Change permeates life. The absence of change is worse than inaction; it is atrophy. A philosopher whose name I no longer recall once said: “Continuity gives us roots, but change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights.” The last three years have been a time of much change in ASWB. Despite change, we have continuity of mission: We want to help member boards protect the public they serve. Those roots grow deep and anchor ASWB.

We have added many branches of change over the last years, however, beginning with a new CEO. Mary Jo Monahan has brought energy and fresh ideas to our organization. It has been my pleasure to partner with her, as she oversees organizational and operational issues, and I, along with the Board of Directors, tackle governance matters. At times, it can be a juggling act, but we have learned a great deal about how to create a workable marriage of these different spheres.

And have the branches grown! The 2014-2018 Strategic Plan has been highly instructive in nurturing our organization. The Path to Licensure initiative is flowering across social work education. The International Technology Task Force has produced excellent guides in regulating technology in social work. ASWB has been aggressively pursuing ideas to foster license mobility and now has a task force in place to shape those ideas into a workable plan. Meanwhile, our exam programs continue to be robust and are growing remarkably.

One branch that is springing forth is the addition of the great state of California to ASWB. This beautiful branch will bring us not only new faces, but new ideas and perspectives. Another branch that grows out of the continuity of our roots involves the excellent work of our Bylaws Committee in thoroughly reviewing the organization’s bylaws and bringing back suggestions for alterations that help us change as our context changes. I encourage all of you to consider these suggestions, which are the product of much thought and study, with an open mind. Sometimes it is difficult to embrace changes, because the change seems to imply that we haven’t been doing things correctly in the past. Not so! The reality is that we live in a fast-changing professional world, and we need to respond to those changes so that we have contemporary, workable ways to assist member boards.
to do their important tasks.

Together, we are growing a beautiful tree: It is held in place by our important mission, while it grows handsome branches that respond to the environment and reach into the future. I am so pleased to be part of growing this tree! Hopefully many of you will join me in Ft. Lauderdale for our Delegate Assembly, where we can learn from each other, relax on the beach sipping libations crowned with little paper umbrellas, and admire the growing and changing tree we are nurturing.
Learning the ropes

You can’t please everyone all of the time—but that’s the administrator’s job

Making sense of the job of board administrator can be overwhelming, especially when there are so many stakeholders to respond to—the public, politicians, licensure applicants, and board members to name a few. So figuring out how to answer the many questions that come through the office and also keep up with the day to day operations can be a challenge.

This year, ten jurisdictional board staff attended ASWB’s second annual Administrators Workshop to share their wisdom and learn from each other. Many attendees got to the Arlington, Va., venue after dealing with missed or nearly missed flights, lost luggage, and weather—Hurricane Joaquin—to be specific. All weekend long, rain and winds, colder temperatures, and nearby flooding made participants glad to be indoors.

There was joking about naming this training session “Survivor,” after the popular reality television show that drops contestants into an isolated wilderness locale where they have to compete in challenging games, provide food and shelter for themselves, and avoid getting voted off the show—all for the opportunity to win US$1 million. The similarities began and ended with the challenges of getting to Virginia. There was no million dollar prize, meals and accommodations were provided, and ASWB participants were collaborators, not contestants.

Simeon Frazier (OH), Megan Gallagher (MN), and Kevin MacDougall (NS) listen intently during the workshop.
Even so, the group came together to support each other like the best of the Survivor tribes—without the backstabbing—and no one was voted off the island.

The workshop was facilitated by John Mayr, registrar of British Columbia College of Social Workers, and Kate Zacher-Pate, executive director of the State of Minnesota Board of Social Work. True to the variety of professions that board staff often represent, Mayr has a law degree while Zacher-Pate is a social worker. The attendees also were rather evenly distributed between social workers and other professions, as well as between U.S. and Canadian jurisdictions. Jennifer Henkel, ASWB director of member services, said that the diversity was not intentional but certainly welcomed because it added to the richness of the discussions.

