

## 2008 Cross Cultural Conference \_ Feb 24 — Feb 27, 2008

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

*"The Impact of Poverty on Individuals and Families: Strategies, Best Practices and Solutions"*

### President's Message



Willie Bethune, LISW

Greetings:

This is my first time greeting you as President of the Action Council.

I pledge to keep you informed on a timely basis regarding all activities the Action Council sponsors, in addition to maintaining our tradition of rendering quality, culturally sensitive education, and training at an affordable cost with the help of our partners.

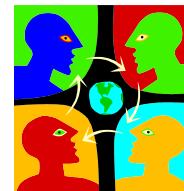
Another part of the Action Council's mission is advocacy. In these times of competing demands, many worthy causes are

overlooked. It is my belief that we lack the commitment to meet the needs of the least among us. Most times the least among us are vulnerable, poor and children.

According to the most recently released Kids Count Report published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, South Carolina is ranked among the bottom five states in this country when looking at children wellbeing.

The factors used in this report rankings: low birth weight babies; infant mortality; child deaths; teen deaths; teen births; high school dropouts; teens not in school and not working, children who live with parents who don't have fulltime, year-round jobs; children living in poverty; and children living in single-parent households.

Dr. Baron Holmes, Project Director, South Carolina Kids Count, former Deputy Director South Carolina Budget and Control Board and a decent person contends: "In terms of the long-term picture, if you're not born healthy and if you don't finish your education and you're growing up in a single parent family and you're poor, then-it's a steeper climb." In South Carolina, we must do better. In three of the rankings we improved, two stayed the same and five got worse. In the Kids Count Report, we were cited for the high number of children who aged out of foster care without having a permanent family. Clearly, if we do not do something to improve our ranking, we will have serious problems in  
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### From the Editor

Greetings! First of all let me thank each of you who contributed to this sixteenth edition of *The Action Council Communicator*. The year 2007 has been filled with Action Council activities and accomplishments. The Cross Cultural Conference 2007, "Poverty; It's Impact on Individuals, Families and Communities," was our first major event of the year. We are considering your feedback and recommendations from the evaluations received. Your impressions, suggestions and concerns are valued and very important to us. It is our goal that the participants of Action Council activities are satisfied and pleased with the quality of what is rendered.

As educators, health and human services providers we must consider if we are accomplishing our objectives, *really* addressing

the needs of the population that we serve and meeting the satisfaction of our customers. I had a recent experience of my son and many of his high school classmates being very dissatisfied with one of their high school teachers. The newly appointed administrator for curriculum informed my son how "good" this teacher was. My son responded, "Has anyone ever bothered to ask the students?" The question is relevant in our unique workplaces, homes and communities. How are we really treating our customers, whether they are victims of poverty, or consumers of our schools, as well as health and human service institutions? I have engaged in recent conversations with Dr. William Miles, MD, Medical Director for Just Care, Inc and Dr. Carl Jones, SCSU Executive Director for Student Success and Retention, who are leading customer satisfaction initiatives in their workplaces. We too as



Sharon Rice-Brown, MSW

members of the Action Council are advocates for the disenfranchised and can promote the same.

We are practically en route to Santee, South Carolina for our Fall Workshop Series and Board Retreat to be held at the Santee State Park and Conference Center on October 12-13, 2007. Our Fall Retreat theme, "Enhancing the Skills of Human Services Professionals; Working with Poor, Vulnerable and Diverse Populations" will be addressed through workshops and speakers focusing on disenfranchised

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## "Academics and Athletics: Portals to Social Mobility and Economic Success"

Carl E. Jones, Ph.D.



Carl E. Jones, Ph.D., NCC

Poor people are disproportionately represented among the client rolls of public mental health and other human services agencies. Moreover, this tends to be a perpetual phenomenon in as much as intergenerational poverty transmits to intergenerational utilization of public assistance programs. In other words, from grandparents to grandchildren poverty too often remains a constant and concomitantly, the need for public assistance prevails from one generation to the next (and the next).

