



# ImPrints

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

MPSI IS PART OF THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH AT WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY, DETROIT MI

SPRING 2014

## Keeping Infants and Parents Together

Amazing achievements are possible when the right groups cross bridges to create a strong team focused on a single goal. Wayne County Baby Court is such a team, an integration of the separate child welfare, legal, mental health and judicial systems, in collaboration with Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute to improve the lives of infants who are removed from their homes. Baby Court's goal is to ensure that infants and toddlers in the child welfare system grow up in permanent, nurturing homes that support optimal development and, when possible, that the parents are again the infant's permanent caregivers.

How is this possible? "All members of the Baby Court team who serve the family are trained in the science of child development. They learn how to work collaboratively," said Ann Stacks, Ph.D., director of the Infant Mental Health (IMH) program at MPSI and the study evaluator. The case manager from the Department of Human Services works

closely with an infant mental health specialist to help the family address the needs that brought the child into foster care, to ensure that attachment relationships between the infant and primary caregivers are supported, and that developmental delays are addressed.

### Better Parenting; Healthier Children

Infants and toddlers in foster care nationwide are at extreme risk for developmental delays and mental health problems. In the Baby Court model, IMH specialists meet with parents at least once a week for two hours, and with the case worker to coordinate additional needs like housing, education, and employment. Preliminary data on the Baby Court approach show significant improvements in the child's language skills, less anger and irritability and more compliant behavior when interacting with parents.

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## Grant to Lessen Marijuana Use in Pregnancy

Marijuana is the most prevalent illicit drug of abuse among pre-nant women. It is vigorously promoted as safe by a grassroots community, yet research suggests that pre-natal marijuana exposure could have long-term effects on IQ, academic achievement, response inhibition, delinquency and later substance abuse. Prof. Steve Ondersma's research has long focused on cost-effective ways to encourage large numbers of pregnant and postpartum women to decrease their use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.



the National Institute on Drug Abuse, he will have three years to develop a similar intervention program to decrease marijuana use during pregnancy and conduct a Phase I clinical trial with 80 participants. The goal is to create a computerized, single-session screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment that can be used in a clinic, plus tailored text message reminders during pregnancy to discourage marijuana use. Dr. Ondersma holds a joint appointment with MPSI and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences at the School of Medicine.

Now, thanks to a \$684,000 grant from

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## An Exciting Day Full of Student Research, Results and Rewards

Dozens of graduate and undergraduate students got the chance to discuss their research with about 80 colleagues, professors and researchers at February's Lifespan Alliance Research Day. The Lifespan Alliance is a collaboration between MPSI and the Institute of Gerontology (IOG), our "sister" institute. Combined projects at MPSI and IOG address issues in development across the lifespan, ranging from prenatal brain growth to end-of-life care. MPSI and IOG jointly hosted the Research Day at the Freer House, with posters displayed throughout the house and presentations given to a packed audience in the Hoobler Room.

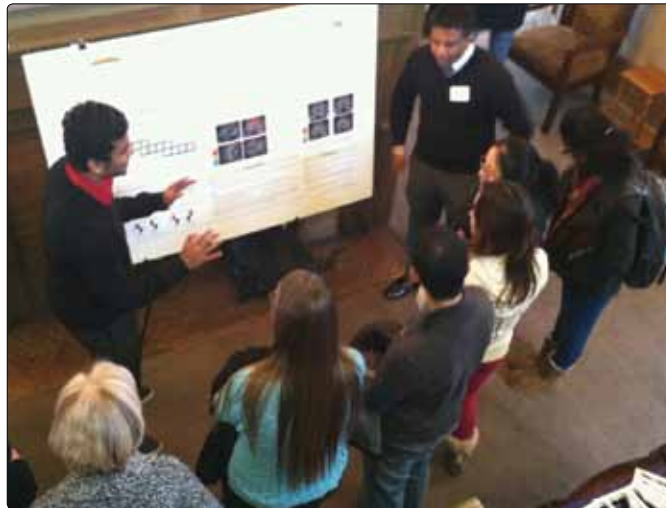
The day was filled with excitement, as the students gained experience communicating their research effectively to a diverse, and sometimes tough audience. MPSI trainees and Fellows prepared vivid posters detailing methods and results, and then explained implications of their research to guests from across campus. Four MPSI trainees gave formal 15-minute oral presentations on their research.

