

Family forum

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

State Affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations

MCFR Annual Conference Will Focus on Diversity

By Madge Alberts, Conference Co-chair

Family professionals work in a very different environment today than they did even ten years ago. The world is much smaller, as new populations join our communities, leaving their countries of origin for a variety of reasons. Some come to the United States under very stressful circumstances. Many face unwelcoming attitudes and even outright discrimination.

As they experience and begin to find their way in American culture, things often do not follow the customs they are used to. As professionals who work with new Americans, we may not know or understand the norms and values of the various ethnic backgrounds of the families we serve.



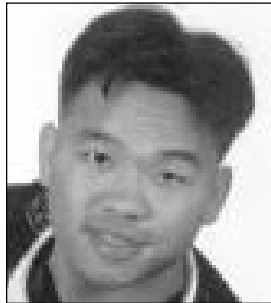
Paul C. Rosenblatt

In addition to these new immigrants and refugees, we continue to work with families who have been a part of our communities for generations, but are marginalized because of race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other reasons. Many of them still feel like they are on the "outside." This feeling is

reinforced when many of the professionals who work with them do not share their backgrounds or experiences.

New family forms – single adults, single parents, stepfamilies, gay and lesbian couples with and without children, and grandparents raising grandchildren – all of these offer new perspectives to our work in family education and family services.

How do we come to know each other better as we work together in our communities for the well-being of children, youth and families? How can we prevent our individual world views and backgrounds from become barriers to understanding those of others? How do we not



Tou Ger Xiong

only accept, but appreciate, celebrate, and fully value and understand the different cultures living together here in Minnesota and our country?

MCFR's fall conference will focus on these questions, on both societal and personal levels, using a variety

of teaching and learning methods.

Dr. Paul Rosenblatt has taught in the Family Social Science department at the University of Minnesota for many years. Among his areas of expertise are family systems theory and family diversity. He will frame the issue during his presentation, "Getting Inside the Realities of Diverse Families."

The life experiences of Tou Ger Xiong, moving from the jungles of Laos to the refugee camps of Thailand to the public housing projects of America, form the basis of his highly acclaimed presentations involving storytelling, music, comedy and art. His message is, "As

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Family Forum is the newsletter of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations, a State Affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations

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Families and Culture: Exploring the Intersection

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Friday, December 6, 2002

Earle Brown Center
University of Minnesota
St. Paul Campus

Registration materials are
available at the MCFR website at

www.ncfr.org/mncfr

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A Note from the MCFR President

Marcie Brooke, MCFR 2002 President



Marcie Brooke

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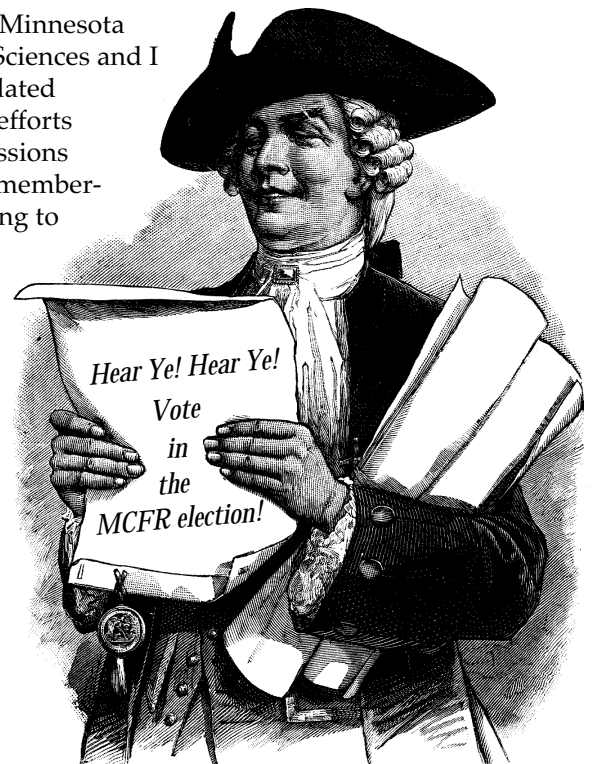
Everywhere I turn I am reminded of important elections coming up. Elections for school boards, mayors, county commissioners, senators, representatives, the governor's race, school referendums, and on and on. I believe we are more fortunate than we realize to have the privilege and freedom to vote. Now is the time to read about our candidates, talk with them, and listen. They are our future leaders. They will be making and voting on issues that will affect us for years to come. Listening to stories of recent immigrants, I see how much I have always taken for granted.

