FSoS alum provides tsunami relief

Already in Tai Mendenhall’s brief career, he has witnessed things that most people only see on the evening news. Mendenhall (Ph.D., ’03) has now been a part of disaster relief efforts for both the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the tsunamis that struck the coasts of multiple South Asian countries last December. Although it is difficult to see first-hand the destruction and despair that the people of Sri Lanka are going through, Mendenhall gives partial credit to his training in the Department of Family Social Science for preparing him to deal with such extreme conditions. Dr. Mendenhall received his Bachelor of Science degree from Family Social Science in 1994. He then went on to receive a Master of Science degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from the Department of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University. Upon completing his Master’s, Mendenhall returned to Minnesota to collaborate with many of the people he met as an undergrad. Mendenhall, now Director of Behavioral Medicine at one of the University of Minnesota Medical School’s Family Medicine residency sites, completed his Doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy in 2003. While studying in FSoS, Mendenhall worked on an array of projects and topics, including experiences with mentors Bill Doherty and Hal Grotevant.

Above: A view of the calm ocean and shoreline in Sri Lanka. Below: A 180 degree turn from the same location shows the mass destruction caused by the tsunami in December.
ones. At the time, he had no idea this work would prepare him for something much larger.

‘Now I know what hell looks like’

After the tsunamis struck, Tai Mendenhall made the decision to go and help out however he could. Collaborating with the Green Cross, with whom he had worked while in New York City after 9/11, Mendenhall joined a group of traumatologists in relief efforts to aid surviving victims of the horrible destruction half a world away.

Mendenhall spent 15 days in Sri Lanka at the end of January and early February. Small 7-9 person multidisciplinary teams were assembled. While each team had people trained in various physical and mental health fields, under these conditions, everyone chipped in wherever they could. Mendenhall worked in processing surviving victims’ grief and trauma; conducting debriefings, clearing debris; cleaning wounds; distributing medical, food, and school supplies; and – often – just listening to the villagers’ stories.

The teams rotated among five camps up and down the eastern and southeastern Sri Lankan coasts. Each team worked for 3-5 days in a row, followed by a day’s rest. This was necessary in order to keep team members from burning out, and to provide respite from the intensity and content of the conditions in Sri Lanka, as well as the extreme work conditions (e.g., heat, insects, long hours). Compassion fatigue specialists, who function as therapists for the

See ‘Tsunami’ on page 4
Greetings!

As we bring closure to the 2004-2005 academic year, we are faced with many transitions. Two of our finest professors retired at the end of the year – Drs. Pauline Boss and Jim Maddock. We celebrated the promotions of two of our faculty, Drs. Wayne Caron and William Goodman and admitted our largest graduate student cohort in recent memory. Our new Family Social Science Advisory Board was launched. Members of the board have already demonstrated their commitment and interest in the future of the department by assisting us with ideas about development, the fit of our curriculum with the needs of employers, and public relations. Faculty have successfully competed for external funds to support their scholarship – our external support has reached over $1 million per year, and efforts spent to revise both the undergraduate and graduate curriculums seem worth our three-year investment. As you will see in this edition of Interactions, our students have been busy honing their skills and have received a number of awards for their excellent work. I once again am pleased to be part of such a great department and to experience the commitment to excellence by so many.

As we prepare for our new year, we will be gearing up for major reorganization at the U. During the 2004-2005 academic year, the University of Minnesota undertook the challenge of reorganizing itself to meet the challenges facing higher education in the 21st century. As a result, we are beginning a time of dynamic change. Faculty, staff, and students in the department have demonstrated throughout this year that they are up for the challenges and opportunities we will face as we begin the changes recommended in the university’s strategic positioning initiative.

It is important that we celebrate the wonderful history and legacy of the College of Human Ecology and our contributions to this excellent University of Minnesota unit.

