

# MCFR

Minnesota Council on Family Relations

# Family Forum

FALL 2011

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



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

## Annual Elections Issue!

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

**President Elect: Mary Maher, MSW, LPE** has a Master's degree in Social work from the University of Minnesota and is a licensed parent educator. She has worked for the Childbirth Education Association(5 years), Early Childhood Family Education(26 years), Parent Warmline (2 years), University of Minnesota (4 years) and done various special projects for the Department of Education and Minnesota's Extension Service. She is currently employed at Northwest Youth and Family Services.

Her Board experience includes a prior term on the MCFR board and serving on the Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota and Theresa Living Center Board of Directors. A goal she has for MCFR is to increase services to student members and increase our membership to include a diversity of family professionals.

Mary lives in Roseville with her husband Mark and their dog Astro. She is adjusting to an empty nest.

**Secretary: Kristin Dillon, MS, PhD** is a Research Scientist at Wilder Research. In her work, she evaluates programs that impact families in many different ways. She evaluates a range of programs from small ones aimed at

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**Friday, December 2, 2011 SAVE THE DATE! MCFR Annual Conference**  
**Featuring nationally acclaimed speaker, U of Arkansas' Dr. H. Wallace Goddard**

**Como Park Visitor Center, Rainforest Auditorium, St Paul, MN**  
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## Board of Directors

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Ron Pitzer..... 612-331-1970

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Mike Bender..... 763-331-4443

Kristin Dillon..... 612-484-4014

Eric Hansen, EdD..... 612-692-1318

Nancy Melquist..... 651-407-2024

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## From the President *Leanne Sponsel*

*Hello to all,*



It's fall! Ummmm, It's summer! Ummmm. What time of year is it?! I know it is October, but the weather forecast predicts 80 degrees – a nice day to enjoy both the emerging colors and the sunshine. Wow.

As 2011 begins its last quarter, I am looking forward to MCFR's "wow" of a conference. On our traditional date of the first Friday in December – December 2 – we have the opportunity to

learn from Dr. Wally Goddard and others about important aspects of our work with families. *The Power of Relationships – Enhancing Skill-based Practice* will surely be a conference that could be life and professional practice changing. I hope you'll join us!

And speaking of joining us . . . there are positions open on our board and we would welcome new and returning faces. If you're not interested in a board position, how about participating in a one-time event or serving on a committee? I know it's odd to "invite" yourself to such a role, but we would be grateful and so enthusiastic it might blow you over. And speaking of being blown over, a wind gust just created a flurry of leaves outside my window – probably a reminder for me to get on with my day.

Wishing you a colorful fall,

Leanne M. Sponsel

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

supporting teenage mothers or preventing child maltreatment to large statewide alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention initiatives that engage families and communities to keep youth healthy and safe. As an evaluator, she helps to make sure that programs are serving families as effectively as possible.

Kristin has her MS and Ph.D. in Family Social Science from the University of Minnesota.

She has been a board member of MCFR for the past six years. In that time she has held different positions on the board, from the Student Section founder and chair to the Treasurer to the chair or co-chair of three conferences. She appreciates the warmth and passion of the board, and is excited for the opportunity to explore a new role on the board.

**Treasurer: Beth Yokom, LPE, MA, ECFE/SR Supervisor - Anoka-Hennepin School District** I worked for 14 years as a licensed parent educator in the Mounds View ECFE program, including 8 years in the Family Learning Program, a family literacy program funded by Even Start. Since 2006, I've worked as an ECFE/SRP Supervisor in the Anoka-Hennepin School District. Also, I have experience as a workshop designer and trainer for various projects in Family

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## Slate of Board Nominees (Continued from page 2)

Literacy and ECFE, and I'm a member of the MN ECFE Curriculum Committee, whose recent project has been the creation and publication of Minnesota's Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework.

Educational Background:

- BA, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN
- Parent Education License, UMN
- Graduate Fellowship, UMN
- MA, Family Education, UMN

My husband and I are adjusting to a sometimes-empty nest as our young adult children find their way in the world – no easy task right now, even with a college degree. So, they come and they go and they come and they go... I love to sing, read, knit, travel, hike, commune with nature and good friends, go to plays and concerts, and sleep! My fervent wish is to find time in my days to sew and quilt, and maybe to revive my golf game, dormant for many years.

