

# Child Welfare News

Summer 2008

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## **TITLE IV-E ALUMNUS PHILIP LARKINS NAMED 2008 SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR**

Former Title IV-E student, Phillip Larkins, was recently named 2008 Social Worker of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers Minnesota Chapter. In response to this honor, CASCW staff interviewed Phil about what he is doing now and the impact of Title IV-E training on his career.

### **What is your current position?**

I am currently the Resource Development Coordinator at Family Alternatives in Minneapolis. In this position I am in charge of recruiting foster families as well as setting up training. I currently provide training for foster parents on the topics of cultural diversity and adolescent development. This position is a step up from the position I previously held at Family Alternatives as a foster care licensing worker.

### **How has your training through the Title IV-E MSW Program at the School of Social Work influenced your practice?**

I currently do a lot of work with adolescent males, helping them to become positive thinkers, increasing their decision-making skills, and teaching skills for independent living (like cooking and sewing). I also encourage them to become involved in their community and avoid gang participation through activities like teaching them to become basketball officials and baseball umpires. My training through the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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## **A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR...**

Greetings! We certainly hope that you are enjoying the summer and all of the activities that go with this terrific season. It has been very busy at CASCW this year, and as many of you know, it was my first year in the role of Director. I'm not sure that I could have asked for a better

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School of Social Work

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# spotlight on IV-E alumni

## LINDA CASSMAN

I completed my Masters Degree in Social Work in May of 2005. I was able to obtain that degree because of the funding through the Title IV-E child welfare stipend program. I was working as a child protection social worker at that time. I really hoped to become a supervisor with my new found degree. I knew without a master's degree this would not likely happen.

I applied for a few different positions and took the test for Merit System. I applied for a position in a small rural county for what I thought was going to be a supervisor's position. When I interviewed and was offered the position, I was informed it was a management position. I accepted that position and for the next couple years worked as the department head and supervisor for a small county human services agency with 22 employees. Although this was not what I was bargaining for, it became a very valuable experience which would not have been possible without my master's level education. I was soon able to move from that position to the Director of Health and Human Services in Pine County with 70+ employees.

So, today I oversee programming, influence state and federal policy through membership and participation in associations, set agency policy, manage a budget of over \$8 million, negotiate contracts, present to the county board, deal with clients complaints, complete maltreatment redeterminations, and participate in appeals. I impact child welfare in ways I never would have dreamed possible just five years ago. I am making a difference at the broader macro level. I believe child welfare is impacted on several levels and all levels are equally important.

Having received my master's through the Title IV-E program is what made this all possible and prepared me for my new experiences. I miss the client contact, but I can still feed my passion for child welfare through policy reforms and program impact. For that I am grateful.

*Linda Cassman, Director Pine County Health and Human Services*

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## (LARKINS CONTINUED PG 1)

Title IV-E Program helped me learn how to more effectively connect with these kids in a developmentally appropriate way.

On a daily basis I use concepts and skills that I learned in the IV-E MSW program. I use methodologies and philosophies I learned about working with children and families in poverty. I use macro skills such as how to increase funding and build a network of community resources. I use the critical thinking skills that I developed through my experiences in graduate school. I gained valuable contacts during my time as a student that I now use to make appropriate referrals and help the people that I work with more effectively access the resources that they need. With the leadership skills I learned I now chair the Hennepin County Children's Collaborative which has a budget of \$12 million and serves four to five thousand kids in 19 different neighborhoods.

