

# MCFR

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

# Family Forum

FALL 2009

Family Forum  
is the  
newsletter of  
the  
Minnesota  
Council on  
Family  
Relations, a  
state affiliate  
of the  
National  
Family  
Council on  
Relations



The Minnesota Council on Family Relations strengthens all families by educating and supporting family professionals and promoting connections among those involved in research, policy and practice.

## Annual Elections Issue!

by Rose Allen, MEd, Nominating Committee Chair

Please review the following MCFR Slate of Board nominees, then print your ballot (page 5) and fax it to 651-407-1754 by November 15.

**President Elect: Leanne Sponsel, PhD** As a parent educator with Mounds View's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program, I work with a range of parents: some are "first timers", others have several children; some are new to our program, others have been taking classes for years. My belief is that by teaching child development to parents, I am equipping them with information that will guide their parenting decisions, make clear some of the mysteries of raising children, and ease some of the challenges of parenting.

In May of 2009, I completed my Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD), specializing in family education. My dissertation focused on the thoughts and actions of licensed parent educators who guide student teachers in the field. I have always considered myself a "teacher educator" - whether those teachers are college students, parents, or others in the role of teaching children. My life

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## Reality Check: Work and Family in a 24/7 World

Friday, December 4

Neighborhood House St. Paul, Minnesota

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

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Leanne Sponsel..... 651-646-1474

Pa Nhia Yang..... 651-503-1983

### Minnesota Council on Family Relations

2738 Evergreen Cir, St. Paul, MN 55110

phone: 651-407-0950 fax: 651-407-1754

[www.mcfr.net](http://www.mcfr.net)

## From the President Rose Allen

### Greetings,

#### Here are a few of my favorite things...

- Apple pie – warm from the oven
- The National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference – San Francisco – here I come!
- A good night's sleep
- Talking about any aspect of family research
- The month of December
- Planning an MCFR Conference
- An occasional rainy day
- Teaching just about anything!
- My computer – especially e-mail
- Playing with fabric, yarn and beads
- Watching my grandson grow from an infant to a one year old – there is nothing more wonderful than that!

#### How fortunate I am to have work that lets me do some of my favorite things.

How fortunate I am to have colleagues who feel passionate about the importance of supporting families. What a privilege it has been to serve as the president of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations this year.

But the year isn't over yet – plan on attending our Annual Fall conference –

#### Reality Check: Work and Family in a 24/7 World

December 4, 2009

Neighborhood House - St. Paul, MN

Looking ahead - 2010 will be an exciting time – we will be offering regional trainings on Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators.

And the National Council on Family Relations conference will be held in Minneapolis – mark your calendars and PDA's now - Tuesday, November 2 through Saturday, November 6, 2010 at the Minneapolis Hilton & Towers.

Rose Allen, 2009 MCFR President

### A Note from the Editor:

Hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter. Included are a ballot and candidate bios. Please vote. My thanks to the Nominating Committee for all their hard work and to all other 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 editor

612-331-1970 [rpitzer@umn.edu](mailto:rpitzer@umn.edu)

### Reality Check: Work and Family in a 24/7 World

Register online at [www.mcfr.net](http://www.mcfr.net) Wilder Center, St. Paul, Minnesota

## Slate of Board Nominees (Continued from page 1)

span development perspective is supported by my Master's degree in adult education and my self-designed Bachelor's degree that combined architecture and family studies.

I live recycling - especially in the forms of repurposing items, finding ways to share resources, and finding great garage sale bargains. Need something? Tell me what and how much you want to spend and I'll find it. Yesterday's "find" was a selection of 18 children's books (my passion) for which I paid \$5.75. Pretty good deal. And soon I'll use those books to start a parenting discussion, support a family that doesn't have books in their home, or delight someone with an unexpected gift.

I consider board membership a part of my own professional development, a way to support and influence my field, and an opportunity to interact with other professionals. Over the years I have viewed MCFR as a premiere professional organization and I value being part of that dedicated group.

**Treasurer: Heather Cline** I am pursuing a MA and PhD in Family Education at the University of Minnesota. I am interested in ways in which parent education can promote parent growth and development, thereby strengthening the parent-child relationship.

My favorite food is tofu pad thai and I love outdoor adventure activities like rock climbing and kayaking.

I have been blessed to serve on the MCFR board for two years as Student Section Chair, and I look forward to the continued opportunity to support MCFR as treasurer.

**Student Section Chair: Alisha Hardman** I am a second year doctoral student in the Family, Youth, and Community program at the University of Minnesota. I received my Bachelor's of Science in Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University in May 2005 and completed my Masters of Science in Family Life Education and Consultation also at Kansas State in August of 2008 directly before moving to Minnesota. I currently hold a research assistantship with University of Minnesota Extension as a member of the Family Development Applied Research and Evaluation Unit. My research interest is in juxtaposing the integration of family, youth and community within the reality of daily life against their integration in academia.

As a four year member of NCFR, I was excited to move to Minnesota and have the opportunity to become involved in the Minnesota Council on Family Relations through involvement with the student section. I have appreciated the supportive atmosphere that fosters professional development opportunities for students and look forward for continued opportunities to network with professionals and students.

