

CONSORTIUM CONNECTIONS

In this issue

Over the past two years, the Consortium--along with other child and family organizations--has been looking closely at racial and ethnic disparities in health, housing, graduation rates, out of home placement of children, and almost every other measure of child well-being. Closing the gap between those children and families who are faring well and

those who are not continues to be one of the most pressing issues we face in Minnesota. This newsletter looks at economic disparities and the many ways that financial instability, especially when it is persistent and intergenerational, has far reaching, negative consequences for families and their children.

Economic Stability for Low-Income Families: What will it take?

Madge Alberts, CYFC Program Coordinator; and Jenny Keyser, CYFC Associate Director

While the welfare to work legislation enacted by Congress in 1996 has been successful in moving parents off welfare and into jobs, it did not provide adequate supports to help families care for their children and other dependents while moving toward employment. Low-income families have significantly more caregiving responsibilities than higher-income workers and, at the same time, have fewer community resources to draw on and fewer choices at their disposal.

The current downturn in the economy and decline in employment mean that today's families may be leaving welfare only to join the ranks of the working poor. It is apparent that low-income parents of every stripe--those who are leaving welfare, have never been on welfare, exist at the edges, or have given up on being part of the formal work economy--continue to struggle to provide basic necessities for their families. This state of permanent economic crisis, coupled with long hours in low wage jobs or searching for resources, creates serious risk factors for children and adults in those families. In turn, economically fragile families present serious challenges and responsibilities for our schools, workplaces, faith communities, neighborhoods, and community infrastructures.

CYFC's Advisory Council grappled with issues related to economic stability for low income families at its recent bi-annual meeting. Guided by a panel of practitioners and researchers and facilitated by Marti Erickson, CYFC director, the discussion surfaced a number of ideas worthy of further consideration. (See article on pp. 4-5 featuring the panel members). Among them:

Work alone doesn't provide an avenue out of poverty. Too often, the jobs available to parents moving from welfare to work pay only minimum wage or slightly more, still keeping many families below poverty. Some families earn just enough that they are above the level to qualify for assistance, further reducing their ability to meet daily needs or plan for the future. In a recent welfare to work study conducted by Wilder Research Center, it was found that of the 65% of participants who were working, only 30% of them earned enough to meet the "basic needs" wage level.

Poverty increases the risk of violence within families and communities. Programs for low-income families may be able to help stem this tide by naming and addressing the behaviors that lead to violence. However, the very families that are living with poverty and violence must be fully engaged in the design of any program or policy that attempts to address these issues. Our track record on this kind of participatory decision-making has been poor.

Programs and policies must be more flexible. From changing the entire focus of a program, to allowing individual latitude within a program or policy, flexibility is a key to successful programs and policies that are making a difference for low-income families.

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.

Low-income parents need family-friendly workplaces

Erin Kelly, Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota, studies businesses that adopt family policies to see how successful they are in creating family-friendly workplaces that welcome, rather than penalize, caregivers. Her work points to the conclusion that employers often provide work-family supports that are, unintentionally, more helpful to those workers who are already privileged by having higher incomes and professional status, than low-wage earners who are struggling to provide for their families.

“Less-skilled workers are less likely to have access to employer-supported child care centers, less likely to have paid family leaves, and they get less benefit from the pre-tax spending accounts that are the

most common form of child care benefit,” observed Dr. Kelly. “I think it is pretty clear,” she concluded, “that many work-family benefits are more beneficial to two-parent, middle-income families.”

What would distinguish a family-friendly workplace that supports low-income employees and their families? Professor Kelly lists these essentials:

- Good wages
- Supportive supervisors
- Health insurance that covers the whole family
- Assistance with finding affordable child care and signing up for child care benefits (e.g. dependent care tax credit, state subsidies for child care, or pre-tax account)
- Flexible, creative work schedules
- Paid family leave
- Advancement policies that help workers move beyond low wage jobs

To read a recent report on employers' family policies visit Professor Kelly's web site: www.soc.umn.edu/~elkelly/



Rural moms work longer hours for less pay

Rural families are working, and most are two-parent households, but their wages are not adequate to achieve economic stability. 50% of mothers in a national study of rural families are employed in one to three jobs for an average of over 32 hours per week, but their median monthly income is only \$791. Mothers in the study have a long history of working, and most started at age 16. Few receive any public assistance.

