



## CFS Students Learn about *Early Care and Education in Reggio Emilia, Italy*

by Cheri Gilman and Ming-Chi Own

Fourteen students toured Northern Italy during spring break as part of a special topics course offered for the first time by the CFS department. Reggio Emilia, Italy was selected based on a survey of students that identified Reggio Emilia as an important site for expanding students' knowledge of early childhood education. The course was set up through the Center for International Studies as part of the university's "intersession study abroad programs". The course supports the CFS departments commitment to expand global opportunities for our students.

We encouraged students, through readings and our pre-travel seminar, to commit in words of Amelia Gambetti, (Reggio Children's Center coordinator) to a "declaration of ignorance" and to go to Italy with an open mind. Student quotes from journals during the experience reflected this openness to learning from whatever the experience offered them.

One of the students described their experience and insights. *"Going on this trip I had ideas of what I would learn, as with life there was a vision of how things would go and work out, but my vision was not always fulfilled, creating an experience all of its own...Italy was an imaginary land...but became a reality. The reality of Italy emphasizes community and the realization that the future is literally within our hands through our children. The value you place in the children now, will forever affect the value they place in themselves and within others later in life, through trust and responsibility..."*

Another student wrote: *"I have learned a lot...I think the biggest thing is to take the walls down...in your lives and in your educational experiences...everything...is waiting to be discovered...I didn't just learn about Reggio or the way you say hello in another culture [language], I*



CFS Students in front of the Loris Malaguzzi International Center in Reggio Emilia Italy

*learned about challenging myself...and how to ...take in sights and sounds around [me]..."*

Student projects, based on individual action plans as part of this course, will bring some visibility of their Reggio Emilia experience to the SCSU campus. Reggio Emilia early childhood programs have a strong focus on learning and creating documentation through various "languages". Student projects that will be available on the College of Education web site and displayed in the college will highlight the transformation that occurred in students' understanding of what it means to have a program that is Reggio "inspired".

Students arrived and departed from Bologna, Italy and traveled by train to Reggio Emilia, Verona, Treviso and Venice. Reggio Emilia early care and education sites are generally not open to visitors. Learning took place in examining the outside spaces of early childhood centers and observing children and families in parks and public piazzas. Attending a play designed for young children as part of the Bologna theatre festival for children "Visioni Di Futuro, Visioni De Teatro..." gave student's an opportunity to experience being part of an audience of young children and families who were experiencing a theatre presentation in Italian about the *Four Seasons*.



Train Station in Reggio Emilia, Italy

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## Chair Reflections by Glen Palm

After seven straight days of 70-degree weather it appears that spring has arrived in St. Cloud. This time of year the pace increases for both students and faculty as we all try to finish projects and bring a sense of closure to the school year. Our Spring newsletter features the CFS faculty and student Spring Break trip to Italy. The comments and photos illustrate the influence of international travel as an exciting adventure and an opportunity to experience new perspectives based on early childhood education and family life in Italy. Cheri Gilman and Ming Chi Own led this tour and provided the group of students with an introduction to Reggio Emilia and a global travel experience. This will be a trip that students will remember for the rest of their lives and will have a profound impact on their view of the world and their role as teachers of young children.

Our department is also in the midst of another search for a fixed term faculty member to join us in the fall. The process appears to be going smoothly and we hope to add a new member to our department to complement our current group of caring, dedicated, and hard-working faculty and adjunct faculty.

Our summer school registration continues through May. You can go on-line to the CFS web site to see opportunities for ECSE and Parent Education licensure courses as well as courses for continuing study and professional development. The latter includes a

course on Play Therapy with Kathy Ofstedal, a course on Working with Fathers in Parent Education that I will teach and the Summer Institute with a focus on Responding to Family Needs.

We will also be piloting a couple of on-line offerings this summer (CFS 421/521 taught by Fatemeh Zarghami and CFS 431 taught by Jane Minnema) to see how we might best integrate new technology into our program and maintain both the quality of our programs as well as the personal connections with and between our students. We are looking forward to a busy summer and hope to see some of our former graduates back for summer classes.

I recently finished teaching a weekend class on parent education methods and continue to find that this format works well as a way for students to both learn from each other as well as form lasting professional connections. After a year of our parent education program being on a hiatus I am hopeful that we are rebuilding the program. I was inspired by the energy and idealism of the young students coming into the field. ECFE has been hit by cuts over the last few years that have dampened our spirits and it is a critical time for young professionals with new energy and creativity to help revive our field so that we can continue to serve parents and families in Minnesota with high quality and relevant parent and family education services.

## Italy (from page 1)

Students reflected on their different experiences with the play. *“It was definitely an experience...I was disappointed that I couldn’t understand the jokes/humor...The two things I liked most were that it was easy to relate and that it could easily be replicated...This was a play I could see myself doing in a classroom to help teach the four seasons. It could be turned into a whole production for friends and family.”*

*“I didn’t feel it necessary to understand the spoken words, ...I feel if someone couldn’t see, they may have been able to understand the story told through the words [and]music...If a person could not hear, they would have understood through the visual changes happening to the tree as the seasons changed...This would be a fun way to help children understand the concept of the four seasons...”*

*“...I loved how the audience would clap along to the music...The freedom the children had to run around the theater and see if from different angles was [refreshing]...I noticed the actress was showing the children how the cloud prop worked afterward...that was neat...none of the children were afraid to approach the actors to ask questions...”*



Group of CFS students at an Early Childhood Center in Treviso

Visiting a school that teaches English to infants and young children in Treviso, gave students an introduction to a very dynamic teacher and an introduction to the Helen Doran centers and philosophy. Perhaps of most importance, however, was the opportunity these students had to be among the *first* public visitors to the Loris Malaguzzi Center in Reggio Emilia Italy that had its grand opening on February 25. We (Cheri and Ming-Chi) attended an intensive workshop during the grand opening and were able to gain access to the exhibit for students during their visit. The International Center exhibit included the history of Reggio Emilia, a large display of children’s documentation from 13 infant/toddler and preschool programs in the region, a display of soft-form children’s furniture, and a large area for exploration of light that was facilitated by one of the creators of that space.

