

FAMILY SCIENCE & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Department Newsletter

DECEMBER 2025

Diaper Drive Supports Homeless Shelter

The Department of Family Science and Human Development and the Montclair Students Council on Family Relations conducted a Diaper Drive in November to benefit the Emergency Housing Program at Turning Point Community Services (TPCS) in Irvington, NJ, which has provided safe, temporary housing to women and their children for over 20 years. A leader in the fight against homelessness, TPCS offers innovative programs and resources to support independence, nurture intrapersonal growth, and prepare families for a more prosperous future.

Due to the lengthy government shutdown and stoppage of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, TPCS communicated a dire need for diapers of all sizes for the homeless families in their shelter. Fulfilling its mission to strengthen the health and well-being of individuals and families, FSHD launched a Diaper Drive, appealing to the university community for help. In true Red Hawk fashion, the donations came pouring in. In just two weeks, the department collected 2,000 diapers of all sizes.

TPCS is an innovative nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering homeless women and their children through emergency housing with private bedrooms, housing assistance, and comprehensive clinical and supportive services. Other programs include life skills workshops, holiday events, and fitness programs to help families regain a sense of normalcy during challenging times. For more information about TPCS, which is unaffiliated with Turning Point USA, visit TPCSinc.org. ■



FSHD Department Chair Dr. Lyndal Khaw sits among the cases and packages of diapers collected to support the TPCS Emergency Housing Program in Irvington, NJ.

The Gift of Sharing: Small Acts, Big Impact

Belief, Hope, Inspiration

by Dr. Soyoung Lee, FSHD Associate Department Chair

As we enter a season filled with holidays of light, reflection, generosity, and renewal — Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, and the many personal traditions our community holds — it's a good moment to pause and reflect on what it means to care for one another. No matter how we celebrate, this time of year reminds us of a shared truth: small acts of kindness can change the direction of a life.

A recent *Fortune* profile of philanthropist MacKenzie Scott offers a powerful reminder. Long before she became known for her transformative giving, Scott was a college student on the verge of dropping out. Money was tight. Stress was high. Then something extraordinary happened: her roommate quietly handed her \$1,000 so she could stay in school. That simple act of generosity helped Scott finish her degree, pursue her work, and eventually become one of

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DATES TO REMEMBER

December 15
- Thursday classes meet
- FSHD Spring 2026 Internship requests due

December 16
Friday classes meet

December 22
Winter classes begin

December 25-January 1
University Closed

Happy Holidays!

Our Achievements

Family Scientists Dissect Power and Privilege

More than one thousand professionals in the Family Science discipline gather each year to network and explore cutting-edge research at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). Montclair's FSHD Department consistently maintains a strong presence, with faculty and doctoral students contributing to numerous presentations and panel discussions, and this year was no exception.

Centering on the theme of *Power, Privilege, and Difference: Lived Experiences of Changing Families and Societies*, our 15 FSHD conferees analyzed a wide range of critical topics, including access, disparities, incivility, inequality, power, privilege, and tolerance — all examined within the context of families. The conference illuminated often overlooked issues, fostering rigorous discussion among the scholars and practitioners, while identifying opportunities for practical application and policy development. ■



Fifteen FSHD faculty and doctoral students attended and presented their work at the National Council on Family Relations annual conference in Baltimore. Eleven of them gathered for this group photo.



FSHD doctoral candidates Elaine Les (left) and Angie Thevaraja successfully presented their paper about influences on college students' character development.



Dr. Rahjaun Gordon presented a session about how faith impacts the development of black male students.

Dr. Ashley Ermer (right) and doctoral candidate Donna Meeker-O'Rourke (center) are joined by FSHD alum Dr. Jackie Keenoy at their poster on intimate partner violence.



Chishay Pearce, second year PhD student, won the award for Best Paper by a Student/New Professional in the 'Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Families' Section for her paper, "Examining the Lived Experiences of African American Parents of Children with Disabilities."



Dr. Soyoung Lee accepts the prestigious Dawn Cassidy Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) Special Recognition Award from Jenee' Duncan for her exceptional efforts in supporting and advocating for the CFLE credential and program.



Doctoral student Jose Rodas, FSHD alum Alicia Rivera (a current MPH student), doctoral candidate Danielle Napoli and Dr. Brad van Eeden-Moorefield pause for a photo at the poster presentations.



Celebrating the wonderful presentations of our doctoral students are (l to r) Dr. Pearl Stewart, Erin Scott, FSHD alum Dr. Tawanda Hubbard, Chishay Pearce, Khadija Ahmed, and colleague Dr. Tammy Henderson from Lamar University.

