

## CCF-Affiliated Research Spotlight



Dr. Christine Dollaghan

By the time she had entered high school, Dr. Christine Dollaghan was fascinated by human language and was determined to study it further. She went on to study linguistics at Wesleyan University in Middleton, Conn., however, a book on aphasia focused her studies on a field that examines how and why language breaks down for a million people in the U.S. Dollaghan earned an MA in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Montana and went

on to earn a PhD in Communicative Disorders at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Over the course of her studies, Dollaghan became more interested in studying language in children, such as how they acquire language and the various ways the process can go awry. "I wanted to know how their learning mechanisms differ, how their learning rates differ, how we can identify them at a young age, and how we can ameliorate the difficulties they're having," said Dollaghan. After obtaining her PhD, Dollaghan worked at a rehabilitation hospital in western Canada before joining the faculty at the University of Pittsburgh. She directed the Speech and Hearing Clinic there for several years and then began to focus more on her research. Among other projects she was an investigator on NIH-funded studies of ear infections and child development, memory and word learning in children with specific language impairment, and speech and language skills in children recovering from severe traumatic brain injury. Dollaghan joined the UT Dallas School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences (BBS) in 2006. Since then, she has published *The Handbook of Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders*. She regularly teaches masters-level courses on child language disorders and the relationship of child language disorders to learning disabilities and dyslexia. She also teaches occasional seminars on various topics including the concept of what words are and how they are acquired — or lexical development — and on research principles and evidence-based practice. Dollaghan, who is married to Dr. Tom Campbell, director of the Callier Center for Communication Disorders, continues to focus her research and teaching on child language development and disorders. Dollaghan is an ASHA (American Speech and Hearing Association) Fellow and a 2012 recipient of the Honors of the ASHA.

## 2016 Spring Lecture Series

### Empowering Parents and Children Together

February 12th

March 4th

April 1st

April 22nd

Talks will be held Friday mornings  
9:30 to 10:30 am, reception following

**Location:** UT Dallas Main Campus  
Jindal School of Management, Room 1.118\*  
\*Green Hall, 4.428 on April 1st only

Visit [ccf.utdallas.edu/programs-resources](http://ccf.utdallas.edu/programs-resources)  
for more information

## Juega Conmigo Changes to Enrollment Model



Beginning in late August 2015, our *Juega Conmigo* (Play With Me) playful-learning program for children ages 0-3 together with their parents changed from its drop-in format to a 12-week enrollment model. Classes of 12-18 parents and their children in each of our 5 program sites have committed to meet weekly over the Fall in 75-minute sessions from September through the first week in December. A similar 12-week program series with newly enrolled parents and their children will take place at the sites starting in January 2016 and again in late spring into summer. In addition to optimizing a fuller impact of the program on more participants, the new enrollment model will allow for the collection of program evaluation data—under a better pre-post design—and analysis that will yield stronger conclusions regarding program effectiveness to encourage the most successful child and family outcomes.

# Building the Brain with Vroom



CCF at Vroom launch event in Vickery Meadow

In early Fall, CCF joined with the Commit! Partnership, a collaborative helping to drive student achievement in Dallas County from cradle to career, to launch Vroom™ in Dallas. Vroom™ is a set of free tools and activities developed to help families turn everyday moments into brain building moments for their young children. CCF was selected as one of 20 pilot partners in Dallas to implement Vroom™ in this major effort to help empower parents to support their children's development and promote school readiness skills. The Center also provided training on the science behind Vroom™ to the pilot partners and assisted with the development of the pre and post surveys now being collected by pilot program participants. Vroom™ materials are very compatible with and complementary to *Juega Conmigo's* curriculum and goals, and this added tool will contribute to our important goal to extend the lessons and experiences of *Juega Conmigo* parent and child classes into their home environments, empowering parents with greater parenting skills and confidence and lending further support for their children's optimal development.



## Sebastian's Story

Sebastian's family was looking for answers. They had been struggling to understand Sebastian's behavior and language difficulties. At age 2.5, Sebastian was having trouble sustaining attention for more than a few minutes, and was easily frustrated, in addition to using very few words. Sebastian's mother, Anita, was concerned and couldn't understand what was happening to her sweet boy. After receiving a speech evaluation, the private agency that made the assessment concluded that Sebastian's language skills were not delayed enough to qualify for services. Anita felt lost and didn't know what else to do to help her son. Then, Sebastian was referred to the Infant Development Program (IDP) at the Center for Children and Families by a UTD student who assists with our program. When Anita learned that IDP offers developmental screenings and helps families get connected to services, she made an appointment. At the screening, Anita learned that Sebastian had a significant delay in his communication skills. He had very limited vocabulary and had difficulty answering simple questions. When Anita shared her concerns about Sebastian's behavior, IDP's bilingual developmental specialist told her that children who do not have the words to express themselves or have difficulties understanding what others say often get frustrated, seem distracted and can have behavioral difficulties. In many cases, when the child overcomes their communication challenges, these behaviors tend to diminish or disappear. When Anita heard this, she felt relief. She didn't have a "bad child," but he needed the words to be better understood! In a follow up to the screening, Anita remarked, "The screeners we met with really took the time to interact with Sebastian and hear my concerns. They explained what they were doing and observing and really seemed to care about my child." Anita told her screener about her past experience being turned down for speech services for Sebastian. She was told that IDP also offers follow up services to help guide and coach parents in understanding and navigating services for their children. In this way, IDP functions as an advocate for the child and family. Sebastian was referred to Early Intervention Services (ECI), a statewide program for families with children, birth to three, who have disabilities and developmental delays. He qualified for speech therapy and received services until he turned 3. Now, Sebastian is attending a special education program through the school system and his behavior has improved significantly. Anita recently shared, "I am so thankful I found the Infant Development Program. It made a big difference for my child and my entire family! I hope more families can benefit from a program like it. Thank you to all the people who work to make this program possible."



