

FAMILY FORUM



Family Forum is the newsletter of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations, a State Affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations

Fall 2005

MCFR ANNUAL CONFERENCE WILL FOCUS ON FAMILY CAREGIVING

Sara Lassig, Conference Chair

A middle-aged couple tries to balance caring for their young children, while also caring for aging parents. A husband learns new skills in order to keep his Alzheimer's disease-afflicted wife at home with him. New parents realize the additional challenges they will face in raising their new baby who has been diagnosed with a life-long disability. A mother tries to adjust to role changes within her family as she moves into a new stage of her chronic illness. A family comes together to make decisions surrounding the impending death of a loved one.

The above illustrations offer just a glimpse into the realm of family caregiving, a facet of family life which families of all types will likely face at some point. While the situations may differ, family caregiving occurs across families of all backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and family forms.

Family professionals across the disciplines will confront family caregiving not only at the professional level, but likely at the personal level as well. With rising health care and long term care costs, increasing incidence of illnesses such as dementia, cancer, and heart disease, and an increasing life expectancy, family caregiving will become an even more important area of focus for family professionals.

According to the National Family Caregiving Association (2005), family caregiving is "the act of assisting someone you care about, who is chronically ill or disabled and unable to care for him/herself." The numbers of those involved in family caregiving are increasing annually. Currently, more than 50 million people, provide care for a chronically ill, disabled or aged family member or friend during any given year. Caregivers providing care for a family member over the age of 50 often underestimate the length of time they will spend as caregivers - only 46% expected to be caregivers longer than two years. In reality, the average length of time spent on caregiving was about eight years, with approximately one third of respondents providing care for 10 years or more (Met Life Mature Market Institute Study, 1999). The estimates on the value of the services that family caregivers provide "for free" are between 198 billion and 257 billion dollars annually, assuming the family caregivers would be replaced with paid caregivers.

Clearly, family caregiving is an issue that has great implications for family professionals. MCFR's fall conference will focus on bringing to light these implications, while offering perspectives and tools for helping families through their individual family caregiving journeys.



Dr. Wayne Caron

Dr. Wayne Caron, Director of the Family Caregiving Center and Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota, will begin the day by

sharing his expertise and experiences in the area of Family Caregiving. He will frame the issues during his keynote presentation, "Caregiving: The Family Journey."

Breakout session offerings include presentations focusing on end-of-life decision making and family involvement, chronic illness and the family, parenting children with special needs, and caring for the caregiver. In addition, a panel of individuals who have experienced a variety of real-life family caregiving situations will offer their lived experiences.

In addition, Jean Illsley Clarke, a long time parent educator and the author of several parenting books, will offer conference attendees special tools for helping families through the tender parts of their journeys. Ted Bowman, a trainer, educator, and consultant who specializes in change and transition, will offer a breakout session focusing on the "Grief of Multiple Losses" within family caregiving situations, while also closing the day with a presentation entitled "As a Family Ages: Honoring Developmental Differences."

We hope you will join us for this engaging day of learning and sharing as we explore various aspects of family caregiving.

MCFR ELECTIONS ISSUE

CANDIDATE INFORMATION AND BALLOT ENCLOSED

GO TO PAGE 3 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

PLEASE MAIL YOUR COMPLETED BALLOT TO MCFR BY NOVEMBER 15.

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President's Letter

Madge Alberts
MCFR 2005 President

My passion, personally and professionally, is supporting families and the people who work with them. Although this is a personal commitment, it is informed by my educational background and my professional experience. To that end, one of the things I do in my volunteer life is teaching pre-marriage education classes in my faith community. All couples who plan to be married in our congregation are required to take the classes.

I am a strong believer in strengthening marriages, and one of the best times to do this is before they begin. In these classes, we start with some pretty deep issues: What kind of a person am I bringing into this marriage? What expectations of marriage do I have, and are they realistic or unrealistic? What influence will my family of origin have on my own marriage relationship? What are my values and how will they play out in my marriage? After that, we cover practical things like communication, conflict resolution, handling finances and more.