## Support the MCFR December 4 Silent Auction

December 4 is the date of MCFR's Annual Conference. One of the fun activities during the day is competing for coveted treasures and prospective gifts at the Silent Auction. There are several ways you can do this.—

- You can contribute a special item for the auction, such as crafts, international artifacts, a basket of related items, gift cards, jewelry, books you have authored or edited, DVD's, pottery, needlework, baby items, and white elephant items you find in your attic or closets. You can really be creative!
- You can purchase items by bidding on them, up in increments from the base price and you can outbid your colleagues.
- You can do both and in so doing support Student MCFR members. How? All funds raised from the auction go to support student scholarships and expenses to travel and attend the conference. Last year over \$700 was raised. Let's do this again this year!

You can bring your items to the conference on December 4. Call or email Mary Jo Czaplewski at [czapmj@usfamily.net](mailto:czapmj@usfamily.net) or 763-502-1345 before Monday, Dec. 1, and let her know what you are bringing, its \$\$ market value and what base price you want the bids to start at. If possible bring it in a carry home container.

Be an early bird Christmas shopper! Enjoy the fun of bidding! Support our students! Thanks.

## At Large Board Members:

**Kristin Dillon** I am an evaluator with Wilder Research and my primary focus is evaluating programs that impact diverse families and family members. Because I come from a family background and my passion is family, I work hard to integrate a family systems perspective in to the projects I work on. I feel that it is incredibly important in research to recognize the bi-directional links both within and between the family and the contexts in which they live. This focus on family helps to strengthen the evaluations and better meets the emerging needs that programs are addressing.

I am a doctoral candidate in the Family Social Science department at the University of

Continued on page 4

### **Slate of Board Nominees (Continued from page 3)**

Minnesota. I received my bachelor's and master's degrees in the same program. I also received my post-baccalaureate certificate in Housing Studies. I am currently working on my dissertation on parenting and children's adjustment in families living in supportive housing.

Family is such an important part of my life that when my husband and I were looking for houses a little over a year ago, we ended up deciding to move into a house less than a block away from where my parents live. Having them close has been such a wonderful experience for me, and hopefully my husband. Incidentally, we also convinced his parents to move within 10 minutes from where we live, so we have both sides of the family close at hand.

I have been involved with the MCFR Board for the last four years. I started as a student representative, and I helped to create the Student Section of the Board. I then moved into the position of Treasurer, which I have served as for the last two years. I have helped to chair three conferences since joining the board. These include: Families and Civility: Pathways to Violence (Spring 2006), Children's Right to a Healthy Social Environment: How to Protect Them from Social Toxicity (Fall 2007), and Families, Health, and Mental Health (Spring 2009). I have invested a great deal into this Board and I feel that I have received a great deal of knowledge, experience, support, and warmth in return. I learned a lot from my experiences so far, but I feel I still have more to learn and grow. The reason I am running for an at-large board position at this time is that I want to take a step back to devote more time and energy to my dissertation, but still be an active member of a group that shares my passion and concern for families. I also believe that it is important to have a variety of family professionals on this board and I think my role as an applied researcher can help to support the broad mission of this organization.

**San Ha** I am a licensed parent and family educator. I currently work as a substitute/reserve teacher for parent educators and early childhood teachers in the Minneapolis Public Schools' Early Childhood Family Education program. I have an M.Ed. in Family Education, University of Minnesota and a B.A. in Philosophy and Psychology, University of Minnesota.

I worked as a volunteer teacher at Jane Addams School for Democracy in St. Paul, Minnesota to help immigrant families prepare for the citizenship test. I also worked as the principal of a small non-profit Japanese school (K-12) in Minneapolis.

My wife, daughter (16), son (10), and I have lived in Minnesota for about 11 years. I am ethnically South Korean but was born and raised in Japan. I moved to the United States with my wife (who is from Minneapolis) and our daughter about 16 years ago. I became an American citizen 12 years ago.

I enjoy reading, walking, watching movies, listening to music, singing (including karaoke), and meditating. Some of my favorite foods are tofu, miso soup, kimchi (a spicy Korean fermented chili pepper cabbage dish), okonomiyaki (a Japanese-style pancake), curry and rice, noodles (including pasta, ramen, and soba/buckwheat noodles), blueberries, carrot cake, and pumpkin pie. My favorite tea is green tea.

I strongly believe that supporting and educating not only families but also family professionals are effective and desirable ways to achieve my goal which is to make the world a better place through developing better people and strengthening families. In addition to supporting and educating families, therefore, I am very interested in serving on the MCFR Board for supporting and educating family professionals as well.

**Eric Hansen, EdD** I have been an educator for Minneapolis Public Schools' Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program for 12 years, teaching both parent education and early childhood. I have also worked for Osseo, Prior Lake, Spring Lake Park, and Minnetonka ECFE programs. Prior to working for ECFE programs, I was a social worker in a variety of programs working with people with severe and persistent mental illness, adolescents and their families, and low income families. My work as a social worker introduced me to family education.

