



social work

# TREATING A MUTUAL TRAUMA

**A STUDY EXAMINES HOW CAREGIVERS IN DISASTERS CAN FUNCTION AMIDST THEIR OWN DISTRESS**

by Sally Lauckner / GSAS '10

**O**n September 11, 2001, Carol Tosone was sitting with a patient, David, in her Lower Manhattan office when they were startled by the whir and rattle of a low-flying plane. Just one mile from the World Trade Center, they soon heard the deafening impact of the jetliner crashing into the North Tower and the ensuing

shrieks of horror and panic. In the weeks following, Tosone (SSSW '93), an associate professor at the Silver School of Social Work, volunteered to help rescue workers, witnesses, and victims' families deal with the trauma. In her private practice, she also helped patients process their individual 9/11 experiences.

But Tosone's own distressing memories kept resurfacing, and

sessions with David became particularly difficult. He was a trigger for that painful morning, and she found herself anxious and distracted during their conversations. It's not unusual for therapists to have a visceral reaction to a patient's story, otherwise known as "secondary trauma." "People in my field are trained to handle that," Tosone says. But after 9/11, she was experiencing

something entirely different. She wondered: “What happens when you are going through the *same* trauma as your clients?”

Tosone embarked on a research project to help find an answer to that very question. She surveyed nearly 500 members of the National Association of Social Workers who lived and worked in Midtown and Lower Manhattan, and who were directly involved in helping 9/11 victims. More recently Tosone replicated the study in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. One of the biggest takeaways was the phenomenon of shared trauma. “You have experienced the trauma yourself in addition to working with others who are suffering from that same trauma,” explains Tosone, whose study revealed that, just like their patients, individual clinicians react differently to shared trauma.

Some reported a greater ability to empathize with their patients, while others were mentally and emotionally exhausted and suddenly found their jobs overwhelmingly difficult. Linda Mills, executive director of NYU’s Center on Violence and Recovery and a professor at the Silver School of Social Work, for example, was able to process her trauma from 9/11 in a useful way. Mills lives just blocks from Ground Zero and a piece of fuselage landed on the roof of her apartment building, displacing her family for several weeks after the incident. “My personal 9/11 experience allowed me to help others as a clinician [and became] the canvas for my own recovery and also for building my capacity to help others recover,” she says.

One thing that concerned almost all the clinicians involved in the studies was their lack of formal disaster training and uncertainty about how to help victims of trauma. “We need to

rethink our approach to teaching about trauma in our [social work] schools,” Tosone says. “It is an elective at this point, and it needs to be infused throughout the curriculum.” Briana Barocas, director of research at the Center on Violence and Recovery echoes this. In 2008, she was part of a team, along with Mills, that published a Public Safety Trauma Response study examining the support programs available to NYC police officers, including 9/11 first responders. They also surveyed mental-health professionals who provided crisis support to those officers at Ground Zero and found results similar to those of Tosone. “A lot of the clinicians we spoke to were grappling with their own reactions to the event and their own prolonged exposure,” Barocas says. “We found that clinicians providing disaster support require additional training and ongoing peer support.”

Tosone next plans to conduct a study in Israel in order to compare how the three environments differ in impact—New York City was an acute, man-made attack; New Orleans is chronically exposed to natural disasters; and Israel is at constant risk for man-made terror. These elements are key in figuring out why certain clinicians thrive under specific conditions. The research is especially timely, Tosone says, given the rise in prominent natural disasters over the past few years, including major earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, New Zealand, and Japan, as well as violent tornadoes in the southern United States. “I want to figure out how the clinicians who were traumatized but still able to do their jobs managed it,” Tosone says. “We do know that the first thing clinicians need to do is help themselves. Unless they do, they can’t help others.” ■

## ■ student outreach

# Small Businesses, Big Ideas

## A STERN PROGRAM TURNS STUDENTS INTO KEY CONSULTANTS

by Sally Lauckner / GSAS '10

Last February, Yoel Borgenicht filled out an application that forever changed the way he does business. Borgenicht, the president of King Rose of New York, a Harlem-based construction company that focuses on high-end renovations, aspired to expand the revenue and staffing of his two-and-a-half-year-old business, but was at a loss on how to do so. “I felt like my experience and abilities had taken the business as far as it could go, but

students are given the opportunity to work with prominent organizations such as the Metropolitan Opera, Habitat for Humanity, the Legal Aid Society, or the William J. Clinton Foundation. Borgenicht applied through the Clinton Foundation and was matched with a group of three MBA students and their mentors from Booz & Company, a consulting firm.