—Rural Families and Welfare Issues, Jean Bauer and Bonnie Braun, 2002

The photographs in this issue are from the Labor Education Service, an outreach program of the University of Minnesota's Industrial Relations Center, which provides training, technical assistance and applied research opportunities to Minnesota workers and the organizations that support them.

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Asset Development for Low-Income Families: A key to economic security

Jan Hogan, Ph.D., and Catherine Solheim, Ph.D., Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota

Michael Sherraden, national leader and pioneer in the Individual Development Account (IDA) movement, states that the pathway out of poverty comes from accumulating personal assets that make it possible to buy a home, start a business, or pay for higher education. Building assets while increasing income is the surest means toward long-term economic self-sufficiency, according to Denise DeVaan, coordinator, Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM), the IDA pilot program in Minnesota. However, major barriers challenge families to achieve financial assets.

The 1996 welfare reform legislation, which limits families to five years of governmental financial support over their lifetimes, has forced many families to take low wage jobs to ensure an immediate income, postponing the education that could lead to higher wage jobs. The end result is family income hovering at or below the poverty level, insufficient to provide for family needs. Thus, saving to build assets, which in turn help to lift families out of chronic poverty, becomes an impossible task. Recognizing this major barrier to self-sufficiency, FAIM was established by the 1998 Minnesota Legislature as a four-year pilot project. FAIM provides 3:1 matching dollars for low-income families saving to reach one of three goals: buy a home, start a small business, or invest in higher education.

A group of faculty and students at the University of Minnesota are following 25 families selected from the 513 families enrolled in FAIM. To participate in the study, participants had to have made deposits into their FAIM account and have at least one child living with them. From the initial 48 participants contacted by the research team, 25 families agreed to participate in the study. They live in 7 of the 8 FAIM regions – one metro, five rural, and one serving the Chippewa tribes.

Interviews are being conducted at approximately six-month intervals throughout the participants' tenure in FAIM. Three rounds of interviews have been conducted so far. Here are some of the study's findings:

- The 3:1 match is a critical motivator to make the \$30 per month savings required of program participants. "This is a hand up, not a hand-out," said one participant, reflecting the general feeling of the group interviewed.
- Most of the participants (80%) have completed the Dollar Works classes. They found the classes to be very helpful, especially the credit reports, discussion of budgeting and getting out

of debt, teaching children about money, and setting goals. They appreciated the group process of listening and learning.

- Most of the participants are self-motivated to be successful. Participants said: "It's a commitment; you just put the \$30 away," "It's hard but you have to make it a priority," "I have been shuffling (money) all of my life so you shuffle a little more," and "You determine where you want to be in five years and you just work toward that goal."
- Participants do whatever it takes to deposit the savings. This includes multiple jobs, multiple workers in the family, living with parents, and cleaning the apartment halls to lower the rent. In one recent immigrant family, the father has a fulltime and a part-time job, the wife is employed weekends, and the teenage daughter is part-time employed. Their goal is to buy a house for their family of five.
- Participants are financially vulnerable and some have missed deposits or made late payments and are hoping to make up their missed savings deposit. For example, one was laid off from work, another had her hours cut, child support was not received by several families, car breakdown is a common occurrence, illness for someone in the family without health insurance benefits, one had a fire in the apartment building, and one had court-ordered foster care for a teenager.
- Unclear goals and the shifting economy are problems for about one-third of the participants. Due to the cost of housing, an inadequate income or a poor credit record. Others now have doubts about the kind of business that will be viable to start in a faltering economy.

The study was begun with a seed grant from the College of Human Ecology initiative fund and Agriculture Experiment Station funds. External grants are being sought to support the research through the end of the FAIM pilot in 2004. The research team is led by Dr. Janice Hogan and Dr. Catherine Solheim from the Department of Family Social Science and includes doctoral students, Nicola Rodrigues, Susan Wolfgram, and Busi Nkosi.

