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SPRING 2010

## Healthier Urban Family Program Supports Detroit Parents & Professionals



Nearly 50 professionals attended the "Grief and Loss in Children" CE workshop in March.

In less than two years, MPSI's new Healthier Urban Families program has doubled its reach throughout Detroit. Relevant topics, expanded venues, partnerships with faith-based organizations and a winning collaboration with Matrix Human Services put the vital information of HUF's programs into the hands of more professionals, parents and grandparents who need it.

"We had to build momentum," said MPSI Director Peter Lichtenberg, who conceived the program in the summer of 2008. "We assembled a motivated Parent and Community Advisory Board and worked with them to choose topics and connect with the people who would benefit most." Members of the advisory board also volunteer to provide hands-on help at trainings. This approach works equally well to build both parent and professional workshops (see related sidebar). In the past six months alone, HUF has conducted 18 workshops in 13 Detroit locations

to reach a total of 194 professionals, and 181 parents and grandparents.

"We listened to parents, teachers, social workers and other professionals who work with families," said Bev Weathington, M.S.W., HUF's program coordinator. "They told us what they needed and we've found interesting ways to provide it."

### Don't Mess with Stress

Not surprising, considering Michigan's economic pressures, the most popular work-

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### Tea Time

June 24, 4:00- 6:00pm

Meet **Dr. Kerry Moustakas**, daughter of Merrill Palmer faculty member Dr. Clark Moustakas, author of numerous books on humanistic psychology and now semi-retired. Dr. Kerry Moustakas is president of the Michigan School of Professional Psychology in Farmington Hills. She will share photos and memories of her father's years at Merrill Palmer where he was a much-beloved professor, colleague and friend.

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**Freer House Hosts Historic Concert** pg.6

## Teachers Benefit from MPSI Expertise

The recent success and expansion of MPSI's Healthier Urban Families programs includes its continuing education series for professionals. "An important part of our mission is to share best-practice information with professionals," Dr. Lichtenberg said. The CE series comprises three to four seminars per year, each costing \$55 and earning three continuing education credits. Recent topics like *Substance Use in Parents*, *Grief and Loss*, and *Gambling Addiction* have attracted widespread interest and audiences of about 40 participants per seminar. The next CE workshop is *Child and Adolescent Obesity* on May 5 at MPSI. Call 313-872-1411 for more information.

Last year, Dr. Lichtenberg helped to bridge an affiliation between HUF and the Vista Nueva Head Start program in early childhood education, a Matrix Human Services agency. Since then, Bev has conducted two professional development seminars for Vista Nueva's Head Start teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators.

Head Start teachers must make at least one home visit a year to assess a student's family environment, but college training for teachers may not emphasize the importance of home visitor safety. Teachers may feel particularly concerned if visits are conducted in an unfamiliar area or one with a high crime rate. Bev's class explains how to be aware of your surroundings, how to protect yourself and your property (don't put your laptop under the car seat where thieves will spot it through the back window), how to

handle anger on the part of parents who may feel threatened, and how to enter and exit the neighborhood and home safely.

Evaluations from the 40 teachers attending February's Home Visitor Safety session were uniformly and overwhelmingly positive. Comments included:

***"All teachers should experience this training. The information given is great."***

***"Very good work."***

***"I felt that this presentation was one of the best I have had. The topic is crucial and it is important to be armed with this knowledge for safety."***

HUF's latest education and research project targets grandparents who are raising grandchildren, a group of about 2.5 million in the U.S. and rising rapidly. Workshop topics include parenting in the 21st century, the impact on grandparents' health, and managing difficult behaviors. Much-needed research on grandparenting is also being conducted through the Lifespan Alliance, a joint venture of MPSI and the Institute of Gerontology. The first focus of the LIFHE project (Lifespan Investigation of Family, Health and Environment), is the physical and emotional impact of grandparents raising grandchildren in an urban environment. For details about this project, visit [www.mpsi.wayne.edu/research/lifhe.php](http://www.mpsi.wayne.edu/research/lifhe.php).

## Urban Workshops

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shop for parents, whether at the Genesis Lutheran Church or Joy Preparatory Academy, has been stress reduction. Bev and co-presenter Joan Blount, M.Ed., created a *Parent Tool Kit* filled with details on how to build the right support system (avoid negative folks and gossip), planning, housekeeping and organizing, and de-stressors. Parents add their own ideas to the kit.

