

Meet our 2017 AaEA Members of the Quarter!



AaEA is “opportunity and member driven,” and most of our programs and activities are initiated by our wonderful members. We are excited to recognize the following AaEA Members of the Quarter for their contributions to our AaEA committees.

Quarter 2 New Member: Robyn Borgman, M.A.



Background

Where did you go to undergraduate and/or graduate school? What did you study?

Undergraduate: Georgia State University, B.A. in Psychology; Graduate: Georgia State University, M.A. in Psychology; Currently: Georgia State University, Ph.D. student

How did you become an evaluator? How long have you worked in evaluation? I found myself immersed in program evaluation in 2010 as an undergraduate student at Georgia State University (GSU). I was working with community psychology graduate students under the supervision of Dr. Kuperminc on the Georgia BASICS Evaluation team, helping evaluate the effectiveness of brief interventions in reducing harmful substance use. This was my first undergraduate research experience and I'm grateful it was in evaluation. Evaluation work encompasses multiple aspects of the research process: study design, data collection, data management, data analysis, and dissemination. Through this experience, I was exposed to the practice and utility of program evaluation. This experience also sparked my passion for community psychology. Since, I have continued involvement in evaluation through my courses at GSU, working with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Atlanta, and my practicum opportunities, working with the International Rescue Committee and not with AaEA and ChopArt.

Life and Work in the ATL

Where do you currently work? What is your job title? How long have you worked there?

Please describe your work. I'm currently a graduate research assistant in the Violence Against Women Prevention (VAWP) Lab and a teaching assistant at GSU. I have worked at GSU in these roles since entering graduate school in 2012. As a member of the VAWP Lab, I work with my colleagues to supervise an undergraduate research team and conduct a series of studies investigating factors that contribute to violence against women and sexual violence, with the hopes of influencing policy and prevention programming. As a teaching assistant, I have taught the upper level undergraduate psychology research methods and statistics labs. This upcoming year I am excited to continue my work in the VAWP lab and become the instructor of record of a psychology course of my own.

How long have you lived in Atlanta? What do you like best about the city?

I have been in Atlanta since the fall of 2009. I moved here for my college at 18 and have stayed here ever since. I love this city. It is so full of life and character. Each neighborhood has a personality of its own and is beautiful in its own way. Atlanta is a resilient city full of resilient people. As this city's landscape begins to change, I am more drawn to those working to preserve this city's roots and history. I am grateful to be surrounded by a diverse array of cultures, religions, music, arts, and foods. (Let's be honest, the food is probably 90% of the reason I love this city.) Atlanta is also a city full of compassionate people. The nonprofit and community organizations I have encountered and worked with know what it means to listen to the needs of the people and to provide services to improve lives. Atlanta is a city where people band together in hardships and hold each other up. Its infrastructure is a mess, but it's a mess that pulls people together to fight back. I feel like it's where I belong, where evaluators belong. This is a place where people are constantly looking up, looking to improve, and looking for a family to grow with. As an evaluator, I have the opportunity to help Atlanta grow and improve.

How long have you been a member of AaEA? Why did you become a member?

I have been a member of AaEA since the fall of 2016. I was first exposed to AaEA as a volunteer for the AaEA helpdesk at last year's AEA conference. I attended a session on pro bono (or affordable) nonprofit evaluation capacity building and service provision in North Carolina that inspired me to pursue similar opportunities locally. Thus, I began emailing people involved in AaEA and was linked with Erin and Sarah of the Pro Bono Committee. I met them at a social event this past fall and was instantly smitten with the work their committee was doing. I wanted to get involved, so I joined AaEA immediately and began officially volunteering in January. It has been the best choice I've made thus far in graduate school. I feel like I found my people; I feel like I found my cause.

Fun Facts and Aspirations

What is your favorite thing about being an evaluator? My favorite thing about being an (aspiring) evaluator is the diversity in experiences and exposure to community work. The organizations and evaluators I've had the privilege to work with are inspiring and energizing. It feels great to be a part of helping improve lives and communities in a broader context. When I

attended AEA this past fall, I finally felt like I found my people. The energy and passion is what I love.

What do you think the field of evaluation will look like in 10 years? I think (and hope) the field of evaluation will become even more integrated into service provision in the public and private sector in the next 10 years. The collaboration between evaluators, program designers, and service providers is critical in improving lives. No one should work in a silo. Continued and improved interdisciplinary work is the future of evaluation.

What are your professional goals over the next 5 years? This question is a tough one. As a graduate student, it's hard to imagine life beyond those GSU walls. I just hope to be employed somewhere, preferably in evaluation, where I can still engage face to face with nonprofit organizers and service providers from time to time. Hopefully my time with AaEA will help me further clarify my careers goals and learn where I fit best in the Atlanta evaluation community.

In one word, complete the sentence: "Evaluators are like _____." I would say evaluators are like cake, I suppose; a lot ingredients and layers come together to make us wonderful (and loved by just about everyone, but I'm biased).