The strategic recommendation most directly affecting Family Social Science calls for the movement of all units in the College of Human Ecology to other areas within the university. What does this mean for the Department of Family Social Science? As yet, we do not know many details. We do know that we will begin our transition to a new academic home this coming fall. The Department of Family Social Science, along with the School of Social Work, will share an academic home with departments in the College of Education and Human Development. In the very near future, task forces will be appointed by President Bruininks to assist with the work around these transitions.

Throughout the coming year, we will be doing a lot of celebrating – it is important that we celebrate the wonderful history and legacy of the College of Human Ecology and our contributions to this excellent University of Minnesota unit. We will also be doing a lot of “saying hello” to colleagues in the College of Education and Human Development. Already, we know some colleagues well and look forward to the many opportunities we expect for working together to integrate our strengths and scholarship.

As with any major change, we are balancing the stress and sadness that comes from shifting old associations and structures. Some days this has been painful; other days we have experienced great excitement about the opportunities that we believe are possible. We, as a group, are committed to the positive growth we have experienced and to the students who entrust us to help them accomplish their educational goals. We are up for the challenges of transition and hope that you join us in our continued commitment for a productive future.

It is my hope that, as we continue to evolve here at the U, we will also continue to have your support. Your commitment to Family Social Science is important, especially in times of major change. As our future unfolds, I will make every effort to keep you informed. If you have specific questions or wish to visit with me about these changes, please contact me.

My Best Wishes,

B. Jan McCulloch
Tsunami (cont.)

therapists, were also on hand to help
out and work with trauma responders
in processing their own reactions and
efforts in self care.

Dr. Mendenhall immediately recog-
nized this work as very different from
his New York City experience.
Although the residual effects of 9/11
were far-reaching, the actual physical
destruction was comparatively
isolated. With the tsunami, the de-
struction stretched across multiple
countries. With casualty numbers
reaching hundreds of thousands, it has
left millions without loved ones.

“The never-ending nature of the
devastation is incomprehensible,”
Mendenhall shared. “Houses, boats,
railroad tracks, bridges, roads – lives – are destroyed across a magnitude
that will never be captured on televi-
sion or newspapers. Now I know
what hell looks like.”

Unbreakable spirit

For so many Sri Lankans, the ocean
is their livelihood. Fishing and tourism
are among the largest industries in the
region. Right before the tsunami hit,
the ocean receded significantly – as
far as a kilometer in some places. In
response, hundreds of villagers went
running out to see what was going on.
They were drawn to all of the shells,
fish and oceanscapes that were
previously underwater. Some villagers
thought that their gods were giving
them more land. They had no idea
what was coming.

Mendenhall reflects on the inspiring
will of the Sri Lankan villagers:

“The stories we have heard are
innumerable and heartbreaking. So
many children have lost their parents
and their brothers and sisters. So
many parents have lost their children –
literally ripped away from them by the
tsunami’s fury. And yet, while an
overwhelming sadness is universal
here, the resolve of these beautiful
people is something that can speak
only to the amazing power and
strength of the human spirit – and a
love for family, neighbors and stran-
gers.”

Doherty honored by
the ‘U’

On May 10th, Family Social Science
professor Bill Doherty was honored by
the University of Minnesota with the
2005 Outstanding Community
Service Award. Doherty joined
five others as recipients of the
university-wide recognition.
A banquet was
held for honorees
at the Radisson Hotel Metrodome.
Additional recipients were Pamela
Holsing-Fuchs, Director of Student
Activities, UM-Crookston; Robert
Nemeth, Executive Secretary, Lions
5M Hearing Foundation; Joy Janzen,
Extension Educator, Aitkin County
Courthouse; Larry Rudnick, Professor,
School of Physics and Astronomy,
UM-TC; and Thomas Stinson, Profes-
sor, Department of Applied Economics
and State Economist of Minnesota.