The Minnesota Council on Family Relations also has an election coming up for the 2003 slate of officers. It is important to get to know these candidates too. Outstanding individuals have responded to the call to place their name on the ballot. It is our responsibility to get to know them and to cast our vote. We all lead extremely busy lives and when one is asked to serve it may seem like one more thing will put us over the edge. Even to take the time to read about the candidates and send in your vote. I know that feeling. I thank the slate of officers for responding to the call. I know that my life has been enriched many fold since I agreed to serve. Please vote.

In spite of many work/family issues in my personal life, MCFR enriches my life. The members I meet and work with continue to inspire and challenge my thinking. They are mentors, friends colleagues, working parents, working grandparents, and family professionals. Their wisdom and support are gifts. I am thankful I got a call to become more active. I hope you too will make a call to invite a colleague to join and to say "yes" when someone calls you.

Michele Saylor, president of the the Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences and I have invited leaders in other family related organizations to discuss collaborative efforts between our organizations. The discussions include conferences, promotions, and memberships. This is a grassroots brainstorming to help capitalize on our strengths, promote our membership, and career involvement. Perhaps you may know of or wonder about other family related organizations. Organizations contacted are the above two, Home Economists in Business, Extension, Future Career and Community Leaders of America. Department of Children Families and Learning (several child family life organizations are known to them), Twin City Home & Community, and MAMFT.

Hope to visit with you at our Annual Conference on December 6, 2002. It will be an exceptional day!!!



FOCUS ON FATHERHOOD!

Reflections on two recent events for Men/Fathers

By Stephen L. Onell, M.S., LISW
Males in Families Section Chair

Seminar: Towards a Healthier Masculinity

Over 40 people attended the seminar sponsored by the Males in Families Section of MCFR on healthy masculinity (addressing the crisis in masculinity for men and boys), held at the St. Paul Area Red Cross on Friday, August 9, 2002. A very diverse audience watched

the 80 minute video, "Tough Guise", at the beginning of the seminar and then developed lists of healthy and unhealthy messages that boys and men hear as they construct their masculinity (i.e. "what it is to be a man")

Following lunch, two sets of work-

shops were presented. Feedback regarding the video and workshops was positive. Participants suggested and inquired about future programming regarding this topic.

Festival of Father's and Families: Celebrating Fatherhood in 2002

The Festival of Father's is over 10 years old and continues to be an annual "North side" event in early August. Over 400 people attended this free event which included: t-shirts for dads, food, entertainment (including the Teddy Bear Band), resource tables sponsored by various community agencies, a petting zoo, a moonwalk, music and many raffle prizes. A number of father's received special honors at the event, presented by father-serving programs.

The event continues to be successful with excellent attendance and many individuals and organizations/businesses willing to volunteer goods, time, money and services. Anyone interested in being a part of the 2003 Festival of Fathers and Families may contact Steve at 651-291-6771.



Programs for Father's Update:

Progress in developing additional, quality programs for fathers continues in Minnesota.

- A new, updated Minnesota Father's Services Directory was released in July. Copies may be obtained by calling Donna at the Minnesota

Department of Human Services at 651-297-4817.

- Concordia College in St. Paul is offering fatherhood classes for professionals wishing to specialize in services and programming for fathers.

- A statewide effort is underway to develop fatherhood programs in all areas of the state. A couple of the key father program initiatives have successfully begun in Northeast Minnesota.

MCFR Annual Conference Will Focus on Diversity

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much as we are different, we are alike. We have no other choice but to learn to get along.”

Panelists representing a variety of ethnic backgrounds will reflect on their experiences living in a cultural environment different from their own. Moderated by Ann Lovrien, St. Paul Early Childhood Family Education Program Manager, this discussion is sure to

provide some great insights and learnings.

Finally, small group guided discussions will encourage participants to explore their own values, biases, individual backgrounds, and actions, and concrete ways they can contribute toward a greater *knowing* of each other.

The day will wrap up with a summary and reflections by two observers

on what they have seen and heard during the day, and some next steps in the journey. Juan Moreno, program director with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion with the University of Minnesota Extension Service, will be one of the responders.

Join us for an invigorating day exploring these issues.

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Encouraging Responsibility in Children

by Leanne M. Sponsel



Leanne Sponsel

There Are Two Types of Responsibility: Social and Task.

