

Broome  
Chenango  
Fulton  
Herkimer  
Madison  
Montgomery  
Oneida  
Otsego  
Schoharie

# Upstate Institute at Colgate University

2009: Number One

## Upstate Institute to help offer bankruptcy assistance

Thanks to a \$45,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida counties, Colgate University's Upstate Institute will develop and implement a program that provides free legal services to local low-income residents who are filing for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. In conjunction with the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc., a not-for-profit law office that provides legal assistance at no cost, the Upstate Institute has started working with new clients this spring for the Consumer Bankruptcy Law Project.

Ellen Kraly, director of the Institute, said, "Through the Upstate Institute's partnership with Legal Aid we will be able to expand regional resources, allowing residents who have incurred substantial debt to reorder their finances and obtain a fresh start. This is also a win-win situation because Colgate students selected for the program will be able to learn so very much about the law and about life. In essence, they will be able to expand their minds and enrich their hearts. At the same time, their work will contribute to the mission of the Legal Aid Society."

Five Colgate students will be selected for the project each semester, and as many as 15 students will be participating by the spring of 2010. Under the supervision of a project attorney, students will obtain

documentation, draft legal forms, and write memorandums for the files. Cases will then be referred to the pro bono attorneys who will meet with the clients and decide whether to file their cases in court.



*Ruben Leavitt, '08, works with Susan Conn and Paul Lupia at Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc.*

Susan Conn, Colgate alumna and lead attorney on the project, serves as mentor for student interns. The Consumer Bankruptcy Law Project grows out of a pilot project that began in January 2008. Seven students participated in the pilot and assisted 14 Legal Aid clients. Four of those clients had their cases referred and completed by volunteer attorneys, while the students have completed work for five other cases, which are ready to refer to volunteer attorneys.

"The seven students who worked with me on the pilot project have truly appreciated the opportunity to have hands-on experiences within the legal profession and leave a meaningful impact on our community," said Conn, who has 22 years experience at Legal Aid. "The pilot project has proven to be very successful, and we are fortunate to be able to continue the work."

Priority is given to low-income residents of Madison, Herkimer, and Oneida counties who are domestic violence survivors and other individuals with

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Upstate Institute is to create linkages between Colgate University and the regional community to engage students, faculty, staff and residents in research and a reciprocal transfer of knowledge that will enhance the economic, social and cultural capacity of the area and sustain the environment. These projects provide a model of community collaboration and civic engagement for our students and within higher education. The Institute values scholarly collaboration as a way to support the region.

insurmountable debt due to a job loss or medical illness. Individuals selected for the project will be prescreened by Legal Aid for financial eligibility and will need to meet additional criteria.

The grant money will also fund a training conference for 12 to 14 pro bono attorneys and Colgate student interns, the preparation of case files, and bankruptcy filings for 35 to 40 clients during an 18-month period.

## Youth Philanthropy Project launched at Norwich High School

Through a collaborative effort with Chenango United Way, NBT Bank and the Community Foundation for South Central New York, and with funding from the Frederick & Margaret L. Weyerhaeuser Foundation, the Upstate Institute is supporting the Youth Philanthropy Project. Sixteen juniors and seniors from Norwich High School will learn about the importance and impact of philanthropy in society and how philanthropists find and fund worthy causes. They will then get the chance to become benefactors themselves when the council distributes \$10,000 to not-for-profit agencies in Chenango County.



*Emily Katz, '09, Cassandra Galante, '09 and Jocelyn Recht, '09 work with students at Norwich High School in the philanthropy program.*

The students spent the first semester developing leadership skills while learning about philanthropy and non-profit organizations from community members in the nonprofit sector. During the second semester, as the group transitions into a working foundation, students are learning about the needs of Chenango County and will reach consensus on the goals to guide their grant making efforts. The capstone

event will be a public award presentation on behalf of those chosen by the students to receive the grants.

The year-long program was developed after the model of the Upstate Institute's Student Philanthropy Council at Colgate University. The project comes at the beginning of a trend to get young people across the nation to better understand philanthropy through an intensive hands-on project, giving out real money to real organization. In July 2009 the Upstate Institute will host a three day conference on student and youth philanthropy for primary, secondary and college educators throughout upstate New York



*Members of Stop NYRI stage a demonstration outside the PSC hearings.*

## Public Service Commission holds first power line hearing at Colgate

The Upstate Institute worked with the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) to provide area residents an opportunity to voice their opinions about a controversial electric transmission power line that is proposed to run from central New York to the New York City area.