"This isn't theory," Bev is quick to add. "We don't talk about concepts unless we have a hands-on way to make it real." Joan shows parents how to take a mental vacation, walking them through the imaginative doors to a relaxing escape. She helps them

*Looking for a speaker for your community group, support group, or church event?*

**Workshops Available to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**

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*This free community outreach service is brought to you by the Healthier Urban Families Program at*



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for Child & Family Development

tap into all their senses. She sprays aromatic oils into the room, dims the lights, speaks calmly, and describes the smell and feel of

a day at the beach. A mental getaway can lower blood pressure as effectively as a real vacation – with no hotel bills. CONT. ON P.3

Bev shares simple, low-cost ideas to keep the family organized and avoid last-minute chaos. "Designate a basket or hook for car keys," she said. "Do you know how many hours in a lifetime are spent searching for the car keys?" She also suggests a *Heading Out Bag* hung at the back door for videos, mail, dry cleaning, library books or anything else that has to leave the house. "Then there is no scrambling at the last minute and no late fees," Bev said.

She also staggers wake-up times for children. Get the slow-poke up first, she says, and do only what's necessary on week-day mornings. Don't expect to make important phone calls before you get everyone out the door; it's not going to happen. "It's the little things that can cause big stress," Bev cautioned, made worse when parents and children don't get enough sleep. "I've talked to parents working two jobs and getting only four hours of sleep a night. That's not enough to function safely," she said.

Professionals are coping with increased stress, too, but parents are especially overwhelmed. "They hold down two jobs, sometimes three. They have less time for their children. Their child care arrangements are more complicated and more likely to fall apart." Bev tells of parents who pick their child up from childcare at 6:00 p.m. and rush to drop them at grandma's so they can get to their second job. With less time and less disposable income, fun times with children disappear and parents feel guilty. "They're barely maintaining their lifestyle as it is," Bev said, "and the fear is that things are going to get worse.

"I tell them to take one day at a time, to make that day more manageable. Sometimes just by listening to these parents, understanding what they go through, I can see them start to relax." They know she is not judging them, simply trying to help. "So many people have difficult lives," Bev said. "We all need to be heard, to know someone cares."

## MERRILL PALMER SKILLMAN INSTITUTE ALUMNI *Breakfast*



Alumni from Detroit and beyond gathered in the Freer House on February 11 for the first official reunion of students who attended Merrill Palmer Institute. For 50 years, students from other universities (and countries) were competitively selected to take classes at Merrill Palmer, for a term of a few weeks to a year. Though their stay at MP might have been short, their memories of the organization's excellence and

innovation remain strong. "This school was life changing," Betsy McGeorge (class of 1953) said. "One of the best in the world." The alums met MPSI's deputy director, Dr. John Hannigan, and shared breakfast with Director Dr. Peter Lichtenberg, who brought them up-to-date on current faculty research and new programs. Many of the women browsed the photo albums charting MP's nursery school, parent education, and home economics classes from the 1920s. Others toured the Early Childhood Center and the Freer House. Alums recalled attending classes in the Hoobler Room, eating lunch in a large basement cafeteria (now gone), and living in a student dorm on the third floor now occupied by student offices. They all talked about Tea Time at 3:00 each afternoon, a chance to socialize with peers and discuss issues with faculty. (The upcoming June 24 alumni event is a re-creation of that tea.) Nearly all of the alums volunteered their services to help at the Early Childhood Center, either by read-

ing to the children, chaperoning field trips, or sprucing up the recess courtyard gardens. "I'm so glad we finally organized a get-together," Phebe Goldstein (class of 1951-52) said with a smile. "The friends I made at MP are some of my most treasured memories."



## Uncovering Why Teens Take Risks

Stella Resko, Ph.D., is the newest faculty member to join Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute. Recruited last August, Dr. Resko's expertise fits well with MPSI's mission and research interests. "We are particularly pleased to have Dr. Resko join our staff," Director Dr. Peter Lichtenberg said. "She already has an impressive program of research in teen violence and high-risk behaviors." These interests complement the work of MPSI faculty member Valerie Simon, Ph.D., who studies intimate teen relationships and partner violence.

Dr. Resko's research interests easily incorporate social work and child and family development. She has studied youth violence, drug and alcohol use among adolescents, sexual risk-taking, and the relationship between women's economic insecurity and partner violence. She is an expert in advanced quantitative methods, community-based intervention and prevention, and motivational interviewing. Her post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan Addiction Research Center was fully funded by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. "I'm looking at teen levels of drinking and violence now," she said, "analyzing transcripts from structured therapy interviews."

The transcripts come from a motivational interview that first asks teens about goals and values then discusses drinking and violence. The interviewer compares the client's behavior to that of other teens – in a non-confrontational way – and asks how these behaviors fit into their previously stated goals. This interviewing approach builds internal motivation for behavior change, which is more long-lasting than enforcing adherence to values from the outside. Dr. Resko analyzes transcripts of these sessions to see how teens use and justify violence.



