



# FAMILY SCIENCE & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

## Department Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2026

### Scholarships for FSHD Majors

The Family Science and Human Development Department is proud to once again offer tuition-based awards to undergraduate FSHD majors through our annual Scholarship Program. These scholarships recognize academic achievements and community service, and help make education more accessible. Past awards have ranged from \$150 to \$2,000.

This year, the university is introducing a new, centralized system for managing all scholarships. Applicants must create an account at [Scholarship Universe](#). When FSHD scholarships are posted on the site, we will provide information and deadlines to our students through the Canvas community associated with their concentration.

We anticipate bestowing the following scholarships:



**FSHD Phyllis Harbach Award**— recognizes a full- or part-time undergraduate FSHD major with a concentration in Child & Lifespan Development (formerly School Settings), who has demonstrated financial need and evidence of teaching and service potential, especially in underserved communities. Student must *already be accepted* into Montclair's Teacher Education program.

**Katharine B. Hall Scholarship** — recognizes the professional and academic accomplishments of a full-time undergraduate prospective senior student with a minimum 3.5 GPA. Preference is given to students who are active participants in FSHD department activities or members of a professional organization affiliated with their course of study.

**Doris Ruslink Scholarship**— awarded to a full- or part-time undergraduate FSHD major with a minimum 3.0 GPA. Preference is given to students who provide evidence of financial need.

**Dalila Reid Award**— awarded to a full- or part-time undergraduate FSHD major with a concentration in Family & Human Services and a minimum 3.0 GPA. Preference is given to students who have exhibited significant contributions in the area of community service with families and/or children, and with demonstrated financial need. ■

### Department Chair's Corner

Happy February! Or is it *Febrrrrrruary*? It goes without saying that it's been a remarkably cold winter, so I hope you're bundling up and staying warm as we cross the mark into month 2 of our Spring semester.

For most of the United States, the "holiday season" typically ends when January 1st rolls around, but one holiday I personally look forward to every year falls around the end of January to mid-February. This year, Lunar New Year — a holiday observed by millions of people across East and Southeast Asia and around the world — falls on February 17. Having been born and raised in Malaysia (a country in Southeast Asia), it is the holiday I most look forward to every year, even today.



**Dr. Lyndal Khaw**

While every holiday has its own special kinds of pomp and circumstance, the part that draws me the most to the Lunar New Year is

(continued on page 3)

### DATES TO REMEMBER

#### February 1

Deadline to apply for  
Teacher Education Program

#### February 5

Ice Cream for Breakfast Day  
CCHL Student Success Center  
UNIV 1170  
8-10 am

#### March 1

Priority deadline for  
filing FAFSA

# Social Justice Initiatives: Black History Month

## A Century of Black History Commemorations

2026 marks a century of national of Black History commemorations!

When Dr. Carter G. Woodson – a co-founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) – planned a week-long celebration in 1926, he could hardly have anticipated the imprint he would leave on the world. Expanding from Negro History Week to Black History Month, ASALH observances have become part of the fabric of American culture and, increasingly, the global community.



### Recording History

As part of the African diaspora, Americans of African descent have viewed their role in history as critical to their own development and that of the world. In addition to writing Black histories, antebellum Black scholars in the north started documenting milestones in the global struggles to gain freedom and equality, including the Haitian Revolution, and the end of slavery in Jamaica. They observed American emancipation with Watch Night, Jubilee Day, and Juneteenth celebrations. Eventually they celebrated individuals who fought against

slavery, most notably Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.

In 1925, historian Arthur A. Schomburg motivated Black people to help dig up their own history and present it accurately to the world when he famously wrote, “The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future...for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset.”

*(continued on page 3)*

## USA Today Honors Negro League Baseball Museum

Built in 1932, [Hinchliffe Stadium](#) in Paterson, NJ, holds a special place in sports history as one of only two remaining Negro League baseball stadiums in the country. It played an important role in the desegregation of baseball and the civil rights movement, earning its designation as a National Historic Landmark.

Over the decades, Hinchliffe became home to more than just baseball. It hosted professional football and soccer games, boxing matches, rodeos, midget car races, concerts, comedy shows, and – arguably the most important event – the annual Thanksgiving Day football game between Paterson’s rival Eastside and Central High Schools.

