

Family forum

“Harmonizing Work/Family and All that Jazz” — A Success!

By Mary Jo Czaplewski

Judging from the high scores on the 100 plus returned conference evaluations, the majority of the 175 attendees at the MCFR annual conference on December 7, 2001 were pleased with the program content, speakers and new features added to this year’s program. These included Linda Rodger’s special piano interludes which led into the opening session with the audience singing “America The Beautiful”. Marti Erickson and the “Free Spirit” quartet provided musical meditations on family, work and life in general. Twelve exhibitors including Grandkids n’ Me, NCFR, the National Institute on Media and the Family, and Oleanna Books vended

their messages and wares.

Special Congratulations to the 2001 award winners:

Ada Crane Alden, Ph.D., CFLE — winner of the Ruth Hathaway Jewson Award

Ada was honored for her long record of research, education and service in the family field across the country



Ada Crane, PhD, CFLE and internationally.

Family Life First Founders — Barbara Z. Carlson, Ph.D. and William J. Doherty, Ph.D. — winners of the Friend of the Family Award for their grass-roots parent initiative in the Wayzata-Plymouth community.

All the sessions received high praise. They began with a panel facilitated by Dr. M. Janice Hogan, U. MN who led the discussion of Minnesota’s Score Card for work/family issues.

Tom Gillaspay, Minnesota State demographer described the changing face of Minnesota, namely, an aging, more diverse population and workforce; growth of families with children, but a smaller percentage of total families; women more attached to the workforce—all impacting harmony between families and their work.



Sue Meyers and Linda Vukelich are always ready with a friendly face at the registration table.

especially in school readiness and early education.

Naly Yang, executive director of the Womens Association of Hmong & Lao shared the challenges of Asian women in the workplace, families, and a new culture.

Esam Aal, counseling psychologist and program director addressed the Muslim and Islamic family needs and the challenges to professionals working with them.

Keynoter, Dr. Martha Farrell Erickson, Executive Director of the U of MN Children, Youth and Families Consortium in her address, “Finding the Best of the Good Old Days in a Brave New World” related the trends that stand in the way of our deep longing for connectedness. Some of



Exhibitors were diverse and original--as always.

these include work issues – overtime, childcare, multi-tasking; technology promoting instant response expectations, and ruling family life; the erosion of community due to physical design, fragmented families, high mobility of families, discontinuity of services, and housing patterns;

Honorable Donald Fraser, former mayor and U.S. Representative addressed Minnesota’s eroding reputation as a leader in child and family friendly policies,

Continued on page 4

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

State Affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations

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inside

NCFR Annual Meeting 1

President’s Letter 2

MN Vital Aging Summit 3

FEN List Serve Information 3

Educational Insert:

Changes in Goodhue CO Parenting Practices, R. Pitzer

Readers Corner, T.Bowman

A Note from the MCFR President

Marcie Brooke, MCFR 2002 President



Marcie Brooke

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2002 has arrived...ready or not! MCFR is ready, thanks to our Past President, Leanne M. Sponsel for completing the remarkable job of documenting and clarifying in written word the specific responsibilities of the board members. It will guide us as we face the needs and challenges of our present journey in this wonderful organization. The 2002 handbook incorporates the rich history and past leadership with the present responsibilities of the board. It is a gift to family life professionals and the growth of MCFR. Thank you, Leanne!!

Our annual conference held on December 7, 2001 "Harmonizing Work, Family, and all that Jazz" presented us with new insights, new questions, and new direction for the changing conditions and demands of work in the 21st Century. We know that in order to find harmony in our lives and in our work, it requires innumerable players and systems. The Minnesota Council on Family Relations is the ideal place to begin. It offers networking, research and resources that assist family life professional in their daily work.

As the new year unfolds, I invite each one of you reading this letter to consider the benefits of belonging to this rich, dynamic

state professional organization. Invite your colleagues to join. Spread the word, that together we can accomplish great harmony in our extremely important work and have fun.

I am overwhelmed by the loud cacophony of challenges that wait. The songs of "Free Spirit" (written and composed by Dr. Marti Erickson, Executive Director of the U of M Children, Youth, and Family Consortium) sung and the December conference inspired and soothed our souls. Music has the potential to do wonderful things. In spite of the challenges we face, I believe that together we can and will create the "music" and the harmony necessary to energize our spirits and make great things happen for families in Minnesota.