Poor working conditions

Working poor parents are less likely than other employees to have job benefits or access to policies that help them address their care-giving needs:

74% of working poor parents did not consistently receive paid sick leave between 1994 and 1998.

34% of working poor parents found themselves without job benefits, lacking paid sick leave or paid vacation between 1994 and 1998.

—S. J. Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families are in Jeopardy*, 2000



Photo by Jennifer Lirchner

Poverty means less time for children and youth

Low-income parents must balance their work and family responsibilities with few resources or help from others. They also have significantly more care-giving responsibilities than do higher-income workers, and many have children with special needs.

Economic Stability for

At its October 1 Advisory Council meeting, the Children, Youth and Family Consortium hosted a lively discussion on economic stability for low income working families, guided by a panel of University faculty and community professionals from a variety of perspectives. Specific questions framed the discussion, and panelists and advisers drew upon their own experiences as well as research studies and program findings.

PANELISTS:

Natalie Greenlaw is with the West Central Initiative Fund in Fergus Falls where she coordinates a McKnight funded career development project for low wage working parents. Natalie is from the White Earth Reservation and founded the Anishinabe Center in Detroit Lakes.

Samuel L. Myers, Jr. is Roy Wilkins Professor of Human Relations and Social Justice at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute, and directs the Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice. He specializes in the impacts of social policies on the poor and pioneered the use of applied econometric techniques to examine racial disparities.

Ellen Shelton is a research scientist with Wilder Research Center. She was a co-author of *Filling the Gaps in Welfare Reform: The Final Report on the Minnesota Welfare to Work Partnerships*. Ellen served as the coordinator for the Minnesota Coalition for Family Policy for several years and is currently a member of CYFC's Advisory Council.

Oliver Williams is associate professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota and current Chair of CYFC's Advisory Council. His work includes community-based research on domestic violence and barriers to reducing violence among African American families and communities. He also directs the National Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community.

What are the factors that support or hinder low-income working families from becoming self-sufficient?

Natalie: The downturn in the economy is one thing that is obviously affecting the families I work with. Our program--career development for low-income working parents--has changed in every single aspect since we began our work two years ago. Initially, it was intended to provide trained labor for the manufacturing sector, which was experiencing a shortage of workers. Now, since the manufacturing sector has been the hardest hit by the economy in our area, workers are being laid off. So the program has become a career development program being driven by the participants instead of the employers.

Sam: The lack of the ability to own their homes is a factor that keeps low-income families from becoming self-sufficient. Home ownership is much closer to the idea of self-sufficiency than is employment, and it provides a built in safety net if you lose your job and your income is gone. But low-income families often do not have access to loans to buy homes, due to new policies placing greater emphasis on credit scores. People of color have lower average credit scores than whites overall. It's important that we look at the role of race in understanding why families remain living in poverty.

Ellen: Poverty greatly constrains the choices people are faced with, and the few choices that remain may all be bad ones -- such as not working versus not caring for your child. When we look at the actions of families that are struggling with poverty, we tend to assume their behavior reflects their core values and disregard the reality that their situation may present only bad choices as options. When we're removed from the everyday lives of fragile families, we forget the complexity of their lives and the few, if any, choices that are available.

Oliver: Children need to spend time in nurturing environments. Poverty greatly increases the chance of violence and neglect, and the risk is even higher for kids of color. Families dealing with violence in their homes and neighborhoods sometimes have to make choices that fit with their reality. For instance, if the abuser is providing financial support for the family, it may feel too risky to walk away from that, so family members put up with the abuse instead of taking their chances at a shelter or public program.



Photo by: Jennifer Lindner

The Economic Treadmill of Poor Pay

"Once largely thought of as a place where teenagers worked part time to save for college, the low-wage market is now the permanent economy for approximately 30 percent of the American workforce... Changes in family structure, demographics, the service economy, immigration, employer practices and welfare policy have all contributed to this dramatic shift."

—*Work-Family Issues and Low-Income Families*,
Families and Work Institute, 2002

Minnesota's Families

What are the programs and policies that are making a difference?

