

Growing Brains, Growing Communities: University of Bridgeport Opens its Doors for All Our Kin's 11th Annual Family Child Care Conference

Posted on [May 27, 2016](#) by [christinanelson1](#)

“High quality early childhood programs – whether they are in a center or in somebody’s living room – have huge, important, powerful impacts on the lives of children. And those impacts can last a lifetime.”

These words, spoken by Dr. Walter Gilliam, were a perfect way to begin All Our Kin’s 11th Annual Family Child Care Conference, “Growing Brains, Growing Communities.” The conference, held on May 14 at the University of Bridgeport, brought together over 200 family child care providers from across the state for a day of growth and learning about child development.



Dr. Gilliam, the Director of the Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy and Associate Professor of Child Psychiatry and Psychology at Yale University’s Child Study Center, kicked the morning off with a [keynote address](#) about children’s brain development and the science of early learning, giving providers concrete examples of how they can incorporate neurological research findings into their programs. He ended his address by encouraging providers to invite legislators and local elected officials to their programs so that they can see what goes on in a family child care, emphasizing that small advocacy efforts like this can truly change minds and make a difference in politics.

After Dr. Gilliam’s address, providers split up to attend workshops on a variety of themes, from sign language to emotional literacy to business marketing.

One workshop, “Developing and Supporting an Emergent Curriculum for Young Children,” led by Winnie Naclerio, introduced providers to the idea of an “emergent curriculum,” a way of planning curricula based on children’s interests and passion at a point in time. “Every little thing can be a learning experience for children,” reflected one provider afterwards. “You can start a conversation about anything and everything.” Providers were particularly enthusiastic about the workshop’s emphasis on using recycled objects and objects from nature to create program materials: “I learned how to be creative without spending a lot of money,” said one provider. “We don’t need to buy expensive materials to teach basic science concepts.” Naclerio’s suggestions were innovative and practical for family child care providers, who may not have extensive materials budgets for their programs.



Another workshop, “Girls in Books,” was taught by Sandy Malmquist from the CT Children’s Museum, a longtime partner of All Our Kin. Sandy explored the role of girls in books for young children. Providers were enthralled: “What look like harmless pictures actually carry important messages that reinforce stereotypes that are harmful for all children.” Another provider said, “I learned to teach kids about gender roles in storytelling, and to change stories so that women can play a greater role. We can use stories to support gender equality and women’s empowerment.”



Presenters were inspired by providers’ engagement and impressed by their unflagging enthusiasm and energy. The workshops allowed providers to learn from the instructors and also to share their own wisdom in peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

The day ended with a celebration including music and raffle prizes. Alike Hope, a local musician and performance artist, helped participants write their own songs about children and their experiences as family child care providers. “The music really brought providers together,” said Kim Braun, All Our Kin’s conference coordinator. “It was a nice way to build a sense of community. By the end of the day, there was this real sense of unity around the common goal of enriching children’s lives.”



We are so grateful to the University of Bridgeport for opening its doors to All Our Kin and our provider network. Dr. Tarek **Sobh**, the Dean of University of Bridgeport's School of Engineering, was generous enough to donate the space and meals for all conference participants. He organized an entire team of professors, graduate students, and university staff to help out as volunteers. "The conference couldn't have happened without them. They were outstanding," said Kim Braun. "And the space couldn't have been more beautiful. The campus was in bloom, the rooms were elegant, and the weather was perfect." Many thanks to Dr. **Sobh** and the whole team from the University of Bridgeport for their support!



Advertisements

Citizens Bank

She got into her top choice.
**Apply once,
it's good 'til she graduates.***

Multi-Year Approval, only from Citizens Bank

Apply Now

*Terms and Conditions Apply

**Switch and
save 20%***
on average

Now that's *extraordinary*.

GET A QUOTE NOW

NJM Auto Insurance

Share this:

- Email
- Facebook 21
- Twitter
- G+ Google
- Reddit
- Print

★ Like 
One blogger likes this.

Related



Fairfield County Giving Day: A day to celebrate All Our Kin's impact on Bridgeport and Norwalk In "economic development"



Dreams, Discovery and Development at All Our Kin's 10th Annual Family Child Care Conference In "family child care"



Supporters, partners, and providers gather to celebrate All Our Kin's new Bridgeport office In "family child care"

This entry was posted in [Brain Development](#), [family child care](#), [Family child care providers](#), [professional development](#) and tagged [advocacy](#), [All Our Kin Family Child Care Conference](#), [brain development](#), [gender](#), [Sandra Malmquist](#), [University of Bridgeport](#), [Walter Gilliam](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

All Our Words

Blog at WordPress.com.