

NEWS & MORE

BEARING WITNESS

It is a hard time for older adults who depend on health, home care, and social work services in New York City. The financial crisis plaguing the private and public sector has resulted in the rollback of many programs - a process that is expected to accelerate as more cuts are anticipated in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010.

Interpreting these changes to clients (and sometimes receiving blame for them) is stressful for social workers who see their role as protecting and supporting vulnerable elders struggling to maintain themselves in their own homes.

During these times social workers should take heart in two other roles of our profession - that of witness to the effect of these cuts on vulnerable clients and in turn that of advocate for positive change. All of us should join in and support the laudable advocacy efforts of many senior citizens and organizations such as the Council of Senior Centers and Services of NYC and United Neighborhood Houses of New York in seeking to reverse the cost cutting decisions that have been made. These organizations rely on the observations of front line workers for documentation of the human consequences of cost cutting; the case examples that bring abstract ideas to life. Front line workers are a crucial link in the information chain. Seize your power. Share your observations.

PRACTICE FELLOWS MOVE FORWARD

Our first cohort of Gerontological Social Work Practice Fellows (GSWPF) has formed a powerful support network through regular phone and in-person contacts. Implementing new policy directives and supporting front-line workers on the delivery of essential case management in a changing practice environment has been a major effort. We look forward to welcoming our second GSWPF cohort in 2011. SBW is engaged in ongoing collaboration with the Institute of Geriatric Social Work at Boston University on the design and implementation of web based interactive opportunities for Fellows - an exciting project.

GRAVEYARD BLUES

SBW Associate Harriet Rzetelny has written a wonderful new book. A mystery set in a waterfront Brooklyn neighborhood featuring a home care social worker as the detective, *Graveyard Blues* is a must-read for anyone who cares about older people, jazz and blues, and the many faces of love. Scroll down for more information.

GRAVEYARD BLUES by Harriet Rzetelny

Published 2010 by Hamilton Stone Editions
Available now at Amazon.com or through your local bookstore. www.graveyardbluesmystery.com

Home care social worker Molly Lewin confronts two unexpected challenges: an elderly client's murder, and the threatened eviction of his long-time companion, an old-time southern blues singer. To Molly, a neighborhood's older people are like the roots of a tree. "Without [this] strong root network, there is no continuity, no history, nothing to maintain the balance of life in a community." When she discovers a devious development scheme to demolish many of the low-rent buildings that house the neighborhood's elderly in order to build an upscale shopping complex, Molly is incensed and sets out to help them.

Her personal life is equally challenging: she worries about the uncertain fate of her brilliant but schizophrenic brother for whom she is sole caregiver, and struggles to come to terms with her ambiguous relationship with the NYPD detective on the case. In the end, it is Molly's passion for music, especially old jazz and blues, together with a cast of humorous, quirky and often quite surprising characters that help her to find the answers she seeks.

Set in a fictitious Brooklyn waterfront neighborhood less than two years following the World Trade Center disaster, this multi-layered mystery explores the often paradoxical complexities of love, loss, change, and the need for continuity.

Harriet Rzetelny is a writer, singer and gerontological social worker. Her short stories, many featuring Molly Lewin, have appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. Her non-mystery fiction has appeared in *The Bellevue Literary Review*, a journal of humanity and human experience.

"Harriet Rzetelny is an inheritor of the great tradition of the social novel which mixes imaginative and documentary writing. Magnificent in its reach, this tragicomic novel combines profound knowledge of the corridors through which a soul can be lost and found. *Graveyard Blues* haunts the imagination of the reader long after the murder mystery has been resolved."

Marc Kaminsky, author of What's Inside You It Shines Out

"I've just read *Graveyard Blues* and enjoyed it enormously. Having been a home care social worker for 30 years, and having started COHME, a non-profit home care agency, and dealt often with administrative problems related to homecare, I find so many of the situations right on target. Molly is a marvel."

Lucy Rosengarten, ACSW.
Founder and currently Board Member, COHME (Concerned Home Managers for the Elderly)

Look forward to hearing your comments.