I just completed my doctorate in education from the University of Minnesota with a focus on family education. Currently, I am completing a practicum with Washburn Center for Children to complete my certificate in marriage and family therapy at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

I have been a member of NCFR/MCFR for over ten years and a Certified Family Life Educator for nine years. I have been interested in getting more actively involved with MCFR for a number of years and the Board's At-Large position would provide an opportunity to work with all of you to build our connections amongst each other, continue the work in sharing resources and information to enhance our work, and advocate for family life educators to policy makers and the public.

**Slate of Board Nominees (Continued from page 4)**

**Sharon Powell, PhD, MEd** For the last four years I have taught family studies to undergraduate students at St. Olaf College. My research interests include low-income family issues, family policy, and child development. Prior to academics, I was a Marriage and Family Counselor at Catholic Charities in Nashville, TN. I specialized in play therapy. 2004- PhD in Family Social Science from University of MN .1994- MEd in Human Development Counseling from Vanderbilt University. 1990- BA in Sociology from Samford University.

My husband, Patrick, is a Special Ed teacher at Washburn High School in Minneapolis. My older son, Sean, is eight and my younger son, Kieran, is four. We live in the Seward neighborhood in South Minneapolis. Though I'm a native Southerner, we've lived in the Twin Cities for 13 years and I love Minnesota as though I've lived here all my life. As a family, we enjoy camping in state parks, trips to Duluth, family bike rides, visiting zoos, libraries, and museums, and taking advantage of the many cool events sponsored in our cities. Personally, I'm a real bookworm and I love to cook. We have a beautiful deck and I also enjoy sitting out there and talking with friends when I get a chance!

As a member of the National Council on Family Relations, I believe that state affiliates are vitally important because the state level is generally where practitioners are more involved. While I appreciate the value of research that is emphasized at the national level, I don't think research has much power unless we have a way to share information with practitioners. The members of MCFR are doing important work with families every day and I want to support their work in any way that I can.

**Nicole Rice** I've been a nanny for over the past 14 years. Caring for children ages newborn to adolescent. I've been a volunteer Guardian ad Litem for Hennepin County Juvenile Court for over the past 4 years. Currently, I contract part time as a Guardian ad Litem in Family Court for Hennepin County.

I have a BA in Child Development. I will be completing my MA in Human Services; Family Life Education (MA, CFLE) this November 2009.

I enjoy running 5K's and half marathons. I've completed 4 marathons-New York City, Grandma's and Twin Cities (2)

I enjoy learning new ways of "reaching out" to emerging families of today. Being a part of the MCFR Board will allow me to continue working with families and individuals in the community as a Family Life Educator.

**MCFR acknowledges Rose Allen for her tireless efforts chairing the Nominating Committee and we thank all of our nominees for their willingness to serve.**

# 2010 MCFR Board Ballot

**President-Elect: (Write-in or choose one nominee)**

- Leanne Sponsel, PhD  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Treasurer: (Write-in or choose one nominee)**

- Heather Cline  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Section Chair: (Write-in or choose one nominee)**

- Alisha Hardman  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**At-Large Members: (Write-in or choose up to five nominees)**

- |                                           |                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kristin Dillon   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharon Powell, PhD, MEd |
| <input type="checkbox"/> San Ha           | <input type="checkbox"/> Nicole Rice             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eric Hansen, EdD | <input type="checkbox"/>                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____            |                                                  |

**DIRECTIONS**

Please print this page, then return your completed ballot to MCFR via fax (651-407-1754)

or US mail to:

Minnesota Council on Family Relations  
2738 Evergreen Circle  
St. Paul MN 55110.

**Ballots are due by November 15, 2009  
Thank you.**

## Communications Committee Report

Peg Lindlof, Communications Committee Chair

We hope you've seen MCFR's updated website, which is colorful and organized but will always be a "work in progress." Thanks to NCFR for hosting our website as an affiliate benefit, which saves us a monthly fee. We are also grateful to Jason Samuels of the NCFR staff for his technical assistance. Thanks to Pa Nhia Yang and Rose Allen for getting the transition work done! We will be exploring how to establish a "Members Only" area on the website to add more value for MCFR members. We are committed to keeping information on the website relevant and timely.

Ron Pitzer and Linda Vukelich are to be commended for the contents and colorful design of *The Family Forum* newsletter you are currently reading. Thanks to all of the contributors, too.

One long-term goal of the Communications Committee is to increase communication and sharing among members. Don't forget to send messages through the MCFR listserv. It's easy—just send an email to [MCFR@lists.umn.edu](mailto:MCFR@lists.umn.edu). The listserv is not just for announcements and job postings. It's also a great place to pose a question to your professional colleagues or ask for ideas related to your connections with families. And don't forget to let others know about successes in your work!

## Policy Committee Report

Carolyn Carr Latady, Policy Committee Chair; Family Support Advocate, Forest Lake Area Schools

The Policy Committee has had a busy couple of months planning for the Fitting Families into Policies, Outcomes & Results: The Family Impact Checklist workshop held on October 1st in collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Children, Youth and Families Consortium. See separate article in this newsletter for a summary of this workshop,

Policy Action Bulletins based on the following MCFR conference themes are available at: <http://www.mcfr.net/policy.htm>.

