



CASCW NEWS

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Center for Advanced Studies
in Child Welfare
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CASCW NEWS

Editor-in-Chief: Esther Wattenberg
Editing and Design: Renee Albert

A SPECIAL INSERT: Q & A with Oliver Williams Director, Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

Community-based Collaborative for Cultural Competence:

by Amy Phillips, MSSW, Moorhead State University**

Moorhead is a city of 32,000 located in Clay County, Minnesota across the Red River from Fargo, North Dakota. While slightly over 94% of Moorhead's citizens are white non-Latino, there are a sizeable number of Latino residents in both Moorhead City and greater Clay County.

In the winter and spring of 2000, a Clay County child protection case involving a Latino family received media coverage accompanied by much controversy and concern, particularly within the Latino community. In response to this case, the Department of Social Work at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), representatives from Clay County Social Services and members of the Moorhead Latino community came together to plan and implement a cultural competence training for social service personnel and an evening information forum for Latino families. The success of this two-day April, 2000 event, which a handful of police officers also attended, motivated Clay County Social Services and the Moorhead Police Department to work with the Latino community and MSUM Social Work to develop a more intensive, five-day, mandatory training for all Moorhead Police and Clay County Social Service personnel.

As with the April event, the second training this past January received financial support from Title IV-E funds through CASCW, University of Minnesota School of Social Work. This training was conducted by Dr. Victor Rodriguez, professor of Chicano and Latino Studies at California State University Long Beach, and was a collaborative event conceptualized and led by members of the Latino community. The January sessions provided more in-depth history of Latinos in the U.S. and was designed for participants to further understand the impact of individual and institutional racism on the provision of human services.

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****State Universities have received a grant from CASCW to develop curriculum offerings in Child Welfare.**

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Community Based Collaborative - con't from page 1

This community based collaborative has established an indispensable network of state university, county and Latino community representatives to address issues of concern in assuring the well-being of families and children.

For a Q & A on the development of this collaborative, please contact CASCW at (612) 624-4231.

Amy Phillips is an Assistant Professor at Moorhead State University.

IV-E Alumni News

Patricia R. Spielman, MSW, LGSW is an August 2000 MSW Graduate and Child Welfare Scholar. In September, 2000, Patty became employed as a Program Manager with Human Services of Faribault and Martin Counties. Prior to that she had worked for both Cottonwood and Rice Counties, as well as for other social service agencies.

In August, 2000, Patty wrote a letter to Esther Wattenberg, CASCW, Director, thanking her for the opportunity that the IV-E Scholarship gave her to pursue her MSW degree. Here is an excerpt from Patty's letter: "I have felt honored to be a scholarship recipient. I have been the recipient of past scholarships in my undergraduate experience. None, of course, was as focused as this one. The importance of child welfare practices to children is without question. The importance of competent and caring practice to society as a whole is known but not always seen and understood by that same society. So...our mission is to advocate for children with best practice and to be accountable to the public for those practices. This is a daily, heavy-duty mission. Having been a IV-E scholar and a county worker, I am adamant that our practices and policies reflect our belief in the value and needs of children. And, I believe that continuing education prompts us to evaluate and to improve the work that we do. It is a worthwhile work. The weekend MSW Program and the child welfare scholarship have made it possible for me to achieve my goal of an MSW degree."

Patty has said she would be glad to serve as a resource person for anyone interested in talking about going back to school for their MSW degree.

CASCW Alumni Get Involved

On March 15, 2001, the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare held its first Alumni Recruitment Luncheon, a special event to celebrate its continuing efforts to provide scholarships to strengthen the child welfare system.

Alums from the Center's IV-E Scholar program were invited to identify and bring someone from their organization (or a colleague in the community) with an interest in graduate education and a strong concern for families and children. Over 50 alums and potential program recruits attended this noteworthy event.

Speakers featured at the luncheon were IV-E program alums **Joan Blakey**, Hennepin County; **Paula Sanders**, West Broadway Village Social Services; **Chul Schwanke**, Minneapolis Public Schools, and **Ann Turnlund**, Minnesota Department of Human Services. School of Social Work Admissions Director Michelle Harris offered information on the MSW program application process. CASCW Director Esther Wattenberg provided opening remarks, and CASCW IV-E Scholar Program Coordinator, Nancy Johnston, moderated the event.

