



Family Link

FALL 2014

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Building the Science of Kindness

As students and educators across southern Arizona went back to school this fall, the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth and Families partnered with the Ben's Bells Project to host the third annual Building the Science of Kindness conference. This annual conference brings together teachers, school administrators, and school staff across the state implementing Kind Campus, Ben's Bells Project's signature kindness education school program. The Frances McClelland Institute aims to invite nationally renowned scholars to engage in dialogue with educators about the benefits of school-based kindness education.

This year's conference was a two-day event featuring four prominent researchers from the fields of medicine, neuroscience, clinical psychology and social psychology. Some featured speakers included University of Arizona professors Charles Raison, MD, Thaddeus Pace, PhD, and Matthias Mehl, Ph.D. Michele Walsh, Ph.D., from the McClelland Institute, and Deanna Kaplan, MA, unveiled preliminary findings of ongoing efforts to evaluate the Ben's Bells Project's programming. The evaluation team, led by Dr. Walsh, has been working with the Ben's Bells Project for four years.

Jeanette Maré, Executive Director of Ben's Bells Project, had this to say about working with McClelland Institute faculty and staff: "Our partnership with Michele's team at the University of Arizona is crucial to the growth and success of Ben's Bells Project's Kind Campus program. Together, we are working toward a better understanding of what it means to be a Kind Campus, what makes these programs thrive in schools, and how we can best support schools in this important work. We have some exciting potential projects in the pipeline that we hope will enable us to provide evidence to schools and other stakeholders that the energy invested in becoming a Kind Campus can have powerful, measurable impacts for students and school communities."

First Things First Early Childhood Summit 2014

The annual First Things First (FTF) Early Childhood Summit was held August 18-19, 2014, at the Phoenix Convention Center with approximately 1,500 participants. FTF created this Summit as a way to provide professional development for early childhood educators and networking opportunities.

Ann Mastergeorge, an FTF Pima North Council member, participated in a cross regional FTF Council meeting to discuss ways to collaborate and disseminate information about intervention programs. Michele Walsh also attended the Summit

and participated in a systems building presentation focused on community service coordination.



More than 75 Summit breakout sessions were included in the program this year, including sessions on children's health, cultural responsiveness, data-driven decision making, early learning, family support, leadership development, systems building, and tribal communities.



From the Director

It's always exciting to welcome students back to campus for a new academic year. We have a number of new projects and people joining the Institute. First, I am pleased to announce that Dr. Ann Mastergeorge has been appointed the Assistant Director of the Institute. Dr. Mastergeorge is an Associate Professor and Cooperative Extension Specialist. She is an expert on early childhood developmental delays and autism and has led our early childhood initiative for several years. Dr. Mastergeorge will provide leadership and coordination for The Janet and Barry Lang Child and Family Observation Laboratory, institute events, and our communications and publications.



In this issue of Family Link we introduce one of our new postdoctoral scholars and, similar to past issues, highlight

the many successes of our graduate students. We also share a number of new research projects that aim to understand factors that shape child, youth, and family health, including innovative studies of food security for rural families, and the role of families in adapting to climate change.

Finally, this year we celebrate 100 years of Cooperative Extension. We are proud of our impact on children, youth, and families through our Cooperative Extension partnerships. For example, the ASPIRE project reaches hundreds of children in Maricopa County through research-based outreach and training.

Thanks as always for your interest and support of our work.

Very best regards,

Stephen T. Russell

Institute Researchers Examine Nutrition and Food Security in Rural Arizona



Dr. Michele Walsh and her team recently received funding to examine the factors influencing participation in nutrition assistance programs from Purdue University's Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Center for Targeted Studies,

funded by the USDA Economic Research Service. Dr. Walsh noted, "Our goal is to identify types of rural communities that under-utilize SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and to use this information to help policy-makers better target outreach programs to ensure that benefits reach those rural communities with the greatest need."

ASPIRE Project Offers Support to After School and Youth Programs

The After School Program Innovation, Reflection and Education (ASPIRE) Project offers professional development, program assessment and coaching to improve after school and youth program quality and increase skill development of professionals working with youth ages 9-18. ASPIRE is currently offered in Maricopa County and serves 32 after school and youth programs. Programs participating in ASPIRE receive free professional development resources, one-on-one coaching, and online program assessment to learn about their strengths and areas for improvement. ASPIRE hosts a quarterly Professional Learning Community focused on building a professional network to connect individuals working in after school and youth programs. To learn more about ASPIRE, visit aspire.arizona.edu or call 520-621-0744.

The Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences developed the Master Coaches assess program, where staff



ASPIRE professional development workshop

interact with youth using the Youth Development Observational Tool (YDOT). Program managers and coaches collaborate on the design and implementation of improvement plans to enhance staff skill development and encourage positive youth development best practices.