- Nature, Children and Families: A Necessary Connection
- Contemporary Families – Formation, Function and the Future
- Families, Health and Mental Health: Military Families
- Families, Health and Mental Health: Postpartum Depression

We are continuing to work on updating the policy pages on the MCFR website, <http://www.mcfr.net/policy.html> and linking these pages to resources and information on the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) website, <http://www.ncfr.org/pubpol/index.asp>.

The MCFR Policy Committee always welcomes additional members. If you have an interest in joining this group and/or would like additional information, please contact Carolyn Carr Latady at [clatady@forestlake.k12.mn.us](mailto:clatady@forestlake.k12.mn.us) or 651-982-8350.

## Membership Committee Report

Nancy Melquist, Membership Committee Chair

### Have you renewed your MCFR membership?

The term for MCFR membership is September 1 – August 31. MCFR members received an email membership renewal reminder on September 1, 2009. The membership renewal reminder included an online option making renewing as simple as a couple of mouse clicks. The link to renew your membership is: [www.eventville.com/catalog/eventregistration1.asp?eventid=1005961](http://www.eventville.com/catalog/eventregistration1.asp?eventid=1005961)

### Why Should You Join MCFR?

MCFR's mission is to "strengthen all families by education and supporting family professionals and promoting connections among those in research, policy and practice." The benefits of a MCFR membership include:

- A place to learn, connect and take action with others in the family field.
- An important link in the practical application of current family research through the MCFR *Family Forum* newsletter (3 electronic issues annually), conferences and workshops.
- Substantially reduced fees for MCFR conferences and workshops.
- Membership on the MCFR listserv.
- Awards and recognition.
- Connection to the international professional association, National Council on Family Relations (NCFR).

If you would prefer a membership renewal application mailed to you, call the office at 651-407-0950, or visit [www.mcfr.net](http://www.mcfr.net). Don't wait! Join MCFR today!

# Reality Check: Work and Family in a 24/7 World



2009 MCFR ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
Friday, December 4, 2009 - Neighborhood House St Paul, MN

by Peg Lindlof and Marcie Brooke, Conference Co-Chairs

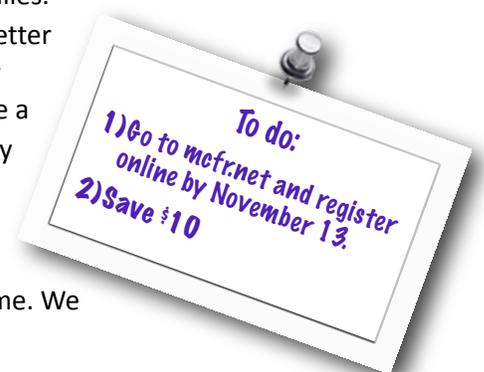
With less than ten weeks to go before the MCFR annual conference, the excitement is building. We have energetic committee members who are working hard to make sure that the agenda has something for everyone. Registration will begin in mid-October, and there will be an incentive for signing up early.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Brenda Bass, will share highlights of research she and other family scholars have been doing that relate to all who work with families. Then there will be a lively conversation with Dr. Bass, Rachel Hastings and Dr. Susan Walker as they respond to and expand the topic of work and family in a 24/7 world. There are many perspectives about how technology and the pace of modern life impact all families.

Details of the afternoon breakout sessions are being finalized as this newsletter goes to press. We are excited about the people who have agreed to help family professionals learn skills and ideas related to work and family. There will also be a poster session for students, and our fourth annual Silent Auction to raise money for student scholarships to conferences.

We can't turn back the clock or slow the rate of change, but as professionals we can help families understand how work and family issues affect children and adults, and give them tools to help them at work and at home. We hope to see you on December 4!

**For full details – go to [www.mcfr.net](http://www.mcfr.net).**



## News from NCFR by Marcie Brooke, CFLE

If you have not done so in the past week, I invite you to go to [www.ncfr.org](http://www.ncfr.org) to visit their newly updated website. It is filled with information that may help you in your daily work, your education, or your interests. It also has a special section on the Annual Conference to be held in San Francisco, California November 10-14th. NCFR has done a number of things to make this conference as affordable as possible due to the struggling economy.

You will not want to miss the informative and enlightening Affiliate Council Leadership workshop on Wednesday, November 11th from 10:00 AM-3:00 PM in San Francisco. Our own Dr. Ada Alden, Program Chair of this year's Leadership workshop, has worked diligently to offer information and education on how Affiliates and Student Affiliates can enhance, rejuvenate or begin new Affiliates. The main theme of this training is explaining and demonstrating exactly how and why the Affiliates need NCFR and why NCFR needs the Affiliates. Everyone will leave with clear directions and new opportunities!

The Student Affiliate Council Breakfast will be held on Friday, November 13, 2009. This is the second year in a row that a MCFR Student Affiliate member will be receiving an award. Kristin Dillon is our award winner this year! Congratulations, Kristin!!

Graduating Seniors, Masters, and Doctoral students please visit [www.ncfr.org](http://www.ncfr.org) to apply to wear the NCFR Honors Stole to be worn at your commencement.

