

**Forging solutions  
Inspiring change  
OUT THERE**



**Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families**  
College of Public Health and Human Sciences



**Oregon State**  
University



## Our work begins with passion. And leads to life-changing results.

Researchers at the Hallie Ford Center are international leaders who advance science, create knowledge and shape public policy. We collaborate with parents, educators and others to develop innovative programs, provide children and families the tools to learn and grow, and help youth and young adults overcome adversity.

We're passionate about our work. We care intensely for our communities. We'll take on any challenge to build a more secure, inclusive and productive society for all.

Join us in changing lives across Oregon and beyond.  
Let's go OUT THERE.



## Thriving. Caring. Strong. Resilient. Supported.

These are just a few words that describe children and families, as well as the settings in which they live, learn, work, and play.

At the Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families, these words inspire us to conduct research that matters.

The doors to our building on Oregon State University's campus have only been open since 2011. But it is hard to remember the time before the Hallie Ford Center, which has become central to the daily life and research activity of the College of Public Health and Human Sciences. Each year, we host hundreds of meetings, retreats, lectures and colloquia to share knowledge and find solutions.

The Hallie Ford Center is a hub for:

- Interdisciplinary and impact-oriented scholarship.
- National research leaders supported by federal agencies and private foundations.
- Undergraduate and graduate research training.
- Faculty working groups ready to tackle big questions and tough problems.
- Land grant scientists and Extension family and community health specialists working to enrich the lives of Oregonians.
- Scientific collaboration that extends across our nation — and the world.

This book includes just a sampling of how all of these elements work together to solve some of the most pressing issues facing today's society, including access to parenting education and adequate physical activity time for children and youth. We hope it will reveal how much we love what we do and how much we care about conducting and translating research that changes the lives of children and families.

**Richard A. Settersten Jr., Ph.D.**

Endowed Director  
Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families  
College of Public Health and Human Sciences  
Oregon State University



# Great ideas and innovative solutions start here, go everywhere.

Leaders in the Hallie Ford Center share an unwavering commitment to the people of Oregon and beyond. Our faculty investigate new opportunities, translate research into effective programs, and bring together colleagues, students and community members to better the lives of children and families across the state and around the world. Our four research cores and their leaders include:

## Early Childhood

Focuses on optimizing children’s development and well-being in families, early care and educational settings, and communities.

**Megan McClelland**, Katherine E. Smith Endowed Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences

## Parenting and Family Life

Examines healthy parenting and family life as a strong foundation for child and youth development, and healthy communities as a strong foundation for families.

**Sally Bowman**, Professor, Extension Family and Community Health

**Shauna Tominey**, Assistant Professor of Practice and Parenting Education Specialist, Extension Family and Community Health

## Youth and Young Adults

Probes the behaviors and environments that threaten or enhance the health and well-being of youth.

**Peggy Dolcini**, Professor, Health Promotion and Health Behavior

## Healthy Eating and Active Living

Promotes healthy lifestyles and the prevention of obesity in children and families through nutrition and physical activity.

**Kathy Gunter**, Associate Professor and Physical Activity Extension Specialist, Kinesiology



# It takes a team effort to get over childhood obstacles. Meet some of our all-stars.

Disabilities. Trauma. Stress. They’re not just adult problems. Helping children get past these and other hurdles so they can grow up to lead successful lives depends on researchers, teachers and community members bringing their expertise to the table. Collaboration is the foundation for everything we do.

- **Megan McClelland** recommended kindergarten assessments for Oregon that allow teachers to rate each incoming student on self-regulation, social, emotional and early academic skills. This work is part of a statewide School Readiness Research Consortium of researchers, graduate students and key stakeholders.
- **Bobbie Weber** and **Deanna Grobe** investigate the rising costs of child care in Oregon and its impact on families.
- **Megan MacDonald** designs individualized physical activity programs for children with disabilities to improve motor skills and help them conduct daily tasks at home and at school.
- **Shannon Lipscomb** at OSU-Cascades in Bend, Oregon, trains early childhood teachers on working with children who have experienced trauma.
- **Bridget Hatfield** works with teachers and children to examine how child-teacher relationships affect stress levels and academic success.