The stadium closed in 1997, launching a decades-long crusade to preserve the site. In 2014, it was incorporated into the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park and, thanks to strong community support, reopened in 2023 as the new home of the New Jersey Jackals baseball team — and welcomed back the Paterson high school rivalry!

Montclair State University played a pivotal role in the stadium’s rebirth by helping to create the Charles J. Muth Museum of Hinchliffe Stadium. Muth, a Montclair alumnus and current Business School Advisory Board member, made a \$5 million donation toward the development of a community-engaged learning museum where everyone can discover the stadium’s rich and varied history. With roots in Paterson and fond mem-

ories of attending events at Hinchliffe, Muth said, “the stadium revitalization project presented a terrific way for me to give back.”

The museum opened its doors in April 2024 and was recently honored with a *USA Today* Reader’s Choice Award as one of the [10 Best New Museums](#) in the



country. Upon learning of the award, university President Jonathan Koppell commented, “As a public-serving institution, we continue to strengthen our bond with Paterson...by creating spaces like this that allow us to give back to the community while also providing experiential learning opportunities for Montclair students. With students actively involved in running the museum, we’re able to educate and build community pride while enhancing our own educational mission.”

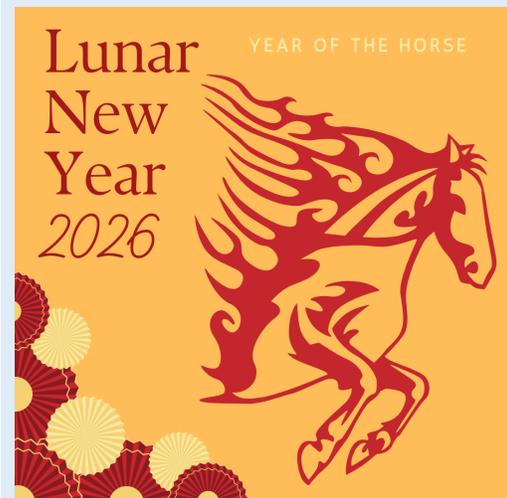
While this newest cultural center focuses on sports history, it is so much more than just a museum. It is a functional piece of history...a treasure trove of baseball’s past...a sports sanctuary...and, according to its benefactor, an “educational hub with a particular focus on young people.” ■

## Department Chair's Corner

(Continued from page 1)

the symbolism of the New Year in itself.

Every New Year marks the end of the old cycle and the beginning of a new cycle that is filled with renewal, gratitude, and hope for the year ahead. But each Year is also repre-



sented by an animal in the Chinese zodiac.

2026 is the Year of the Horse, and if you think of some characteristics of a horse — fast, energetic, vigorous, independent — well, it goes without saying that that's how our year will

shape up to be, right? Of course, I know that won't be true for everyone, but it is the symbolism of the holiday and its traditions that make it all the more fun, and mysterious, at the same time.

As a department committed to understanding families and human development across different cultural spheres, Lunar New Year offers us a meaningful opportunity to honor cultural traditions that emphasize community, intergenerational connection, and collective well-being.

I think fondly of all the years my family and I have had the good fortune to return to Malaysia for the all-important New Year's Eve reunion dinner, where your entire family gathers for a meal. It gives me pride to show my biracial kids a cultural tradition that is lesser known in the United States, but that is equally ingrained in their multicultural psyche. Whether through family gatherings, shared meals, storytelling, or rituals meant to welcome prosperity and good health, the Lunar New Year, like many holidays, reminds us of the importance of fellowship, relationships, and belonging.

I encourage you to take a moment this month to learn more about Lunar New Year traditions, wear red for good luck, attend events on campus or in your community (or head east towards NYC), or engage in good fellowship that deepens our appreciation for cultural diversity within our department and broader community.

Wishing you a joyful, healthy, and prosperous Year of the Horse. Xing Nien Kuai Le! ■

## Our Achievements

**Dr. Soyoung Lee** was selected as a 2026 Korea Foundation Fellow for Field Research. The prestigious fellowship supports scholars affiliated with universities or research institutes outside of Korea, providing opportunities for on-site field research in Korea and access to essential resources. Her project, *"Exploring the Lived Experiences of Motherhood and Womanhood of Multicultural Mothers in Korea,"* examines how identities as women and mothers evolve as participants navigate immigration, marriage, parenting, and aging within specific historical and sociocultural contexts, centering the voices of migrant mothers in Korea.