At the hearings held in October on the Colgate campus, informational sessions led by state PSC staff members were followed by public hearings on the \$2.1 billion project proposed by New York Regional Interconnect. Two administrative law judges - Jeffrey Stockholm and Michelle Phillips - listened as dozens of residents stepped up to the microphone at the Hall of Presidents and talked about the 190-mile-long power line.

The overwhelming majority of the comments were negative, with residents questioning whether a thorough needs analysis for the project had been done,

expressing concern about the impact on agriculture, tourism, and real estate values, its potentially adverse effect on area electricity rates, and possible health issues surrounding electromagnetic fields.

The Upstate Institute also continues to support public discussion of the proposed power line by supporting research conducted by Rebecca Morgenstern Brenner on environmental justice. Environmental justice, as designated in Executive Order 12898, is the disproportionate environmental impacts to communities of minority or low-income populations. This assessment will review social indicators to assess the possibility that the proposed NYRI transmission project may violate environmental justice legislation.

## Public Health Planning Conference held at Colgate

Several organizations in Madison County are taking part in a process developed by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) called Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships, or MAPP. MAPP is a community wide strategic planning tool for improving public health. It gives the community a method to help prioritize public health issues, identify resources for addressing them, and take action. The National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP) is one stage of the MAPP process and focuses on assessing and improving the overall public health system.

Public health systems are commonly defined as "all public, private, and voluntary entities that contribute to the delivery of essential public health services within a jurisdiction." Public health systems can also be described as a network of entities with differing roles, relationships, and interactions as depicted in the picture to the left. These entities contribute to the public's health and well-being throughout the community. The county public health department is a major player in the regional public health system, but is not the sole provider of the full spectrum of essential public health services.

## Summer Field School Projects

### Madison County Department of Health

Allison Taylor, '09, worked with the Environmental Health Division at the Madison County Department of Health to enhance the GIS capabilities of the

department to track environmental health indicators. Using department data, she mapped the facilities and occurrences regulated by the division, including county wells, food service establishments, mobile home parks, organic farms, and cases of elevated blood lead levels in children. Applying ArcGIS software, she created a database that will assist in the identification of environmental conditions that may impact public health and property. The creation of this database will allow the division to better identify and track these conditions, and map surveillance data that could be used for assessments to improve delivery of services and protect the health of county residents.



*Allison Taylor, '09, at the Madison County Department of Health*

### Abraham House and Hope House

Curry Knox, '09 worked with the Abraham House in Utica on a capital grant proposal that would allow the organization to renovate an office building. Abraham House offers residence and a staff of professionals and trained volunteer caregivers to persons who have reached the end of curative therapy options. Curry also worked with Hope House, a non-profit organization that operates as a food shelter. She interviewed staff members and volunteers, immersed herself in the daily activities at the center, and also produced a booklet describing the organization and its successes.

### BRiDGES

Lea Furutani, '10, expanded the scope of a BRiDGES initiative that seeks to raise awareness of how alcohol is advertised to youth in Madison County. She expanded this initiative with additional public presentations, surveys of community opinion and the development of school and community partnerships to address the problem of underage drinking and the environmental

influences of such behavior. She also helped the non-profit organize a youth leadership summit, which was a two-day retreat focused on skill development related to creating and delivering focused presentations to key community leaders and on action plan development.

### Lorenzo State Historic Site

Kaitlin Tufts, '10, provided oversight of a day camp at Lorenzo State Historic Site that offers an immersion



*Kaitlyn Tufts, '10, at Lorenzo State Historic Site.*

experience in turn-of-the-century life. She conducted research on the history of education and teaching in the United States, and incorporated the information into a format appropriate for training staff and volunteers.

### Community Memorial Hospital

Grace Baik, '10, worked on an orthopedic research project under the direction of Diane Bialczak, RN In-Service Coordinator for Community Memorial Hospital, and Dr. Ivan Gowan. This study will examine outcomes of approximately 1,000 total knee prostheses over a 20-year period. Grace reviewed medical records for each surgery performed and conducted follow-up interviews to determine which of the prostheses required the least number of revision surgeries. The final goal of the project is a publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

### Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees

Mark Castiglia, '09, worked with Compass, the rebranding of MVRRC's cultural services. He conducted web-based research on cultural competency curriculum and developed training materials. He also assisted with the Refugee Running Team, which participated in the Utica Boilermaker, and coordinated

the 'International Mile' section of the race for the Center.



