



Grandparent



Infant



Adolescent



2012 BIENNIAL REPORT

Child



Parent

MERRILL PALMER
SKILLMAN INSTITUTE
for Child & Family Development



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Stone Carving Symbolizes Merrill Palmer Skillman

by Hilary Ratner, PhD

In 1931, famed architect Albert Kahn designed the Children's Aid Society building in midtown Detroit. Above its doorway, he placed a stone sculpture of a mother reading to her child, a beautiful reminder of the purpose of the Children's Aid Society. For 150 years, the society has dedicated itself to strengthening families and helping children in Detroit, especially those most at-risk. The mother and child sculpture was their mission carved in stone.

Fifty years later, the Children's Aid Society building had become the home of Wayne State University's Department of Psychology. I passed under the sculpture every day as I went to and from my office, looking up at the compelling scene. The mother and child share a book, exemplifying the learning that takes place between loving and supportive parents and their children. As a developmental psychologist who studied how children learn from others, this meant a great deal to me. So when I learned the building would be demolished, I was determined to preserve this touching representation of Wayne State's commitment to children and families.

The Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute has been helping children and families since 1919. Like the Children's Aid Society, MPSI promotes the health and well-being of children and families – especially Detroit's most vulnerable residents – through research, education and outreach. What better home for the sculpture than outside the offices of the Institute? Each day, MPSI's faculty and staff pass by this symbol to be gently and artistically reminded of their mission.

Dr. Hilary Ratner, Vice President for Research at Wayne State University, shown here with MPSI Director Peter Lichtenberg



photo by Catherine Blasio

MISSION

The mission of the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute for Child & Family Development (MPSI) is to promote and improve the development, health and well-being of infants, children, youth and families across the lifespan, through research, education and outreach.

Editor: Cheryl Deep / Design: Catherine Blasio

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photo by Rick Bielaczyc



photo by Catherine Blasio



photo by Rob Widdis



photo by Catherine Blasio

Clockwise from top right: Lifespan research includes grandparents raising grandchildren; researchers study brain images of developing fetus; Dr. Lichtenberg trains new volunteers in Hoobler room; WSU President Allan Gilmour addresses guests at the Freer House new roof dedication ceremony. Opposite page: Dr. Lichtenberg reads to ECC preschool students.

Message from the Director

Growth, Depth and Discovery: Today's Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute

For nearly 100 years, the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute has been a national leader in child and family development and education. In 1922, we opened one of the country's first preschools. It served as a prototype for the many preschools that followed. During World War II, we advised the government in establishing daycare centers so mothers could work in the defense industry. We pioneered life-saving research on the nutritional needs of mothers and infants. Our 1930s studies proved that adding vitamin D to cow's milk could stop the bone deformity and fractures of rickets. We created the Merrill-Palmer Scales in 1931, one of the earliest IQ tests for young children. A revised version of the assessment is still widely used today.

We are proud of our heritage but prouder still of our current successes and future plans. Today's Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute builds on the legacy of excellence dictated by its founding board:

- We **educate thousands** of children, teens, parents and professionals every year.
- We **research the topics that shape our society** like substance abuse, violent dating behavior, mental health, prenatal development, brain changes as children grow, and preventing child maltreatment.
- Our research incorporates **new technologies** like non-invasive brain imaging that shows the brain in action as children safely complete tasks inside an MRI machine.
- We fight to **improve educational standards** by guiding a consortium of Detroit preschools to improve teacher training and classroom resources.
- We **model excellence in education** with our own Early Childhood Center, accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children to annually prepare about 60 preschoolers to succeed



photo by Catherine Blasio

in kindergarten and beyond.

- We do all of this in **the beautiful ambiance of a historically significant home.** The Charles Lang Freer House is an architectural treasure that we work hard to nurture, share and restore.

I have the privilege of directing both MPSI and its neighbor, the Institute of Gerontology. I am a gerontologist by training and led the Institute of Gerontology for 10 years before directing MPSI. Before I accepted the position, I asked, **“What could someone who specializes in older adults bring to an institute dedicated to children and families?”**

The answer, it turns out, is simple. Older adults, like children and families, are more “high touch” than “high tech.” Both groups are vulnerable, so finding ways to empower them improves their welfare and advances our society. And the intergenerational links

“For 92 unbroken years, our legacy has been to improve the welfare of children and families.”

– Dr. Lichtenberg

that connect families and communities bind all of us and foster a sense of belonging. With these similarities in mind, I was inspired to unite the two institutes in lifespan research.

We formed a Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience program to study the brain from pre-birth through old age and have conducted research into the effects of grandparents raising grandchildren. **Our connection allows a unique continuity of investigation across developmental stages.**

In my discussions with older adults, they often talk about their legacy, what they leave behind to be built on by future generations. The concept of legacy also underscores and energizes the work of MPSI. For 92 unbroken years, our legacy has been to improve the welfare of children and families. Read our new biannual report to see how we build on our storied past to create an even brighter future.

Warmly,

Peter A. Lichtenberg, Director

Wide Ranging Expertise to Improve Children's Lives

Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute has added seven new faculty members in the past five years. Two of these faculty members are neuroscientists integrated with the Institute of Gerontology into the newly created Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience Research Program. Research projects touch all stages of development from fetal brain imaging to infant mental health and attachment, and on through adolescent dating behavior and sexual victimization.

Research



John Hannigan, PhD

MPSI Deputy Director, Developmental Psychobiology

Much of Dr. Hannigan's career has been spent studying Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and the prevention and treatment of prenatal drug and alcohol abuse. In 2012, he collaborated with the Guidance Center to help with their free summer camp for elementary school children in River Rouge, Michigan. Dr. Hannigan and his team assessed social skills, spatial navigation, and gross and fine motor skills, looking for deficits and testing methods to improve them. His other recent achievements include teaming with faculty at the College of Education to create the Woodward Corridor Early Childhood Consortium to help neighboring childcare centers increase teacher training and the quality of their programs.