Working with King Rose construction was a natural fit for Raha Nasserri (STERN '12), who previously served with Engineers

President Yoel Borgenicht had such a positive experience working with one student that after the final presentation, he offered to hire her.

I wanted to exponentially increase the size of the firm,” he says. “I knew I needed guidance.”

It turns out a group of graduate students could help with the solution. Established in 2002, the Stern Consulting Corps, or SCC, matches qualified grad students from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business with non-profits where they consult with small businesses in underserved New York City communities. After a grueling application process, which includes several rounds of interviews, accepted

Without Borders in Peru and as a civil engineer for a construction company in her native Iran. “I wanted to get a clear snapshot of the entire consulting process,” Nasserri says, explaining what has attracted some 500 Stern students to participate in the program. “I wanted to learn how to solve problems and how to present projects to clients.”

After an arduous 10-week process of conducting market research on similarly sized companies and holding a series of

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meetings with Borgenicht and other King Rose employees, the students and consultants determined that a key step was for Borgenicht to hire middle-management people to handle day-to-day responsibilities, allowing him to devote more time to financial tracking. The team determined the specific skills the new hires would need to possess and calculated how much it would cost the company. The students' fresh vantage point to such businesses is essential, says Julius Tintelnot, program associate for the Clinton Foundation. "It is very valuable for the owners to have an outsider come in and question them," Tintelnot says. "They become more business-savvy because they take a step back and evaluate how they run their business."

For Borgenicht, the process delivered both a valuable learning experience and a boost in business. "I'd never worked with consultants before, so my expectations weren't concrete, but they figured out what the company was about and helped me determine the road map for growth," he says. In fact, Borgenicht reports that his company's staffing is up to 45 employees (from 33) and that his profits have also increased, something he owes partially to the Stern students. He also had such a positive experience working with Nasser that after the final presentation, he offered to hire her as a consultant. She had to decline as she'd already committed to a summer internship but found the experience invaluable nonetheless. "I didn't sleep very much and I worked on weekends, but it was eye-opening," she says. "I learned that consultants not only have to be business-savvy, but they have to develop a vision for a company and be able to express that." ■

CLAUDIUS SMITH'S ROCK LOOP



the insider

# BEST OF NEW YORK

NYU FACULTY, STAFF, AND ALUMNI OFFER UP THEIR FAVORITES

by Renée Alfuso / CAS '06

• **TAKE AN INVIGORATING HIKE TO SEE FALL COLORS, THEN REWARD YOURSELF WITH SOME GOURMET DOUGHNUTS**

• **BOOK NOOKS**

• "Reading is my life—that's practically all I do," poet Deborah Landau says. And when she shops for new material, the clinical professor and director of the Creative Writing Program at NYU prefers independent bookstores to the sprawling chains that often neglect small presses. "It's like the difference between a clothing boutique and a department store, which can feel overwhelming," she explains. Landau suggests **THREE LIVES & COMPANY**, where an ambiguous shelving system encourages communication between customers and knowledgeable staff. A West Village staple for 33 years, the space itself is fit for a Hobbit and recalls another era in bookselling. "The atmosphere is so charming that you

really can't believe it still exists," Landau says. For a bit more legroom, she recommends **MCNALLY JACKSON**, which boasts a tea shop with free Wi-Fi frequented by authors and bookworms alike. The two comfy floors in Soho are decked with plants, paintings, and leather armchairs, and offer additional perks such as an Espresso Book Machine that prints PDFs as bound paperbacks, which can then be sold in-store. But Landau goes for their poetry chapbooks, literary magazines, and showcased staff recommendations. "I love a carefully curated selection because you'll discover things you didn't even know you were looking for," she says. **154 WEST 10TH STREET**  
**212-741-2069**  
**WWW.THREELIVES.COM**

52 PRINCE STREET  
212-274-1160

[WWW.MCNALLYJACKSON.COM](http://WWW.MCNALLYJACKSON.COM)

