



CONSORTIUM CONNECTIONS

In this issue

A delegation of 35 Minnesotans made the trek to Nashville on June 21 & 22 for the eight annual Family Re-Union conference, and seven of those took the stage as panelists. Many more colleagues from around Minnesota contributed ideas and resources to the year-long planning of the conference, and

countless others inspired our work by their creative efforts to strengthen families and communities in Minnesota. This issue features articles written by Family Re-Union participants and explores the intricate web of connections between family and community.

A Re-Union of Family and Community

*Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D., Director of the Children, Youth & Family Consortium
Jenny Keyser, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Children, Youth & Family Consortium*

Young people, parent educators, and grass roots leaders are talking informally to the Vice President of the United States, the U.S. Transportation Secretary, and other top policy makers. Moises Perez, founder of Alianza Dominicana, proudly tells how his community created a neighborhood gathering place for children and families in one of the most troubled parts of Manhattan, and named it La Plaza. "A safe haven and a sense of home," Perez argues has to come first, before any community development efforts can take root. Others share similar stories of strengthening families by strengthening communities. This is Family Re-Union. A two-day policy conference that brings together ordinary citizens and public officials for a down-to-earth conversation about the role of families in American democracy.

Begun back in 1992, this remarkable yearly event is moderated by Vice President Al Gore and Mrs. Gore and is sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Children, Youth and Family Consortium and Vanderbilt University's Child and Family Policy Center. Held in Nashville in late June, Family Re-Union focuses attention on issues critical to families and children—the role of men in the lives of children, family and work, families and the media, and families and health, have been among the featured themes. Each conference builds upon the year before in an on-going effort to reinvent family policy so it more accurately reflects the challenges facing families and local communities. There is a limit, of course, to what government can do. As Gore acknowledged in his opening remarks, "No policy proposal can teach a child the right values...no policy conference can create the kind of community where neighbors look after each other."

This year's conference, Family Re-Union 8: Family and Community, focused on the interconnection between families and communities and featured an array of grassroots efforts, from scrappy neighborhood garden projects to sophisticated community mapping initiatives. While celebrating these model programs, Family Re-Union 8 challenged participants to look beyond the latest success story to address the fundamental changes needed to sustain healthy families and livable communities. Recalling the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., Gore encouraged the audience to build "beloved communities" where families are strong and autonomous but inextricably bound to their communities and to other people.

"Family Re-Union 8 is about the messages of attachment, connection, and caring," said Vice President Gore, drawing upon the University of Minnesota's research on parent-child attachment. The Vice President emphasized how a secure attachment with a parent becomes the springboard for a child to go out into the world with confidence, ready to connect with others. Just as a child's secure attachment has its roots in the parent's sensitive, reliable response to the child's needs, so is the family's security grounded in knowing the community is a safe haven of support, respect and encouragement.

Family Re-Union isn't just talk. It has led to specific policy development. The expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act, the V-Chip legislation, and the BOOST-4-Kids initiative to streamline the delivery of social services to families are just a few of the policies shaped by past conferences. This year's conference introduced several initiatives that are

A Re-Union of Family and Community

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Mission Statement

The Children, Youth & Family Consortium was established in fall 1991 in an effort to bring together the varied competencies of the University of Minnesota and the vital resources of Minnesota's communities to enhance the ability of individuals and organizations to address critical health, education, and social policy concerns in ways that improve the well-being of Minnesota children, youth, and families.

Volume 8, Number 3, Fall 1999

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

A Community of Readers

Terilyn C. Turner, Ph.D., Area Superintendent, Saint Paul Public Schools

At the opening forum for Family Re-Union 8: Family and Community, Harry Boyte, Co-Director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Democracy & Citizenship, argued that the work of building community was "public work," and as such, is at the heart of the democratic process. A community engaged in public work also understands that democracy requires literacy in order to thrive. Historically, literacy laws kept African-Americans from voting, and now, lack of English serves as the same barrier for new immigrants. Freedom to read is both an entitlement and a mandate in a democracy.

Mobilizing a whole city around "literacy as public work" is exactly the plan of a group of community folks in Saint Paul. The Saint Paul Public Schools, the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, local libraries, community groups and businesses are joining together to encourage the entire community to participate in the "Saint Paul Reads—Saint Paul's An Open Book" campaign. The campaign, which begins this fall, asks all Saint Paul students, staff, families and citizens to read more and encourage others to read.

At first glance, the campaign may seem to be a strategy to engage the community in supporting the work of the schools, namely, to produce higher student achievement in test results and overall graduation standards. That's not a bad goal, and it certainly requires the community in order to achieve success.

But, a "reading community" means much more: it means a community that reads and values literacy. A reading community finds ways to encourage individuals and organizations to use the printed word to look beyond themselves, to explore new ideas and ways of viewing the world. A reading community loves language—all languages—and celebrates the wealth of stories and traditions that exist in a city of diverse cultures. Babies are read to and sung to in such a community, and children hear the rhythms and patterns of language everywhere.

A reading community understands that the vigorous practice of literacy links people of widely varying backgrounds together in a common purpose. Historically, the daily newspaper has filled that role, allowing people from all walks of life to talk freely about what they "just read in the morning paper." In today's world, e-mail, web sites, billboards and all forms of visual print require adults, as well as children, to be literate in new ways. A reading community must self-consciously promote literacy and expand literacy opportunities for all of its citizens, from infants to seniors.

To find out more about "Saint Paul Reads," call 612-399-9999 or contact www.saintpaulreads.org.



Seven year old Daniel Barzak presents Mrs. Gore with a book he and his classmates have made showing their community designed playground that is accessible to kids of all abilities. "If there wasn't Boundless Playground," Daniel explained, "children with disabilities would have to just sit and watch able kids play."

