

FAMILY SCIENCE & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Department Newsletter

MAY 2025

Meet our 2025 FSHD Scholarship Winners

The Department of Family Science and Human Development annually awards scholarships to students whose community service activities and academic achievement are deserving of recognition and support.

We are proud to introduce this year's award recipients.

KATHARINE B. HALL SCHOLARSHIP

Oscaterin Bautista



As a full-time mom raising four children, a full-time student with a double major (FSHD and Child Advocacy), and a full-time family

advocate at a Head Start agency, Oscaterin admits that balancing all her responsibilities requires significant sacrifice. Her passion for helping others keeps her focused on success.

one person can make in a child's life. She wants to be that person — to teach, inspire and uplift those who need it most.

DORIS RUSLINK SCHOLARSHIP

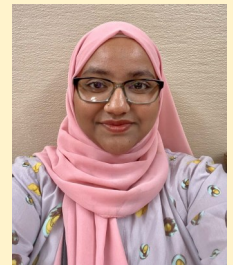
Paulina Salas



As a ten-year-old, Paulina accompanied her aunt to work at an early childhood education center, and her passion for teaching blossomed. Field

experiences enabled her to communicate with students and parents, observe their interactions with each other, and solidify her dream of being a teacher.

with children. Volunteer experiences have shaped her understanding of what it means to serve others, and deepened her desire to better people's lives and build stronger families and communities.



DALILA REID AWARD



Arleen Tejada

Volunteering as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for abused and neglected children, and understanding policies and issues

that affect the well-being of families, have reinforced Arleen's choice to major in FSHD and minor in Social Work in order to support families in need. ■

FSHD/PHYLLIS HARBACH AWARD



Nicole Harris

With a dream to become a teacher and a social worker, Nicole has always believed in the power of education and the difference

DORIS RUSLINK SCHOLARSHIP

Tasnima Orpa

Tasnima's decision to major in FSHD originates from her genuine love for people, her community, and working

Department Chair's Corner

As the academic year winds down, let's take a moment to reflect on all that we've accomplished together—and to celebrate the community that defines FSHD. We must recognize that the past few months have been especially tenuous for members in our community, given many new national policies that impact individual and family wellbeing and heightened sentiments against higher education. But as I look around campus and even in my own ASYNC course, I am reminded daily of the true power of teaching and learning evidence-based knowledge and creating a welcoming space where every idea and identity belong and thrive. The work we do at FSHD and at Montclair goes beyond any defined labels or written description - it is what we embody as a unit, and what we hope to espouse to all of our students, that matters.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

May 5

Last day of classes – follow a Friday schedule

May 7

Commencement

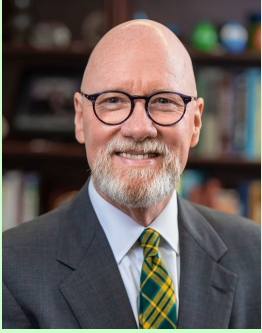
May 12

Summer sessions begin

May 26

Memorial Day - no classes

Welcoming our New Dean of the College for Community Health



Dr. Ronald Werner-Wilson, an expert on adolescent development and family science, has been appointed dean of the College for Community Health (CCHL), effective June 1, 2025. He comes to Montclair from North Dakota State University, where he served as a professor of Human Development and Family Science, dean of the College of Human Sciences and Education, and the interim dean of the newly-formed College of Health and Human Sciences.

CCHL prepares future generations of professionals and researchers to enhance the physical, social, and emotional health and well-being of all people, their environments, and their communities. Established in 2022, the college comprises six highly accomplished departments, making a strong collective impact by leveraging strengths, building new strategic relationships, and expanding academic offerings to meet critical workforce needs. The Department of Family Science and Human Development is based in CCHL, along with Communication Sciences and Disorders, Counseling, Kinesiology, Nutrition and Food Studies, and Public Health.

Werner-Wilson holds a PhD in Child and Family Development from the University of Georgia, as well as a master's in Sociology and a BA in Psychology from Georgia State University. He was drawn to Montclair for its strong commitment to community engagement. "I've spent a fair bit of time working at land grant universities, where being engaged in the community is important," he said. "I'm really looking forward to collaborating with folks in the college to support and strengthen those efforts."

