

# network notes

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## MFFN presents three Excellence in Fatherhood Awards

The following awards were presented on Thursday, January 14, 2010, at the Strong Foundations Conference and Minnesota Fatherhood Summit in Alexandria, Minnesota. Over 400 family professionals, educators, policymakers, and fatherhood advocates attended the three-day conference.

The first Excellence in Fatherhood award of 2010 was presented to the **Individual of the Year: Dr. Gar E. Kellom**. Gar has served in higher education for four decades. In 1992, Gar joined St. John's University in Collegeville and began articulating what it means for the university to be one of the four all-male institutions of higher education in the country. Gar is currently the Director of the Men's Center for Leadership and Service at St. John's University. The Center for Men's Leadership and Service seeks to create a safe and respectful environment for students to share their stories and discern who they are. Saint John's was the first liberal arts college to establish a men's center in 2001. The Center for Men's Leadership and

Service hosts the annual conference on the college male and invites scholars from around the nation to encourage dialogue on difficult issues involving masculinity, men's role in society, volunteerism, patriarchy, and the important role of gender in society. The Men's Center also runs student-volunteer programs in local schools, and offers international service and study trips to Trinidad/Tobago and India/Nepal. Recently, the SJU Men's Center hosted the first international conference for campus-based men's gender equality and anti-violence groups. Under Gar's leadership, the Men's Center seeks to work for justice and to better the lives of men and women through innovative programs, scholarship and community service. Gar is a pioneer, nudging us toward healthier notions of manhood and masculinity. He has helped launch national discussions about men's spirituality, health, and community service. He

"Excellence", continued on page 2. ►

## Obama unveils budget proposal

On February 1, 2010, President Obama released his 2011 Federal Budget proposal. The following information, accessed from the White House and Federal agencies, provides descriptions of various budget items that would directly impact the nation's families and father-serving programs. This is not a comprehensive review, but provides key issues most important to Minnesota's educational institutions and social service agencies.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) 2011 budget proposal includes \$500 million in competitive grants through the **Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund** for State programs focused on helping hard-to-reach populations in two areas. (1) Strengthening families by investing in comprehensive responsible fatherhood initiatives. Programs might include expanding service provided through child support offices, funding comprehensive responsible fatherhood programs, eliminating barriers to employment, providing enhanced training, and employment opportunities. States will partner with

non-profits and community organizations with these programs. (2) Improving child outcomes by improving

outcomes for custodial parents facing serious barriers to self-sufficiency. Funded activities would focus on barriers to employment and could include interventions like home visitation, subsidized employment, transitional jobs, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. General specifications for the fund include: Three-year grants to States on a competitive basis; States proposing activities supported by strong evidence will be prioritized; States that receive funding will be expected to rigorously evaluate programs; and, funds may be for statewide or community-specific initiatives ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)). This fund would redirect monies from the existing Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grants.



"Budget", continued on page 3. ►

## Our mission

The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network enhances healthy father-child relationships by promoting initiatives that inform public policy and further develop the field of fatherhood practitioners statewide.

## A voice for fatherhood

MFFN seeks to provide a voice for Minnesota's fatherhood and family services organizations. If you have a best practice or information you would like to share, please contact MFFN. *Network Notes* is published each February, May, August, and November.

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Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.

## Excellence in Fatherhood

◀ Continued from page 1.

has promoted anti-sexism and anti-violence as a founder of the National Organization of Men Against Sexism. Gar has served on the board of directors of the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network since 2005. During his tenure on the board, he has been a strong advocate for his colleagues – men and women – to embrace healthy masculinity. He promotes an understanding that masculinity can be humble, generous, and caring.

The second 2010 Excellence in Fatherhood award was presented to the **Program of the Year: the FATHER Project, a program of Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota.**

A highly innovative program formed in Minneapolis in 1999, the FATHER Project offers services for low-income dads to help them support their children financially, emotionally and physically. The FATHER Project addresses some of the most intransigent problems facing low-income fathers such as high rates of incarceration, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, low rates of employment, and intergenerational poverty. Through individualized case management, the program offers holistic services in fatherhood skills development, employment and training, child support services, family law, and GED completion. Staff served 380 fathers in 2009 with 229 of those representing new starts who completed the comprehensive enrollment process. The FATHER Project does not exist in a vacuum – its longevity is due in great part to the dedication of staff, especially the vision of Andrew Freeberg who guided the program through some of its toughest transitions. Additionally, the program has been nurtured through the passion of Guy Bowling, the dedication of Michelle Bell, and the hard work of dozens of staff and hundreds of volunteers. Beyond the invaluable institutional support of Goodwill Easter Seals Minnesota, the FATHER Project maintains a vast list of collaborative partners who extend the program into the community and extend its services into all areas of life. Through these partnerships, the FATHER Project offers culturally-competent services to families in the African American, Latino, and Native



American communities. The FATHER Project brings together some of the best services, partners and staff to create an exceptional experience for the fathers and families who enter its doors.