Natalie: A lot of policies don't allow for a holistic approach to a problem. When policies are developed, decision makers need to be sure those policies are in agreement with the other pieces of the picture and will play out in the way they were intended. We need simplicity and adaptability in our programs. It's easy for me to see how policies conflict with each other. For instance, welfare to work policies say you have to work and be self-sufficient, no matter what. Child welfare policies say you must be a loving, nurturing parent and do all the things you need to do for your kids. Those are in conflict with each other.



Making dollars stretch

Families with limited resources often run short of food at the end of the month, or they don't realize they are not making good choices at the grocery store or good use of the food they bring home. The Families That Work program at the University of Minnesota helps communities improve the everyday lives of families with limited resources. Check out these nutrition and financial planning resources at <http://ftw.che.umn.edu>

Sam: Earned income tax credits and tax rebates that are spent immediately have a positive effect on the economy, but not necessarily on a low-income family's ability to be self-sufficient. A better solution would be to directly increase after-tax income and assets for poor families. We need to balance the earned income tax credit program with additional policies that take into account how low-income families spend their money throughout the year.

Ellen: Policies and programs that work are those that are flexible and adaptable rather than rigid and narrowly focused. For instance, in the welfare to work evaluation, we found that providing group transportation methods didn't work. The greatest transportation success was providing assistance for families to own their own vehicles.

Oliver: A good example of that flexibility is Project Hope in Detroit. It started out with providing food, but now focuses on education and increasing people's capacity in their communities. Programs and policies that take a fatherhood perspective are also making a difference. We are seeing fathers take more responsibility. But how do you collect child support from very poor fathers? Child support is skewed toward what middle class folks can provide.

Taking the long view, what should we be doing now to ensure that young children today will grow up to be tomorrow's successful parents and workers?

Natalie: We agree that children are a sacred gift. But when you look at careers where people care for kids – childcare workers, teachers – they are the least paid and valued. We need to take responsibility collectively for our kids. Being raised Anishnaabe has given me a worldview that is different from the mainstream of society. In mainstream society, the good of the few motivates most decisions and well-being is measured in terms of the GNP. We need to create environments where everyone has opportunities and the quality of life for children and families is measured. Families with limited opportunities often have no experiences other than what they know. Mentors who have more experience and are patient and nurturing can help children and parents learn different ways of being.

Oliver: The way those in the helping professions define "help" may be significantly different from those who receive the help, the so-called "consumers". We need to fully engage the very families we are intending to help if we want brighter futures for children and parents.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Members of the Advisory Council added their comments to the discussion:

- **Mental health** — Young children who have been traumatized by neglect and abuse have the potential to carry mental health challenges throughout their lives and even into the next generation.
- **Child support** — There are many ways to measure success in child support. Minnesota leads the nation in child support collected, but we are also \$1.2 billion in arrears. A proposed new child support bill would give a break to low-income fathers. Minnesota's Child Support staff is looking at the larger issues that may make fathers unable or unwilling to pay.
- **Family-focused policies** — Oliver made an important comment in saying that groups affected by decisions need to be involved in making them. We need to help families share their stories in order to illustrate the dynamics and struggles of balancing parenting and work.
- **Education** — Families can "play by the rules," but economic downturns may cause them to lose their incomes. We need to look at education as one of the best long-term investments for families. Maybe education isn't the best short-term investment, but we must address the barriers that prevent parents and children from seeing education as a credible goal.
- **Nurturing children and youth** — Let's not lose sight of the fact that parents and other caring adults need to be involved with kids as whole human beings – beyond social services. We need to figure out how to do that. Adults need to be engaged with children and youth in meaningful ways that make the kids feel hopeful and useful.

NOVEMBER

November 13

Children, Youth and the Media: Perils and Possibilities, open forum at the McNamara Alumni Center presented by the Center for Adolescent Health and Development, U of M. Contact Linda at 612-626-2820 or boche001@umn.edu.

November 14-15

Healthy Communities: Embracing Cultures, Changing Systems a two-day conference sponsored by the Center for Cross-Cultural Health. 612-379-3573 www.crosshealth.com

November 15

Elders in the Fabric of the American Community: Successful Intergenerational Programs & Policies, a Humphrey Institute Policy Forum held at HHH Institute, U of MN West Bank campus. For more information call 612-625-8330 or email emarquez@hhh.umn.edu.