In America, education has long been used as a vehicle to promote social mobility. Coupled with athletics, education has been the pathway to economic success for many children and adults seeking a better way of life. Moreover, receiving a quality education and using activities such as sports to earn scholarships for further study in college have helped many to break the poverty cycle while improving their mental health and economic well-being.

I purport that not only is it a noble idea to support legislation, policies, and practices that foster higher achievement among poor children, but it is plausible and sound decision-making among leaders of school districts, colleges, businesses and industries as well as human services agencies to collaborate in helping children of impoverished families receive the support that they need to finish high school, go to college, complete college and secure stable employment. How might this occur? Consider the following bio-brief.

As I look back on life, I fondly recall my childhood and my hometown. My family did not have a lot of money, but we had middle class values with a focus on education, civic responsibility and leadership. This was supported also in my church, my school, and my neighborhood. Seemingly, all eyes were on me to be good, to do good, and to help somebody else along the way.

So I went to school, behaved myself, made decent grades, played sports and received much support and encouragement from teachers, coaches, community leaders, business owners, clergymen, and city officials. I shall never forget how proud I felt when I saw my picture, in my high school basketball uniform, displayed in the front window of a business owned by the mayor of the city. This was part of an effort of my high school coach to gain community support for the basketball team. Why the mayor chose to display my picture he never told me, but I believe that he saw something in me of which he was proud.

Armed with the support I received from my family and members of the community throughout my childhood up to graduation

from high school, and using my academic and athletic abilities to secure financial support, I was propelled to complete college, go on to graduate

school and successfully enter and engage the world of work. Not only am I delighted each day to be able to serve others as a counselor, teacher and administrator in higher education, but I have been financially rewarded for my income alone is significantly more than the entire family income of my childhood. Everyday, I thank God for my family ---of origin, my native hometown, my teachers, coaches, and others who encouraged and supported me along the way. You see, I understand fully that when people work together to better the lives of others, only good things happen. Towards that end, I feel obligated to continue the legacy of encouraging young people to use academics and athletics as portals to social mobility and economic success. Along the way one's mental health can also be enhanced.

The above bio-brief is a reality that can be similarly repeated exponentially for individuals from low income backgrounds. It takes moral conviction, political astuteness and collective resources to make it happen. I am sure that the Action Council will do its part to continue to promote community collaborations and supports to improve the quality of life of citizens in poverty. We beseech others to step up to the plate so that we can all hit a "homerun" to help more people move around the bases of life in a successful mode.

*\* Dr. Jones is Executive Director for Student Success and Retention at South Carolina State University. He is also immediate past president of the Action Council and present chair of the Action Council Education Committee.*

## Who We Are

The Action Council for Cross-Cultural Mental Health and Human Services, Inc. (ACCMHS) is a voluntary organization dedicated to enhancing the involvement of minority citizens in the management, delivery and utilization of mental health and human services. The Council represents public and private business/industry and organization representatives, professionals, and volunteers who have an interest in cross-cultural issues.

The Council exists for the purpose of understanding diverse cultures, enhancing cultural relations and providing a forum for multi-cultural issues and management/personnel concerns. This includes educational training, resource management and networking toward providing service delivery and cultural awareness.

## Why You Should Belong

Statewide and regional support is needed to make the Council's goals a reality. By your membership and interest, you join in enhancing the participation of professionals from diverse cultures in mental health and human services.

## "NUMBER OF WORKING POOR FAMILIES GROWING IN AMERICA"

University Park, Pa. --- Although the War on Poverty was declared in the 1960's, a poor family today in 2007 is much worse off than the average poor family in the 1960's, because official poverty measures have failed to keep up with changing basic needs, according to a new report.

"America has become a nation of people where all able persons who can work, do, but many can not make ends meet," says Dr. Amy Glasmeier, lead author and the E. Willard Miller Professor of Economic Geography at Penn State. "America is not currently doing all it can to assist working families, those who are discriminated against in the labor market, and the disabled, to make ends meet.

