



# Family Link

WINTER 2012

<http://McClellandInstitute.arizona.edu>

## Undergraduates Translate Research into Community Benefit

The current group of undergraduates to join McClelland's Moving Research into Practice (MRP) includes 14 students majoring in family studies and psychology. To be a member, undergraduates must be nominated by faculty.

Depression in college students is the topic group members selected. They began with a needs assessment and asked professors

"We want to know how we can fit agency programs together with the needs expressed by the students," says MRP President Megan Curry, a junior from Prescott, Arizona. "We don't need to create a program if it already exists."

Shannon Corkery, MS, a graduate student advisor to the group, notes that to be competitive for a grant, researchers often must be collaborative and interdisciplinary,



### *Moving Research into Practice Fall 2011 Members*

*Top row (from left to right): Matt Hixson, Taylor Schmidt, Sean Cahill, Holly Mounger, Angela Palomer, Casey Heinsch, Andrea Nell.*

*Bottom row: Megan Curry, Alicia Ernsky, Victoria Lopez, Jessica Calcagni, Shanelle Washington, Ebtisam El-sharkawy.*

campus-wide to allow students to take a few minutes at the beginning of classes to complete a questionnaire. More than 2,000 students participated.

Because of their interest in depression in college students, MRP is collaborating on a campus-wide grant to prevent suicide, led by the UA's Campus Health Service, and funded for three years by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). An important part of the grant is identifying underlying symptoms or risk factors of potential suicidal behaviors and teaching people from across the campus and community how to intervene appropriately.

so MRP students are not only engaging in research and community collaboration to prevent suicide at the university and in Tucson; they are learning what it takes to garner and be part of a competitive grant.

"UA is a research university, but that doesn't mean we overlook how our research moves from the lab to the community. This group helps undergraduates see the connections," says graduate student Joel Muraco, another advisor to MRP.

Another advantage is a social one. "We're already are a very tight-knit group. It's a nice experience to have this small group experience in such a large university," says Megan.



## From the Director

Happy New Year!

In this issue of Family Link we highlight a number of new projects in the Frances McClelland Institute. We're studying suicide among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth; youth bullying in Tucson; and early detection of autism.

I'm especially pleased to tell you more about our student group: Moving Research into Practice, or "MRP". We have a dynamic group of students who have been gaining research experience with faculty and staff in the Institute – and who are applying what they've learned to improve the campus and community.

Last year, MRP identified depression among college students as their focal point. It turned out to be a perfect fit for a



partnership with Campus Health on a new grant to prevent suicide on campus. I'm so excited about the project – it is a great opportunity for the students to learn about how research matters – and to make a real difference here on campus and in Tucson.

MRP is an example of the activities that donors help support. Even a small gift goes a long way to help the students in MRP maintain a small budget for their work. If you've been a donor, we so appreciate your support. If you are interested, please contact me and I'd love to tell you more.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen T. Russell".

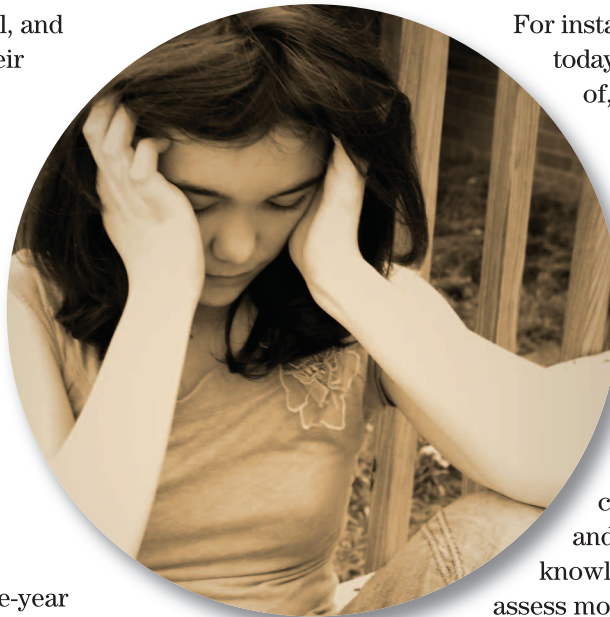
Stephen T. Russell, Ph.D., Director  
Professor, Fitch Nesbitt Endowed Chair

## Why is Suicide Risk in LGBT Youth so High?

Study after study finds higher rates of suicidal behavior among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth than their heterosexual peers. A \$2.8 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health is helping researchers find out why.

Arnold Grossman, a professor in the Department of Applied Psychology at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development is the project's principal investigator. McClelland Director Stephen Russell, Ph.D., is a co-investigator.

Their research follows, over a three-year period, more than 1,000 LGBT youth aged 15 to 21 in three metropolitan areas in the United States. Researchers in each area will work with community based organizations, including Wingspan's Eon youth program in Tucson.



"Other research has pointed to potential causes. For instance, compared to prior generations, today's LGBT youth are increasingly aware of, identifying and disclosing their sexual and gender identities earlier in life. As a result, they are more likely to be exposed to suicidal risk factors—such as bullying, harassment, marginalization, and victimization by family members and peers," said Grossman.

"Our emphasis compares LGBT youth who do and do not experience any suicidal behaviors, which can include suicidal thoughts, threats, and even attempts," said Russell. "The knowledge we generate will allow us to assess more accurately LGBT youth at risk for suicidal behaviors, identify those risk factors that can be diminished at various developmental stages we hope to create preventive messaging and interventions that simultaneously increase protective factors and reduce risk factors."