The final award of the evening was presented to the 2010 Excellence in Fatherhood **Policymaker of the Year: Mark J. Ponsolle**, the Director of the Human Services Division in the Office of the Ramsey County Attorney. Mark currently oversees the divisions of child support, civil commitments, and child protection, having served as the Director of the Child Support Enforcement Section since 1998. Mark's work motto, "feed the babies", reflects his belief that human services must focus on the wellbeing of our youngest citizens. We often think of "policymakers" as those elected officials in state, city or county government. But some of the biggest impacts on fathers and families come from policymakers like Mark, who implement on the ground. Through his personal commitment to innovative policies, pilot programs, and a desire to make government work well, Mark sets a high standard for other Minnesota counties to follow. In the true spirit of innovation, Mark has sometimes taken controversial stands; for example he led Ramsey County to implement Minnesota's first projects in areas of genetic testing and child support arrears management. Ramsey County's Genetic Testing Policy ensures that the biological father is correctly identified in all the paternity cases initiated by Ramsey County by requiring genetic testing in those cases. Since the inception of this policy in 2004, over 4,600 fathers have been correctly identified and over 1,200 possible fathers correctly excluded. In addition to his county duties, he works on legislative and policy issues with state legislators, county commissioners, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Supreme Court, and with the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network. Mark is a mentor to attorneys in his office and other County Attorney Offices. He speaks at the state and national levels relating to child support and paternity, and works tirelessly to get information to service providers, attorneys, the courts, and the public about child support and paternity establishment. Anyone who knows Mark feels his deep passion about these issues. As his nominators state, "Mark is about doing the right thing for the families we serve."

The **Excellence in Fatherhood Awards** were created in 2005 to honor individuals, agencies, policy makers, programs and other institutions that are making outstanding contributions to fatherhood policy and practice in Minnesota. A list of two-dozen past Excellence in Fatherhood awardees is available at [www.mnfathers.org/awards.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/awards.html).

## Recent funders

MFFN thanks the following entities for their support in 2009:

Bush Foundation  
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University Foundation  
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Leadership Education  
in Maternal and Child  
Public Health  
West Central Initiative

## Contribute now

MFFN is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Donate online at [www.mnfathers.org](http://www.mnfathers.org) or call for details at (651) 222-7432. Thank you.

healthy community = healthy fathers = healthy families

## Federal budget proposal

◀ Continued from page 1.

The 2011 HHS budget includes \$183 million for **teen pregnancy prevention** programs. These programs will support State, Tribal, Territory, and community-based efforts to reduce teen pregnancy using evidence-based models and promising programs. This is an increase of \$69 million over the current budget. The budget also includes \$22 million, an increase of \$7 million, for CDC teen pregnancy activities to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies through science-based prevention approaches. According to HHS, the \$183 million are for teen pregnancy prevention programs that could include abstinence education ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)). \$4 million of the funds would be allotted to carry out longitudinal evaluations of pregnancy prevention approaches.

The proposal for HHS includes \$145 million for **family violence prevention** programs, an \$11 million increase over FY 2010, which is the primary Federal-funding stream dedicated to the support of domestic violence shelters and services for victims of domestic violence and their dependents. The additional funding will be used to expand shelter capacity and support services, provide services to children who witness domestic violence, and support increased call volume to the Domestic Violence Hotline ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)).

The HHS budget also includes a one-year, \$669 million extension of the Federal match to States' reinvestment of incentive payments into **Child Support Enforcement** programs. Without this critical extension of resources, it is estimated that States would reduce program expenditures by 10 percent. The budget also includes two proposals focused on increasing child support collections and a proposal to expand resources [\$2 million additional funds annually] for non-custodial parents' access to and visitation with their children ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)).