Another recruitment event is tentatively scheduled for Fall of 2001. For more information, please contact Renee Albert at (612) 625-8121 or via e-mail at ralbert@che.umn.edu.

Q & A with Esther Wattenberg and Oliver J. Williams

Director, National Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

-Held February 5, 2001, under the auspices of the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare-

Wattenberg: What is the origin and background of the National Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community. Specifically, why did you think that domestic violence needed an African American perspective as a special concern?

Williams: In 1993, I made a presentation at a family violence conference which was about domestic violence and African Americans. . . . The perspective and issues that were raised around domestic violence did not meet the realities of the communities that needed support. . . . So what did we need to do to try to respond? We started to brainstorm and think about the fact that there are all sorts of violence: child abuse and neglect; community violence; dealing with aging, as well as partner abuse. They all needed attention. Most people don't have a perspective that advances the realities of this community. We decided to have a symposium, initially, to have a discussion about this and bring some people to think about this issue . . . an

Wattenberg: No doubt, many discussions followed. How is the National Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community funded?

Williams: It is federally funded by the office of Community Services, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families.

Wattenberg: Although you are a relatively young institute, what kinds of activities and issues have you focused on?

Williams: We have sponsored a number of activities. A major symposium occurred in 1994. Since then, we have conferences almost every six months that draw about 400 people to each conference dealing with a range of issues that we think have importance in terms of developing a strong base of understanding. We also aim to link practitioners and researchers, to create knowledge, but also to create practice skills and interventions to address the needs of the community.

We have recently been involved in going around the country trying to organize folks in the Bay Area, the Twin cities, Seattle, Memphis, and we are going to go to Savannah, Georgia, and a few other cities. We are trying to get a group of community leaders that deal with the faith, law enforcement community, children's issues and other elements of the African American community to start thinking about what the issues are that prevent them from addressing domestic violence. . . . We ask how they prioritize the issues of domestic violence, and what they think are the best ways to intervene. . . . We intend to do an analysis to try to figure out what the similarities and what the differences are from locality to locality.

Wattenberg: As you know, more recently, the effect of children's exposure to domestic violence has gained some attention. This issue covers a broad range of concerns. How domestic family violence and child maltreatment are linked turns out to be a very complicated issue. . . .

Domestic violence prevention advocates chiefly seek ways to protect the mother from abuse, and child protection focuses on the protection of the child, as their chief interest. Trying to reconcile those two points of view is at the heart of a good deal of work among domestic violence programs. Is this reflected in some of the work that you are doing?

Williams: Yes, it definitely is reflected in the work that we have done in terms of trying to hear the voices of the people—the authentic voices of the people in the community. . . . The Institute tries to encourage a partnership with this process to be able to understand that you don't have to be dichotomous. This issue is complex. What we want to do is hear as many voices of the people who are affected by it, because we know people of color, particularly African-Americans, are over-represented in data collected on domestic violence. Maybe there is a piece that is not understood. How do we engage the people in the process to see resources that are helpful—as supportive and not intrusive? I am not so sure that we have found a way to be able to deal with that. We have done some work to be as informative as we can and to find ways to be responsive to issues that communities are faced with.

Wattenberg: A good deal of your work, then, is trying to raise the consciousness of the community, itself, to these complex issues. Do you think this will have an effect on enlarging the role of child protection? For example, what do we know about who or what programs in the African American community report concerns to child protection? .

Williams: That is a good question. My sense is that reports come from all different sources—the usual suspects, the schools, etc. I think when you deal with low-income African Americans—and of course, not all African Americans are low income—but with low income African American folks, often they are more intensely observed by others. They also may be more in earshot of other people, when something problematic is happening. These are factors that have some influence on reporting. The question is, when people find their way into the system, what is the capacity of the system to be as responsive as possible? Does the system seek to understand the people that they are working with—not to superimpose judgments on those folks, but at the same time, to engage the person in the process to help them? Sometimes communities feel very distrustful of systems that they think don't have their

best interest at heart or don't understand them. On one hand, what you have to deal with is breaking through denial and also myth-busting with communities. For example, with the issues of discipline, not everybody in African American communities discipline their children in a very hostile or a more aggressive way, even though I think that is what many people think. . . . I am not sure that our systems get inside the heads of the populations that they are trying to serve—understand the rationale for their actions—and then talk to them about why they have to think about other alternatives. We need to have a conversation that changes community norms around these issues.