“The administrator training is modeled on the New Board Member Training,” said Henkel, “but the focus is different. Staff members have a role of supporting the board and informing board members about things like media inquiries.” Staff members deal with responding to reporters, for example, so there is more time spent in small groups talking about how to handle these types of requests. Henkel went on to note that the administrator training is 100 percent peer led, unlike New Board Member Training, which is co-facilitated by ASWB legal counsel Dale Atkinson.

Despite the weather and other challenges involved, Kathleen Lanoue of Ontario summed up the weekend as a positive experience: “This is my first ASWB meeting and it’s very well done.”
With an agenda this full, it’s a good thing we’ll start with a relaxing dinner reception!

Delegates to the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly will have a lot on their metaphorical plates when they get to Ft. Lauderdale. In addition to the elections (three members of the Board of Directors and one member of the Nominating Committee), delegates will weigh in on a range of changes to the ASWB Bylaws, and more minor changes to the association’s Model Social Work Practice Act. The agenda for the meeting is divided between a day of reporting on Friday, followed by a day of action Saturday.

Friday morning, ASWB President Dorinda N. Noble of Texas will call the assembly to order, followed by the roll call of jurisdictions and the approval of the agenda for the remainder of the meeting. Reports to the assembly begin at 9:30 a.m. with the association leadership report from ASWB CEO Mary Jo Monahan. Next, the Nominating Committee presents this year’s election slate and delegates will have the opportunity of making nominations from the floor.

Late Friday morning, this year’s Bylaws and Resolutions Committee report will provide an overview of the proposed changes to the ASWB Bylaws, which encompass cosmetic changes to adjust language, to expansion the Board of Directors and Nominating Committee. By hearing the committee’s report on Friday, delegates will have ample time to follow up with questions prior to voting on Saturday morning.

Following the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee report, the Regulation and Standards Committee will present its recommendations for changes to the association’s Model Social Work Practice Act. Attendees can review these changes on the ASWB website prior to arriving, and Friday will allow ample opportunity for discussion as well.

After lunch, ASWB staff will provide information to the assembly about the association’s new headquarters, including architectural renderings of the new facility. Committee reports continue in the afternoon, until election candidates give their speeches at 2:45 p.m.

The assembly will recess at 3:45 p.m., and attendees can relax...
and get to know election candidates at a reception immediately following.

Saturday morning, ASWB President Dorinda Noble will present her formal report to the assembly. ASWB legal counsel Dale Atkinson will briefly explain parliamentary rules for the day’s elections, motions, discussions, and voting.

Elections will be conducted electronically, as they were in 2014. Before voting at 9:45 a.m., delegates will be able to practice with the keypads during a brief introduction and explanation of the technology. Because the electronic voting system reports results immediately, the assembly will know the election outcomes prior to the morning break.

Late morning on Saturday, the assembly will formally vote on the changes to the ASWB Bylaws. Following that discussion and voting, delegates will vote on the proposed changes to the Model Social Work Practice Act. Again, voting for these actions will happen electronically.

Following these votes, ASWB Treasurer Carole Y. Bryant of Saskatchewan will report to the assembly about the association’s finances. The annual awards presented by ASWB—the Sunny Andrews Award for board service and the Board Administrator Award—will be presented at the awards luncheon Saturday.

After lunch on Saturday, the assembly will hear from the co-chairs of the Examination Committee—Greg Winkler of Wisconsin, Brent Meyer of Georgia, and Mary Stebbins of Virginia—about the examination program in 2015. This report will be followed by an executive session of the assembly, which will not be recorded, to present the technical report for the ASWB examination program.

Saturday afternoon, outgoing ASWB president Dorinda Noble will pass the gavel to incoming president M. Jenise Comer of Missouri. Following Comer’s remarks, the entire Board of Directors will take the oath of office for the coming year of service to ASWB.

After a sunny (but very busy) weekend in Ft. Lauderdale, attendees will be invited to the next ASWB Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in San Diego, California! The assembly will adjourn Saturday afternoon at 3:30 p.m.

Thursday!

Administrators for ASWB member jurisdictions have come to rely on the Administrators Forum for information, collaboration, and commiseration for several years. These twice-annual meetings give regulatory professionals an opportunity to network with colleagues from throughout the U.S. and Canada.