Congratulations to Minnell Tralle the newly elected Affiliate Council Board member. Minnell will represent the Affiliate Council for two years on the NCFR Board of Directors. She will then transition to be the President of the Affiliate Council Board for two years. Chloe Merrill of Weber State University in Ogden, Utah will become the Affiliate Council President as Dr. Richard Sale of Tarleton State U in Sphenville, Texas finishes his term.

This is my last month on the Affiliate Council Board as President Elect, President and Past President. It has been a challenging and enriching six years. Thank you all.

# Student Section: Greetings students and student supporters!

Heather Cline  
Student Section Chair

We are looking toward another engaging and energizing year for the Student Section of MCFR. This year builds on our foundational activities including social events, mentorship opportunities, and a student poster session at the December MCFR conference. A change for the Student Section is also on the horizon. You may have noticed my bio in the nomination section of this newsletter under the MCFR committee position of Treasurer. I will continue my involvement in the Student Section, but I look forward to passing this torch to a highly respected peer and friend. The Student Section committee has nominated Alisha Hardman for the position of Chair of the Student Section (see Alisha's bio for more information).

**Fall Social Event** Get ready for another informative and thought-provoking student event on October 23rd from 4:30 – 6:30pm at the Snelling Avenue Caribou Coffee in Roseville. As you may know, the focus of the December MCFR conference is on work-life balance. Motivated by this ever-present tension in the lives of professionals, the student event is going to focus on the student-life balance. As a committee of doctoral students, the student section lives this tension every day and we look forward to opening up the dialogue on this challenge to students at all post-secondary levels. Professionals interested in supporting student growth and development are always welcome.

**Student Poster Session, December 2009** Thanks again to all of the students who presented their work at the MCFR conferences last December and April. This poster session not only offers students a chance to share their work with the field, but is also an opportunity for professional development and networking. Professionals attending MCFR conferences also benefit from learning about the work happening at the academic level and connecting with those students who will contribute to the future of the family field.

The December 2009 MCFR conference is hosting another Student Poster Session. Check out [mcfrr.net/conferences](http://mcfrr.net/conferences) for more information.

Stay tuned for more information on our student events and mentorship program. For more information about the student section, go to [mcfrr.net/students](http://mcfrr.net/students).

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## Kristin Dillon wins NCFR AOC Student Research Paper Award

MCFR has a national winner! Congratulations to Kristin Dillon, current MCFR Treasurer, who won the NCFR Association of Councils Student Research Paper Award in June! The title of Kristin's paper is "Attachment to Adoptive Parents in Adolescents and Young Adults: Influences on Young Adult Romantic Relationship Attachment." As the contest winner, Kristin received a \$500 award, and a travel stipend to attend the upcoming NCFR National Conference in San Francisco in November, where she will present her paper.

Kristin's paper was selected for submission to the NCFR contest by a MCFR review committee who used the following NCFR criteria in selecting Kristin's paper, from several submitted, as the MCFR submission to the contest.

- Uniqueness of research question.
- The degree to which the findings contribute to the field.
- Clarity of writing.
- Good use of theory.
- Comprehensive literature review, building upon previous work.
- Sound research methodology.
- Application for practitioners and/or likelihood of spurring future research.

This is the second consecutive year that MCFR has won the NCFR AOC Student Research Paper Award. Last year, Sarah Lassig, also an MCFR member, was the contest winner.

Congratulations, Kristin! MCFR is very proud of your accomplishment!

# Fitting Families into Policies, Outcomes & Results: The Family Impact Checklist

*Learning how asking a few simple questions can really make a difference for families*

by Carolyn Carr Latady, Policy Committee Chair

**The intersection of public policy and families is a key focus of MCFR.** This was evident at the Fitting Families into Policies, Outcomes & Results: The Family Impact Checklist workshop held on October 1st at the Minnesota State Capital. This workshop, a collaboration between MCFR and the University of Minnesota's Children, Youth and Families Consortium, brought together 53 participants from diverse perspectives and organizations who were interested in:

- Connecting with others who work with and care about families.
- Understanding the importance of maintaining "a family impact perspective" in policymaking and how it differs from "family policy."
- Learning how to use the Family Impact Checklist, a practical tool for considering the policy implications of practitioners' work with families.
- Gaining new insights and finding a comfortable place for themselves in the policy world.
- Identifying a plan to implement the Family Impact Perspective and the Family Impact Checklist into their work.

The workshop opened with a welcome from Representative Sandra Peterson (DFL, District 45A) followed by a history of family-focused policy in Minnesota and nationally provided by Ellen Shelton, Research Scientist at Wilder Research. Rose Allen, MCFR Board President, also gave some welcoming remarks and spoke briefly about MCFR's work on policy issues.

Sara Benning, Policy Coordinator at the Children, Youth and Family

Consortium (CYFC), introduced Karen Cadigan, CYFC Policy Director who presented an overview of the Family Impact Checklist, including how the family impact perspective is unique and how to conduct an analysis of issues in order to examine the impact of policies, programs and services on families.