Wattenberg: As you know, Minnesota had a piece of legislation in the last legislature around the issue of harm to children in domestic violence situations. The legislation expanded the definition of maltreatment of children. Witnessing domestic abuse—that is a child within the “sight or sound” of domestic abuse could be construed as a child in harms way. The system was overwhelmed with reports. Are there any special attributes about that situation that might be reflective of African American concerns? . . .

Williams: I'm troubled by these definitions. I struggle from a couple of perspectives. One : I think that the jury is out. I mean we know that children that are exposed to violence have different reactions. . . . The jury is still out in terms of looking at the impact of long term resiliency. . . . If we come up with a term and a concept that we can't put our hands around, that's not tangible, . . . definitions will end up increasing the numbers of people who come into the system. I am still concerned over who, in fact, is most likely to come into the system—those who are caught in the legal system; those who are subjected to unusual scrutiny. . . . We need to come up with some concrete ways to understand this impact, and then apply the same standards to everybody—and I'm talking about middle class and upper middle class families. I do think that there needs to be sanctions against men who are violent, but the problem that I have when I discuss ways to do this is that there are some people more easily caught into the system, and it happens across economic barriers, and it happens across race. . . . So I wonder about who the target group is . . . Unless we can come up with a way to make the definitions tangible and concrete, then I think we do a disservice.

Wattenberg: *Is there much thinking going on about how to deal with the phenomenon where both mother and child are abused?*

Williams: The research states that if there is a woman that is a victim of abuse, there is higher potential that a child is being abused. Even in my practice experience, when I see a woman that is being abused, sometimes I see the abuser doing negative things or provoking the mother to do negative things to the children. That is a very complex question, because depending on the area that you are working in—child welfare or partner abuse—you have different responses to the issue. . . .

What I often see happening is that the person who is the primary perpetrator of both the mother and child gets off without consequences. . . .

The weight of the responsibility, whether it is around neglect or protection, is placed on the woman. . . . It is certainly important to understand the woman's circumstances, but also to understand the impact on the community, when families are over-represented.

Wattenberg: *Well, there is one suggestion that has been made to ensure that child protection receives reports only on those children who are in "imminent harm," which is*

defined this way. "When a child is used as a shield in a domestic abuse situation, when an older child tries to protect the mother, and a weapon is being used . . . where there is violence and abuse that is so out of control that the child and other members of the family are not safe." Does that seem like a reasonable set of definitions for determining harm?

Williams: Not to me because some of that seems to disadvantage women who find themselves in domestic violence situations. Sixteen percent of all cases of domestic violence start when women are pregnant. So if she gets hurt when she is in a relationship with somebody, based on that definition, should they take the childwhen the child is born because that child has been exposed, even before birth. . . .?

Another concern: I've got a videotape that I did several years ago of a young woman stepping in to protect her mother from getting beat up by her ex-husband. The woman asked her daughter "why did you help mommy?" She said "mommy, the last time you got beat up I didn't help you, and I promised that if that ever happened to you again, I was going to help you". So should the other kids be taken away? . . .

This woman was divorced for a year and she had a new boyfriend but the ex-husband came and did something like that. Women are in danger if she stays or if she leaves. . . .

Another illustration: There's a man that I talk about, 53 years old, who talks about remembering the victimization that he witnessed of his mother, and when he got to be a certain age, he was going to stand up to try to support and defend her. It is not uncommon for adolescent boys and girls, when they develop some sort of size and mass, to try to protect the mother and to try to spare her from the continued victimization that they might see.

