



## New volunteers bring expertise and enthusiasm

*New committee members look forward to making a difference and giving back*

The four new volunteers serving on the Exam Committee reflect a diversity that the exam is often criticized for lacking. But that diversity is a hallmark of the exam development program. Item writers are selected based on geographic, demographic, and subject matter needs of the program, and Exam Committee members are selected from the roster of item writers

using the same criteria. Exam Committee members serve a one-year term, renewable for two additional years, during which time they form close professional relationships with the other members. For the four new members of the Exam Committee, it all began over a rainy, cold weekend in Baltimore at the end of March.

Despite the official arrival of Spring a week earlier, the rain

and cold temperatures persisted for the three days that committee members met in darkened rooms to review items projected on screens

for group deliberation. Joining the Masters Committee are June Yee, of Alberta, and Adolpha Bassett, of North Carolina. Starting their terms with the Clinical Committee are Emily Honken, of Minnesota, and Bora Sunseri, of Louisiana.

Each year the Examination Committee meets up to four weekends to review items for the licensing exams. Some items get approved for pretest, some do not. Last year the committee reviewed 1,635 items and approved 1,234 for pretest. The volume of items approved year over year has built a sizable bank of items to choose from when it is time to build the 170-item exams, or forms, as the tests are called. The collaborative experience of serving on the Exam Committee is completely different from the experience of being an item writer. Item writers work independently to develop their items, which they then submit to one of ASWB's item development consultants. The item review process is a one-on-one interaction conducted primarily via email. Following approval by the item development consultant, the items move on for consideration by the Examination Committee.

June Yee said of her first day as a Masters Committee member, "I was not overwhelmed. It seems organized, and it's a practical, intellectually stimulating, and



*The new members of the Exam Committee attended their first meeting in March. Seated (l-r): June Yee (AB), Masters Committee, and Emily Honken (MN), Clinical Committee. Standing (l-r): Bora Sunseri (LA), Clinical Committee, and Adolpha Bassett (NC), Masters Committee.*

enjoyable process.” Bora Sunseri, one of the new members of the Clinical Committee, also found the experience enjoyable, saying, “I liked the group discussion and seeing what happens to the items.” When your own items are on the screen, she said with a laugh, “it’s humbling, but you also see what happens to your contribution” and how the items are improved.

Yee’s social work career has been mostly in health care. She applied to be an item writer because she thought it would give her an opportunity to learn. “It was a good reason to read,” said Yee, “I increased my knowledge and got a broader exposure to literature.” She became an item writer in 2010 but is not writing while serving on the committee.

Yee is currently a clinical social worker for the Southern Alberta Congenital Heart Clinic and Heart Health. The PLC hospital has a specialty clinic that treats adult patients born with a heart defect. She also works with people who have acquired heart conditions. In addition to treatment for physical symptoms, patients are treated for psychosocial conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety. Yee’s clients meet with her as often as necessary for therapeutic assessment and treatment. Outside of work, she enjoys activities such as cryptic crosswords, hiking, gardening, cooking, and dancing. “I look forward to further involvement with the Masters Exam Committee,” she said.

For Sunseri, getting started in the item writing program was more by accident than by design. She received an email announcement about the program and responded. She was accepted to the program in 2011 and found time to write after

work and when her two children, now 10 and 12, were asleep.

Sunseri is currently a CQI child welfare manager for the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services. CQI stands for “continuous quality improvement.” In this administrative role, she works with managers in the field across three state regions to provide child welfare case review feedback to improve the quality of practice. The goal is to engage families, providers, and staff to increase the safety, permanency, and well being of children involved with the child welfare agency. Her role also involves assessing quality and suggesting ways to improve practices statewide for consistent performance, which may include policy and practice changes and related legislative changes.

During the time that she was an item writer, Sunseri was a training manager for the department. Before that, she worked in the field and was involved in many different settings. In addition to working in child welfare investigations, foster care, and adoptions, she worked in the state correctional system with offenders, and later she was recruited by the Air Force to provide clinical services as a civilian.

The Air Force saw her expertise in child welfare as important to the work she would be doing with military members. She describes the interrelationship of the jobs in her career: “The children who don’t get good care come into the child welfare system,” she explained. “Many end up in the correctional system. Sometimes juveniles who improve within corrections will enlist [in the military]. At that point, their tough childhood

might come out in their service. They might show disrespect to others. They then are mandated for treatment by their commanding officers or other authority. Their treatment is often not voluntary.”

Sunseri’s husband asked her why she decided to work on the Exam Committee as a volunteer. “I wanted to contribute to the social work field,” she said. “It’s important to give back and help others.” As a practitioner of quality improvement initiatives, Sunseri was quick to praise ASWB’s exam development process. “I’m impressed by all that goes into the process,” she said. “It’s top of the line. The items make sense, are professionally sound, and are grammatically correct.”

Emily Honken, of Minnesota, also on the Clinical committee, is a new mother in addition to being a new committee member. She traveled to Baltimore with her 11-week-old son and husband. Asked what her first meeting was like, she responded, “It’s extremely busy! I’m running back and forth during the breaks to feed my son. But it’s been a good weekend.” Honken had applied to the item writer program after seeing an announcement on her state board’s website. At the time she was licensed at the Masters level. When she was accepted in 2007, she had just passed her clinical exam. So over time she has written for both the Masters and the clinical exams.

Honken currently is a clinical social worker at the Fraser Clinic, a clinic for children from the ages of 2 through 21 who have special needs, including autism spectrum disorders. She provides individual therapy for children on the autism spectrum as well as parent/child

interaction guidance for parents of children with autism. She has been with the clinic for the last 10 years. She also is a program and staff supervisor. She credits her work as an item writer with helping her work supervising staff. “You always have new situations,” she said, “and have to think through what the right reason is.” Writing items provided her “additional insight.” Her areas of expertise are special needs, supervising staff, child development, and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Adolpha Bassett, of North Carolina, serving on the Masters Committee, felt welcomed as a new member at his first meeting. “I enjoyed how everyone worked together and contributed to the review process,” he said. He also appreciated the “wealth of knowledge and

skills” of the other members of the Masters Committee.

Bassett was accepted as an item writer in 2012. His areas of specialization include assessment and diagnosis, human development, families, social work ethics, and cultural diversity. He decided to apply in part because he considered it a “worthwhile challenge” and in part to see what goes on behind the scenes in developing the exams. He discovered, like Sunseri and Yee, that a lot of care goes into the development of the exams: “It is quite obvious that a significant amount of time, energy, and planning is invested,” he said.

When he is not serving on the Exam Committee, Bassett is a hospital liaison for a county government-funded health center in the Raleigh area, Johnston

Mental Health Center, which is in partnership with a managed care organization. He is involved with treatment and discharge planning for adult patients who are psychiatrically hospitalized in acute units in the eastern region of North Carolina. Outside of work, Bassett is an avid fiction reader and enjoys traveling.

The Examination Committee will meet three more times this year, in June, August, and October. The August meeting will be in Philadelphia. June and October meetings will be held in Washington, D.C., and Herndon, Virginia, respectively. From “getting their feet wet” at the meeting in Baltimore, these new volunteers will spend the rest of the year contributing their expertise and enthusiasm for a process that ensures the reliability, defensibility, and validity of the exam.