

Passing the Mic: Farewell Peter, Hello To Our New Hosts

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Peter Sobota [00:00:05] Hi, everybody, and welcome to a special edition of the inSocialWork podcast. Today, we want to introduce our new co-hosts. I'm here with our new hosts, JoAnn Lee and Todd Sage. Hello, colleagues and fellow faculty members.

Todd Sage [00:00:21] Thank you for having us.

JoAnn Lee [00:00:23] Hello, hello!

Peter Sobota [00:00:24] I know every podcast host's worst nightmare is being the person who answers the question.

Todd Sage [00:00:34] Absolutely, because we like to be on the other side of the microphone.

Peter Sobota [00:00:37] That was always mine, so all right. So let's see here. I wanted to start off with like an icebreaker kind of thing, and something a little challenging just to keep us loose here. So here's my first question for our new hosts. What makes each of you or even both of you? Believe that you are ready to replace. The mediocrity and tedium of the previous host.

Todd Sage [00:01:18] Well, I guess I can answer that first. Well, first, I don't think we're replacing mediocracy. I think that the podcast has been in great hands over the last years and that we've been able to, to provide to the listeners topics that are varied and that, you know, go more than just surface deep. And so. I know for me that's one of the things that keeps me listening, you know, from time to time. I won't say, Peter, I listen to you every time. But that keeps coming back so that I can continue my own growth and learning. What about you, JoAnn?

Peter Sobota [00:01:59] By the way, that was extraordinarily diplomatic, and you were supposed to talk about how great you are, but I can't wait to see what JoAnn does with this.

JoAnn Lee [00:02:09] I agree with what Todd said, man, I you know, folks can't see that you were laughing hysterically and diabolically for quite a while. You managed to do that silently, which is quite a trick.

Peter Sobota [00:02:25] It's a skill. Yeah, all right. All right. So all right, let's get the foolishness out of the way, because that that's enough a little bit. So how about this? I know this is a tough one, but why don't you start by telling us a little bit about yourselves and the roles that you have here at, you know, at the school. You know, we're all faculty members. We do other stuff. Could you start there?

Todd Sage [00:02:51] So I'll start first. So obviously, yes, we're all at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work and my role is as a clinical associate professor. My specialty is in substance use disorder and motivational interviewing. I also come from a long work history of child welfare. So I have some research interest in some some work in and around child welfare as well. And you know, what really attracted me to participate in this is to bring some of that kind of clinical lens to our listeners and our participants. You know, one of the things I constantly tell our students is the greatest thing about a social work degree is that there's a million and one different things you can do with it. And so I think I just bring a small sliver of what potentially you could do with a social work degree and and my own expertise and experiences behind that. And that's why I do what I do at the University at Buffalo and I enjoy it.

Peter Sobota [00:03:59] Nice. JoAnn?

JoAnn Lee [00:04:02] So I'm an associate professor here, not clinical like Todd, so I think he and I will complement each other really well. So with that, my research area is on transitions to adulthood with a focus on populations that might struggle the most, including those with experiences in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. And in terms of teaching, so far I've taught across programs. I've been teaching the human behavior class foundational course with the MSW students, although I think I'm not teaching that this year. And I've also taught research in the DSW program. And this past year I taught theory in the PhD program. I think it's just so fun to teach and work with students and be energized by their enthusiasm.

Peter Sobota [00:04:54] Nice, all right. So I used to ask this question of almost all of our guests, and I don't know if I got away from it, but how did the two of you, and remember, we're trying to keep this short, so do the best you can. How did both of you end up in social work, of all things?

JoAnn Lee [00:05:17] So I have a quick answer and then I have a really involved answer, so I'll pass on the involved answer. All right. But I think the quick answer is just my mom kind of modeling, just helping people. And it's interesting, because when I got into social work, my mom was really upset at me. And I said, but mom, it's... Like you inspired me, you have the biggest heart, you're the most generous person I know, you're always helping people. So I'm inspired by you. And she looked at me and she scoffed and she's like, you can make good money and help people too. I don't know why you have to give up the professional sort of opportunities to help people. But all right. There was film.

Peter Sobota [00:06:04] Yeah, there must be a book about this because that's like the standard answer for almost all parents whose offspring go into social work. So that's all right. Well, all right, and I know your mom wasn't a social worker by formal education.