This overview was followed by large and small group exercises in which participants generated a topic and then walked through a family impact analysis of the selected topic in order to better understand the family impact analysis process using the Family Impact Checklist which includes the following six principles:

- Family support and responsibilities
- Family membership and stability
- Family involvement and interdependence
- Family partnership and empowerment
- Family diversity
- Support of vulnerable families

These interactive sessions were followed by an opportunity to process the day's training through discussion and evaluations. Senator Claire Robling (R, District 35) brought the workshop to a close by summarizing highlights of the day and encouraging participants to get involved in public policy discussions.

Watch for more information on the Family Impact Checklist in future issues of the Family Forum and on the MCFR website at:

[www.mcfr.net/policy.htm](http://www.mcfr.net/policy.htm).



Karen Cadigan, CYFC Policy Director who presented an overview of the Family Impact Checklist.



(Above and below.) Participants broke into large and small groups to generate a topic and then walked through a family impact analysis of their selected topic.



Training collaborators (l to r): Karen Cadigan, Betty Cooke, Carolyn Carr Latady, Rose Allen, Linda Vukelich, and Sara Benning

## Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators

by Betty Cooke, PhD, CFLE

In 1992 the Minnesota Council on Family Relations formed a Parent Education Ethics Committee as part of what was then a separate Parent and Family Education Section of MCFR. From that work came several editions of the booklet "Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators," the latest and new version which is available in PDF format on the MCFR website at [www.mcfr.net](http://www.mcfr.net). Hard copies are also available for purchase through MCFR for \$5.00 per copy (checks written to MCFR) by contacting Linda Vukelich at:

Minnesota Council on Family Relations  
2738 Evergreen Circle  
St. Paul, MN 55110  
Phone 651-407-0950  
Fax 651-407-1754

### History of development of the booklet:

- The Parent Education Ethics Committee of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations (MCFR) was formed and began work in 1992.
- Parent educators were surveyed, and the committee consulted with ethics experts and reviewed literature on ethics in related fields.
- The principles and virtues were inductively developed through a first round of workshops.
- The case study process was developed and a second round of workshops was conducted to refine the principles and process.
- The booklet was published and further rounds of workshops were held.
- MCFR Ethics Committee members presented at state and national conferences.
- The document became part of NCFR publications.
- The principles and process were revised in 2008-2009 and adopted for use in the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) certification process.

The MCFR is in the process of planning workshops on use of the booklet and process with various audiences around the state and nation. Plans include:

- (1) offering a series of planned workshops in the late winter and early spring of 2010 at various sites throughout the state sponsored by MCFR and
- (2) making available MCFR members with expertise on ethical thinking and practice in parent and family life education to do workshops upon request by various organizations, agencies, and other groups.



# Treasurer's Corner

By Kristin Dillon, MCFR Treasurer

As I am coming to the end of my term as treasurer for MCFR, my mind is whirling with thoughts about the important information I can't forget to pass on to the next person elected to this position. In some ways I feel like I'm just learning what it means to be the treasurer of this organization. However, the lessons I have learned transcend bookkeeping and balance sheets. I would like to take this opportunity to pass along the lessons I have learned so far, both because they provide insight into how MCFR functions and because I'm hoping the next treasurer reads this column in case I forget to tell him/her something important.

**First, I have seen that in organizational finances, just as in life, things often don't go as planned.** I feel that this has been especially salient for all of us personally and professionally in the last two years. As global economy shifts, it creates quakes through every facet of our community. Such is the greatness of our interconnected world. Every year, the treasurer and our administrative professional get together and create an annual budget based on the income and expenses of the previous years. This budget is reasonable, tidy, and based on past trends. Despite all of these efforts though, our year end budget tends to look vastly different than the one we began with. More often than not, this is due to our board seizing new opportunities to provide to our members. In the last two years, we revamped our website and our marketing materials, we helped to organize the family impact checklist training, we created an online, credit card friendly conference registration and

dues system, and we are currently updating our parent education ethics booklet, just to name a few. These activities were not even on our radar during the budgeting process, but they have been important investments. Also, we have noticed the same pinch in our organization that others are noticing at home and at work. These economic trends could not have been easily predicted in our small non-profit budget, but they did have an impact. These budget changes have required us, and especially me, to be flexible. However, I am constantly reassured that our board truly understands what it means to be sustainable and with all of these budget shifts, we are still able to always come out alright. It is the perseverance and forward-thinking that I am so proud of in our field in general.

**Second, I have learned what a tremendous balancing act it is to provide the best services possible to our members and to not overburden our members financially.** This is true both for dues and conferences. Over the years, we have maintained a mission of providing high quality resources and professional development opportunities for our members. We also consistently strive to keep costs as reasonable as possible for these opportunities. I never realized before becoming treasurer what a delicate balance these two priorities demand. In many cases, especially as our member benefits have expanded recently, the financial costs of these investments have not been fully returned. However, I believe that the social-emotional and professional returns on these investments have been significant.

Therefore, we have made conscious decisions to make these investments with the knowledge that it may take a little bit of time before they pay off financially. As long as we are responsible about our spending and maintaining our mission to best serve our members in a sustainable way, it has been well worth the financial costs.

