

Spotlight On

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA

By Travis Gulbrandson

travis.gulbrandson@plaintalk.net

For the first 15 years of its existence, USD's Disaster Mental Health Institute (DMHI) was on the scene at disasters around the globe, from the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 to the Indian Ocean tsunami.

The DMHI provided direct mental health support and training in the wake of these traumatic events, and helped other countries develop their own response programs for use into the future.

Then in 2009, its funding was cut due to the economic crisis.

"Basically, disaster response was taken out of our job description," said Gerard Jacobs, Ph.D., USD psychology professor and director of the DMHI. "(The program) doesn't make money, and therefore it's something the university prefers not to fund."

Jacobs said he hopes that this will change with the improvement of economic conditions.

"The disasters certainly aren't stopping, and we need to learn more about how to help people to get through those difficult times not just in our country, but in countries around the world," he said. "I think it's a moral obligation to be able to share the resources that we have with those who are less fortunate, and to try to help them rebuild their lives in the aftermath of destruction."

The DMHI was

established based on the proposal of Jacobs and Randal Quevillon, Ph.D., in 1993. Their idea was to develop a national plan for disaster mental health, to have national standards, policy and training, and prepare people respond to those kinds of events.

"We didn't envision in 1993 the degree of international work that we would be called to do. We've worked now in well over 30 countries," Jacobs said. "We didn't envision that world scope initially, but the fact is that our expertise in the field was called on particularly to help in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami."

"I spent the good part of three years working with countries affected by the tsunami, helping them to develop their psychological support programs and helping them to implement those programs," he said.

The DMHI has received numerous awards, including the American Psychological Association International Humanitarian Award in 2007, an award for advancing the science of psychology internationally from the International Union for Psychological Science in 2008, and the Distinguished International Psychologist award in 2006.

Jacobs and Dr. Beth Boyd also were appointed by order of President George W. Bush as two of the 12 "invited experts" on the Disaster Mental Health Subcommittee of the National Biodefense Science Board. The DMHI

Jacobs hopes state will help DMHI fulfill its mission

was the only organization to have two experts on the board.

In its present state, the DMHI provides training to undergraduate and graduate students, as well as professionals, such as through its Psychological First Aid course, which provides people with the tools to cope with disasters and traumatic events, as well as day-to-day life.

The DMHI also has research programs to advance the scientific understanding of the work on the field, and consults and trains people who are helping communities and countries prepare for disasters.

One example is Japan, with whom the DMHI developed a psychological support program, which was utilized in the aftermath of its earthquake and nuclear crisis.

"We're still working with them," Jacobs said. "We're about to begin some research to look at the ways the Japanese people responded, and how we could perhaps improve their psychological support program in the future."

The cut funds enabled the DMHI to work with other countries more effectively, Jacobs said.

"In the world of disaster response and humanitarian assistance, normally you have to go out and do the work first, and then the reimbursement comes down the line," he said. "But, if you don't have that money up front, the work simply can't be done."

As a result, the DMHI has utilized online

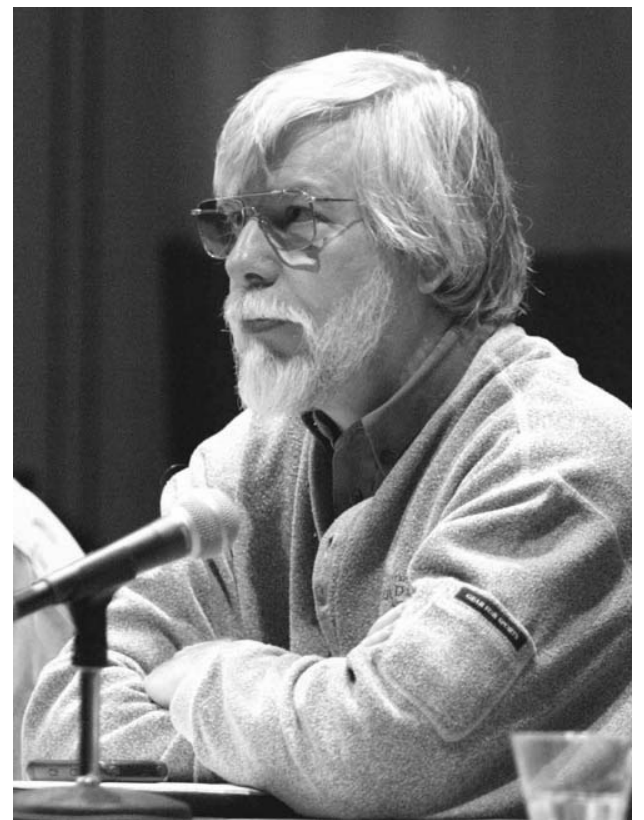
interactive technologies to work with people and organizations from other countries.

"In a lot of ways, that's easier because flying all over the place is not necessarily the easiest thing to do," Jacobs said. "But it's also very different from being on the spot and seeing the issues that they're dealing with and being able to look over their shoulder and provide feedback as they go."

Unfortunately, Jacobs added, these kinds of relief programs are "few and far between."

"We've been trying to help places expand, but it involves a lot of work, and when they realize how much time and work it involves, they tend to drop by the wayside," he said. "You need to stay current with the field, and you need to go out into the field and work with folks in disasters (to help them) understand what's going on."

"As with the state of South Dakota, they realized that doesn't have a



big pay-off," he said.


"There's not a big check at the end of the month to say, 'Gee, this is wonderful stuff. Keep doing it.' So the state decided to end the funding. I think the experience of a lot of other universities has been the same. If it's not making money, then it seems harder for the universities to sustain."

For this to change, Jacobs said there needs to be a "change of attitude" by those in power, "a change to reflect the fact that not everything is about making profit, that

sometimes you have to look at what you can do to help people who are in need. ...

"The scope of these things and the lack of resources in these developing countries is staggering, and being able to provide them with some inexpensive ways to respond to those events and help the people in rebuilding their lives I think is something that's well worth continuing," he said.

For more information, visit www.usd.edu/dmhi.




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Thank You!

A big thank you to family and friends for the many 80th birthday wishes. It has been a great way to celebrate.

God Bless
Albert Rosenbaum

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Merton Turner
On Friday June 14th.

The Open House will be from 3pm to 6pm at the Pointe Golf & Events Center located at the Pointe Golf Course in Elk Point.

Hope to see you there!



Welcome to the World

The following babies were born at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in May 2013:

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BELLA	EMMA	KYLER	NOAH	TREVOR
BRADYN	JAXON	KYLER	OLLIE	TROY
BRAYLEE	JAZLYNN	KYSON	QUINN	SUMMER
BROCK	JONATHAN	LONDON	RIAN	WESLEY
CHAR'LEE	KAYDEN	MAPLE	RYDDER	ZETTA
CHERYL	KAYMEN	MAXWELL	RYLEE	

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