November 19

Great Conversations series: "The Art of Remembering," 7:30 pm, Ted Mann Concert Hall. U Regent's Professor and award-winning author Patricia Hampl will join author Eva Hoffman for conversation about the creative writing process. Call 612-624-2345.

November 20

Intervening With Grace I: Building Strong Bonds Between Parent & Child, sponsored by CHASE for Families -the Child Abuse Prevention Council for Hennepin County, held at the Minneapolis Urban League. For more information, contact Carla Kock at 612-728-2084 or carla.kock@famchildserv.org.

November 20

Thinking Smarter About Public Policies for Out-Of-School Time, public forum at the McNamara Alumni Center presented by the Center for 4-H Youth Development, MN 4-H Foundation, Twin Cities Youthwork Coalition, and MN Youth Work Institute. Contact Lisa Kimball at 612-624-8192 or kimbs014@umn.edu.

Covering All Families

Filling out multiple forms and answering questions about family size and income can be intimidating for any parent. But for low-income, working poor parents, just getting time off from work to find out about family support programs and where and how to apply can be overwhelming. No wonder more than 80,000 children in Minnesota are eligible for public health insurance programs but are not enrolled.

The Children, Youth & Family Consortium and the Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota have developed a screening tool that cuts through the red tape and provides a quick overview of programs that a family might be eligible to receive. It doesn't determine final eligibility nor does it allow families to enroll on line—that technology is still in the future. And in most cases, families will be using the web tool with the help of a volunteer or professional at a community center, workforce development site, county office, library, or technical assistance center.

This web-based tool is the result of an unprecedented effort to consolidate eligibility information on six different federal and state programs that support working families: Basic Sliding Fee Child Care, Earned Income Tax Credit/Working Family Credit, public health insurance programs (MinnesotaCare, Medical Assistance and General Assistance Medical Care), and School Meal program. But the tool is just a starting point. Behind the project is the goal of encouraging communities to step up and support low-income families in their efforts to achieve economic stability.

The project's emphasis on the needs of the whole family, as opposed to just the parent or the child, is also intentional. It encourages families to be proactive in assessing resources and planning for the permanent needs of all members of the family. "This tool will be a great asset for families and the people who work with them," said Ruth Curwen Carlson, Assistant Director of the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health, MN

Department of Health, and one of many people who have been reviewing the web site and suggesting ways to make it better. "It is similar to concepts envisioned under several children's initiatives in Minnesota," she observed, "and it's great to see it a statewide reality!"

We invite you to review the Covering All Families web site (<http://www.coveringall-families.org>) and email any comments to cyfc@umn.edu



Photo by Jennifer Lindner

High quality and affordable child care can help break the cycle of poverty

"If middle income parents in stable, two-income families have difficulty finding and paying for decent child care, which in 48 states costs more than public college tuition, how much more difficult—or near impossible—it is for fragile, poor families."

—Marian Wright Edelman, July 2002

Economic Stability for Low-Income Families

—continued from cover

Flexibility is even more important in the economically precarious times we live in now and that lie ahead.

Home ownership and asset development make a difference. Families who own their homes have distinct advantages and built-in safety nets over renters, but policies regarding credit and lending do not generally give low-income families access to mortgages or loans for home purchases. Asset development programs are helping some Minnesota families, but the partnerships and eligibility requirements should be expanded to reach more families (see story on page 3).

Education across the lifespan is key to a living wage. We should be promoting a coherent system of early childhood, pre-K-12, adult and higher education, parent education, and workforce training that is accessible, flexible and incorporates the very best of what we know about human development across the life span.

CONNECTION CORNER

Family Re-Union 11: Youth and Families Together

This year's Family Re-Union conference focused on youth development and the web of interconnections that exist among youth and their families and communities. Held October 20 at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, the conference was moderated once again by former Vice President Al Gore and his wife, Tipper.

Although CYFC was not a formal sponsor this year, four CYFC advisers and U of M faculty were among the presenters and other Minnesotans were in the audience. The Family Re-Union website (www.familyreunion.org) lists the conference agenda and contains proceedings from past conferences.