JoAnn Lee [00:06:21] No, I mean, I think she's the classic old school kind of social worker who just did it because she believed in helping people, not not because it was a profession, but it was just part of who she was. Yeah, interesting. And I'm speaking about

her like she's passed. She's still very much alive and still very upset with me for going into social work.

Peter Sobota [00:06:42] Well, you might want to interview her and do an update, you know, now that you're running a podcast.

Todd Sage [00:06:51] So, alright. Yeah, so my origin story is a little bit different and has a kind of a funny undertone to it as well. So I was in the military, I'm an Army veteran and when I got out of the Army, I had to go to college or something because I had this GI bill that I wanted to use and so I was originally gonna go do physician assistance or register a nurse or something like that and I took organic chemistry and I got a C. And there's no way I was ever going to take organic chemistry again, and get that that precious B that you have to have in the hard sciences to continue on in those programs. And at that point, my wife had already done her BSW and her MSW. And she was doing social work. And so after I got that C in organic chemistry, I was looking around trying to figure out, well, what's next for me. I was really influenced by my wife and her friends and the people she right around. And I saw a place for me in social work. And so it just so happened, I graduated from Cal State San Bernardino. They had their inaugural BSW program open up. And I like to tease and say I was a token male in the program. And so I got my BSW and I never looked back. And I'm glad I found social work as my home and my profession. And not that I probably wouldn't have been happy as a physician's assistant or something like that, but I've definitely had a rich career doing lots of different things in social work and it's really given me an opportunity to give back and help the community. And so that's kind of how I came to social work and that's my origin story.

Peter Sobota [00:08:37] Yeah, thanks. Wow, I didn't know either of those things about you. So, all right. So how about this? What, I don't know how to ask this. What? There's a lot going on in the world, I think, to be fair. And so I guess I'm curious for each of you, and this will probably be reflected in your duties as hosts, the hosts are kind of like host, editors slash producers. We kind of get to pursue our own interests with, we get feedback from our colleagues, but we kind of do the things we're most passionate about. But I'm curious, what, like, as of today? What is really rattling around as kind of most present or that you want to do a podcast on right away?

Todd Sage [00:09:34] So I know for me a few things that kind of have my immediate attention are our first I have a love and passion for all things motivational interviewing I'm still involved in teaching motivational interviewing, I train agencies and motivational interviewing. And so one of my first podcasts is going to be about motivational interviewing so stay tuned. The other thing that's kind of got my professional north star kind of a. Guiding me is this new frontier related to technology and artificial intelligence and large language models. And so I'm hoping to bring some of that into how we as social workers navigate that as a profession with our values and ethics. And so those are some of the things that are kind of on my radar to bring on early on and kind of presenting podcasts. And then lastly, just kind of just things in general related to like practice and enhancing practice because as social workers, as social work educators, we're always telling our students we're lifelong learners. And so, just because I've done 101 different things with my social work degree doesn't mean that there's not a lot still to learn and a lot more to share. And so that's the kind of material I'm hoping to be able to bring to the table.

Peter Sobota [00:10:54] Thanks Todd. JoAnn, have you given any thought to this?

JoAnn Lee [00:10:58] Yeah, I mean, I think, I would, I think I've been going about it in a slightly different way. It's less about the things that I want to bring to the table in terms of content. Um, but I think I have more of an interest in more of a hope of bringing to the attention of social workers, things that may not be quite so mainstream that might be a little bit more off the beaten path. Um, that might be less likely to get airtime. Um, and I think to the point, to this point, the first guess I wanted to bring on is not, is actually not a researcher, which perhaps I'll get into trouble for that.

Peter Sobota [00:11:35] Yes, yes, that will happen immediately.

JoAnn Lee [00:11:38] Well, I was told it needs to be very social worky. But the conversations I've had with this researcher, he's a criminologist. And when I talk to him, I feel like I'm talking to a social worker. Would he identify as a social workers? Has he been trained as a Social Worker? No, but does he say things that will resonate with us as a profession? Absolutely. And that's why I want to bring him on because I don't know how we would necessarily connect to his work, unless you were... Outside of social work doing criminology and that sort of thing.

Peter Sobota [00:12:13] Yeah. Interesting. All right. So how about this? I'm just going to assume that the two of you listen to podcasts, so maybe you don't. But if you do, which podcasts of any kind do you two listen to and why are they your favorites?