One of the most valuable parts of my education was being able to learn from so many great leaders at the School of Social Work. I wouldn't have applied to the MSW program if

# collaborations

## FOSTER FAMILY-BASED TREATMENT ASSOCIATION (FFTA)

CASCW is collaborating with the Foster Family-Based Treatment Association (FFTA) – an agency-led organization of treatment foster care providers – to identify ways to demonstrate the effectiveness of treatment and specialized foster care services, and to share information to improve outcomes for children and youth in out-of-home care. The goals of this partnership are to:

- Provide information and referrals for agencies operating treatment foster care programs
- Identify and evaluate best practices and evidence-based practice in the field of treatment and specialized foster care
- Assist FFTA's Benchmark TFC! Project – a national benchmarking effort to help

treatment foster care programs collect data that can be used to better understand the effectiveness of treatment foster care and inform policymakers and funders about child outcomes – in performance management and improvement.

CASCW is currently developing a report on evidence-based practice in foster parent training and support as part of its collaboration with FFTA. More information about FFTA, and resources for practitioners, students, and agencies (including the report on evidence-based practice in foster parent training and support, once completed) can be found at [www.ffta.org](http://www.ffta.org).

## (LARKINS CONTINUED PG 2)

it weren't for the encouragement I received from David Hollister. And throughout my time as an MSW student, there were many people who mentored and encouraged me like Jean Quam, Nancy Johnston, Oliver Williams, and Sonia Davila-Williams. There were professors I "loved to hate," who challenged me and motivated me like Victoria Van Slyke, Linda Jones, Megan Morrissey, and Jim Reinardy. By constantly challenging me they were investing in my future and those same professors who forced me to work my tail off as a student now command my respect.

I would say that when I came into the School of Social Work I had the house, but the Title IV-E Program gave me the solid foundation that I needed to become a more polished social work professional. What I received through

the program was invaluable. I went into the program a good person and came out a great person.

### **What are your proudest achievements as a social worker?**

One of the proudest moments of my career was being recognized as Social Worker of the Year. It is a special honor, as a male in a primarily female dominated profession, to be recognized by my peers and colleagues for my professional accomplishments.

As I look back on my career I am proudest of the accomplishments of the youth I have worked with throughout the years. Many have gone on to college, two own their own businesses, and one is a banker. I am proud of the relationships I have developed with these youth and the extraordinary people they have turned out to be.

# events

## PERMANENCY AND ADOPTION COMPETENCY CERTIFICATION KICK-OFF

There are an estimated 1.6 million adopted children under the age of 18 in the United States and 6 million adoptees of all ages according to recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau (Biafora & Esposito, 2003). Those numbers grow every year; according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services an estimated 125,000 new adoptions occur annually (Biafora & Esposito, 2003). In 2002 in Minnesota, over 600 children were adopted from the public child welfare system (CWLA, 2005). In addition to public child welfare system adoptions, Minnesota has over 60 private adoption agencies that work in the areas of both international and domestic adoption. Adoption and permanency are important areas of social work that involve diverse and large populations of clients. The clients can include children, birth parents, adoptive parents, families, and more with each of the clients having unique and specific needs and challenges.

In fall of 2007, members of Minnesota's adoption and permanency communities approached the CASCW with a proposal to develop and facilitate a competency certificate in the areas of adoption and permanency. The community members brought with them a survey that indicated that 72% of those surveyed would attend an adoption and permanency competency certificate program. Over several months, those community members along with several staff members from the CASCW created a community advisory group and began to work very intensely on the development of the Permanency and Adoption Competency Certificate Program

(PACC). The preliminary structure of the PACC includes a 12 credit or 200 CEU professional training program that will be available to both bachelor's level and master's level professionals and students. The focus of the program will be adoption and permanency for child welfare and mental health professionals.

Following months of discussion and preliminary decision making, the community advisory group decided that it was time to involve the greater community in the project! On May 29th, 2008, the Permanency and Adoption Competency Certificate Program held a kick-off event at the new Wilder Center where over 45 community members with interest in adoption and permanency came together. The kick-off event was a time for the community advisory group to share with those in attendance the exciting news that the project was well underway, to inform them of the status of the project, to solicit their feedback in the areas of overall mission, logistics, and preliminary curriculum, and to invite them to become members of a larger ongoing advisory committee. The event was a success and the community members offered great feedback on the project!