I enjoy serving on the MCFR Board because of the variety of family professionals MCFR serves. We, who work with families, have much to teach one another, and MCFR provides opportunities to do just that. Because it's a great gathering place for family professionals, MCFR is professionally energizing.

MCFR Board Experience:

- Conference Planning Committee, Dec. 2006
- Secretary
- Communications Committee Chair
- President-Elect, President, Past President



## At Large Board Members:

**Mike Brown, EdD** Early Childhood Education Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education

Mike Brown works at the Minnesota Department of Education. At the state level, he works with Early Childhood Family Education, Head Start and School Readiness. He received his B.A. in psychology and sociology from the University of Minnesota in 1996. He also received his M.Ed. and Ed.D. in Family Education from the University of Minnesota, in 1998 and 2007, respectively. He is also an adjunct instructor at the University of Minnesota.

Mike lives in Blaine, MN, with his wife and two children.

**Carol Bruess, PhD** My primary work is as a Professor of Family Communication and Director of Family Studies at the University of St. Thomas. While I've been at UST for 14 years, my interest in the study of family began 20 years ago when I conducted my first study on marriage and the development of a co-culture between couples who share private language, like nicknames. Since then I have been studying and teaching about families and marriages, specifically rituals of connection in daily, mundane interaction. I'm passionate about translating excellent research on family and relationships into sources that are widely consumed by individuals in marriages, partnerships and families to help them have smarter, stronger and more inspired interactions. I've written 3 hybrid books -- scholarship in pretty gift book form -- on happy couples, keeping marriage strong when couples are also parenting, and rituals of connection sustaining strong female bonds.

My M.A. and Ph.D. are both from Ohio University's School of Interpersonal Communication. I have a B.A. in Art.

I love beer and hot yoga (not at the same time), am about to celebrate 20 years of happy coupledness to my college sweetheart Brian, am an avid seamstress and recently made my sister's wedding dress, have two really cool kids (Tony is 15 and has a great sense of humor and his first job at Davanni's on Cleveland/Grand Ave; Gracie is 11 and just about everything makes her happy, especially if she can craft it, kick it around a field, catch it with a glove, or swim in it). We also have Fred (woof), our 5.5 lb Yorkie, the youngest and most spoiled member of our family.

As someone rather new to the field of family studies, yet wanting to learn as much as I can because I see the incredible passion, excitement and desire of so many of our students, I'm excited to be an eager learner in the MCFR journey and share - from a novice, fresh, outsider perspective - what MCFR looks/feels like from my multi-disciplinary

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

vantage point. Honestly, I also love meeting others who love studying/working with families; my best guess is that will happen by joining the MCFR board?!



**Peggy Cardenas** My work as a School Social Worker at Sunnyside Elementary in Mounds View School District has been the focus of my career since 1990. Prior to this experience, I worked for Wilder Foundation for 11 years. I currently work with elementary school children and their families around many issues, including: family changes, family chemical dependency, mental health concerns, social issues and academic concerns. I meet with children individually and in social skills groups and help them with problems that occur in their lives. Matching families with community resources is a major focus in my position and is always a challenge. I enjoy serving on several committees within the school district and in the community.

My MSW is from St. Thomas University and my BA in Social Work and Early Childhood Teaching Certificate is from the University of Minnesota.

I am a proud mother of 2 children and an equally proud grandmother of 5 children. I love animals and currently have 2 dogs and a cat. I enjoy watching sports, playing sports, biking, hiking, reading and quilting. I enjoy spending time with my family and with my friends. I love to travel and hope to do more of it.

Being a part of a group of people who are working in the field of family relations and helping families navigate their way through resources in our community, is very appealing to me. I believe it will be a growth experience for me and a place for me to contribute some of the things I have learned in working with families.