Over the four years or so that I've been teaching the classes, several couples have made the decision not to get married. At first, I was upset about this, wondering if I had scared them off. But after considering it further, I realized this was a good thing. It was far better they decided now that their marriage wouldn't work, or that they weren't fully prepared for it, rather than realizing after they were married and potentially had children that their marriage was a mistake.

Once a marriage occurs, a couple needs all the help they can get to keep it healthy. Bill Doherty, a long-time MCFR member, has written a wonderful book called "Take Back Your Marriage." In it, he talks about how our consumer culture has had a fairly negative influence on the stability of marriage: If your marriage doesn't meet your expectations, throw it out and find a new one. He suggests that as communities, we all have a stake in keeping each others' marriages strong, but in the vast majority of cases, we are uncomfortable asking even friends how their marriage is going!

Almost all marriages go through significant transition times: the birth of children, children starting school, children entering adolescence, the empty nest, caring for aging parents, retirement of one or both spouses, and more. Marriages



Madge Alberts

tend to be more vulnerable during these times, and need extra support and education to help weather these times. But for the most part, we leave it up to individual couples to find that support. I think it is time that our faith communities, community education programs, medical clinics, mental health clinics, and perhaps family education programs offer educational opportunities to strengthen the relationships of couples in various kinds of transitions.

I'm very aware that marriage is a hot topic these days, and I want to close by making a couple of observations.

Supporting the need to strengthen marriage in no way devalues people who are unmarried, divorced or single, by choice or circumstance. What I'm addressing is WHEN there is a marriage, we need to support it.

Neither am I suggesting that anyone should be pushed into marriage, either by government programs or well-meaning people. To be successful, marriage must be entered into by people who are mature, and prepared for the commitment and responsibility it requires. When that does not happen, the likelihood that the marriage will end is much greater.

Not all marriages should stay together. There are certainly circumstances when marriages should end.

The legal institution of marriage is not an option for all people. There are rights and benefits assigned by society and government to married couples that are not currently available to couples in unmarried or same sex partnerships. Same sex couples who wish to enter into a long term commitment need the option of legal marriage in order to create the same kind of family stability their heterosexual counterparts have.

This whole issue of how we address marriage and other couple relationships in our culture is of great interest to me, and of critical importance to society. I invite your comments, either through this newsletter, or by e-mail. My e-mail address is provided in the column to the left.

Your ballot is enclosed in this newsletter. Please vote by mailing it back to MCFR by November 15.

PRESIDENT ELECT MINNELL TRALLE



Minnell is a Family Relations Specialist with University of Minnesota Extension Service and has worked as an Extension Educator for the past 30 years teaching youth development, leadership

development, family relationships and parent education. She was a member of the team that authored the Positive Parenting I & II and the Parents Forever curricula, served as the statewide coordinator of Parents Forever and trains professionals in both curriculums. She currently serves as an Area Program Leader for the Family Relationships Area of Expertise.

She has held membership in MCFR and served on the nominating committee and served as secretary. Minnell is also a member of the Minnesota Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences and served as president of that organization in 2004.

She has a Masters of Education Degree/Home Economics Education with coursework emphasis on family relationships. She earned her Masters and her Bachelor of Science degrees from the University of Minnesota.

Minnell is married and has two sons. She is an avid gardener, loves camping and traveling.

SECRETARY KRISTEN STUENKEL

I became a parent educator after many years of working in Washington, D.C. and Minneapolis, MN with women and teens who were homeless. I learned so much about life and the human experience which culminated with my co-directing Kulture Klub Collaborative, an arts program to connect artists with homeless teens. While I was busy establishing Kulture Klub as a non-profit, I also was enjoying parenting with my husband our two children, Linnaea and Gustav. My parenting was enhanced as a participant



in ECFE in Minneapolis and I decided to redirect my vocation toward parent education. I received my M.Ed. and license as a parent educator from the University of Minnesota and worked for 5 years with very diverse populations at the St. Paul ECFE and Minneapolis ECFE programs.

