

FAMILY FORUM

Family Forum is the newsletter of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations, a State Affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations Winter 2006

MCFR EXPLORES NEW TERRITORY AT DECEMBER CONFERENCE

By Sara Lassig, Conference Chair

This fall's conference, entitled, "Caregiving: The Family Journey," was MCFR's first extensive focus on the ever growing topic of caregiving. While the topic was a new one for many in attendance, participants throughout the day expressed appreciation of the topics presented and surprise as to the impact they felt from the speaker's messages.

The day started with a captivating and passion filled keynote address by Dr. Wayne Caron, focusing on *family centered care* and the notion of caregiving truly being a *family* journey. In a similar fashion, the day ended with a beautiful and poignant message from Ted Bowman, as he presented the idea of honoring development differences across the different



Dr. Wayne Caron

generations of family members.

The group was honored to have Jean Illsley Clarke deliver a valuable and touching presentation relating to "Tender parts of the family journey," as she shared tools for caregivers dealing with difficult situations.

We were so fortunate to have Carmen Graumann, Dr.

Christine Ternand, and Joan Knuesel each present breakout sessions and share their own wisdom within the field of family caregiving. In addition, we were so lucky to have a wonderful panel of individuals who themselves had been through caregiving situations. These panel members included Nancy Gonzalez, Dawn Cassidy, Mark Vukelich, and Deborah Daehlin. Many participants shared words of praise for each of the presenters.

Throughout the day, and even after the conference, participants noted the importance of the presented topics, not only at a professional level, but on a personal level as well. It seems, as family professionals, we sometimes forget that this ever important work we do, is also

going on inside the walls of our own homes. It is my hope that each participant was able to leave this conference with something to take away, not only at a professional level, but on a personal level as well.

I want to thank the board of MCFR for allowing me to take one of my passions and truly run with it, and for supporting a conference that focused on a topic area relatively new to MCFR. I also want to express my sincere thanks and apprecia-



Panel moderator Kristin Schneider (left) observes the panel with Conference Committee Chair Sara Lassig (right).



Colleagues engage in professional discussions during a break.

tion to all of the speakers and participants who came together on this day and shared their knowledge, experiences, stories, and memories, and left with a greater understanding of meaning behind "family caregiving."

SAVE THE DATE!

May 5, 2006

CIVILITY & FAMILIES: PATHWAYS TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION

MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Peg Lindlof 651-748-7287

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Minnell Tralle 763-767-3881

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Madge Alberts 612-625-7899

SECRETARY

Kristen Stuenkel 612-721-7491

TREASURER

Beth Mediger 651-293-5330

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR

Linda Rodgers 763-506-1282

Sara Lassig 612-625-4240

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Tammy Dunrud 651-982-8317

POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIR

Vicki Thrasher Cronin 651-644-8138

Shannon Rader 763-545-2551

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Rose Allen 651-480-7745

Kathleen Olson 507-536-6306

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Pa Nia Yang 651-503-1983

NCFR REPRESENTATIVE

Mary Jo Czaplewski ... 763-502-1345

PAST PRESIDENTS

Ada Alden 612-975-6990

Ron Pitzer 612-331-1970

Marcie Brooke 651-293-5330

Marty Rossmann 612-624-3082

AT-LARGE MEMBERS-

David Brueshoff..... 952-432-1026

Dawn Cassidy 763-231-2882

Carol Gesme 952-938-9163

Elizabeth Hoodecheck 651-793-5435

Mike Jerpak 651-644-2321

Joanne Kelley 651-653-4529

Mike Walcheski 651-603-6184

Zha Blong Xiong 612-625-5882

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

2738 Evergreen Circle, St. Paul, MN 55110

PHONE: 651-407-0950 FAX: 651-407-1754 WWW.MCFR.NET

President's Letter

Peg Lindlof
MCFR 2006 President

Greetings to all MCFR members! As your 2006 President, I intend to serve each of you by helping this wonderful organization stay vital and energized to continue its important work with families. Thanks to Madge Alberts for her thought-provoking, inclusive and upbeat leadership during 2005. During her term, the MCFR mission statement was updated, a new strategic plan was adopted, and we established a strong new committee structure that will help the Board accomplish more in the future. We also held two wonderful professional conferences. Good job, Madge!