Ann Stacks, PhD

Director, Infant Mental Health

The nation's first dual-title degree in infant mental health, launched in 2012, is Dr. Stack's capstone. As director of MPSI's Infant Mental Health program, she has worked for years to include infant mental health training into nursing, education and social work curricula through a certificate program. The new dual-title degree deepens this learning with challenging and interdisciplinary coursework that fits well within the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health endorsement criteria. The dual-title option is also available at the master's and doctoral level. Dr. Stacks' work includes assessing programs that reduce the impact of child maltreatment. Her current consulting with the Shaken Baby Syndrome Project educates parents about long periods of newborn crying and healthy ways to cope. Dr. Stacks was also honored this year to receive the Esther Dean Callard Award for outstanding service to infants and their families in the Detroit area.



Moriah Thomason, PhD

School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics

One of MPSI's newer faculty members in Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience, Dr. Thomason began brain imaging studies while at Stanford University and UCLA. Her research revolves around brain devel-

opment - from conception through adolescence - and how trauma, hormones, anxiety, depression and genes affect brain connectivity and function. Dr. Thomason's lab uses novel methods for detecting and characterizing large-scale human brain networks. Her work has provided new insights into how human brain networks develop, mature, and alter with specific variations in genetic composition. Dr. Thomason is also director of the Perinatal Neural Connectivity unit of Wayne States' Perinatology Research Branch funded through the National Institutes of Health.

"Children are not miniature adults. Understanding a child's brain is a unique challenge."

- Dr. Thomason



Steven Ondersma, PhD

Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences

Creating brief, low-cost interventions to help mothers avoid substance abuse is a major objective of Dr. Ondersma's research. He has developed simple computer programs that pregnant women access during physician's visits to learn about the effects of drugs and alcohol on the fetus and to motivate self-change. In his pilot study, a majority of women cut down, delayed or abstained from drug use after the birth of their baby. His latest research will enroll 500 post-partum woman identified to be at high risk of drug use. He hopes his computerized intervention will decrease drug use dur-

ing the often stressful post-partum period, which could also decrease child neglect and abuse. Mothers need not admit to drug use to access the program or for it to be effective.



Julie Wargo Aikins, PhD

School of Medicine
Department of Clinical and Translational Science

A clinical child psychologist and developmental psychopathologist, Dr. Aikins joined MPSI this fall from the University of Connecticut. Her current research looks at risk and resilience in military families during deployments, especially attachment and emotion regulation of parents and children. In addition to studying service members and their families, her recent publications have tackled teen popularity, the interplay of adolescent friendship with depression, and the relationship between substance use, behavior problems and the choice of romantic partner.



Noa Ofen, PhD

School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics

Dr. Ofen is the newest faculty member to join the Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience Program, a joint project of MPSI and the Institute of Gerontology. Her postdoctoral work at MIT concentrated on using brain imaging to trace the differences in memory development between children and young adults. She

showed that the memories of adults are richer and more detailed probably because their prefrontal cortex is more mature. Dr. Ofen is also interested in the clinical implications of understanding brain development especially relative to premature birth, depression, anxiety and schizophrenia in children.

"I am fascinated by the dynamic nature of brain development that gives rise to changes in memory throughout our life."

- Dr. Ofen



Anna Miller, MEd

Executive Director, Early Childhood Centers at WSU

Anna Miller directs the Early Childhood Centers at the College of Education and MPSI. She is also a lecturer and undergraduate advisor for the early childhood program in the College of Education Teacher Education Division. Ms. Miller has worked with young children and their families in the Detroit area for over 30 years. She serves on several community committees related to young children and provides professional development training to early childhood programs. She belongs to the National, Michigan and Metro-Detroit Associations for the Education of Young Children; the Michigan Reggio Collaborative Group; the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance; and the Michigan Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators. Ms. Miller is the principal investigator of the Great Start Readiness Program Grant from the Michigan Department of Education and, with Dr. Sharon El-

liott, oversees the U.S. Department of Education Child Care Access Means Parents in School grant at WSU. She is also an innovator in early childhood education currently conducting pilot studies to translate the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum from elementary level to preschool, and to incorporate the latest media technologies into early childhood learning.



Sarah Raz, PhD

Psychology

Dr. Raz studies babies born prematurely, assessing the development of a battery of skills as they grow. For premies, an additional two weeks in the womb (from 24 weeks to 26 weeks) can mean major improvements in their cognitive and motor skills and overall survival. Her results were published recently in the *Journal of International Neuropsychological Society* and in *Neuropsychology*. Dr. Raz continues to collect data on language skills in dozens of children she has been following since birth and teaches graduate courses at Wayne State University in Developmental Neuropsychology and in Child Assessment.



Valerie Simon, PhD

Clinical Psychology

The choices adolescents make as they date and form sexual relationships have long fascinated Dr. Simon. Early romantic experiences shape identity, sense of

self, and sexuality in adulthood. She has been particularly interested in how childhood sexual abuse impacts later relationship decisions and sexual development. Other research examines ways to increase families' participation in mental health services when child sexual abuse is discovered. Dr. Simon also studies how individuals process childhood experiences of abuse, and the implications of their processing strategies for trauma recovery. She currently collaborates on a project that looks at the connection between risky family environments and asthma morbidity among Detroit youth.



Stella Resko, PhD

School of Social Work

High risk behavior in teens, including violence, has long baffled parents around the world. Dr. Resko approaches it scientifically to understand the interplay between alcohol and drug use, sexual acting out, poverty, violence and weapons. She has analyzed adolescents in inner city emergency rooms and in therapy sessions, always with an eye toward creating interventions that will stop the dangerous, high-risk behavior. Dr. Resko is currently assisting in a regional needs assessment to determine the extent of substance use among adolescents, and in a national evaluation of forensic training programs to combat sexual assault.