Today, official guidelines still assume that families spend about one-third of their income on food, but food spending has dropped to one-sixth, with a larger share of expenses being taken up by housing, utilities and transportation. If health care and childcare expenses are included as necessities, the minimum level of income needed by a family of four is much higher.

Over the last 30 years, the number of jobs that do not pay a living wage has increased dramatically. In the U.S., as many as 25 percent of all jobs pay less than a poverty-level income, the report says. In some states, as many as 30 percent do not pay a living wage.

A living wage takes into account differences in the cost of living across areas of the U.S. In many communities, the national minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour provides an income insufficient to support individuals or families, the report says.

The working poor are found in every state, according to the report. In 17 states, the majority of working totals more than 50 percent of the working age population. Such states are concentrated in the Farm Belt, where economic decline has been ongoing for the last 20 years, and in the West, where population growth has helped keep wages low, say the researchers.

"Certainly, progress has been made over the intervening 40 years in terms of an overall minimum standard of living as measured by material conditions," the researchers write. "In the last 40 years, the largest positive change occurred for the poor elderly. In 1959, 35.2 percent living below the poverty line; today, it is 10 percent. A combination of programs i.e. Social Security and Medicare has been one of the main reasons. Still, more than 40 percent of elderly persons live on incomes only twice the national poverty level, which is approximately \$18,000 a year."

Looming trade deficits, growing disparity in the availability of good jobs, reduced returns to investments in education, and the loss of labor-intensive manufacturing jobs in America's low-wage region raise serious questions. Individuals and families at greatest risk for poverty today are men with less than a college education, people of color (especially Blacks and Hispanics), working families and families headed by women, and a significant number of the nation's elderly who live at or close to the poverty line, the report says.

"The problem of persistent poverty is a complex one that includes communities and individuals, who through no fault of their own, find themselves unable to make ends meet in this globalizing, information-intensive world," the researchers say. "We are a more diverse population and a more dispersed population. If

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## Iceland

**Dr. Carol Apt, Associate Professor, SCSU**



I've been very fortunate to have traveled to some fascinating countries, but one of the most intriguing places I've ever visited is Iceland. Not too long ago I made a presentation on sexuality (what else?) at an international conference in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Iceland does not often grab the international headlines, but it's a place one should not ignore. It's a volcanic island of about 100,000 square miles situated off the eastern coast of Greenland in the North Atlantic. It was settled during the ninth and tenth centuries by Norse explorers from Scandinavia and by Celts from the British Isles. While many consider Iceland to be part of Scandinavia, the Celtic influence accounts for the fact that many Icelanders have darker hair and complexions than what we have come to think of as the typical Scandinavian coloring. Iceland was ruled by Norway or Denmark throughout much of its history, but in 1944 gained its independence from Denmark and became the Republic of Iceland. Present-day Iceland is a parliamentary representative democratic republic; the Prime Minister is the actual head of government, and the President is a largely ceremonial figure. On one of my tours around the country I visited the president's house — a modest structure totally devoid of armed guards, snarling Dobermans or any other security measure. The 300,000 citizens share a common ancestry, and speak the same language — Icelandic. Icelandic is a Germanic language and is very similar to the Norse language spoken by the original inhabitants of the island. Icelandic children also learn English and Danish in school. Because the Icelandic language is spoken in only one place on earth, the Icelandic people learn other languages. I was stunned to hear how fluent the average citizen is in English; I had no trouble communicating because it seemed that everyone spoke excellent English.

One thing I found most interesting about the country was the issue of names. There are only a few last names in Iceland; people are known by their first names. A person's last name is composed of his or her father's name, plus the addition of 'son' or 'daughter.' The first explorer to come to North America was Leif Erikson, or, son of Erik (The Red). A man whose father is named Johann, will have the last name of Johannson (Johann's son); a woman whose father is named Johann will have the last name of Johannsdottir (Johann's daughter).