*Laura Simocko, '08, works at The Neighborhood Center, Inc.*

### The Neighborhood Center

Laura Simocko, '09, worked with the Somali Bantu Case Management Program at the Neighborhood Center in Utica. She performed outreach with interpreters and developed programming for future implementation. She researched and created life skills training materials for caseworkers and clients on transportation and home management. She also coordinated a community meeting between leaders in the Somali Bantu community and representatives of local and state government hosted by the Neighborhood Center.

### House of the Good Shepherd

David Pokorny, '10, worked with the House of the Good Shepherd in Utica to research and report on better ways to evaluate program outcomes within the organization. He looked at the activities of similar organizations to find potential new outcome measures that HGS could employ. He also developed a proposal for an investment in a new software program that would allow for web based tracking of the progress and outcomes for clients of the organization.

### Chenango United Way

Allison Bush, '09 worked with Chenango United Way to conduct community partner site visits and create a mid year outcome report. On these visits, she toured the program and examined the organizations' program outcomes and mid-year budgets. The organizations were scored based on the visit, and the scores will be incorporated into their request for funds next year.

Allison also updated an existing document, started by 2006 Upstate Fellow Julia Heymans, detailing the transition to a "business model" of evaluating requests for funding. The document, titled, "Our Transition to Community Impact," is to be used by the Chenango United Way when presenting to other United Ways planning to implement the business model.

Daniel Cavazos, '10 worked with Executive Director Elizabeth Monaco to develop the Youth Philanthropy Project, a pilot collaborative between the Chenango United Way, the Upstate Institute, the Community Foundation for South Central New York and Norwich High School that was implemented this fall.

### **Hamilton Central School**

Chris Glendening, '09, worked with several teachers at Hamilton Central School to integrate the arts and communications technology into the traditional curriculum to create a broader, connected field of study for the students. Chris completed three projects for the school: documenting past integrated arts projects; creating a short video documentary on the school itself; and running workshops for the school staff on communications software. He photographed and created notes on the past school projects that combined the arts with curriculum such as math or science, then organized the information into PowerPoint templates that will be used in grant applications.

### **Young Scholars Liberty Partnership Program at Utica College**

Griffin Goldsmith, '09, worked with the Young Scholars Liberty Partnership Program (YSLPP), which aims to help low-income children graduate from high school



*Griffin Goldsmith with the Young Scholars Liberty Partnership Program.*

and attend college. The YSLPP started in 1993 and has successfully graduated 10 cohorts of students. Griffin helped to create an alumni database that will allow the program directors to stay connected with graduates and use stories about their success as motivation for future YSLPP participants. She also assisted with the annual YSLPP Summer Session at Utica College, in which rising seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students attend classes for three weeks for both academic support and enrichment.

### **Earlville Opera House**

Katherine Byrns, '10, had the opportunity to study arts management while serving the local arts community. She assisted the EOH summer performance series of music and theater and with the East and West galleries, which present year-round exhibits of regional and national artists. She also assisted with the theater's circus camp program.

### **The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc.**

Ruben Leavitt, '08, worked with the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York (LASMNY) in the summer of 2008 to increase the organization's ability to provide bankruptcy representation to low-income clients, particularly victims of domestic violence, clients with mental health issues, clients struggling with medical debt as a result of being uninsured, and working poor families. Consumer bankruptcy gives the working poor who have incurred substantial debt an opportunity to reorder their finances and obtain a fresh start, but many individuals filing for bankruptcy are unable to afford a lawyer and typically cannot accurately complete the lengthy and confusing legal documents necessary to represent themselves in court. Ruben completed the legal forms and supporting documentation necessary for at least five of the cases to be referred to a pro bono attorney.

### **Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc.**

Swetha Peteru, '08, helped the Community Foundation pair with the United Way to create a capacity building program for regional non-profit organizations. She conducted research that would identify the best practices for approaching capacity building and make suggestions for short and long term goals for organizations interested in capacity building. She conducted interviews with leaders of the regional nonprofit community, community foundations across the nation, and nonprofit support centers that already

support capacity building programs. She also conducted a literature review of past capacity building efforts in the region in order to inform a program to build capacity in community organizations. Her research showed that capacity building programs need to have certain characteristics to be effective, such as being timely, assessment-based, customized, contextualized, competence-based, comprehensive, and allow for networking opportunities with peer connections.