Posters and presentations were judged by Professors Emily Grekin (Psychology), Jina Yoon (Education), and Joanne Smith Darden (Social Work). All students performed admirably, according to the judges and MPSI's Deputy Director John Hannigan. "The hardest job was choosing winners," Dr. Hannigan said. "All our students are engaged in serious, high-quality research. The mentors set the bar high and their students rise to the challenge."

**1st Place Presentation: Kristyn Wong** (Developmental Psychology) for *Helping to Better Early Parent-Child Relationships: The Basics of Reflective Functioning*. Kristyn reviewed how reflective functioning can be used effectively by caregivers such



**Top:** Dr. Hilary Ratner (far left) and Dr. Peter Lichtenberg (far right) discuss research projects with a few of the 30 student presenters.



**Center:** Students discussed the details of each project with interested colleagues, faculty and judges.

**Bottom:** In addition to posters, four MPSI trainees gave formal oral presentations on their work.



as foster parents and teachers in addition to biological parents.

**Runner-Up Presentation: Mickey Sperlich** (Social Work) for *Trauma Exposure and Depression in a Community Sample of First-Time Mothers*. Mickey found that depression in post-partum women showing symptoms of PTSD was more difficult to treat, suggesting it is crucial to understand unresolved trauma and factor that into

interventions for depression.

**1st Place Poster: Hilary Marusak** (Translational Neuroscience) for *Trauma Exposure Disrupts Conflict from Emotional Distractors in Youth*. Hilary reported that emotional distractors have a unique ability to interfere with neural processing and behavioral performance in children, which may help explain how trauma exerts long-lasting effects on

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## Opportunities Knock on Student Trainee Doors

MPSI Trainee **Hilary Marusak**, who works with Dr. Moriah Thomason in the Social Cognitive Affective Neurodevelopment Laboratory (SCANLab) did extremely well on her qualifying exam, a milestone in completing her translational neuroscience doctoral degree requirements. Dr. Thomason congratulated Hilary on “crushing” those exams. Hilary has also been selected as a 2014-15 MPSI Fellow.

**Amy Loree** completed her MPSI fellowship this spring and will intern at the

Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, CT, next fall. Amy will divide her time working at Yale’s forensic drug diversion clinic and its community mental health clinic for children and adolescents.

Trainee **Travis Goldwire** accepted a clinical psychology doctoral internship (and rank of Air Force captain) at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. He plans to defend his dissertation in early fall and be eligible to become a fully licensed psychologist with the Air Force. The USAF internship requires

a service commitment of about three years that includes job security and skills-building experience typically earned only at a separate post-doctoral position. “This is a unique experience and opportunity,” Travis said, “to serve my country, to become better versed in various areas of mental illness, to advance my career as a practicing psychologist, and to help the military families who have given so much to our country.”

### NEWS & HONORS



**Rose Foster**, operations coordinator for MPSI for more than a decade, was named WSU’s *Building Coordinator of the Year*. This competitive award honors one person each year who has shown outstanding effort coordinating the complex systems and services needed to run a building. Rose’s primary territory, the Freer House, encompasses an extra level of complexity. It not only houses the faculty and staff of MPSI, but is also historically significant as the 1906 home of Charles L. Freer. The building honors Freer’s legacy with special art-related events for Freer House members and the public. Rose also oversees services for the nearby Skillman Building and half of the Knapp building that contains an all-day preschool. Congratulations Rose, and well-deserved!

**Felicia Christ**, a WSU undergraduate working in infant mental health with Dr. Ann Stacks, received an undergraduate research grant and the Heart & Soul Award from the Michigan Campus Compact. Heart & Soul recognized Felicia’s time, effort and personal commitment to community service.



**Amy Graham** received a graduate-professional scholarship toward her first year as a doctoral student in WSU’s Clinical Psychology program. In addition to pursuing her doctorate, Amy assists in Dr.

Steven Ondersma’s lab researching the effects of brief computer based interventions for expectant mothers who are substance dependent. In her spare time (which isn’t much), she writes a blog called “Mommy Back at College!” the journaling of a mother of five returning to college after a 20-year hiatus.

Newest affiliate faculty member at MPSI is **Erika Bocknek, PhD**, an assistant professor of early childhood education and infant mental health who works with WSU’s College of Education and the Department of Psychiatry at U-M Health System. Her lab, the Center for the Study of Family Resilience, at MPSI includes undergraduate and graduate students from multiple disciplines researching how family processes promote social-emotional resilience among infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



**Christopher Trentacosta, PhD**, was made a tenured associate professor in clinical psychology at Wayne State. Dr. Trentacosta is an affiliate faculty member of MPSI researching emotional competence and self-regulation in parents and young children.