• **DECADENT DOUGHNUTS**

Whether or not cops have an affinity for a certain circular pastry, the truth is: Who *doesn't* like doughnuts? Still we thought we'd ask one of NYU's finest, Mark Fischetti, who's worked as a campus security officer for 16 years, to help sample some of the tastiest in town. After some much deserved off-duty indulging, Fischetti's top pick was **DOUGHNUT PLANT**. Owner Mark Israel uses his grandfather's special recipe for eggless artisanal doughnuts, which have been featured on *The Martha Stewart Show*, Food Network's *The Best Thing I Ever Ate*, and countless "best" lists across America. "It's not a run-of-the-mill doughnut," Fischetti notes. The gourmet treats are made with all-natural ingredients,

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: © DAN BALOGH; COURTESY DOUGHNUT PLANT; © JASON HOLLANDER; © CHRISTOPHER L. SMITH



fresh fruit, and no trans fats, preservatives, or artificial flavorings. Even the traditional jelly doughnut is transformed into a fluffy square filled evenly with blackberry jam. But Fischetti lauds the store's unique flavors such as fresh blueberry, carrot cake, and crême brûlée—an elevated version of Boston cream with rich vanilla custard and crunchy burnt sugar on top. Flavors constantly change with the seasons, with rose petal in February and roasted chestnut for fall. When the tough work was over, Fischetti concluded: “Being a doughnut tester is the perfect job.”

**379 GRAND STREET**  
**212-505-3700**  
**WWW.DOUGHNUTPLANT.COM**

#### SPOT OF TEA

It doesn't take a trip down the rabbit hole to uncover an exceptional tea party. Simply pop into **ALICE'S TEA CUP** (on the Upper West and East sides), with its more

than 140 loose-leaf varieties, including the rare Japanese green tea Gyokuro and Trafalgar Square, a peppermint-patty house blend. The whimsical wonderland serves afternoon tea all day alongside tiers of scones, finger sandwiches, and fruit tarts (try the Mad Hatter for two or the Jabberwocky for more monstrous appetites). But for a proper cup of tea, look no further than **TEA & SYMPATHY** in the Little Britain section of Greenwich Village, where Londoner Nicky Perry set up shop in 1990. “The place has a lot of character and really great food,” says Rebecca Smith (CAS '11), who co-founded the British Culture Club at NYU and catered their events with Tea & Sympathy's authentic fare, such as shepherd's pie and Yorkshire pudding. The cozy eatery has just 10 tables but patrons happily wait in the adjacent gift shop, which sells British groceries, sweets, and tea accessories.

Regulars include expats Tina Brown, Rupert Everett, and Kate Moss. Smith especially recommends it to coffee-prone New Yorkers who she believes are missing out. “I didn't like tea for the longest time, but then it grew on me,” she recalls. “It's a nice change of pace.”

**108 GREENWICH AVENUE**  
**212-989-9735**  
**WWW.TEAANDSYMPATHY**  
**NEWYORK.COM**

#### EDITORS' PICK: DAY TRIPPER

NYU Alumni Magazine Editor-in-Chief Jason Hollander (GAL '07) recently discovered a nature hike so perfect that he just couldn't keep it to himself. “It's quick and easy to get there—essentially it's user-friendly hiking for Manhattanites,” he says of **CLAUDIUS SMITH'S ROCK LOOP** in Harri-man State Park. After just an hour's ride on NJ Transit, from Penn Station to Tuxedo, New

York, the train deposits you two blocks from the trailhead, and there's even a deli by the station where hikers can stock up on supplies. The 6.2-mile loop is moderately strenuous and takes about five hours to complete. Once you get moving, the terrain changes from swampland to rock crevices and shimmering streams before climbing to dramatic cliffs overlooking the Hudson Valley. Plateaus such as Claudius Smith's Rock and the aptly named Almost Perpendicular offer scenic spots to stop for lunch while taking in panoramic views of the Ramapo Mountains and miles of brightly colored trees in autumn. “What's nice is that it's not *just* a stroll in the woods,” Hollander says. “It has lots of different physical challenges, so it's never boring.”

**FOR THIS AND OTHER NEARBY TRAILS, VISIT**  
**WWW.NYNJTC.ORG/VIEW/ HIKE\_NY**