It was my privilege to represent MCFR at the National Council on Family Relations annual conference in Phoenix in November. It gave me a perspective on the value and strength of this professional organization for those who work in the family arena. I also learned how unique Minnesota is in the Association of Councils in NCFR. MCFR's leadership is strong and we have one of the most active groups of practitioners of any Council in the country.

At the MCFR Board retreat in January, we had a stimulating discussion about collaboration between those involved in academic research and those who are practitioners. One of my hopes for the year is that we identify ways to build a stronger "bridge" between these two groups. We need each other and we need to respect each other and not to be afraid of questions or challenges. Will Rogers said "Everyone is ignorant, only on different subjects." That's why I love the field of education. Learning is never finished! It's my belief that practitioners do their best when they are grounded in strong research, and researchers do their best when they listen to those who work on the front lines with families.

A priority of the MCFR Strategic Plan that we have chosen to focus on this year is increasing the diversity of our membership. If we are truly interested in strengthening all families, we must listen to and understand all families and their needs. We need your help. Please let us know how we may reach out and welcome a more diverse membership. If you feel



Peg Lindlof

MCFR does not represent you or those you work with, I would like to hear from you. I promise that I will listen and will bring issues forward to the Board. We all live in families and we have such richness to share with each other.

Another initiative I hope to implement this year is to encourage more Minnesota professionals to become Certified Family Life Educators through NCFR. Certification as a CFLE recognizes professional background and understanding in ten family life content areas. Parent Education licensure is important, but the CFLE

*That's why I love the field of education.
Learning is never finished!*

designation recognizes lifelong family education and sees parenting as part of a larger ecological family system. I am excited that Dawn Cassidy, NCFR Certification Director, has agreed to facilitate a workshop this year for MCFR members who are interested in becoming a CFLE.

As usual, MCFR is planning two wonderful conferences in 2006. I have had the opportunity to work on two conference committees in the past, and I have learned more through that process than I usually do when attending a conference. Consider serving on a conference committee. Any MCFR member is welcome to volunteer, and I think you'll be glad you did!

Please let me know what you're thinking. If you'd like to get involved in MCFR, send a note to me at plindlof@comcast.net. If we are to strengthen all families, we need all the help we can get. "Many hands make light work!"

It's an honor to serve as your MCFR President this year. I look forward to seeing you at the spring conference on May 5.

Sincerely, Peg Lindlof, CFLE

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2005 AWARD WINNERS!

AWARD WINNERS HONORED AT MCFR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Kathleen Olson, Communications Co-Chair and MCFR President Peg Lindlof, CFLE

Congratulations to two recent MCFR award winners, who were recognized at the MCFR Annual Conference December 2 in St. Paul:

Children First! and leader Mary Kosak were recognized for outstanding and innovative contributions to families with children. The Friend of the Family Award is given to a professional or organization who has made significant contributions to the quality of family life in Minnesota. The initiative, started with funding from the Blandin Foundation and led by Mary Kosak, has been a grass-roots effort by volunteers, businesses, and professionals in the Itasca County area who believe that the entire community must be involved in the education and care of young children. Children First! promotes parent education, quality child care, affordable health care, and public awareness of what it takes to have all children ready to start kindergarten healthy and ready to do their best. The team effort involves a broad representation of community members including parents, health and human service professionals, educational institutions, community non-profits, businesses and employers, the medical community and the media. Among the initiative's many noteworthy efforts are the Baby Steps Boutique, the extensive training of early education professionals, and the relentless Children First! emphasis on involving the entire community in efforts to strengthen families.

Dr. Joan Comeau, CFLE, received the Ruth Hathaway Jewson Distinguished Service to Families award, given to a professional in the family field who is recognized for outstanding work on behalf of families.