Todd Sage [00:12:38] I have two that I listen to regularly besides obviously our own podcast here at UB. One's not controversial and the other one's probably going to be a little bit controversial because of it's directly our competition. But the one that's not the one that is not controversial is Talking to Change and that's the motivational interviewing podcast that Rolnick still as with lots of other professionals and. That are out there really trying to expand and understand how motivational interviewing does what it does. And so I find a lot of interest in that and just the kind of conversations they have are, are really down to earth and Frank, right? And, and so that's kind of the type of podcast. So like, and the more controversial one, which I would encourage everybody to listen to both ours and his is Jonathan, Jonathan Singer's, uh, the social work podcast. And so. Um, he's been doing his podcast forever and ever. It's a brilliant podcast and, um, I think there's a lot of overlap in what we do and, but we are, you know, um it's always good to get different perspectives from different hosts, asking those types of questions. And so, uh, those are my kind of two go to podcasts. Um, and so what are yours, JoAnn?

JoAnn Lee [00:13:58] You made the wrong assumption, Peter. I am not a big fan of podcasts. I'm not very into him for the most part, but there are two that are fun.

Peter Sobota [00:14:09] Well, it's been nice having you as host, JoAnn.

JoAnn Lee [00:14:10] I know, am I done? Am I fired? But there are two that I think of, but they're a lot bit older. And one was the very first season of Serial. That the storytelling, the way that they kind of explored that one question from every angle, I found fascinating. And the other was a very different kind of podcast. It was called Another around. Todd's nodding, you're familiar with that one? It just, it was short, it was goofy, it was entertaining. So talking about social work research, I'm trying to figure out how to make it short, goofy, and entertaining. I am being facetious, don't worry.

Peter Sobota [00:14:55] No, I think that's going to help. Yeah, I want to throw in my recommendation. I think everybody should listen to the bugle. I'm just going to leave that

right there. The bugle and by the way, Todd, I think it helps that Stephen Rolnick is quite a character. I think that is that's the fun part.

Todd Sage [00:15:15] Yeah, he has a great sense of humor. He doesn't take himself too seriously, both Rolnick and Miller. They're just genuine down-to-earth people. And so it's great that we still have those two individuals out there spreading the gospel related to MI.

Peter Sobota [00:15:31] Yeah, and it is not controversial to, to recommend Jonathan's podcast, Jonathan, we've, we've really not competed with Jonathan. We have, actually, when this all began, it was pretty much Jonathan and us. That was it. So it was just kind of like fun. Um, now there are many, many podcasts and so yeah, terrific. All right. So let's get personal. I was thinking about asking height, weight, and religious affiliation, but we'll skip that. What is one thing that listeners might be surprised to learn about each of you?

Todd Sage [00:16:21] Well, that's interesting. And I already kind of pulled the curtain back a little bit on one of them. I am a veteran. I served in the military. So I do have a passion for my fellow veterans and things related to veteran affairs and kind of the care of veterans. And so I did deploy to Kosovo. So I did have that as part of my history. Something that not many people know because it just recently happened is I recently got a service dog. And so that's an area of interest that I'm starting to explore now. It's kind of like, you know, folks with hidden disabilities or disabilities that they don't talk about, how those can be met. And I guess something that's more kind of fun going is I'd rather take a cruise across the ocean to get to Europe than fly on a plane just so that I can take my time getting there. It's not that I have a fear of flying. I just think cruising's a great way to get around places. And so I'm all about cruising.

Peter Sobota [00:17:25] Nice, thanks Todd. JoAnn?

JoAnn Lee [00:17:27] There is nothing interesting about. Me.

Peter Sobota [00:17:30] I knew this was going to happen. But by the way, I'm going to push. I feel like now I'm going to go around and beat the press.

JoAnn Lee [00:17:38] If I have to answer, I would say alternatively, I feel like a couple of things have already come up that listeners might be surprised to learn. Like I am really not a podcast person. So when you initially approached me, I was like, I don't really listen to podcasts. Why? Why would I do this? What, what?

Peter Sobota [00:17:58] Oh

JoAnn Lee [00:17:59] But but I did obviously warm up to the idea.

Todd Sage [00:18:01] You did, yeah. Now you're going to blow up and become an international superstar.

JoAnn Lee [00:18:12] There's the goofiness, thanks Todd.