**Colleen Clements** I have been an active mother and volunteer in various capacities (including Girl Scout leader, Reading Is Fundamental school coordinator, school reading group leader, and others) for the last 14 years, and recently completed my licensure requirements and MEd in parent education at the University of Minnesota. I am currently a PhD student at the U, in the Family, Youth and Community track, with an emphasis in Family. Areas of focus include parent education and family policy. In addition, I share the position of coordinator of the Parent and Family Education Licensure Program at the University of Minnesota with Heather Cline. My husband and I have three kids: a 14-year-old son and 11-year-old boy/girl twins. We like to travel together and have had the great good fortune of visiting Europe and the British Isles, as well as a number of states in the US (27 and counting!). We also like to cook and eat good food together, and we all share a passion for music and reading. I am interested in being on the board of MCFR to expand my own understanding and knowledge about families in our society and to develop my own leadership skills. In addition, I believe membership on the board of MCFR will allow me to find new ways to serve and support families.

**Beth Gausman** I am a Minnesota licensed Pre-Kindergarten and Parent and Family Educator as well as a Certified Family Life Educator. I am currently writing a book on facilitating online learning for adult learners through Parenting Press and I am working with Elizabeth Crary as she brings her book STAR Parenting to the general public through online learning systems. Additionally, I will begin working with Concordia College in the spring as an online educator with their Family Life Education Program of study. My previous work opportunities have included; child care at a center for at-risk children, ECE and Parent Educator with District 279 ECFE, author of Sound Foundations-a parenting kit for at-risk parents of young children, and instructor in an early childhood education program at a community college.

I have a Bachelors of Science degree from the University of Minnesota in Home Economics with additional focus areas of study in Early Childhood Education and Parent Education. My Masters degree is in Post Secondary and Adult Education from Capella University.

I am eager to join the board of MCFR as a member at large. I was previously on the board in the 1990's but left soon after my appointment when my husband and I moved our family to another state. Prior to my leaving in 1994, I served on the Ethics Committee during which time the original Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators was published.

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

In my time away from my professional endeavors I enjoy reading, hiking and time spent at my families remote cabin “up north”. In the summer I am eager to find time to spend in my kayak and in the winter treading around on my snowshoes. My husband and I are proud parents of two adult sons, who continue to bring us pleasure and pride.

**Alisha M. Hardman, CFLE** I received my Bachelor’s of Science in Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University in May 2005 and completed my Masters of Science in Family Life Education and Consultation also at Kansas State in August of 2008. I moved to Minnesota in August of 2008 and am currently a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Family, Youth and Community program track. I am in my fourth year as a graduate research assistant with the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Family Development Research and Evaluation Unit. In this role I consult on, design, collect data, analyze data and write up reports and articles for a number of research and evaluation projects. I am an avid K-State football and basketball fan so watching the games is my favorite pastime when I’m not busy with coursework or my assistantship. I have served on the board as the Student/New Professional chair the past two years and am eager to continue serving on the board in a new capacity.

**Lisa Krause, MA**, is a family life education student and certified parent coach. She founded the adoption and foster care ministry at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley where she provides support groups, parent education and youth development programs for adopted and foster care youth. She also has experience working as a domestic abuse advocate and childcare provider. Her current passion is program development particularly in the area of adoption/foster care, youth development and parent education.

Lisa is a mother of two wonderful teens and a twenty year old. She is enjoying seeing how her new role as a parent of an adult is unfolding. Her favorite activities are scrapbooking, camping and geocaching.

As my schooling is coming to an end I wanted to find a way to continue working with colleagues who share the same passions for families as I do while further strengthening the credibility of the field of family life education. Being on the MCFR board would meet those goals.

- B.A. Psychology - St. Cloud State University
- M.A. Family Life Education -Concordia University to be completed in February of 2012.
- Certified Parent Coach- Concordia University, St. Paul.

**Gail Peavey, MS** For the last fourteen years, I have been employed with University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension as a Family Living Agent and Co-Department Head for the Polk County Extension Office in Balsam Lake, WI. My career as an extension agent has provided me numerous trainings and opportunities to enhance family relationships, promote positive parenting and co-parenting strategies and help families meet future financial needs while addressing the basic of spending, saving, and housing issues. Prior to my career with UW Extension, I worked for eight years as a parent educator in the Marshall, MN ECFE program.