CONSORTIUM CONNECTIONS

Consortium Connections is published three times a year by the Children, Youth & Family Consortium: A University and Community Collaboration.

Publication staff: Jenny Keyser
Design: Brett Olson



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One of the most electric moments at Family Re-Union 8 occurred when Dr. Rob Ross, Director of San Diego County Health and Human Services, held up 853 pages of paperwork that a family seeking public assistance had to complete — it was the size of the Nashville phone book. He recalled bringing this daunting stack of forms to last year's conference and challenging Vice President Gore to help local communities decrease paperwork and streamline services for families. From that challenge the federal Boost for Kids initiative was born. The initiative is now providing federal support to 13 communities that are channeling more funds into prevention and making their family services more user-friendly and more results-oriented. Dr. Ross had a dramatically smaller set of forms to hold up this year and, he said, "This hasn't cost us a dime because we are using existing resources and existing energy more creatively to provide more and better services for families."

This powerful demonstration made the staff from St. David's Child Development & Family Services cheer along with the rest of the audience. And it reinforced the strengths of what is called "outcome-based contracting," a process in which a funder and a service provider agree on what outcomes are desired for a family and the service provider is then free to determine the "how".

For the past six years, St. David's — a non-sectarian, multi-service agency — has worked closely with Hennepin County in just this way. Both parties agree to an outcome-based contract that focuses on reducing child abuse and neglect. Unlike other contracts that list a specific fee for a specific task, the contracting parties agree to the overall goal of the project as well as a certain number of families to be served. St. David's agrees to tailor services for families participating in this program, with the goal of reducing stress and other related risk factors among families that are isolated, have little or no support system and who continue to experience multiple challenges in their lives. Staff in

the program provide advocacy, case management, and support to assist families to locate and access services in their communities — services such as housing, transportation, legal assistance, job training, education, mental health resources, and recreation. This program has had excellent outcomes for families in the six years it has existed: less out-of-home placement for children; a reduction in severity and frequency of child protection reports; and an increase in family stability.

Outcome-based contracts allow families to get what they need, which in many cases is a simpler, more individualized service than found in other contract models. If a family's primary need is housing, our case managers help the family search out and visit available housing options, and then assist in completing the necessary paperwork. Recently, a woman participating in this program used emergency funding within the contract to purchase a used car, which allowed her to complete her training program and search for employment. She now has a full-time position as a medical records clerk.

While some organizations remain fearful of outcome-based funding, at St. David's we have found it energizes our work. Family Re-Union 8 reminded us that there are many people in the community who are willing to take risks, change old paradigms of doing business, and in the process transform the lives of children and families.



St. David's works in partnership with all members of a family, including siblings, parents, and grandparents.



Flexible funding makes it possible for St. David's to tailor programs to meet the particular strengths and needs of each family.

Community Renewal

The idea of citizenship as public work generates hope, most importantly, because "work" opens many sources of power. Work produces things, leaves a legacy, changes one's community or the larger world. Thus it has very different power implications than charity or volunteerism. Democracy understood as the serious work of the people illumines the task of each age, and specifies the task of ours. For the 1940's, it was the war against fascism. For the 1960's, it was the struggle to dismantle segregation, whose civic character was expressed in Martin Luther King's comment that the movement was "bringing the whole nation back to the great wells of democracy." Today, the work of citizenship repairs the commonwealth. It overcomes the centrifugal forces of greed, identity politics, radical individualism, divisions along race, class, religion, ideology and other dynamics that erode a sense of the common lot.

—Harry Boyte, *Center for Democracy and Citizenship, University of Minnesota*

Youth Building Community

Kim Anderson of White Earth Reservation and Greg Mason of Minneapolis were among six young Americans on stage at Family Re-Union 8 to discuss the role that youth can play in strengthening family and community life.

Kim Anderson

Circles within circles define the life of Kim Anderson. When she left the White Earth Reservation to study horticulture at the University of Minnesota-Crookston, Kim says, "I was not proud of who I was." "I had seen poverty everywhere on the reservation, and I wasn't going back." But a student leadership conference on Native American food systems changed all that. Kim learned she was a natural born leader. And, she began to formulate an idea of how to merge her interest in horticultural with the nutrition and health needs on the reservation. "It was a real turning point in my life," Kim explains. She returned to the reservation as a member of the Aki Planning Circle, first as an intern and now as a teacher, gardener and nutritionist.



Kim Anderson oversees nine community gardens on the reservation.

The Aki Planning Circle is a circle of community members, gardeners, nutrition educators, students, reservation personnel and University of Minnesota extension educators from Mahnommen and Becker counties. Its goal is to improve the overall health of the community and combat the prevalence of diabetes and cancer on the reservation through gardening and nutrition. Kim is supporting this effort through teaching classes in nutrition and horticulture, fostering intergenerational learning, and overseeing several community gardens. Indian children from 4 to 13 years of age can be found in the community gardens digging potatoes, picking beans, and learning where vegetables and fruits come from. "Many children on the reservation have been raised on USDA commodity products and think that food comes in cans," Kim explains, "so they are surprised and excited to discover that potatoes grow underground and peas are found inside pods." While the children are learning about growing good food and eating well, they are also getting plenty of exercise and are interacting with community members of all ages.

An important figure in this circle of growing is Kim Anderson's grandfather, Clyde Estey. He is a master gardener, accomplished basket maker, and revered community elder. Kim's voice sparkles when she describes his wealth of knowledge about native plants and healing herbs. One of the most powerful lessons he teaches, Kim says, lies in his style of gardening: he grows in circles. Corn is planted in the middle of the circle, with peas and pole beans in the next ring so the vines can climb up the corn stalks. Squash is planted in the outer ring so the spreading leaves will shade the ground and inhibit the growth of weeds. Each one complements and supports each other. Much like the children, parents, and grandparents who work side by side in the gardens, renewing their ties to the land and strengthening the health and well being of the whole community.