This award recognizes Dr Comeau's outstanding and innovative academic and community work with family professionals. In 1989 she founded Family Information Services, a newsletter for family professionals, which has filled a great need in the field of Family Education by making research-based professional development opportunities available in a convenient way. More than 3000 professionals benefit each year; they serve on the front lines of family education in secondary schools, churches, the armed services, social service agencies, and traditional parent education programs such as Early Childhood Family Education.

Family Information Services has also given many family professionals a vehicle to publish their work as guest faculty. This has leveraged the professional expertise of many excellent academicians and practitioners, and exemplifies the values and intent of the mission of MCFR. Joan is recognized nationally and internationally for her articles, curricula, and professional development workshops.

For more information and photos of the award recipients, check out the MCFR website at: www.mcfr.net.

MCFR ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

By Sara Lassig, Nominations Committee Chair

The annual Minnesota Council on Family Relations elections are now complete, and the new members have officially joined the board. The two new at-large board members include David Brueshoff and Joanne Kelley, and the newly elected secretary is Kristen Stuenkel. Minnelle Tralle was elected as the new President Elect. We are so pleased to have all of these individuals join the board, and look forward to the upcoming year.

NEWS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Sara Lassig & Linda Rodgers, Co-Chairs

We would like to thank the MCFR members who completed the online membership survey. Over 80 members participated.

Over 86% of the respondents noted that the conferences were one of the benefits that encouraged them to join (and stay in) MCFR. Likewise, 80% cited the importance of interaction with other family professionals as a significant reason for joining and remaining in the organization.

- 72% of respondents found the list serve to be either "effective" or "very effective."
- 59% found the website to be "effective" or "very effective."
- 78% found the Forum Newsletter to be "effective" or "very effective."
- 89% of the respondents fell in the age range of 41 and above, with 86% being female and 14% male
- Parent education (67%) and Early Childhood Education (37%) made up the highest percentages of "Primary area of focus in work with families," with Higher Education, K-12 Education, Faith, Social Work, Counseling, Public Health, Legal, Housing, and Medical also being represented.

We will use the information gathered from the survey in several ways. One the membership committee's goals is to increase membership, with an emphasis on increasing student membership. Though the number of students in MCFR has increased over the last year, they still comprise a small percentage of the organization. In addition, we will continue working to diversify our membership, and encourage individuals from various work, cultural, scholastic, and family backgrounds to join. We are striving to allow for a greater interaction and collaboration between the members, all of whom share the common bond of recognizing the importance and impact of families in so many realms.

MCFR HISTORY--GERHARD NEUBECK AND RICHARD HEY

By Sue Meyers

MCFR has been linked with NCFR for many years, thanks to the rich heritage of family professionals in our state. Previous MCFR Presidents Gerhard Neubeck and Richard Hey were presidents of NCFR and AAMFT as well. They have worked together over the years and remain friends.

Gerhard Neubeck was 1956 & 1957 President of MCFR and 1977-78 President of NCFR. During his term of presidency, the Governor's Conference on Children and Youth was held, Ruth Hathaway Jewson was named NCFR Executive Officer, and Lester Kirkendall keynoted the conference on "Ethics, Morals and Family Life Today."

Neubeck retired in 1986, but continued to stay involved in the family field. He taught a sex education course for residents at Oak Park Heights, Stillwater, and Lino Lakes. You certainly have to have your wits about you when teaching those residents. For his retirement, a collage was designed to capture the array of involvement and interests. Additional funds established the Neubeck Scholarship fund that provides travel expenses to professional conferences for FSoS students. He was honored when Richard Hey donated his retirement contributions to the Neubeck Scholarship fund. For the past decade, Neubeck has written poems for incoming graduate student classes-- something treasured by those students. Prior to his involvement in the family field, Neubeck was a runner and qualified

for the 1936 Olympics tryouts. His track shoes and jersey are in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. In his late 80s, Neubeck has had a variety of illnesses, including surviving lymphoma cancer, cataracts and shingles. His mobility has been limited, but technology provides a ride to his bedroom. His wife, Ruth, still maintains a wonderful display of her pottery and other art. The cognitive and creative capacity is strong in both of them. They are proud of the multi-diversity of their children, grandchildren and other relatives. They celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary in 2006.