Doherty was recognized for emphasizing civic engagement as a way to
strengthen family life. His efforts as a
researcher and educator have fo-
cused on applying academics to the
concerns and needs of communities,
while engaging the knowledge and
energy of citizens. Doherty has
written about and developed new
strategies for working with family
issues such as diabetes care, the
over-scheduling of middle class
children, support for fragile new
families in urban communities, and
community-engaged parent educa-
tion.

Doherty believes community-oriented
work is important in the academic
community. “This award feels like an
endorsement for my last six years of
work in creating alliances with com-
munities on behalf of families. The
key is that this is faculty work,
academic work, and not just volun-
teer work in my off hours.” Doherty
said. “What we have done here in
FSoS is to create a culture where
public engagement is at the core of
what we do, not at the periphery.”

Doherty has stimulated public discus-
sions about the collective impact of
family decision-making and time
management. He also has worked
collaboratively with colleagues in the
Department of Family Medicine and
Community Health to develop Citizen
Health Care – a model that involves
citizen decision-making concerning
health resources. One of his most
recent accomplishments is a three-
year McKnight Foundation grant for
Community Engaged Parent Educa-
tion, which has pioneered a national
model to encourage parents to work
individually and collectively on the
public problems that face families.
This spring, the Department of Family Social Science took time to honor the work and careers of two legendary professors. Both Dr. Pauline Boss and Dr. Jim Maddock are retiring from the department after a combined half-century of teaching, research and service. They were each saluted by colleagues, students, family and friends for their groundbreaking work and commitment in the field of family science.

On April 15th Jim Maddock was honored at the Weisman Art Museum on the Minneapolis campus. Dr. Maddock was among the founders of the department as it exists today in McNeal Hall. Over his thirty-plus year career in the department, Maddock became a leader in the field of human sexuality and marriage and family therapy.

A reception honoring Pauline Boss took place on May 21st at Coffman Union. Dr. Boss joined the department in 1984 and forever changed the way people cope with the many forms of ambiguous loss. Her work has been published worldwide and she’s received numerous awards for her research and outreach work, including her work with the families of the NYC union workers who perished on 9/11.

Although retiring, both Drs. Maddock and Boss will continue to enrich the history of the department through their future endeavors, as well as through the many students and professionals they’ve inspired.
NEWS & NOTES

STUDENT NEWS

Patricia Schaber successfully defended her dissertation on November 15th. Her work is titled Family Decision-Making: Examining the Decision Context, Process, and Outcome When Employees Are Offered Long Term Care Insurance.

On November 30th, Kurt Wical was successful in defense of his dissertation titled Father Identity as a Predictor of Father Behavior: A Validity Study.

On February 10th, Carey Wexler Sherman successfully defender her dissertation entitled Alzheimer’s Spouse Caregiving in Late Life Remarriages.

On May 13th, the College of Human Ecology granted FSoS undergrad Jennifer Bradley the Experience Abroad Fall Award in the amount of $1,000. Ms. Bradley will be studying abroad during Fall semester 2005.

On May 18th Dawn Reckinger successfully defended her dissertation titled Influence of Family Perceptions of Burden on Adolescent Mental Health Service Utilization.

FSoS undergrads Kimbery Wix and Betsey Palmer were both awarded CHE Undergraduate Professional Experience Grants (UPEG). The grant is $600 and will aid the students’ work during their internships.

Graduate student Paul Orieny has been named the recipient of a Bush Fellowship. The Bush Foundation, created in 1953, encourages and promotes charitable, scientific, literary, and educational efforts in order to enhance the quality of life in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The foundation has awarded over $600 million in grants and fellowships since its inception.

Several FSoS undergraduate students have been named recipients of CHE awards and scholarships. Congratulations to Carly Emil (Legacy Scholarship), Stacy Sielaff (Augustus Searle Scholarship), Megan Pardy (Augustus Searle Scholarship), Keli Bolin (Augustus Searle Scholarship), Theresa Thompson (Erna Kvitrud Scholarship), Amanda Beardsley (Gute Scholarship/Erna Kvitrud Scholarship) and John Barner (Constance Fabumni Scholarship/Elizabeth Ukkelberg Scholarship).