Intergenerational gardening at White Earth.

When Kim took the stage at Family Re-Union 8 as a member of the panel "Youth and Community: Working Together," moderated by Mrs. Gore, she emphasized the importance of connecting young people to their family and their community traditions. "My family members are my heroes," she said, "and we all work in the community." They are volunteer fire fighters, county commissioners, teachers, foster parents, gardeners, and community leaders. "I am following in their footsteps," Kim says, and she is clearly home to stay.

To find out how the University of Minnesota is involved in Native American planning circles and nutrition and gardening on Minnesota reservations, contact Jim Sutherland, Coordinator of Pathways to Educational Partnerships, College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, 612/625-8295.

Greg Mason

Greg Mason is quick to tell you what he is most proud of as a neighborhood coordinator for Summit Academy OIC: "I've never had a kid quit on me and I've never quit on a kid!" Greg's "kids" range in age from 10 to 18 and are young people that many others have given up on. It helps, Greg says, that as a former gang member he knows exactly where these kids are coming from. It also helps that Greg is in his early twenties and a proud graduate of Summit Academy OIC. In fact, Greg received Summit Academy's 1998 Student Leadership Award for the student who best represents the Academy's mission of strengthening the community through education and vocational training.

The older youth in Greg's programs paint houses and build and market wooden lawn chairs, while the younger ones, 10 to 13 years old, provide lawn services to seniors as part of the Neighborhood Youth Corps. "It feels like we've cleaned every alley, empty lot and boulevard in the Phillips and Central Minneapolis neighborhoods!" laughs Greg. In

Community Conversations

Linda Cronk, U of MN Extension Service, Hennepin County

A large screen dominates the board room of the Hennepin County Government Center, as community members grab box lunches and settle in for an afternoon of viewing the opening session of Family Re-Union 8 via a satellite downlink connection. Before the broadcast begins, the group talks informally about their local efforts to strengthen families and communities. After the downlink ends, they will send their comments and responses to the conference planners via an on-line feedback form. Similar scenes were played out in 100 other downlink sites across Minnesota and the U.S. on June 21 as the eighth annual Family Re-Union conference rolled out.

The University of Minnesota Extension Service of Hennepin County convened this particular downlink Community Conversation with the help of several Hennepin County staff members. A variety of different Hennepin County departments were represented at the afternoon event—Children and Family Services, Community Health, Adult Services, the County Attorney's office, Family Court, Juvenile Court, Pilot City Primary Care, and the Office of Planning and Development. Even several County Commissioners and their staff were in attendance.

After the afternoon session concluded, the group formulated its response and sent it to the conference planners through the Internet. Family Service Collaboratives and the Domestic Abuse Service Center were mentioned as shining examples of ways that the Hennepin County community works to strengthen, support and involve families in community activities. The most important challenge to strong community life for families in Hennepin County was voiced as affordable housing in sufficient numbers. This would be the primary issue the group members would choose to discuss with the Vice President if they had the opportunity.

Participants also identified efforts to encourage local government to pool funds among various organizations to meet needs of families and communities as a public policy issue that has important ramifications for communities and families.

One participant's comment echoed that of many others: "The panelists who were on the stage at Family Re-Union were inspiring. They represented the very best of what REAL PEOPLE are all about!"

Neighborhoods are extremely diverse and constantly in flux, and there is often no unified voice. Neighborhood leaders and institutions are incredibly stressed; sometimes they need technical assistance and support from others, as much as they need funding.

—Emmett Carson,
The Minneapolis Foundation

Youth Building Community—*continued from previous page*

helping others and themselves, these youth learn to become self-reliant, accountable, responsible community members.

But, community members also have learned important lessons about young people. Last spring an elderly woman called to ask if the Neighborhood Youth Corps would rake and clear her yard. When Greg Mason and his youth workers knocked on her door, she quickly slammed the door in his face. "All she saw was that I was a Black youth," Greg explained. Not to be deterred, Greg spoke to her through her front door and found out that neighborhood kids had been tearing up her yard for months. "I had to reassure her that we were here to help, not hurt her," Greg concluded. Now, she is one of the program's most ardent supporters and clients. She has donated winter coats to the youth workers and looks forward to seeing them at her door.

Both Greg Mason and Summit Academy OIC's President and CEO, Louis King, took the stage at Family Re-Union 8 to add their voices to the national conversation about families and communities. "Our families in Minneapolis want their communities to be places where they can earn a decent living and, at the end of the day, return to a nice home," Louis King explained to the filled auditorium and to the conference moderator, Vice President Al Gore. "They also want hope," he quickly added, "hope that is best represented in the children and youth of the community." That is why so much of Summit Academy's efforts are focused on community youth development and on children's education. "The last thing we want," King cautions, "is to see families get on their feet, finally earn a livable wage, and then leave the city." King believes that young people are key to building a long-term investment in the neighborhood: "Under the leadership of young men like Greg Mason, the youth are helping to make our communities a better place right now, while they are preparing to take over as leaders tomorrow."

When it came time for Greg to speak as part of the conference's youth panel, Mrs. Gore asked him about his own children who are three and five years old. "I want them to be Harvard graduates," he said with a big smile, "or be in the NBA, maybe!" "But at the moment," Greg reflected, "the most important thing is they know they've got somebody they can come to at any time. They've got me."



Greg Mason leads a spirited game at Summit Academy Nursery School.

Eight Years of Family Re-Union

Lisbeth B. Schorr, Director, Harvard University's Project on Effective Interventions and Co-chair of the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families.