I am currently working as a parent educator with many different programs. I teach through the Wayzata ECFE program, St. Paul Title I Homeless Program, and the University of Minnesota's Department of Pediatrics. Working with parents from a wide spectrum of backgrounds keeps me ever-growing and intrigued. I never leave home without my knitting and I am regenerated by spending time with my family, doing a variety of fiber arts, gardening, and chipping away at the stacks of books found in nearly every room of our house!

AT LARGE MEMBERS

DAVID W. BRUESHOFF, MDiv, MS, MTh EDD ABD CFLE



Dave has been working with individuals and families for well over twenty-five years. He holds advanced degrees in Counseling, Psychology and Theology. Currently, Dave is a faculty member in the

Department of Child and Family Studies, Concordia University-St. Paul.

Dave is also involved with training and development to corporations around the United States, specifically addressing issues of work and family navigation, managing stress, overcoming burnout, and dealing with change. David recently retired from the United States Army Reserve where he specialized in combat stress management, family support, mobilization and its impact on families.

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TAMMY DUNRUD

Tammy is the Assistant Coordinator with the Forest Lake Family Center. Previously, she was a Coordinator, Program for Decision Cases, University of Minnesota.

She has been a member for a number of years, and is currently serving as the Secretary of the MCFR Board.

Tammy is committed to supporting the competence of all parents and caregivers to provide the best possible environment for healthy growth and development of children.

JOANNE KELLEY

Joanne spent her entire career working in the early childhood field. She recently retired from the Forest Lake Area school district where she coordinated the Forest Lake Family Center program and taught classes since 1984. Previously she worked in the early childhood programs in North St. Paul and Roseville. Joanne also owned her own nursery school.

She received her MEd degree in Family Education and has a B.S. degree in nursery and primary level ages. Currently, Joanne serves as treasurer for MNAFEE. Since her retirement, Joanne has been busier than ever. She enjoys traveling to visit two of her daughters (one who is serving in the military and is now stationed in Germany) and spending time with her third daughter who lives nearby and has a grandson, Michael. Joanne would bring experience and a strong sense of collaboration to the MCFR board.

A. PAUL MASIARCHIN

Paul is the State Coordinator for the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network. The Network is a statewide organization dedicated to promoting and supporting effective programs and educating about public policy to enhance the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of children, families and the community. The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network seeks to promote effective fathering by providing support and education to fatherhood practitioners, social services agencies, and policy makers.

Previously, Paul lived in Washington, DC where he was the project manager for the National Youth Employment

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THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE POLICIES ON FAMILIES

By Erin Kelly

The ability of families to fulfill their basic functions of family creation, economic support, child rearing and caring for their members is significantly influenced by the roles, options and policies the adults in the family have at their places of employment.

Policies developed by and related to the workplace may “make or break” a family’s ability to care for its members and rear children, and often the same policy can have both positive and negative consequences. A public policy such as the Family and Medical Leave Act is intended to support families in their caretaking and childrearing roles. However, the same policy can undermine the ability of families in their role of providing adequate economic support since the leave allowed by FMLA is unpaid, and many middle and lower wage earners cannot afford to use it. In addition, FMLA does not apply to families where the adults are unmarried heterosexual or same sex partners.

This article considers workplace policies related to leaves and child care. Policies related to working time, tax laws (including tax laws related to child care and working time), pensions and social security are included in the on-line version of this article, available at: <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/publications/connection/index.html>.

LEAVE POLICIES

The U.S. lags far behind many other industrialized nations in its policy supports for working families. More parents are covered by leave policies and they receive a much higher level of salary replacement during leaves in many other countries. For instance, a recent report from the Harvard School of Public Health found that 160 countries offer guaranteed paid leave to women in connection with childbirth. The U.S. does not.

The ability and feasibility of families to take time off for any kind of personal needs – from vacation to illness to caregiving – have an impact on the choices family members make about their jobs and families.