**Carolyn Dayton, PhD**, is the new associate director of MPSI’s Infant Mental Health (IMH) program. Dr. Dayton is an assistant professor, jointly appointed at the School of Social Work. She will teach IMH courses and continue her research into early parent-child relationships. Dr. Dayton will also oversee student learning outcomes in IMH’s rapidly growing Dual Title Degree option, which allows masters and doctoral students in social work, early childhood education, or nursing to receive concentrated research and clinical experience in infant mental health.



# Large Audience Enjoys Freer Spring Event by William Colburn

## Samurai, the Kano School, and a New Tryon Reproduction

The Freer House spring lecture event was held May 4 in conjunction with the Detroit Institute of Arts' *Samurai: Beyond the Sword* exhibition. The day included a presentation by Yukio Lippit, PhD, professor of Art and Architecture at Harvard University and a member of the Freer House National Advisory Board. Dr. Lippit spoke about the Kano house of artists of Japan. Much favored by Samurai families and the Tokugawa Shogunate of the 17th century, this official school of painting caught the interest of Charles Lang Freer in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as he expanded his exceptional collection of Japanese art.

Dr. Lippit's lecture, *In Attendance to the Realm: the Kano School of Painters in 17th Century Japan*, attracted a large and enthusiastic audience of more than 200 people at the DIA's Danto Lecture Hall. Over 100 guests visited the Freer House to enjoy the post-lecture reception, house tours and a visit to the new "Freer and Japan" exhibit in the former Peacock Room.



Wayne State President M. Roy Wilson and First Lady Jacqueline Wilson were special guests of the event, as well as the Consul General of Japan Dr. Kazuyuki Katayama and wife Yukari Katayama; Graham Beal, director of the DIA; and Dennis Archer, former mayor of Detroit and past chair of the Japan America Society, and wife Trudy Duncombe. The Asian & Islamic Art Forum/DIA,

the Center for Japanese Studies/University of Michigan, the Japan America Society of Michigan and Southwestern Ontario, and the Americana Foundation co-sponsored the event. A special Japanese Bento box



**Top:** Freer House volunteers guide visitors through the main hall at the May 4 event, pointing out a *giclee* reproduction of a Dwight W. Tryon painting.

**Below left:** WSU President M. Roy Wilson and First Lady Jacqueline appear with Freer House Director William Colburn and Dr. Yukio Lippit, rt.

**Below:** Dr. David Weinberg stands beside the latest *giclee* instalation, *Early Spring: New England*.

luncheon was held in their honor.

Festivities included the dedication of a new reproduction of an 1897 Dwight W. Tryon painting originally commissioned by Freer, with a frame by Stanford White. Sponsored by Dr. David Weinberg, a *giclee* reproduction of *Early Spring: New England* was installed in its original location at the top of the Freer House main staircase. A brief ceremony honored Dr. Weinberg for underwriting this beautiful new addition to the interior of the Freer House. Board member John Douglas Peters was also recognized for his efforts in overseeing the reproduction project, with credit given to the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, for providing a new photograph of the painting and giving permission to create a facsimile for the Freer House.



An International Landmark... A World Class Lecture Series

FALL 2014



After Sunset, 1892 Thomas W. Dewing. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian, F1906.68 a-b.

SAVE  
THE  
DATE

Sunday  
October 5  
2014

### *The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement, 1887-1920*



Lecture by

**Anna O. Marley** Curator of Historical American Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

*The Artist's Garden* tells the intertwining stories of American artists, Impressionism, and the growing popularity of gardening as a middle-class leisure pursuit at the turn of the twentieth century. Through paintings, sculpture, books, and gardening ephemera, *The Artist's Garden* will explore how the horticultural and visual arts in this period were both visual and environmental manifestations of an emerging national Progressive-era middle-class American identity.

When American audiences hear the word Impressionism, they usually think of Claude Monet's paintings of water lilies or his famous garden at Giverny. This lecture will encourage visitors to expand their understanding of Impressionism and its international impact by introducing them to the artists associated with the American movement. A particular focus of both the exhibition and lecture will be on the art and gardens of Maria Oakey and Thomas Wilmer Dewing, favorite artists of Charles Lang Freer and contributors to the design of the original Freer House gardens, now scheduled for future restoration.