As I think back to the first Family Re-Union conference in 1992, I am dazzled with how far we've come — how much more we know today than we did then about how to make life better for American children, families, and communities. I believe there are four important things we know now that we didn't know at the time of the First Family Re-Union conference, seven years ago — understandings that can become the basis of an action agenda:

The first is reflected in the theme of this conference: We know how closely family and community are intertwined, and that where community connections are missing, we have to create them. We know that for children to grow up healthy and whole, there is no substitute for family — no substitute for an adult in each kid's life who is irrationally crazy about the kid. But the ability of parents to do right by their children is powerfully dependent on whether their child-rearing

efforts are supported or undermined by the environments in which they live. My husband and I are eternally grateful that the values we tried to instill in our two children — including a commitment to education, hard work, personal responsibility, and lifelong service — were reinforced by the schools they attended, by other institutions in our community, and by the fine people who are our friends and neighbors.

Second, we know so much more than we did about how to build social capital and how to build communities of which we can be proud. We are learning what it takes to re-connect, in Robert Kennedy's words, "the thousand invisible strands of common experience and purpose, affection and respect, which tie us to our fellows and create the community where children can play and adults work together and join in the pleasures and responsibilities of the place where they live."

People engaged in community building today use a comprehensive lens to look at the world, and put together enough of what works to restore hope in depleted neighborhoods, be it through early education, school reform, faith-based efforts, family preservation, community policing, or expanding economic opportunity.

We have learned that outsiders cannot build community. Neither can insiders — local residents — if they are left to themselves. After years of arguing between top down and bottom up, we have finally learned that the interventions that change lives require both. That's why we need new vertical alliances between the community people whose local wisdom is essential and the

outsiders who have assembled and analyzed the lessons from elsewhere. Vertical alliances between neighborhoods and those who can help sustain local efforts because they can reach the policy levers to change how accountability is maintained, how to make the money flow more flexibly, how the regulations are written, and how leaders and practitioners are trained.

Third, we now have stronger proof than ever before of how crucial are the years, zero to five. We now know the importance of early brain development and of how we care for our babies — not only for school readiness and for life-long learning, but for the ability to feel empathy and a sense of belonging. Given what we now know about attachment and brain development, it is untenable for government to make mothers leave their babies in the care of others — as early as 12 weeks of age — without being able to assure that these babies' future prospects will not be damaged. The findings of the new national study of child care remind us that children's experiences in out of home care can — when the care is of poor quality — seriously jeopardize their own chances to become productive and successful adults. The alternative is to build on our rich new knowledge to create the kind of universal preschool and early childhood structures that would allow all American families to assure that their children will have the early experiences that will equip them for success in school and in life.

Fourth and last, we know now that to reach the goals we value, we have to think more broadly, more boldly, and more strategically. We have to think clearly about how our activities connect to results. We cannot simply mobilize a collection of disjointed programs, not even if they are a bunch of high quality, comprehensive programs, and hope to realize our goals.

Bill Shore, the founder of Share Our Strength, points out in his wonderful new book, *The Cathedral Within*, that we will not succeed in making life better for the children who are being left behind and the young people who have lost hope unless we think in long-range, strategic terms. Like the cathedral builders of old, who worked backward from a grand vision, we too must be willing to commit to "a cause we may not realize in our own lifetimes." As we begin to think more boldly and more strategically than we have in the past, as we think beyond just supporting exemplary programs, we will see that our common purposes go beyond making our government more efficient and our programs more effective. We have the potential to make our democracy more just. And that, as I see it, is the ultimate goal that must pervade our efforts to strengthen families and rebuild communities.



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*for conference reports and outcomes see www.familyreunion.org

The Irving B. Harris Training Center for Infant and Toddler Development

HARRIS
CENTER

About the Harris Center

Welcome to the Harris Center's fall update! Established in 1997, the Irving B. Harris Training Center for Infant and Toddler Development is a growing center dedicated to the training and continuing education of individuals working in the field of infant and toddler development. We are a University/community partnership with a twofold mission: to serve as an information resource for the University and to maximize the ability of professionals and organizations to better serve infant and toddler populations. The Harris Center is housed at the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota and open to the public to answer questions, provide resources and disseminate information, in addition to serving as a center for ongoing projects of continuing education and professional development.

A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER:

Serving the University and the public through continuing education

This summer has been an exciting time at the Harris Center! In keeping with our mission of supporting education and training, we were pleased to have the opportunity to offer an ensemble of short summer classes classified as the "Summer Institute." The series, entitled "Contemporary Topics in Child Development," was held in the mid-summer months of June-July. The classes included the following offerings: "Early relationships: Attachment theory and its clinical applications," "Including children with special needs in early childhood programs," "Issues in the assessment of infants and young children," "Touchpoints: Building relationships with parents," and "What's going on in a baby's brain? Underpinnings of early development."

Given the high attendance and wealth of positive feedback on the classes, we are also pleased to announce that we are already in the planning stages for another exciting series of classes to be held during "Intersession 2000" (May 22nd-June 9th), and during the summer terms at the University of Minnesota (June 12th - August 4th). Along with re-offerings of some of this summer's classes, a few new additions will be offered. Please note that partial scholarships for these classes are available on a limited basis. (You may contact the Harris Center for more information on financial assistance.) In addition, please stay tuned to the next issues of *Consortium Connections* for further details on Intersession 2000 and summer classes.

ASSESSMENT AND OBSERVATION:

Keeping abreast of new developments in the field of infant and toddler mental health

At the Harris Center we strive to keep abreast of new developments in the field of infant mental health and child development. We aim to keep the public informed and inspired to learn and explore new developments occurring both in the field and at the university level. We've heard many questions about strategies for observing and assessing very young children and their families, and with new developments across disciplines serving infants and toddlers, recognized the need for education and training on this important topic.

