

FAMILY SCIENCE & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Department Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2024

Future Community Leaders are Right Here

Maintaining a new tradition, faculty and staff from the Department of Family Science and Human Development “crashed” the *Intro to FSHD* class to welcome the next generation of community leaders, who just happen to be the newest cohort of FSHD majors.

The event was an opportunity to orient the students to our major, and introduce them to the people and resources within the department. More importantly, it fostered a sense of community among the cohort, which is crucial for their successful integration into academic life here at Montclair.

Armed with pizza, brownies, t-shirts and promotional swag, Department Chair



Dr. Lyndal Khaw, FSHD Department Chair, takes a selfie with the Fall 2024 cohort of first-year FSHD students during a Welcome Lunch in their classroom.



Dr. Lyndal Khaw greeted the students and encouraged them to actively engage with FSHD on social media, by keeping notifications turned on in Canvas communities, and by reading this fabulous monthly newsletter.

Leading an open discussion by asking how they chose FSHD as a major, Khaw learned about their career goals and trajectories, with students aspiring to become lawyers, teachers, family therapists, and social workers, just to name a few. While enjoying lunch, the FSHD folks spent time chatting with the students about their classes and life at Montclair. ■

Our students are becoming JEDIs and now they have t-shirts to prove it! Central to the mission of the Family Science and Human Development Department is a commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion!



Department Chair's Corner

Happy Fall and happy November! The semester is in its fullest swing at this time, and things are chugging along. As we enter November and approach some of the most pivotal weeks ahead, this year in particular, I want to take a moment and encourage everyone in our community who is of age and eligible to vote, to turn up at the polls on November 5th, do your civic duty, and vote. I know some of you may feel that you're “not a political person” or perhaps politics have become so divisive that you've quite literally tuned out. But I encourage you to not take your vote and your right to vote for granted.



Dr. Lyndal Khaw

Remember that voting has the power not only to help determine the future of this country, but may also determine yours and that of communities and people you care deeply about. So have a plan to vote and encourage your friends and family to do so as well!

With that in mind, I hope we embark into the month of November by embracing the values of unity and peace. I am always reminded

(Continued on page 2)

DATES TO REMEMBER

November 1
Deadline to apply for Spring 2025 FSHD Internship

November 3
Turn Clocks BACK 1 hour

November 5
Election Day - VOTE!

November 25
Summer 2025 Registration opens

November 27 - December 1
Thanksgiving Break
No classes

Showing Appreciation with Bagels & Bracelets

Family Science and Human Development participated in the university's Student Appreciation Week in October. Academic and administrative units across campus were invited to sponsor events to foster a sense of belonging among students, making them feel valued and connected.



FSHD hosted "Bagels & Bracelets," a fun, informal gathering to welcome and engage all Red Hawks. Students were invited to stop by to make their own friendship bracelets with colorful beads and words symbolizing their relationships, mantras and/or emotions. Casual yet interesting conversations developed while the students were being creative, and as the bracelets took shape, everyone was impressed by the clever designs and phrases!

All the visitors enjoyed fresh bagels and hot beverages—even the students racing to class who didn't have time to sit and visit with us.



FSHD faculty and staff joined in on the fun and made bracelets as well.

We are proud to have hosted one of 87 activities offered to students throughout the week. ■



Chair's Corner *(Continued from page 1)*

of last spring's visit to campus by Father Michael Lapsley, SSM, a social justice activist who had fought alongside Nelson Mandela during the anti-apartheid movement. He spoke of the sacrifices he endured in the fight for an equal and antiracist South Africa, but what I had learned most from Father Michael is that it is more important than ever for us to come together, listen with empathy, and support each other with compassion.

So, whether we are entering a classroom full of students with a range of different opinions, or engaging with strangers on social media, or gathering with people over Thanksgiving break, let's remember the importance of extending kindness to folks beyond our immediate circles.

May this month serve as a reminder of preserving and celebrating our shared community and at the core, our shared humanity. ■



Father Michael Lapsley (center) and his assistants joined FSHD faculty for a casual dinner after his presentation at Montclair State University in May 2024. He lost both his hands and one eye after surviving a letter bomb attack during his fight against apartheid in South Africa.

Internship Insights

Interns Thankful for the Experience

All Family Science and Human Development majors in the Family Services concentration are required to complete a nine-credit, 300-hour internship. Usually fulfilled during the student's last semester, the FSHD-409 Internship course integrates on-site and academic components for a well-rounded experience. This fall, we asked our interns to share why they are thankful for this opportunity. Here's what some of them had to say...