Even though Iceland is situated in the North Atlantic, it's not as cold as one might think. The Gulf Stream moderates the climate; the average summer temperature is about 50 degrees Fahrenheit and the average temperature in winter is about 32 degrees Fahrenheit. The seasons, however, are a little different. Spring begins in May; summer begins in June and fall begins in September. From mid-May to late July, the sun doesn't set, so there is daylight all night long. From late August to March, one can often see the Northern Lights, although they are unpredictable. When I was there, in October, they did not appear, even though we were promised the light show of all time. Oh well. November, December and January are considered the heart of winter, during which time there are only four or five hours of daylight in a twenty-four hour period.

The economy of Iceland is strong, and has been deemed the least corrupt economy in the world. Inflation is low, unemployment is even lower, and the country has incorporated a flat tax rate of about 36%. The major occupations are agriculture, fishing and fish processing; fish and fish products are the major export items. The abundance of deep-sea coldwater fish, which are loaded with Omega 3 fatty acids, may partly account for Iceland's long life expectancy of 80 years, which is the third highest in the world, after Norway (82) and Hong Kong (81). In terms of overall quality of life, as determined by the Human Development Index, Iceland is second only to Norway. The United States was ranked at number eight. The Human Development Index of 2005

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years to come.

I would like to extend an invitation for you to join me and the Action Council's Board of Directors at our upcoming Annual Retreat and Workshops at Santee State Park Village Round on October 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 2007. Registration starts at 8:00 AM and the program at 9:00 AM. The theme, "ENHANCING THE SKILLS OF HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSIONALS: WORKING WITH POOR, VULNERABLE AND DIVERSE POPULATIONS."

For more information, you may call 1-866-591-1829 or you can reach me at 803-775-4354.

Please mark your calendars for the Annual Cross Cultural Conference to be held February 24-27, 2008 at the Landmark Resort Hotel in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The theme will be "IMPACT OF POVERTY ON INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES: STRATEGIES, BEST PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS."

I look with much anticipation to see you at the Action Council's upcoming events. If you are not a member, please consider joining.

Our close-out speaker on Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, as well as our Convocation speaker on Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, is none other than **The Rev. Dr. Lewis Anthony from Washington, D.C.** This dynamic pastor is one of the best speakers in America, and he has a storied history of advocating for the poor. He will leave the conference participants not only spellbound, but energized and ready to go back into the "vineyards" to serve the less fortunate.

In between the plenary sessions will be 20 workshops dispersed among the four learning tracks, namely: 1) Policy and Government, 2) Behavioral Healthcare and Social Welfare, 3) Community and 4) Education.

If you haven't done so, register now! This is must training for health and human services professionals who work with culturally diverse populations. Our aim is to assist in increasing the number of culturally competent professionals.

I look forward to greeting each of you personally in Myrtle Beach. See you there.

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populations and a comprehensive training session for preparation for the Licensed Professional Counselor Exam will also be conducted. After a full day of training, we are excited and thrilled that a Pig Pic'n fellowship/ reception have been planned for Friday evening. Mr. Willie Bethune, Action Council Board President, and his staff from the Wateree Community Action, Inc will be our hosts. Our Board Retreat will convene that Saturday morning at nine until noon. As chairperson of the membership committee, I strongly encourage our members to attend our Board Retreat. During this session present and future Action Council fund raising opportunities, activities and programming needs will be discussed. We welcome your attendance and participation in our work groups that will be conducted to address the aforementioned.

**Save the Date for Cross Cultural Conference 2008! It will convene February 24<sup>th</sup> through February 27<sup>th</sup>** and our theme is "The Impact of Poverty on Individuals and Families: Strategies, Best Practices and Solutions. Mr. Willie Bethune and Dr. Otis Corbitt provide articles that present valuable information about Cross Cultural Conference 2008. Dr. Stephen McLeod- Bryant and Dr. Carl Jones, Action Council Board members, also contribute to this edition addressing the effectiveness of our board; and poverty, education and athletics, respectively. Dr. Carol Apt, a newly elected board member, provides an informative article on the culture of Iceland where she recently visited.