CCF staff conduct a developmental screening

# 2015 Annual Fall Forum Recap

Over 180 people from 75 different organizations gathered to hear Dr. P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale from Northwestern University address components of two-generation programs at CCF's 6th annual Fall Forum on September 25th. The Forum's theme, "Empowering Children and Parents Together"



*Juega Conmigo* (Play With Me) program parents Maribel Cantu and Fausta Guerra spoke about their challenges and goals as parents

addressed national and local efforts to lead families on a path out of poverty. "Being a parent," Chase-Lansdale noted during her keynote address, "is not a barrier but an asset and a resource, and we want to harness parents' motivation and redirect it to help parents and

children succeed together." A parent reflection, panel discussion and table discussions led by invited community leaders followed. Participants found the information shared, networking opportunities, and hearing the parents' perspectives to be the highlights of the Forum. Timberlawn Psychiatric Research Foundation and United Way of Metropolitan Dallas were major supporters of the event.



Forum wrap-up leader Suzanne Smith (Social Impact Architects), keynote speaker P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale (Northwestern), with panel moderator Susan Hoff (United Way), panelists Fernando Figueroa (DCCCD), Jerry Hawkins (Zero to Five Funders Collaborative), Tori Mannes (ChildCareGroup), and Center director Margaret T. Owen



Tania Vuelvas-Barreto  
Junior, Speech-Language Pathology Major  
CCF Volunteer since April 2015  
Bilingual in English and Spanish  
Commutes daily from Ft. Worth

## Volunteer Spotlight - Tania Vuelvas-Barreto

**Q: What do you like best about volunteering with *Juega Conmigo*?** I like that it provides students with the opportunity to work with a variety of different people with different personalities and parenting styles. When students have opportunities like those provided by *Juega Conmigo*, it helps us expand our knowledge and widen our experiences interacting with parents and children.

**Q: How do you think you've impacted program participants?** Every mom wants to know how their child is doing and about how well they are developing. They're very eager to see their child's next developmental milestone achieved. I've tried to meet

parents where they are and support them in supporting their child's development. I've tried to encourage parents to think of their children as individuals and support their learning at their own pace.

**Q: What are your future plans?** As a speech pathology major, I know that I will one day work with children and their families and this program gives me that experience, which I never had before. I honestly never saw myself working with children but the more I volunteer with *Juega Conmigo*, the more I love working with these amazing little humans who are just full of joy.



UT Dallas students at *Juega Conmigo* program



## From the Director

Our 6th Annual Fall Forum was a great success filling every seat. I was so pleased we were able to draw together so many to learn more about and discuss two-generation education programs

empowering parents and children to succeed together. The forum shared promising whole-family strategies that align high-quality and intensive human capital investments for young children and their parents. Important connections were made among attendees and I look forward to hearing about its impact. We are thankful to Timberlawn Psychiatric Research Foundation and United Way of Metropolitan Dallas for their support of the event. The Center's existence at UT Dallas and its steady growth in outreach and impact would not have been possible without Dean Bert Moore of the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences. His steadfast vision and belief in the myriad ways we can serve children and families and the support he provided the Center was a foundation for all that we do. I want to express our deep, deep sorrow over the loss of Dean Moore. His inspiring spirit stays among us.

- Margaret T. Owen, Ph.D., Robinson Family Professor, Director, Center for Children and Families

## Advisory Council Members 2015-2016

- |                 |                        |
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The Center for Children and Families was established in 2008 with a generous grant from the Meadows Foundation. Our heartfelt thanks are extended to the individuals, foundations and organizations that have given and aided us in our vision.

## How to Give

As we work to promote optimal family and child development, our community outreach programs and our child and family research need your support.



To learn more about giving to the Center for Children and Families or how to designate your gift, contact Pagett Gosslee, CFRE at [pgosslee@utdallas.edu](mailto:pgosslee@utdallas.edu) or 972-883-2837.

We are an important resource for children and families with your support.

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