**2:00 PM LECTURE**  
at the  
Detroit Institute of Arts,  
Marvin and Betty Danto  
Lecture Hall  
FREE with DIA admission

**3:30 - 5:00 PM  
RECEPTION & TOURS**  
at the Freer House  
\$10 per person  
\$5 students,  
AAW, and Freer House  
members

For more information  
contact Rose Foster  
or William Colburn at  
313-664-2500

## Another Way To Help Our Institute

Thank you to our many donors who support the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute. With your help, we make a stronger, positive impact on the welfare of Detroit's children and families.

If a cash gift is not a comfortable option in your current financial plan, you might prefer to consider making a planned gift payable from your estate. In addition to playing a significant role in the good works done by our Institute, donors who make an estate gift to Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute are inducted into the exclusive Old Main Society at Wayne State University.

Members of Old Main are recognized in print materials and at the annual Old Main Society brunch. All gift information is confidential and donors always have the option to remain anonymous. Gifts may be given to our Institute for a specific purpose or for unrestricted use. In either case, all gifts donated to Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute are guaranteed to directly benefit Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute.

To become a member of the Old Main Society, just let us know you have included us as a beneficiary in your estate. For more information on this or other gift options, contact Rob MacGregor, Wayne State's senior director of planned giving, at 313-577-8346 or rmacgregor@wayne.edu; or Kelly Cronin, major gift officer for MPSI, at 313-664-2608 or kellycronin@wayne.edu.

## Baby Court from page 1

Parents who are part of Baby Court showed more responsiveness toward their children, more positive affect when interacting with their children, and improved insight into their children's needs. The Wayne County team was fortunate to receive coaching from the original Court Team started in Miami Dade County, Florida.

In Michigan, seven Baby Court programs dot the state but only one is in Wayne County. Two years ago, Dr. Stacks received \$200,000 from the Flinn Foundation to study whether Baby Court could be scaled up in Wayne County to reach more children. Her team created trainings about the model for attorneys, DHS workers, court personnel and infant mental health specialists. They expanded the Florida model to include assessments of the child's development and the family's parenting skills. "We first collected this information only for research," Dr. Stacks said, "but we realized we should share this information with courts and parents, so they could make more informed decisions." Parents learn how their children rank against developmental norms and receive video feedback on parenting strengths, as well as "missed opportunities" to connect with their child or to build developmental skills.

Attorney Laura Dunbar Kellett of the Michigan Children's Law Center represents the infants in Baby Court as the *lawyer guardian*



*I applaud Dr. Stacks and everyone involved in the Baby Court project for looking out for Michigan's most vulnerable residents. Nothing is more important to me than protecting our children."*

**Maura Corrigan**

Director of Michigan's Department of Human Services

*ad litem.* When asked to join the team three years ago, she was unfamiliar with the Baby Court concept. Do crying babies fill the courtroom or lay on a psychiatrist's couch for "infant mental health" sessions? "I thought it was a little silly to think that mental health services could be provided to an infant," she admitted, "but soon after starting training in IMH therapy, I saw it as something that could change the world."

Laura learned that when babies don't form secure attachments to a primary caregiver (often due to mental health issues or substance abuse), their risk for lifelong deficits increases. "These babies don't learn how to control their emotions. They hesitate to explore the world around them. They produce stress hormones that can contribute to attention deficit disorder and anxiety," she said. An IMH specialist working with the infant and family, can also "repair damage done to the parent by their own parent," Laura said. "Three generations of work is done at the same time."

Can the attorney "team" with the parents and still represent the child? The Baby Court model encourages every team member to

focus on the well-being of the child; not compete to see which side wins. "I view the team as the walls of a nest that shelters the parent and therapist so they have a peaceful space to develop rapport and trust," Laura said. Her daughter has Down syndrome and she likens her Baby Court role to spectating at Special Olympics. "We all cheer for BOTH teams," she said. "We elevate the whole community of athletes so they have a great time -- but I never forget who I brought to the game. Just like in Baby Court, I want the entire family to be elevated, but I never lose sight of the child's interests."

## Saves Money, Families and Futures

Baby Court teams work. National data from Zero to Three suggests that Baby Court families save resources by spending less time under court jurisdiction and having fewer families re-enter the system. Preliminary data from Wayne County shows that, compared to a historical group, Baby Court families have higher rates of reunification and are reunified 60 days faster.

