

JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER



MARYAM RAFIEIFAR PhD
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Watch the June 2024 Monthly News Video Update and read the stories below.

Video edited and produced by Doughlas Gutierrez

[**CLICK TO WATCH JUNE 2024 NEWS VIDEO UPDATE**](#)



Alumnae support youth aging out of foster care

By Jaelon Jackson

The inaugural Brilliance Ball, hosted by Resources Inspiring Success and Empowering or RISE brought together 220 attendees in a celebration of innovation, empowerment, and community impact at The Social Space meeting venue in Fort Worth May 3.

The event, designed to support the next generation of leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, particularly those transitioning from foster care, received enthusiastic participation from professionals, community leaders, and stakeholders.

[CLICK TO READ FULL STORY ABOUT THE BRILLIANCE BALL](#)



From left, Jose Soto (coach), Doughlas Gutierrez and Raul Canizales (coach).

Promoting Physical Activity for Men’s Health Month

By Jaelon Jackson

A staff member in the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Arlington uses his passion for martial arts, particularly Muay Thai, to help improve his physical and mental health outcomes.

Growing up in a household enjoying action movies featuring Bruce Lee, Wesley Snipes, and Jean-Claude Van Damme, Doughlas Gutierrez, a videographer and communications assistant, found himself drawn to “the art of eight limbs,” better known as Muay Thai.

It is called “the art of eight limbs” because it is a type of martial arts where participants can use their fists, elbows, knees and shins. Muay Thai fighters must be in excellence physical shape.

[CLICK HERE TO READ ABOUT MEN'S HEALTH MONTH](#)



Dr. Maryam Rafieifar, SSW Assistant Professor.

Exploring online vs. face-to-face group therapy efficacy

By Jaelon Jackson

A School of Social Work assistant professor and researcher at the University of Texas at Arlington conducted a study comparing the effectiveness of online and face-to-face group therapy.

Dr. Maryam Rafieifar, who has an undergraduate degree in statistics and two master's degrees – one in social science research and the other master's in urban and regional planning, led the study.

Dr. Rafieifar, who earned a Ph.D. in Public Health and Social Work from Florida International University, conducts research in immigration and child welfare with a strong emphasis on quantitative methodologies, including meta-analyses.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE ABOUT DR. RAFIEIFAR'S RESEARCH](#)



Dr. Micki Washburn, SSW Assistant Professor.

UTA explores use of VR for substance use treatment

By Neph Rivera

A University of Texas at Arlington assistant professor is proving that virtual reality (VR) software is not just for gaming. It can be a force for healing.

A team of researchers that includes Micki Washburn from the School of Social Work's Bachelor of Science in Substance Use and Treatment program is working with The Menninger Clinic in Houston to conduct a pilot

project in which patients with substance use needs will use VR software as an additional form of treatment.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT DR. WASHBURN'S RESEARCH](#)



Dr. Morgan PettyJohn, SSW Assistant Professor.

Challenging perceptions, violence against men - Netflix series *Baby Reindeer*, social work research

In the hit Netflix series *Baby Reindeer*, an act of kindness by the main character toward a vulnerable woman leads to an obsession that impacts both their lives.

Based on a true story, the show follows Donny, a bartender and comedian, who is stalked by Martha, the woman he showed kindness to, over a period of several years. The experience of being targeted by a stalker prompts Donny to reflect on his experience as a young adult, when he was sexual assaulted by a man who promised to help launch his comedy career.

It is a unique story that demonstrates that men, not just women, can be victims of violence—in fact, about one in four men experience some sort of unwanted sexual contact across their lifetimes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT DR. PETTYJOHN'S RESEARCH](#)



Grandmother of Juneteenth, Opal Lee receiving Medal of Honor from President Joe Biden.

Blog Post: Juneteenth in Texas, Social Work values

By Jaelon Jackson

What is Juneteenth?

Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19, marks a pivotal moment in American history.

Known as Emancipation Day, it commemorates the day in 1865 when enslaved African Americans in Texas were informed of their freedom, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued.