Another issue is that when the onset of violence occurs, children may unintentionally be in harms way. I've heard some women say that they have held the baby, thinking that would make the abuser stop. . . . sometimes the baby was in the way when he was attacking, and he did not stop advancing. I think, in those circumstances, it is important that there is a consequence for that behavior. In those situations when you can identify that there has been harm done to the child and also to the woman, there needs to be a consequence to this male for the behavior that he's done. . . . this issue is

complex. If there is a woman who is poor, and we talk about welfare to work as a circumstance, this woman does not have many choices about where she is going to live—not many options at all. . . . What is she going to do if the court says she's got to find another place to live or we'll take your kids?

Wattenberg: To what extent, then, is the Institute investigating and exploring treatment modalities for the men who abuse both the caretaker and the children?

Williams: I'm proud to say that I think we're at the cutting edge of that. I, as you know, write about African American men who batter, and ways to work with men who batter. We have also been working on the intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence. We have been developing curricula to address this. For example, there's a curriculum called "Project Evolve"¹ . . . funded by the Department of Justice. We're looking at men who have been violent who either don't have children and may potentially be fathers or men who are already fathers. The curriculum helps them to

¹ Donnelly, D., Mederos, F., Nyquist, D., Williams, O.J., and Wilson, S.G. (June 2000). Connecticut's evolve program. Published by the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch.

figure out ways to not only understand the impact of their behavior, but to accept responsibility for those things, to understand how to be more affective and appropriate fathers and learn to use non-violence as a way to interact. What is also important, in terms of looking at fatherhood, is finding ways to interact with the mothers of their children more positively, regardless of the romantic relationship. The goal is to interact more effectively with the mother of their children in ways that will be healthy for the children. . . .

I've been working with fatherhood organizations, as well . . . committees called "Common Ground." One committee is focusing on policy and research, and the other is focused on application. We are working with the Center for Fathers, Family, and Policy² to engage in dialogue in all areas of fatherhood. . . . we also hope to be able to work with them around domestic violence issues . . .

Wattenberg: In summary, let me see if I'm saying this right. Where there is abuse of mother and child, it should be

² **Center on Fathers, Families and Public Policy**, 23 North Pickney Street, Suite 270, Madison, WI 53703 Phone: (608) 257-3148; FAX: (608) 257-4686.

a matter of criminal prosecution, rather than child protection. Is that a way of saying this is a situation that should focus on the perpetrator, not on the mother's capacity to protect or not protect?

Williams: Let me say more about that. I think there is an appropriate time for criminal justice intervention. I think the African American community feels uncomfortable when the primary way to deal with domestic violence is through criminal justice interventions. The reason is there is an over representation of African American men that get caught in the legal system. . . . What we have heard from doing these conferences around the country and engaging with communities is that there needs to be other ways to deal with issues associated with prevention and intervention. Perhaps there are different sanctions or interventions that can take place within community or different access points for people to get help in environments that they trust. I think it's important for systems such as child abuse and neglect, the court system, battered women's organizations, to be perceived as real resources. . . .

We have to be able to engage in partnerships with the

community so that they see it as a partnership. . . .

How do we engage a community so it's not an expectation that the system, be it criminal justice or child welfare, has to do all the work? There has to be something that's done at a grass roots level and at a community level to get people to get involved and to be responsive. The Institute has done something with family violence prevention around domestic violence. We've come up with twelve 90-second soap operas that get played on radio stations around the country. It's been playing on relatively famous radio stations programs all around the country. It raises the consciousness of African-Americans to the issue of domestic violence and gets them talking about it. . . .

Wattenberg: A new initiative, a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, has recently been announced. Have you encountered any community agencies that you think have a track record of being effective in dealing with domestic violence?

Williams: Yes. . . . in various cities. I have been doing a report for the Casey Foundation, so I have been interviewing a number of

programs on that very issue. One of the characteristics is the fact that they have the capacity to hear the issues that people are bringing up. So assessment is very important. For example, let's say that you deal with secondary prevention so you are dealing with a population that is high risk for a number of issues, because they are primarily low-income. These people come to you and talk about the problems that they are experiencing. In the assessment process, you have the capacity to hear those things and to direct them to right the service. . . . you also talk to them about domestic violence. . . . That's a different way to be able to engage people and help them at the same time.

