

# Returning student discovers effective social work can be practiced anywhere — even in restrooms

## Outstanding Graduate's 'A Stall for All' project earns high marks from Tucson library patrons

By Mark J. Scarp, ASU News  
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**Editor's note:** This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2025 graduates](#).

Lindsey Joy Smith enrolled at Arizona State University to earn a Master of Social Work at ASU's Tucson location 23 years after receiving her bachelor's. But it didn't take her long to find that her passion for social work had led her to where she readily admits was an unusual place: the restroom.

"I've always been keenly aware that women's restrooms are not adequately supplied," she said. "This provided an opportunity to merge my zeal for social justice with righting a societal wrong."

Smith is the spring 2025 Outstanding Graduate of the [School of Social Work](#), part of the [Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions](#). She found the lack of feminine hygiene products available in public restrooms — items that, when they are needed, are needed urgently and immediately — to be nothing short of an injustice.

Smith successfully negotiated with downtown Tucson's Joel D. Valdez Public Library to place free feminine hygiene product dispensers in 14 women's and nongender restroom stalls on all three of its public-access floors.

The effort, which she named "A Stall for All," earned her a \$5,000 ASU Principled Innovation Grant to support the research and installation. After 10 weeks monitoring the products' use in the library and surveying patrons about it, she found overwhelming support and endorsement.

Smith plans to expand “A Stall for All” elsewhere in Tucson, her hometown.

“It’s something that I’m uniquely, oddly passionate about,” she said.

Smith said ASU’s offering an immersion MSW program in her city was a key factor in her decision to return to higher education after many years as the stay-at-home mother of six children, ranging in age from 10 to 25.

Earning a degree as an older student “sets an example for my children that we can do difficult and fabulous things,” she said. “It was an invitation for them to see their mom doing something she loves and is good at.”

Read on to learn more about Smith’s ASU journey:

*Note: Answers may have been edited for length and clarity:*

**Question: What was your “aha” moment, when you realized you wanted to study the field you majored in?**

**Answer:** When I read the National Association of Social Workers' [Code of Ethics](#) for the first time, I was moved to tears. I knew right then that I was in the right place, studying in the right field, and that at long last I had found my true calling in social work.

Social work is not just a profession but also a lens with which I now view the world. I was raised in a high-demand religion that promoted service and community whilst also ignoring social justice. Patriarchy was touted as divine, and unjust practices were dismissed as a lack of faith. ... Exiting my religion was no small paradigm shift, and I saw a real need for more clinicians skilled in supporting others who are navigating their spiritual journeys. Social work has continued to foster my lifelong love of service and community but adds a strong emphasis on social justice. This has been both healing and invigorating. I'm eager to work with others who, too, have not experienced religion as a protective factor.

**Q: What’s something you learned while at ASU — in the classroom or otherwise — that surprised you or changed your perspective?**

**A:** I am an older, first-generation college student. I obtained my bachelor's degree in 2000. Email was just gaining traction, no one had smartphones and none of my peers had personal laptops. The technological advances in the last 25 years have been nothing short of miraculous. However, as a person who has been out of the workforce and away from school longer than I was ever in school, returning to academia to obtain a master's was terrifying. With courage, a sense of humor, a little help from my friends and the humility necessary to learn, I dove into the wild world of modern technology. I am happy to report that I am now a wiz at Canvas and Canva. I can do hard things!

**Q: Why did you choose ASU?**

ASU's charter states, "ASU is a comprehensive public research university, measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes." This is a principle grounded in social work. It's inclusive. It's empowering. It acknowledges the vital role that the community has to the individual and recognizes that as we invest in people, they will, in turn, give back to the community. It's beautiful. It makes

me proud to be a Sun Devil.

**Q: Which professor(s) taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?**

**A:** Assistant Professor [Matt Ignacio](#) taught my very first course in graduate school, Diversity and Oppression. Little did I know he would go on to mentor me through my student-led research project, "A Stall for All." He is a master teacher, a high-quality individual and a shining example of social work. ASU is lucky to count him as faculty, and I am grateful to have been among his pupils.

**Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to those still in school?**

**A:** Dig in like it's Thanksgiving and you are wearing stretchy pants! Make the most of this glorious opportunity to play, learn and grow! School is an opportunity, a stress, a privilege and an investment. Leave nothing on the table!

**Q: What was your favorite spot for power studying?**

I have a turquoise couch in my living room with a view of the Catalina Mountains and the cactus in my front yard. This was my go-to location for reading textbooks, writing papers, crying, studying and dreaming of the future. I hope everyone, metaphorically, has a turquoise couch.

**Q: What are your plans after graduation?**

**A:** Immediately following the graduation ceremony, I plan to celebrate with the perfectly timed Taco Tuesday. My next step will be to change the world! Though I am eager to complete the MSW program, I am equally eager to continue learning about social work. I plan to further my professional practice by becoming a licensed master social worker. Continuing to work with clients will help me to hone my craft and improve my skills.

I also intend to further my advocacy work associated with my research on restroom equity, "A Stall for All." In fact, I'm eagerly waiting to hear from the Council on Social Work Education about a recent application I submitted to present at their upcoming conference this fall. My broader goal following graduation includes a commitment to using my education and passion for social justice. I hope to relieve suffering, promote healing, advocate for and foster growth among those I will be privileged enough to work with. I see this as the noble calling of social work.

**Q: If someone gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?**

**A:** When we empower women, we improve the world. If I had \$40 million to fix a problem, I would tackle gender equity, specifically in health care. We are experiencing a devastating reduction in basic human rights for women, which can only result in a decline in global health.

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*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

**Main image**



Lindsey Joy Smith is the spring 2025 Outstanding Graduate of the School of Social Work.  
Courtesy photo