CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY CONSORTIUM

Lessons from the Field Presenter Biographies

UNBARRED: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AFFECTED BY INCARCERATION
NOVEMBER 14, 2013

Co-sponsored by University of Minnesota’s Program in Health Disparities Research.

Lee Buckley

Lee Buckley joined the Minnesota Department of Corrections in 2009 as Community Reentry Coordinator. In this role she coordinates with field service offices and community corrections agencies, government, faith-based and community-based organizations that deliver reentry services to offenders. She also serves on the steering committee for the Minnesota Transition from Prison to Community (TPC) initiative. In 2005 Buckley was appointed to lead the Governor’s Council on Faith and Community Service Initiatives Advisory Council which worked to develop a closer connection between the state government and faith and community organizations. She serves on the board of directors for World Wide Village, Inc. and the R3 Collaborative for Recovery, Reentry and Renewal and has served as a member of numerous strategic and leadership committees including the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA), the National Association for Mental Illness Minnesota (NAMI MN), Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan (MCORP).

She holds a Masters of Arts in Community Ministry Leadership from Bethel Seminary where she serves as their Associate Director for Intercultural Relations. Buckley is a licensed and ordained minister and Associate Pastor at Progressive Baptist Church in East St. Paul.

Erica Gerrity

Erica Gerrity, LICSW, is a psychotherapist in St. Paul and a founding member of Isis Rising – A prison doula project. Ms. Gerrity has worked with incarcerated women and families affected by incarceration in Minnesota since 2003. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Minnesota and her Master’s Degree in Social Work from the Universities of St. Thomas and St. Catherine (Minnesota).

Ms. Gerrity has worked as a disaster mental health worker for the Red Cross, a community based-social worker, a doula for high-risk pregnant women, and systems change advocate for Minnesota’s Waiting Children in the foster care system. Her passion in life is for the development of thriving families, deep-rooted communities, and equal opportunity for the health and well being of all people.
Christine Harnack

Christine Harnack, MA LP, LMFT, is the Director of the Mental Health Clinics for Volunteers of America of Minnesota with over 30 years of experience developing and supervising mental health programs for children and their families across the continuum of care: outpatient, in-home, group home, residential treatment, and chemical dependency settings. Christine is dedicated to making quality and innovative mental health services available, accessible, trauma informed and culturally sensitive for children and their families. Christine participated in the second (2012-2013) national Trauma-Informed Care Learning Community through the National Council of Behavioral Healthcare. She organized and co-facilitated the Metro Area Trauma Informed Learning Community from January to June 2013.

Lori Lofrano

Lori Lofrano is the Child Support Liaison for the MN Department of Corrections. This position was created in 2007 to enhance the communication of child support information between inmates, corrections staff and county child support. Prior to this position, she was the supervisor of the Crow Wing County MN child support office. Lori has been involved in child support for almost 20 years. She received her degree in Psychology and Child and Family Studies from St. Cloud State University in 1992.

Jenifer McShane

Jenifer McShane has directed two feature length documentary films. “I love to tell stories that won’t be told by anyone else and to give voice to people who won’t be heard otherwise.” Her first film, A Leap of Faith, was about an integrated school in Belfast for both Catholic and Protestant students. Liam Neeson was the narrator and it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 1996. Her most recent film, Mothers of Bedford, tells the story of five incarcerated women at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester, New York. Bedford Hills is the only maximum-security prison for women in New York State with an innovative parenting program that is supported by a nonprofit group. Jen was intrigued by the question of whether it is possible for a woman to fill the role of a mother while being imprisoned particularly since many of the women are serving long sentences.

“These circumstances are certainly not the norm and the women were given the opportunity to tell their story. I found that they were able to redefine themselves as something other than a prisoner.” The women were eager to participate in the film because they aren’t often given the opportunity to talk about their lives. Jen met with the women’s extended families to examine how the situation has impacted everyone involved. “These women are able to nurture and love their children and, even under these unnatural conditions, it is possible to be an engaged parent.”
Daniel Marcou

**Daniel Marcou** is the Corrections librarian for Hennepin County Library Outreach where he provides library service and programs for incarcerated adults. Previously, he worked in a variety of public, special and academic library settings, including director of a small public library. In 2009, Library Journal recognized Marcou as a Mover and Shaker for his work in promoting public libraries as a reentry resource for people leaving corrections facilities.

Eddie Miles

**Eddie Miles** started his career with the MN DOC in 1992 as a Correctional Officer at the Lino Lakes Correctional Facility. In 1997 he was promoted to Special Investigator conducting criminal Investigations at four different facilities within the agency. He was promoted to Corrections Program Director at the Stillwater Correctional Facility in 2005. Three years later he was promoted to Associate Warden of Operations at the Stillwater Facility. In 2009, he was appointed Warden of the Lino Lakes Correctional Facility. He left in 2011 to become Warden of the St. Cloud Correctional Facility and returned to Lino Lakes as Warden in 2012. He is a passionate advocate for programs that contribute to successful community reintegration and reduced recidivism.

Ebony Ruhland

**Ebony Ruhland** is a PhD candidate from the University of Minnesota. She received her Master's Degree in Counseling and Psychological Services from St Mary's University in January 2007. Ms. Ruhland serves as the director of research and evaluation at the Council on Crime and Justice. Research and evaluation studies that she participated in include the Children of Incarcerated Parents Study, Collateral Effects of Incarceration on Fathers, Families, and the Family Strengthening Project Evaluation. She has coordinated numerous internal and external evaluations for the Council.

Rebecca Shlafer

**Rebecca Shlafer**, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. Dr. Shlafer joined the faculty in September 2012 after completing a two-year, post-doctoral fellowship in the Division. Dr. Shlafer completed her BS and MS in Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, and her PhD in Child Psychology at the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Shlafer’s research focuses on understanding the developmental outcomes of children and families with multiple risk factors. She is particularly interested in children with parents in prison, as well as the programs and policies that impact families affected by incarceration. She teaches the writing seminar for an interdisciplinary training program in Adolescent Health and routinely teaches undergraduate courses in Child Psychology, as an affiliate faculty member at the Institute of Child Development.
In addition to her research and teaching activities, Dr. Shlafer is a volunteer guardian ad litem in Hennepin County where she serves as an advocate for abused and neglected children involved in juvenile court.

**Jason Sole**

Jason Sole was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. He sold his first bag of crack at the age of fourteen. He was a leader of a notorious street gang and has been in many correctional facilities due to his criminal behavior (i.e. possession of a firearm, first degree possession of controlled substance, second degree possession of controlled substance, terrorist threats, disorderly conduct, etc.).

His resilience and perseverance helped him overcome his past experiences and he earned his Bachelor's of Arts and Master's of Science in Criminal Justice. He is currently pursuing his Doctorate in Public Safety with a specialization in Criminal Justice. His mission is to help children learn from his mistakes and help ex-offenders learn from his road to redemption. By showing others the pain and suffering that he endured he hopes to help them gain a sense of hope.

**Deborah Jiang Stein**

Deborah Jiang Stein is a writer and public speaker who devotes her work to women, men, and children in the margins of society. Her book, *Even Tough Girls Wear Tutus*, is her personal story of being born of to a heroin-addicted mother in prison, and her struggles to overcome her own past. She is the founder of the nonprofit The unPrison Project to serve women and girls in prisons. She is currently at work on another book, *Prison Baby: A Memoir*, a YA novel, and a collection of short stories.