One characteristic I found in organizations that do effective work is that they listen to the issues that people bring. . . . Sometimes bureaucrats don't do that. They say, "this is what we offer" and people say "this is what we need." And then they say, "Well, this is what we offer." Hearing the needs of the people is not something of primary importance, because they know that their primary responsibility is to provide a certain type of service. However, they may be missing an opportunity, and that's the problem. This is one of the things I've talked

about with people who have been working in the field of domestic violence for a long time. . . . Even though domestic violence is really important, there are a number of other issues that are challenging in the lives of folks. . . . I'm hearing from people dealing with homeless issues, from people who are dealing with substance abuse issues, and from people dealing with low income issues.

These workers are looking at the social context of people of living with these issues, and trying to make sense of the complexities of their lives. I think the same thing happens in child abuse and neglect. Sometimes we get so focused in terms of looking at that, and we forget about the complexities that make up people's lives. . . . I like the idea of developing new ways to help people on the margins—to help them become better parents and engage with their children in different ways. I think we have to figure out what other strengths there are in communities. Leon Chestang³ talks about this . . . He talks

³ Chestang, L. W. 1976. Environmental influences on social functioning: The black experience. In Pastoral Cafferty and Leon Chestang (eds.), *The diverse society: Implications for social policy*. New York: Association Press.

about a nurturing and sustaining environment. The nurturing environment still exists, it is just muted. You have to be able to help get people reconnected with their nurturing environment. In those pockets where there is high stress, you have to work in terms of nourishing and supporting those things that already exist for people. I think there are ways that we can engage communities, identify their strengths, and get people re-connected. I think for the African American community reconnecting to their nurturing environment builds strengths. . . .

Wattenberg: Do you think there is a role for a faith-based approach? Have you observed this approach in your work?

Williams: Absolutely. . . . I think change is the focal characteristic of the faith-based center. . . . we had a domestic violence weekend where we did things, specifically about domestic violence in relationships. A friend of mine gave two sermons, morning and afternoon, around domestic violence and connected it to scripture. It is not religiosity; it is spirituality. And spirituality makes connections to people. I have a speech called, "Creating Environments for Epiphanies to Occur." When I think

about epiphanies, I think about people being able to see something where they can make these connections. These connections have something to do with the realities of their lives. They start to get a vision of what it is that they need to do or to change. If they can't link it to their own reality in some way, then nothing is going to work for them. Faith-based organizations are able to make those connections. They are able to speak to people in their language, which is what human service organizations need to do, but fail to do. Often what happens is that we speak in our jargon and our language, and we don't make the community a partner to understand their truths.

Wattenberg: This observation could lead us into a broad discussion of principles for practice in community partnerships. Perhaps we should deal with this another time. For now, thank you, very much, for sharing your knowledge and providing valuable observations and commentaries. We wish continued growth and development for the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community.

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Program Updates

PRACTICE CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CONCURRENT PERMANENCY PLANNING: A CASE CONSULTATION SEMINAR

Sandy Robin, Associate Director, Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, was the project director of a live satellite videoconference, entitled "Practice Challenges in Implementing Concurrent Permanency Planning: A Case Consultation Seminar". This program was broadcast on Wednesday, April 4, 2001, to 75 Minnesota county downlink sites. It was also streamed live over the Internet. Two cases involving children in out-of-home placement and their families were presented to panels of experts for their consultation. The cases, presented by **Stacey Christensen**, Child Protection Specialist, Clay County Social Services, and **Chris Harder**, Ongoing Child Protection Worker, Anoka County Human Services, focused on practice challenges that impact meeting concurrent permanency planning goals and timelines, including attachment issues; issues around visitation; parental conditions (chemical dependency, mental health, parental capacity); provision of culturally appropriate services; issues concerning disclosure with children; assisting people in dealing with trauma and loss, etc. The primary goal of the case consultation seminar was to strengthen the knowledge base of practitioners needed to work with children and families in the child welfare system.