I received my undergraduate degree in Business Education and taught business for four years prior to choosing one of the most important careers and that being a wife and mother to three children. When our youngest was three years old, I started part-time as a parent educator for ECFE and began the non-traditional educational journey of graduate school where I earned (after eight years) my Masters of Science in Child and Families Studies from St Cloud State University with a license in Early Childhood and Parent Education. Both my undergraduate and graduate degree and teaching career prepared me for my new role as an extension educator.

One of my favorite joys in life is spending time with our grandchildren. Every week, my grandson and I play together at ECFE in Burnsville. When Ruger ‘graduates’ from ECFE, that special playtime will continue with his younger brother. My husband and I also enjoy traveling and experiencing different cultures and foods as well as relaxing at our cabin on a small Wisconsin lake.

I look forward to networking with colleagues as a contributing member and also gaining professional knowledge and experiences in helping fulfill the mission.

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### Treasurer's Corner

#### Heather Cline, MCFR Treasurer

MCFR has had an energizing and prosperous 2011. The spring conference featuring Dr. David Walsh brought in nearly \$6,000 in registration income, and cost us \$3,700 in expenses. Thanks to conference participation, including ongoing ethics workshops, and membership renewals our current balance is \$10,266.02. This is up \$4,193.66 from September 2010. As we look toward the end of 2011, with the December conference still on the horizon, we are proud of our accomplishments and thankful to all who have contributed to our growth. With your continued support, MCFR will continue pursuing our mission to educate, support, and connect family professionals.



### Communications Committee Report

Peg Lindlof, Communications Committee Chair

The MCFR Communications Committee is working to become more visible internally as a resource for members, and externally as a source of information and expertise about family issues throughout the lifespan. If you are a member of MCFR (or an NCFR member who lives in Minnesota) you are getting weekly MinneNews updates.

If you aren't a member, but enjoy reading this newsletter published three times a year, we'd like to invite you to become more involved. Let us know what kinds of professional development opportunities you need that are not currently available to you. Feedback from members is welcome and always carefully considered.

Members of the Membership and Communications committees are collaborating through a Marketing Task Force. During the rest of 2011 we will also collaborate with the Student Section to explore how social media might improve or enhance our communication and marketing efforts.

MCFR members are welcome to post events, news, questions or ideas on our listserv. Send your email message to [MCFR@lists.umn.edu](mailto:MCFR@lists.umn.edu). Contact San Ha at [haxx0039@umn.edu](mailto:haxx0039@umn.edu) to post your organization's link or event on the website.

## Membership Committee Report

Have you renewed your MCFR Membership?

Nancy Melquist, Membership Committee Chair

#### **Have you renewed your MCFR membership?**

The term for MCFR membership is September 1 – August 31. MCFR members received an email membership renewal reminder on September 1, 2011.

#### **Why you should join MCFR or renew your membership:**

MCFR's mission supports you and your work. It's an investment in your professional identity. MCFR offers you

- a professional working with families - opportunities to learn, connect and take action with others in the family field. MCFR is the Minnesota affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR.)

Your membership also saves you money, with reduced fees for MCFR conferences and workshops.

Visit [www.mcfr.net](http://www.mcfr.net) to learn more about all of the benefits and activities of MCFR. If you would prefer a membership renewal application mailed to you, call the MCFR office at 651-407-0950.

## What's New at NCFR by Minnell Tralle, CFLE

**It's hard to believe** that two years have passed and in November I'll finish my term on the NCFR Board of Directors and take the helm of the Affiliate Councils Board as President. Rose Allen will take my place on the Board of Directors in her new role as President-elect of the Affiliate Councils. I have learned so much about the NCFR organization and met some wonderful and committed board members as well. If you are ever asked to serve this organization, I would encourage you to do so. We have great leadership potential here in Minnesota.

