



# ImPrints



## Premature Infants: Life at the Edge of Survival

**Dr.** Sarah Raz studies babies born before their time with a variety of complications, including intrauterine growth restriction and chronic lung disease. Known as extremely preterm infants, some of these babies come into the world at 22 to 26 weeks of gestation, falling far short of the 40 weeks required to be full-term. Twenty years ago, many of these babies would not have survived. Medical advances since then, like surfactant treatment to keep the lungs from filling with fluid and gentler ventilators, have greatly increased their odds. Today babies born from 23 to 26 weeks gestation have about a 30 to 85% chance of survival, depending on gestational age. But, as some developmental researchers caution, there can be a cost.

The rates of moderate to severe disability for these infants can be about 30%. Dr. Raz's research looked closely at children born preterm to learn what a two-week difference in gestation meant to their intelligence, perceptual and language skills, and motor performance. In a recent project, her team compared 20 babies born at 23 to 24 weeks gestation with 20 babies born at 25 to 26 weeks.

"We found that the addition of two weeks' gestation was accompanied by a

significant advantage in neuropsychological functioning," Dr. Raz said of their study published in the 2010 *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*. Children born two weeks earlier had lower scores in global intelligence and motor skills and higher rates of placement in special education programs. Two more weeks in the womb and the long-term outlook for these infants is improved.

Dr. Raz' chosen line of research has special challenges. Her hypothesis was that

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## AWARDS & HONORS

**PNC's Grow Up Great** program awarded \$18,500 to the Early Childhood Center to help close the funding gap in the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant. CCAMPIS helps to pay the tuition of the children of eligible Wayne State students so they can complete their university degree.



Extra funding is required to fill the difference between actual education costs and the CCAMPIS reimbursement. The Early Childhood Center also received a **Great Start Readiness Program** grant of \$61,200 to offset the tuition costs of four-year-old children of low income families who are at risk of school failure.

Early Childhood Center Director **Sue Madro, Ed.S.**, was invited to speak to 75 parents of preschoolers in the Novi School District about the importance of play in the healthy development of young children. Novi Community Education



Director Bob Steeh contacted Sue because of her depth of experience as a preschool and kindergarten teacher and expertise in play-centered education. Feedback from parents and teachers was overwhelmingly positive. As might be expected from a play advocate, Sue said, "It was fun."

Assistant Professor **Valerie Simon, Ph.D.**, won a five-year grant of \$755,121 from the National Institutes of Health to study the relationship between childhood sexual abuse in females and the increased risk of sexual health problems later in life. "Little is known about the early sexual development of female victims of child sexual abuse," Dr. Simon said. Increased understanding of these behaviors should aid in developing more effective risk reduction programs for these adolescents.



**John Hannigan, Ph.D.**, deputy director of MPSI, co-authored a study on the under-reporting of drug use among teens and their parents. *Just Say "I Don't": Lack of Concordance between Teen Report and Biological Measures of Drug Use* appeared in the November issue of the journal *Pediatrics* and met with widespread media attention. In the analysis of more than 400 high-risk urban teens and their parents, both groups substantially under-reported the teens' recent cocaine and opiate use, despite their knowledge that teens would be drug tested as confirmation.



## Premature Infants

Cont. from p.1

some of the differences in outcome were attributable to gestational age – not only to risk factors occurring before or after birth, or resultant physical handicaps. So subject recruitment of the 3 to 5-year-olds had to control for situations like prenatal alcohol exposure, head injury with loss of consciousness, or a severe sensory, perceptual or motor handicap. "It is a difficult task to recruit the right populations," Dr. Raz said. "The rarer the complication we wish to study, the longer it takes to obtain a sufficient number of children for an investigation."

Dr. Raz tests preschoolers because they are old enough to be tested reliably on intelligence, verbal, visual-spatial, fine and gross

motor skills; cognitive skills needed for goal directed behavior; expressive and receptive language; and memory and attention. Dr. Raz has assessed about 350 preterm children in her lab over the years with an extra benefit to parents. "We provide parents with a full report of our findings," Dr. Raz said. "Often this helps them get their children referred on to speech and language therapy or other early interventions to correct deficiencies."