The two panels of consultants included **Ann Ahlstrom**, Program Consultant, Family and Children's Services Division, MN Department of Human Services; **Liz Dodge Hanson**, Social Services Director, Chisago County Health and Human Services; **Anne Gearity**, Clinical Social Worker/Therapist/Consultant, Minneapolis; **Ted Thompson**, Psychologist/Family Therapist/Consultant, Minneapolis; **Margaret Thunder**, Program Manager, ICWA Section, Hennepin County Social Services; **Bert Bailey**, Family Services Supervisor, Anoka County Human Services; **Chris Harder**, Social Worker, Intensive Concurrent Permanency Planning Program, Anoka County Human Services; **Deena McMahon**, Intensive In-Home Services Director/Family Therapist, Therapeutic Services Agency, Pine City; **Catherine McPherson**, Assistant County Attorney, Anoka County; **Terry Rehani**, Foster Parent Liaison, Anoka County Human Services. **Esther Wattenberg**, CASCW Director, served as moderator.

The primary audience for this videoconference included child protection workers, supervisors, tribal social workers, and other social workers and community practitioners who work with these cases. Copies of this videoconference are available for purchase at a cost of \$25.00. For further information, please go to the CASCW web-site at <http://ssw.che.umn.edu/cascw>.

MAINTAINING SOCIAL WORK ETHICS IN A HIGHLY REGULATED SYSTEM

This workshop for CASCW child welfare scholars and field instructors, held on Tuesday, April 24, at the McNamara Alumni Center, University of Minnesota East Bank campus was developed by Sandy Robin, Associate Director of CASCW. The ongoing challenge of maintaining social work ethics in a highly regulated public social service system was the focus of this exchange.

A process for ethical decision making was presented by **Dr. Glenda Dewberry Rooney**, Interim Gamble-Skogmo Chair, of the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities School of Social Work. Field instructors **Richard Spratt**, Hennepin County Children and Family Services and **Hugh Knox**, Stearns County Children and Family Services, and **Ricky Venson**, Child Welfare Scholar and Intern, Hennepin County Children and Family Services outlined examples of ethical dilemmas faced in their current practice, and discussed approaches to dealing with these ethical challenges

. Former child welfare scholars **Joyce Becenti**, Hennepin County Children and Family Services; **Christine Enking**, Hennepin County Children and Family Services; **Sherry Holloway**, Hennepin County Children and Family Services, and **Sue Serbus**, Nicollet County Children and Family Services presented what they see as some of the major ethical dilemmas in their work and how they go about addressing them.

Available Soon! Report from CASCW Seminar for Supervisors

THE ADVERSARIAL COURTROOM: The Supervisor's Role in Supporting the Child Protection Worker

This December 1, 2000 seminar for supervisors featured a panel presentation by **Robert A. Blaeser**, Chief Judge, Hennepin County; **Susan Harris**, Chief Assistant, Washington County Attorney, Juvenile Division; **Kyler Meers**, Social Service Supervisor, Child Protection, Wright County Social Services and **Reeah K. Bledoe**, Child Protection Supervisor, Hennepin County Children and Family Services. A respondent panel addressed issues raised by the presenters. The panel respondents were **Bert Bailey**, Family Services Supervisor, Anoka County Human Service; **Richard Coleman**, Supervisor, Ramsey County Human Services; **Lynda Erickson**, Co-Chair, Association of Minnesota Social Service Supervisors and **Marsha Miller**, Child Protection Supervisors, Hennepin County Children and Family Services. A report from this seminar is forthcoming. To order, please contact Anne Preston, CASCW, (612) 624-4231.

Now Available: CASCW Publications

- ◆ Practice Notes: The Ethnographic Interview ◆
- ◆ Practice Manual for Concurrent Permanency Planning ◆
- ◆ Proceedings: A Social Justice Framework for Child Welfare ◆

Upcoming Events

◆ June 15, 2001 ◆

**Safeguarding Privacy and Assuring Safety for Children:
Searching for Balance in Data Practices for the Child Welfare System**

For more information or to order a publication, please contact the Center at
(612) 624-4231

CASCW

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This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, 205 Peters Hall, 1404 Gortner Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55108 (612) 624-4231.



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