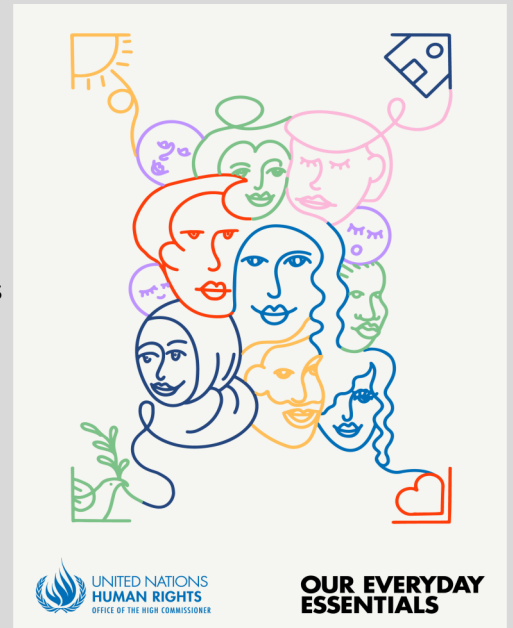
Social Justice Initiatives

Human Rights: Essential Components of Life

Human Rights Day (HRD) is observed around the world every year on December 10. This event commemorates the anniversary of the UN General Assembly's 1948 adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which sets out the fundamental human rights to be universally protected, and enshrines the inalienable rights entitled to every human being.

In the current global atmosphere of turbulence and unpredictability, many people feel a growing sense of insecurity, disaffection and alienation. The 2025 HRD theme, *Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials*, reaffirms the value of human rights and emphasizes how they remain a winning proposition for humanity. Needs like security, equality, and dignity are not luxuries or abstract concepts, but relevant, essential components of everyday life that must be protected.

HRD aims to re-engage people by showing how human rights shape our daily lives, often in ways we may not always notice. Bridging the gap between human rights principles and everyday experiences can spark awareness, inspire confidence and encourage collective action. ■



Source: United Nations websites

The Gift of Sharing *(continued from page 1)*

the most influential philanthropists of our time.

This experience transformed not only Scott but also her roommate, Jeannie Ringo Tarkenton, who was inspired to help others. Twenty years later, she founded Funding U, which has since helped nearly 8,000 students stay in college through low-interest loans without co-signers. Their story of shared generosity and mutual inspiration is a beautiful reminder: when we support each other, we create “ripple effects” that strengthen our society and lift future generations. You may read the article [here](#).

Many of us carry stories like this — moments when someone saw our struggles, stepped in at the right moment, or believed in us before we believed in ourselves. These gestures may seem small in the grand scheme of things, but to the person receiving them, they are life-changing. They restore dignity, ease burdens, and help us keep going. More importantly, they remind us that we do better when we lift one another. It isn't just the financial support; it is the message behind the gesture that inspires us most: “I’m sharing what I have and what I can offer because I believe in you and want to help you continue.”

In our own community, we saw this spirit during the **FSHD Diaper Drive** (see page 1) and the **CCHL Red Hawk Food and More Drive**, where gifts as simple as a box of diapers or a

can of food bring comfort and relief to families in local shelters and to our peers here at Montclair. These offerings may not be glamorous, but they make a real difference in someone’s day, and sometimes, in their outlook. As members of FSHD, I hope these experiences of giving inspire you to make our community, our nation, and our world just a little better — personally and professionally.

This season, let’s embrace the idea of “being Santa/Los Reyes Magos/La Befana/Saint Nicholas/Joulupukki/Amu Nowruz/Hoteiosho/Ded Moroz/Sekhmet & Bes/Tomte/Nisse/Ganesha & Lakshmi” — not as a figure tied to any single tradition, but as a symbol of generosity, compassion, and shared humanity.

Every culture has its own version of this spirit: giving light, sharing abundance, expressing gratitude, and caring for the common good. As we celebrate in our different ways, let’s take a moment to thank those who helped us become who we are. And let’s look for opportunities to lift someone else financially, emotionally, or simply by offering the steady presence that says, “I’m here with you.”

In the end, the greatest gifts we give are often the simplest: kindness, empathy, and the belief that we rise higher when we lift one another. ■

Meet Our Alumni

Major: Family Sciences & Human Development / Minor: International Studies

Joseph Scarpa

About Me

In my role, I lead a team that supports Arizona State University students facing complex challenges throughout their academic careers. This includes crisis response and intervention, addressing unmet needs, supporting survivors of sexual or relationship violence, promoting campus safety, and removing barriers that impact academic success or well-being.

Favorite Part

The most rewarding aspect of my career is the ability to provide direct care to students who are facing, at times, the single most challenging moment in their lives and ensure they build or find the resilience necessary to overcome and succeed.



Class of '19

Advice For Students

It is critical to build relationships as you pursue your career goals. Look to connect with as many people as possible to learn about the work they do and why. The network you create as a student is critical to your long-term success and once you graduate, don't stop. Keep connecting, keep learning, and you will find where you are meant to be.

Social Media Giveaway

In November, the FSHD Department hosted an Instagram Giveaway in an effort to increase followers on our social media. We posted the contest rules, asking everyone to comment on the post and tag two friends who would hopefully become followers. Everyone who commented was entered into a drawing for a cozy fleece blanket and FSHD tote bag. At the end of the contest, we randomly chose one winner. Congratulations to Maggie Drislane, an FSHD senior who is pursuing a career in elementary education. Here she is with her prizes!

Follow us on social media! You can find our handles in the box to the right of this article. ■



Career & Internship Insights

Spring Internship Deadline is 12/15

December 15 is the deadline for FSHD seniors to submit their Internship Experience requests on Handshake. If you're in the Family & Human Services concentration and planning to take FSHD 409 in Spring 2026, this deadline is for you!



If you have any questions about the process, visit a Career Advisor in University Hall 1170 or email CCHLcareer@montclair.edu. ■

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