**Finally, being treasurer has really emphasized to me the great importance of our members.** I have learned just how much this organization exists because of its members and to serve its members. Our members are incredibly generous, caring, and steadfast. We have many members whose commitment to this organization has spanned decades. That is a wonderful testimony to the work of MCFR and the character of its members. Also, in the time that I have served on the board of MCFR, we have established our scholarship fund and accompanying silent auction. These two activities, and our member support of them, have demonstrated the generosity and altruism of the people in this organization. Your support has helped us to better serve all of our members, even when times are difficult or when students are working hard to make their way in the field. This lesson has been incredibly rewarding to learn and it has solidified my admiration and commitment to this organization.

I thank you all for these lessons and this wonderful opportunity to serve you and the board. If you have any questions, please contact me at [kschneid@umn.edu](mailto:kschneid@umn.edu).

# Mentoring Through MCFR and NCFR

Sue Meyers, Professor Emeritus, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota; MCFR historian and Board member

NCFR requested some examples of mentoring for their newsletter (Report) to share between members. At MCFR, we have a rich history of mentoring colleagues, protégées, and acquaintances. Many in MCFR have been mentors to other MCFR members.

We even have learned from printed materials that developed theories and provided research that hone in on what our family field is all about. Students also mentor professors, practitioners, other students and any who teach or apply learning to others.

Any Board or leadership group wisely brings in new members while retaining the wisdom of those who came before them. New faces bring new perspectives based on their own experiences learning from others. Experienced faces provide a context of what has been and how this developed. MCFR has a strong history in bringing in new members to the board and retaining experienced ones as consultants or committee members or chairs.

Most know that my longest and most significant mentor was (and is) my colleague and friend Ron Pitzer. I observed how he encouraged MCFR/NCFR members to submit proposals for papers on applied education, research findings and adaptations of theories to their work. The Extension Educators and others worked very hard and their presentations were well received by the NCFR annual conference attendees. I also observed Ron's involvement on the NCFR Board, through the Association of Councils, affiliated councils, heading the membership committee and through section leadership. He was

always prepared for meetings, but allowed for much shared input before he presented his now-adapted ideas to others. I wish that I could say that I learned all these lessons well and now am just as good, but I must admit I fall short in

## At MCFR, we have a rich history of mentoring colleagues, protégées, and acquaintances

many respects. That doesn't mean I don't want to keep trying.

As I have observed mentoring throughout my career and found that I have tried to learn from those in close proximity (work or department colleagues), but reach out to other disciplines, departments and colleges as well. This cross-disciplinary perspective has broadened my perspective on the family. I also have looked to cross-generational learning – where research on infant brain development can clarify some of the losses in late years dementia. Families automatically are cross-generational, but if seen internally (within one family system only), there is less appreciation for family members who join our families as adults (often through marriage or partnerships). I have also sought out means of being respectful within families, especially when there are deeply held beliefs that are not shared. Not only are the differences political and religious, but can be work place or geographical in nature. To find mentors or peers who choose to discuss difficult issues to understand different perspectives without having to change to a shared perspective is rare at best. However, respectful discussions can

add to learning on all sides. Nobody said this would be easy.

I see examples in teaching parent education from ethical perspectives – work so skillfully done by fellow MCFR members (Betty Cooke, Ada Alden, Glen Palm, and a large group of colleagues). I saw this in the development of Positive Parenting (developed by Ron Pitzer

and a team of colleagues including Kathy Olson, Rose Allen, Minnell Tralle, and many others). Instead of coming from a framework of guilt, this program looked at the positive outcomes parents can receive while guiding and parenting their young children. I saw in the development of Parents Forever (developed by Minnelle Tralle, Rose Allen, Ron Pitzer, Sue Meyers, and many other colleagues) how a focus on children of the divorcing couple may lessen the rancor between the parents so their children are not caught in the cross-fire of parental hostility. When parents act in the best interest of their children, they are less likely to retain high levels of anger at the other parent (formerly known as “the Ex”).

I encourage each of us to reflect on our own mentors and see how we developed as family professionals. If you were influenced sufficiently, consider dropping him/her a note and telling of experiences learned from that mentor.

I want to salute another fine mentor – Ted Bowman. In August, Ted was honored by induction into the WCCO 830 radio “Good Neighbor Award” Hall of Fame for his work with families. Congratulations, Ted!

# Research The Impact of Relational Aggression on Children's Mental Health and Relationships with Peers

By Amy Gower, Andrienne Banny and Lindsay Mathieson, Doctoral Students, Center for Relational Aggression, Crick Social Development Lab, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota

Most studies about aggressive behavior in children have focused on boys and on physical expressions of aggression, which gave the appearance that girls really were sugar and spice and everything nice. However, for the past fifteen years, we have studied relational aggression, used more often by girls than physical aggression. Rather than physically harming others, relationally aggressive children harm or threaten to harm the victim's relationships with others. In the school years, relational aggression involves behaviors such as gossiping, spreading rumors, and excluding others (e.g., "You can't come to my birthday party"), as well as threats of such retaliation (e.g., "Do this or I won't be your friend"). Recent studies in our lab as well as others' suggest that

relational aggression is used as early as preschool and continues into adulthood in a variety of situations, such as romantic relationships and the workplace.