"The positive changes I've seen in the lives of adolescents affected by substance use and violence inspire my research."
– Dr. Resko



Carolyn Dayton, PhD

School of Social Work and
Department of Clinical and Translational Science

Dr. Dayton recently joined Wayne State from the University of Michigan and moves into new laboratory space at MPSI this fall. She has 20 years of experience providing psychotherapy and intervention services to children, adults and families in the fields of social work and clinical psychology. Her research is multidisciplinary across the fields of developmental and clinical psychology, social work, and infant mental health. During Dr. Dayton's postdoctoral research fellowship at U-M, she conducted functional MRI studies of traumatized mothers to research the neurological basis of parenting deficits.

AFFILIATE FACULTY

Marjorie Beeghly, Ph.D., is an associate professor in developmental psychology at WSU and holds faculty appointments at Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital, Boston. Dr. Beeghly researches the impact of risk and resilience on children's communicative, cognitive, and socio-emotional outcomes, and how differences in parenting and parent-child interactions affect these associations.

Christopher Trentacosta, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in clinical psychology at WSU. He researches self-regulatory skills and emotion competence in parents and young children with special interest in how these skills affect children's risk of behavior problems and school adjustment.

HUF

Healthier Urban Families Program Reaches Deep into Metro Detroit

Below: Parents, social workers, teachers and therapists are a few of the groups that benefit from HUF training. Right: Bev teaches students about safe social media.



"Parents want their children to be safe, to have a better life than they did, to feel loved and nurtured."

– Beverly Weathington



Service to the community has been a part of Merrill Palmer since the institute's creation in 1920. Today's Healthier Urban Families (HUF) program expands and strengthens that tradition by training more than 2,500 parents, professionals and children every year. Originally focused on the city of Detroit, HUF's programming is now making inroads into the greater metro area. Highland Park, Hamtramck, Taylor and Madison Heights are a few of the neighborhoods where HUF has had impact. Trainings also service pockets of Detroit that tend to be underserved, such as the Native American and Hispanic communities.



photo by Catherine Blasio

Courses for Credit

Continuing education classes for human service professionals come in two convenient and affordable formats: a two-day, themed conference called *Explorations in Development* in the fall, and a series of half-day seminars on various topics related to child welfare in the spring. Courses qualify for social work and counseling credit; some also provide nursing, physical therapy and speech therapy credits depending on topic. Recent *Explorations in Development* themes include teen pregnancy, attachment disorder, and speech and language delays. The half-day seminars examine

From left: HUF training on foster care; Bev teaches grandparents tips on raising grandchildren; family enjoys HUF parenting workshop.

topical issues like adolescent depression and suicide, welfare reform, and cyberbullying.

All HUF's credit programs combine the research and the clinical perspectives, a unique approach not always available in training. "We consistently get high evaluations on our programs," said HUF's Program Coordinator Beverly Weathington. "Mostly because we look at what is evidence-based, what we know works in a clinical setting. Our attendees want to learn how to use the insights of recent research so they can improve the lives of their clients." HUF also offers CE trainings at host locations, many for Wayne Metro Head Start teachers. Other popular topics for professionals working with children are *Mental Health Needs of Infants* and *Home Visitor Safety*.



Training for Parents

"Stress" seems to be the rallying cry of today's parents as they struggle with financial uncertainty and challenges to the safety and well-being of their chil-



photo courtesy ECC

dren. "The topic we get the most requests for – by far – is 'Stress Reduction for Parents,'" said Bev. "Parents desperately need strategies to reduce their stress and improve family interactions." The second most popular topic is "Positive Discipline for Preschoolers."

HUF's speakers bureau of experts trains all levels of parents, from expectant moms to grandparents raising grandchildren. Nearly 450 parents attended HUF classes last year, almost double the number from two years earlier. Though the numbers have changed, the concerns of parents remain constant. "Parents want their children to be safe, to have a better life than they did, to feel loved and nurtured," Bev said. "They want to be good parents and do their job well." Challenges keep changing. "That's where HUF can help," she said, "We can give them the skills to overcome those challenges."

HUF's programs pay special attention to adolescents.

From left: More than 250 teens learn tolerance at Giant Step; adult facilitators train to lead Giant Step discussions; Giant Step students moved by inspirational keynote Ronnie Bachman.

Caught between child and adult, teens struggle deeply with acceptance, identity and independence. Community trainings for teens and pre-teens include appreciating diversity, safe social networking, and internet safety. HUF's signature annual program is the Giant Step Teen Conference held on Wayne State University's campus every fall. More than 300 young adults benefit from Giant Step and other HUF programming each year.



photo by Cheryl Deep

A Giant Step toward Tolerance

The Giant Step Teen Conference has been helping southeast Michigan teens get to know each other for 30 years, and is the longest-running conference of its kind in the country. Its motto is *Inclusion, Harmony, Acceptance*. Its mission is to break the barriers that segregate area teens by color, religion, income, heritage and culture. This free conference unites about 250 students from 60 different schools and communities for a day of discussion, sharing and understanding. They enter the conference as strangers and leave as friends.

Research evaluations after every conference confirm that just one day of facilitated discussion improves

student attitudes toward other people who are different from them. "Giant Step works," said conference coordinator Trudy Shiemke. "It changes the way teens think about each other. Change one student and you start to change the world."

If you or your organization would like more information about Giant Step, CE, youth or parent trainings, contact Bev at b.weathington@wayne.edu or call 313-664-2526. Visit all MPSI programs at www.mpsi.wayne.edu.

FAST FACTS

PERSONS TRAINED BY HUF IN 2012

<i>Professionals</i>	1,619
<i>Parents</i>	446
<i>Teens</i>	319
<i>Counselors and Facilitators</i>	120



photo by Rick Bielaczyc

ECC We Believe the Children are Our Future

Weekday afternoons, in a spacious courtyard full of wagons, balls and tricycles, 57 young children play happily outdoors. These are the students of MPSI's Early Childhood Center, one of two preschool sites on Wayne State's campus that lead the charge for quality education and kindergarten readiness for Detroit's children.