## AUTISM: Early Intervention Key *Excerpted from a UAnews story by Jeff Harrison*



For reasons still being debated—and there are a lot of them—the number of children with autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, has grown sharply in recent years. Autism, in its various forms, robs children of language, social skills or both.

And while it is a lifelong disability for those who have ASD, as its name suggests, the effects vary

from barely noticeable to a form that essentially closes off the world to those affected.

### Patience. Patience. Patience.

Work to view my autism as a different ability rather than a disability.

Look past what you may see as limitations and see the gifts autism has given me.

It may be true that I'm not good at eye contact or conversation, but have you noticed that I don't lie, cheat at games, tattle on my classmates, or pass judgment on other people?

Also true that I probably won't be the next Michael Jordan. But with my attention to fine detail and capacity for extraordinary focus, I might be the next Einstein. Or Mozart. Or Van Gogh. They had autism too.

*Excerpted from "Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew" by Ellen Notohm (2005)*

Ann Mastergeorge, a developmental psychologist in the Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences, is encouraging parents of children with autism to actively do something about it, including engaging their children in developmentally appropriate activities. Mastergeorge also leads the Early Childhood Typical and Atypical Development initiative for the McClelland Institute.

Mastergeorge's research focus on autism is about alerting parents to its early signs. She is studying the effects of a

### First 100 Days Kit

Available online: A tool kit to assist families in getting the critical information they need in the first 100 days after an autism diagnosis. [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)

16-week program called "parent-mediated intervention" and whether it can make a difference. Early indications show that many children improve significantly when parents facilitate their child's engagement in activities.

Some hallmarks of autism appear in children as young as 12 months: not responding to their names, not pointing or showing or sharing objects. "Those are huge red flags," Mastergeorge said. "Early intervention is key to mitigating those factors that you might see in autism."

"If you watch kids in their environment, they're always pointing things out to people and then looking back at them to see whether or not they get feedback, either verbal or nonverbal. Physicians really have an opportunity to refer very, very, early," Mastergeorge said.

"Even if there isn't a concern about developmental disability, but there is a concern about a delay, it is much better to err on the side of providing early intervention for somebody who is at risk, rather than waiting." That is what is important for people to understand. If we have early detection in place, the other important step is that we have early intervention services that are provided to families, that are evidence-based, and include the families in the intervention," she said.

---

### Pamela Turbeville Speakers Series: Early Childhood Experts to Present

*Location: McClelland Park, Room 105, 650 North Park Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85721*

#### Sally Ozonoff, Ph.D., UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute

*"First Signs of Autism: Rethinking Onset"*

Friday, Jan. 27, 2012 • 3:00 pm-4:30 pm

#### Catherine Ayoub, R.N., Ed.D., Harvard Medical School

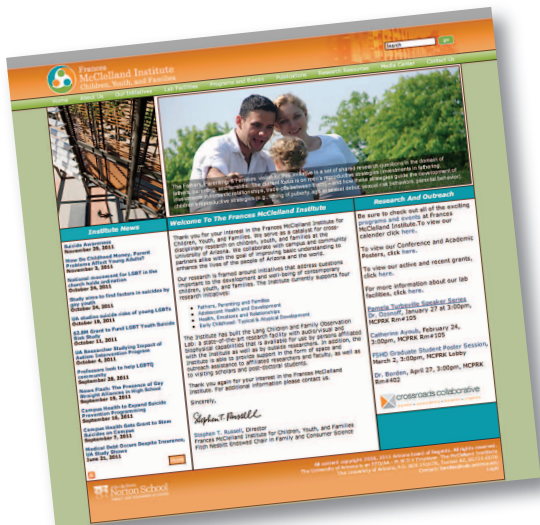
*"Mechanisms of Early Head Start Programming on Parent and Family Characteristics, Parent-child Interaction, and Child Outcomes"*

Friday, Feb. 24, 2012 • 3:00 pm-4:30 pm

---



## Check out our website!



<http://mclellandinstitute.arizona.edu/home>

## Join Us In Congratulating...

**Stephen T. Russell**

*2011 CALS Faculty Research Award*

**Joel Muraco**

*CALS Outstanding GTA Award (M.A.)*

*Meritorious Graduate Teaching Award (M.A.)*

**Deborah Casper**

*Meritorious Graduate Teaching Award (Ph.D.)*

**Ashley Randall**

*Commencement Centennial Achievement*

*Graduate Student Award (Ph.D.)*

**Shannon Corkery**

*Commencement Centennial Achievement*

*Graduate Student Award (M.A.)*

## In the next issue...

- Dr. Ann Mastergeorge receives funding to understand parent-child resilience and risk factors.
- Dr. Stephen T. Russell receives funding to study family economics and alcohol abuse.
- Crossroads Collaborative: Community Partner Feature

## Upcoming colloquium speakers and events...

- Sally Ozonoff, January 27, 2012
- Catherine Ayoub, February 24, 2012
- FSHD Graduate Students: SRA Preview, March 2, 2012
- MaxQDA Workshop, April 6, 2012
- Lynne Borden, April 27, 2012

### CONTACT US:

Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families  
The University of Arizona  
P.O. Box 210078  
Tucson, AZ 85721-0078  
Phone: 520.621.8067  
Fax: 520.621.4979  
E-mail: [families@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:families@ag.arizona.edu)  
Website: [McClellandInstitute.arizona.edu](http://McClellandInstitute.arizona.edu)



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.



P.O. Box 210078 • Tucson, AZ 85721-0078

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
TUCSON ARIZONA  
PERMIT NO. 190