The Emancipation Proclamation, signed by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, declared that all enslaved people in Confederate states were free. However, due to the slow spread of information and the resistance of enslavers, many enslaved people in Texas were unaware of their freedom until June 19, 1865.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT JUNETEENTH](#)



Social Work's new *Blaze the Mic* Podcast - Episode 5 featuring BSW student Katie Pham.

New Social Work *Blaze the Mic* Podcast now available

The SSW Office of Communications and Marketing released the 5th episode of our student focused podcast -- *Blaze the Mic*.

This episode features BSW student Katie Pham - "*Pride, Belonging, and Social Work*"

"In this episode, BSW student Katie Pham shares with us how the impact of community and inclusivity during Pride Month has helped her find clarity on her journey towards a Bachelor of Social Work degree.

Our new podcast is available on Spotify, Amazon Music, iHeart Radio, PlayerFM, Podbean App, and soon on Apple.

[LISTEN TO SSW BLAZE THE MIC - EPISODE 5](#)

June SSW Spotlights

This section highlights the remarkable achievements and contributions of individuals within the social work community.

From esteemed faculty members to dedicated alumni, their accomplishments reflect a commitment to excellence and a passion for making a positive impact in society. Whether through groundbreaking research, innovative teaching methods, advocacy efforts, or community engagement, these individuals embody the values of social work and inspire others to strive for greatness.

Join us in celebrating their successes and acknowledging the profound influence they have on the field of social work and the lives they touch.

Awards & Recognitions

Dr. De'An Roper - Dr. Roper was appointed as a member of the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Council on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (CSOGIE).

Dr. Micki Washburn - Dr. Washburn presented her study "Enhancing justice system and mental health outcomes in high need populations through the use of multisystem liaisons" at Physical Medicine and Psychology Congress 2024 in Japan.

Dr. Dianna Jones - Dr. Jones was awarded Faculty Teaching in the Archives grant for 2024-25 through the UTA Library to redesign two of our core macro courses, 3306 and 5306 to include the archival data from UTA Libraries Special Collections (SPCO) for student learning.

Dr. Jaclyn Kirsch - Dr. Kirsch received the Interdisciplinary Research Program (IRP) Grant through UTA. The project titled, "Increasing Access to Health Services for Limited English Proficiency Patients Using Simulation-Based Learning: A Pilot Study" is being led by her with her co-PI Dr. Alicia Rueda-Acedo (Modern Languages), Jennifer Roye (CONHI) and SSW's Karla Arenas-Itotia.

Karen Magruder - Karen Magruder, in collaboration with CRTLE, was awarded an Open Initiatives grant through UTA Libraries to write and publish an OER digital resource book, "AI-Powered Education: Innovative Teaching Strategies to Elevate Student Learning" as well as served as an invited panel speaker for the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine's](#) national workshop "Artificial Intelligence in Education and Mental Health for a Sustainable Future."

Dr. Joyce White - Dr. White has been appointed to serve on the CSWE [Council on Practice Methods and Specializations](#) for a 3-year period from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2027.

Dr. Catherine LaBrenz and Dr. Yangjin Park - each received funding through James Bell Associates (flow-through from the Annie E. Casey Foundation) to provide technical assistance on an evaluation of the [FOCUS+ program at NewDay Services](#).

Alan Kunz Lomelin - PhD student Alan Kunz Lomelin successfully defended his dissertation, "Implementation of Technological Innovations: An Identification and Examination of Opinion Leaders and Advice Networks in Primary Care." Congrats Dr. Lomelin!!

Dr. Donna Schuman - Dr. Schuman's grant proposal, "Expanding Provider Capacity to Prevent Rural Veteran Suicide: Virtual Reality Lethal Means Safety Training," was approved by the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) Board of Directors for \$140,000.

In The Media

Dr Micki Washburn - UTA [news story](#) published about Dr. Washburn and her research into proving virtual reality (VR) software is not just for gaming. It can be a force for healing.

Upcoming SSW Events:

- **July 4** - Independence Day Holiday
 - **July 5** - UTA Campus Closed
 - **Aug. 19** - Fall 2024 Classes Start
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Other SSW News Products:

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