**The NCFR Annual Conference is coming up November 16-19 in Orlando.** If you haven't done so, take a look at the program at [www.ncfr.org](http://www.ncfr.org). There are

lots of interesting workshops related to the theme "Families and the Shifting Economy". Scanning the program, I noticed a number of familiar names including MCFR Board members, Peg Lindlof, Alisha Hardmann and me. Other Minnesota scholars presenting at NCFR include Jodi Dworkin, Jennifer Doty, Kathryn Rettig, Jean Bauer, Pauline Boss, Susan Walker, Katherine Wickel, Catherine Solheim, Nancy Gonzalez, Paul Rosenblatt, Ellie McCann, and Mary Marczak. I'm sure I missed others, but what a line up! I hope to see you there.

Minnell Tralle,  
Affiliate Councils President-elect  
NCFR Liason to MCFR

## Ethics Project to be Reviewed

MCFR is pleased to be the distributor of the *Ethical Thinking and Practice* workshops and we are getting requests from a wide variety of interested professionals who work with families. We are in the process of deciding if and how to adapt materials for each audience as well as a general review of the project. If you have attended an *Ethical Thinking and Practice* workshop, we would value your feedback! Think about what you learned, how you used the information, and/or what you'd still like to learn. Then let us know! Send information to Leanne Sponsel, President of MCFR at [leannemsponsel@gmail.com](mailto:leannemsponsel@gmail.com).

Thanks for your input.  
Leanne Sponsel, MCFR President

### Slate of Board Nominees (Continued from page 5)

**Sharon Powell, PhD** earned her Masters degree in Human Development Counseling from Vanderbilt University (1994) and her doctorate in Family Social Science from the University of Minnesota (2004). Her professional interests include family policy, child development, and low-income family issues. She currently divides her time teaching adjunct at the U in Family Social Science and serving as the Family and Children's Program Coordinator at the Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community.

**The Ballot is found on page 8.**



Stay in touch at [www.mcfr.net](http://www.mcfr.net)

# 2011 MCFR Board Ballot

## President-Elect: (Choose or write-in one nominee)

- Mary Maher, MSW, LPE  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Secretary: (Choose or write-in one nominee)

- Kristin Dillon, MS, PhD  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Treasurer: (Choose or write-in one nominee)

- Beth Yokom, LPE, MA  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## At-Large Members: (Choose or write-in up to nine nominees)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Michael P. Brown, EdD | <input type="checkbox"/> Alisha M. Hardman, CFLE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carol Bruess, PhD     | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisa Krause, MA         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peggy Cardenas        | <input type="checkbox"/> Gail Peavey, MS         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colleen Clements      | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharon Powell, PhD      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beth Gausman          |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____                 |  |

## DIRECTIONS

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

or US mail to:

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

**Ballots are due by November 15, 2011 Thank you.**



### **Student/New Professional Events**

In an effort to provide students and new professionals with more opportunities, the S/NP section will be hosting two events each semester. These events will range from workshops that help students and new professionals develop skills to social events that allow S/NPs to gather together to socialize with one another.

We had a small group of students and family professionals meet for our first fall event, held on Friday, October 7. The discussion featured two family professionals: William Allen, a licensed marriage and family therapist and Nancy Melquist who is a licensed parent educator. The group engaged in a stimulating dialogue about the family field with particular emphasis on the vital role of relationships in both family therapy and family and parent education. Students and new professionals can find resources from this event including information regarding the Minnesota licensing requirements for both Marriage and Family Therapists and Parent Educators on our website under the Fall 2011 topic "A Conversation with Family Professionals: Marriage and Family Therapy & Parent Education."

**Join us for a social gathering at Sweeney's Saloon on Friday, November 4 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm.** Come enjoy happy hour appetizers and socialize with

other students! This is a great opportunity to meet and mingle with other students in family related programs.

Our spring events include a workshop on writing and submitting conference proposals and another conversation with family professionals. Check our website regularly for updated information on these events and other opportunities available through the S/NP section of MCFR.

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

The MCFR Fall Conference is quickly approaching! A few of the benefits that students who attend will gain include: the opportunity to hear a keynote presentation by a nationally-recognized speaker, an opportunity to network and become more familiar with family professionals as well as the work being done with families in Minnesota.

