

# Washington

SUMMER 2015



## GLOBAL IMPACT. LOCAL SOLUTIONS.

Washington University researchers work together with international partners to address some of the world's most complex health challenges.

## Power of Partnerships

Mark Katzman



**“This determination to make the world a better place ... is woven into the fabric of the university. But we do not take on this challenging work alone.”**

— Mark S. Wrighton

Commencement is my favorite time of year. And by the time you receive this issue of *Washington*, we will have celebrated our 154th Commencement ceremony, sending more than 2,950 graduates into the world to generate great impact in communities near and far.

This drive, this determination to make the world a better place, is not just in our graduates’ DNA; it is woven into the fabric of the university. But we do not take on this challenging work alone. A key part of our efforts has been our ability to develop and foster long-term sustained partnerships with individuals and organizations. In this issue of the magazine, we explore some of these relationships and how these partnerships are helping improve the lives of St. Louisans as well as people around the world.

Locally, the Brown School recently celebrated a 40-year partnership — one of our longest and most successful — with the Family Resource Center. Founded in 1974 with the help of Brown School faculty and students, the center gives children from abusive environments an opportunity for a better life. The center, through collaborations with our social work students, faculty and graduates, is closer than ever to establishing a model for the elimination of chronic child abuse.

Another set of partnerships is behind the success of the Cortex Innovation Community in midtown St. Louis. Where vacant lots and decaying buildings once stood are now state-of-the-art incubators and laboratories. Along with the city of St. Louis, we are partnering with other founding institutions — BJC HealthCare, Missouri Botanical Garden, Saint Louis University and University of Missouri—St. Louis — to create an innovative bioscience and technology hub, which

will drive job growth through the development of new enterprises, providing opportunities for our faculty to commercialize their research advances.

Partnerships fuel our international efforts too. Indeed, our lead international initiative in its 10th year is the McDonnell International Scholars Academy, a partnership with 28 other premier research universities to enhance collaborative efforts in education and research. One of the important collaborative themes is global public health, and our cover story features some of the important work we are doing in global health, drawing on university strengths in infectious disease and malnutrition research.

To encourage and support more of these global health efforts, our Institute for Public Health’s Global Health Center develops sustained partnerships across our campuses and around the world in order to address some of the world’s most pressing public health challenges. To this end, we see great opportunity to leverage the important relationships we’ve built with our 28 McDonnell International Scholars Academy partner universities.

Changing the world is on the minds of many at the university, including our most recent graduates. I am confident that you will see many of them, regardless of their degree or career path, featured one day in the pages of this very magazine. I look forward to seeing how they use their time, talent and treasure as they progress through their postgraduate lives and contribute to making the university, St. Louis and the world a better place.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Washington*. As always, we welcome your comments and ideas. Please email the editor at [wustlmageditor@wustl.edu](mailto:wustlmageditor@wustl.edu) with your thoughts. Thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Wrighton  
Chancellor

## Brown's 40-Year Partnership Helps Children of Abuse

BY ROSALIND EARLY

Six years ago, Jim and Bobbie Jo Parker, recently licensed foster parents, got the call. Some children had just been rescued from a violent home in northern Missouri. Would the Parkers be willing to take in two?

The Parkers readily agreed — so readily, that the social worker called back a few minutes later.

"What if it's five children? We don't want to split them up right now. It would be temporary..." Jim and Bobbie Jo exchanged glances. They already had two foster kids staying with them. Did they really think they could handle seven children, five of whom were terribly abused, all at once?

"Sure, we can take all five," they agreed.

The children entered the house shyly, their timid steps due as much to bruises as to nervousness. Before that, they'd been at the hospital, because one of them, the oldest girl, had been beaten so badly she could hardly walk.

"I will never forget the looks on their faces," Bobbie Jo recalls. "They were very scared, very sad, very physically hurt children. We got them to bed, and we promised them over and over again that we would keep them safe."

The children had survived years of horrible abuse that included beatings, sexual assaults, neglect and verbal abuse, and it had done its damage. Developmentally delayed, distrustful, withdrawn — any one of them alone would have been a challenge to seasoned foster parents.

Greg Echele, chief executive officer of Family Resource Center (FRC) — whose affiliated company, Children's Permanency Partnership, licensed the Parkers to become foster parents — remembers the case. "Usually, these kids would have been split into five homes or maybe two and two and one, because normally foster parents wouldn't think they had the ability to take five injured kids at one time," Echele says. "I've never seen that happen in all of my years."

And Echele has been involved in the prevention of child abuse for decades.

### Prior to helping found FRC in the 1970s,

Echele was the director of social services at St. Louis Children's Hospital and was responsible for developing several new programs, including one that would help the hospital better manage cases of suspected child abuse.