**One key direction in the work on relational aggression is awareness.**

Interviews with school aged children indicate that children view relational aggression as mean, hurtful, and usually enacted in anger. Additionally, children and adolescents who are victims of relational aggression often experience adjustment problems including depression, anxiety, and loneliness. These studies demonstrate that relational aggression is a highly salient and harmful aspect of many children's daily experiences, one that is both viewed and experienced by children as hurtful and "aggressive".

In our lab, we have examined the ways in which relational aggression is associated with current and future social and psychological adjustment in individuals ranging in age from toddlers to college students. Often, we follow children for multiple years, observing their behavior in different classrooms with different peers to better understand the ways in which children's use of relational aggression changes over time. Here, we summarize selected results from these efforts with school aged children.

## Measuring Relational Aggression

Our recent research on the development of relational aggression in middle childhood includes a sample of children in grades 3 to 6. Focus on this age group is driven by the idea that important social and cognitive changes that occur during this developmental period may make relational aggression a particularly salient behavior. For example, the acquisition of language skills may enhance children's abilities to engage in more covert and sophisticated forms of relational aggression and increased cognitive capacities allow children to recall and retaliate against their peers in response to past relational provocations. Moreover, the evaluation of one's peers becomes increasingly important for children during these years, which may fuel relationally aggressive behavior. Our research has supported this developmental trajectory of relational aggression, as girls experience a growth in relationally aggressive behaviors during this period.

In order to assess the development of relational aggression and its associated outcomes, we gather information regarding children's behavior, friendships, peer experiences, and adjustment from multiple informants, including the child, his or her peers, parents, and teachers. Peer reports of aggression provide a rich and reliable source of information, as peers may be more knowledgeable about occurrences of aggression that may go unnoticed by parents or teachers, especially given the covert nature of relational aggression. Children are given a class roster and asked to select up to three classmates who engage in a particular behavior (e.g., "Kids, who, when they are mad at a person, get even by keeping that person from being in their group of friends"). This technique is also used to measure each child's general acceptance or rejection by their classmates (e.g., "Nominate up to three classmates with whom you like to hang out the most/the least").

## How Harmful Is Relational Aggression?

Through our research, we have found that relational aggression is associated with adjustment problems in children. One domain of adjustment that we have

studied is internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety. We have found that relational aggression is associated with depressive symptoms in school-aged children. In one study we showed that children who increased their engagement in relational aggression from 4th to 5th grade also showed increased internalizing problems across that time. We also know that children who are both relationally and physically aggressive may be at the highest risk for anxiety/depression. Not only is engaging in relational aggression associated with depressive symptoms, but experiencing relational victimization is also associated with depressive symptoms.

Our research has also shown that children who engage in relational aggression are rejected by their peers. In a longitudinal study, relationally aggressive behavior in 3rd grade predicted peer rejection three years later. It is possible that this relationship between relational aggression and peer rejection is cyclical, as we have noted that rejection, in turn, predicts further increases in relationally aggressive behavior. These associations are particularly troubling given the developmental significance of forming positive relationships with peers. Research consistently shows that children who are rejected by their peers are at risk for developing a number of adjustment difficulties, including loneliness, depression, and low academic achievement.

In addition to looking at the larger peer group, it is important to examine the role of friendships in the development and maintenance of relational aggression. In fact, some friendships may actually serve to promote engagement in relational aggression. Girls involved in relationships characterized by high levels of self-disclosure experience increases in relational aggression over time. It is possible that children use sensitive information elicited from friends as ammunition for relational aggression when they become angry. Another friendship context to consider is affiliation with relationally aggressive peers. Our research has shown that girls involved in friendships with highly relationally aggressive peers experience increases in relational aggression themselves. Collaborating against another peer may promote cohesiveness between friends, serving to reinforce relationally aggressive behavior.

## Future Research and Intervention Directions

One key direction in the work on relational aggression is awareness. We are already seeing more awareness on the part of schools, and we hope that this continues to grow. Parents, educators, and children themselves need to be made aware of the harmful effects of both engaging in relational aggression and experiencing relational victimization. For example, we are currently partnering with organizations such as Girl Scouts to work on promoting awareness of these behaviors among children and particularly among girls.

We also need to continue developing evidence-based interventions for addressing relational aggression. For example, some schools already have social programs in place that address relational aggression, but we don't always know how well those programs work. Furthermore, there is a need for development of interventions targeted to assist highly relationally aggressive individuals in reducing their aggressive behavior.

Finally, we need to continue to expand our knowledge about relational aggression and victimization. While there has been a great increase in the number of studies on this topic, we are only beginning to understand how these behaviors develop. More research is needed to understand what puts children at risk for using relational aggression frequently and also about the long-term outcomes of engaging in these behaviors. We have identified the occurrence of relational aggression across almost all phases of life, including early childhood. Now, we need more research examining the development of these behaviors from early childhood into adulthood.

For more information about relational aggression, our research, and research team, please contact our research coordinator, Peter Ralston, at [ralst003@umn.edu](mailto:ralst003@umn.edu) or visit: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ICD/SocialDevelopment>



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