Richard Hey was 1976 President of MCFR and 1969-70 President of NCFR.

During his term of presidency, Dick Hey keynoted the MCFR Annual Conference "Partners in Family Life & Sex Education: Family, Church & School."

Hey retired in the late 1980s after working part time for several years. Following retirement, he (and Miriam) led several study tours in the 1990s to Germany and Yugoslavia, and to Thailand, Bali, and Singapore. The students kept journals and the experiences they shared provided great insights of understanding of the family field. After a number of years in Roseville with involvement with offspring and grandchildren, they bought a house in St. Anthony Park to share with their adult child and grandchildren. The three-generation household allows separate

living and combined activities that are beneficial to all. Hey has become more politically active and appreciative of the family field. Though media and some in academia assume that family influences economics, the reverse has been more the case in recent years -- families reacting to economic policies thrust upon them. He also expressed concern about changes in the University that affect his beloved Family Social Science department. He has survived cancer and open-heart surgery. Currently he is visually impaired because of macular degeneration, but reads more extensively than ever before -- thanks to the Society for the Blind and the books on tape. This stimulation allows for even more involvement in the family field. Study of the family field provides a unique perspective on society -- because families are so complicated. We learn in our families and that can reach into society as well. Obviously the cognitive capacity of Dick Hey is in good shape.

An aside from the author: Back in 1969, Neubeck hired me to teach in the Family Study Center -- and took sabbatical for the year. I met Hey as I reported to work. The following July I joined the Minnesota Extension Service, meeting Ron Pitzer for the first time. And in August of 1970, the Family Study Center was dissolved and Neubeck and Hey joined the Family Social Science Department. I treasure learning from the best in the family field.

NCFR – 68TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 8-11, 2006

HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, MINNEAPOLIS

DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS CONFERENCE –
RIGHT HERE IN MINNESOTA! FOR CONFERENCE INFORMATION, TURN TO PAGE 5.

TURNING THE CORNER: THE LAST COLUMN

Ted Bowman

In 1989 I began writing a book review column for *Family Forum*. The first two books discussed were *Enabling and Empowering Families* by Carl Dunst, Carol Trivette and Anglea Deal and *Families and Early Childhood Programs* by Douglas Powell. Between then and now, I have reviewed and discussed almost 150 books. With this column, I turn a corner and hand this column and its important service to someone else.

I am a family educator. As such, I have always believed in bringing the best of research and theory to the practice of working with families. Added to that personal viewpoint, most of the members of MCFR are practitioners. If my ears have heard accurately, the readers of this newsletter want to read about perspectives and resources they can use in their daily work. Attempting to integrate these desires and perspectives, I have attempted to provide a bit of commentary and suggestion to ten or so books a year that

MCFR *Family Forum* readers might find useful.

A review of the books discussed during the past sixteen years shows these were the primary themes.

- Family Forms and Families in Change
- Leadership and Community Ties
- Resiliency and Strengths Perspectives
- Parenting and Child Development
- Change and the Resulting Grief and Loss

Any other writer for the column may have made other choices. These were the books that grabbed my attention, leading to their discussion in "Reader's Corner".

A few personal comments. I have found it interesting and disturbing that the only people who have written me notes or emails about the column have been a few of the authors and some of the MCFR officers whose responsibilities included the newsletter. As a departing writer for *Family Forum*, I urge you to respond to the writers and the contents

since this is the only resource of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations that reaches all its members. I have persisted in writing the column because of my conviction that books are a valuable resource. Had I gauged my commitment to continue on reader responses, the column would have ended in 1990.

I have now written over 80 articles and chapters in a variety of publications, not including this column. That is partly a comment about my longevity and love of writing. It's important for you to know that writing the column, AFTER reading the books, has been one of the most important writing exercises of my professional life. I have learned much from the perspectives of others. Writing this column has been a joy.

