HDFS Summer Academy

The 3rd annual HDFS Summer Academy was held this June. Dr. Robert Hughes, faculty coordinator, says, “This was the largest group of high school students we have had attend. The evaluations from the students were overwhelmingly positive.”

The HDFS Summer Academy focuses on topics that high school students will find interesting and are based on courses in the HDFS curriculum—adolescent developmental issues, cyberbullying, gender and identity issues. The students also conduct observations at the Child Development Lab (CDL) just like students do in HDFS 105. We hope students learn some things that are personally beneficial and gain insight into what they might do if they go to college and major in HDFS.

The Summer Academy staff this year, Rachel Smith, Madeline Mueller, Kristen Herdegen, and Katie Jordan (pictured in the first row above) designed an engaging and outstanding program for the high school students. Some new activities included a scavenger hunt on the Quad to learn the history and traditions of the U of I (Kirsten & Rachel) and a “kindness” message activity (Madeline) in which students could acknowledge helpful ideas and contributions by each other and with the Academy staff. Katie Jordan provided a very helpful presentation about preparing for college. As usual one of the most successful aspects of the program was a panel discussion by the HDFS students in which they answered any question that the high school students had about college. Everything from Greek life to ‘do you ever do anything fun?’

Hughes notes, “Our best marketing of HDFS is the quality of our students. Their poise, friendliness, knowledge of children and families is all on display throughout this program. At the closing ceremony there were hugs and tears; the high school students develop close bonds to our HDFS Academy staff. I always feel a great sense of pride about our students.”

Summer Internship ... Law School Ahead

This summer HDFS undergraduate, Hayley Graf interned for Guardian Angel Community Services. During her time at Guardian Angel, she worked directly with caseworkers and coordinators in the Adult Protective Services program. She was in charge of documenting and reporting cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of seniors and adults with disabilities. When she was not handling intake calls, she spent her time alongside caseworkers at the Will County Courthouse. Part of the caseworker’s job was to represent clients who are unable to represent themselves in a court of law. Hayley notes, “Whether we were in a criminal court or family court, my ability to work directly with families going through transition is something I credit to my Human Development and Family Studies major. My internship with Adult Protective Services opened my eyes to working with families in a legal setting and solidified my desire to continue family and legal education after my undergraduate studies. HDFS has taught me how to engage with and understand families going through a transition and has helped me to become more confident in my work.” Hayley plans to apply to law school this year and we know she’ll represent both HDFS and her clients well.
Elizabeth "Liz" Holman graduated from our HDFS Ph.D. program this August, after successfully defending her dissertation earlier in the summer. She has been at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign since 2008, beginning as a dual master’s student in HDFS and Social Work. After completing these degrees in 2010, she began her career as a social worker only to be drawn back into academia. During her year as a licensed social worker, she realized that her passion and drive for research was strong enough to begin HDFS’s Ph.D. program in 2011. Liz’s research “broadly focuses on sexual minorities and their families – specifically, thinking about ways to support these families in context (e.g., communities, workplaces).” Dr. Ramona Oswald, Liz’s research advisor, guided Liz in doing both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data from Dr. Oswald’s Rainbow Illinois project were used in conjunction with Liz’s own data which she obtained through in-depth interviews with participants. In her dissertation research, Liz found that “sexual minority employees continue to face social discrimination and microaggressions in the workplace and that employees who experience more hostility in these forms report more negative individual-level and couple-level effects.” Liz hopes that her study will motivate companies to evaluate how supportive their work climate is for LGBTQ employees and their families. We will truly miss Liz here at Illinois as she has made a positive impact on her students (as a TA and course instructor), colleagues, and the department as a whole. We wish her luck at Bowling Green State University in Ohio where she has accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Family Studies and will be teaching Family Diversity this Fall semester.

Research Lab Highlight
Dr. Angela Wiley is a Professor of Applied Family Studies within our HDFS Department. Her research interests focus on promoting wellness, exploring family strengths, and examining the mechanisms which promote resilience in times of stress and challenge for both individuals and their families. She has a special focus on families within the United States who are Spanish-speaking and at a higher risk of poor outcomes while facing health disparities. Dr. Wiley heads the Abriendo Caminos team which took on the sub-project, Educadoras this summer. The main goal of the project is to help Hispanic women educate other mothers about healthy habits and lifestyles by giving them the foundations for health promotion. These tools include knowledge pertaining to healthful nutrition, family time, and physical activity habits/daily practices. In addition, the team educates mothers on how they can best reach out to families and teach about best practices for self-efficacy in order to promote healthful lifestyles. Another focus of this lab is to prepare and facilitate a quantitative research methods course, HDFS 494 Hispanic Health Promotion, for undergraduates, while also ensuring the Abriendo Caminos main project has new and improved content to present each fall.

Undergraduate Spotlight
Caroline Stevens, along with fellow HDFS undergraduate and graduate students, will be presenting research at the Illinois Occupational Therapy Association (ILOTA) conference this Fall. The research project began through HDFS 494: Developmental Assessment and Screening (instructors Dr. Brent McBride and Meghan Fisher). Caroline, along with recent HDFS graduates Molly Harmon and Lexi Cirrincione used two child development screening tools, the Denver II and the Bayley. Both screening methods assess cognitive and behavioral development in young children. However, the Denver II is used to assess development from birth to age six whereas the Bayley is used to measure development from one to forty-two months. The research team wanted to see whether these two tools similarly assessed development during the age span they both address. The research team sampled a group of children and found that both the Bayley and the Denver II had significant overlap. Specifically, the screening tools had a high level of congruence, 77%. This research suggests that both of these tools are tapping into similar markers of child development. When asked about her experience working on this project, Caroline exclaimed, “The project was exciting to complete as a team.”

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