Simultaneously, at Washington University, Bob Pierce, MSW '69, PhD '79, then a professor at the Brown School, wanted to create a stand-alone non-profit center to serve abused children and abusive adults before kids wound up in the emergency room.

In 1973, Pierce was teaching a course at Brown in child-abuse treatment and prevention, and he and two graduate students discovered that the federal government was looking to develop model programs around the country to do the very thing that Pierce envisioned and Echele was trying to set up at Children's Hospital.

Though they didn't know each other, Pierce called Echele, and together, along with two social work graduate students, Phyllis Rozansky, MSW '74, and Susan Keller, AB '72, MSW '73, they wrote the grant proposal for FRC. Pierce, Rozansky and Keller searched the literature for the best evidence-based practices for the center's potential programs. Echele built up the infrastructure, securing a partnership with Children's Hospital to get doctors to oversee potential programs and help the center administratively.

In the end, though, the most long-lasting partnership that emerged was the one between Washington University and FRC, founded in 1974. A few years later, after the federal grant money expired, Children's Hospital helped the center become fully independent, and Washington University faculty and students have remained a critical part of the center ever since.

"All Brown faculty do community-engaged research," says Melissa Jonson-Reid, PhD, professor of social work, who works closely with FRC. "There's an advantage to having agencies that are eager to partner, because this allows the agency and faculty to advance and improve outcomes."

Nine Brown School faculty members work with the Family Resource Center on program development and evaluation. The center, therefore, gets improved, evidence-based programs, while

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— Greg Echele, CEO, Family Resource Center



Prior to adopting, the Parkers received extensive foster-care training through FRC, and their children all had individualized treatment programs.

faculty members conduct research on child welfare and child maltreatment. The partnership also offers social work students practicum opportunities.

FRC's flagship programs include a therapeutic day-treatment preschool for children between 3 and 5 years of age who have suffered abuse, a family treatment program to help parents break the cycle of abuse, and a foster-care program for children who can't stay safely with their families. PathBuilders, another key program, addresses both the psychological and the social/environmental contributors to child abuse. Dealing with root causes, such as unemployment, increases the likelihood for successful outcomes. These FRC programs and others are rigorously reviewed and grounded in evidence-based practices.

"One of our goals with the Brown School is to develop the definitive model for the elimination of chronic child abuse," said Echele in a 2007 issue of the Brown School's magazine, *Social Impact*. "We want to examine each program for its evidence base, document the evidence if it doesn't exist currently or find new interventions that are rooted in evidence."

**A few years ago, J. Curtis McMillen, PhD,** then a professor at the Brown School, reviewed more than 100 evidence-based practices with

the family treatment department at FRC. Of the evidence studied, the staff implemented seven new programs including trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing and parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT), which teaches parents how to help a child with social and behavioral problems increase pro-social behavior and decrease negative behavior. More recently, a Brown School doctoral candidate, Paul Lanier, PhD '13, studied PCIT program participants and showed that parents who completed PCIT had statistically significant improvements in mental health and reduced parenting stress.

F. Brett Drake, PhD, professor of social work and Lanier's graduate adviser, says the partnership offers a critical link between theory and practice.

Jonson-Reid, who is also director of the Center for Violence and Injury Prevention, concurs. "However, it isn't just a passive partnership on one side," she says. In 2009, when Jonson-Reid was setting up her center, she turned to FRC for advice.

#### **A shared desire to help abused children**

and their families brought a professor, two students and Echele together 40 years ago. "And that theme has run through the Family Resource Center all these years," Echele says.

The strength of FRC helped the Parkers. The parents received extensive foster-care training, and the children each had an individualized treatment program. And with FRC's help, the Parkers adopted four of their new charges (the fifth child moved to live with her biological father).

Echele remembers when the adoption was being finalized; the Parkers asked the kids if they wanted to choose a new name to signal their new beginning. The second-youngest of the siblings, who was only 3 at the time, enthusiastically replied, "Spiderman!"

The Parkers weren't sure what to say, but one of his cousins asked, "Do you know what Spiderman's real name is?" The boy shook his head no.

"Peter Parker," the cousin replied.

Echele says that such endings make the work gratifying. "After all of the misery these kids go through, we get to be the people who break the cycle of violence and really allow them to have a better life than they would otherwise," Echele says. 



## **FRC BY THE NUMBERS:**

# 40

Number of years FRC and the Brown School have partnered to improve Missouri's child welfare system and help area families build a brighter future

# >7,000

Number of children and other family members whom FRC helps each year

# 65

Number of children FRC worked with when first awarded a federal grant in 1974

# 82%

Percentage of children FRC serves who live in families with incomes below the federal poverty line

# 85%

Approximate percentage of children who can safely stay with their parents after the family completes an FRC program