The Wayne State University Early Childhood Centers are unique for several reasons:

They received the nation's highest accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a standard of excellence that requires meeting 10 major standards and more than 400 related criteria.

• **Federal and state grants cover much of the tuition for many children who may be at risk of educational failure** or come from families of limited economic means. Attending a preschool of our caliber can offset these disadvantages. Our Childcare Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant is especially life-changing. It provides tuition for children of Wayne State University students, supporting the need for quality childcare so parents can complete their college degrees.

• **Play is how we learn.** Our Centers, in their mixed-age classrooms, use the Project Approach, a curriculum model in which children and teachers do in-depth studies of topics of interest. Problem-solving, creativ-

ity, socializing, self-expression – these and many other skills are strengthened in a play-based program. The Centers are guided by the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten Programs.

• **Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a supplemental curriculum and teaching strategy, exposes children to works of art and strengthens observation and discussion skills.** During VTS lessons, teachers facilitate discussions about an art image to build vocabulary, critical thinking and listening skills. Regular field trips to the neighboring Detroit Institute of Arts enhance the curriculum. Our Centers are part of just a few programs nationwide piloting the VTS preschool curriculum.

In addition to an unrivaled preschool education, the Centers give Wayne State researchers, and students studying medicine, social work, education, physical, occupational and speech therapy, the chance to observe normal childhood development. Observation decks at the MPSI site and a student teaching program at the College of Education site integrate these learning oppor-



tunities without interfering with the children's routine.

Anna Miller is executive director of both Early Childhood Centers, supervising the MPSI and College of Education sites. She has been instrumental in instituting the Centers' numerous improvements over the past few years. "This collaborative partnership between MPSI and the College of Education has enhanced the quality of early childhood education and care on campus," she said. "It has also expanded our relationships with the community at large and created new collaborations."

Parents and children alike give high marks to our Early Childhood Centers. "Chloe is smart academically, so I like that her teachers challenge her," said mom Bianca. She liked that Chloe got up every morning excited to go to school.

"This is the best quality program I've ever seen," said Agnes, a mother of five and full-time Wayne State student. "Rachel gets the individual time that can be hard for me to give."

"I have lots of friends here," 4-year-old Rachel said grinning. "They like to play with me every day. It's fun."

"This partnership . . . has enhanced the quality of early childhood education and care on campus."

– Anna Miller, Executive Director



photo courtesy ECC

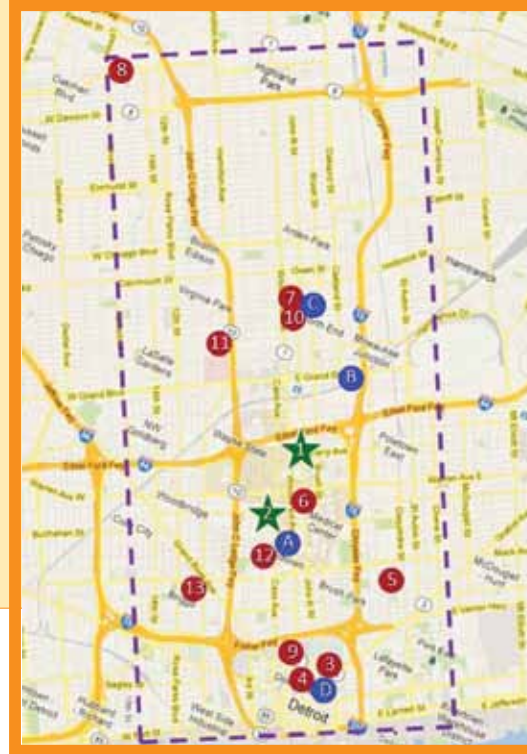
The Woodward Corridor Consortium: A Helping Hand to Surrounding Preschools

A new initiative taking flight over the past year is the Woodward Corridor Early Childhood Consortium. That's a big name for a simple, yet powerful, concept: unite nearby preschool directors to share best practices and improve quality. Thirteen early childhood centers in Detroit's midtown, north end and downtown neighborhoods have joined so far, including the WSU centers at MPSI and the College of Education. Support for the concept came from seed funding from First Children's Finance.

Some early childhood centers are franchises, some are corporate-based, and others are independent centers affiliated with churches or neighborhood organizations. Consortium goals are to expand professional development of teachers with continuing training in early childhood education, and to promote high quality care by facilitating implemen-

tation of evidence-based best practices.

Quick to take action, the group held their first annual professional development conference on October 6 and drew about 70 teachers and staff to the free half-day of expert presentations on topics such as "Building Children's Brains," "Communicating Effectively with Families," and the new Michigan-mandated Quality Rating Improvement System. Community partners Midtown Detroit, Inc., Great Start Collaborative Wayne, and Vanguard Community Development Corporation helped to sponsor the conference. A spring research colloquium is planned for center directors, faculty, and students from MPSI and the College of Education.



WOODWARD CORRIDOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSORTIUM

Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute
 COE Early Childhood Education
 Boll Family YMCA
 Compuware Child Development Center
 Detroit Edison Public School Academy
 Detroit Montessori School
 Family Place Early Start Day Care
 Focus: HOPE Center for Children
 Fox Tots Child Development Center
 Franklin-Wright Settlements Inc.
 Henry Ford Child Care
 KidSpace Montessori
 Sunshine Community Preschool
 Midtown Detroit, Inc.
 Vanguard Community Development Corp.
 First Children's Finance, Inc.
 Local Initiatives Support Corporation

The possible benefits of high-quality early education for all children, especially those raised in poverty, include better health, increased likelihood of graduating from high school and attending college, fewer emotional disturbances and juvenile crime, and more stable employment. Lifetime public savings for each Detroit child who is prepared for kindergarten is estimated conservatively at \$80,000.