All FSHD majors are required to complete 35 hours of supervised field work with selected agencies offering services for families. Within the scope of this experience, students explore their own interest in the field of family science and human development, and are exposed to the common professional roles and occupations.

We welcome Dean Werner-Wilson and are excited to work with him to showcase the quality of academics and research in the FSHD Department. ■

PhD Gathering Encourages Connections and Relaxation



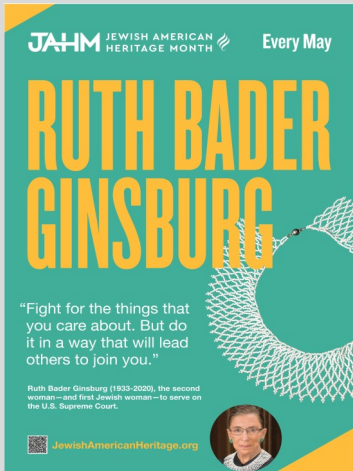
The Family Science and Human Development PhD Program hosted its Spring Gathering in April to create a space for doctoral students, faculty and staff to unwind from their busy schedules and enjoy each other's company. This annual event enables everyone to socialize and foster connections outside of the classroom. During the gathering, food and beverages were served, and the group enjoyed a surprise visit from our new CCHL Dean, Dr. Ron Werner-Wilson. It was a perfect opportunity for him to meet our FSHD family in a relaxed, informal setting.

Montclair offers the only [FSHD PhD program](#) in New Jersey. The 48-hour program offers full- and part-time options, providing flexibility for balanced experiences to help students reach their academic goals. ■

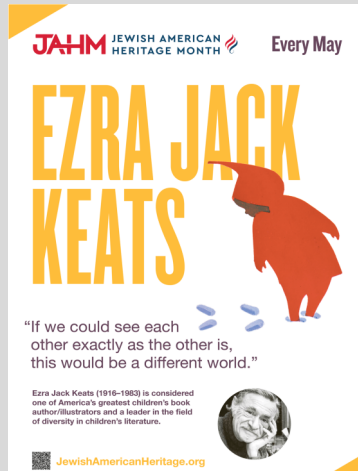
Social Justice Initiatives

Jewish American Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) is a national recognition of the more than 365-year history of Jewish contributions to American culture. Celebrated each May, JAHM serves as an antidote to antisemitism by lifting up the indelible contributions American Jews have made - and continue to make - to our nation's history, culture, and society. Consider these impactful Jewish individuals:



Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933-2020), the first Jewish woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, was an outspoken advocate for equal rights and justice throughout her career, known especially for her precedent-setting work on women's rights. Later in her career, she became known affectionately as the Notorious RBG, inspired by her passionate written dissents, especially around civil rights and social justice issues, such as the Voting Rights Act.



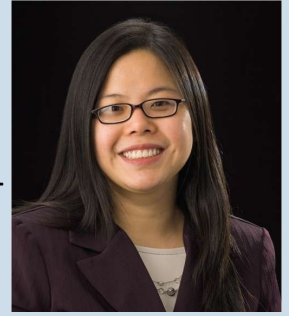
Ezra Jack Keats (1916-1983) was a giant in the field of American children's literature who promoted social justice through the power of reading and learning. His work invites young readers to value diversity and embrace the identities of underrepresented communities. His 1962 book, *The Snow Day*, about a Black boy named Peter, earned the Caldecott Medal and helped usher in generations of multicultural children's literature.

**JEWISH AMERICAN
HERITAGE MONTH** 

Source: JewishAmericanHeritage.org

Department Chair's Corner

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Dr. Lyndal Khaw

This month, a major highlight for FSHD is being selected as the inaugural recipient of the **2025 Presidential Excellence Team Award**. This award from the Office of the President recognizes "any group of three or more employees that collaborate on an initiative that makes Montclair an excellent place to work, learn, or serve others. [Awardee is] selected based upon evidence of improved learning or research; evidence of improved student/employee satisfaction, engagement or morale; and positive impact on the university."