In closing, your membership and input is important to us. We have added a **Spotlight on Membership** section to our Newsletter. If you would like to be featured please feel free to communicate with me by telephone at (803) 609-8859 or e-mail [sdrbrwn@aol.com](mailto:sdrbrwn@aol.com)

We encourage your contributions to our Newsletter and Website. Please share with us any news, articles of interest, special accomplishments, gifts or talents you may have.

Blessings,

*Sharon Rice-Brown, LMSW, ACSW, Editor Action Council Communicator, Secretary, Action Council Board of Directors*

## Grace Brooks Palmer Award Recipient



Mrs. Rosemounda "Peggy" Butler was the recipient of the 2007 Grace Brooks Palmer Award that was given during the Sunday Convocation of Cross Cultural Conference 2007 held on February 25<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Butler, a nurse, has a long history of mental health and human services, community activism and military service. Considering the Conference theme on Poverty, Mrs. Butler's life history is most fitting as she represented for sometime a poverty stricken area as the first African American city council member and Mayor Pro Temp of West Columbia, South Carolina, serving from 1993-2006 and successfully implemented initiatives to address this issue.

Mrs. Butler is a disabled veteran with 100 percent service connected disability stemming from her service as a US Nurse Administrator with the medical/ surgical unit in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. She has received the Army Service Ribbon, National Defense Medal, Southeast Service Medal with Bronze Service Star and Sharpshooter Marksmanship Badge for the US Army. She is a graduate of the Institute of Elected Officials – Municipal Association of SC and has a certificate in Psychiatric Nursing, American Institute of Psychiatric Nursing.

Her community and civic accomplishments include encouraging neighborhood leaders to become annexed into West Columbia, thus eliminating a drug infested area called "Crack Alley". She encouraged residents to participate in a housing rehabilitation effort funded through the Community Development Block Grant Program. A grant of \$487,000 funded repairs to 22 houses occupied by low to moderate income families and another 187,000 was secured to install needed sewer lines. She initiated a major project to expand and renovate the facilities at Raleigh Street Park, a neighborhood park primarily serving low and moderate income residents. In 1996 the city council of West Columbia renamed the facility the Rosemounda Percell- Butler Community Park.

She also initiated free summer lunch programs, Back to School Bash, Community Unity Festivals and Senior Citizen's galas.

Mrs. Butler was nominated by Ms. Sharon Rice- Brown and is a new member of the Action Council.

## "Spotlight on Members"

Mrs. Bessie Abraham was recognized by the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work on April 29, 2007 as the 2007 Distinguished Alumni Award for Outstanding contributions in Social Work Practice.

Mrs. Abraham is a native of Orangeburg, South Carolina who obtained her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology from South Carolina State University. She continued her education at the University of Pittsburgh, obtaining a Masters of Social Work Degree, before returning to her home community where she has been employed by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health at the Orangeburg Area Mental Health Center for the past twenty-eight years.

Beginning as Director of Children's Services at the Mental Health Center, Mrs. Abraham advanced to Assistant Director in 1992, and was named Executive Director of the Center in 2002. In this capacity, Mrs. Abraham is responsible for the provision of public mental health services to a quarter of a million citizens living in a three-county area. To accomplish this task, she manages a staff of over 100 mental health professionals and clerical support at four sites.

Under her leadership, Center programs for chronically mental ill adults have been expanded, including a recent doubling of the capacity of a day program designed to teach skills necessary for independent community living. A program for geriatric adults has been established, one of the few such outpatient programs in the state. Children's Services have been expanded to include both school-based counseling and Multisystemic Therapy (an intensive counseling program designed to address severe childhood behavioral problems in the natural environment by supporting family involvement has reduced the long-term risks of out-of-home placement and of legal involvement for the child). Mrs. Abraham's leadership, vision and exceptional commitment to the concept of recovery and community functioning for mentally ill clients has allowed her to implement these programs in the Orangeburg area, despite a decade of increasing financial pressure and resulting budget cuts for public mental health programs both statewide and nationwide.