Dr. Jessica Fish

Postdoctoral Research Fellow Joins Institute with NSF Funding



Dr. Jessica Fish, who recently joined the Institute from Florida State University and their Department of Family and Child Sciences, has begun research funded by the National Science Foundation and working with Dr. Stephen Russell. Her research is focusing on understanding

how interpersonal relationships (peer and parental relationships) and developmental contexts (family, school, and community environments) influence disparities among LGBTQ youth and young adults.

Funding from this two-year grant will afford her the opportunity to investigate these modifiable factors that put LGBTQ youth and young adults at risk for alcohol use, alcohol use disorders, and consequences related to alcohol use. Dr. Fish will be using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to examine these factors. “Our overall goal is to disseminate and apply these findings in ways that will help inform prevention and intervention strategies aimed at reducing LGBTQ youth and young adult alcohol use,” Dr. Fish explained.

Katie Paschall

Doctoral Student Receives Doris Duke Fellowship



Katie Paschall is a fourth year doctoral student in Family Studies and Human Development. Paschall is interested in early development and family processes in the context of socioeconomic disadvantage. The focus of her recent work has been on both the development and

consequences of parent-child relationship quality in early childhood. Additionally, she has examined the effectiveness of several community-based parenting programs in the promotion of positive parenting, as well as the effectiveness of Early Head Start on a national scale. Katie Paschall has collaborated with Dr. Ann Masterngeorge, Dr. Melissa

Barnett, and graduate students Henry Gonzalez, Jennifer Mortensen and Ashley Dixon on presentations and manuscripts in preparation. Most recently, Paschall published on the nature of bidirectionality (how parents and children co-create relationships) in parent-infant relationships.

Paschall’s dissertation research is supported by the Doris Duke Fellowship for the Promotion of Child Well-Being at the University of Chicago; the focus of this project is on identifying trajectories of parenting styles within the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project, and linking those trajectories to proximal and distal risk factors, child self-regulation and child maltreatment.

Ryan Watson

Graduate Student Attends International Summer School in Adolescent Development



Ryan Watson, a Family Studies and Human Development Ph.D. student funded by the Jacob’s Foundation, attended the annual International Summer School in Adolescent Development, sponsored by the Society of Research on Adolescence

and the European Association for Research on Adolescence. The summer school was held in Utrecht, Netherlands June 2-6, 2014. Only 26 young scholars from around the world were selected.

Watson works with large nationally representative datasets to explore protective factors and healthy development for sexual minority youth in both the United States and Norway. At the summer school, Watson was exposed to innovative and creative research, as well as workshops focusing on

professional skills. The summer school gave students enthusiasm to search for scientific guidance outside of the borders of their countries and the walls of their universities. For example he was exposed to topics broad issues of development such as resiliency, culture and ethnicity, dating, emerging adulthood, and methodological advances in the study of adolescents.

Watson forged connections with junior and senior scholars; he has collaborated with some of the junior scholars and will present with many of them at the biannual conferences of the European Association for Research on Adolescence in Izmir, Turkey and the Society for Research in Child Development in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was also able to present his dissertation to a team of scholars—both junior and senior—to share ideas and receive feedback that strengthened his cross-cultural project.

Institute Researchers Examine Adaptation to Climate Change and Family Stress

McClelland Institute researchers received funding from The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean's Research Advisory Committee's Research Innovation Challenge, which aimed to encourage new, interdisciplinary collaborations. The investigators are Drs. Melissa Barnett and Melissa Curran (Family Studies and Human Development), Sabrina Helm (Retailing and Consumer Sciences), and Zeliann Craig (School of Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences).



The goal of the pilot study is to apply a whole-family approach to address climate change adaptation-related stress and coping (CCARSC) by examining how exposure to messages about climate change (fear versus hope) influences (a) stress responses in parents, (b) the quality of filmed family interactions, and (c) short-term changes in climate change adaptive behaviors. Families will visit the Lang Lab in the McClelland Institute for assessments. The findings will inform future studies aimed at developing messages about CCARSC to inform families and policymakers how to foster climate change adaptation while improving family well-being and health.

Cooperative Extension Celebrates 100 years!



Institute faculty have participated in several statewide celebrations – the final celebration will be on Saturday, October 4, at the Phoenix Zoo, Neely Center.

Norton School and Institute Cooperative Extension programs include the Strengthening Families Program in Santa Cruz and Pinal Counties. That program has infused more than \$120,000 into local communities, including 20 part-time staff, and has reached more than 100 children and 150 parents in both counties. Evaluation results show that the parenting education has led to improvement in parenting and child behaviors, and lower parent stress, both of which are strongly linked to a child's later achievement & earnings.

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The Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families is housed in The John and Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona. The Institute serves as a catalyst for cross-disciplinary research dealing with children, youth, and families.