The next steps for the project include integration of the feedback that was received from the community, and administration of another widely based survey to gauge interest in the certificate program. We will be administering a survey this summer that will help us to make final decisions about program logistics before moving forward in curriculum development. Stay tuned for updates on this exciting new program next fall!

# events

## CASCW/CURA SPONSOR FORUM ON CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES

On Thursday, May 1, 2008, CASCW and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) co-sponsored the forum "Addressing the Best Interests of Children in Immigrant and Refugee Families: Rising to the Challenge." Professor Esther Wattenberg brought together an impressive slate of experts from across the country to discuss the unique challenges of serving children of immigrant and refugee families in the child welfare system. Presenters included: Randy Capps, Senior Research Associate from the Urban Institute; Tom Gillaspay, Minnesota State Demographer; Rowena Fong, Ruby Lee Piester Centennial Professor from the University of Texas at Austin; and Sonia Velazquez, Vice President of the Children's Division of the American Humane Association in Colorado. The second half of the forum consisted of a panel of local experts from around the state commenting on the life circumstances of immigrant children in rural Minnesota. Panel respondents included: Hassan Ugas, Director of the Center for Somali Family and Children Services; Katherine Fennelly, Professor for the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota; Susanne Schroeder, School Social Worker from Steele County; John Keller, Executive Director of the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota; and Diane Kimm, Program Manager for the Lutheran Social Service Refugee Program in Pelican Rapids. Check out our website for links to handouts and PowerPoint presentations from the presenters. [http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/events/past\\_events/immigrantchildren.asp](http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/events/past_events/immigrantchildren.asp)

## NEW POPULATIONS FINAL REPORT RELEASED

This project unfolded at a time when the national debate on immigration had sharpened, revealing a deeply divided nation, with the health and well-being of children of immigrants rarely on the agenda at any level of government. Comprehensive immigration reform appeared to have been abandoned.

We were in a period of unprecedented crackdowns and raids being conducted with increasingly militaristic aspects, such as helicopters hovering over arrest sites. A serious blow to educational opportunities for the children of immigrant parents occurred with the defeat of the Minnesota "Dream Act," legislation allowing children of illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition if they had graduated from a Minnesota high school.

For Minnesota, the settlement of immigrant families drawn to rural areas by employment opportunities in meat packing and poultry processing companies posed unexpected challenges for the county social service system and school districts.

Funding for this project was provided through the Division of Child Safety and Permanency, Minnesota Department of Human Services. Additional support was provided by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs and the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota. You can find the whole report online at: <http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/research/publications.asp>

# events

## **CW360° AND THE 9TH ANNUAL ITV/VPC CONFERENCE: CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS**

This spring the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare introduced a new publication called CW360°. CW360° is an annual publication that intends to provide communities, child welfare professionals, and other human service professionals, comprehensive information on the latest research, policies, and practices in a key area affecting child well-being today. The publication uses a multidisciplinary approach to examine an important issue in child welfare practice and invites articles from key stakeholders, including families, caregivers, service providers, a broad array of child welfare professionals, and researchers.

The inaugural issue of CW360° focused on children of incarcerated parents. The publication featured current research, best practices, and policy overviews and implications from experts in the field of children of incarcerated parents. In addition articles highlighting innovative programs around the country were included. Finally, articles featuring personal perspectives from child welfare workers exploring challenges and successes from the field, as well as a parent's story on parenting from prison were also key components of the current issue of CW360°.

To correspond with the inaugural issue of CW360° focusing on children of incarcerated parents, the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare hosted an interactive television (ITV) conference on April 16th, 2008. Dean Creasie Finney Hairston from Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago was keynote speaker. Dr.

Hairston is considered a leader and expert in the field of children of incarcerated parents.