Jordyn Montano

My internship this semester is at [Project C.O.P.E.](#), Communities Organizing for Prevention and Empowerment. We provide prevention education to the community of Paterson, NJ. Being here has opened my eyes to many things, and I'm so grateful and thankful for this opportunity. The team and the work we are doing have taught me so much about myself, the communities around me, and how much I love being a part of something that helps so many people.



Alana Wright

I'm interning at the Ben Samuels Children Center. It's been an amazing experience. I



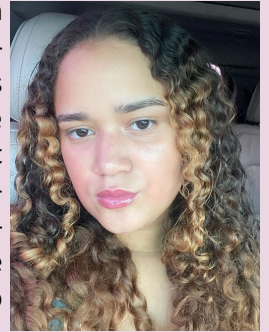
serve as a Student Assistant Teacher in the pre-school classrooms and also provide administrative support.

I am truly grateful for this experience, especially given Ben Samuels' outstanding reputation. It has allowed me

to connect, network, and learn from many incredible individuals.

Jayleen Morfa

I am completing my internship at Northeast Life Skills Associates, a methadone clinic in Passaic, NJ, that caters to chemically dependent clients. I am learning how group sessions are conducted and how to combat addiction. This experience has taught me to get out of my comfort zone and embrace working with the community! I have learned so much and I am excited to continue to learn and grow in this field!



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Liz Rivera

My internship at Oasis has been amazing with aiding in my personal growth and knowledge. At Oasis, we have been able to feed and clothe thousands of women and children in need, as well as provide them with educational resources and services to break the cycle of poverty.



FSDH Looks Ahead



In October, the Family Science and Human Development faculty and staff gathered for a day-long department retreat, where we held productive conversations, created action plans for future programming, identified areas of promise and potential growth, and created space for thoughtful reflections of what it means to embody social justice into the fabric of our department community. Most importantly, it was an opportunity for our FSDH family to gather and brainstorm as a cohesive unit. With this amazing team, the future of FSDH at Montclair is bright! ■

Sensory Space for the Neurodivergent

A unique space designed specifically to be welcoming to neurodivergent individuals is now located in Sprague Library Room 030 on the lower level in the Multimedia area. The Sensory Space creates a safe, comfortable environment where individuals with particular sensory needs can relax and recharge. The walls are lined with acoustic paneling to reduce ambient noise, and lighting levels can be customized for each user to create the optimal sensory experience. Features include:

Privacy Chairs: Acoustically insulated privacy chairs are available for work, study or relaxation. Each chair has an integrated, moveable desk, dedicated work lamp with adjustable brightness, noise-canceling headphones, and outlets for charging personal devices.

Lounge Chairs: Fleece lined bucket-style lounge chairs which can be used for work or relaxation include a matching footrest, dedicated work lamp with adjustable brightness, noise-canceling headphones, and outlets for charging personal devices.

Yoga Mats and Cushions: Yoga mats are available for meditation, yoga, or floor seating, and can be combined with floor cushions to create a comfortable floor seating position.

Noise-canceling Headphones: Headphones help to block out ambient noise, provide sound isolation from adjoining spaces, and can be plugged into personal devices with an auxiliary port to listen to music and other media.

Fidget Toys: Stored in the yoga mat cart, fidget toys help students relax, focus, and generally provide positive stimulation.

The Sensory Space is open to all library users with a NetID; [seats can be reserved online](#). If you have questions or ideas about the space, contact Jarreau Henderson at hendersonja@montclair.edu or the library's front desk at 973-655-4288. ■



How to Talk to Children about Politics and Elections

Any day is a good day to begin a dialogue with children and teens about politics. Regardless of how much we try to shelter them from the rhetoric, kids learn about elections from classmates, social media, commercials, and billboards. Confusion, distress or anxiety can set in when they hear negative or disparaging comments about another human being.

Youngsters rely on adults to be role models and set the tone for discussions. When they ask questions, it's important to inquire about what they've heard or what they are thinking. According to the Fred Rogers Institute, we should "talk with children about what it means to discuss different ideas while still respecting those who disagree with us." Productive conversations can encourage development, and kids benefit from understanding the questions we raise, how we find answers, and how we determine the ideals that drive our political thinking.

Younger Children

The simplest way to describe an election to preschoolers is to explain that people are deciding who will be the next leader in their community or country. For elementary school children, conversations should focus on getting along and listening patiently to other perspectives.