As faculty, we have come to appreciate that one cannot really understand Reggio Emilia without visiting and experiencing the image and culture of the region. Our understanding and appreciation were certainly enhanced by this experience and we were glad we had students with us on this journey, so they can carry the images and impressions of Italy into their future work with young children and families.

*Cheri Gilman and Ming-Chi Own will offer this course again either next Spring break (March 5—9, 2007) or during Intersession in May. Specific dates will be determined in September in conjunction with the Center for International Studies. The course will have limited enrollment, so interested students are encouraged to complete an application through the Center for International Studies, once the course is set up this fall. The application requires references and an essay describing the student’s interest in participating in this global/international experience.*

# CFS Scholarships—Awarded Spring 2006

by Kathy Ofstedal

On April 19, The Eighth Annual Dessert Fest honored scholarship winners from the College of Education at St. Cloud State University. The Dessert Fest brings together students and their families, faculty members and scholarship donors. The Child and Family Studies Department awarded eight scholarships for the 2005-2006 school year.

All eight scholarship recipients have maintained a high Grade Point Average and hold great potential for becoming exemplary early childhood educators. All of the CFS students attended the Dessert Fest and thanked family, friends and faculty members for supporting them as they pursue their degrees. Jane Minnema, Kathy Ofstedal and Ming-Chi Own were named as professors who had made a significant difference in their lives.

## Golden Rule Scholarship of \$500.00:

Sara Funk



CFS Scholarship Recipients—Front Row (L to R): Sara Funk, Jacky Johnston and Maria Campbell. Back Row (L to R): Steven Theis, Suzanne Zelinko, and Megan Samuelson. Not pictured: Carrie Smieja and Jamie Mahan

## Jack Mayala Scholarship of \$500.00:

Jacky Johnston

## Olga B. Satre Hart Memorial

## Scholarship of \$1000.00:

Maria Campbell

Jamie Mahan

Carrie Smieja

Steven Theis

## Kathryn Kelly Scholarship of \$500.00:

Megan Samuelson

Suzanne Zelinko

## CFS Surveys of Former Students

Some of you may have been contacted by our graduate assistants Joy Birr and Molly Neal who are conducting a telephone follow-up survey of our CFS graduates from 2005 and students who have completed a graduate teaching license in our program during the last 5 years. Please take a few minutes to share with them information about your current employment and some feedback about our program. This information is valuable to us as we continue to look for ways to improve our program.



## A Photo Collage of the Reggio Emilia Trip

Many images of Italy will appear on campus as a result of the journey taken by 14 students and two faculty to learn more about Reggio Emilia. These are a few of the images of their experiences.



Cheri and Ming-Chi catching up on reading on the train.



Arrival of students in Bologna on March 3—led by CFS graduate assistants Molly Neal and Joy Birr



View of Prospero Square (Lions' Square) in Reggio Emilia



Reggio Children logo



Ming-Chi and Cheri at a restaurant near Treviso, enjoying wonderful Italian cuisine



Ming-Chi with a puppeteer/puppet maker in Bologna



Students in front of a carved monument in the old part of Bologna

Students exploring the children's section of a bookstore in Bologna



**We're on the web!**  
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## Summer Institute 2006—Making Services Work for All Families

The Early Intervention Summer Institute is scheduled for August 7-8-9 at St. John's University in Collegeville .

Speakers over the two and half day Institute include Jean Ann Summers, from the Beach Center on Disabilities, University of Kansas who will present the opening session, on "Listening to Family Voices" and in depth sessions related to assessing family needs and designing early intervention services. Other topics focus on bridging education and mental health, meeting the needs of families with adopted children, working with parents of color to become advocates for their children, learning the language of intervention for families identified as high-risk, or those for whom violence and/or poverty are realities. All of the invited speakers bring unique expertise to helping professional become more responsive and accepting of the families of young children that we serve in our various professional roles.

The Early Intervention Institutes are appropriate for graduate students in early childhood special education as well as related fields. This summer's family focused topic should be of interest to professionals who work with families in various capacities.

Campbell Meeting Management facilitates registration for the Summer Institute. All registrations, whether for graduate credit or CEUs are sent to Campbell Meeting Management. Students enrolling for graduate credit at SCSU will be given permission to register online (CFS 605-Summer Institute) after they have submitted their applications to Diane Campbell, the Summer Institute Coordinator. The CFS web ([www.stcloudstate.edu/cfs](http://www.stcloudstate.edu/cfs)) will have updated Summer Institute 2006 information soon, with the application form and descriptions of speakers and sessions.

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### Upcoming Events— Important Dates

Summer 2006

- Summer Registration continues through May
- Registration for Fall—Begins April 10
- Dates for Summer Session I Classes are June 12—July 14
- Dates for Summer Session II Classes are July 17—August 17
- Summer Institute—Aug 7, 8 @ 8—6:30 & Aug 9 @ 8-12:30
- Fall 2006 Classes Begin Wednesday, September 6