We are extremely grateful to have been chosen for this award and I am so proud to highlight our amazing team of staff and faculty who bring their individual strengths and talents to collectively support our students and each other, making FSHD a safe, pleasant place to work. It is such an honor to work alongside a dedicated group of colleagues and professionals. Congratulations to the FSHD team!

May is also a time when we celebrate **Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month**. This is an opportunity for us to honor the rich cultures, histories, and contributions of AANHPI individuals—both within our broader society and right here in Montclair. Our department knows how essential it is to recognize and uplift diverse voices. I encourage everyone to engage with the diverse stories, scholarship, and lived experiences of AANHPI communities—not just this month, but year-round. As a naturalized American citizen, I write this now thinking of my own journey as an immigrant from Malaysia 24 years ago with deep appreciation and empathy for all immigrants who have made similarly difficult decisions to leave their lives as they knew it, all to seek a brighter and safer future in the United States. (See more about AANHPI on page 4.)

To the Class of 2025 graduates: a hearty congratulations and the best of luck to you! We can't wait to see the impact you'll make in the world. I hope your time here as an FSHD student has been defined by compassion, community, and a desire for making meaningful change in our society. We will be rooting for you to find success in your next chapter.

And a last note to our FSHD staff, faculty, and returning students: thanks for your hard work, your care for each other, and your contributions to make this department the special and unique place it is. Have a restful and relaxing summer ahead - you have earned it! ■

Honoring Asian Trailblazers

The observance of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month in May celebrates the influence and contributions of AANHPI people, whose rich heritage is thousands of years old and played an integral role in shaping U.S. history. This year's theme, *A Legacy of Leadership and Resilience*, honors the hard work of AANHPI leaders who established a foundation for their descendants to thrive as well as adapt to change and adversity.

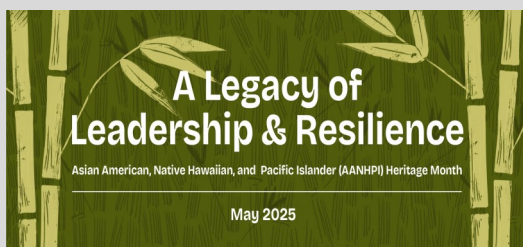
Throughout history, AANHPI people have transformed challenges into opportunities for public service, efficiency, and innovation, resulting in lasting change that resonates beyond their community and has positively impacted our world. This resilience is woven into the fabric of their success, as a testament to the unwavering spirit of ancestors who faced their own struggles with dignity and strength.

We pay tribute to AANHPI trailblazers whose resilience and courage paved the way for future generations, including:

- **Lieutenant Susan Ahn Cuddy** who prevailed against anti-Asian sentiments during World War II to become the first Korean American woman in the U.S. military and the first female Navy gunnery officer.
- **Congressman Dalip Singh Saund**, the first Asian to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1956, who successfully lobbied to end restrictions to citizenship for Indian and Filipino immigrants and gave Asian Americans a voice at the national level.
- **Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta** who overcame racial injustice as a child of Japanese immigrants in a World War II internment camp to serve in the U.S. Army, Congress, and the Cabinets of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

These pioneers, while facing seemingly insurmountable barriers, demonstrated exceptional

leadership, and risked much to usher in change. Their stories of perseverance—of overcoming doubt, discrimination, and the weight of societal expectations—serve as inspiring reminders that resilience is a cornerstone of our community. Each breakthrough they achieved has laid the groundwork for those who follow, encouraging the next generation to dream boldly. ■



Source: FAPAC.org

SLAAY Lab Supports Asian Youth

The SLAAY Lab (Strengthening Lives of Asian American Youth), is a research lab in the Department of Family Sci-



Dr. Sei Eun Kim

ence and Human Development, led by FSHD Associate Professor Dr. Sei Eun Kim. The lab researches how sociocultural factors shape Asian American youth development and mental health. During AANHPI Heritage Month, this work exemplifies the critical need to understand and address challenges facing these communities.