Up to age 13, children parrot their parents' political views, so it is important to counter any animosity and hostility they are witnessing. This demonstrates that open discussions can guide decision-making, and even in disagreement we can still respect each other. It also reinforces the fundamental truths

that most people are good and trustworthy, and careful choices work better than snap decisions.

Fred Rogers was a strong proponent of reading to educate children, even about politics. Since this year's election is making history with the first woman of color running for president, books like *Shirley Chisholm Dared: The Story of the First Black Woman in Congress* can teach children how other women blazed this trail.

Pre-Teens and Adolescents

After puberty, kids will often use politics to differentiate themselves, and will begin to deviate from their parents'

choices. Before sharing your thoughts, it is key to listen first, and then incorporate history and culture to make the discussion less personal. Reflect on events or experiences that shaped your political beliefs but avoid telling teens what to believe. Adults are still powerful role models but at this age, rebellion and pushback are developmentally appropriate.

Election education stresses values, communication skills, and learning how to work through disagreement.

When teens are exposed to political advertising, encourage critical thinking by asking deeper questions such as "who created this ad?" or "what do they want you to believe?" Teens also gravitate to humor from comedians and social media, so create teachable moments by discussing what you like or dislike, and pointing out when something crosses a line. ■

Source: *Psychology Today*



Our Achievements

Dr. Ashley Ermer's research on the stereotyping, stigmatizing, and marginalizing of single people was cited in an article titled "[The Painful Secret Divorced and Widowed People Know](#)" in the lifestyle publication *YourTango*.

Dr. Soyoung Lee served as a judge for the university's inaugural Korean Speech Competition which featured ten student competitors working with the theme, "My Favorite Korean Word." The event was sponsored by the Korean program in the Department of World Languages and Cultures. ■

Alumni Spotlight

Annalyce D'Agostino

Annalyce D'Agostino earned her BA in Family and Child Studies (the forerunner to FSHD) in May 2017 with a concentration in Families, Children, and School Settings and a minor in Communication Studies.

Her Story: A brief class activity in New Student Seminar changed the entire trajectory of my life. My professor handed our class of Communication Studies majors an example resume. The title read, "aspires to a career in children's programming." It was a light bulb moment, a revelation, and I never looked back. A few weeks later, I officially began majoring in Family and Child Studies and minoring in Communication Studies.

It was a winning combination for me: the strong foundational understanding of child development, family dynamics, and education, with the complement of the media world. Dr. Lyndal Khaw had been (and continues to be) an amazing support, from my freshman year introduction class to my senior year thesis project, where I created a therapeutic video for children to teach deep breathing as a stress-management technique. It was beautifully foreshadowing where I am now, impassioned to support children's mental and physical health and wellness.

Her Career: I am the Founder and CEO of Focus Posters, a web-app for parents and childcare professionals to create



custom visual supports for children with characters designed to look like them. We're currently piloting with Child Life teams in hospitals and private practices throughout the country to assess how it can support children with complex medical needs. We're also for non-medical, home use as well, so check us out at FocusPosters.com!

Words of Wisdom: "You don't need to have all the answers right now—trust the process and embrace unexpected, unconventional paths. Let your passions, what energizes you, drive you. Surround yourself with people who support and motivate you, and you'll recognize how limitless you truly are. I am where I am today because of the countless chance 'yes's I took, unwavering belief in my mission, and the people who love me." ■

Social Justice Initiatives

Preventing Runaways and Homelessness

November has been recognized as National Runaway Prevention Month since 2001, following a landmark White House Conference on Exploited and Runaway Children. This year it has been rebranded as Youth Hope Month to more accurately reflect the broader issues impacting youth today.

Working together, communities across the country can illuminate the challenges faced by runaway and homeless youth, and can make a difference by raising awareness and promoting resources that offer hope and support.

Runaway Hotline: 1-800-RUNAWAY

By calling or texting 1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929), youth can connect with a trusted, compassionate person who will listen and help them create a plan to address their concerns. Additionally, a wealth of information and support is available through multiple [organizations and agencies](#).

For example, the Home Free program reunites youth with their family or guardian or helps them find alternative living arrangements (ALA), such as a community-based transitional living program, through a free bus ticket. Home Free works in collaboration with youth, families, law enforcement, anti-trafficking organizations, social service and health care providers and others to ensure youth who are victims of labor and sex trafficking benefit from reuniting with caring adults or getting to an alternative living program. ■

Family Science and Human Development

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