Carpe Diem. Happy New Year!



Kari Ellefson

Letter from the Editor

By Kari Ellefson

I look forward to working with MCFR members in my new role as editor of the Family Forum. Please note the Educational Insert of this newsletter, written by Ron Pitzer, Family Sociologist. Future newsletters will also include this insert, providing members with research-based educational information on various topics, as well as book reviews from Ted Bowman. The idea of the Educational Insert is that you may pull it out and file it for future use.

Please contact me if you are interested in submitting an article for the insert, or have other information for the newsletter. You may call me at 218-723-4040 or email: kari@northlandfdn.org.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Minnesota Vital Aging Summit--March 26, 2002

Have a voice in shaping a new societal vision of what it means to grow old

The University of Minnesota and other members of the Minnesota Vital Aging Network (VAN) will convene the first Minnesota Vital Aging Summit on March 26, 2002. National leaders and Minnesota role models will talk about shaping a new societal vision of what it means to grow old. The all-day event will take place at the Earle Brown Center on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. On this day, the University will launch a new Vital Aging Network (VAN) Web site that will connect older adults and vital aging advocates across the state with news and education.

The Need

Public officials and service providers tend to see aging as a problem as they struggle to meet the needs of a growing population of "old-old" (85 years old and older), frail elderly. Improvements in health status, however, have done more than expand longevity. They also have resulted in the active independence of more than three fourths of older adults into their eighties. When the baby boomers become seniors, Minnesota will experience the most dramatic age shift in history. The future is already here in farm areas and retirement communities where older residents must share their strengths, get the community's work done, and take care of each other. There is a lot that can be done to link people throughout the state to productive, meaningful activities that will fulfill individual interests and community needs.

The Network

The Vital Aging Network (VAN), which was initiated in the fall of 2000, is a forum where individuals and organizations work collaboratively to promote self-determination, self-sufficiency, civic engagement, and quality of life for and with older adults through education, advocacy, and

leadership development. The University, via the College of Continuing Education, is a co-convenor of VAN.

The Site

The Web site to be launched at the Summit, www.van.umn.edu, will: 1) link older adults with options for productive, meaningful activities that match their individual needs and interests and 2) guide employers, service providers, community planners, and other advocates to educational tools that will promote and support vital aging. A searchable database will be organized by topic and region.

The Summit

The Summit will be led by two Minnesota role models for vital aging – Bob Bergland and Emily Anne Staples Tuttle. Bergland is a former Minnesota Congressman and U.S. Commissioner of Agriculture. He is now Vice Chair of the University's Board of Regents. Staples Tuttle is a former State Senator and board chair for a number of University and civic organizations. They have worked with University faculty and staff, VAN members, and community leaders to design a program that will engage the audience in creative interaction so that attendance will be a vital, memorable experience stimulating new perspectives on aging.

The national presenters include:

- Connie Goldman, former MPR and NPR talk show host and author of *Secrets of Becoming a Late Bloomer*,
- Marc Freedman, author of *Prime Time* and founder of Civic Ventures with John Gardner,
- Ron Manheimer, author of *Map to the End of Time* and founder of the University of North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement, and
- Ed Creagan, chief of Oncology at the Mayo, and author of *Mayo Clinic on Healthy Aging*.

Community Connectors

Community connectors in each region of the state will be asked to convene teams who might then plan their own forums or other activities relevant to regional needs and interests. Information about regional follow-up efforts will be featured on the VAN Web site.

To sign up for the Summit, to become a community connector, or for more information, call or e-mail University Vital Aging Initiative Coordinator Jan Hively at 612-379-4124 or hivel001@umn.edu.

Would you like to be connected to other Minnesota professionals?

Join the Family Education Network (FEN) Electronic Forum!

By signing up through your email account, you will be informed of networking and in-service opportunities in Minnesota. This Electronic Forum is for all family professionals, including those that work with early childhood, youth, parents, older adults—basically anyone working with families!

Join today by emailing Rose Allen, Extension Educator, at allen027@umn.edu and ask to be added to the FEN Electronic Forum. Be sure to include your e-mail address in the body of the message.

Don't miss this opportunity to communicate with others who do similar work!