The lab's reach extends beyond academic research to address pressing issues facing Asian American communities. A flagship initiative is the Navigating Race Project, conducted in collaboration with the University of Arizona and the University of Sonora in Hermosillo, Mexico. This innovative research examines how online and offline discrimination affects psychosocial and health outcomes of Asian and Latinx/Hispanic American youth and families.

Other current projects include studies on racial discrimination experiences, intergenerational relationships, and the development of culturally responsive mental health interventions. Graduate students in the lab work closely with Dr. Kim to advance these research initiatives, contributing their expertise and innovative perspectives. Their research provides critical insights that inform education, mental health services, and policy development for Asian American youth.

Collaborations with organizations like APEX Youth NYC and the Korean Community Center of New Jersey ensure research translates into meaningful community support, embodying the spirit of AANHPI Month by amplifying diverse Asian American voices and experiences.

Looking Forward

"The power of visibility can never be underestimated." This quote from prominent Asian American comedian and advocate Margaret Cho resonates with the SLAAY Lab's work during AANHPI Heritage Month, highlighting the importance of representation and recognition. The lab's work hopes to make Asian American youth experiences visible, contributing to understanding developmental trajectories and psychosocial outcomes while honoring the generations of Asian Americans whose contributions we celebrate this month.

For more information about the SLAAY Lab and opportunities to participate in their research, visit the website at www.theSLAAYlab.com. ■

Student Spotlight

Khalli Harris

Khalli Harris is a senior graduating from the FSHD program this month with a concentration in Family Services.



Her Story: My road to Montclair State University and specifically the FSHD Department was met with many pauses, roadblocks and even successes. I am not a traditional senior student. I am a mother to three beautiful children, Alexis (24), Kohen (19) and Katherine (13), and an Early Childhood Educator with more than twenty-five years of experience working with the tiniest of learners,

families and great minds in the field of Early Care and Education here in New Jersey.

When I first attended a four-year university twenty-four years ago, my major was Pre-Medicine. I knew that I wanted to be a Developmental Pediatrician. My love of educating children and families is a lifelong passion and commitment. With great surprise I found myself pregnant and had to go home because I became ill during the pregnancy. That challenge did not stop me from accomplishing my dream; it just changed the path on how I would achieve it.

Her Path: I pursued my Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education and graduated when my first daughter was just two-years old. Life continued to happen, getting married, divorced and now raising three children on my own, but with lots of support from my family, friends and colleagues I was able to still dream.

In 2017, while working in childcare, I came across a workshop

entitled “Keeping Babies and Children in Mind” hosted by Montclair’s Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health (CAECMH). There I met so many amazing individuals and finally a community that understood the importance of early childhood! A couple of years later I embarked on a fellowship through CAECMH; that is where I met Dr. Gerald Costa and Dr. Kaitlin Mulcahy (the past and current CAECMH directors). They both were so incredibly instrumental in sparking my flame to continue this work and my dream!

In 2022, due to Covid-19 and the foreseeable future of working from home, it was the perfect opportunity to go back to school. I chose the FSHD program because of Mr. Christopher Cottle, my then advisor, whose guidance and support made me feel at home at Montclair. I cannot believe that two years here are coming to an end. I have learned so much not just in theory and practice, but I learned to never give up on my dream.

After graduation I am looking forward to continuing to pursue my dream. I am excited for what the future may hold for me. I know that I definitely want the opportunity to keep building on relationships, while working with diverse children and families.

Her Thoughts: My advice for future FSHD students is a quote from research professor, Brene’ Brown. “Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path.” That quote embodies everything that I learned in my career here at Montclair, and that is what I will hold on to working with all children and families in the future. ■

FSHD Department Chair Dr. Lyndal Khaw and Assistant Professor Dr. Sei Eun Kim attended the university’s Accepted Students Day open house in April to welcome new students to our program and to Montclair. Dr. Khaw commented, “We had an amazing morning greeting future Red Hawks and their families, and explaining all the exciting careers the students can pursue with a degree in FSHD.”



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