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FRED ROGERS CENTER NAMES TWO FELLOWS IN MEDIA AND CHILD HEALTH



Julie Polvinen and Mary Gillis

LATROBE, PA - The Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College has named two Fred Rogers Fellows in Media and Child Health, according to an announcement by Maxwell King, executive director of the Center.

Mary Gillis, a graduate student at Teachers College Columbia University, and Julie Polvinen, field coordinator for Video Intervention/Prevention Assessment (VIA), a research program of The Center on Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital Boston, will collaborate on production of a media-based application in child health as part of an expansion of the Fred Rogers Center Fellows program design to encourage creative young talent to advance in their field and in their work.

"To date, the Fred Rogers Center Fellows program has supported senior scholars engaged in academic research, all of which has proven to be productive and valuable," explained Mr. King. "That will continue but now it is time to initiate additional Fellowships for those who have an interest in and an aptitude for production of children's media to spend time working in association with the Center on fresh ideas in the same way that Fred began in the 1950s."

"We should remember that Fred was an entrepreneur, a creator and something of a geek back then," Mr. King continued. "He had the means in New York, Toronto and Pittsburgh to put his genius to work unconstrained by commercial pressure. Because of that, his talent could really flourish. We are in a position to do the same for another generation of idealistic, motivated and creative young talents who may be able to use their time at the Center to advance a field that has only barely begun to touch the potential of technology to educate."

Both Ms. Gillis and Ms. Polvinen recall watching *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and are eager to apply his approach to their new research.

"Fred Rogers was very safe, very methodical in his delivery," Ms. Gillis commented. "He was always there and when he said he would be back he was. He had genuine warmth as a person that extended outside of television."

"I grew up with Fred Rogers and hope to instill his values into the work I do for the Center. This is an opportunity to give something back to kids in a way that will communicate Fred's values," Ms. Polvinen added. "This research will join different ideas we each have for integrating new forms of media to improve health by encouraging children to play in different ways."

"We are trying to use media to understand and hopefully improve the experience of childhood," Ms. Polvinen continued. "Research has shown that there is a distinct relationship between the health of our children and their media use. This program will focus on healthy lifestyles and media use as well as bridging the divide between children, showing how everyone likes to play, sing, laugh and learn regardless of background."

Ms. Gillis said that she has always loved to play outdoors. In high school, she was involved in track and field events and ranked first in the nation in the 2000 meter steeplechase. "I was a real athlete but I also had a creative side and knew that I liked media but didn't know how to connect them," she said. She graduated from Lafayette College where she earned a bachelor of arts degree in economics and business. She will complete a double masters of science degree in nutrition and applied physiology in spring 2010 and will continue for a doctorate in applied physiology at Teachers College Columbia University.

As founder and president of the innovative Anything But the Gym, she oversees a New York City based fitness program that encourages play as a form of exercise for both children and adults. She is the creator of programs such as "The Creative Kitchen - Outdoors" and "Walk and Talk" which encourages families to connect in the kitchen and develop healthy eating habits.

Ms. Polvinen is a graduate of Bridgewater State College where she earned a bachelor of arts in graphic design and photography. She has furthered her education through Children's Hospital Boston, The Harvard Extension School, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Boston Film and Video Foundation and Massachusetts College of Art. She has taught expressive video production courses for over ten years and child empowerment through media at Children's Hospital Boston for the past six years. At VIA, she gives children with illness the tools to tell their stories through video. "We believe the patients are the experts on their disease and can teach doctors what it is like to live with a chronic condition. I directly facilitate each participant by showing them how to use a video camera and how to document their everyday lives. Advances in technology have

allowed younger and younger children to create broadcast quality video and what they have to show and tell all of us is both unexpected and enlightening.”

The specific application of their research will be formulated during the next few months.

For Information:

Don Orlando, *Director, Public Relations*

Saint Vincent College, 300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

Phone 724 805-2010, FAX 724 805-2019, pr@stvincent.edu

[<mailto:pr@stvincent.edu>](mailto:pr@stvincent.edu), www.stvincent.edu [<http://www.stvincent.edu>](http://www.stvincent.edu)

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