The student rate for this conference is \$59 but dues paying student members of MCFR are eligible to apply for a scholarship to attend the conference. Those who receive a scholarship will be able to register for the conference for only \$29. The scholarship form is available on the S/NP website and by clicking on the conference registration link on the MCFR conference website. The deadline for student scholarship applications is November 15.

### **A note from the Editor:**

The goldenrod is yellow, the frost is on the pumpkin, Halloween is fast approaching.

It's fall in Minnesota and so time for the annual MCFR elections. Included are a ballot and candidate bios.

Please vote. My thanks to Nicole Rice and all the others who did the hard work of compiling this slate of candidates and to all other contributors to this issue. Oh, did I say, please vote? Also, I encourage each of you to consider contributing to Family Forum—by preparing a book review or a research article/brief or by submitting an item for "Members' Corner" (our version of Letters to the Editor). Thanks.

Ron Pitzer

Family Forum editor

612-331-1970, [pitzer@q.com](mailto:pitzer@q.com)



review *A Review of Smart Parenting, Smarter Kids: The One Brain Book You Need to Help Your Child Grow Brighter, Healthier, and Happier*

[by David Walsh, Ph.D.; Free Press, June 14, 2011; ISBN # 9781439121177; \$25.00; hardcover; 304 pages; e-book 9781439137338]

*Reviewed by Marcie Parker, Ph.D., CFLE, President and CEO of Parker and Associates, a healthcare research and consulting firm in Excelsior, Minnesota.*

I may as well start this review by stating baldly that I think David Walsh's book should be required reading for every parent or prospective parent and definitely mandatory reading for anyone working with families. In addition to several other books, he has written No: Why Kids---of All Ages---Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say it, where Walsh taught parents how to say "no" when it was necessary. In Why Do They Act That Way?: A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen, he showed parents how to navigate the drama and upheaval of adolescence. [In my review of this book, I suggested that parents and teens or pre-teens read and discuss the implications of this book together]. And now, Walsh has written Smart Parenting, Smarter Kids. In this exciting new book, Walsh looks at the latest scientific findings and new and interesting facts about the brain, from birth through adolescence. In addition to providing families with solid scientific information about the brain, Walsh also discusses important aspects of exercise, nutrition, play [play is a kid's job and equips her/him for very important adult functions], sleep, emotional intelligence and social connection.

There are sixteen chapters in this new book, including Our Children's Amazing Brains; How to Raise Your Child's IQ; How the Brain Listens, Speaks, Reads and Writes; Memory, Attention, and the Rule of Seven [i.e.

our brains are designed to remember up to 7 chunks of information at a time]; Brain Food: Nutrition and the Brain; Play is Serious Business; Brain Workouts: Why Exercise is Critical; Your Brain's at Work While You Snooze; Self-Discipline: The Key To Success; A Brain Under Construction: The Adolescent Years; Boy and Girl Brains: What's the Difference; Stress and the Brain; Cyber Brains: Parenting in an Online World; Wired Differently: Special Needs Brains, Mental Illness and Chemical Use; Brain-Wise Daycare, Preschool and School Decisions; and the 21st-Century Parent. Notes and an Index follow. Each chapter ends with a Parent Tool Kit [a list of questions to which you respond yes or no], a list of Do's and Don'ts, and the questions "What do I want to continue?" and "What do I want to change?"

Walsh's goal is to separate sound scientific fact from fiction and urban myth and to provide parents with a guide to raising happy and healthy children who can live up to their potential. I guarantee that you will learn something new and exciting in each and every chapter, and sometimes each page. With the aid of CT scans, MRIs, PET scans and SPECT scans, we now know more than ever about how the brain functions. For example, the brain is equipped with two kinds of attention systems: reactive attention [located deep in the brain's emotional center, automatic, instinctive and involuntary....allowing kids to focus

on video games for hours on end] and focused attention [located in the prefrontal cortex or the executive center right behind the forehead....not an automatic system but one which kids need to learn things which are not necessarily flashy or stimulating but important nonetheless, such as word rhyming or reading skills].