Peter Sobota [00:18:14] Yeah, we don't want to go on and on because then people won't be surprised to learn everything about you as you lead the podcast. But we're getting kind of closer to the end. But before we do, I want to ask both of you, how did the Knicks manage to win that game? The Spurs last night were up by 27 points. How do you think that happened? JoAnn, let's start with you.

JoAnn Lee [00:18:43] Well, I didn't watch the game.

Peter Sobota [00:18:45] I- I have a-

JoAnn Lee [00:18:47] I vaguely have- It wasn't the-

Peter Sobota [00:18:47] It wasn't a podcast, JoAnn. It was nationally televised.

JoAnn Lee [00:18:52] I'm still recovering from my trip to Alaska.

Peter Sobota [00:18:56] Oh, all right, Todd.

Todd Sage [00:18:59] So what I will say that going back to your last question about something people might be surprised about me is that I am originally from the West Coast. So I have no love and care for the Knicks. And so all my teams are already out of the race. So for our Knicks fans out there, good for you. But I don't have any skin in the game. I'm still waiting for the west coast to come alive again.

Peter Sobota [00:19:28] Yeah, San Antonio is as close as you're gonna get, right? All right, so we've covered a lot of ground here. So you're going to be our new co-hosts. I wanna give you the last word. What would you like to say to our listeners who will be listening to your podcasts as you begin your new roles? Last word to both of you.

Todd Sage [00:19:51] Yeah, I mean, I think for me, just for our audience, you know, I'm genuinely glad to be here and to, you know hopefully be able to impart some entertainment and some knowledge to you through the episodes. You know, the show as it's been built, I feel has become kind of a trusted voice in the social work area for a long time. And I'm hoping to be able to kind of pick up that. That flame and continue forward with it. And I'd be interested as we move forward to hear from some of our listeners kind of, what are you liking, what aren't you liking and what can we do to make this second transition more entertaining and more meaningful to you all? So that'd be my kind of final thoughts related to that.

Peter Sobota [00:20:46] Thanks Todd.

JoAnn Lee [00:20:49] Um, I would say for me, um, the, part of the reason I'm excited about the podcast is that I realize what the storytelling elements, um it's an opportunity to take research that is so sterilized when you read research studies, they're sterilized. You can't pontificate at all. You can have opinions. Um, and it is so just sterilized, um I'm excited about bringing the human element to research. Um, and understanding a little bit more about the researchers and the passion and the motivation that drives people. Um, so I hope that translates into a somewhat interesting podcast. Uh, but my last words would be stay tuned.

Peter Sobota [00:21:34] Nice. All right, that's a good place to be. Well, it's gonna be awesome having both of you. I couldn't be happier. The other thing that we need to acknowledge is that the person in the background, Ryan Tropic, our GA, our crack GA production assistant, I think this might be tied in with his last duties. I think might be his last thing before the two of you... Begin to terrorize a new GA that we will hire. Ryan, thank you for everything. Are you, you're there? I can see him. And so Ryan, thank you. You, it was a gas to get to know you. And, and what about you? What do you want to say?

Ryan [00:22:18] I've just really enjoyed this experience a great deal. You know, obviously I appreciate a lot of things that come along with the appointment, but being able to sit down on the recordings, being able edit them, really being able, you know, I really felt like this position was almost like having a two year long course where I get to cover so many different aspects of social work that I otherwise wouldn't have gotten to experience in that way. So yeah, I'm just really grateful for the time. I'm really grateful for having access to you Peter throughout the last two years. And seeing just like how you conduct these interviews, the way your mind works, the way that you, you know, JoAnn asked before we started recording, like how much you stick to script versus going off of it. And while I don't always see the scripts, I can oftentimes see when the guest says something that really grabs your attention and the way you can shift gears in the moment. And I just really respected that. I think I've learned a lot from that process. So yeah, I just, I'm leaving feeling a lot of gratitude at the end of this.

Peter Sobota [00:23:12] Well, you are a major, major contributor and we're really grateful. Do we know who's gonna be stepping into the role? We do. Yeah, can we see it?

Ryan [00:23:23] Am I allowed to share that? Is that legal?

Peter Sobota [00:23:25] Well, let's break rules. What the heck? I'm done.

Ryan [00:23:29] Yeah, incoming student Morgan Hamm.

Peter Sobota [00:23:33] Morgan Hamm, all right. Well, JoAnn and Todd, welcome, it's all yours.

Todd Sage [00:23:39] Bye, everybody! Bye!