The federal Family and Medical Leave

Act of 1993 requires employers with 50 or more employees to allow some employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for specific purposes. The federal law technically does not include the common illnesses of young children, although some employers do allow for them. Some states have augmented FMLA with additional leave policies. For instance, California is currently the only state that provides paid family leaves to mothers, fathers and those caring for sick relatives.

Minnesota enhances FMLA with its Minnesota Parental Leave Law, that requires smaller employers with 21 or more employees to provide unpaid leave to mothers and fathers upon the birth or adoption of a child. In addition, employers with 21 or more employees must allow parents who are employed at least half-time to use their paid sick leave to care for their own sick child, including common illnesses. And all workers in Minnesota, regardless of the size of the employer, must be allowed to take up to 16 hours per year of unpaid leave to attend school, child care, or other activities of their children. These additional policies put Minnesota in the top 20% of states’ policies on family leave, according to one ranking by the National Partnership for Working Families.

CHILD CARE SUPPORTS

The United States does not fund child care for the general public. Child care subsidies are available only to the very neediest families – and even then, states vary widely on how much subsidized care is provided. Given the current budget crunches, some states have reduced or proposed reductions in child care subsidies to minimal levels and have lowered income eligibility levels, making far fewer families eligible.

In contrast to many other countries where governments fund the operation and oversight of quality child care facilities, child care in the U.S. is private and there is a wide range of quality, even in licensed care. And it is often the case that the lowest income families are not able to afford licensed care and have to settle for care with which they may not

feel comfortable, or they are put in the position of asking relatives to provide care at minimal or no cost.

It must be emphasized that work-life policies disproportionately benefit higher income families. Half of American workers are not covered by FMLA because they work for small employers, have changed jobs, or are part-time. Lower income workers often do not have access to flextime scheduling, sick leave, vacation, and other benefits. In addition, low income workers cannot typically afford to take advantage of unpaid leaves, and paid leaves are not universally available to them. The lowest income workers do not always earn enough income to file tax returns, and thus cannot take advantage of child care or other tax credits (unless they are reimbursable without tax liability). In addition, less privileged workers likely do not have the time, energy, money or clout to advocate for policies that would meet their needs and thus may remain at a disadvantage.

The way public and private work-life policies affect families is complex. Not only do they impact day-to-day decisions about a variety of family issues, but they make a difference in the long term job security and wages of employees, especially women. Research is increasingly looking at whether employers considered to be “family-friendly” have a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining workers.

Erin Kelly is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota.

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MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE MEMBERSHIP MAMBO

Linda Rodgers, Membership Comm. Chair

MCFR members value opportunities to connect with each other to keep up with the latest research and cutting edge practices. They like learning about the many ways other members work with families because it stretches vision for their own work. They like to find out about job openings within the family field. And increasingly members expect information and connections to be available on the net. These themes resonated in conversations initiated by the Membership Committee with new members over the summer.

MCFR is listening carefully to its members to align membership benefits and organizational priorities with members' expectations. The Board of Directors has charged its Membership and Communication Committees with conducting a survey of our full membership to gain more input on benefits and priorities. You'll receive email later this fall regarding the survey once it is up and running. Please take a few minutes to go to the survey website and respond to the questions. In this way you will help MCFR to understand, reflect and respond to all its members!

MSCFR - STUDENT NEWS

Kristin Schneider, MSCFR Vice President

School has just begun and so has the MSCFR year. We are getting started the way we usually do by recruiting, recruiting, recruiting. We are talking to students about who we are, what we do, and how to be involved. As we are sharing our purpose with others, we are re-working it within the group as well. Our goal for this year involves better integrating MCFR's mission into its student affiliate. This goal will require some significant changes in actions and perspectives, but I am confident it will be successful and beneficial for all.

Finally, as we are moving forward with our organization, we all found it necessary to stop and take action as the country cried out. In the wake of perhaps the most devastating natural disaster to hit the US, we are compelled to help. We are in the midst of holding a drive for the

families impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The drive is taking place from September 22-October 7 on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. We are collecting personal care items and school supplies to be then taken to the United Way. I am optimistic that others on this campus will also be called to action and will donate generously. I am always moved by the willingness of Minnesotans to give, and this drive is no exception.