Walsh pulls together what is currently known about how the brain develops and functions from infancy through adolescence, buttressed with practical advice and important information. In addition to checklists, tool kits and do's and don'ts, Walsh includes sample dialogues, conversation starters, anecdotes, case studies and stories to help illustrate what he is discussing. He paints a vivid picture of what goes on in the brain. For example, on pages 35-36, he gives a detailed list of the language and hearing milestones for birth to 3 months, 3-4 months, 6-9 months, 12-15 months, 18-24 months, 3 years of age and 4 years of age. He also addresses a very important issue in kids becoming deaf due to loud music and loud sounds. On page 43, he has an excellent list of 22 different things we can do to read to kids and help them develop their language skills. Pages 64-65 list things we can do to help develop and refine a child's memory, retention and retrieval of information [the stages include rehearsal, organization into categories, retrieval, study time,

elaboration and study techniques]. He mentions one set of parents who bring a new object to the dinner table each night and discuss it with their child to expand her world and her vocabulary.

Walsh starts with a very simple overview of what we know about how the brain works and how hormones affect our behaviors and actions. For instance, when a baby is born, only 17% of his or her brain cells are wired together and the vast majority of the wiring occurs in the days and weeks and months and decades following birth. Our brain development is affected both by our genetic inheritance and by our life experiences. Human brains go through long periods of blossoming and pruning until brain development is, more or less, complete in the mid to late 20's. Walsh points out that less than 50% of our intelligence is inherited and that we tend to overestimate talent's contribution and underestimate the role of luck, hard work and effort. He stresses that we need to praise the effort a child makes and not lavish generalized praise on the child's innate ability otherwise she will be afraid to fail and not try new things. Walsh says to praise the effort, be specific and not generic, be sincere in the praise and do not overdo the praise.

In his chapter on nutrition and brain development, Walsh takes on the excessive salt, fat and sugar in the typical American diet and suggests breakfasts, lunches and dinners to provide growing children with what they need to grow up healthfully. He includes valuable strategies [pp.83-84] to encourage healthy eating, especially for picky eaters. Walsh stresses the importance of regular rigorous physical exercise for brain

development. Sleep, until recently a much misunderstood and underappreciated but critically important activity, is vital to the brain development of children. On average, American children of all age groups are not getting enough sleep and are operating on a sleep deficit; the biggest sleep deficit being for teens, who need at least 9-10 hours of sleep a night and get only 6-7. This sleep deficit leads to lots of health issues such as obesity, memory problems and language development. Children who do not get enough sleep can be cranky and difficult and have problems in school. Babies, astoundingly, need 16-18 hours of sleep a day! If your child has sleep apnea, nightmares, night terrors or narcolepsy, Walsh addresses these as well. TV, electronic media, overscheduling, stress, anxiety and cell phones may all be culprits in cutting into valuable sleep time.

Walsh also stresses the importance of play as well as free and unstructured time to play and create. The need for unstructured free time is also being touted in the popular press [see for example "*The Joys of Summer: Go Ahead, kids: Lie in the Grass. Study the Clouds. Daydream, Be lazy. You Have Our Permission*" by Mitch Albom in Parade August 7, 2011, page 12]. Free play is a way to encourage creativity, language development, imagination and executive function. I always thought that it would be neat, as a parent, to have a basement full of musical instruments [portable and otherwise], dress up clothes/hats/jewelry/cowboy boots and chaps, and later all kinds of engines and motors and age-appropriate tools so that kids could take things [such as watches, clocks, motors, engines]

apart and put them together again. I remember a very poignant story about a mother of a 5-year-old boy. She was planning his birthday party and was thinking along the lines of huge, expensive and elaborate....you know, clowns, ponies, Ferris wheels, bands, that kind of thing. Then she decided to ask her son what kind of party he wanted. He asked for a few huge appliance boxes and blankets in the living room so the boys could make forts and then, when he requested it, he wanted his mom to serve cake and ice cream. The boys played fort for several hours, had cake and ice cream and went home, vowing it was the best party they had ever attended.