Born in Israel, Dr. Raz received her undergraduate degree in education and sociology from Hebrew University. She worked as a special education teacher in Jerusalem in the late 70s before enrolling in the University of Texas graduate program. She studied clinical neuropsychology, specializing in brain abnormalities associated with schizophrenia. "I was trying to understand what is happening in the brains of schizophrenics. The

studies were pointing to problems early in development, even before birth," she said. "So eventually I thought why not just study preterm birth." She has been investigating outcomes of children born prematurely ever since. In 2001, she came to Wayne State where she is jointly appointed in the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute and the Department of Psychology.

Dr. Raz' lifelong hope is to add substantive information to the body of knowledge about premature birth, especially how various risk factors contribute to the long-term development of these children. "I'm humble enough to accept that all knowledge grows through the contributions of many research groups," she said. "I just want to contribute my share."



## Tea Tradition Reborn for Merrill Palmer Alumni

One of the most vivid, lasting memories for college students at Merrill Palmer was the quaint English tradition of afternoon tea. Every weekday at 3:00 p.m., tea and biscuits were served at the Freer House. Students and faculty alike attended, creating a special camaraderie. Mary Lafter, a current board member who taught in the preschool in the late 50s and was a student in the Enhancing Human Potential Program in the late 70s, remembered details of the ceremony, right down to the gold, green and red stripes circling the ivory china. "I even bought a demitasse cup," she said, "as a memento."



So it was only fitting that Merrill Palmer's second alumni event was Afternoon Tea, with Kerry Moustakas, Ph.D., as guest speaker. Kerry herself was a student in the preschool and later a student in the adult program, encouraged no doubt by her father Clarke Moustakas who created the Enhancing Human Potential certification program while a faculty member at Merrill Palmer. Kerry is now president of the Michigan School of Professional Psychology which offers graduate degrees in clinical psychology.

Alums were treated to a look back at highlights of Merrill Palmer's history and a look forward from MPSI Director Peter Lichtenberg at its new research, trainees, faculty, and community programs. Many of the nearly 30 alums shared testimony of the impact their brief time at MP had on the rest of their lives. Linda Larson studied at MP for only 10 weeks in 1958, but drove in from Chicago for the alumni event. "It changed the way I thought of myself and what I wanted to do with my life," she said of her training. "I discovered possibilities here that enabled me to set new goals for myself. It was transformational."

## New Steering Committee Affirms MPSI's Road Map

According to baseball great Yogi Berra, "If you don't know where you are going, you will wind up somewhere else." Good for a chuckle but also a reminder that reaching a destination – without getting lost in the woods – requires a clear road map. This year MPSI created two important guides to help it reach its destination: a five-year strategic plan and a seven-person steering committee.

The strategic planning process began with a committee comprised of MPSI faculty and key staff. They met regularly for a full year to determine the following strategic directions along with steps and timelines to move toward them:

- Sustaining Research Excellence
- Strengthening Graduate Research Training
- Enhancing the Early Childhood Center
- Leading Superior Community Outreach and Professional Development
- Facilitating Administrative Function and Research Infrastructure
- Restoring and Enhancing the Freer House
- Promoting Financial Sustainability

Deputy Director John Hannigan, Ph.D., who organized the planning, said the creation of an achievable strategic plan is crucial to the future of MPSI. All oars are now rowing in the same direction.

Even the best-run institutes with foolproof strategic plans require outside experts to review their progress. Dr. Hannigan and Director Peter Lichtenberg assembled a steering committee of leaders in family and child development from Michigan and around the country to provide oversight. Laura Pittman, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology at Northern Illinois University, chaired the committee.