CELEBRATE NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK NOVEMBER 20-26, 2005

The week of Thanksgiving is National Family Week. This is a great time to remind our colleagues, participants and the community about the importance of strong and healthy families. Below you will find several web resources that you may want to explore as you celebrate National Family Week.

The Alliance for Children and Families

www.nationalfamilyweek.org

They offer a great on-line booklet to help you organize National Family Week events through your agency.

Ohioline - the Ohio State University

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/lines/fami.html>

Features many short fact sheets on family life. These are sometimes used to promote National Family Week.

Ideas for Observing National Family Week

www.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/fcs/holiday2003/

A collection of short articles about families and holidays from the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

MCFR IN AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Sue Meyers

Where are they now? Sander (Sandy) Latts was President of MCFR in 1972 and 1973. Previously he was Vice President to Don Irish. He was with the University of Minnesota's General College for many years, retiring in 1999. Sandy kept busy after retirement as Guardian ad litem for a while as well as doing some counseling (his professional background). Now he reads a lot and is the family "go-fer!" He now considers himself a "man of leisure" - something we all hope to achieve. Yes,

there have been health problems, but with good medical care he has a bionic knee, cataract surgery and has had no problem since his heart attack some time ago. On reflecting on changes in the family field since his term, Sandy reflected in the move away from a traditional (and sometimes constrained) family framework and thus increased individual freedoms, especially for women.

Interviews are planned for Gerhard Neubeck and Richard Hey, both past presidents of NCFR and MCFR. Gerry was MCFR President in 1956 and 1957 and Dick was MCFR President in 1976. Comments, suggestions or your own reflections are encouraged. Contact Sue Meyers at smeyers@umn.edu.

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

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A. PAUL MASIARCHIN

Coalition's "PEPNet" project. PEPNet is a nationally acclaimed model for best practices in youth employment and youth development programming. Additionally, Paul provided three years of service in Paraguay as a Peace Corps Volunteer and as a Volunteer Coordinator. He has also worked at the National League of Cities and taught middle school Spanish in rural Wisconsin. Paul earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education/Spanish from Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee and a master's degree in sociology/international education from the American University in Washington, DC.

DAVID W. BRUESHOFF, MDIV, MS, MTH EDD ABD CFLE

Dave and his lovely wife Bonnie live in Apple Valley. Their son Ben recently graduated from their parent's alma mater- Gustavus Adolphus College, and their daughter Amanda is in her senior year at Eastview High School. Their English Bulldog Dolly is in charge of their home.

VOTE!

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Again, I encourage all of you to consider contributing to *Family Forum* by preparing a book review or a research article/brief or by submitting an item for "Members' Corner". See my paragraph in the Summer issue of *Family Forum* for details and procedures. Thanks.

Ron Pitzer, Family Forum managing editor
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Managing Editor: Ron Pitzer

ARTHUR ROLNICK TO RECEIVE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO FAMILIES AWARD

Arthur J. Rolnick, senior vice president and director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, is the National Council on Family Relations' 2005 recipient of the Distinguished Service to Families Award. Peg Lindlof and Beth Quist report that "Mr. Rolnick's research on the economics of education and his essays on issues such as "The Economics of Early Childhood Development," have gained national attention in policy arenas that impact families, and have given early childhood advocates a new voice. Mr. Rolnick's work has helped "convince business leaders and the public about the importance of early childhood education." His research has shown that the best economic development investment to be made with taxpayer dollars is an investment in human capital, which increases the base of the economy. More specifically, he proposes that early childhood development programs, particularly those targeting at-risk children, yield important economic benefits to communities and society at large.

Mr. Rolnick was nominated by the Minnesota Council on Family Relations. DSF Award committee members included: Susan Meyers, Ronald Pitzer, Dan Sandifer-Stech, Ruben Viramontez Anguiano, and Raeann Hamon, Chair.

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