This past year has been one of growth and progress for our chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. We benefited from heightened participation, reached further into the community, and discovered new ways to be counselors who are Christians. The year’s activities actually began before the start of the fall semester with the Day of Caring, an annual, community-wide back-to-school drive for local students and families. Teaming up with the Elliot Foundation, we offered depression inventories, thereby focusing our efforts on community outreach. This same focus again led us to join the Elliot Foundation in offering inventories on campus as well as the Unity Health Hospitals of both Searcy and Newport, meeting the needs of Harding students and residents of both Searcy and Newport. Similarly, at the start of the spring semester the professional counseling program was invited to offer depression and anxiety inventories as a part of a free clinic on Harding’s campus hosted by the college of pharmacy. While Chi Sigma Iota headed our participation in this event, the participation of non-members was crucial, and I am thankful to all for providing professional services to our community.

Chi Sigma Iota’s work this year peaked on April 21st in the form of an original, community-wide event entitled, “Unifying Faith and Mental Health: A Community Conversation.” This was the culmination of determination, numerous hours of hard work, and a conviction to help build a bridge between these two worlds. The event included a panel discussion comprised of professionals in the fields of both ministry and mental health. I must take a moment to thank these panel members (Hannah Brownfield, Nick Fouts, Michael Jones, and Charles Chamblee) for their willing spirits and open hearts. Hundreds of invitations were sent out to alumni, local church congregations, Harding graduate and undergraduate students, and local mental health practitioners. This resulted in a great turn out for the event, which made a substantial contribution to the integration of faith and mental health in our community.

As president, I want to personally thank our program faculty and staff for their support and encouragement. I also want to thank Roxanne Kelly, Angela Drury, Amanda Hardison, and John Mark Warnick for their continual energy, giving hearts, and Christ-like spirits. It has been a great honor to fill the role of president of the Alpha Pi Chi chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. I welcome our new inductees and officers and pray that God fills you all with His Spirit to far exceed all that has been described above in the coming year.
How to Support a Suicidal Friend
by: Steve Johnson

Once a friend has told you that they are contemplating suicide, your first reaction is probably to panic. It’s a natural response when you feel as though someone’s life is in your hands. Fortunately, supporting a suicidal friend is not your job alone. Here are a few ways to support your friend without emotionally draining yourself.

Express Willingness to Listen
The best thing you can do for someone experiencing suicidal thoughts is to listen. Let them know they can talk to you when they need someone to listen. Often, the action of talking alone can greatly improve the person’s mindset. Of course, it isn’t the only step toward recovery they will need, but it is certainly an important one.

Gauge Your Responses
Being a confidant for a depressed person can be difficult. It is important that you respond well to what they tell you. For example, when your friend admitted to being suicidal, a good reaction would have been to calmly and compassionately ask how you can help. A negative reaction might be guilt-tripping the person (“How could you do this to me?”) or breaking down into tears. The last thing they need is an over-emotional reaction from you. You need to control how you feel and exude calmness and empathy. They need to know you care, but in a way that doesn’t make them feel worse about their situation. It is a fine line to walk, but it is achievable.

Clean Out Their Space
If possible, it can be hugely beneficial to comb through the suicidal person’s space and rid them of any potential weapons. This can include firearms, knives, razors, medications, and toxins. If they have expressed a preferred method of suicide, be sure to focus on those tools. For example, if they offhandedly mention wanting to die by overdose, removed all the medications from the home first. This is particularly important for addicts.

People who are addicted to any substance are more likely to commit suicide. Removal of the substance from the home followed by rehabilitation is key. Be sure this is done sensitively. It can be patronizing to the person if they feel as though their home is being child-proofed and can result in withdrawal from loved ones.

Seek Help
If you are not a trained professional, odds are you are not equipped to handle this situation in its entirety. Seek the help of counselors, crisis centers, hotlines, or even other friends and family. Trying to be the sole support for your friend is only going to drain you and prevent you from giving them the help they need.

Assistance for everyone, regardless of income, is always available. The most convenient, free, and anonymous method is the National Suicide Hotline. They can be reached at 1-800-273-8255 at any hour of the day or night and are comprised of trained volunteers.

Learning that a person close to you is suicidal is difficult to swallow. You may have a natural moment of panic or you may unintentionally say the wrong thing. But your support and love are two things that can and will help this person through their crisis. However, you should never try to be their sole supporter.

Do some research and identify potential resources you can use like crisis centers and hotlines. You are not trained to handle a situation like this, and you shouldn’t pressure yourself to be able to handle such situations as a professional would. Be available, listen to them, and gently steer them in the direction of the help they need.

Steve Johnson is dedicated to promoting health and wellness in all aspects of life. Studying in the medical field has shown him how important it is for reputable health-related facts, figures, tips, and other guidance to be readily available to the public. He created PublicHealthLibrary.org with a fellow student to act as a resource for people’s overall health inquiries and as an accurate and extensive source of health information. When he isn’t hard at work in his studies, he enjoys playing tennis and listening to his vintage record collection.
Get to Know the Faculty... Dr. Jenene Alexander

1) Where were you born? Searcy, near the Harding campus where my parent’s met, married and were going to school.

2) When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Someone connected to airlines – a flight attendant or a pilot. I wanted to travel.

3) Siblings: I have a biological sister who is a dental hygienist and lives in Omaha; and two step siblings, a sister and brother, who live in the Searcy area.

4) Where did you attend college? Harding, East Texas State (part of the A&M system) and University of Memphis.

5) Spouse and how long you have been married: I was blessed to marry Harold Alexander, my high school sweetheart (he was in college at Harding); he left earth too soon in 2015.

6) Children: We have three children who are grown and married in homes of their own. Stacey – a speech pathologist, Scott – working in the world of business, and Kristy – in schools, counseling and administration.