Consortium center directors meet regularly under the guidance of Dr. Sharon Elliott, associate professor in the College of Education, who leads the consortium alongside MPSI Deputy Director Dr. Hannigan, and Anna Miller, executive director of both WSU Early Childhood Centers. MPSI and the College of Education are seeking resources to recruit additional centers and expand the impact of the Consortium within neighborhoods. The Kresge Foundation recently awarded \$246,000 to help support the next three years of the Consortium's work.

What's New

MPSI faculty are attuned to the changing needs of our community, continuously assessing programs and research to make sure their work is relevant. In the past year, several new initiatives have emerged. We've outlined a few of them below. New programs insure that MPSI stays a nimble and responsive partner in improving the lives of children.

12

Infant Mental Health Dual-Title Degree is First in the Country

Wayne State graduate students in nursing, social work, or education can now augment their studies with classes and fieldwork in infant mental health to obtain a degree that includes that title. Dr. Ann Stacks is director of MPSI's Infant Mental Health program. "For years, we offered a certificate in infant mental health that was highly regarded," she said. "Last year we realized we had the depth of knowledge to expand it into a dual-title program." Several departments at Wayne strongly supported the idea.

The program launched this year through the School of Social Work, College of Nursing and College of Education with coursework that is challenging and meaningful. Faculty in multiple disciplines worked closely with MPSI to insure the program fits each department's graduation requirements, plus is rigorous enough for master's and doctoral level students. Seven students have already enrolled and many others are inquiring.

Infant mental health specialists often work with

children at high risk of developmental delays due to poverty, parent substance abuse or mental health problems, child abuse and neglect, or lack of family social supports. A dual-title degree balances the clinical and research skills needed by these specialists. "This degree will strengthen our field," said Kathryn Sims, the clinical



photo by Catherine Blasto

supervisor of birth-to-six programs at the Guidance Center in Southgate. Students agree. "It will help me better understand and support the infant-caregiver relationship," said Mickey Sperlich, an M.S.W. and predoctoral trainee at MPSI. "I'm excited to be one of the first to pursue it."



photo by Cheryl Deep



photo by Catherine Blasio

Far right; Drs. Stacks, Thomason and Beeghly team on a project to scan the brains of fetuses and follow-up with developmental assessments.



photo by Catherine Blasio



photo by Rob Widdis

New Initiative Spans the Life Cycle

Because brain development and aging happen over time, cognitive neuroscientists often pick a phase of the lifespan and concentrate their research on that age group. To get a clear picture of the continuum of brain changes that occur as we grow and age, however, it makes sense to bring researchers from across the lifespan together under one roof.

That is the concept and the wisdom behind the recently formed Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience program, a collaboration between MPSI and the Institute of Gerontology (IOG). Dr. Naftali Raz heads an IOG team that images the brains of older adults to chart the changes of normal aging. Dr. Noa Ofen tracks how memories are encoded and retrieved in 5 to 30-year-olds. Dr. Moriah Thomason concentrates on children age 7 to 15, examining the effect of anxiety disorders on brain development. She is also helping with a large-scale fetal imaging project to study how brain networks connect in utero. Someday diagnosis and treatment could occur before symptoms appear, she said.

According to Dr. Raz, "Brain aging is not a discrete event that happens overnight but a long stretch on the developmental continuum." The combined work of these and other researchers may well exceed the sum of its parts, helping to create a coherent picture of the developing brain from conception through old age.



"Brain aging is not a discrete event that happens overnight"
– Dr. Raz

Skills and Thrills at CHAMPS Summer Camp

MPSI Deputy Director John Hannigan traded his suit and tie for shorts and sneakers this summer as a gym teacher for an exciting research project. “Who would have thought?” he asked, still incredulous. Dr. Hannigan and collaborators Dr. Lisa Chiodo of the College of Nursing, HUF Coordinator Bev Weathington, and a small staff provided enrichment activities to 90 elementary age children at the Walter Wright River Rouge Summer Camp run by the Guidance Center. Over half of the camp’s children also enrolled in MPSI’s research project to assess interventions for children with developmental and behavioral problems.

CHAMPS (Children Having Adventures through Merrill Palmer Skillman) assessed children for possible challenges such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or ADHD. Children practiced social skills (“I will show her my empathy,” a second grader said after watching another girl being teased), strengthened navigation and gross motor skills in mazes and gymnastics, and played select computer games to improve memory.

Children, counselors, and MPSI’s team all learned important lessons. Dr. Hannigan admits some goals proved too lofty for their first six-week camp, but other areas succeeded beyond expectations. “Social skills training worked very well with these children,” Dr. Hannigan said. “Bev adapted that training to the camp setting in exactly the right way.” CHAMPS used a token economy where children receive tokens as a reward for appropriate behavior and then trade them for fun gifts and toys. “That was a big hit,” he said.

Data from the project are still being analyzed, but the MPSI team and Guidance Center camp leadership

agree that establishing an excellent collaboration was a key measure of success. All look forward to continuing to work together. CHAMPS was supported by a grant from the Carls Foundation; Dr. Hannigan hopes to find funding for next year to continue the most effective aspects of the training while exploring new ideas. “It was wonderful being in the community,” said Bev, “and having the opportunity to teach children lifelong skills that improve their relationships with others.”



From top: Children at CHAMPS camp develop balance and spatial awareness; computerized games strengthen memory; large scale matching game helps concentration and spatial awareness.