For the second time, ASWB is offering a parallel gathering for social work regulatory board/college members. The Board Member Exchange (f.k.a. Board Member Colloquium) was a hit in Seattle, Washington, prior to the 2015 Spring Education Meeting in May. This fall, attendees will get an all-day meeting with facilitated discussion of key issues facing social work regulators.

Other sessions are planned for first-time attendees and members interested in volunteer leadership opportunities.

Attendees are invited to the welcome dinner and reception, which will feature a Latin jazz combo. To take advantage of the warm Florida locale, all are encouraged to wear summer white attire.
**association asides**

**A star in our midst!**

That’s SIMEON FRAZIER’s son Michael-Steven R. Frazier in the photo, which was taken recently during filming of a biopic about U.S. Navy fighter pilot Jesse L. Brown that is being shot throughout Ohio. Jesse Brown gained acclaim as the first African-American aviator in the Navy. He also was the first African-American naval officer killed in the Korean War. Michael-Steven, age 10, is cast as the young Jesse. SIMEON works with the administrator for the Ohio board. Watch for the movie, likely in 2016–17!

**Staying connected**

MEGAN GALLAGHER, a regulations analyst for the Minnesota board, was enjoying the Administrators Workshop but missing her daughter. This was her first trip away from 15-month-old EMMA. Thank goodness, she said, for video technology that allowed her to stay connected with home.

**It’s a dog’s life**

 Jurisdictional board staff were sharing stories of their faithful companions during the recent workshop training.

KEVIN MacDOUGALL (NS) has a new dog, named Dougall MacDougall. KEVIN’s previous pooch was named Mac MacDougall.

ERIKA MAZORATI (MI) rescues great Danes and has a new 10-month-old puppy.

EDWINA McGRODDY (ON) also has a new dog named Romeo. Apparently the dog is such a love that EDWINA’s adult daughter has taken custody of him—or is that considered dognapping?

**Whirlwind world tour**

A number of registrars attending ASWB’s Administrators Workshop were moving at warp speed from coast to coast and north to south on their international travels from the annual Canadian Registrars meeting in Regina, Saskatchewan, to ASWB’s training in Arlington, Virginia, in early October. Co-facilitator JOHN MAYR (BC), EDWINA McGRODDY (ON), and SHEILA McKINNON-OKE (NS) as well as ASWB Director of Member Services JENNIFER HENKEL all made it, although JENNIFER lost her luggage going through Customs and SHEILA and JOHN nearly missed their flights. (We are happy to report that JENNIFER was reunited with her bag in Virginia.)

SHEILA had perhaps the most international of travels: She reportedly was in Mexico before traveling back to Canada and on to the U.S.

**Bad karma?**

Poor JIM MARKS! The executive director of the Oklahoma board thought he had found the perfect new office space, writing in a recent announcement that the board made the move to new office quarters that were “structurally sound.” It seems that damage from an ice storm several years ago was never correctly repaired in the old digs and tenancy was an issue. Rather than wait for things to get worse, JIM found the new space. But not long after staff moved...
in a water pipe burst in JIM’s office. Over his desk. Ruining his computer. We hope things improve! Thanks to JINNA DREESSEN for the update, shared at the recent Administrators Workshop.

*****

Congrats!

Birthday wishes are in order for ALISON MacDONALD of Saskatchewan and CARLA MOORE of Louisiana. Both celebrated recently: ALISON during the Canadian Registrars annual meeting and CARLA on October 13.

Congratulations to BRIAN CARNAHAN, executive director of the Ohio board, who celebrated his one-year work anniversary in August.

CARMEN HOWLETTE of Maryland, a member of ASWB’s Exam Committee, has a new job as a behavioral health care coordinator with Magellan Healthcare Provider Group.

More happy news from LYNN KING of Alberta, who writes that she is thrilled to be a grandmother again for the third time! New grandson Heath King was born September 5. LYNN is pictured here with Heath and his sister Stella.

Students from Switzerland and Wright State University met with the Ohio board as part of a course on comparative social welfare.

Congratulations to ROBIN JENKINS of Washington, D.C., who recently became president of the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR). ROBIN was president-elect last year.