The budget maintains funding for *Promoting Safe And Stable Families* to ensure continued support for a variety of important State **child welfare** activities, including post-adoptive services. The budget includes a proposal for a five-year reauthorization of funds for two elements within the State Court Improvement program, improved data collection and training and collaboration between courts and child welfare agencies. In 2008 the percentage of children in Foster Care without a case plan was reduced to 3.4 percent. By increasing the proportion of cases with a case plan, HHS is

helping to ensure that there is a focus on moving children to a permanent home ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)).

Finally, the HHS budget expands and strengthens **early education** and **child care** programs by extending the Recovery Act expansion of Head Start and Early Head Start, providing an increase of \$1.6 billion for child care to serve 235,000 more children than could be served without the additional funds in 2011, and supporting work to improve quality in the Child Care and Development Fund ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)).

The Department of Education (DOE) budget, invests \$210 million in Promise Neighborhoods, an initiative that integrates **school reform** with strong family supports and effective community services across an entire neighborhood, so that youth successfully complete high school and continue on to college. The DOE budget also, expands educational options and increases access to high-quality schools by investing \$490 million to grow effective charter schools and other effective, autonomous public schools that achieve results, develop new approaches, and give parents more choices. Finally, it funds new reforms across the Nation's early learning programs for children birth through age five, so they're prepared to enter kindergarten ready for success ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)).

The Department of Agriculture budget provides \$8.1 billion for discretionary nutrition program supports, which is a \$400 million increase over the 2010 enacted level. Funding supports 10 million participants in the WIC program, which is critical to the health of **pregnant women, new mothers, and their infants**. The budget includes an increase in funds for breastfeeding awareness ([www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)).

The Justice Department proposes \$1.7 million to fund **Second Chance Reentry** to implement a reentry and recidivism statistics program; to establish a statistical series that monitors prisoner employment outcomes; to study jail reentry issues focusing on offenders with special mental health/medical needs; and to create automated processes to analyze and study criminal history records with a focus on reentry and recidivism. No funds are currently allotted for these purposes ([www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)).

For a thorough examination of the budget proposal, view the document online at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) or view detailed descriptions at each Federal agency website.

## MFFN 2010 Board of Directors

- Terri Allen, Face to Face Health and Counseling Service, St. Paul
- Marques Armstrong, Minneapolis Public Schools and NorthPoint Health & Wellness Ctr, Minneapolis
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Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.

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page 4

## Expanding our reach in 2010

Over the past few months, the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network has been working on new projects and collaborative efforts to expand and improve fatherhood services and policies across Minnesota. Here's a brief overview of some of our new initiatives.



**Strong Foundations and Fatherhood Summit:** In January 2010, MFFN hosted our 7th annual winter conference. This year we collaborated with the state's Strong Foundations Conference to offer a joint conference focused on engaging fathers in the lives of infants, birth to three. With over 400 total attendees, it was a resounding success. Check out the keynote presentations here: [www.mnfathers.org/summit2010.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/summit2010.html).

**Fathers' Services Assessment Project:** This project, being conducted by a graduate student through the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, will ascertain how Minnesota's father-serving programs are utilizing program assessments, outcome data, evaluations, and evidence-based practices to support and improve their ongoing work with fathers. The data collected through this project will be used to develop resource publications, professional training sessions, public policy resources, and other resource materials.

**Minnesota Fatherhood Leadership Circles:** In February, MFFN conducted the first of four day-long trainings which will take place throughout 2010 in Brainerd, Fergus Falls, and Grand Rapids. Each community has gathered a team of professionals who will work with MFFN to develop a strategy for increasing the father-awareness, father-friendliness, and father-inclusiveness of community agencies. Through coaching, training, and a mini-strategic plan, we will help these three communities create real change for fathers and families.

**Mind the Gap and Co-Parent Court Demonstration Projects:** MFFN is involved in two demonstration projects that have great potential to improve healthy father involvement and impact policy and practice across the state. View details in our November 2009 newsletter at [www.mnfathers.org/resources.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/resources.html).

**Legislation:** Our 2010 Public Policy Agenda is now available. We will continue to monitor bills this session at the State Capitol and keep you updated through our website and policy email list serve. We will continue to educate policymakers and testify as needed on bills related to our positions. **New this session**, MFFN is also working with a collaborative group of local organizations on a child welfare policy bill. MFFN is spearheading efforts to improve state laws related to fathers in child protection cases. Sign up for our policy email list to learn more! Contact [mfroehle@mnfathers.org](mailto:mfroehle@mnfathers.org) or visit [www.mnfathers.org/policy.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/policy.html).