Felecia Berry (lt), a Detroit social worker and WSU alum, meets with Dr. Resko (center) and Dr. Valerie Simon (rt) to discuss her work with women and teen girls who have been abused and traumatized.

One result published in *Academic Emergency Medicine* showed that although gun carrying was more frequent among males, females were as likely to carry a knife or pull a weapon. She currently is analyzing the transcripts to better understand the context of alcohol use among female adolescents.

"The transitions in adolescents are core determinants of one's adult life," said Dr. Lichtenberg. "Through faculty members such as Drs. Resko and Simon, MPSI stays committed to better understanding the competencies and challenges that teens face."

The economics of violent behavior has also been a fundamental research interest. "It started as my dissertation and transformed into a book published in February," Dr. Resko said. *Intimate Partner Violence and Women's Economic Insecurities* uncovered interesting correlations and reversed previously held beliefs. Her results support the notion that improving women's economic position can reduce intimate partner violence. "She gains more power in the relationship and has more alternatives, which

could include leaving the relationship. If a woman chooses to stay, she also is better positioned to advocate for herself to make the violence stop," Dr. Resko explained. Her research did *not* support the conventional wisdom that a male partner will become less secure – and more violent – as his partner earns more money.

One benefit of a joint appointment is a reduced teaching load, but Dr. Resko genuinely enjoyed the undergraduate class she taught last semester through the School of Social Work. Statistics for undergrads is not normally a crowd favorite, but she embraced the challenge. "I really liked the students," she explained. "They were a talkative group and had tons of questions." For many, this was not their first attempt to pass a statistics class. "It was not an easy course for them," Dr. Resko said sympathetically. "But most of them did very well. I was able to get them excited about statistics and research – just like I am."

## AWARDS &amp; HONORS



DR. SHAWNA LEE

**Shawna Lee, Ph.D.**, received a two-year, \$40,000 Junior Faculty Grant in Social and Behavioral Sciences from WSU for her work on "Assessing the Feasibility of a Technology-Based Intervention Platform to Address Paternal Risk for Physical Child Maltreatment." Dr. Lee also co-authored, "Mothers' spanking of 3-year-old children and subsequent risk of children's aggressive behavior," in the May issue of *Pediatrics*. The article received widespread media coverage in *Time Magazine*, *Reuters Health*, ABC and CBS radio news, and WebMD among others.

Faculty member **Stella Resko, Ph.D.** (jointly appointed with the School of Social Work this year) received two travel awards from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to attend substance abuse conferences in Albuquerque, NM and Scottsdale, AZ.

**Lisa Ficker** won the 2010 Norine G. Johnson Clinical Psychology Scholarship given to a Wayne State University graduate student for excellence in scholarship, outstanding practicum training, and a commitment to clinical service.

MPSI won funding from WSU's Division of Research to support the appointment of one post-doctoral fellow for one to two years beginning in 2010, to be chosen by May 1.

**Sarah Brown**, a student assistant at the Early Childhood Center, received the Kurt G. and Martha Schmidt Endowed Memorial Scholarship for \$3,000 and the *Pi Lambda Theta* Helen J. Detmer Scholarship for \$500. Sarah is currently studying elementary education at WSU with a minor in early childhood education.

**Dr. Jessica Beatty's** abstract, "Greater Prevalence of Marijuana Use Than Tobacco Use Among Low-Income Pregnant Women in Detroit," was selected from 54 submissions for oral presentation at WSU's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience's annual research day on April 30.

Several students involved in MPSI's undergraduate training program received honors recently. **Tara Hixson** won 2nd place at the annual Rodney Clark *Psi Chi* Poster Day in April. The poster was based on longitudinal data on the development of preterm infants (collected by faculty advisor **Marjorie Beeghly, Ph.D.**) and titled, "Early language skills of toddlers born very preterm at 14 months: Role of preterm birth, SES, and maternal child-directed language." The poster's other authors are **Tina Dykehouse**, former MPSI graduate trainee **Sue Delonis**, and future MPSI undergraduate trainee **Hasti Ashtiani**.

**Dr. Beeghly** also co-authored, "Neurodevelopmental Outcomes of Fetuses Referred for Ventriculomegaly," to be published in *Ultrasound in Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

**Giant Step Teen Conference** received \$3,500 to expand recruitment of high school students from underrepresented ethnic groups. The Junior League of Detroit awarded the one-year grant in March through its Community Assistance Program, which supports voluntarism and the health of Wayne County children.