There are sections on the terrible two's and the eight steps to limits and consequences as well as ways to avoid power struggles with your children. There is an important and illuminating chapter on the differences [and similarities] of the brains of boys and girls. Another chapter looks at stress in children's lives and how kids and parents can cope with stress; an important part of this is helping parents help kids who are struggling through a crisis. Another important chapter deals with parenting in an online world, distraction and multitasking, online activities and obesity, cyber bullying, sexting, cell phones and distracted driving, and internet addiction. One chapter takes readers through the requirements of special needs brains, mental illness and chemical use in kids [including Asperger Syndrome, childhood depression and suicide, anxiety disorders, medications, tobacco, alcohol and drugs and the importance of parenting as the antidrug]. One critically important chapter looks at daycare, preschool and school decisions and how

parents can make the best possible decisions for their children. In addition to checklists on how to choose infant care and toddler daycare, Walsh provides [p.241] an invaluable list so that parents can know if their child is kindergarten ready.

In his final chapter, “The 21st-Century Parent”, Walsh leaves and encourages parents with several wise phrases [pp.254-255]. *Relax. It’s all about balance. Don’t make your kids your report cards. The time we spend with our kids is a better investment than the money we spend on them. Slow down. And finally: Remember, parenting is a delayed gratification activity!*

Some suggestions for future editions or future books: use “such as” instead of “like” where

appropriate. To the extent that it exists, give us more research [see page 114 for one mention of this diverse research] illustrating contrasts, such as they are, between rural-suburban-urban settings, young vs. older parents, immigrant vs. American families, minority and ethnic families, families with deaf or blind parents or children, and parents of multiples.

The audience for this book, in addition to parents/prospective parents and teens, would be students, graduate students, physicians and those in the helping professions, anyone working with or interested in families and family life, Certified Family Life Educators, mental health professionals, therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists, and public policymakers

who are crafting family policy. You will not be able to put the book down once you start it and I guarantee that you will encounter challenging and expansive ideas... even counter-intuitive ideas that will interest you from beginning to end. David Walsh is similar to the wise, patient, gentle relative who helps new parents understand and successfully navigate the difficulties and frustrations of raising kids. We should all profit from his years of family parenting, family therapy, experience and research. We are fortunate indeed to have Walsh living here in Minnesota and the USA, so available and accessible. He consistently offers such wonderful affirming family-enhancing guidance. If you read only one family book this year, let this be it.

## MCFR History - A Reflection by Sue Meyers

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

Early in our professional development, we can become awe-struck by famous researchers and teachers in our discipline. Shy people may not get to know others as easily as those who are more out-going. Do we ask about the research? Do we challenge the conclusions? Do we want to learn more and clarify points, or would we rather impress the other by showing our great understanding of research? Balance is difficult as we learn to ask questions and share perspectives. We all are too forward or too shy at times. We learn to limit our questions and get over our reticence of asking.

The learning curve is usually fast – learned by personal experience and by observing others. As we become more experienced, we become the models for others – for better or for worse. With more responsibilities, we become leaders in our small groups. Here comes the opportunity to come from the models learned in coursework, or from the experiences of those who want to learn.

A former student was concerned that she might not be able to share the most current research, or forget the research methodology. She saw her goal as having the professor looking over her shoulder. When she was able to see that the learner was better able to define his/her

need, the instructor could select the points to emphasize for the learner to absorb. That transition began a long profession for her, where she could share information and help facilitate the learning in colleagues. I am still proud to read of her endeavors in the family field, and I even let her know every so often.

I have observed how some of my “experienced” friends are adapting to different technological advances and find that I’m back in that very inexperienced professional learning from others. Do I really want to tweet others? Do I want hundreds of friends? Can I learn and adapt to new methods of sharing and receiving information? I know how many of my age mates are spending more time than expected to learn these new techniques. With grammarians as parents, IM is very uncomfortable. I’m sure my mom would turn over in her grave to find the new language of texting.

So now I am learning how to ask those questions, without acting as though I know more than I really do. This may mean finding a ten-year old who won’t laugh at me or won’t tell everyone how “dumb” I am. Thank heavens I have friends in their 90s who have modeled openness and asking for help. ***This lesson is a hard one – ask for help when you need it!***