Their report noted that "MPSI is in the midst of a resurgence and has the capability to regain preeminence as a national leader in interdisciplinary research . . . and service to the urban community." Dr. Lichtenberg's experienced leadership won high marks from committee members. "His energy and forethought about the promise of MPSI is evident in all that has taken place," they reported, including his "understanding of the value of the legacy of MPSI and the Freer House." The committee will meet annually to review MPSI's progress and suggest changes in direction.

"We were fortunate to convene a steering committee of such high caliber and commitment," Dr. Lichtenberg said. "Their thoughtful suggestions on how to achieve our goals lay the foundation for our future."

# Freer House Shines Bright in National Spotlight

The Friends of the Freer House and MPSI celebrated the completion of a new cedar shake roof and other improvements to the Freer House on October 8. The event also recognized the recent designation of the Freer House as a site of National Significance on the National Register of Historic Places. WSU President Allan Gilmour joined city and state officials and WSU guests to acknowledge these achievements and thank those who made them possible.

State Historic Preservation Officer Brian Conway presented President Gilmour with an official decree from the U.S. Department of the Interior elevating the Freer House to a site of National Significance. In his remarks, President Gilmour complimented the Friends of the Freer House for their dedication and commented on the importance of the Freer House and Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute to the ongoing revitalization of Ferry Street and the WSU/Cultural Center neighborhood. He also got big laughs from the crowd. "When I worked at Ford, I was given the task of renovating the historic Dearborn Inn," he said. "I'd never done anything like that before so I asked a friend for advice. He told me to make sure I got three reliable bids for the work. Then take those bids and add them all together. That's your budget to renovate a historic building."



(left) Chair Phebe Goldstein and Honored guests join new chair Naoko Matsuda and his wife Naoko



The roof restoration project was supported through funds generously provided by the WSU Board of Governors. In addition to the historically appropriate roof, the project included new copper gutters and flashing, energy efficient insulation, an electronic ice melt system and masonry cleaning of the entire exterior.

This six-month, \$750,000 project not only secured the historic Freer House from the elements but also enhanced its beauty by revealing the subtle colors and textures of the original stonework buried under 120 years of grime and dirt.

Over 100 guests joined Phebe Goldstein, chair of the Friends of the Freer House, MPSI Director Peter Lichtenberg, and Vice President of Research Hilary Ratner in applauding the work of the various contractors, architects, and the WSU Facilities, Planning and Management team for their efforts. Special appreciation was extended to WSU Project Manager Steven Pecic.

On October 24, the Friends hosted a lecture at the Detroit Institute of Arts entitled, "A Discerning Taste for Japanese Art: The Formation of Charles L. Freer's

**The Freer House** received an Americana Grant of \$42,150 for 2011 to conduct a public lecture series, continue to analyze the paint colors originally used in the Freer House, and begin implementing suggestions from consultants in museum design to improve awareness of and accessibility to the Freer House.



eting rooms.



in presents plaques to the "New Roof" team. Consul General of Japan to Detroit, Mr. Kuninori Matsuda (far right).



Collection," by Ann Yonemura, senior associate curator of Japanese Art, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. The lecture attracted 225 people, and more than 100 visitors gathered later at the Freer House for a benefit reception and tours.

The Friends of Freer were especially pleased to have esteemed guests from the Japanese business and cultural communities in attendance. A special Bento Box lunch was held to honor the new Consul General of Japan to Detroit, Mr. Kuninori Matsuda, his wife Mrs. Naoko Matsuda, as well as Ms. Yonemura and other invited guests.

The event marked the first visit to the Freer House for many guests and generated great interest in the major contributions of Charles Freer toward fostering cultural relations between the United States and Japan. The event was co-sponsored with the Japan America Society and the Asian & Islamic Art Forum/DIA, with support from the Americana Foundation and Blossoms, Birmingham.