7) Somewhere you would like to visit and why? Possibly Italy. Our children have said it is one of their favorite places in the world to visit. Also, at some point I would like to spend time in Oregon. My husband and I had visited two countries and 48 of the 50 states and I just returned from #49, Washington. Oregon would be number 50.

8) If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why? It would be incredible to dine with Ruth and listen to how she adapted so well; Apostle John and see the attributes that made him loved; Anne Frank and hear her story of resilience; my family, those in heaven and those on earth, they are my very favorite people!

9) Something not many people know about you: Often people don’t know I once worked for a sheriff’s office or that my summers were spent working in camps, especially a horse riding camp where we had a professional trainer to teach barrel riding and did lots of trail rides, or that I earned summer money as a lifeguard.

10) Favorite color: Depends on the day. Today it is blue!

11) Favorite movie: For meaning and thought – Testament of Youth; For fun – Inside Out and Star Trek or Star Wars movies.

12) Favorite sport and/or team: Depends on the season for the sport. Harding Bisons always. My husband enjoyed Cowboys and Cardinals (some years more than others) and those have been fun games for us to go see.

13) Favorite thing about Searcy: It’s home and it’s friendly. I love that it is a university town and all the depth of experiences that Harding brings to this community.

14) Favorite book (other than the Bible): Too many to name. A few are: In the Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day by Batterson; Brainstorm by Siegel; Upside by Rendon.

15) How long have you been teaching at Harding? Since 1997, almost 20 years.

16) Biggest challenge or obstacle: So far it’s processing the death of my husband.

17) Proudest moment or accomplishment: I’m changing this to sweetest moments. Seeing their daddy baptizing our children and performing the marriage ceremony for one.

18) Person who had the biggest impact on your life and why? My mate because of his wisdom, ability to love, ability to lead, and practical yet kind approach to life.

19) Favorite scriptures: A favorite right now is Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

20) Words of wisdom for our students: Stay balanced in life, remembering to breathe and keeping your focus on what is truly important: your faith, those you love, and whose you are. That will also give depth and value to your work in helping others.
Student Spotlight—Dholy Loor

I am Dholy Loor, and I am from Ecuador. I first came to Arkansas as an exchange student, and after I came back to complete a Master’s program, I was hired to teach Spanish in the Carlisle School District. Although all my family is still in Ecuador, I have been blessed with a wonderful host family that has become as my own. I enjoy reading, traveling, spending time with family and friends, dog agility training, and quilting. The last two I would have never discovered, had I not come to Arkansas. Teaching and interacting with students has been a joy, and now I am looking forward to working with them on the school counseling level; which I will start this fall. The Professional School Counseling at Harding has been everything I expected it to be and more. I have met wonderful people and learned a lot of useful information that I am sure will help me in my professional future.

Alumni Spotlight—Sue Bunn

My name is Sue Bunn and I live in Searcy, AR. I am a 2007 graduate of Harding’s Counseling Program. I am currently working as a School Counselor at Riverview School District since the fall of 2007. I LOVE my job! I consider it a ministry to the students, their parents and the teachers. Every day is different and holds new challenges and rewards.
Keep in Touch
Have You:

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☐ Added to your family?
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Bruce McLarty, D.Min.
President, Harding University

Donny Lee, Ed.D.
Dean, College of Education

Jenene Alexander, Ed.D.
Director, Professional Counseling Program

Angela English
Newsletter Editor/Designer

Fall 2016 Calendar

Classes Begin....................................................................................August 22
Fall Break Day (no classes) ...............................................................October 7
Homecoming Alumni Breakfast & CE............................................October 28
ArCA Conference & Poster Session...............................................November
Final Exams......................................................................................December 12 – 15
Commencement..............................................................................December 17

Disaster Drill

As a second-year student in the Professional Counseling Program, I had the opportunity to participate as a victim in the 2016 HU Disaster Drill on April 6th. Going into the experience, I was unsure of how I would feel or behave as I tried to prepare myself for the role of “victim.” As it turns out, the experience was more unique and rewarding than I could have ever anticipated. Thirty minutes prior to the drill I was handed a piece of paper which outlined my scenario as a victim—an uninjured survivor who has left her suitemate behind. Before I knew it, my face was being smeared with ashes by a drama student, and I was being led into the dorm building’s hazy lobby. The experience became very chaotic when I later exited the building and was instructed to breathe in from an inhaler and led to an area with a counselor. Though the disaster itself was staged, there was an undeniable sense of panic and chaos in the air. The experience was mentally and physically exhausting as I continued to play my part for my counselor. I found myself crying actual tears as the environment fueled my real sense of panic. Overall, the drill opened my eyes to the vulnerability that victims in a crisis experience, and it was encouraging to watch my fellow classmates demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

By: Claire Dangerfield

Disaster Drill

Shocked, crying, and dirty, students poured from the burning dorm building in small groups, filtered out by firefighters. Some were trapped for endless minutes until the emergency responders arrived, bringing freedom to the victims of the conflagration. But even after fleeing the building, the survivors of this accident had scars. Some were physical burns and even scarring of their lungs. But for many, their injuries were deeper, more emotional wounds. As a counselor, I worked with one such girl. Covered in ash, she cried for her friend whom she had left behind in the blaze. I consoled her, breathing with her to calm her heart rate, finding emergency responders to search for her missing friend. Yet, her panic continued, every few moments having difficulty breathing due to her anxiety. After several minutes of calmly reassuring, her anxiety seemed to diminish. With medical responders running everywhere, often frantic or emotionless, it was apparent that we counselors had a place there to be givers of comfort and provide a sense of safety and empathy. If this had been a real emergency, instead of just a simulation, I no doubt feel more prepared to fulfill this imperative role as a first responder.

By: Korey Alfred