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In CLEAR sight

ASWB was well represented at the 2015 CLEAR conference in Boston in September, starting with CLEAR President ROBIN JENKINS of Washington, D.C.!

Others known to be attending: ASWB member board staff members ALISON MacDONALD of Saskatchewan, RICHARD SILVER of Québec, and JOHN MAYR of British Columbia; ASWB Board of Directors members STEVEN PHARRIS of Tennessee and PATRICIA O’REILLY of West Virginia; and ASWB staff member JAN FITTS, senior manager for education and training.

*****

International relations

BRIAN CARNAHAN, executive director of the Ohio board, reports that the board hosted a group of social work graduate students from Wright State University (WSU) and students from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work, in Zurich, Switzerland. The students met with the board for a question and answer session as part of a course on comparative social welfare taught at WSU. “While there are many cultural differences, the dedication to core social work principles was evident,” BRIAN wrote. “Board members and staff were surprised at the level of support for social and mental health services in Switzerland.”

*****

ASWB welcomes new jurisdictional staff members:

KIM MADSEN, California

BRAD BURNHAM, Washington

...and says good-bye to:

MARIAMA GONDO, Washington

DOUG WARNE, Ohio
Name of jurisdiction: California

Name of board: Board of Behavioral Sciences

Number of board members: 13: seven public members and six licensees. Licensee membership includes two Licensed Clinical Social Workers, two Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, one Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, and one Licensed Educational Psychologist.

Licensure categories offered: All are master-level licenses.

- Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor
- Licensed Educational Psychologist

The following registrations are issued to individuals seeking licensure who must be registered with the board to gain their supervised work experience hours. Completion of the supervised experience work hours qualifies the individual to take the written clinical examination in the appropriate profession.

- Associate Social Worker
- Marriage and Family Therapist Intern
- Professional Clinical Counselor Intern

Number of licensed social workers: Totals are as of August 2015.

- Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW) 14,878
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) 22,882

Biggest achievement in the past 12 months:
The board received approval to hire additional staff for its licensing program in fiscal year 2014/2015. As a result of the additional staff, temporary staff, and process improvements, the board was able to eliminate its severe application backlog.

Additionally, the board developed a video tutorial for the Associate Social Worker application process, which is currently available on the board’s website. This video tutorial won a Gold Award in this year’s State 

Useless tidbits about California from the editors:

- Each year, 17 million gallons of wine are produced in California.
- The second largest tree in the world grows in King’s Canyon National Park. Named the General Grant tree in 1867 after Ulysses S. Grant, it was also dubbed the “Nation’s Christmas Tree” by President Calvin Coolidge in 1926.
- California is the only state to host both the summer and winter Olympics.
- The first patent for blue jeans was granted on May 20, 1873, to Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss & Company of San Francisco.
- The first Artichoke Queen of Castroville, Norma Jean Mortenson, went on to become the actress Marilyn Monroe.
- California has a larger population than all of Canada.
- Summer temperatures can exceed 120 F in Death Valley, the hottest and driest place in the United States.
Information Officers Council Awards. This yearly award program recognizes the best of the best in state service in the arena of communications.

**Biggest lesson learned in the past 12 months:**
The board continues to appreciate and value its collaborative work with its stakeholders. These collaborations are important to the board’s success as a regulatory agency. Providing ongoing opportunities to engage all stakeholders in meaningful policy discussions demonstrates that, together, we can develop a proposed change that is beneficial to both licensees and consumers.

**Biggest challenge facing the board:**
The biggest challenge for the board will be the implementation of the examination restructure. This change will require all California registrants to take a California law and ethics examination. In the first year, the board estimates it will receive more than 60,000 initial and reexamination applications from registrants. The board is working diligently to ensure a smooth transition to this new examination process.

*(complete the sentence)* “I would really love to hear about how other jurisdictions... are addressing the issue of providing psychotherapy through electronic means in both in-state or out-of-state situations.