New Videotape Series on Children's Special Health Care Needs

The University of Minnesota Center for Children with Special Health Care Needs has developed five independent study modules on topics that range from culturally appropriate care for American Indian children with asthma to family-focused care for children with Down Syndrome. Designed for nurses and other health care professionals, each module

includes a videotape, set of printed materials, and CEU request form. The videotapes can be rented for six weeks at \$26 each, and group rates are available for five or more individuals studying together. For more information, contact the School of Nursing Outreach Office at 612-626-4772.

Neighborhood Programs

One of the best kept secrets is the University of Minnesota's Neighborhood Programs, which offers low-cost accredited University classes for residents who live in low income neighborhoods in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Participants with low incomes or other hardships are eligible, and often learners are the first in their families to be enrolled in college. All

courses are taught in the evening and most are held at community sites in the neighborhood. The fall semester is already underway, but the spring semester registration will be in early January. Call for a brochure and information about eligibility by calling 612-625-8555 or visit the website at www.cce.umn.edu/neighborhood

CONSORTIUM UPDATE

Framing a Child Welfare Research Agenda for Minnesota

What are the most pressing research questions in the child welfare field today? And how can we use the evidence gained from current and future research to improve outcomes for children and families? The University of Minnesota's School of Social Work and CYFC have joined forces with the MN Department of Human Services to answer these questions and shape a comprehensive research agenda for child welfare in Minnesota. This effort was launched at a June 3 meeting that brought together professionals from many fields to share ideas about current knowledge, unanswered questions, and top priorities for Minnesota. Throughout the fall, this process continues with interviews of community members and child welfare staff, being conducted by Susan J. Wells, Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Professor in Child Welfare and Youth Policy, U of M. When completed, the Proceedings from the June conference and the framework for Minnesota's child welfare research agenda will be available on CYFC's web site.

Vital Aging Network is growing

Monthly meetings of the Vital Aging Network (VAN) take up issues of creative housing options, learning opportunities, civic activism, cross-cultural understanding of aging, and much more. Committed to developing new ideas about vital, resilient aging, the network hosts open meetings on the second Tuesday of every month. The University of Minnesota's Career and Lifework Center administers the network, and CYFC is a proud member of the network's leadership group. Read about their work at www.van.umn.edu and add your name to the VAN listserv.

Database of Youth Programs at the U

One of the results of the University of Minnesota's involvement with America's Promise as a University of Promise is a refurbished database of the premier youth service programs sponsored by various departments and centers across the campuses. Here in one place you can browse or search for programs that focus on one or more of the five promises to youth: caring adults, safe places, healthy lives, effective education, and opportunities to serve. Contact information is available for each program in case you want to volunteer or connect a youth in your life with an appropriate University program. Check the site often for new programs that will be added during the year: www.promise.umn.edu

DECEMBER

December 2

Health Care Coverage Summit: Successful Strategies for Reaching Uninsured Families, a statewide conference hosted by the Cover All Kids Coalition at the MN Department of Health, Snelling Office Park. Call Cover All Kids at (651) 855-1177 or e-mail the Coalition at greeneg@cdf-mn.org.

December 6

The Nurtured Heart Approach and Emotional Intelligence, a workshop open to the public held at the Center for Brilliant Living. Call Tina at 651-453-0123 for more information.

December 6

MN Council on Family Relations Annual Conference "Families and Culture: Exploring the Intersection" featuring UM faculty Paul Rosenblatt, Juan Moreno and Rose Brewer. Co-sponsored by CYFC. Earle Brown Center, St Paul. Call Linda Vukelich 651-407-0950.

December 6 - 8

ZERO TO THREE—17th National Training Institute, held in Washington, D.C. For information visit www.zerotothree.org.

JANUARY-JUNE 2003

February 6 & 20, March 6 & 27

Diversity & Multiculturalism in Higher Education, a U of M lecture series. Contact Darwin Hendl 612-625-0129 or hende001@umn.edu or visit www.education.umn.edu/PEPSC.

April 8

Minnesota Round Table on Early Literacy, presented by the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED), Radisson Metrodome, U-Minneapolis. Call 612-625-3058 or herre012@umn.edu.