So, if you have a response to this history of "Reader's Corner", I hope it might include picking up a book and reading it. Then, share your learnings with a colleague. I plan to join you.

NCFR – 68TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By Rose Allen, Local Arrangements Committee Chair

This year's conference theme is *Unanswered Questions in Marriage and Family Science*. We hope it will stimulate dialogue on important issues of concern to families and people who work with and study them.

The keynote speaker will be **Professor Alvin Poussaint**, Director, Media Center, Judge Baker Children's Center, Boston, MA; Professor of Psychiatry and Faculty; Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Harvard Medical School, Cambridge, MA. Dr. Poussaint will help us explore questions that create opportunities for us to better understand families and the challenges they face.

Other plenary or special sessions will include:

The Third Parent: **The pervasive influence of popular media plays in family process** presented by **Dr. David**

Walsh, founder of the MediaWise Movement, a program of the National Institute on Media and the Family.

After "I Do...": New Frontiers in Marriage and Relationship Education, a panel discussion with several pioneers in relational assessment and therapy including **Lorraine Blackman**, **David Olson**, and **Scott Stanley**.

There will also be several pre-conference workshops on the emerging trends in motherhood and fatherhood, the ramifications of the increasing childrearing obligations of grandparents, balancing work and home life, and an update on family theory construction and research methodologies.

In addition to the speakers listed above, here are a few additional highlights of the conference:

- More than 450 presentations of new

research in various formats: paper presentations, symposia, workshops, posters sessions, and interactive round tables.

- Book and program exhibits from local and national publishers and service organizations.
- Phenomenal opportunities for networking with noted leaders in the family field through informal dialogue and frequently scheduled receptions.
- Employment Matching Service with an opportunity of face-to-face interviews with potential employers.
- Interactive tours provide learning experiences.

To learn more about the conference go to http://www.ncfr.org/conference_info/index.asp

This conference won't return to Minnesota until 2010. Make sure you attend this year!

This article is an adapted version of the introduction given by Madge Alberts at the McEvoy Lecture hosted by the Center for Early Education and Development hosted on Nov. 4, 2005. The title of the forum was "Suffer Not the Little Children: What Religions Tell Us about Caring for Young Children."

WHY IS THE TOPIC OF RELIGION IMPORTANT TO THINK ABOUT WHEN CONSIDERING FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN?

In a book titled *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*, Sociologist Patrick McNamara made the following observation, "Social scientists tend to have a blind spot where spirituality and families are concerned." Indeed, religion is a topic that many academics have tended to shy away from over the years. There are variety of reasons for this, probably the greatest of which is that faith/religion/spirituality – whatever words are used to define it – is not an exact science. It's pretty hard to gather empirical evidence about matters of faith – which by its nature requires a belief in something that's intangible and unexplainable. Religion has also been viewed as a more private matter, and wading into this area may be just too uncomfortable for some people.

Religion and politics – until recent years, these two arenas have been unlikely partners. But a faith movement that has been growing and organizing for at least two decades has now begun to exert considerable power in the political world. Whether you agree with it or not, the influence of religion on politics appears to be here to stay.

So why are we focusing today, at a policy conference at a public University, on the topic of religion? Why is the topic of religion important to think about as we consider families and young children?

I want to offer two responses to this question - one related to individual family functioning, and the other related to policy development.

First – family functioning. The ecological model of human development is a lens used by most social scientists in looking at family functioning. Basically, this model of thinking about families recognizes that each individual, as well as the family as a unit, is significantly affected by interactions among a number of overlapping contexts, systems or environments. This includes systems in which the family and its members are directly involved, such as neighborhoods, schools and faith communities, as well as systems that are more distant from direct interaction or influence, such as society,

culture, and policy. Using this ecological perspective, we are overlooking a very significant influence on families if we do not consider the role religion has on the majority of individuals and families, and in family functioning overall. This can be true whether families are actively involved in a faith community or not. A person's internal sense of spirituality, even if it is not connected to a specific faith community, influences them at a very deep level. Active involvement in a

"Social scientists tend to have a blind spot where spirituality and families are concerned."

faith community increases the public dimension of one's faith, and connects people more directly with the teachings and beliefs of their denomination.