**Completed by:**
Kim Madsen, Executive Officer, Board of Behavioral Sciences
Bylaws, Resolutions, & Policies, Oh My!

The ASWB looks forward to seeing its membership in attendance at the upcoming Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, November 5–7, 2015, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The annual meeting is the time for ASWB to conduct its business. It also provides the delegates, other members of member boards, and under certain circumstances, other attendees with an opportunity to be heard on relevant matters. ASWB seeks to ensure that delegates and members of member boards are equipped with information, both of substance and procedure, to facilitate a productive and efficient meeting. The ambitious agenda calls for informative reports from the association officers, office staff, and committees, and updates on programs and initiatives, and also involves the election of members of the Board of Directors and Nominating Committee. The August issue of the ASWB newsletter addressed, among other important topics, the corporate and governance structure of the association. This edition’s Counsel’s Column will cover issues specifically related to the annual meeting in an attempt to identify for the delegates and other attendees some of the nuances of the decision-making items.

Elections

The 2015 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly will include elections to open positions on the Board of Directors. The open positions include the office of treasurer as well as director at large professional member and director at large public member. As a refresher, the bylaws establish the governance of the association and provide for the number and eligibility of the members of the Board of Directors. Article VII of the bylaws sets forth the composition of the Board, qualifications and continued qualifications of the Board members, and the terms and officers. The Nominating Committee receives nominees and, once eligibility has been determined, slates candidates on a ballot, taking into consideration factors to ensure that the Board of Director representatives reflect the demographics of ASWB. The slate of candidates must be distributed to the delegates at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting to ensure delegates are prepared to cast an informed vote.

Bylaws and Resolutions

In addition to the election of the Board of Directors and Nominating Committee, attendees will hear a report from the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee, and delegates will be asked to vote on proposed...
amendments to the bylaws. The 2015 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly will consider extensive proposed amendments. Delegates are encouraged to study these changes and arrive prepared to engage in debate and eventual decision making. The Bylaws and Resolutions Committee report will provide background and rationales to these suggested modifications. The 2015 proposed amendments address minor edits to reflect current practice of the association, as well as substantive changes to the association purpose statement, qualifications of candidates, terms for and composition of the Board of Directors, and restructuring of the Nominating Committee.

Delegates and members of member boards must distinguish between bylaws, resolutions, and policies. In short, bylaws are the documents that set forth the governance structure of the organization and address “big picture” governance-type issues of the organization. The ASWB bylaws define the membership and address its authority, set forth the relevant meetings, establish and authorize the Board of Directors, identify the standing committees, establish parameters regarding finances and indemnification, and address amendments. Establishing and amending bylaws falls solely within the purview of the membership through a voting process and amendments thereto are limited to acts of the delegates at an annual meeting.

Resolutions are policy statements made by the delegates that provide the organization’s leadership, specifically the Board of Directors, with the opinions of the membership on relevant matters of significance. Resolutions are drafted in a manner to identify the facts supporting the submission of the resolution (WHEREAS clauses) followed by the requested resolution (THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED). Resolutions are reserved for matters of significance to the organization and generally provide a request for action. For example, a suggested action may be the establishment of a task force for gathering information and making suggestions and recommendations to the Board or Delegate Assembly within a specified time period. Other actions may include implementing a previously identified issues that has been explored, such as implementing a program to assess the education equivalence of graduates of foreign education programs for the purposes of use by the member boards. Resolutions must be carefully drafted to ensure that they fall within the mission of the association.

The Bylaws and Resolutions Committee considers and discusses each resolution and makes a determination of “recommend,” “do not recommend,” or “no recommendation” before it is presented to the delegates. Once a resolution has been submitted and reviewed by the committee, it is introduced into the record and discussed by the membership at the annual meeting. After the discussions, it will be voted on by the delegates and either passes or fails. Passed resolutions provide a basis for the Board of Directors to pursue directives or initiatives from the membership. Remember: A failed resolution can send an equally strong message as a passed resolution. The Board of Directors establishes policies regarding the submission dates of proposed resolutions to ensure that they can be edited, addressed by the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee, and forwarded to the delegates to allow for consideration in advance of the annual meeting. Resolutions can be adopted only by an affirmative vote of the delegate assembly.