Social Responsibility is developed over time as children learn about and create connections with their communities. We teach social responsibility by:

- modeling it
- showing respect for the child's feelings and listening to his/her concerns

- giving positive messages about mistakes
- teaching self-motivation (ask children what rewards they would give themselves for a job well done and help them reflect on the good feelings one gets without a tangible reward)

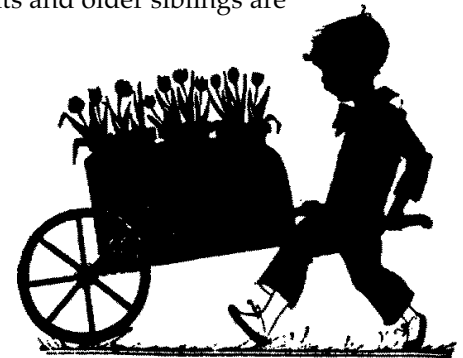


Task Responsibility is a precursor to social responsibility and in itself is important for:

- feeling included, important, and necessary
- gaining confidence and a sense of capability
- preparation for later in life (Who does stock the linen closet with extra toothpaste?)

The best time to teach task responsibility is the most inconvenient time for parents - it's when the children want to learn. It's when they are two and love to do what parents and older siblings are doing.

**For those with little children: Let Them Do Things.
For those with older children: Don't fear - it's not too late.**



Teaching task responsibility

First, understand "childish irresponsibility".
Assess the four "R"s: Readiness Risks Repetition Reward.

READINESS

Stages of Learning

1. Child watches adult
2. Child helps adult
3. Adult helps the child
4. Does task alone when reminded
5. Does task remembering by self
6. Child needs reminder again
7. Child is independent once again

REPETITION

Just Do It - Over & Over

1. Provide many opportunities to do the task over and over.
2. Be patient.
3. Don't redo the task.

RISK

The Questions

1. What is the safety risk?
2. What are the emotional or psychological risks?
3. Are the risks too big?

REWARDS

When/What

1. Financial?
2. Related to allowance?
3. Non-financial?
4. Extrinsic or intrinsic?

C. Follow some of these tips for assisting children in learning task responsibility:

- Set limits: "Your chore must be done by noon."
- Break down new or large tasks into small pieces.
- Manage your own expectations.
- Vary (and rotate) the tasks.
- Balance chores with other kid responsibilities: (school, homework, play, music, sports)
- For reminders, say it in a word. "Coat" will say, "The rule is that you hang up your coat."
- Put directions, reminders, and appreciation into words or pictures.
- Let children help set work expectations.
- Give concrete guidelines for a job.
- Ask, "Do you *want* help?" (vs. "need")
- Don't help too soon.
- Help them put failures into perspective. (This is a 9-year-old job and you're 7, and you completed the whole job.)
- Examine your own standards if "quality of work" becomes an issue.
- Avoid comparing siblings' chores.
- Help them label their accomplishments: (This room is so neat. You'll be able to find things so easily.)

READER'S CORNER: Fresh Perspectives for Work with Families

By Ted Bowman

In this issue of Reader's Corner, you are invited to consider a book that expands the discussion of a major perspective for those working with families and an unusually thoughtful book about grandparenting.

Consider adding these volumes to your library.

Resiliency enhancement: putting the strengths perspective into social work practice

(2000) edited by Elaine Norman.

New York: Columbia University Press, paper, \$22.50

Among the reasons this book stands out is the way it moves the resiliency discussion beyond children. Chapters addressing resiliency in older people; women and midlife; couple resiliency; even a resiliency model for mental health organizations are included. Such an array of perspectives makes this volume distinct among the many volumes addressing resiliency or hardiness.

Further, Elaine Norman in the opening chapter places resiliency squarely within the strengths outlook now complementing and replacing the traditional deficit model for working with families.

As with all edited volumes, some chapters are stronger than others. Yet, on balance the chapters weave together providing rich food for thought for family professionals.

The special mission of grandparents: hearing, seeing, telling

(1999) by C. Margaret Hall.

Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, hardback, \$39.95.

This impressive volume explores the special role of grandparents. Drawing on more than 25 years experience as a clinical sociologist, Margaret Hall, utilizes wonderful

examples of all sorts of families as she looks at purpose and relationship. This is not a book about ideal relationships. No, Hall takes families as they are and as their history has shaped them. In the midst of often complicated family systems, the role and mission of the grandparent is developed. Practical, though not a handbook of activities, Hall invites critical reflection.

Here are three examples of the questions she addresses. What is it that grandparents know that is most helpful to their grandchildren's development and social progress? What are the most effective ways for grandparents to communicate that knowledge? How can grandparents have a constructive impact on their families and communities?

As a grandfather, this book was helpful. I could see it being used in a parenting or a grandparents group. Therapist will find much to inform their practice. This will add greatly to your volumes on grandparenting.

