assistant professor of social work at the University of New Hampshire, has been named Social Worker of the Year by the New Hampshire chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). UNH student Erin Dudley was named Master of Social Work Student of the Year by the organization, which will honor the two at its annual meeting Friday, March 5, 2010.

Byam has taught at UNH since 1992; she is also undergraduate coordinator of the social work program. In their nomination letter, her UNH colleagues Mary Banach and Rene Bergeron, both associate professors of social work, said, "Martha has always been engaged in community action and broad scale advocacy, epitomizing the social work profession's ethical commitment to change efforts."

Byam's focus is primarily on policy and advocacy, what she calls a "macro" practice. "I think this award is a wonderful recognition of the importance of that kind of work in a field that sometimes can get very 'micro' or clinical focused. That is the true gift and contribution of social work -- that we carry a dual focus and responsibility -- the person *and* their environment are both important and our attention must be to both," she says. "I am very flattered and honored. To be recognized by one's peers as having made a contribution to the field is as good as it gets."

A former assistant dean of students at UNH, Byam serves on the boards of United Campus Ministry in Durham and the UNH Alumni Board, as well as on the public policy committee of the New Hampshire Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She earned a bachelor's degree from UNH and a Master of Social Work (MSW) from the University of Utah. She is a resident of Hampton Falls.

Dudley, daughter of John and Kelly Dudley of Derry, is in her first year of the MSW program at UNH, where she is studying direct practice. Growing up in a family that took foster children into its home sparked Dudley's passion for community service. "I was an only child and loved the companionship of having children in our home," she says. "However, being a foster sister opened my eyes to a world of terror and abuse that I could never have imagined."

A graduate of UNH Manchester, Dudley has been an Americacorps volunteer with the Child Advocacy Center in Hillsborough County for more than two years, providing support to child victims of sexual and physical abuse and their non-offending parents. In addition to her coursework, Dudley is an intern at Casey Family Services. Upon graduation, she plans to work with at-risk children and families and open a clinical practice.

"I am so proud to have been selected by so many outstanding professionals and community members," she says of the NASW honor. A single mother of a young daughter, Dudley adds

that the award underscores the importance of education. "I am proud to be such a positive role model for my daughter and my two younger sisters, whom my parents adopted from the foster care system."

To learn more about the social work major at UNH, go to www.chhs.unh.edu/sw/index.html. For more information on the New Hampshire chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, go to www.nhnasw.org.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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Photographs available to download:

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2010/feb/bp17social_01.jpg

Caption: Martha Byam, clinical assistant professor of social work at the University of New Hampshire, has been named Social Worker of the Year by the New Hampshire chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

Credit: UNH Photographic Services

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2010/feb/bp17social_02.jpg

Caption: UNH student Erin Dudley was named Master of Social Work Student of the Year by the New Hampshire chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

Credit: Courtesy of Erin Dudley