

HDFS NEWS

Family, Nutrition & Exercise Sciences (FNES) Department
Human Development & Family Science Newsletter - 2022



Dear Human Development and Family Science Students and Alumni,

We hope you and your families have been doing well. We also hope that you were able to continue to thrive and grow during this long COVID pandemic and that the knowledge and skills you gained in our Human Development and Family Science courses helped you in this process.

We share with you the 2022 HDFS Newsletter, which includes program updates and information on our students' and alumni's achievements!

Thank you very much for keeping in touch with us, and please continue to do so!

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Human Development & Family Science Program News

Last year, we worked on transforming the specialization in Human Development and Family Science (HDFS) into a major on its own, a change that is in line with programs around the country.

Students who join the HDFS Program starting with Fall 2022 will graduate with a degree in human development and family science. We are very delighted about this!

Many Thanks to Our FNES Department Leadership, Dr. Ashima Kant, for All Her Support!



Dr. Ashima Kant

Dr. Ashima Kant is professor and chair of the Family, Nutrition and Exercise Science Department.

Dr. Kant received a PhD in nutrition from the University of Maryland, College Park. She completed a post-doctoral fellowship in nutrition at the Johns Hopkins University and a cancer prevention fellowship at the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health (NIH). The focus of Dr. Kant's research is to understand the role of diet in health promotion with funding from the NIH and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Faculty Updates



Dr. Elizabeth Riina

Dr. Elizabeth Riina continues to study the social and cultural contexts for families and children. She was recently invited to the University of Virginia Community Psychology Program Speaker Series, where she discussed her work on neighborhood resources for parents and adolescents. In other recent research, she is investigating the neighborhood and family correlates of parenting stress and family meal time as well as youth dietary habits.

Dr. Riina published several studies in 2021, focusing on neighborhoods, parenting, and adolescent adjustment. A study published in the *Journal of Family Psychology* found that living in a tight-knit and trusting neighborhood protected youth in violent homes from developing behavioral and mental health problems. A study published in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies* examined the role of parenting for youth future aspirations, finding that mothers' and fathers' involvement and support were especially important for future goals among youth in high poverty neighborhoods.

Dr. Mihaela Robila had a 2021–2022 Science and Technology Policy (STP) Fellowship (www.aaas.org/programs/science-technology-policy-fellowships) from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) (www.aaas.org). As an AAAS STP Fellow, Dr. Robila was placed in the Division of Social and Economic Sciences (www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=SES) in the Directorate for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation. During the fellowship, she worked on different projects and wrote several reports.

In November 2021, Dr. Robila organized a symposium on “Impact of Science and Technology on Parenting Behaviors and Services from an International Perspective” at the 2021 Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations (www.ncfr.org) and presented a paper on *Technology and Automation in Parenting and Social Services Globally* that she co-authored. Robila has also been editing the *QC Global Newsletter*. (https://www.qc.cuny.edu/academics/ge/wp-content/uploads/sites/39/2022/05/QCGlobal_Newsletter_2022.pdf).

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Student News

HDFS Student Club

Dr. Riina is the faculty adviser for the HDFS Student Club. The club resumed meetings in Spring 2022. We held a student get-together on campus and Joanna Agnello, a licensed mental health counselor, was invited to speak about her career path and experiences. We strongly encourage HDFS alumni to come visit and share information about their post-graduate pathways with current students. If you are interested in being a guest speaker, please contact Dr. Riina at eriina@qc.cuny.edu.

Congratulations to our 2022 Student Awardees!

Nelsy Collado Perez was awarded the 2022 **FNES Award** for high scholarship and future promise in Human Development and Family Science.

Tahira Ahad was awarded the 2022 **Estelle Rosenzweig Scholarship** for high academic achievement in Human Development and Family Science Program and community engagement.

Students' Professional Development

Below are examples of the activities our students are involved in.

Katelin Ildefonso: "For my fieldwork, I'm working with the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council. I am an afterschool group leader. I work with second graders, where I help with homework and engage in activities with the children."

Rachel Medina: "I just finished my Bachelor of Arts degree in family and consumer sciences with a specialization in human development and family science. I did my fieldwork in an after-school program at a middle school. I enjoyed it a lot and it taught me patience, organization, and

perseverance. Working with kids/teens is not easy but so important. After graduating, I am excited to continue my studies at Queens College in the School Counseling program this fall. I know going straight into school after graduating is the best thing for me, and I am so excited to continue this journey and learn more and get prepared for what I want to do in my career."

Natalie Villacis: "My new job title is case manager/intake specialist for Safe Horizon. My job entails taking calls from individuals in domestic violence situations and who are seeking resources. My position would be to provide the resources that best fit each case. I will not only be taking calls but building bonds with each client to ensure their safety which may include accompanying them to court for emotional support."

Kyoungee Youn is conducting her fieldwork "by volunteering as a director of children's ministry in my church." She plans to pursue a master's degree in family therapy.

Alumni News



Kiana Cheng

Kiana Cheng (2021) just started her second semester of Graduate school at Queens College in the School Counseling Program and will be graduating with a master's

degree next spring. Currently, all of her classes are still online, but they will most likely be in-person in the fall. Additionally, she started her fieldwork this semester at Francis Lewis High School and was nervous at first, but once she got there on the first day, everything went smoothly. She finds it interesting because there is always something different to do. The counselors there are really nice, and she gets along with all the other interns.