AMY LOREE

MPSI pre-doctoral student **Amy Loree** co-authored "Spouse Beliefs about Partner Chronic Pain," that appeared in the 2009 *Journal of Pain*, (vol. 10).



Jessica Lucero in her Freer House office

## Where We Live Can Guide Who We Become

"It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood," sings Fred Rodgers on children's television show *Mister Rodgers' Neighborhood*, where children play safely in backyards, neighbors chat on the sidewalk, and the rhythms of each day tick by with a calming familiarity. But what makes *real* neighborhoods beautiful? Is there a perfect neighborhood, or does the beauty lie in the fit between family and community? Could we one day match families with the neighborhoods most likely to support, nurture and protect them?

Jessica Lucero, M.S.W., recently joined the Wayne State University neighborhood from her home state of Wyoming to work toward her doctorate with the help of faculty at the School of Social Work and the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute. She's currently assisting Drs. Anna Santiago and George Galster with their research on Denver Public Housing to sort out the effects of neighborhood influences such as poverty, crime, community resources and violence on minority children. "Where a person lives is going to influence what they do and especially the development and behavior of children," Jessica said.

These studies are likely to impact national housing policy. "Remember the concentrated urban high-rise projects of a few decades ago?" Jessica asked. "We don't want to repeat the mistakes of creating those types of

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The Freer House is home to MPSI faculty, administrative offices and meeting rooms.

## CHARLES LANG FREER HOUSE

- by William Colburn, Historic Preservation Specialist and FOFH Board Member

Public education programs, fund-raisers and restoration projects kept the Friends of the Freer House (FOFH) busy this past season. In February, the Scarab Club String Quartet recreated the first concert held in Washington, D.C.'s Freer Gallery of Art. Nearly 100 people attended this chamber music benefit concert in the Freer House Exhibition Gallery (also known as the Hoobler Room) to mark the 86th anniversary of the original 1924 concert.

In March, another capacity crowd attended a lecture by Friends Board President Dr. Thomas W. Brunk (above) on "Charles Lang Freer and Detroit's Pewabic Pottery." Terese Ireland, executive director of co-sponsor Pewabic Pottery, welcomed the audience.

The Midwest Regional Conservation Guild, a professional network of art conservators, visited the Freer House in March for a

special tour and reception as part of their annual conference sponsored by the Detroit Institute of Arts. Cathy Selvius DeRoo, of the DIA Conservation Department, presented her research and analysis of the original decorative paint surfaces of the Freer House.

The Freer House is getting a new roof this spring thanks to Wayne State University's allocation of \$750,000 for a new cedar shake roof to replace the badly deteriorated existing roof. The project is being overseen by WSU architect Steve Pecic with help from the FOFH. The project includes tuck pointing repair and cleaning of the house's original fieldstone facade.

For information on membership in the Friends of the Freer House or to join the mailing list for future lectures and events, contact Rose Foster at 313-872-1790 or email [rmfoster@wayne.edu](mailto:rmfoster@wayne.edu)



Dr. David Weinberg stands aside the giclee reproduction he donated to the Freer House. Marilyn Tuchow dedicated a giclee reproduction to her husband Gerald in honor of his birthday. Doug Haller, Harriet Berg and Anita Plous, enjoy the dedication of the reproduction donated by Harriet.

## Teen Risk CONT.

neighborhoods where crime and violence become the norm." Research may point to the benefits of decentralized housing for low income residents or a voucher system with accompanying real estate-like services. "For neighborhoods to exert an overall positive effect, they can't exceed a threshold of 15% of its residents living below the poverty level. But other things might influence the impact of neighborhoods, such as social support and networks of friends and family," Jessica said. "There is much we don't know."

In addition to neighborhood effects, Jessica researches the relationship between economic status and partner violence. Previous research suggested that a drop in income could precipitate an increase in partner violence. Jessica's research, captured in a poster that won First Prize in a recent

Wayne State University graduate exhibition, found that financial strain rather than simply income was a better predictor of violence. "It wasn't a factor of how much people made," she said, "as much as whether they could pay their bills. A drop in income, an unexpected expense, any strain on the finances might cause stress that would lead to increased violence. So training in financial literacy might be a big help in these situations."

The chance to work on varied research projects across disciplines drew Jessica to the Wayne State program. A graduate student in the School of Social Work, Jessica is also a pre-doctoral trainee at MPSI and receives mentoring guidance from faculty in both areas. "I came here from Wyoming," she explained. "I'm a first-generation college student, so there was a lot I didn't know about how academia works and how to navigate the system. At MPSI, I've received extra

support, wonderful office space, experts to consult with and a clear, built-in goal system." She values the student-to-faculty and student-to-student encounters. "I've been to so many interesting presentations and brown bags with quality lecturers and time to interact. I am completely impressed with the program."