Reunification is child welfare's number one

**Student Research** from page 2  
cognitive and emotional processing.

**Runner-Up Poster: Amy Loree** (Clinical Psychology) for *Evaluating Potential Moderators of Efficacy for a Single-Session Computer-Delivered Intervention for Smoking during Pregnancy*. Amy's results suggested that factors such as smoking frequency, nicotine dependence, maternal mental illness, and a partner who smokes, did not alter the effectiveness of a brief computer-based intervention to lessen smoking during pregnancy.

goal. National data also suggest that nearly 33% of infants and toddlers entering the child welfare system have delays, but 80% of them receive no services to address these delays. Baby Court children are more likely to be assessed and to receive services, while parenting to support development also improves. "Our preliminary data suggest that 57% of infants enter Baby Court with developmental delays, but only 15% are still delayed 9-12 months later," explained Dr. Stacks. This helps the child's long-term prospects and saves costs on future interventions.

But the Baby Court model must expand to significantly impact the approximately 1,000 Wayne County babies currently in foster care. Thousands of parents need the therapy, training and support the Baby Court model could provide. Maura Corrigan, director of Michigan's Department of Human Services acknowledges the need to improve the welfare of these children. As a Michigan Supreme Court Justice, she brought the first Baby Courts to Michigan. "The Department of Human Services supports data-driven programs to improve the safety and well-being of Michigan's youngest residents while they are in the child welfare system," Dir. Corrigan said. "I applaud Dr. Stacks and everyone involved in the Baby Court project for looking out for Michigan's most vulnerable residents. Nothing is more important to me than protecting our children."

## MEMORY LANE



MPI cafeteria in the basement of Freer House, circa 1960.

### *A Grateful Guest in Mr. Freer's Home*

To the Editor,

Thank-you for the Imprints newsletter I received recently. It brought back a flood of memories . . .

As a Merrill-Palmer alumna in 1961, I was also a married student; we lived in Ann Arbor. I commuted to the campus on Monday, lived in House 100, and went back every Friday – it was a journey! The time I spent on the very small campus meant a lot to me, both personally and professionally. The classes were excellent, but living in Mr. Freer's house (meals in the basement, tea in the afternoon) was quite special. Memories . . .

There isn't a time now where I don't visit the Freer Museum in Washington, DC, "talk" to him in that lovely "Peacock Dining Room," and revisit his home in my mind. It's simply glorious that the house is "saved." It reflects a piece of history in Detroit that is unique. The gallery on the second floor of the house was a memorable place to visit, and I'm happy that others can enjoy it today.

I am a docent at the oldest house here in Naples, Florida and also do Walking Tours for the Historical Society. How I would like to be a docent at the Freer House!! I would love to be a Freer House Member and will call to join.

Thanks for keeping us in touch.

Sincerely,  
Nancy K. Webster  
Antioch College (1961 MPI)

From the Editor: We are honored to have you as an alumna of Merrill Palmer Institute and as a new Freer House member. Thank you for sharing your memories with our readers.

Register online at: [www.mpsi.wayne.edu](http://www.mpsi.wayne.edu) or call Bev Weathington at 313-664-2526



MERRILL PALMER  
SKILLMAN INSTITUTE

**Who Will Benefit**

Nurses, social workers, and other professionals working with infants and families

**Hosted By**

Healthier Urban Families  
Outreach Program

Infant Mental Health  
Program

Michigan Association  
for Infant Mental Health

**Location**

WSU Oakland Center  
33773 W. Twelve Mile Rd.  
Farmington Hills,  
Michigan, 48331

Registration includes  
continental breakfast  
and CEs.

•  
Lunch not included.

## 2014 Explorations in Development



*Understanding the Impact of Past and Present  
Trauma on the Lives of Parents and Young Children*

**Early Bird Registration Until August 22**

**5.5 CEs per day**

**DAY 1: Thursday, October 2, 9:30am - 4:30pm**

*Shooting Down the Elephant: Legacies of Historical  
Trauma on Practitioner/Client Relationships*  
presented by: **Marva Lewis, PhD**

**DAY 2: Friday, October 3, 9:30am - 4:30pm**

*Shelter from the Storm: Supporting Infants and  
Toddlers Exposed to Domestic Violence*  
presented by: **Deborah Harris, LISW, IMH-E (IV)**