- by William Colburn  
Historic Preservation Specialist and  
FOFH Board Member



## Professionals Flock to Trainings on Autism, Speech Delays

Explorations in Development, MPSI's enhanced professional development seminar, trained nearly 200 social workers, speech/language pathologists, nurses, counselors and teachers this October on high impact topics. The series spans two age groups: Explorations in Infancy looked at early indicators and interventions for autism spectrum disorders; and Explorations in Children, Youth and Families provided training in speech delays and sensory integration challenges.

Speakers discussed the latest research and treatments for clinical approaches and got high marks across the board for relevance, knowledge, and clarity of presentation. Attendees came from as far as Kalamazoo to attend the conference at the Wayne State University Oakland Center. MPSI's infant mental health clinical coordinator, Carla Barron, coordinated the Explorations in Infancy program. "Our goal was to expand the already excellent training and attract more professionals," Carla said. "Autism spectrum disorders are increasing and clinicians are trying to keep pace with the latest research."

The day included research on early diagnosis and interventions, a treatment approach called P.L.A.Y. (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters), and remarks from the mother of two young sons with autism on its effects on the family. "Attendees were deeply moved by Holly's story," Carla said of the parent presentation. "Her honesty gave us all a new



Internationally known therapist Nancy Kaufman explains her speech-to-language protocol.

perspective on the ripple effects of autistic behavior."

Explorations in Children, Youth and Families examined speech and sensory problems in autism and other disorders. Nancy Kaufman, founder of the Kaufman Children's Center, explained her work and successes with children who struggle to speak. Nancy is an internationally known lecturer on childhood apraxia of speech, and the author of several books and kits to help develop speech. KCC treats about 300 children a year from around the world.

MPSI Outreach Coordinator Bev Weathington organized the program which included KCC's director of occupational therapy, Jessica Hunt's, overview of sensory integration challenges and treatments.

The enhanced Explorations in Development continuing education programs were a success by every measure and the new format will continue next year. A full 95% of attendees found the presentations worthwhile and said they would recommend the program to colleagues. For more about programs or to join the mailing list, contact Carla Barron at [ac7863@wayne.edu](mailto:ac7863@wayne.edu).

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## Parents Help Early Childhood Center Excel

Like to plunge your hands into the dirt and make things grow? Maybe you'd rather run a pizza kit fundraiser to pay for a farm field trip. How about a spot on the advisory committee to discuss the Early Childhood Center with its program teachers?

Whatever your preference, if you're a parent and want to get involved, the Early Childhood Center at MPSI will find a way for you to fit in and help out. The ECC encourages parents to take an active part in their children's education. It was parents, in fact, who staffed this year's gardening, fundraising and advisory committees. We welcome parents who want to help us," said ECC Director Sue Madro. "The door is always open."

The ECC also holds a number of parent meetings throughout the year including "Meet the Teachers Night," and workshops on study skills and making the transition to



kindergarten. Additional meetings based on parent suggestions are in the planning stage.

Parents who don't have time to join a committee can volunteer for a single event, such as Picture Day. "Parents were so helpful for that," Sue said. "They escorted the children to and from their classrooms in small groups so teachers didn't have to disrupt their teaching. We couldn't have done it without the parents." Parents chaperoned the Harvest Walk to the President's Office (on WSU's campus) and will participate with their children in the May farm trip. They also



Children enjoy seeing their parents volunteer at school and learn the value of altruism.



help plan parties and often schedule a visit simply to read a story to the students.

It's an old chestnut but true: Communication is key to a successful preschool experience. Sue writes a Parent Newsletter every month to update families on the curriculum, staff changes, field trips and other activities. "The more parents know about our school, the richer their child's school experience will be." Sue said. "We are all part of a team dedicated to the education and well-being of young children and their families."

## Research on Pregnancy and Abuse Wins First Place Award

A Fall Poster Session was held jointly between MPSI and the Institute of Gerontology to encourage research awareness across the lifespan. Nine MPSI students presented their research to a crowd of about 75 faculty, students, administrators and judges. The first place winner was **Mickey Sperlich** for a project designed to help pregnant women who have been abused cope with their post-traumatic stress disorder to improve birth outcomes. Second place went to **Jessica Lucero** for her examination of the neighborhood factors that contribute to violence among low-income Latino and African American children. **Travis Goldwire** took third place for his research into the effects of father involvement on young children's school readiness.

