

Children, Youth & Family Consortium

CYFC Monthly

CYFC Monthly – June 2014

Celebrating a Decade at CYFC, and Saying Goodbye

On June 30, 2004 I left my first University of Minnesota career as a pediatric neuropsychologist to become the Executive Director of the Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC). As a clinician, I had seen the developmental impact of good as well as challenged parenting, safe communities and risky ones, healthy and unhealthy environments, and effective as well as ineffective educational systems. I was also a researcher, conducting community-based participatory research on childhood lead poisoning. In both roles, I was working downstream, but looking upstream, and wondering if I might be able to make a different kind of impact if I changed my career course. What might I be able to do if I focused attention on the application of research evidence to practice and policymaking? And what would it look like if I helped to make that research responsive to and respectful of communities by engaging them in authentic, reciprocal partnerships?

When I came to CYFC, I was excited by the opportunity to combine my passions for children and community engagement with a more intentional approach to addressing upstream mechanisms. I have not been disappointed. In fact, I have been incredibly enriched by the opportunities to work with brilliant, passionate, mission-driven, and creative community professionals, CYFC staff and University faculty. I have gained many insights into how systems work, how to inform decision-making, and how to support the work of individuals and organizations that interact directly with children and families. I have learned to work across disciplines and university structures and have strengthened my approaches to community engagement. I have been able to dip, and sometimes dive, into a variety of content areas — early childhood education, literacy, parenting, connecting children to nature, housing, out-of-school time, children's mental health, health and educational disparities, and many more. Recently, however, I have missed having an area of specialization of my own.

I am now motivated by a new passion — for nature as the learning context — to shift my career course again. On June 30, ten years to the day, I will leave my position as Director to begin my third career at the University. I will assume a joint position between my faculty “academic home” in the Department of Pediatrics and the Extension Center for Community Vitality. I leave inspired by a new area in which to develop specialized expertise, and prepared with a broad knowledge base, diverse set of skills, and expanded networks acquired and strengthened by my CYFC experience. With these tools as my foundation, I plan to develop a community-engaged applied research program focused on nature-based education for youth at risk for academic failure or disengagement. I am also looking forward to working with colleagues in the Extension Center for Community Vitality on participatory approaches to program development, implementation and evaluation as they work to ensure that Minnesota's communities are strong. I will also continue to work at the University of Minnesota and nationally to increase the capacity for authentic community engagement and rigorous community-engaged scholarship.

This is an exciting time for CYFC. We have engaged in a six-month reflection and planning process to identify and articulate the philosophies, approaches, activities and content that distinguish CYFC and allow it to add value to the academic mission of the University. This process will continue over the next few months to develop plans to scale up CYFC's programs for added impact. This process will also result in the identification of the leadership qualities needed to move this next phase of CYFC's work forward. A search for a permanent leader will then begin. Trish Olson, program leader in Extension's Center for Family Development, will serve as Interim Director. Our programs, events and publications will continue uninterrupted. CYFC's talented and dedicated staff look forward to continued and deepened partnerships with our University and community collaborators.

Many people have contributed to the success and sustainability of CYFC and to my own professional growth. During my ten years at CYFC, six administrative leaders have helped to guide CYFC's direction and have offered me support and mentorship. CYFC will continue to benefit from a stable and supportive home within University of Minnesota Extension, which it has enjoyed since 2010. I want to thank CYFC's passionate staff, past and present, for their dedicated, creative and highly skilled efforts on behalf of children and families. And I especially want to thank you — the community and academic professionals that work tirelessly to improve the lives of children and families. I thank you for the work you do. I have been honored to partner with you and I will take the many lessons I have learned from you into the next leg of my journey serving children and families.

Should you wish to contact me, please email me at jorda003@umn.edu.

Cathy Jordan
Director

Consortium News

Play is Important Work for Learning

Cathy Jordan recently wrote for the [Youth Development Insights Blog](#) about the importance of play in academics. She highlights the learning opportunities students have during "fun" activities like how to collaborate, communicate and problem solve. [Read the blog and add to the conversation.](#)

Children's Mental Health Research to Practice Series

CYFC partnered with Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health (MACMH) to present the [Research to Practice Series](#) at the most recent annual conference. This series features University of Minnesota faculty and staff and provides an in-depth review of basic and applied research, best practices, and translation of research to practice and policy. The focus this year was Strengthening Families in the Context of Incarceration with the keynote presentation made by Dr. Rebecca Shlafer. Jason Marque Sole presented "Research and Reflections About Incarceration and Families: What Do We Know?" and a viewing of the movie Mothers of Bedford was followed by a discussion with Barbara "Bobby" Blanchard-Lewis. Videos and presentation notes are available on our [website](#).

University & Community Announcements

What Went Wrong? Reflecting and Learning from Community-Engaged Research

Date: July 11-12, 2014

Location: Minneapolis, MN

Cost: \$25-\$75

Register to attend this conference featuring keynote address by María Torre, Ph.D. and Brett Stoudt, Ph.D. from The Graduate Center, City University of New York. Join others working for social justice in an active dialogue about what it means for communities and universities to practice deeply engaged research that is reflective, questions power dynamics and works toward shifts in practice.

Measurement and Evaluation Certificate

Hamline University Center for [Public Administration and Leadership](#)

Dates: 9/18/14-4/17/15

Location: Hamline University

Participants will gain knowledge and tools for performing basic internal and collaborative performance measurement and evaluation activities in the context of planning and research in public organizations. The curriculum is structured specifically for individuals who would like to improve their existing skills, for staff for whom performance measurement and evaluation is a newly acquired duty, or for public agency leaders who are responsible for new evidence-based practice initiatives, evaluation, and measurement, and need an understanding of the processes and resources needed to make these efforts succeed. [Participants can register for the certificate or seminar.](#)

Save the date for the Food Access Summit 2014

[The Minnesota Food Charter](#)

Dates: October 29-30, 2014

Location: Duluth Entertainment Convention Center

This will be an opportunity for those working to improve access to healthy food for underserved populations to participate in the launch of the Minnesota Food Charter. The Food Access Summit will provide food/social policy tools, training and action-oriented ideas to educate and organize participants to support local, state and national efforts to make the food systems equitable for all.

A Modern Parenting Conversation with Author Jennifer Senior

[MomEnough Podcast](#)

Building on research in psychology, sociology and history, and discussions with parents “in the trenches,” [Jennifer Senior explains](#) how modern parenting is different, impacts everything from sleep to life satisfaction, and brings joy when reflecting on the overall experience.

Job Opportunities

[Vice President of Improvement Science-Search Institute](#)

[Research Associate — Search Institute](#)

Follow CYFC



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

© 2017 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.