Kristy Piescher has been named a recipient of the Diamond Anniversary Fellowship from the Educational Foundation of Phi Upsilon Omicron.

Yvette Perry was among those selected for the Graduate School 2005-06 Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship Award. The competition for this University-wide fellowship program included approximately 160 nominations.

ALUMNI NEWS
Jerica Berge (Ph.D., ’04) has accepted a position as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Consumer Medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

On April 17th, Bill Allen (Ph.D., ’97) was a guest speaker at the African American Male Project (AAMP) conference on State of the Black Family: Male Responsibility. The town-hall style meeting also featured speakers Rev. Al Sharpton and AAMP Director Gary Cunningham.

Celvia Stovall (Ph.D., 1992) has recently accepted a position as Extension Association Administrator at North Carolina A&T University.

FACULTY & STAFF NEWS
Wayne Caron has been promoted to Senior Lecturer and Assistant Professor. William Goodman has been promoted to Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor.

Bill Doherty has received a three-year grant from the McKnight Foundation to fund his Community Engaged Parent Education Project.

Jodi Dworkin has received a Summer Fellowship from the University of Minnesota to support her work with Adolescent and Young Adult Health Related Behaviors and Family Development.

Virginia Zuiker and graduate student Clint Gudmunson have been awarded a Bush Foundation grant. The grant is part of an initiative titled Promoting Student Learning in Large Classes and was awarded to Dr. Zuiker’s FSoS 3101: Personal and Family Finances course.

The Winter issue of the University of Minnesota Medical School’s Bulletin profiled Dr. Wayne Caron and his work as the director of the Family Caregiving Center.

In March, FSoS welcomed Peggy Larson to the department. She joined the accounting staff after four years in the Department of Soil, Water & Climate.

Hal Grotevant has recently been awarded over $1 million in funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Science Foundation. The combined grants are apart of one large project that is being funded by a partnership between NIH and NSF. These grants fund the third wave of the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project, which will investigate how the degree of openness in the adoption arrangement affects the adopted children as young adults.

Steven Pearthree has recently completed an appointment to the 2004-2005 U of M President’s Emerging Leaders (PEL) program. The program was designed to identify talented staff and further develop their readiness and skills for leadership roles. Participants become part of a talent pool that administrators can tap for open University positions or other assignments that require leadership skills.

Cathy Solheim and Jan Hogan have received a McKnight Foundation grant for their work on Comparison of Financial Train-the-Trainer Models. Drs. Hogan and Solheim were invited by the McKnight Foundation to evaluate several financial education-training models.

Wayne Caron has received a CHE eScholarship grant for The Virtual Collaborative Learning Center. Dr. Caron will be working with the college to create an interactive website that will increase access to the research findings and collaborative learning of the Family Caregiving Center.

Sharon Danes along with Regional Extension Educators Lori Hendrickson, Becky Hagen-Jokela and Sara Croymans have recently been awarded the Excellence in Extension Award presented by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). The award is for the creation and implementation of the workshop series titled Financial Literacy: What’s New in Credit & Debt? The team will be honored during the AAFCS Annual Conference, June 26th, 2005.

Make a gift...

You may make a gift to the Department of Family Social Science through the University of Minnesota Foundation. You may choose to designate your gift to any of the funds below:

- Friends of the Family Assistantship (3911)
- Shirley Zimmerman Fund (5487)
- David Olson Fellowship (5816)
- FSoS Strategic Initiative (2748)
- Jan Hogan Fellowship (5734)
- Family Caregiving Program (5995)
- Ambiguous Loss Project (5937)

You may also choose to memorialize a loved one by donating in their name. Visit www.foundation.umn.edu or call 612-626-8560 or 1-800-775-2187 for more information.

Thank you,
Family Social Science

Our mission: to enhance the well-being of diverse families in a changing world through teaching, research, and outreach.