

2010-2011 Award Winners- Project Abstracts

Understanding and Utilizing Conflict Management Systems and Strategies in the Workplace: Creating a Community-Centric Paradigm

Principal Investigator Name: Neil Katz, Ph.D.

This proposal addresses quality of life in the workplace of Broward County, Florida. In today's business environment, workplace conflict is one of the most significant issues organizations face in regards to cost, efficiency, effectiveness, and employee retention. Research in the conflict management discipline predicts that conflict in the workplace is on the rise, but leaders and managers are not fully aware of the structures and processes available to effectively manage conflict. The proposed research study will measure workplace leaders' and managers' awareness, perception, and usage of conflict management systems and strategies in the Broward County business community. The research team and community partners will work with organizations to identify current practices relating to conflict management, raise awareness of the costs of workplace conflict, and partner with them for workforce training to enhance improvement, and implementation of these systems and strategies.

Discovering the Lived Experience of Licensed Medical Foster Parents of Children with Special Medical Needs

Principal Investigator: Barbara Packer-Muti, Ed.D.

Licensed medical foster caregivers provide home-based care that allows a foster child with a chronic medical condition to grow and develop within a family setting outside of his or her own home. Medical foster parents also receive special training to provide personal care services for these children. Despite their critical role, little information is available about the ways in which these caregivers work to improve the quality of life for these medically-challenged children. To address this gap in understanding and to provide new insights to policy makers, administrators, practitioners, and other stakeholders in the foster care system, the investigators will explore the experiences of licensed medical foster caregivers in Broward County through phenomenological inquiry. Utilizing a semi-structured interview approach, the researchers will ask licensed medical caregivers who provide foster homes to children with special medical needs about their experiences parenting these children in the dependency court system. Guided by Pollio, Henley, and Thompson's (2007) existential phenomenology procedures the investigators will analyze the verbatim transcripts of the recorded interviews. Through this data analysis process, the researchers will capture themes that will be useful to inform training, practice, and policy and to improve the quality of life for foster children with specialized medical needs and for their licensed medical caregivers. The results will be disseminated to local agencies with professionals who interact with these children as well as to state and national organizations.

Making the Museum of Discovery and Science Accessible to All

Principal Investigator: Susan Kabot, EdD, CCC-SLP

This Quality of Life grant proposal will address the accessibility of the Museum of Discovery and Science in Fort Lauderdale to children with autism spectrum disorders, as well as other special needs. At the current time, the museum has not implemented or provided any assistive technology and visual supports to allow children with communication, behavioral, and physical challenges to fully benefit from the programs and activities provided there. A collaboration between the museum and several NSU departments, including the Mailman Segal Institute, Fischler's Speech, Language, and Communication Disorders, and the UM-NSU Center for Autism and Related Disabilities will develop a pilot program to increase the ability of individuals with special needs to access and benefit from museum activities. The Florida EcoScapes exhibit will be targeted and accommodations made for the benefit of accessibility. A pretest posttest control group design will be used to measure the difference between two groups of 10 individuals with autism. One group will be provided with visual supports and activities using visual information to accompany their second visit to the Florida EcoScapes exhibit, while the other will not. During each of their two visits, all participants will have data collected on their level and type of engagement, communication, and behavior. Parents will be given a questionnaire measuring their satisfaction with the day's visit to the Florida EcoScapes exhibit and overall museum experience.

Improving the Quality of Life for Senior Citizens with Limited Incomes

Principal Investigator: Al P. Mizell, Ed.D.

From the literature, we know that a majority of our older citizens with limited incomes have many needs. One that we can address is the fact that many feel a lack of necessity to learn about new technologies (Pew Internet and American Life 2004, 2007). They also tend to be rather isolated from the rest of the world. We believe that by enhancing their skills in the use of new technologies and providing a basis of support, seniors will have an increased desire to continue using computers and we will see an improvement in their psychosocial and cognitive capabilities.

The project will involve an evaluation of the SeniorComp program that is designed to enhance the quality of life of a group of senior citizens. The program evaluation will consist of the administration of a set of questionnaires and surveys to a group of previous SeniorComp limited-income senior citizens during their participation in a three-month technology course. The course will provide repetition of skills acquired in earlier courses and it will introduce them to advanced experiences including digital photography. To determine the effectiveness of the program, data will be collected on the participants to determine their level of cognition, memory, depression, computer expertise, and self-confidence in their own abilities at the start of the

course. The surveys and questionnaires will be administered at the start of the project and re-administered every four weeks as the group progress through the course.

As we seek major funding to expand the SeniorComp project, we seek to formally determine the value of the SeniorComp project by measuring the impact that participation and repetition has on the lives of these seniors. Following five years of successful operation, over 100 low-income senior citizens in South Florida have already been introduced to the Information age and helped over the threshold of the digital divide. We believe that credible research will serve as leverage to enhance our potential success in obtaining significant funding to expand the project. Once funded to expand the project, we will be able to reach many more senior citizens.