**Dr. Gerard Costa** was selected to present a session titled *Using AGILE to Tailor the Interaction* at the International DIR Conference hosted by the International Council on Development and Learning. ■

## A Century of Commemorations

(continued from page 2)

Woodson maintained this tradition and, by concentrating on the scientific findings of historians, sought to turn the annual commemorations into a far-reaching, organized, and sustained effort to transform how Black folks were viewed by themselves and the world. Year after year, he built Negro History Week into a cultural institution. He set the themes and provided materials to illustrate Black contributions to the movement of history and modern culture.

Over the past century, ASALH has continued Woodson's work, making Black History Month an even more deeply-rooted American institution. Notable milestones include:

- In February 1976, during the U.S. Bicentennial, President Gerald R. Ford became the first president to issue a message recognizing Black History Month.
- In 1986, Congress designated February as Black History Month.

These achievements have made February the month when Black history finds its way not simply into our schools, but also into cultural heritage sites (museums, libraries, parks, etc.), workplaces, houses of worship, and homes. This year, as we also commemorate the 250th anniversary of United States independence, it is important to tell not only an inclusive history, but an accurate one, particularly when legislation and book bans attempt to excise Black history from schools and public culture. ■

Source: ASALH.org

## Environmental Stressors Work Against Heart Health

by Alicia M. Rivera

During this year's American Heart Month, I find myself returning to the same question that arises repeatedly in my work with communities navigating high levels of stress: *How are we asking people to take care of their hearts when the conditions around them are actively working against them?* As a Family Science and Human Development alumna, current graduate assistant, and Public Health master's student engaged in community mental health and resilience work with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, this question shapes how I think about prevention and social responsibility.

Much of our heart health messaging emphasizes individual responsibility. We are encouraged to eat better, move more, and manage stress. While these recommendations are not wrong, they are incomplete. They often fail to account for the environments in which people live, work, and care for their families. When prevention messaging unintentionally centers blame at the individual level, it obscures the broader conditions that shape cardiovascular risk.

Stress plays a central role in this gap. Chronic stress is a well-established risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Stress elevates blood pressure, increasing inflammation and disrupting metabolic functioning over time. Importantly, this kind of stress is not simply a matter of poor coping. It is often the result of persistent and unavoidable pressures embedded in

daily life. Research consistently shows that individuals exposed to ongoing stressors are at higher risk for heart disease compared to those with greater stability and access to resources (CDC, 2023).



In my own work facilitating mental health and stress-related workshops, I see how these pressures surface. Participants frequently describe living under conditions of heightened vigilance and uncertainty. Conversations often turn to fears about missing

family members, concerns about safety, and the emotional toll of navigating systems that feel unpredictable or hostile. These realities do not just affect mental well-being. They shape whether people feel safe leaving their homes, accessing care, or prioritizing long-term health goals.

When safety feels fragile, survival takes precedence, and health behaviors are reshaped by context.

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*“When safety feels fragile, survival takes precedence”*

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This is where unintentional blame becomes particularly harmful. When prevention attributes cardiovascular risk solely to individual choice, it ignores how constrained those choices may be. Acknowledging context offers a more honest foundation for prevention. Effective heart health messaging must acknowledge agency *and* environment. To reach this goal, *how* we deliver heart health interventions matters as much as what we recommend. Person-centered prevention begins with listening. When people feel heard and their stressors are validated, prevention becomes collaborative, supporting people where they are, not where we assume they should be.

Effective prevention also requires moving toward community-embedded approaches with the knowledge that individuals do not engage with health in isolation. They bring cultural knowledge, social networks, and community ties that can serve as powerful supports and protective factors. When we overlook these assets, we risk missing opportunities to build on existing resilience. This can mean understanding which trusted resources exist and *how to access support already within reach*. Encouraging connection and collective care is central to a successful American Heart Month. ■

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). *Heart disease and mental health*. [https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/about/about-heart-disease-and-mental-health.html?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/mentalhealth](https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/about/about-heart-disease-and-mental-health.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/mentalhealth)

## Dementia Education Improves Lives

Alzheimer's and Dementia Care Education Week (February 14-21) is all about supporting and enhancing the lives of those who are affected by these diseases. The goal is to encourage communities to emphasize the importance of dementia education, and to raise awareness about certification in dementia care practices. Before we can make a positive impact, we need to understand the differences between dementia and Alzheimer's.