“It’s been exciting, rewarding and fun to bring together people from different disciplines and fields who otherwise would not have collaborated. This way of building teams has led to fresh and innovative discoveries.”

**Richard A. Settersten Jr.**  
Endowed Director  
Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families





# To thrive, families need a strong foundation. We're building it.

Children's brains grow at lightning speed from birth to age three — producing more than a million new neural connections every second. Healthy brain development — along with early academic and social-emotional skills — begins with the people children interact with most. And it's our job to guide them when they need help.

That's why the Hallie Ford Center is partnering with Extension Family and Community Health and the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC) to bring Oregon families, teachers, and caregivers credible resources backed by child development and parenting research. OPEC is a partnership between four of Oregon's largest foundations (The Oregon Community Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, and the Collins Foundation) and Oregon State University. With 15 parenting education hubs in 32 of the state's 36 counties — as well as in Siskiyou County in California — OPEC brings evidence-based classes, workshops and events to families of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Topics range from understanding how babies progress during the first year to hands-on activities that prepare preschoolers for kindergarten. Participating parents have reported significant improvement in their parenting skills and their child's behavior. OPEC also equips parenting educators for their vital roles through online tools and conferences.

The needs of families are constantly changing. By helping children establish a strong connection during the early stages of life, parents can set them up for long-term success.

“We have developed a unique system for providing universal parenting education to families. We're serving as a model for other states.”

**Shauna Tominey**  
Assistant Professor of Practice and Parenting Education Specialist (pictured)



OPEC is the pillar of parenting education in Oregon. Between 2010 and 2017:

**219,146**  
people attended 1,764 family activities.

**45,098**  
parents participated in 1,625 workshops.

**97%**  
found OPEC's classes to be helpful and would recommend them to others.

**7,744**  
families were reached through home visits.



# Confronting childhood obesity involves the practical and political. **We're leading on both.**

The American Heart Association recommends at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity for children every day — but many get much less. Recent Oregon State studies show that rural Oregon students in grades 1-6 get less than 19 minutes each school day — and 40 percent of those students are overweight.

The Generating Rural Options for Weight (GROW) Healthy Kids and Communities program led by Kathy Gunter and Deborah John is working to change school and community environments to encourage physical activity and healthy eating habits among low-income children and families. Part of their program is a practical tool kit featuring games and activities, recipes, and an online video tutorial for parents.

The data collected through the GROW project is also informing public policy. As part of our Oregon Family Impact Seminar, Gunter presented research on physical activity and childhood obesity in rural Oregon schools to state legislators and agency heads, as well as to members of the Senate Committee on Health Care involved with House Bill 3141 — a law that requires K-8 students receive at least 150 minutes of physical education each week.

“We have the greatest opportunity to benefit the most children when our work can inform public policy,” Gunter says. “As a scientist, an Extension specialist, and mother of a 12-year-old, it’s important for me to improve conditions for children — especially those who are most vulnerable.”



**GROW Healthy Kids and Communities Team**

**Kathy Gunter**  
Associate Professor and Physical Activity Extension Specialist, Kinesiology



**Deborah John**  
Associate Professor and Public Health Extension Specialist, Kinesiology



**Regular exercise  
=  
happy, motivated kids**

**Physical activity decreases risks of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression and negative behavior. It strengthens bones and improves academic performance and test scores.**

# What if virtual reality could shape the real thing?

That’s a question Siew Sun Wong and Melinda Manore are determined to answer. With the help of a \$4.7 million USDA grant, they created WAVE Ripples for Change: Obesity Prevention for Active Youth in Afterschool Programs Using Virtual and Real World Experiential Learning. As part of this program — which is geared toward high school soccer players and their families — youth enter a virtual world and act as avatars while completing daily tasks like growing food, cooking and grocery shopping.

The goal is to provide tech-savvy teens with a relatable medium to learn and practice valuable life skills that will carry them through adulthood.