In addition, under Mrs. Abraham's direction and guidance, first as Assistant Director and now as Executive Director, the Center has consistently achieved the highest level of accreditation every three years from the outside agency which surveys mental health outpatient facilities in South Carolina (CARF: Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities).

It is believed that Mrs. Abraham has been able to accomplish so much because of the positive management style, which emphasizes finding the strengths of each employee and utilizing these strengths for the good of the clients the Center serves. In managerial decisions, Mrs. Abraham works through consensus building. With this management style and her deep experience with the clinical care of clients, she has fostered a client-centered approach to the delivery of care which, she and her staff believe, is unrivaled anywhere in the State.

Mrs. Abraham is an excellent role model for today's young professionals. Often, a position with the Center is a young person's first professional experience after completion of school and their training. Time and again, Mrs. Abraham mentors young professionals, publicly acknowledging their achievements in the Center's General Staff Meetings and privately discussing with them ways to im-

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## "Governance Task Force Update"

**Stephen McLeod-Bryant, MD**  
**Vice-President, Action Council**



At the 2007 Annual Conference Business Meeting of the Action Council, the membership endorsed forming an ad hoc task force to examine the functioning of the Action Council and propose ways in which the Council could become a more efficient and dynamic organization. I volunteered to chair this task force, and Board Directors and General Members have joined me on the task force. Current membership includes: Board of Directors immediate-past

President Carl Jones, PhD; Secretary Sharon Rice-Brown; Shirley Furtick; Josephine Mitchell; Josephine Jupiter; and Gloria McLaughlin; plus General Members Tracy Richardson and Dean Patrick.

The Board's charge to the task force: To propose a timetable of Action Council Board of Director and General Membership goals and tasks to improve Action Council efficiency, effectiveness and autonomy. The task force has until the next Annual Meeting to complete its task, at which point it will be dissolved.

The task force has communicated by E-mail, and then met in Columbia on August 15. An immediate goal identified by the task force, and endorsed by the Board, is to review the Action Council Bylaws and recommend amendments to improve the operation of the organization. After the Board of Directors review the recommendations, the Bylaws and any proposed amendments will be presented to the General Membership at the 2008 Annual Business Meeting during the Annual Conference.

An intermediate goal of the task force will be to develop a process for creating a request for proposals (RFP) to contract with an Annual Conference Planner/Director for the 2009 Annual Conference. This could be seen as prelude to the long-term goal of seeking an Executive Director for the Action Council as a whole.

Please feel free to contact me at [mcleodbs@musc.edu](mailto:mcleodbs@musc.edu) if you have comments, questions or suggestions about the Governance Task Force.

(continued from page 3— **Working Poor**)

anything, the gap between the economically secure and the poor is more severe than it was four decades ago. In many families today, children cannot say they expect to be better off than their parents. This is perhaps the greatest challenge now facing our society."

\*An abbreviated version of *atlas of Poverty* is available at Earth and Environmental Systems Institute, University Park, PA 16802-6813 or [akgl@ems.psu.edu](mailto:akgl@ems.psu.edu).

(continued from page 3 - **Iceland**)

was developed to rank countries on three variables: 1. living a long and healthy life; 2. being educated; 3. having a decent standard of living.

There is little stratification in Iceland; most people are either working class or middle class, as we might define them in the United States. There is equality between men and women, universal medical care and a university education can be attained by just paying a few low entrance fees. And in keeping with our theme of poverty, there is very little of it in Iceland.

Iceland is a beautiful country with people enjoying a high standard of living, and few social problems. The crime rate is low. I can remember lying awake in my hotel room in the capital of Reykjavik on a Saturday night, and listening to the silence, thinking something was missing. Sirens! There were no wailing sirens from police cars or ambulances; the capital was quiet on a Saturday night. People were out and about, but they were not breaking laws.

There are, however, incidences of domestic abuse and alcoholism. Who knows, in a country with only four hours of daylight in the winter, I might drink, too. Police commonly stop motorists to check for drunkenness, and if it is discovered that a driver has been drinking he or she will have to serve jail time. The only problem with that is that the national jail is so small that offenders often have to wait for a jail cell to become available before they can begin serving their time.