Education

Preparing the Next Generation to Help Children

GRADUATE TRAINEES & AWARDS

Ann Carrellas, Social Work

Casey Dexter, Developmental Psychology*

Partial tuition from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research

Tina Dykehouse, Social Work

Travis Goldwire, Clinical Psychology*

Minority training supplement for *Teens at Risk: Prenatal Cocaine and Postnatal Challenges* from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (through Virginia Delaney-Black, MD and Lisa Chiodo, PhD)

Benjamin Goodlett, Clinical Psychology*

President, Graduate Student Organization, Department of Psychology
Graduate Student Service Award, Department of Psychology
Graduate Research Assistantship, Department of Oncology

Amy Kohl, Developmental Psychology*

Graduate Research Fellowship Award of a one-year stipend, Office of VP for Research

Amy Loree, Clinical Psychology*

John Teahan Memorial Award, Department of Psychology
Research Day Clinical Presentation Award, Dept. of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience
Co-president, Graduate Student Organization, MPSI
National Institute on Drug Abuse Travel Award

Erin Mason, Clinical Psychology

Mickey Sperlich, Social Work*

Graduate Student Reviewer to *Child Maltreatment Journal*
2012 Elizabeth N. Brehler Scholar (School of Social Work)
Thomas C. Rumble University Graduate Fellowship
Graduate Fellowship Writing Boot Camp Award for successful submission of federal grant

Kristyn Wong, Developmental Psychology

Co-president, Graduate Student Organization, MPSI

LIFESPAN ALLIANCE POSTER DAY (held with the Institute of Gerontology)

1st – Casey Dexter: *Parenting Antecedents of Parent-Infant Shared Reading Quality in a Low-Income Sample*

2nd – Ann Carrellas: *Feelings and Friendships: A Study of Autism, Empathy and Relationships*

3rd – Amy Loree: *Screeners for Child Maltreatment and Parenting Risks*

* Denotes MPSI Fellow

Trainees at MPSI are a select group of WSU students with a serious interest in child and family development who are pursuing doctoral degrees in psychology or social work. The training goal is to prepare the next generation of scientific researchers to effectively study and intervene with children and families. Interdisciplinary mentoring teams advise trainees on research and publishing, doctoral course work, internships, and career planning.

Trainees selected to be fellows assume additional responsibilities and receive greater support from MPSI. While all trainees are encouraged to attend colloquia and professional development sessions, to be active in the Graduate Student Organization, and to present their research, fellows commit to doing so. Fellows also host scientific visitors to MPSI and receive support to attend at least one scientific conference a year.

Dr. Hannigan, MPSI's deputy director and the director of training praises the caliber of MPSI's trainees and fellows. "The complexities of behavioral and cognitive development require research skills rooted in core disciplines but that transcend traditional departmental boundaries," he said. "This 'real-life' training positions our students for careers with impact in the academy, clinics, classrooms and communities."

Grants

Risky Family Environments and Asthma – Dr. Richard Slatcher, PI. Dr. Simon is a co-investigator on this 5-year, \$3 million dollar grant funded by the National Institutes of Health to examine risky family environments and asthma morbidity in urban adolescents. The grant capitalizes on Dr. Simon’s expertise in adolescent development, interpersonal risk, and developmental methodologies.

Assessment and Intervention for Perinatal Drug Use – Dr. Steve Ondersma, PI. A four-year, \$1.73 million grant from the National Institute on Drug Use to test his newly created screening and intervention tool to reduce drug use in new mothers. The tool is low-cost, easy to administer, and designed to be effective even if the mother never admits to drug use.

Child Care Access Means Parents in School – Anna Miller, M.Ed., PI. The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$711,000 to MPSI over four years to provide tuition for preschoolers of eligible families to attend its Early Childhood Center. A parent must be a Wayne State University student with low income and assets, and maintain a GPA of at least 2.0. By making quality child care affordable, parents in college are better able to obtain their degrees.



Computer-based Interventions to Reduce Alcohol Use in Pregnancy – Dr. Steve Ondersma, PI. This three-year grant of \$655,500 from the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse funds a pilot clinical trial to see if a hand-held computer program can change drinking behavior. Dr. Ondersma uses the SBIRT (screening, brief intervention and referral for treatment) approach via smart phones and tablets to interact with high-risk mothers and motivate them to change.

The Emergence of Sexual Risk among Sexually Abused Adolescent Females – Dr. Valerie Simon, PI. Little is known about the early sexual development of girls who were victims of child sexual abuse. The National Institutes of Health awarded \$620,000 for a five-year study of this relationship that may lead to more effective risk-reduction programs for these adolescents. Dr. Simon also received a \$58,000 post doctoral fellowship award toward this research.

Baby Court – Dr. Ann Stacks, co-investigator. Dr. Stacks is the Detroit Site Research Coordinator for a multi-site project funded by the Centers for Disease Control (PI Jenifer Goldman Fraser, RTI International) to implement a “Baby Court” team model that brings the science of child development into the courtroom in cases where parents and/or their children are in the state’s custody as a result of allegations of maltreatment. In this model, infant mental health therapists,

foster care workers and attorneys work together to give children and families the best opportunity for success. The team takes into account the fundamental needs of the infant while attempting to significantly change the parents’ competence to care for their children. The Detroit site share is \$148,000.

The Flinn Foundation awarded Dr. Stacks, PI, an additional \$192,147 over two years to continue to study the effectiveness of the Baby Court model, provide standardized court assessments, support therapists in delivering an evidence-based therapy “Child Parent Psychotherapy,” and develop and provide training for new therapists, attorneys and caseworkers.

Promoting High-Quality Early Childhood Education in Detroit’s Woodward Corridor – Dr. Sharon Elliot, Dr. John Hannigan, Anna Miller, M.Ed., PIs. A three-year, \$246,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation to help MPSI and the College of Education provide leadership, training and resources to early childhood centers along Woodward Avenue. See page 11.



Interventions for Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) – Dr. John Hannigan, PI. A \$150,000 grant from the Carls Foundation to promote parental advocacy and to test targeted social, cognitive and motor skills training in various settings to improve function in children with FASD.



photo by Catherine Blasio

Freer House Restoration Projects – William Colburn, PI. The Americana Foundation awarded a total of \$124,000 over three years to support improvements to the Freer House, the historic home of MPSI faculty and staff built in 1892. Monies funded a walkway timeline depicting the history of the house, and architectural plans to restore one of the home's art galleries and its courtyard garden.