Policies

Policies are adopted by the Board of Directors and address more operational issues that facilitate the record keeping, records retention, and financial aspects and set up parameters related to the day-to-day operations of the organization. Policies are more fluid and generally address issues that assist the association staff under the authority of the Board of Directors but without micromanaging the affairs of the organization. Current ASWB policies address issues related to membership, the examinations, meetings and travel, conduct of business, Board of Directors, personnel, and methods of operation. Policies are adopted by an affirmative of the vote of the Board of Directors.

Role of Delegates and members

Delegates and members of member boards are encouraged to review the materials in advance of the annual meeting and be prepared for a productive and robust discussion of the important issues that are subject to a membership vote. It is hoped that this column will provide some preliminary guidance on the procedural issues relevant to the meeting. Of course, the Board of Directors, staff, and counsel will be available to answer any questions that may arise. We look forward to seeing you in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.
Welcome to sunny Ft. Lauderdale!

With beaches and shops, the “Venice of America” offers plenty to do after the day’s work is done.

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on November 5-7, 2015. Our focus will be on the ASWB business at hand, but you can optimize your time in Fort Lauderdale by checking out some of these great options to explore!

Points of Interest

Hugh Taylor Birch State Park
The 180-acre park has two walking trails and is open daily from 8 a.m. until sundown. Wildlife is everywhere, and the park has its own mile-long freshwater lagoon, beach access, picnic areas, and the Birch House Museum.
https://www.floridastateparks.org/park/Hugh-Taylor-Birch

Riverwalk Arts & Entertainment District
Located along the city’s New River, the district offers entertainment options year-round, concerts, events, galleries, shopping, and fine dining.
http://www.riverwalkae.com/

Beaches
Fort Lauderdale has more than 23 miles of beaches!
http://www.sunny.org/beaches/

Shopping

Las Olas Boulevard
The name “Las Olas” means “The Waves” in Spanish, and this area is considered the riverfront area of Fort Lauderdale. Las Olas Boulevard is a one-mile stretch of art galleries, boutiques, and museums, with more than 65 shops and restaurants to browse!
http://www.lasolasboulevard.com/

Sawgrass Mills
The largest single-story mall in the U.S., Sawgrass Mills has more than 300 stores and dining options.
www.sawgrassmills.com
The Galleria
With more than 100 shops and places to eat, the Galleria is accessible by
car or water taxi.
http://www.galleriamall-fl.com/

History

Fort Lauderdale’s history dates back more than 4,000 years, with the first
inhabitants being aboriginal natives. Later, the Taquesta Indians lived
there for more than a thousand years. The first U.S. stockade, named Fort
Lauderdale, was built in 1838 and was the site of a massacre during the
Second Seminole War.

The fort was abandoned after the war, and only a few pioneer families
lived in the area until the late 1800s. Development renewed after the
Florida East Coast Railroad built tracks through the area in the mid-1890s.
In 1911, Fort Lauderdale was officially incorporated as a town and had
175 residents. The population now totals close to 1.8 million people.

Fun Facts

• There are three drawbridges in Fort Lauderdale, all operated on
demand

• Fort Lauderdale and its suburbs have more than 4,100 restaurants

• The city is known as the “Venice of America” for its vast quantity of
canals – more than 165 miles

• There are 2.6 million tourists who visit Fort Lauderdale each year

• Fort Lauderdale has the sixth largest school system in the U.S.

• Florida has more than 1,300 golf courses—the most of any U.S. state
“I learned early on that you are either part of the problem or part of the solution, and my intent is that I would make education and regulation better than what they were.”

M. Jenise Comer, MSW, LCSW, ACSW

M. Jenise Comer watched her father study to demonstrate continued competence as a postal clerk. She learned the value of hard work from him. Her mother modeled the value of principled decision making. Her grandmother and twin sister emphasized the demand for excellence. These attributes contributed to her personal and professional development. Today, looking back at a 41-year social work career, she considers herself both honored and blessed for the opportunities that she has been afforded.

Looking forward to her tenure as president of ASWB, she has much that she wants to help the association accomplish.