### What are Dementia and Alzheimer's?

According to the Alzheimer's Association, dementia is described as a group of symptoms associated with a decline in cognitive skills such as memory and reasoning. Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes cell damage due to complex changes in the brain. As the disease advances, a person may experience disorientation, behavior changes, and eventually lose the ability to speak, swallow, and walk.

There are more than 100 types of dementia, and Alzheimer's disease is the most common, making up 60-80% of dementia cases. Neither dementia nor Alzheimer's is a normal part of aging, and both can be life-changing diagnoses for the individual and their family.



### How to Get Involved

There are many ways to support individuals affected by dementia:

**Volunteer** — Contact a local memory care center or nursing home to plan a visit. A brief conversation, a small craft, or even a fresh coat of nail polish can truly make a difference in a senior's day.

**Raise Awareness & Advocate** — One of the most meaningful ways we can offer support is to listen and help raise awareness about dementia. Explore resources such as [Alzheimers.gov](https://www.alzheimers.gov), the National Institute on Aging, and the Alzheimer's Foundation of America to learn more.

**Write a Note** — February 26th is National Letter to an Elder Day. Look for our event taking place in University Hall. We'll have notecards for you to write a short message to someone living in a nursing home or senior care facility. Not good with words? Pick up some crayons and decorate our bright coloring pages from [Color A Smile](https://www.ColorASmile.com) — perfect for releasing your creativity or decompressing after a long lecture while still making a difference. ■

Source: Alzheimer's Association ([alz.org](https://www.alz.org))



## FIGHT STRESS WITH HEALTHY HABITS



- 1. Slow down.**  
Plan ahead and allow enough time to get the most important things done without having to rush.
- 2. Snooze more.**  
Try to get seven to nine hours of sleep each night. To fight insomnia, add mindfulness and activity.
- 3. Let worry go.**  
The world won't end if a few things fall off of your plate. Give yourself a break and just breathe.
- 4. Laugh it up.**  
Laughter makes us feel good. Don't be afraid to laugh out loud, even when you're alone.
- 5. Get connected.**  
A daily dose of friendship is great medicine. Make time to call friends or family so you can catch up.
- 6. Get organized.**  
Use "to do" lists to help you focus on your most important tasks and take big projects one step at a time.
- 7. Practice giving back.**  
Volunteer your time or spend time helping out a friend. Helping others helps you.
- 8. Be active every day.**  
Exercise can relieve mental and physical tension. Find something you think is fun and stick with it.
- 9. Give up the bad habits.**  
Too much alcohol, tobacco or caffeine can increase blood pressure. Cut back or quit to decrease anxiety.
- 10. Lean into things you can change.**  
Make time to learn a new skill, work toward a goal, or to love and help others.

Learn more at [heart.org/HealthyForGood](https://heart.org/HealthyForGood)

EAT SMART MOVE MORE BE WELL

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## Check out our Gerontology minor!

FSHD offers an 18-credit minor in the study of aging. To learn more, [click here](#).

## Family Science and Human Development

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@ Family Science & Human Development at Montclair State University



# From Trauma to Healing: Healing-Centered Approaches to Trauma in Families and Communities

This 10-week fully online and interactive course offers a comprehensive exploration of healing-centered approaches to addressing trauma. Moving beyond traditional trauma-informed care, the curriculum emphasizes a practice-shift towards recognizing and nurturing the inherent strength and resilience of individuals, families, and communities affected by trauma

### Course Term & Fee

February 23 – May 3, 2026 (10 Weeks)  
\$550

### Course Highlights:

- Gain a deep understanding of Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACEs) science; examine how early experiences shape brain development, and explore long-term outcomes of trauma across generations
- Learn about pioneering research on neurobiological responses to trauma with practical applications tailored for family and community contexts
- Be guided by a trauma-certified, licensed mental health professional and faculty in the department of Family Science & Human Development
- Develop culturally responsive skills to support healing within family systems and community structures
- Earn CEUs and a micro-credential certificate from the Department of Children and Families' Office of Resilience and Montclair State University



[CLICK HERE](#)

[TO REGISTER](#)

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