Dr. Hairston's presentation was followed by an impressive panel of professionals who work with children of incarcerated parents or incarcerated parents themselves. Panelists included Trina Starr, MSW the Program Coordinator for Mentoring Children of Promise of the Lac Courte Oreille Tribe; Joshua Gerrity, LSW the Parent & Family Program Coordinator MN Correctional Facility-Shakopee; Sarah Dass, BSW who is a case manager and the Prison Program Coordinator with the Minnesota Volunteers of America; and Kelsey Jones, BSW a Child Protection Services Specialist with Otter Tail County Human Services.

Both the publication CW360° and the ITV conference featuring Dr. Hairston are available on the Center's webpage at <http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/events/incarceratedparents/default.asp>.

As a result of the success of CW360° and parallel ITV conference, we are excited to announce the new topic for the upcoming academic year. CW360° will explore the successes and challenges faced by youth as they age-out of the foster care system. Our Spring ITV conference will correspond and address the same issue. Please keep an eye out for CW360° in the spring of 2009!

# Minn-LInK update

## MINN-LINK UPDATE

Minn-LInK is attempting a first-ever, statewide examination of homeless and highly mobile students in Minnesota. With the help of McKinney-Vento districts, Minn-LInK will examine educational and child welfare outcomes of students with high mobility in public schools with the hope of examining the events that may precede homelessness to improve intervention services. The project is also conducting a follow-up study on the attendance rates of students who were identified as having substantiated educational neglect in 2001 whose attendance improved immediately after child welfare involvement. This study seeks to describe whether attendance improvements were sustained for this group and if so, for how long. Minn-LInK is also in the process of studying the educational outcomes of students who have child welfare involvement who attend non-traditional schools and also completing results on a study of the special education use patterns of young children who received Part C early intervention services as infants and toddlers. All reports are anticipated to be completed and released late this year.

An article titled "Poverty, Development, and Child Protection Services," written by Minn-LInK project coordinator, Anita Larson, was published in the fall edition of the Early Report from the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED). To access the pdf of Anita's article in this special edition of the Early Report focusing on childhood poverty go to: <http://cehd.umn.edu/CEED/publications/earlyreport/EarlyReportFall07.pdf>

## MINN-LINK PRESENTS AT CONFERENCE

On April 24, 2008 the Minn-LInK project presented at the Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota Conference, Prevention Works: Igniting Change for Families. Minn-LInK Coordinator Anita Larson and Graduate Research Assistants Mira Swanson and Danielle Meehan led a workshop titled "Researching Child Welfare: Data Matters." The session discussed the importance of data when working with child abuse. The history and application of administrative data was reviewed from a national and local standpoint. Data application was illustrated by two studies: graduation and economic outcomes for teens involved in child protection and the effects of home visiting nurses on teen mothers. The presentation highlighted a variety of uses for administrative data in child welfare research, including public health, educational and economic outcomes. A discussion of limitations provided recommendations on both small and large scales that can be used to increase the quality of the administrative data collected for researching child welfare practices. The PowerPoint presentation, as well as the complete studies mentioned above, can be found at <http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/research/minnlink/minnlinkpublications.asp>

# publications

## NEW PRACTICE NOTES RELEASED

Recently, social workers' visits with children in foster care have become a "hot topic." What has brought increased attention to the value of such visiting? Notice comes from evidence gathered from the recent Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) that a linkage exists between positive outcomes for children in foster care and visits from a social worker. However, the reviews under CFSR also disclosed uneven attention to visitation, and a lack of standardization of practice among Minnesota counties. Although there has been a long-standing recognition of the importance this issue, now there appears to be a concerted effort to improve practice in this arena.

There are now several "works in progress" addressing the issue of visitation. Among them are: A PIP (Program Improvement Plan) under development by the Minnesota Department of Human Services; a project, "Family Connect" (through Family Alternatives); and initiatives sponsored by county child welfare staff.