Comer says she never regretted her decision to become a social worker. Although she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and sociology, she knew that she was going on to graduate school. Her advisors gave her good counsel, she says, when they told her the MSW degree would give her greater flexibility and put her in the “upper echelons of the profession,” whereas she would need a doctorate degree to achieve the same stature in the field of psychology.

She went to University of Kansas for her MSW. She concentrated on an administrative track because she wanted to work for the government. Her second master’s practicum was with the Office of Child Development, responsible for administering all Head Start programs in Region VII, which included Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska.

Upon graduation, however, an upcoming car payment “jolted” Comer into reality, and she accepted a job offer to become the coordinator of the minority adoption program with Catholic Charities in Missouri. From that point on, she says, her professional career has advanced through opportunities that were offered to her or that she was encouraged to apply for, based on others’ recognition of her skills and training. This serendipitous approach has been successful, she acknowledges, because she was willing to listen to her mentors’ advice coupled with her family values. On the advice of one mentor, Comer became active on the board of directors for the
Niles Home for Children, a residential treatment center in Kansas City, Mo., serving children with emotional difficulties, while she was working at Catholic Charities. Her next job, as deputy director of the center, came as a result of her work on the board and the position becoming available at the home. With a push from her peers, she applied for the job and was selected. She held this position for eight years before another opportunity called, this time in education.

Comer became a field instructor supervising students from the time she earned the MSW. When Central Missouri State University (now University of Central Missouri) asked her to teach a class in the fall of 1985, it was the result of a meeting with the practicum instructor to evaluate a student under her supervision. At the time, Comer recalls that she was serving as a loaned executive with the United Way. She taught one semester as an adjunct professor, and began teaching full time the next semester. She became the first African American full professor at the university in 2000.

In 2009, she became director of the BSW program at the school—applying at the urging of other faculty members. After seven years, she says she is very comfortable in the role and continues to divide her time between teaching and administering the program. She notes that she wrote the self-study for the school’s reaffirmation of accreditation being conducted this fall by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

Concurrent with teaching, Comer continued to work part time providing home-based therapy to children and families in the foster care system for ten years and as a children’s therapist at a residential drug and alcohol treatment center for two and a half years after that. She also provided consulting services for the Missouri Department of Social Services Children’s Division for 25 years. She infused her teaching with the rich experiences from her work, noting: “The kids taught me so much...work gave me wonderful stories to amplify the concepts that I was trying to get across in my teaching.”

Along the way, more opportunities to serve her profession arose, with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Missouri chapter, where she was active on the chapter’s board and elected to attend three delegate assemblies in Washington, D.C., and with the Missouri State Committee for Social Workers.

Comer was first appointed to the Missouri board in 2000. She has been reappointed by three governors and will continue to serve until replaced—something she anticipates happening very soon. While currently a member, she has frequently served as secretary, then president. Because of the number of vacancies on the board, she makes it a point to attend every board meeting; otherwise there would not be a quorum.

The Missouri State Committee for Social Workers, she notes, is still young as a board. The first licenses were issued in 1989. (Comer was grandfathered in 1991 as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.) On the board, Comer served on every task force involved with writing new rules, including requirements for supervision. She identified the need and worked directly with NASW to draft legislation for multiple categories of licensure in the state, to meet the goal that all social workers be licensed. Comer persuaded her board to preapprove all applications for the exam, as Missouri was one of the last three states to meet the requirement. She also persuaded the board to add the requirement that social workers who apply for a clinical license must hold a current license as a Licensed Masters Social Worker, meaning that the applicant has passed the ASWB masters social work exam prior to sitting for the clinical exam. The change moved taking the clinical exam from immediately after graduating with the MSW degree to after completion of the 3,000 hours of supervision. Tom Reichard, executive director of the Missouri board, Comer, and other board members worked with the state Medicaid office to eliminate the Provisional LCSW license, and to accept the LMSW under clinical supervision for the purpose of billing.

Like many other jurisdictional board members, Comer attended ASWB’s New Board Member Training as her first experience with the association. She was “hungry to learn about regulation and becoming a member of ASWB’s group of leaders.” She was “bitten by the bug” at the 2003 Spring Education Meeting in Buffalo, New York, she says, impressed by the speakers and ASWB leadership.