“These youth are active now, but what happens when they don’t have a team sport to motivate them?” Manore says. “Many parents of active teens allow their kids to eat unhealthy food, because they don’t worry about their weight. This is about building healthy behavior that becomes part of their life.”

Wong is confident that this virtual world will inspire youth to take initiative. She says when each teen applies what they’ve learned to establish a healthy lifestyle, it will cause a ripple effect — and encourage others to do the same.

# We’re going further to get kids going.

Movement and socialization are closely related as children develop, and Oregon State researchers Sam Logan and Megan MacDonald are increasing opportunities for children with disabilities to do both. As part of the nationwide, community-based Go Baby Go program, they’ve developed new modifications for ride-on toy cars — a sit-to-stand car and a car equipped with a pitching machine that throws foam balls. The cars allow young children with disabilities to move independently, play and interact with others.

In addition, MacDonald is helping kids with disabilities like cerebral palsy improve their motor skills — with

assistance from the family dog. They work together to complete activities like playing fetch, balancing on a wobble board and going on walks. The research indicates that through these activities with their dog, children build camaraderie, increase their physical activity in a fun way and develop the confidence to overcome difficult tasks.

“Our gold standard is to figure out ways to get kids with disabilities moving at the same time as their peers,” Logan says.

And they are.



# To make informed decisions, start with reliable information. We have plenty to offer.

And we share it with Oregon policymakers — state agency leaders, legislators and their aides — in a neutral, nonpartisan setting through the annual Oregon Family Impact Seminar. The seminar is part of a national network of land-grant and other universities addressing a wide range of family policy issues. National experts and policy analysts, including Hallie Ford Center researchers, present the latest scientific evidence on real-world issues that impact the well-being of children and families.

Do we advocate for any specific policy? No. Instead, we present the strongest possible available data, integrate findings from the research literature, and spell out the policy implications of a range of options under consideration.

The Family Impact Seminar has brought fresh thinking to two of the biggest challenges facing Oregon families: poverty and childhood obesity. The first seminar in 2015 examined a two-generation approach to reducing poverty. This method simultaneously focuses on policies to improve parents’ employment skills and earnings, reduce family stress and increase parenting skills, along with those that promote children’s health and development.

The 2016 seminar focused on obesity, presenting research on increasing physical activity related to House Bill 3141. The seminar also included surprising information about

the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Researchers found that those who receive SNAP benefits are no more likely to be obese and may be less likely to be obese than peers who are SNAP-eligible, but do not receive benefits. In fact, researchers found higher levels of SNAP benefits have been associated with lower rates of obesity. Greater participation in SNAP may be another policy approach to reducing obesity.

Creating public policy is hard work. But the results of informed decision-making are worth it.

**“The goal isn’t to influence legislators or other policy leaders to act one way or another, but to provide them with the latest research so they can make informed decisions that make sense in their own environments.”**

**Sally Bowman**  
Extension Program Leader  
Family and Community Health

## Oregon Family Impact Seminar Planning Group

**Sally Bowman**  
Professor  
Extension Family and Community Health

**Bethany Godlewski**  
Doctoral Student  
Human Development and Family Sciences

**Gloria Krahn**  
Barbara Emily Knudson Endowed Chair in Family Policy Studies  
Director of Strategic Initiatives

**Rick Settersten**  
Professor  
Human Development and Family Sciences

**Emily Tomayko**  
Assistant Professor  
Nutrition

**Bobbie Weber**  
Research Associate  
Hallie Ford Center

# We don’t just identify societal challenges. We stand up to them.

The Official Poverty Measure in the United States, originally developed in the 1950s, is based on a family’s income relative to an established level of need. Yet, because of how it measures income and defines the needs threshold, the official measure misses many of the most vulnerable people in our society, such as those with incomes just above the threshold or those with insufficient financial assets. If the government doesn’t see their poverty, it can’t provide the help and services they need.

David Rothwell looks at other factors that define poverty — drawing insights from state agencies’ assistance records and analyzing the full picture of a household’s assets. He is committed to generating scientific data that might ultimately influence policy decisions.