Jamie Esposito

Jamie Esposito (2020). "After graduating in May of 2020, I started taking a course through the Autism Partnership Foundation to become an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Behavior Technician. After finishing that course, I started working as an ABA Behavior Technician for two companies. I am working for Gersh Academy in West Hills, NY as an Applied Behavior Analysis Paraprofessional. There I am providing ABA services to children on the autism spectrum who are working on building language and communication skills because they are semi-verbal. I am also working with them to improve their maladaptive and aggressive behaviors. I also work for Proud Moments ABA, providing similar services to high-function children on the autism spectrum in a home setting, working on communication, social, and functional skills as they have minor problems in all three categories."

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Gabrielle Golino

Gabrielle Golino (2016) “After graduating in 2016, I went on to take a job in the medical field. Fast forward five and a half years later, and I’m in my second semester of Graduate School at Mercy College. I’m working towards my degree to become a Mental Health Counselor and eventually obtain my licensure. It’s never too late to achieve your dreams.”



Yasmin Jalil

Yasmin Jalil (2019) “I am currently in the midst of graduating from the Mental Health Counseling program here at Queens College. I can’t believe I am so close to finishing graduate school when it feels like just last year I graduated from my undergraduate academic career. I am currently working as the Program Coordinator and Academic Advisor in Project ExCEL

at Queens College. Project ExCEL is a program which provides students of color with mentoring services and personalized support to contribute to academic and professional success in college. I am also interning at a private mental health clinic called Lester Psychotherapy as a Mental Health Counselor. I provide individual counseling via telehealth for all demographics with specificity in the presenting problems of depression and anxiety. I love being able to help others and provide resources to the community!”



Jadae Johnson

Jadae Johnson (2017) “I did my masters at New York University in Drama Therapy where I explored the use of roles, play, and projective technique as therapeutic interventions to work with all populations. I am currently working at Bellevue on one of their Child and Adolescent inpatient psychiatric units as a creative arts therapist. The children I see range between 12–17 years old and typically are admitted for concerns of safety to themselves and/or others and have at least one mental health diagnosis according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). The children I work with enjoy taking creative arts therapy because it is fluid and meets them where they are.

This allows for healthy self-expression, healthy coping skills, healthy interpersonal skills, social skill interactions, and so much more.”



Devika Loknauth

Devika Loknauth (2018) After earning her BA at Queens College in human development and family studies, Devika took a year off and decided to become an educator, specifically a special needs educator. In 2019, she was accepted into Hunter College’s Dual Certification Education Program, General Education and Special Education Grades 1-6.

“This past January, I completed my masters! The classes I took in my undergrad courses definitely aligned with a lot of the instruction I was taught in my master’s program. I’m currently working at an elementary school in the Upper West Side in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) first-grade classroom!”

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Cadesha McNish

Cadesha McNish (2017) “I am currently working as a nurse (LPN) in the Queen of Peace Residence nursing home and starting the process of enrolling into a RN program. I realized working in a field where I get to help people every day is something that I find fulfilling and worthwhile. Ultimately, I plan to work in either labor and delivery and or pediatrics, as those are my passion. Long term, I want to start a non-for-profit for mothers that need necessities for their child or children.”



Denell Nobadeh

Denell Nobadeh (2019) is pursuing a Master of Science in Health Informatics at Hofstra University and will graduate in Fall 2022. While she was in HDFS, she completed her fieldwork at the Aids Center of Queens County.

Uma Ramkissoon (2017) “After graduating from Queens College’s HDFS program in 2017, I knew I wanted to work with children. My experience being a substitute teacher during my last year of doing fieldwork made me interested in working with children on the spectrum. Once I completed my undergrad, I was able to immediately secure a full-time position providing ABA services to three- to five-year-old children in an early intervention center. I continued working in early intervention for a few years and really enjoyed working in the classroom. During this time, I learned so much and received great opportunities for professional development. Most recently, I had an opportunity to meet and collaborate with professionals from Rutgers University Autism Center. I am currently pursuing my master’s degree in education in a dual degree program for general education and special education for grades 1–6 at Touro College-Graduate School of Education. I’ve recently completed the last of four seminars required for NYS licensing and start student teaching in the fall. I am so excited for this new journey!”



Uma Ramkissoon



Jaime Rodrigues

Jaime Rodrigues (2016) “Upon obtaining my bachelor’s degree from Queens College, I began working as a foster care case planner for an agency located in Brooklyn, NY. After six months of working in this position, I received a promotion and became program facilitator for the Child Success NYC program. During this time, I decided to return to college and pursue a master’s degree in psychology. Once I graduated from college, I began working as a supervisor for the Family Support Services program at the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services. I have worked in my current position for almost two years. Furthermore, I joined JCCA (formerly known as Jewish Child Care Association) as a service provider where I have been able to work one on one with children, teenagers, and their families.”

Ashante Salley (2020) will be completing a Master of Arts in teaching: Birth through second grade at Queens College in Fall 2022.

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Alexa Wilner (former Lean) (2014) is in her eighth year of teaching fourth grade at a private school in the Bronx. She earned a master's degree in education and does continuing education in responsive classroom as well as math and literacy programs.



Alexa Wilner

Alumni Spotlight



Keyana Barga

Keyana Baerga (2020) "I am in my last semester at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California, pursuing a master's in public administration specializing in evaluation and analytics."

Last semester, I joined the Mixed-Methods Evaluation, Training and Analysis (META) Lab research hub where members provide support and advice to students on information systems such as Excel or R-Studio. The META- Lab has also given me the opportunity to create a website with other colleagues focused on instructional videos for Microsoft Excel. I am also an intern working on my practicum for the Blue Zones Project. In a few weeks, I will be conducting focus groups and distributing surveys in Spanish-speaking communities nearby in hopes of developing a farmer's market tailored to the community's needs. As of now, I am leaning towards pursuing a career in data science and data analytics in the field of public health."

Congratulations to All our 2022 Graduates!!!

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

— Maya Angelou



