

economic, developmental and political activities. Emergence of the self-help group movement has paved the way to break the social, cultural and religious barriers and increase the access to financial resources at women's disposal. SHGs have reduced the vulnerability of poor women and created better awareness among them through group formation and sharing of information regarding resources, market, and social improvement. SHGs as a tool of social engineering in the hands of NGOs and Government have penetrated all walks of women. There are vegetable vendors, auto-drivers, mini-bus operators, department store owners, fishing vessel operators, chairperson of Panchayat and stone-quarry contractors - all from SHGs. This paper will present a few success stories of SHGs with illustration from Tamil Nadu.

Strengthening One Another: The ripple effect of positive connections

Amanda Vos, BSW, MAASW (Acc)

In March 2002 as a newly graduated Social Worker, Amanda embarked on what was to prove a life-changing journey. Setting off from Brisbane, Australia, she traveled solo throughout the USA working on an international film project that aimed to provide a forum to explore the issues of self-care and professional well-being whilst also celebrating the diversity of Social Work. Privileged to live with and share in the lives of dozens of social workers and their families, the initial three month journey in the USA became an unexpected launch pad for a variety of other opportunities ranging from guest lecturing, media appearances, writing, and being presented with work and elected roles that were usually reserved for older, more experienced colleagues. With the five year anniversary of the start of this odyssey fast approaching, Amanda was inspired to reflect on how that initial experience proved to be the catalyst for a ripple effect of positive interactions, relationships, employment opportunities, travel, creative discoveries and an overall enriching professional journey for not only herself, but more importantly for fellow colleagues who were 'drawn into the web' of the unstoppable international network that had been born. Amanda realized that every positive professional experience had been born from either creating and/or tapping into supportive connections and networks which have proved a source of strength, support and inspiration for herself and others she has encouraged to 'get connected' in order to pursue and fulfill their own goals and dreams. The presentation will draw on this Social Worker's real life example of how by daring to venture beyond the traditional pathways, we can forge incredible experiences not only for ourselves, but even more so for others. She will encourage participants to think of ways to create new connections or join existing networks to enhance ones own, or another's, situation. Amanda will also discuss how age, location, and level of experience need not matter, because when one ventures forth, others will follow...and all can be strengthened.

Strengthening Remote Services: An Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Communities DVD Presentation

Larissa Walker

RAATSICC's philosophy is caring for children in a holistic way and includes programs that encourage the personal and social developmental, cultural and spiritual well-being of children and encompasses Child Protection as well as Child Care. Since its inception, RAATSICC services have expanded to meet community needs, based on increases in community population, greater awareness of community requirements and more qualified community workers on the ground. The RAATSICC program assists remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities to respond to the needs of children and their families in a culturally appropriate way by utilizing strengths of individuals, and the community.

Work With Me: Training For Best Practice With Substance-Using Mothers

Sydney Michelle Weaver, MSW, RSW

Contemporary child welfare discourse has shaped practice standards and created documents that intersect to shape the lives of substance-using mothers. Historically the discourse, reflective of a shaming culture, has condemned the substance-using mother. A focus on empirical, deficits-based documentation excludes hope and resilience, adversely affecting both child protection social workers and substance-using mothers. Fortunately, a strengths-based discourse and practice are emerging. This paradigm shift demonstrates potential for reconstructing child welfare discourse and practice as helpful rather than harmful. Consistent with a commitment to a strengths-based discourse and practice, this paper will discuss findings from two surveys and a qualitative study conducted in 2003, British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development's revised standards of practice, and current alternate practice approaches. Strengths-based child protection social worker training, developed and conducted in response to research findings relating to best practice with substance-using mothers is described. Of particular importance will be workers' evaluation of the training and the subsequent revision of the training. Recommendations will include practical tools for workers to adopt within the current child protection system in British Columbia, in addition to recommended changes in service delivery at both the policy and practice levels.