Graduate studies are going so well that Jessica's dream is to become a professor of social work at a research university, finding ways to empower vulnerable populations. "The mission and values of social work fit my personal and professional life," she said. "I want to offer my research expertise to improve programs and policy analysis." She is adamant that whatever research she conducts, it must have real-world value. "I don't want it to stop at a journal article. I want to get it out on the street." No doubt that street will be in a neighborhood that enhances the lives of its residents.





## Sponsor a Student to Attend 2010 Giant Step Teen Conference



For 26 years, the Giant Step Teen Conference has brought together young teens from across southeastern Michigan to teach them about unity. This free one-day conference improves attitudes and changes lives by joining students who may look different and sound different but who share common experiences, issues and expectations.

Hosted by MPSI at Wayne State University, Giant Step is research-based and proven to improve attitudes about cultural and ethnic differences, self-responsibility, communities and families.

In 2008, 223 students from 48 different schools attended Giant Step. Last year, 274 students from 51 different schools attended. Our goal for 2010 is to recruit 300 students from 60 different schools. Your generosity can help us reach that goal.

For a donation of \$50, you can sponsor one high school student to attend this year's Giant Step Teen Conference. Your donation helps us with promotion, mailings, venue costs, materials and lunch for that student. For \$500, 10 local teens will get the chance to experience the magic of Giant Step for themselves.

Please find the resources to help us expose the next generation of Michigan's children to a culture of inclusion and social harmony. By helping teens recognize their similarities, you make a difference that can last a lifetime.



### CHECK APPROPRIATE BOXES

- \$50 each to sponsor a student for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ students
- Please include my name on the Honor Roll of student sponsors.
- Other amount \$\_\_\_\_\_

Your donation is tax deductible if listed as an itemized deduction on your federal tax return. The state of Michigan also allows a state income tax credit for Michigan residents and corporations.

## GIANT STEP TEEN CONFERENCE SPONSOR A STUDENT DONATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Full Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Make CHECK payable to:** WSU – MPSI Giant Step Teen Conference

Check # \_\_\_\_\_

**CREDIT:**  Visa  Mastercard Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Sec. Code \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL TO:** Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute  
Attn: Trudy Shiemke  
71 E. East Ferry Ave.  
Detroit MI, 48202

MERRILL PALMER  
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for Child & Family Development



## SAVE THE DATE

### **Attention Parents of Children 2 1/2 to 5 Years of Age**

The College of Education Early Childhood Center and the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute Early Childhood Centers are each hosting an open house. Please join us to take a tour, meet the staff, and learn about our curriculum.

### **OPEN HOUSE, TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2010, 4:00-7:00PM**

College of Education, Early Childhood Center, 4500 Cass Ave., Suite 1, Detroit, MI 48201  
(313) 577-1686 or pfrierson@wayne.edu

### **OPEN HOUSE, THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2010, 4:00 -7:00pm**

Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute, Early Childhood Center, 87 E. Ferry, Detroit, MI 48202  
(313) 873-0724 or dk8048@wayne.edu

### **Merrill Palmer Alumni Tea with Dr. Kerry Moustakas**

#### **THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 4:00-6:00 PM, FREER HOUSE DINING ROOM**

Please attend this special Alumni Reunion held in the classic tradition of the early years of the Merrill Palmer Institute. Dr. Kerry Moustakas, president of the Michigan School of Professional Psychology will discuss the outstanding contributions made to Merrill Palmer by her father and professor Dr. Clark Moustakas. Dr. Clark Moustakas, now semi-retired, is one of the world's leading experts on humanistic and clinical psychology. His history and successes are very much intertwined with MPI. Join us for a fascinating afternoon of high tea, long traditions, and deep camaraderie. Convenient, safe parking provided. Please RSVP to Cheryl Deep at 313-577-2297, ext. 285, or cheryldeep@wayne.edu by June 10.

### **MPSI Offers Detroit Public Schools a Unique Perspective on Childhood Development**



Dozens of Detroit Public School preschool paraprofessionals tour MPSI's Early Childhood Center as part of an extensive 2010 training program to enable them to meet Michigan Department of Education requirements. Dr. Anna Miller, executive director of both ECC sites, conducted the training with the help of two colleagues. All 200 DPS preschool paraprofessionals will be trained by the Wayne State team. Above paraprofessionals observe MPSI-ECC classroom behind 2-way mirror from observation deck.