This edition of Practice Notes was informed by the wisdom of experienced practitioners and an exploration of national initiatives. In preparation, there was a scan the literature; search for protocols from other states; and an uncovering of fugitive guidelines that were embedded in unpublished papers. Somewhat surprisingly, given the importance of the topic, the literature references were few, detailed protocols from other states were scarce, and guidelines were rarely age-related. It was the field that yielded knowledgeable social workers who articulated for us their intuitive wisdom; their keen and sensitive observations derived from long experience; and their grasp of a child's response to loss and deprivation. From

practice experience, the keys to establishing a trusting relationship were identified. The challenge was finding ways to translate the "intuitive instincts" and the storehouse of skill and competencies of experienced social workers into tangible guidance for those assigned to do the valuable work of visitation.

To read the entire Practice Note, please access it online at:  
<http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/research/practiceNotes/default.asp>

**Check out all of the Center's  
publications at:  
[http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/  
research/publications.asp](http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/research/publications.asp)**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars for these fall events sponsored by CASCW:

### **SEPTEMBER 15, 2008:**

*Working with Involuntary Clients  
Featuring Chris Trotter and Ron Rooney, internationally known experts on working with involuntary clients.*

### **OCTOBER 22, 2008:**

*Family Visits: Putting the Pieces Together  
A forum on best practices and findings from Family Alternatives' pilot project on improving family visits for youth in out-of-home placement.*

# center news

## CASCW UNVEILS NEW WEBSITE

You may have noticed that CASCW has increased its web presence with a more user-friendly website. In January many months of planning, surveying, and trials came together into a complete face-lift for CASCW.

The site features a clearer navigation and a virtual one-stop for publications, conference materials, archived videos, and online training.

If you haven't had a chance to check us out online, do so!

<http://cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw>

## CASCW WELCOMES NEW STAFF

This spring, CASCW welcomed Kristy Piescher as the newest member of our staff. Kristy is the Project Coordinator for the Foster-Based Family Treatment Association (FFTA) collaborative project described earlier in the newsletter. Kristy has a strong background in quantitative research and has an M.A. and a Ph.D in Family Social Science from the University of Minnesota. Her research interests include: interpersonal relationships, developmental psychopathology, families and mental health issues, and research methodology. She is a great addition to the staff and we look forward to working with her in the coming year. Welcome Kristy!

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## CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW/GRADUATING TITLE IV-E STUDENTS

Congratulations to all of the Title IV-E students graduating this year! It has been a rewarding experience for all of us at CASCW to work with such a dedicated group of folks who are eager to improve the child welfare system. Many of our recent graduates have already secured positions in a variety of public child welfare settings across the state. We look forward to collaborating with you as colleagues as we work to increase safety, permanency and well-being for children and families in Minnesota!

While it is a time for celebrating the accomplishments of our graduating students, it is also a time to welcome our new students! CASCW has admitted 22 new Title IV-E students for the 2008-09 academic year. Together with

our returning students, we will have a total of 41 students in the Title IV-E program for 2008-09. We had a very strong pool of over 50 applicants to choose from this year, making the selection process an extremely difficult one for our reviewers. We are excited and encouraged by the diverse experiences and passionate commitment to the field of child welfare that was reflected in the applications of our newly admitted cohort. The staff at CASCW looks forward to working with and getting to know all of you in the coming year!

# CEUs on a Stick You betcha!

## August 25-27, 2008

Treat yourself to a day of fun and learning during the Great Minnesota Get-Together.

The School of Social Work will present a variety of continuing education workshops during the Minnesota State Fair. Attend one or two workshops in the morning and spend the rest of the day at the fair.

You'll earn two CEUs per workshop and receive one free admission to the fair for each day that you register.

All workshops will be taught by School of Social Work faculty members.

Register on the SSW Web site:  
[www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw).