Iceland also has one of the highest rates of out-of-wedlock pregnancy in the world. While some would not consider that to be a social problem; it's interesting nevertheless. Iceland is not a particularly religious country; the state Lutheran church does not seem to exert a strong influence on the government or on its people. Unmarried pregnancy has never been highly stigmatized; it's estimated that about a third of all babies are born to mothers who are not married. With government-provided daycare, universal health care and a highly educated, predominately middle class population, an unmarried woman who becomes pregnant does not often have to worry how she's going to support her child or whether she's going to be ostracized by others.

I couldn't believe I was in a country with clean air, clean water, no military force and predominately happy, well-adjusted people. I had to find something somewhere, and I did. I was told, on the sly, that immigration is beginning to cause problems. There is a labor shortage in Iceland, and the government has been importing workers from Poland to fill the gaps. Poland, like Iceland, is part of the European Union, so there are few restrictions on the movement of Polish workers to Iceland. In fact, the Polish workers like Iceland so much that they are taking steps to become permanent residents, and eventually, Icelandic citizens. This has caused a backlash among some Icelanders, who feel that foreign workers should come to their country, work hard, and then go home. (sound familiar?) Deprived of assimilation into Icelandic society, some Polish workers are showing their disdain for Icelandic jingoism by ignoring her laws and committing crimes. This situation bears watching.

All in all, my trip to Iceland was one of the most memorable excursions I've ever taken. I've tried to give you a flavor for the country, but I didn't even mention the horses, the sheep, the geothermal energy, the geysers, the craters or the famous Blue Lagoon – a geothermal spa that offers not only an invigorating and healing bath, but its own line of natural skin care products.

I'm taking another trip to Europe in October; I'll tell you all about it when I return.

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prove their professional skills and demeanor. Because of her competence, honesty, fairness and concern, her role model status is openly acknowledged by many young professionals on staff. Mrs. Abraham has indeed taught them the importance of patience, maintaining a positive attitude, appropriate communication skills, management skills and commitment to community.

But, Mrs. Abraham's dedication to her community does not stop with her work at the Center. She is a member of the Mt. Olive Corporation and the President of the Abraham-Moss Board. This non-for-profit community group recently secured 1.2 million dollars in funding to build housing for the elderly in the community. She is also the Financial Secretary for the Pine Grove Union and has served as Financial Secretary for the Mt. Olive Baptist Congress of Christian Education, served as Secretary of the Mt. Olive Baptist Association, and the Pine Grove Union which are organizations in the community that provide Christian leadership and other assistance as needed.

Mrs. Abraham is also very active in her church and continues to set goals for herself to develop personally and for the good of the community. In May 2006, she completed a Bachelor's Double Degree in Bible and Leadership and Ethics. She is a member of Hickory Grove Baptist Church where she serves as the Sunday School Superintendent, alternate Bible Study and Adult Sunday School Teacher, a Member of the Choir, Pulpit Aide and Financial Secretary. Mrs. Abraham also started several girl scout troops in her church and served as a Girl Scout Leader for six years and served as PTSA President while her children were in middle school.

Mrs. Abraham has received some acknowledgment of her hard work, dedication and personal achievement from the community. Some of them include Mother of the Year by Orangeburg Chapter of Jack and Jill, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Outstanding Woman of the Year Award, South Carolina Girl Scouts' Distinguished Women of the Year, Outstanding Support from the Kidney Foundation Award, Louise R. Hassenplug Award and Most Helpful and Spirit Award from Southern Methodist College.

In summary, Mrs. Abraham has been able to demonstrate the following:

- She has managed to achieve, while not leaving her community behind.
- She leads by example, in her concern for the Center's clients and staff alike.
- She is able to find the good in all, and is satisfied with no less than the best for all who depend upon her.
- She is not afraid of hard work or hard decisions, but makes it all look easy.