We are proud to be co-sponsoring, along with the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) and the Maternal and Child Health Program in the School of Public Health, the 1999 Minnesota Round Table on Early Childhood Education. This year's topic is "Observation & Assessment of Young Children: Issues in Research, Policy & Practice." The roundtable, with its time-honored tradition of learning through observation and discussion, provides participants a unique opportunity to "eavesdrop" on a panel of national experts as they discuss research, policy and practice issues related to the observation and assessment of infants and young children.

Sitting at the Round Table this year will be:

Marie E. Anzalone, ScD,OTR Columbia University, New York
Kathryn E. Barnard, RN, PhD University of Washington, Seattle
Scott R. McConnell, PhD University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Samuel J. Meisels, EdD University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Moderator: Richard A. Weinberg, Ph.D, co-director, Harris Center, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

The Round Table will be held Friday, October 1, 1999 at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Bloomington, MN. For further information, you may call 612-625-6617 or send an e-mail to ander352@tc.umn.edu.

KEYSTONE
PARTNER
Together building bridges for the well-being of children, youth and families.

SERVICE PROVIDERS, HOME VISITORS:

Keep an eye out for new educational and training materials

Looking for practical, effective prevention and intervention techniques? The Harris Center, along with the CYFC, is also pleased to announce the introduction of a new set of educational materials that will soon be made available to the public. We have created two products for service providers from the award-winning STEEP Program (Steps Toward Effective, Enjoyable Parenting) developed by Drs. Byron Egeland and Marti Erickson. One is the STEEP manual, a comprehensive facilitators' guide to the STEEP program, and the second is *Seeing is Believing*, a videotape and companion manual for teaching service providers to use videotaping techniques during home visits and to assist mothers in sensitively reading their babies' cues. Both are based in attachment theory and are grounded in more than 20 years of longitudinal research on risk and resilience conducted at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development. They operate on the premise that a secure attachment between parent and infant establishes ongoing patterns of healthy interaction. Secure parent-infant attachment lays the foundation for later competence and well-being.

The products were developed in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Health and Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education and Early Childhood Special Education Programs, and was funded in part by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning.

CONTINUING YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TRAINING

Touchpoints: Building relationships with parents to support optimal child development

As we pursue our goal of providing continuing professional development and education for front-line workers and service providers, we are quite pleased with our work as part of the Minnesota Touchpoints Training Team. Designed by T. Berry Brazelton, Touchpoints is a training program designed for health care professionals, educators, social service professionals, and administrative staff who work with children and families to improve delivery of services. The Harris Center, along with collaborative partners St. David's Child Development and Family Services, Hennepin County Medical Center's Pediatrics Department, and the CYFC, provide on-going Touchpoints trainings in the community for individuals and for organizations.

According to Brazelton's theory, "Touchpoints" are defined as predictable periods in a child's development that are challenging for children and families, but can also provide an opportunity for practitioners to connect with parents. This model is aimed at building alliances between parents and providers around key points in the development of young children. The fall training is scheduled for September 17th and 24th, and our winter training is scheduled for January 21st and 28th. For space availability and more information on Touchpoints trainings, please contact Julie Sjordal at St. David's Child Development and Family Services (612-939-0396) or at JSjordal@Stdavids.net.

COMING SOON TO THE HARRIS CENTER: "QUESTIONS ABOUT KIDS"

As parents, teachers, day care providers, or physicians, we encounter hard-to-answer questions about children and their development. Am I spoiling my child? How do stress and trauma influence babies? What's going on in a baby's brain?

To help you and others answer these sometimes daunting and confusing questions, the Harris Center and the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) are developing a set of pamphlets, called *Questions About Kids*, which may be displayed in doctor's offices, grocery stores, and other highly visible public places. These pamphlets will contain cutting-edge information about current issues of interest to you as parents of very young children and/or practitioners working with parents of very young children. Our aim is to make the information available to the public in hard copy form, via display, as well as in a downloadable version via the world wide web, so be watching for these pamphlets and some answers to some very important questions!

For more information about these items or any information available here, please contact Amy Susman-Stillman at (612) 624-3367 or Christina Robert at (612) 624-4510. You may also e-mail us at asusman@tc.umn.edu or rober103@tc.umn.edu.

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KEYSTONE PARTNERS

is a new feature of the *Consortium Connections*, providing space for partner organizations that do not have regular newsletters or wish to reach new audiences with the help of the Consortium.

INFANT TIP OF THE DAY:

With winter months soon upon us, those of us with infants, or expecting a new one, will certainly be considering how we will keep our babies warm and comfortable while they sleep. In light of the tragedies linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), researchers have determined that the best sleeping position for you baby is on his/her back or side (the back is the best position). A firm mattress should be used and the child's sleeping area should be kept free of thick blankets or stuffed animals which could possibly interfere with the babies ability to breathe while sleeping. Following these simple guidelines, you and your baby will both sleep more easily! For more information on SIDS, or on the national "Back to Sleep" campaign, you may contact the Harris Center, or the Back to Sleep hotline at 1-800-505-CRIB.

A CHILD'S FIRST COMMUNITY

The family is a child's first community; it is in the family where children learn to be actively engaged and contributing community members. Children learn this in at least three important ways:

1. **HAVING THEIR VOICES HEARD AND RESPECTED.** This begins in the earliest months of life, long before a child has words, when caring adults respond to a baby's cries, smiles, and gestures. Through these simple, day-to-day interactions children learn to trust others — and they learn they have the power to get a response. This willingness to listen to the voice of the child must continue throughout development.
2. **SEEING PARENTS AND OTHER ADULTS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THEIR COMMUNITY.** Children learn by example. When they see their parents connecting with others and contributing to the public good, they learn that as a way of life.
3. **BEING ENGAGED AS CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.** This begins in the home with such simple things as having a preschooler join with others in meal preparation and cleanup. Then, as children grow, it reaches beyond the family into the larger community, with children being guided and supported by adults as they discover what they have to offer through service and public work.

