

## **CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL WORKER WINS AWARD**

**HICKORY** – Brian Weir, a social worker with Catawba County Social Services and 2014 graduate of Methodist University of Fayetteville, has been awarded the 2015 Toby Brown Award from the National Association of Social Workers North Carolina Chapter (NASW-NC).

The award recognizes the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) student in North Carolina who best reflects and represents the ethics, values, and passion in the field of social work through exemplary performance in social work coursework, field placement, student social work associations, and community organizations.



“This is a prestigious award presented to the top social work student in the state,” said Dean of the School of Public Affairs Dr. George Hendricks. “This is a tremendous honor for Brian and Methodist University.”

Weir is an infantry combat veteran with the U.S. Army and is now a family investigator for Catawba County Social Services Child Protective Services.

During his social work policy course at Methodist, he became interested in the topic of human trafficking after learning about the high rate of trafficking in the Fayetteville area, and he went on to form a group to help with the issue. Students Organized for the Advancement of North Carolina (SOANC) engages students in community action.

“My social work education provided me with skills needed to take a proactive approach to fighting human trafficking,” Weir said. “It was this moment that I feel I actually became a social worker.”

SOANC partnered with the Raleigh-based advocacy group Partners Against the Trafficking of Humans in NC (PATHNC), the Fayetteville Dream Center (FDC), and North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA). Weir arranged a meeting with a local city council representative and worked with the Fayetteville City Council and Cumberland County Commissioners to adopt a resolution on human trafficking in Fayetteville.

Weir facilitated a press conference with Mayor Nat Robertson and Council Woman Kathy Jensen that was attended by the Fayetteville district attorney, county sheriff, police chief, and county chair, who together issued a county-wide proclamation denouncing human trafficking.

In 2014, Weir was accepted as a North Carolina Child Welfare Collaborative Scholar, a prestigious honor that prepared him for an education and internship committed to serving the communities for North Carolina as a Child Protective Service representative. His internship with Cumberland County Department of Social Services enabled him to work with susceptible populations and government institutions, and create action plans to address community issues such as human trafficking.

“Brian has truly made a tremendous impact on the Social Work program, on our entire university, and on the City of Fayetteville,” Hendricks said.

### **About the award**

The NASW-NC Toby Brown Award program was established in memory of and to honor Dr. James S. “Toby” Brown who died in 1995. He was an assistant professor of social work at North Carolina State University and was a highly recognized educator and practitioner.

The National Association of Social Workers North Carolina (NASW-NC) is a membership organization of professional social workers with over 4,600 members in North Carolina. NASW promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy.

Methodist University is an independent four-year institution of higher education with more than 2,400 students from 41 states and 53 countries. Methodist University offers 80 majors and concentrations, four master’s degree programs, one doctoral level program, 100 clubs and organizations, and 20 NCAA III intercollegiate sports. To learn more about Methodist University, please visit [methodist.edu](http://methodist.edu) or [facebook.com/MethodistUniversity](https://facebook.com/MethodistUniversity).