### **Central Adirondack Laboratory for Environmental Sciences**

Ryan Streams, '09, worked with an environmentally-focused research and education facility within the Adirondacks. The proposed field station, which will be located at the former Arts Center of Old Forge building, will offer short-term and long-term accommodations for researchers conducting fieldwork in the Central Adirondacks. Ryan helped CALES refine its goals and future plans in order to develop a business plan that provided a narrative for what CALES is, how it will operate, and what it hopes to accomplish. He conducted extensive research into other field stations around the world, examined their operational schemes, and determined how CALES could emulate and improve on their models.



*Rachel Surprenant, '08, worked with the Chenango Canal Association..*

### **Chenango Canal Association**

Rachel Surprenant, '08 worked with the Chenango Canal Association, an organization that seeks to preserve the historic cultural and present-day recreational value of the Chenango Canal and its associated towpath. She provided outreach and marketing assistance, trail maintenance, signage, research and education. She also designed a brochure to accompany the interpretive trail and educate visitors

about the history of the Chenango Canal. Rachel organized a successful community work day to install new signs along portions of the trail in Bouckville.



*Kate Joyce, '09, works for National Abolition Hall of Fame*

### **National Abolition Hall of Fame**

The National Abolition Hall of Fame (NAHOF) honors exemplary people from three centuries that have dedicated their lives, efforts, and personal wealth to gain equal rights for all. Kate Joyce, '09, worked with NAHOF to prepare for the commemoration ceremony held at Morrisville State College in October 2008. She conducted research on the abolitionist inductees to assist in monologue background and on geographic locations of the inductees' work. She also facilitated the afternoon symposia at the ceremony, and co-facilitated the evening commemoration, which is the heart of the weekend.

### **Resource Center for Independent Living**

Carly Turro, '09, worked on a quality study of the programs offered through the Resource Center for Independent Living, an organization in Utica that offers advocacy services to people with disabilities. She began by researching how RCIL programs work, who is being served, what is being provided, and how clients benefit. She then identified what constitutes quality of service and experience and how quality can be measured. She applied the findings to six programs within the organization to determine the effectiveness of service delivery.

## Cornell Cooperative Extension

Katy Morley, '09, compiled an inventory of farms in Madison County for the Agricultural Economic Development program at Cornell Cooperative Extension. The program develops, maintains and promotes a viable agricultural economy by creating



market opportunities and encouraging value-added enterprises in the county. The finished map is part of a Buy Local campaign throughout the county.

## Cazenovia Preservation Foundation

Kevin Williams, '09, created baseline documentation reports (BDRs) for Cazenovia Preservation Foundation's easement properties. BDRs detail current site and environmental conditions when a conservation or architectural easement is established. For each property, Kevin reviewed the property project files, conducted a site visit to document conditions and monitor adherence to terms of the easement, and prepared and filed the BDR with photo documentation and pertinent background information. This project will support CPF's work toward accreditation by meeting several detailed Land Trust Alliance standards.



Kevin Williams, '09, works for Cazenovia Preservation Foundation.

## Executive Board

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**Susan Conn**, Consumer Bankruptcy Law Project Coordinator

**Julie Dudrick**, Project Consultant

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## Upstate Institute

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### *From the Director...*

*Thank you for your interest in the Upstate Institute and for receiving and reading our newsletter! As in previous newsletters, we have had to be selective in the project descriptions that we highlight, and even more so in this issue given our move to publish two issues annually rather than three. We seek to trim such administrative costs because the meaningful ways in which the Institute is engaged in the region continue to grow and, we believe, more profound.*

*As we generate knowledge about, for and with communities within the upstate region, the Institute provides opportunities for Colgate faculty, students and staff to deepen their experience of this historically, culturally and environmentally vibrant landscape in which we reside. My own Colgate experience has been transformed as a result of the Upstate Institute, and my commitment to community based research and public scholarship is firm. I look forward to continuing as director of the Institute for an additional year and working with each of you in contributing to the upstate region through creativity and collaboration.*

*Ellen Percy Kraly, Ph.D.*

*William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Geography  
Director, Upstate Institute*