—excerpted from the remarks of Consortium Director Martha Farrell Erickson in opening the Family Re-Union 8 conference.

How can we create social spaces in which to understand the historic values of the community? And how can we provoke behaviors that are consistent with those values? At Stairstep Foundation we've created community reclamation projects in which African American churches connect with young people who are most challenged in our community.

—Alfred Babington-Johnson,
President and CEO,
Stairstep Initiative Companies

Community Gathering Places

Trudy Dunham, the Center for 4-H Youth Development, University of Minnesota

What does information technology — the computer, the Internet - have to do with our efforts to strengthen family and community? In his *Virtual Communities*, Howard Rheingold references Ray Oldenburg's belief that there are three essential places in people's lives: the places we work, the places we live, and the places we gather (The Great Good Place). The gathering places are those that build community: comfortable and supportive places that encourage conversation and allow us to display our personalities, interests and individuality. These places are where we go when we don't have to be at work and at home. Where do we find places like this today? Do our geographical communities offer us these places?

We know that youth are adopting information technology as a place as well as a mode of communication. Recent surveys suggest that nearly half of American youth are online, and this percentage is growing. Youth make friends in Chat rooms — and revisit these rooms. They exchange ICQ numbers with geographic and virtual friends as adults do phone numbers. They develop vocabulary and signals — including the "POS" used to restrain fellow chatters until Mom or Dad is no longer in the "parent over shoulder" stance.

Adults are more reticent than youth when it comes to joining or forming virtual community. Today, about one third of American households have Internet, and many of those use it infrequently. We fear the scams and unknowns it brings into our lives. We view it as intrusive. We worry it may upset the careful balance we try to establish between work, leisure and family. It isn't a comfortable place for adults — yet.

But the Internet has the potential to become community, to support and make life easier in some ways. At 3:00 in the morning or when you can't get a baby sitter — the Net makes possible finding an adult to talk to. The Net is always awake. When you don't know where to ask for information, you can usually find something online. Taking a distance education course, listening to music, writing a letter and other activities also point to community functions.

"Neighborhood Nets" are also slowly forming. They buoy up the geographic community by identifying common interests and hobbies among those who live nearby, as well as easing the organization of potlucks and baby-sitting guilds.

Most of what goes on in the Chat rooms and virtual communities is the over-the-fence or over-supper sort of gossip and discussion. It is informal. You can drop in for two minutes or two hours. CYFERnet—the Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network— is just such an online resource for parents looking for sound, research-based information on parenting. It is a service of the Cooperative Extension Service and links to hundreds of other web resources for families and kids.

Computing is also a social activity. Today's youth are gathering online and are comfortable with technology, in the same way that today's adults are more comfortable with the telephone than their parents or grandparents were.

Parents take their cue from their children when it comes to home computers. Parents are more likely to purchase computers if they have children at home, and if the family doesn't have a computer before the teens go off to college, parents are likely to get an email account in hopes of maintaining communication during the college years.

In a world where we change jobs all the time and move into new homes and new towns frequently, the relative permanence of a virtual community may appear more friendly and supportive as we go through life. It shouldn't replace our geographic communities, but it can be a special place where we gather for conversation and support.



Parent and youth use the Internet to plan and advertise an annual neighborhood get-together.

Don Eversmore

SEPTEMBER

September 27

"Unplanned Parenthood: Raising Relative's Children" a conference of the Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association will be held at the Midway Sheraton in St. Paul. Co-sponsors are the Brookdale Foundation Group, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis, Volunteers of America Minnesota - Senior Resources Division and Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning. For more information and registration materials, please call (651) 484-4856.

September 27-28

MN Literacy Summit: All Children Reading and Writing. Scholars, school policy-makers, and representatives from state government have been invited to meet for a two-day discussion of what we know about reading and how to impact practice and public policy. Keynote speakers will focus on three areas of development in reading and a Round Table panel will be convened following each keynote address. The Literacy Summit is sponsored by the U of M's Center for Early Childhood Development. Call (612) 624-5780 or email bart002@tc.umn.edu for further information.

OCTOBER

October 1

"Observation & Assessment of Young Children: Issues in Research, Policy & Practice" the 1999 Minnesota Round Table presented by the U of M's Center for Early Education and Development includes a panel of national experts on research, policy and practice related to the observation and assessment of infants and young children. Co-sponsors are Irving B. Harris Training Center for Infant and Toddler Development and the Maternal and Child Health Program in the School of Public Health. For further information and registration materials, call (612) 625-6617 or email ander352@tc.umn.edu.

October 8

"Creating a Common Action Agenda: Developing and Supporting Minnesota Educators," 8:00 - 11:00 am, Bandana Conference Centre, St. Paul. This Minnesota Education Policy seminar is hosted by Uof M Education Dean Steve Yussen and MN Commissioner of Children, Families & Learning Christine Jax.

October 12

"Seen & Heard: Minnesota Students Speak Out" is a joint collaboration of the Department of Children, Families and Learning and the Uof M. Via live satellite link, 400 high school students will discuss safe schools and how kids learn. Governor Jesse Ventura, Lieutenant Governor Mae Schunk, and Commissioner Christine Jax will be in attendance. For ordering and other details, visit the Seen & Heard website at: www.seenandheard.org.