I want to make clear that we are not talking about a small part of the population here. In a study by the Tannenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, in partnership with the Harris Poll and the Pew Forum On Religion And Public Life, 90% of the population identified themselves as religious. Obviously this number includes a very wide range of theological perspectives, but in applying it to our world, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of families we work with, and the majority of policymakers at all levels, hold the place of religion, faith, spirituality – whatever they call it - very high in their lives.

People's world views, their values systems, their beliefs about what is good, moral and appropriate in their lives, their standards of conduct, their gender roles, their views of sexuality, what gives their lives meaning, purpose and legitimacy, how they should respond to changes in society that impact their families – and even how families are defined - all of these things are shaped to a great degree by people's faith systems, whatever they may be.

How do these beliefs play out in their

lives? There are many ways, but I want to highlight a couple that are particularly relevant to the topic of young children.

People's religious views affect the way they parent. Differing philosophies about parenting and child rearing are very often informed by faith systems. There are a wide range of teachings within religious institutions about the tasks of parenting and the relationship between parents and children. And beliefs rooted in faith are very, very important to people.

As professionals who work with families, the dilemma for us comes when what we are teaching, or saying, or asking a family to do, does not fit with their belief system or world view. If it doesn't, they are unlikely to be able to utilize the information or carry it out because it doesn't fit in their framework. Think for a moment about a parenting education class: Suppose there's a father in the class whose faith tells him that he is the authority over his child, it is his role to break his child's will, and he should spank his child if necessary to accomplish that. And suppose as the leader, we are teaching the class that children should be given choices, that they should have the freedom to say no, and that spanking is inappropriate. How is the father going to respond to this? His faith system will likely be his primary filter here, and what we are teaching is unlikely to sink in because it doesn't fit. He may not even be able to conceptualize how it would work, because it so goes against his beliefs about humankind and parenting.

In looking at young children, this dilemma is particularly critical because early childhood is the time when the foundation for the child's future is built. There is long standing and solid research – much of it at the University of Minnesota – on the crucial developmental needs

of early childhood. Some of the parenting beliefs based on people's faith systems about the place of young children and the tasks of parents do not fit with what scholars believe from research about early childhood development. What do we do about this?

Obviously we can't tailor our work to fit the unique value systems or world views of each individual or family. But when we work one on one with children and their parents, it's important that we at least *understand* what their world view is and not dismiss it. And when we're working with groups, maybe the influence of the faith systems of participants is something we should be talking about instead of avoiding - not pushing any one particular belief, but asking what their own faith says about the subject at hand.

The beliefs people hold that are based on their faith are at the very bedrock of how they function in the world, including the way they relate to their children. But people of different faiths may come to very different conclusions about what that means for them. If we ignore or dismiss this critically important influence in family functioning, our best efforts may miss the mark.

Religion has also been viewed as a more private matter, and wading into this area may be just too uncomfortable for some people.

A few observations about religion and policy....policymakers at all levels - from federal, state and local public policies to private policies such as those in the workplace - are constantly making decisions that affect families. Some of these effects are direct, such as laws about marriage, divorce or child support, or workplace policies. Others are more indirect, such as policies about taxes or feedlots. Many of these decisions are rooted in the value systems of the policymakers, and some policymakers clearly identify their values as coming

from their faiths.

Let's look at the example of early childhood education. There are very different perspectives about what the role of government is where young children are concerned. Some feel that this age is entirely the purview of parents, and government has no role in it, and in fact any government involvement is an intrusion into the family's responsibility to rear their children. Those who hold this view often cite their religious beliefs and values. Others believe that government involvement in early childhood is crucial for helping kids get a good start in school. This belief is also based on values, many of which are likely informed by a faith system - but the proponents of this view may not be as vocal about that connection. This view also takes into account what research has shown about the development of young children.