612-625-1220  
800-779-8636  
swinfo@umn.edu

### School of Social Work

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### Cost



**\$60**

(Discount price: \$50)\*



**\$90**

(Discount price: \$75)



**\$115**

(Discount price: \$90)

You can qualify for a discount if you are an alumnus of the University of Minnesota School of Social Work, a student in the College of Education and Human Development, a School of Social Work field instructor or are registering two or more people from the same agency at the same time.

### Register Online

Register on the SSW Web site:  
[www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw).

**(NOTE FROM DIRECTOR CONTINUED)**

first year. As you will read throughout this issue of CW News, a great deal of activity has taken place across the state in our child welfare community and at CASCW.

This year we hosted 6 conferences, workshops and forums. We were particularly pleased with the attendance at the two spring conferences, Working with Children of Incarcerated Parents and Addressing the Best Interest of Immigrant Families and Children: Rising to the Challenge. In preparation for next year, CASCW has also collaborated with numerous partners to host conferences, workshops and forums throughout the 2008-2009 academic year. Additionally, we have planned our events to support the MN DHS Program Improvement Plan which resulted from Minnesota's recent Child and Family Service Review process in fall of 2008. Please watch for two conferences in the fall, Working with Involuntary Clients and Best Practices in Visitation with Children and Families. In the spring, our ITV conference (and second issue of CW360) will focus on best practices in working with youth aging out of foster care. CASCW publications increased this year with the addition of CW360. We received a terrific response to this publication as it included a variety of invited articles by practitioners, researchers, and individuals utilizing services. The publication is designed to present numerous perspectives from different stakeholders on a given topic. Other projects started this year which will continue into next year, include training child welfare professionals and foster, kinship and adoptive parents on working with children and parents with disabilities; the development of the Permanency and Adoption Competency

Certificate program; identifying best practices in treatment and specialized foster care; and the development of comprehensive family assessment protocols. These projects, and others in development, provide terrific opportunities for CASCW staff and students to partner with state, county, tribal, and community providers. We ALWAYS welcome new opportunities to collaborate, so if you have new project ideas or need assistance with a current project, feel free to call me directly so we can strategize how CASCW can support your efforts. We hope that you enjoy the rest of your summer and look forward to seeing you at CASCW events in the fall! Best-



Traci LaLiberte, PhD  
Director

# announcement

## COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

LEARNING TO SUPPORT AND CARE FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS WITH DISABILITIES



Internet-based learning for foster and adoptive parents, and other child welfare professionals.

Call toll free  
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



**mc strategies**  
THE HEALTHCARE E-LEARNING COMPANY

[www.collegeofdirectsupport.com](http://www.collegeofdirectsupport.com)

The College of Direct Support (CDS) is a comprehensive internet-based training system built upon a nationally validated set of competencies for working with individuals with disabilities. The College of Direct Support (CDS) was originally created to meet the training needs of professionals working within the disability field; however it was quickly realized that this high quality training system has value and applicability in other human service fields where people with disabilities receive services. The child welfare system is

just that type of service system. The Child Welfare League of America (2005), reports that more than 80% of children in foster care have behavioral, emotional or developmental disabilities.

With the number of people with disabilities receiving services through child welfare, it is essential that child welfare professionals, including kinship providers and foster and adoptive parents, receive high quality training for working with children and parents with disabilities. CDS provides up-to-date training approved by a national board of disability content editors. Disability Intensive Courses are particularly interesting to many child welfare professionals as they seek additional training on how to work with people living with specific types of disabilities (autism, diabetes, cerebral palsy etc.).

Currently, CDS is being piloted in two states: Minnesota and Connecticut. The CDS courses are being delivered as they were written with terminology and language that

may be more familiar to professionals in the field of disabilities. CDS is a tool to assist child welfare professionals and foster, kinship and adoptive parents working with families toward safety, permanency, and well being.

If you are interested in participating in the pilot and receiving FREE training, please contact CASCW at [cascw@umn.edu](mailto:cascw@umn.edu) to express your interest in participating.