April 14-15

Child and Adolescent Mental Health, MN Assoc for Children's Mental Health annual conference, Duluth Convention Center.

April 30 - May 2

Early Childhood Family Education and School Readiness Coordinators Conference at the Doubletree Place Hotel in St. Louis Park.

May 15

Irving B. Harris Forum featuring Harris Visiting Scholar, Dr. Sam Meisels, President, Erikson Institute (Chicago) and Zero-to-Three. (612) 626-8625 icd.coled.umn.edu/HarrisCenter.

May 30

Minnesota Children's Summit II, Coffman Union, University of Minnesota. Watch for details at www.cyfc.umn.edu

June 5 & 6

National conference on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, Radisson Metrodome, U-Minneapolis, co-sponsored by U-M's Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community.

Michael Brott, Community Partnerships and Communications Coordinator

Economic stability for low-income, working families is a rapidly emerging topic on many web sites that track resources, programs and policies for children, youth, families and communities. Chances are you will find information on economic stability and child and family well-being on your favorite national research, advocacy or policy sites.

Start your search at CYFC's policy web site where we have selected and hot-linked current reports, articles and briefs on economic stability and low-income families:
www.cyfc.umn.edu/policy/issues/stability.html

Rural Families and Welfare Issues Policy Brief

<http://fsos.che.umn.edu/bauer/pdf/RuralFamiliesBrief.pdf>

Rural families often face unique economic and welfare issues. Jean Bauer of University of Minnesota and Bonnie Braun of the University of Maryland produced this policy brief that highlights the critical issues facing rural Americans.

Filling the Gaps in Welfare Reform

<http://www.wilder.org/research/reports/pdf/mcknightreport8-01.pdf>

This report, produced in 2001 by the Wilder Research Center, describes the effectiveness of community partnerships in addressing welfare reform in Minnesota. The evaluation and report was funded by the McKnight Foundation, which had supported community efforts to help make the state's new "work first" model succeed.

Low-Income, Working Families.

<http://www.lowincomeworkingfamilies.org>

This site contains two papers that explore the low-wage labor market. Written by leading researchers and policy experts, the papers are produced by the Project on Work, Family and Democracy at Harvard University and the Families and Work Institute. The site also includes resources on welfare and low-wage issues and summaries of TANF and low-wage policy.

Grow Faster Together or Grow Slowly Apart

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/dsg/index.html>

The report outlines trends that are shaping the size and characteristics of America's labor force: labor and skills shortages and stagnant wages. The report recommends that worker training, job security and stability, and immigration policy should be national priorities and proposes concrete initiatives for government and the private sector. Produced by the Domestic Strategy Group, Aspen Institute.

Who's The Consortium?

Senators **Leo Foley** and **John Hottinger** and Representatives **Mindy Greiling** and **Barb Sykora** are assisting CYFC in planning a series of conversations between legislators and U of M faculty. Set for January 2003, these "Conversations at the Capitol" are being sponsored by CYFC's Deans' Policy Council as a way to further connect research and policy.

Barb Kucera, a staff member of Labor Education Service, an outreach program of the U of M's Industrial Relations Center, generously provided photographs for this issue of the newsletter. She is eager to share the resources of LES, which include a video library, courses, live theatre and a website—Workday Minnesota—devoted to the issues that face working people.

Ann Kirby McGill, Director of Constituent Services for University Relations and long time member of CYFC's Advisory Council, is working very closely with CYFC this year to plan an array of University-community activities that will culminate in a statewide Children's Summit on May 30, 2003.

Dr. Jodi Sandfort leads the McKnight Foundation's program area for Children, Families and Communities and still finds time to be a visiting professor at the U of M's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. She has been meeting with CYFC staff and advisers and is actively working to look beyond welfare reform to permanent economic stability for low-income families.

Emily Topinka, U of M student majoring in Communications and Spanish, completed a year of service as a University of Promise fellow in June. She identified and summarized programs that link University students, faculty and staff with community children and youth. You can see her work by viewing the University of Promise database and web site (www.promise.umn.edu).

And the Consortium is YOU!



MN Children's Summit II is coming

May 30, 2003!

Watch for more details at—

www.cyfc@umn.edu

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