How do we reconcile these views, and develop the kinds of policies that support parents in their ability to care for and raise their young children to be ready for school? This is a very important topic for public discussion.

Can policy decisions take into account all the individual world views and belief

systems held by people they will affect? Of course not. But as much as possible, policies should be broad enough that the majority of faith perspectives can embrace them, and follow them without compromising their own world views. It is important for policymakers to look at the big picture, instead of being narrowly driven by ideological perspectives - at either end of the political spectrum. It is also important that policymakers consider the impact of policies on families - looking at both the intended and potential unintended consequences. The National

Council on Family Relations has published a Family Impact Checklist that can be used by policymakers and others to provide a structured way to look at the potential impact of a policy or program on families.

Whatever its role, government cannot develop effective policies in isolation. There is a place for families, for communities, for religious institutions, and for government in ensuring that every young child gets a good start and plenty of love and learning. The challenge for us is to think about how each of these institutions can contribute and play a role in a way that doesn't take the power or responsibility away from the others.

I want to close by quoting a paragraph from a very new book authored by Dr. Penny Edgell, from the University of Minnesota's sociology department. Dr. Edgell has focused much of her research over the years on religion and families, and this book, *Religion and Family in a Changing Society*, is based on research she conducted on how different faith communities and individuals within them respond to changes in society. Her words here are instructive as we think about these topics of religion - policy and families:

"Religious communities are not a substitute for more responsive and humane social and economic policies. In a pluralistic society, religious voices should both reflect the pluralism of religious belief and be raised in civil conversation with secular visions of the good family. But religious communities provide a venue where men and women can construct a moral vision that may have an impact on law and social policy as our society continues to grapple with the implications of the rapid and fundamental restructuring of family life that has taken place over the last thirty years. Such venues, religious and secular, liberal and conservative, are the foundations of a good society."

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy 2006 to everyone. Hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. My thanks to all of the contributors.

Again, I encourage each 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” (our version of Letters to the Editor). Thanks.

Ron Pitzer
Family Forum managing editor
(612) 331-1970; rpitzer@umn.edu

Family Forum is published three times a year by the Minnesota Council on Family Relations and distributed to all association members.

MCFR gives permission to copy or reproduce articles in *Family Forum* for educational purposes. Proper acknowledgement of author and source must appear on each copy. Copies not for educational use require written permission. Please direct all correspondence to the address below. **Please consider writing an article for one of our *Family Forum* newsletters.** The deadlines are January 15, May 15, and September 15. Email submissions are preferred to rpitzer@umn.edu, but you may mail articles to MCFR at 2738 Evergreen Circle, St. Paul, MN 55110 or fax them to 651-407-1754. If you are interested in participating as a member of the Communications Committee, please call the MCFR offices at 651-407-0950.

Managing Editor: Ron Pitzer

MCFR UPDATE

by Kristin Schneider

I am proud to introduce you to the new student representative of MCFR – Pa Nhia Yang, who is now serving as vice president of MCFR. We have shifted around the officers we had last year and now I am serving as the president, and our former president, Holli Trombley, is serving as our treasurer. We also have a new addition, Memory Roberts, who has graciously accepted the position of secretary.

As we have shifted roles, we have also geared up for the excitingly busy semester we have planned. In our quest to expand into more University of Minnesota departments, we are scheduling some fun networking (i.e. recruiting) events by teaming up with Michael Jerpbak to initiate these efforts. We are also getting ready to help out with NCFR when it comes to Minneapolis in November. We have our work cut out for us, but I look forward to reaching each milestone along the way – and keeping you posted as we go.

May 5, 2006
CIVILITY & FAMILIES:
PATHWAYS TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION
Go to www.mcfr.net for more information.

IN THIS ISSUE

MCFR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1
PRESIDENT'S LETTER 2
COMMITTEES 3
HISTORY 4
READER'S CORNER 5
EDITOR'S NOTE 6

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 1794
Minneapolis, MN

MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS
2738 EVERGREEN CIRCLE
ST. PAUL, MN 55110