CONSORTIUM UPDATE

We're moving

In late November, the Consortium is moving its office into the new Gateway Center being constructed on the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota, where the old Memorial Stadium used to stand. The Consortium will be located on the second floor together with the Center for 4-H Youth Development and the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health. For over a year, the directors and staff of these three programs have been planning ways to share resources and collaborate on joint projects in anticipation of being together in the new building. Look for more details about these exciting collaborations in the months ahead!

Start Seeing and Hearing Youth

"Seen and Heard: Minnesota Students Speak Out" is a collaboration between the Department of Children, Families and Learning and the University of Minnesota, being spearheaded by the Consortium, the Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health, and the Center for 4-H Youth Development. On October 12, 400 high school students in Crookston, Marshall, Duluth and Saint Paul will be linked via interactive satellite for a youth-facilitated discussion of three topics selected by the summit's Youth Advisory Council: safe schools, student involvement, and how students learn. The day's events will conclude with a report from representative students at each location broadcast via satellite link to the whole group as well as Governor Jesse Ventura, Lieutenant Governor Mae Schunk, and Commissioner Christine Jax. The "Virtual Lunch Discussion" with the Governor will be recorded for future viewing. For ordering information and other details, visit the Seen & Heard website at: www.seenandheard.org.

Hot off the Press

"This integrative overview of birth-to-three is a real find for all early childhood professionals," says Dr. Linda Gilkerson of the Erikson Institute, describing the just released *Infants, Toddlers, and Families: A Framework for Support and Intervention* written by Consortium Director, Dr. Martha Farrell Erickson. Co-authored with Karen Kurz-Riemer and published by Guilford Publications, Inc., the book is getting attention from scholars as well as practitioners. Dr. Kyle Pruett, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Yale Child Study Center says, "The field is in desperate need of the passion and wisdom contained in this book." To order copies call 1-800-365-7006 or see www.guilford.com.

Strengthening Communities: Youth as Resources

Judith Kahn, Director, Konopka Institute on Best Practices in Adolescent Health

For many years, prevention strategies focused on reducing the harmful behaviors have targeted the individual for intervention. It was believed that changing beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, skills and behavior - fixing the person - would eliminate the problem. Over the past decade, there has been acceptance of a framework called "youth development" that a) views youth as resources, not problems, and b) recognizes the role that caring adults and a caring community play in youth development. Several years ago the National Network for Youth coined the term "community youth development" as a way of encouraging youth-serving organizations to link themselves and the young people they serve more firmly in the communities in which they live. It was a recognition that kids do not grow up in programs. They grow up in families. And, families reside in communities that are combinations of families, neighbors, faith institutions, schools, businesses, civic organizations, and public and private services.

Community supports are critical to the development of young people; in turn, young people are critical to the

development and health of communities. Increasingly, those who engage in community capacity-building, whether through neighborhood revitalization, economic development and family support, or community organizing, are beginning to view young people not as service recipients but as resources. The KICK BUTTS program of the Minnesota Smoke-Free Coalition is an excellent example of a substance use prevention strategy that has successfully adopted this perspective. KICK BUTTS seeks to develop the full potential of youth as health advocates by training them in a variety of skills that allow them to effectively engage in public dialogue, peer education, community organizing, public relations, and media advocacy. Once trained, the young people are capable of having an impact on the health of their own community.

Young people have the capacity to be significant change agents in their communities - participating in everything from planning, to physical rehabilitation of houses and parks, to advocacy. They are full citizens of our community and a great untapped resource.

CONNECTION CORNER

Human Rights Conference.

In honor of the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Consortium is proud to announce its co-sponsorship of the up-coming conference "Children's Human Rights: Facing the Challenge in Minnesota" to be held at the Earle Brown Center on the University of Minnesota campus in St. Paul, November 8 and 9. A joint project of the Consortium, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, the Minnesota State Bar Association, and the University of Minnesota's Partners in Human Rights Education, the conference is designed to investigate ways that children's human rights principles can be used to improve conditions for Minnesota's children in

many arenas, including law, education, medical and social services. An innovative conference methodology, Open Space Technology (OST), will allow attendees to work together in small groups to discuss, debate, plan, and leave with notes from their conversations. Speakers will include Joseph Mettimano, public policy associate at the United Nations; Stuart Hart, Indiana-Purdue University; Gerison Lansdown, who monitors the United Kingdom's compliance with the UNCRC, will come from London; and John Powell, Director of the Institute for Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota. For more information call Consortium offices at (612) 626-1212.

A Re-Union of Family and Community —continued from cover

likely to result in substantive federal policy efforts: self-help housing awards, community mapping resources available through a new federal Internet site, and an initiative to encourage universities to better prepare a new generation of community builders. The Community Building Initiative calls on universities to bring together schools of architecture, health care, public policy, education, and city planning to strengthen families and build livable neighborhoods.

What have we learned in eight years of Family Re-Unions? Author and policy analyst Lisbeth Schorr summed things up by saying we now know "how closely families and communities are intertwined." Ralph Smith, Vice President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and long-time Family Re-Union supporter, added, "We know what we need to do, and we have no shortage of good ideas, research, and model programs—what we need now is leadership and will." Next year will provide yet another opportunity to build leadership and refine the blueprint for family policy. On June 19-20, 2000, the spotlight will shine on the theme of "Families Across Generations" and highlight ways to foster intergenerational family and community life.

8th Annual St. David's Symposium.

"Providing Balance to Promote Resiliency in Children: Effective strategies in achieving balance and relieving stress for children and families," will be presented November 10, 8:30 am-4:30 pm, at the Hyatt Regency, Minneapolis. Co-sponsors are St. David's Child Development & Family Services, Hennepin County Medical Center-Pediatrics, and the Children, Youth & Family Consortium. Keynote speakers will be Dr. Robert

Brooks from the medical faculty at Harvard University, Dr. David Elkind, professor of Child Study from Tufts University, and Dr. Martha Farrell Erickson, Children, Youth & Family Consortium director at the University of Minnesota. For registration information please contact St. David's Child Development & Family Services at (612) 939-0396, x266.

