Several years ago, Lehman spoke in one of Dr. Piers’ classes at Hope, and the Hope professor recalled Lehman’s passion for his work. “He’s sold on the fact that social work practice can bring change,” Dr. Piers said.

Lehman came to Hope in 1980 with an idea that a career in social work was the right path to take. Psychology was his favorite class in high school, and he’s grown up in a family that valued the social service field. His father was an ordained minister with a doctorate in family and marriage therapy, and he worked for Young Life, a non-denominational Christian youth ministry. When Lehman was 16, his family moved from West Michigan to Australia where his father established a new branch of the organization.

Two years later, Lehman decided to return to the United States to attend Hope, earning degrees in psychology and business. One of his most meaningful experiences came at the end of his junior year, when he took a May 3rd “Helping Relationships” course – a rigorous off-campus summer seminar that taught counseling therapy and techniques.

“My years at Hope not only gave me an academic knowledge base, but also the character confidence to participate in the work world,” he said. “At a liberal arts school, you’re not too narrowly focused academically and in your personal life, and I think that contributed to my readiness in moving on to the next phase in life.”

In the years since, Lehman has held a variety of social work jobs and served on the boards of numerous organizations, including the Colorado Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. In 1993, he received his Master of Social Work degree from the University of Denver. In addition to his licensure as a social worker, he is also a Licensed Clinical Drug and Alcohol Counselor. Currently, he is teaching a master’s level course for nearby Newman University and writing a chapter for a military psychiatry textbook slated for publication this summer.

Lehman’s enthusiasm for his work with children is obvious. Even he admits that he’s “just a kid at heart” who loves hunkering down on his office floor to play a game of Chutes and Ladders.

“I have a great job,” he said. “I just have fun everyday. I get to practice prevention and intervention with kids and their families, and I feel good about that.”

(Ed’s Note: Doug will talk about his work during a Hope regional event scheduled for Friday, April 20, at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Please visit the Alumni Office online at or call (616) 395-7250 to learn more.)