Vice President of Research **Dr. Hilary Ratner** remarked on the value of integrating two different institutes dedicated to human development. "We come to problems from different perspectives – childhood and aging – but we connect them to create something new that provides stronger training and expanded research opportunities." Dr. Ratner also noted the high level of community involvement in research projects. "The research we undertake is clearly of significance to our community," she said.



Session winner Mickey Sperlich (left) answers questions from Vice President of Research Dr. Hilary Ratner.

## Sharing the Best in Early Childhood Education

Being asked to oversee the training of a group of professionals can be flattering. But for Anna Miller, whose career has been dedicated to early childhood education, it also felt deeply rewarding to provide professional development to 200 Detroit Public School (DPS) early childhood associate teachers. The associate teachers worked in either a Great Start Readiness Program or Head Start classroom. "It was a wonderful experience," she said of the 11-month program. "I watched these teachers blossom and become empowered."

DPS and the Michigan Department of Education Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services contacted Wayne's College of Education to provide 54 of the 120 required clock hours of training in early childhood education for their associate teachers. Members of the project team that planned, coordinated, and implemented the extensive training were College of Education Associate Professor Dr. Sharon Elliott, Teacher Education; Dr. Mark Larson, program coordinator Early Childhood Education & Autism Spectrum Disorder; and Anna Miller, executive director of the Early Childhood Centers at the College of Education and MPSI.

Topics covered in the 16 sessions included:

- How Young Children Learn; Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Creating a Literacy-Rich Environment
- Working with English Language Learners and Immigrant Families
- Adult – Child Interactions: Promoting Social/Emotional Development
- Building Children's Brains: What Does Brain Research Tell Us?



Associate teachers view preschoolers, parents and teachers from a one-way observation deck.

offer a chance for classroom observation. "This was an important piece because participants had the opportunity to see theory and best practices in action," Anna said.

The participants built strong relationships amongst themselves and with their group leaders. This experience helped them build a network of support for their work with young children. "The

For the first half of each session, the participants attended a large group presentation. For the second half, they broke into 10 cohort groups, each led by a College of Education early childhood education specialist and a DPS instructional specialist. These smaller groups provided opportunities for discussion, reflections and hands-on activities.

The associate teachers also visited one of the two early childhood centers on campus. The project team was particularly pleased to

associate teachers frequently commented on the fact that participation in this professional development program had given them the tools to become more effective teachers," Anna said.

Feedback on the DPS Professional Development Program was overwhelmingly positive, she added. "Some associate teachers expressed strong interest in pursuing an associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood education. It lit a spark in them to further their professional career."

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**Freer's 1910 Exhibition  
of Oriental and American Art**

Sunday, January 30  
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.  
The Charles Lang Freer House  
71 East Ferry Street  
Detroit, MI 48202

Three doctoral candidates at the University of Michigan will shed new light on Freer's landmark art exhibit in this lecture about the significance of this exhibit to the U-M and its relationship to Freer's life and home in Detroit. Cost is \$10 (students and Friends of the Freer House pay \$5). Reception and tours after the lecture. RSVP required to Rose Foster, 313-872-1790, rmfoster@wayne.edu.



**Teens Connect with Kindness at Giant Step 2010 Conference**

The Student Ballroom at Wayne State University bristled with excitement as 225 high school students from the Detroit area attended their first Take a Giant Step Conference. "Inclusion, harmony and acceptance are our watchwords," said co-coordinator Cheryl Deep. Giant Step invites students from all schools, races, cultures, ethnicities and economic backgrounds to join together for a day of honest discussion and heartfelt connection. Students learned about giving back, too, by creating 114 greeting cards for residents of Redford Geriatric Village in Detroit.