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# The UMass/Boston Friday Report

Volume 2, Number 12  
January 22, 1993

News and information about and for the  
University Community from the Chancellor's Office

## Research Team Conducting Largest-Ever Survey On Sexual Abuse by Health Care Providers, Psychotherapists and Clergy

Researchers at the University are seeking to interview victims of sexual abuse for a survey that is exploring the scope and dynamics of client abuse by health care providers, psychotherapists and clergy. The survey is the largest ever of its kind, according to **Estelle Disch**, associate professor of sociology and research project director. She said the survey is the first to attempt to address client sexual abuse from the perspective of race, ethnicity and social class.

A multicultural team of seven women researchers, composed of two African-Americans, two Latinas and three whites began gathering data last year. To date the team has contacted 80 sexual abuse victims. Fifteen victims have been interviewed, and the others have answered extensive questionnaires dealing with many aspects of their lives. The survey is expected to be completed by the end of March and a report will be published later this year. Disch said the vast majority of those surveyed have been white women from the Greater Boston area. "We'd like to hear from more men and from more people of color," she said. The researchers are surveying speakers of both Spanish and English.

"Sexual abuse by health care workers, psychotherapists and clergy is a rampant, hidden problem," according to Disch. "Finally it is beginning to get the attention it deserves. In my first five years working as a victims' advocate, I counseled approximately 100 people; in the last four years, I've counseled about 250." The other members of the UMass/Boston research team are psychology professor **Deborah Brome**, sociology lecturer **Diane Fitzpatrick**, and **Elizabeth Johnson**, an assistant professor at CPCS. Representing other institutions or organizations on the team are **Margarita Alvarez** of Choate Health Systems; **Mauricia Alvarez**, a psychologist with the Latino Clinic of Cambridge Hospital; and **Nancy Avery**, co-director of Boston Associates to Stop Treatment Abuse. The survey is being supported through a combination of University grants and private funding.

## Grant of \$199,154 Given to UMB For Cape Cod Bay Research Project

Environmental sciences professors **Tracy Villareal** and **George Gardner** have received a grant of \$199,154 from the Massachusetts Bays Program for a study beginning next month that will examine Cape Cod Bay, and in particular how its biological processes are influenced by the flow of water from Massachusetts Bay. Villareal and Gardner are collaborating on the project with Professor Theodore Loder of the University of New Hampshire. One of the primary issues to be addressed by the researchers is why the growth of phytoplankton is so abundant in the eastern part of Cape Cod Bay. The research will involve tracking currents and examining the nutrients found in the bay waters. "One of our hypotheses is that the shallowness of the water in the eastern part of the Bay allows the phytoplankton to be closer to the surface, where it can be nurtured by sunlight," said biologist Villareal. "In addition, we believe that nutrients tend to collect in this part of the



Bay because they aren't so easily washed away by the currents." According to Villareal the research will prove helpful in understanding the impact that the proposed Boston Harbor outfall pipe might have on Cape Cod Bay. The outfall pipe is part of the massive Boston Harbor cleanup project, and would extend eight miles into Massachusetts Bay, where it would discharge sewage. Three vessels will be used to conduct experiments: UMass/Boston's *Neritic*, Maine Maritime Academy's *Argo Maine*, and *Asterias*, owned by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute.

## **Dorchester Woman Receives Award For Outstanding Community Service**

The University has presented the 1992 Robert H. Quinn Outstanding Community Leadership Award to **Maria Menconi-Waldron** of Dorchester, who over the course of several decades has devoted considerable energy to civic affairs and charitable causes. Menconi-Waldron received the award at the University's annual Community Breakfast January 22 at the Harbor Campus. Chancellor **Sherry H. Penney** addressed the breakfast audience. The Quinn Award honors an individual from the communities of Dorchester, Quincy, Roxbury or South Boston who has made an outstanding contribution to his or her community. It was given to Menconi-Waldron by **Robert H. Quinn**, who as a legislator helped found the University. Menconi-Waldron, a resident of Savin Hill, is a past president of the Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association, the Bayside Council for Children, and the Dorchester United Neighborhood Association. She also has been or still is a member of many other civic organizations.

## **Three Hundred Local High School Students Attend Science Fair Held on Campus**

Three hundred students from 10 local high schools participated January 21 in a day-long science fair at the campus. The students were introduced to a variety of science topics in biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics. University faculty conducted the sessions, which were designed to make science both engaging and fun. Each student selected three sessions to attend from among the 17 offered by University professors. In addition to taking classes, the students toured the Harbor Campus' research laboratories and other science and math facilities. "Our objective was to provide these students with an educational experience that encourages them to think of science careers as interesting and rewarding," said **Christine Arnett-Kibel**, dean of the faculty of sciences.

The students participating in the science day were from Braintree, Cambridge Rindge & Latin, Charlestown, Chelsea, Lawrence, Minuteman Technical, Needham, Oliver Ames, and South Boston High Schools, as well as the Dana Hall School in Wellesley. Typical of the day's events was a class on water and gravity conducted by **Jack Looney**, a professor of geography. Looney provided about 20 students with a first-hand lesson on what he called "the three P's -- permeability, percolation and porosity." In one experiment, while Looney poured water through various types of sediment, students observed how quickly the water was absorbed. The demonstration -- called a "perc test" -- helped explain the differences between various sediments, and why some land is suitable for development and other land is not. In another lesson, students learned to identify the three wave formations -- surging, plunging and spilling -- and how each one provides information on the characteristics of its beach.