Fetal Neuroimaging: Multi-modal pathways to early identification of brain injury – Dr. Moriah Thomason, PI. The Kellogg Foundation grant of \$121,000 over two years uses prenatal brain imaging to study at-risk infants and the risk of infection.

Strengthening Mental Health Service Utilization to Reduce Negative Consequences of Child Sexual Abuse – Dr. Valerie Simon, PI. An 18-month, \$100,000 grant to identify barriers to and increase utilization of no-cost mental health services among families with a newly discovered case of child sexual abuse. At present, few families take advantage of early intervention resources, putting children at greater risk of long-term trauma.

Translating Research into Practice: Improving Pregnancy Alcohol Screening – Drs. John Hannigan and Lisa Chiodo (Nursing), Co-PIs. A \$75,000 grant from the WSU-HFHS Institute for Population Studies Health Assessment, Administration, Services and Economics

(INPHAASE) to assess training for prenatal care nurses to implement an efficient screen for risk drinking in pregnancy.

Great Start Readiness Program – Anna Miller, M.Ed., PI. This one-year grant from the Michigan Department of Education is shared between both Early Childhood Centers on campus. MPSI's Center receives \$61,200 to provide free tuition for qualified four-year-olds who are at-risk of school failure.

Neural and Epigenetic Bases of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome in Youth – Dr. Moriah Thomason, PI. Dr. Thomason will use functional brain imaging to investigate the effects of PTSD on the developing brain. The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation awarded a New Investigator \$60,000 grant for this two-year study.

Multiservice Growth for WSU Early Childhood Centers – Dr. John Hannigan & Anna Miller, Co-PIs. First Children's Finance provides two years of consultation (\$10,000) and a \$40,000 grant to create a growth and financial stability plan to help sustain Wayne State's two preschools serving about 95 children, primarily from Detroit.

Visual Thinking Strategies Training – Anna Miller, M.Ed., PI. A follow-on grant of \$20,000 from PNC Foundation to continue professional development, staff training and field trips required to implement the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) adjunct curriculum in WSU's two Early Childhood Centers. VTS uses guided discussions of select works of art to improve preschoolers verbal, cognitive, observational and critical thinking skills.

From far left: Students assist Dr. Noa Ofen (third from left) with her lab's brain imaging studies; Dr. Ondersma devises computerized interventions to reduce risky behaviors during and after pregnancy; students review brain scans outside MRI machine; installation of photographic timeline in passageway to Freer House; MPSI research partner "Kids Talk" conducts interviews with children to determine abuse and neglect.



photo by Catherine Blasio

Wayne State Research Awards – Dr. Moriah Thomason won \$30,000 in the graduate research assistant competition sponsored by Wayne State's Office of the Vice President of Research. She also received a University Research Award of \$10,000.

Period of PURPLE Crying – Dr. Ann Stacks, PI. Shaken Baby Syndrome is the leading cause of abuse-related death among infants. The Children's Trust Fund of Michigan is working with DMC hospitals to implement the Period of PURPLE Crying, the only evidence-based prevention program. Dr. Stacks is evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the program and training community professionals who work with parents on normal infant crying, consequences of shaking, and healthy ways to cope with and soothe crying. Dr. Stacks' grant is \$10,000 per year to evaluate the training and analyze its effectiveness.

Early Head Start Evaluation – Dr. Ann Stacks, PI. Dr. Stacks works with Macomb County Early Head Start to evaluate their compliance with Federal Performance Standards and children's development. This \$5,000 per year contract is subject to annual renewal.

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The community leaders selected to serve on MPSI’s Board of Visitors act as our ambassadors throughout metropolitan Detroit. They foster relationships with organizations that share our mission and spread awareness of our research and education programs. Our board is also a vital component of our fundraising efforts.



photo by Rose Foster



photo by Cheryl Deep

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photo provided by ECC

From far left to right: Board member Phebe Goldstein and Giant Step Co-ordinator Trudy Shiemke converse at alumni reunion; BOV holiday meeting in former Peacock Room, ECC preschooler hones his culinary skills; The Co-Ette Club presents a generous donation to the Giant Step Teen Conference.

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photo by Cheryl Deep



The Freer House

Faculty and staff of the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute feel fortunate to have their offices in the former home of Detroit industrialist and art collector, Charles Lang Freer. The 22-room, Shingle-style home was completed in 1892 and designed by architect Wilson Eyre, Jr., the perfect space for Freer to display his expanding collection of paintings and porcelain. “My colleagues get jealous,” a faculty member said. “They can’t believe I get to work in such a beautiful atmosphere.”

20

But being good stewards of the 117-year-old home requires partners, patience and plenty of funding. The effort is well worth it, according to William S. Colburn, director of the Freer House. “Charles Freer was a consummate collector of Asian, Middle Eastern and American art,” he said. “His house is a treasure of

American architecture, designed to display his collection with museum quality ambiance.” For more than a decade, William has worked to preserve and restore the Freer House, first as a historic preservation consultant and then as a member of its board of directors. The Freer House is a Michigan State Historic Site and



photo by Rose Foster

listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Freer made his fortune building railroad cars in the late 1800s, money that allowed him to retire at 46 and devote his life to his primary love – art. He owned the largest collection of works by American artist James McNeill Whistler, including his redecoration of the famous Peacock Room for Englishman Frederick Leyland, who never liked it. When Leyland died, the future of the ornate room, complete with stunning floor-to-ceiling murals, was in jeopardy. Freer purchased the room (walls, floor and ceiling) then custom-designed an addition to his Detroit home to house it. The Peacock Room resided

The Freer House through the Years

Above: Freer House Main Hall, 2012.

1890; House and Stable for C.L. Freer, Esq. Detroit, Mich. Rendering by Wilson Eyre. (*Detroit Institute of Arts Archives.*) 1906; Whistler Gallery in carriage house. (*Freer Gallery of Art Archives.*)



"The welfare of any community is . . . dependent upon the quality of its motherhood and the spirit and character of its homes."