October 15-17

National Observance of Children's Sabbath focus theme, "Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed." Celebrate that each child is wonderfully made and help build a consensus in your congregation to prepare children to learn and succeed. To order a free multi-faith 1999 Children's Sabbath Resource Book to aid preparations for October contact the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition at (612) 870-3670, x14, or toll free at (888)-870-1402, x14.

NOVEMBER

November 8-9

"Children's Human Rights: Facing the Challenge in Minnesota" held at Earle Brown Center on the U of M campus in St. Paul. The conference is sponsored by MN Advocates for Human Rights, The MN State Bar Association, and the U of M's Partners in Human Rights Education and the Children, Youth & Family Consortium. For more information call (612) 626-1212.

November 10

"Providing Balance to Promote Resiliency in Children: Effective strategies in achieving balance and relieving stress for children and families," 8th annual St. David's symposium will be held at the Hyatt Regency, Minneapolis. See Consortium Connections for more information. For registration information please contact St. David's Child Development and Family Services at (612) 939-0396, x266.

November 11-13

"Healthy Communities - Healthy Youth," conference will be held in Denver, Colorado at the Adam's Mark Hotel. For registration information call (800) 888-7828

November 13

"Impact of Violence on Children" the fall conference sponsored by Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association and the Early Childhood Resource Center. GMDCA and ECRC are also offering classes throughout the fall. For more information about registration for these events call Sheila McGuire at GMDCA, (612) 349-9422 or Taunya Smith at ECRC, (612) 721-012, x117.

Registration Form

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone(w) _____

Please indicate any special accommodations required _____

- \$95 \$95 Student (student ID required)
- \$80.75 Individual rate when registering with a group of five or more (registrations must be received together)

- Check (payable to St. David's) Visa/Mastercard

Card Number _____ exp date _____

Number of attendees _____ Total Paid _____

Name on card _____

Signature _____

Send to: St. David's Child Development and Family Services, Attn. Symposium, 3395 Plymouth Road, Minnetonka, MN 55305

ON LINE AT — WWW.CYFC.UMN.EDU

Jane Viste, Graduate Research Assistant
Michael Brott, Community Partnership and Information Coordinator

Family Re-Union (www.familyreunion.org)

If you visit the Family Re-Union web site (www.familyreunion.org) you will find over 100 related links to other web sites for this year's conference alone. The Family Re-Union web site, which is managed by the Children, Youth & Family Consortium, has undergone a face lift this year; it is no longer just a conference site, but has year-round resources for those interested in all aspects of child and family policy. Generous funding from the Allina Foundation has supported this re-tooling of the web site. Below are just a few of the web-based resources on the theme of strengthening families and communities through civic participation.

The Center for Democracy and Citizenship (www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/cdc)

The Center for Democracy and Citizenship is a research center at the University of Minnesota that promotes the idea of citizenship as public work to renew the promise of democracy. Dr. Harry Boyte, co-Director of the Center, was among the planners and presenters at Family Re-Union 8.

Campus Compact (www.compact.org)

This is a member organization that supports community service among students, faculty and administration on over 600 college and university campuses across the country. The site contains links to model programs for service-learning and community-building. At Family Re-Union 8, Vice President Gore announced an initiative to encourage universities to become more active in their local communities, and held up Campus Compact as a national model.

National Civic League (www.ncl.org)

The National Civic League is a non-partisan civic renewal organization that advocates and promotes community programs based on the principles of collaborative problem-solving and grass roots decision making. The League assists with community projects and building civic leadership, and is best known for the annual All-America City Awards.

Civic Practices Network (www.cpn.org)

This is a collaborative and nonpartisan project dedicated to bringing practical methods for public problem solving into every community in America. It provides citizens the opportunity to learn from what others are doing to renew their citizens.

Livable Communities (www.livablecommunities.gov)

This is a government web site that provides tools and resources on programs to help communities grow in ways that ensure strong, sustainable economic growth and restore a sense of community. Introduced by Vice President Gore at the conclusion of Family Re-Union 8, this new site provides extensive links to federal programs, funding opportunities, and national models of community building.

Who's the Consortium?

Michael Benjamin succeeds Mary Jo Czaplowski as Executive Director of the National Council on Family Relations, and he is a new member of the Consortium's Advisory Council. Past director of the Institute for Mental Health Initiatives in Washington, D.C., Michael has a broad background in public policy and family issues.

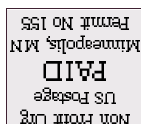
Christine Jax, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, was a member of the Minnesota delegation to Family Re-Union 8. At the Experts Forum preceding the conference, she spoke from the floor about the importance of engaging parents and community members in children's education.

Beverly Mills-Novoa, Medtronic's work-family life expert, attended Family Re-Union 8 and is currently in London assessing work-family life policies for international corporations. Medtronic Corporation became involved in Family Re-Union in 1996 when the conference theme was Family and Work.

Alfred Babington-Johnson, President and CEO of the Stairstep Initiative, was a panelist at Family Re-Union 8 and led an interactive videoteleconference session with Vice President Gore. Stairstep's partnership with General Mills and with the African American faith community was held up as a model of creating community around economic development opportunities.

Emmett Carson, President and CEO of the Minneapolis Foundation, assisted in the planning of Family Re-Union 8 and addressed the Experts Forum on how to support and sustain community revitalization. The Minneapolis Foundation provided funding for the conference and also hosted a local Community Conversation at a downlink site in north Minneapolis.

And the Consortium is YOU!



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