The Family Education Network is sponsored by the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

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Continued from page 1

age segregation. Suggested action steps to buck these trends include reconnecting generations by thinking **FAMILY!**

Cross-generational teaching, flextime, telecommuting and satellite work environments; rewards for school involvement; sensitive space planning; reaching out to families and every generation to make them feel useful.

Keynoter, Dr. Ted Bowman closed the day with inspirational thoughts about "When Harmony is challenged at home, at work, and because of world



Jean Illsley Clark

events: Caring and Compassion after losses". Using personal stories, he addressed the September 11 tragedies in our lives, closing with the poem he wrote about that day.

Breakout session speakers included **Dr. Janet Hively** on Lifework Planning: Exploring Meaning/Possibility; **Madge Alberts** on policies and family impact: Roles and Responsibilities; Dr. David Bredehoff, Jean Illsley Clark, and Connie Dawson **on Overindulgence, Personality, family interaction and parental locus of control; and** Dr. Ada Crane Alden **on Best Practices: Early Education and Parental Involvement in Schools.**

Many thanks to Leanne Sponsel, 2001 President, Marcie Brooke (2001



2002 President Marcie Brook gets a few pointers from 2001 President Leanne Sponsel.

President Elect) and Mary Jo Czaplewski, conference program chairs and the committee for a great day.

2002 MCFR Spring Conference

Tools for
Peace, Hope
& Healing

Friday, April 26

North Como Presbyterian Church
965 Larpenteur Ave West, Roseville, MN

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

2738 Evergreen Circle

St. Paul, MN 55110

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Changes In Goodhue County Parenting Practices 1993-1998

By Ronald L. Pitzer, Family Sociologist (ret) University of Minnesota Extension Service, January 2002

In December 1998, interviews were conducted with as many as could be located (425) of the 502 Red Wing parents who were interviewed in June 1993 and September 1995. The major purpose of these "Wave Three" interviews was to ascertain (1) whether any changes had occurred in parents' use of physical punishment and other disciplinary practices and (2) whether any changes had occurred in parental reports of their children's aggressive acting-out. Results are summarized below.

Changes in Attitudes Toward Physical Punishment

Many studies over the years have assessed parent acceptance of physical punishment by asking if they agree or disagree with the statement: "A good, hard spanking is sometimes necessary to discipline a child." The most recent national data (1996) showed about 67% of U. S. parents agreed with this statement, which is a substantial drop from the mid-80s when about 84% of parents endorsed spanking. At Time One (June, 1993), 55% of surveyed Red Wing parents agreed with this statement. By September 1995, the proportion who agreed had dropped to 48% and by December 1998 to 42%. While not a huge change, this is a significant decline.

Changes in the Use of Physical Punishment

When Red Wing parents were first interviewed in 1993, they were considerably less likely to report the use of physical punishment than were parents in most U.S. studies. The data show that there was further decline in the reported use of physical punishment by Goodhue County parents across the span of the project—overall a decline from 36% (in 1993) to 21% (in 1995) to 12% (in 1998) reporting the use of physical punishment during the six months preceding the interview.

We were especially interested in changes in the disciplinary approaches of those parents who claimed to have participated in activities of **KIDS: Handle with Care** and/or **Positive Parenting**. The data indicate that participants made greater changes in their use of physical punishment between Time One (June 1993) and Time Three (December 1998) than did non-participants. Interestingly, those who later participated in **KIDS** . . . activities actually were a

bit more likely to have used physical punishment prior to their participation than were the rest of the sample. But they were less likely than the rest of the sample to do so at Time Three. And those who did use physical punishment, did so less often: At Time One, 11% of the participants spanked 11 or more times (in the past 6 months). At Time Three, no participants claimed to spank this frequently. At Time One, 20% of participants spanked 6 or more times (in the past 6 months). At Time Three, only 2% reported spanking this frequently.

The above data suggest three things:

- (1) There were changes in parenting practices in Goodhue County across the project's duration
- (2) **KIDS: Handle with Care** and **Positive Parenting** programs appear to have contributed to these changes;
- (3) **KIDS** . . . programs appear to have reached not just those "who need it least".

Changes in Children's Aggressive Acting Out

A major interest of the study was whether children's "aggressive (or violent) acting-out" changed across the five-plus year span between Time One and Time Three interviews. The data showed clear decline in these aggressive child behaviors. Specifically, the following proportions of parents reported their children to have engaged in these actions during the months preceding the interviews.