– Lizzie Merrill Palmer, 1915



in Detroit for 13 years. Upon Freer's death, the room and his art collection were bequeathed to the Smithsonian Institution to become the Freer Gallery of Art.

Merrill Palmer Moves In

In 1920, the estate of Lizzie Merrill Palmer purchased the home for a new school dedicated to child and family development. For years, the home supported college students, researchers, and an infant and toddler preschool complete with sandbox and sliding board. In 1981, the independent Institute was incorporated into Wayne State University due to financial strains and the house endured architecturally insensitive renovations to convert it to office space.

Today some of those changes have been undone and the building looks more like the original home.

Reproductions of several large paintings from Freer's collection now hang throughout the first floor, thanks to generous donors who underwrote the cost of each reproduction. In 2010, thanks to the support of Wayne State, the cedar shingled roof and copper gutters were replaced, and the original stonework was cleaned to reveal beautiful colors and textures under decades of city grime.

Funding for Freer House projects comes from generous donors, many of them members of the Freer House, and from grants like those from the Americana Foundation that support a public lecture series related to Freer and his legacy. The lecture series has drawn hundreds of area residents to the house and the nearby Detroit Institute of Arts for presentations by Smithsonian Institution experts, historians and other art professionals knowledgeable about Freer's life and collection.

Counterclockwise from top left: Lizzie Merrill Palmer (*Merrill-Palmer Audio Visual Archive, Walter P. Reuther Library*). 1927; Nursery school tots play while Merrill Palmer student trainees observe (*Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute*). 1950s; Merrill Palmer trainees learn about child development and the life cycle (*Merrill-Palmer Audio Visual Archive, Reuther Library*). 1960s; Student teacher works on reading skills with Merrill Palmer preschool class (*Merrill-Palmer Audio Visual Archives, Reuther Library*).



1927



1950s



1960s

The Future of Freer House

A major achievement in increasing awareness of Freer's life and work was the 2012 installation of the timeline exhibit "A House and its History." Set in an arched passageway leading to the rear of the home, the archival photos, captions and quotes reveal Freer House history from construction to modern day. It also includes the intertwined history of Merrill Palmer Institute.

The Freer House was built with two large second-floor galleries full of natural light to maximize the viewing of Freer's art. The Exhibition Gallery known as the Hoobler Room has no major changes and is regularly used for meetings and small conferences. The Whistler Gallery, however, has had major alterations beginning in the 1950s and up through the 1990s. William and members of the Freer House hope to restore the Whistler Gallery to a space more similar to its original design that can be used as future meet-

ing space. They are also exploring ways to restore the courtyard garden area to a style closer to Freer's original plan. Both projects are the focus of a new and ambitious major fund-raising campaign.

Research on Freer's art, his life and even the furniture that once filled his home continue through the help of students, faculty and volunteers. "We've documented much of his furniture, decorations and

household objects that survive in the T.W. Brunk collection," William said. "We've uncovered more than 100 historical newspaper articles about his life and legacy. And we've done a digital inventory of many of his photographs and documents.

"As the layers pull back, we appreciate the depth of Freer's artistic sensibility with more clarity and understanding."



A symposium entitled, *The Living Legacy of Charles Lang Freer: Detroit and Washington, D.C.*, was held in October, co-sponsored by the Freer House/MPSI/WSU, the Detroit Institute of Arts and other partner organizations. Dr. Julian Raby, the director of the Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art, was the invited keynote. Over 150 people attended the symposium and another 60 guests attended a dinner event at the Freer House in Dr. Raby's honor.



Julian Raby

Left: Charles Lang Freer, photograph by Edward Steichen, 1916. (*Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian.*) Above: Dr. Julian Raby, (*Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art Archives, Smithsonian.*)

2010; Kril Enterprise employees work on roof replacement. 2011; Giclee reproductions of major works in Freer's collection adorn the home's walls throughout. 2012; Timeline photos are hung in the passageway through the carriage house; guests enjoy a musical interlude at a lecture on Freer and artist friend James McNeill Whistler.

2010



photo by Rose Foster

2011



photo by Meg Urisko



Concept for Whistler Gallery Restoration, rendering by Michael Brown



Concept for Courtyard Garden Restoration, rendering by Thomas Holleman.



"As we learn more, we better understand the significance of the Freer House to Detroit and the nation."
– William Colburn



photo by Carrie Leach

2012



photo by Rick Bielaczyc

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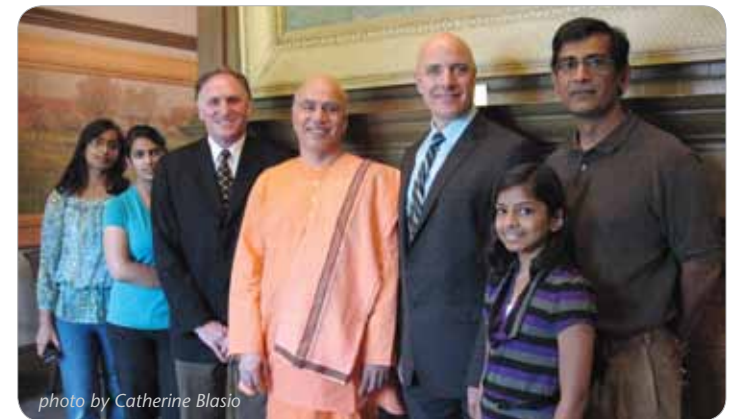


photo by Catherine Blasio

Left: Freer with Tomitaro Hara family and guests, Yokohama, Japan, 1907. (*Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian.*) Above: Dr. Lichtenberg and William Colburn welcome a visit by Swami Tyagananda with Dr. Madhu Prasad and family. Far right: Betty Roden, David Roden, (Counsel General to Republic of S. Korea in Detroit), Naoko Matsuda, Kuninori Matsuda (Counsel General of Japan in Detroit)

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