After her daughter graduated and her son was successfully launched into college, she had time to give to the organization. She was elected to the Nominating Committee in 2003 and served as chair in 2004. She then was appointed to three
1-year terms on the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee, serving as chair for two terms. She was appointed to serve a one-year unexpired term on the ASWB Board of Directors in 2006–2007. She served on the Program and Education Committee in 2009–2010. In 2010, she was elected to the office of secretary for a two-year term and reelected in 2012.

In 2013 and 2014, Comer was proud to serve on the International Technology Task Force and be integral to the development of ASWB’s Model Regulatory Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice. Also in 2014, as a member of the Program and Education Committee, she welcomed ASWB to St. Louis for the Spring Education Meeting. That fall, she was elected as president-elect. She will serve two years as president beginning in November and one year as past president before her leadership role with ASWB concludes.

As she prepares to accept the gavel at the end of the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, Comer has been “reflecting on how things have been and how I would like things to be.” She sees one aspect of her responsibility as being focused on “what ASWB does best: providing a legally defensible, reliable, and valid exam.”

She also looks forward to helping the association accomplish its strategic initiative of achieving license portability and social work practice mobility—something that she has been passionate about her whole career—and to “turn the key on the new headquarters.”

The next three years will be the capstone of a rich and varied career and life of volunteer service. Comer plans to retire from teaching and serving as director of the BSW program at University of Central Missouri in 2016. After completing her service to ASWB, she says that she plans to “do nothing!” in retirement (other than focus on her grandson and family). That may change if she sees another opportunity and is asked to help make things better than they were.
On the Path to Licensure path

Jan Fitts hits the road for ASWB’s efforts to integrate licensing into social work degree programs

Since she joined ASWB as education and training senior manager last spring, Jan Fitts has been reaching out to schools of social work that have expressed interest in the ASWB Path to Licensure program. “I invited myself,” Fitts said, about several of her recent visits. Rather than waiting for schools to come to her with their questions, Fitts has been actively reaching out, whether it’s offering ASWB materials about social work licensure for student orientation packets, or spending time on campus talking to faculty and students.

In August, Fitts made her first Path to Licensure trip, a visit to Texas State University in San Marcos. The school of social work there was a pilot school in the Path to Licensure program, and Fitts wanted to talk with faculty and students to find out more. “I wanted to see how they’ve developed their program and find out what are the lessons learned that we can share with other schools,” Fitts explained. “It was fascinating,” she said. “I got to see what all the social work school is doing, including the distinctions between online and in-person course development.” While in San Marcos, Fitts met with faculty members at Texas State, as well as MSW and BSW students.

While she was in Boston for the Council on Licensure Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) annual conference, Fitts arranged for a conversation with a social work faculty member at Boston University who had expressed interest in the Path to Licensure program.

When she’s not inviting herself for a visit, Fitts has been fielding invitations as well. Most recently, she was invited to Wayne State University in Detroit. The school is launching a student-driven program called Licensure Exam and Achievement Program (LEAP) and invited Fitts, along with several members of the Michigan social work licensing board, to meet on campus to address questions and provide key information about licensure. LEAP received an internal grant from the university to get started. Faculty advisors help the students plan the program, which will feature ongoing conversations about issues related to licensure. Two student mentors facilitate the group meetings as well as consult with individual students. “It was the first time they ever met as a group,” Fitts explained. One of the Michigan board members, Brian Philson, presented information on the Michigan law and application process for social workers. Fitts followed up with information.
about the licensing exams and licensing in general. “The students could actually hear from board members,” Fitts said, about things like applying for a license. These exchanges can provide an invaluable opportunity for students to understand how regulatory boards and ASWB work together in the licensing process. It also gave the social work students a better understanding of the different roles of ASWB, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

“It was so valuable to have that diversity around the room,” said Fitts. “We had people with a lot of different perspectives on professional practice.” One faculty member at the meeting seemed to really understand the purpose of Path to Licensure, Fitts said. “She said ‘I really get how we need to integrate licensing and regulation throughout the program—it’s not just a course we have to teach.’”