	Time 1 (Jun 93)	Time 3 (Dec 98)
Hits siblings	80%	56%
Hits other kids	45%	27%
Damages things	47%	31%
Hit parent or other adult	28%	9%

In a little more detail, systematic analysis of the data indicate that children who were low in aggression at the first interview (avg aggression score of 0.59 on a 0 to 3 scale) and were spanked were twice as aggressive at Time Three (avg aggression score of 1.17) while the aggression scores of those who were not spanked declined by almost half (0.32). The children who were high on aggression at Time One (avg score of 2.26) and were spanked became significantly more aggressive by Time Three (2.48 on a 3.0 scale) while those who were not spanked declined in aggression by almost half (avg score of 1.14).



Other Changes in Parenting Practices



Data were obtained regarding a variety of other parenting practices. Two on which changes seemed to occur, especially among “participants” were: “parent set clear expectations” and “parent explained why wanted child to do something”. All respondents reported increased use of these recommended practices and “participants” were doing them more frequently than were non-participants.

Summary and Conclusions

While there were clear and substantial changes in the reported parenting practices of study respondents in the direction of significantly less use of physical punishment, there was not a lot of difference between **KIDS . . .** program participants and non-participants. Perhaps this can be interpreted as an indication of changes in the culture of the Red Wing community regarding the hitting of children (a second goal of the project). That is, if change in the culture regarding this matter has happened, it might spread out and influence the behavior of parents even if they had not participated in educational programs or other **KIDS . . .** activities or even heard of the project.

READER'S CORNER: Fresh Perspectives for Work with Families

By Ted Bowman

Winter is a time for soups and stews. When cooking, I'm on the lookout for fresh ideas for nutritious meals. Sometimes, it's only a different spice or ingredient added to a familiar recipe. In other cases, I am drawn to try something not tasted before.

Books and their connections to my work fit with this analogy. Some books match the spice category, providing me with insights or tools to do continuing work. Others become resources for personal change. The books reviewed in this issue offer those possibilities and more. As is our custom, books with Minnesota connections are highlighted.

The Cancer Poetry Project (2001)

edited by Karin B. Miller. Minneapolis: Fairview Press, paper \$12.95.

This is a poignant and powerful book of poems written by cancer patients and those in their circles of care. Karin Miller, a Twin Cities newspaper reporter and writer, began the project after her husband was diagnosed with cancer. She initially wrote for herself. Then, one morning the thought of gathering poems from cancer patients, their families, friends, and care providers came to mind. This collection is the result.

While obviously most useful as a resource when dealing with cancer, many of the poems have wider use. Stories and poems, when selected and used well, can spark conversations about many things. One example that could be used in any family education or therapy setting to aid people in talking about what is difficult in talking about tough stuff is entitled

“An Explanation to my Dying Daughter”

You say you do not understand
Why I sorrow for the loss of things
Rather than for the greater losses
Your time of travail brings.
Oh, my child, don't you know

That sometimes to endure we choose
To grieve for unimportant things
That we can bear to lose.

Poetry, at its best, weaves the specific with the general aiding the reading in addressing both. This poem does that for me. If space allowed, I could continue with examples like these. Your better choice would be to purchase the book.

Schools and Families: Creating Essential Connections for Learning (2001)

by Sandra Christenson and Susan Sheridan. New York: Guilford Press, hardback \$32.00

What a timely addition to our libraries! The tie between schools and families is a highly charged current topic. This book will aid you in thinking about these special connections. Sandra Christenson, a University of Minnesota professor, and her Nebraska colleague, Susan Sheridan, add richly to the growing literature on this subject.

I was drawn in to read more when on the first page, I was asked, “Why another book...on this subject?” Immediately, the authors make the case for a book that explores a real partnership between schools and families, not another book of activities of minimal substance. If you are looking for new twists on advisory groups, volunteers opportunities in schools, or the schools obligation to inform parents, then this will NOT be the book for you. If, however, you want to examine what real partnership could involve, then get *Schools and Families*.

The book is respectful of both families and school personnel, cognizant of their special roles in children's lives, willing to discuss boundaries, but also ways to partner...fully. Rationale and rich examples are provided. The process of relationship building, they write, must start early and continue across an academic year, and across a child's entire academic experience. How that can be done is detailed in this impressive volume.