For example, through the center’s annual Oregon Family Impact Seminar, Oregon lawmakers received the latest research on how poverty disproportionately affects families with children under 5. As a result, they revised the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in 2016, making Oregon the first state to allocate a greater percentage of the tax credit to young families.

The EITC reduces the amount of tax owed and may provide a refund — giving families more money to live on. Rothwell is now studying the long-term impact of the change to see whether it’s having the desired result.

“With better information, we can better understand the impact of policy,” he says.

As a former social worker, Rothwell has seen firsthand the struggles many families face. He wants others to see them clearly, too.

**David Rothwell**  
Assistant Professor  
Human Development and Family Sciences





## Some research breakthroughs come from playing games.

Research shows that young children who can pay attention, follow directions and control their impulses do better when they start school — and the benefits can last all the way through college graduation. Megan McClelland has found developing these executive function skills can be fun for them, too.

Games like Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders (HTKS) and Red Light, Purple Light use verbal commands to tap early memory skills like attention and focus. HTKS is used in 20 languages around the world. Similar to the game Simon Says, parents or teachers ask children to touch their head, toes, knees or shoulders. Instead of following the command, children are instructed to do the opposite — when told to touch their head, they touch their toes, and vice versa. Red Light, Purple Light uses different colors to represent stop and go. Like HTKS, the meaning of each color changes — purple signals go and orange signals stop in the first round, then orange means go and purple means stop in the second round. The games are easy for parents and teachers to use at home or in school.

McClelland says games and activities like these are effective because they teach students to think things through before acting. Having that self-control will contribute to their success in and out of school. And the more they practice, the more these skills become second nature.



**Megan McClelland**  
Katherine E. Smith Endowed Professor  
Human Development and Family Sciences



## If a problem has never been solved, we find a way.

Like discovering a method for detecting potentially dangerous flame retardant chemicals in household items.

For decades, flame retardants have been added to furniture, mattresses, carpet, electronics and other items to prevent fires. But with growing concerns about exposure to small children, an interdisciplinary team of researchers at the Hallie Ford Center and OSU's Environmental Health Sciences Center came together to begin examining their effects. Using lightweight silicone wristbands — which were developed by team member Kim Anderson and graduate student Stephen O'Connell — the investigators were able to detect the type and level of chemicals children are exposed to.

The research team gave wristbands to 92 preschoolers from ages 3 to 5 who wore them for a week at home and at school. Each wristband detected some form of flame retardant.

After examining the wristband data and results from parent/teacher questionnaires for each child, they found a possible link between flame retardants and children's social skills and school readiness.

"When we analyzed behavior assessments and exposure levels, we observed that the children who had more exposure to certain types of flame retardants were more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression, defiance, hyperactivity, inattention, and bullying," says Molly Kile, one of the team's leaders.

Researchers are now planning for a longer study that looks at additional factors. "If scientists find strong evidence that exposure to flame retardants affects children's behaviors, we can develop strategies that prevent these exposures and help improve children's lives," Kile says.

### Flame Retardant Research Team

**Molly Kile**, Associate Professor, Environmental and Occupational Health, College of Public Health and Human Sciences

**Shannon Lipscomb**, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences, College of Public Health and Human Sciences, OSU-Cascades

**Kim Anderson**, Professor, Environmental and Molecular Toxicology, College of Agricultural Sciences

**Megan MacDonald**, Assistant Professor, Kinesiology, College of Public Health and Human Sciences

**Megan McClelland**, Katherine E. Smith Endowed Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences, College of Public Health and Human Sciences



# We treat information like lives depend on it. Because sometimes they do.

That’s certainly the case with preventing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, especially among low-income youth in the U.S. and developing countries.

In a study of African American teenagers ages 15 to 17 in San Francisco and Chicago, Peggy Dolcini found they’re more likely to make smart choices about sexual health when they get information and support from parents, teachers and other caring adults. The study showed many teenagers received surprisingly little accurate information about sex and sexual health — and few use or trust the internet to provide it.

In Tanzania, where 1.4 million people were living with HIV in 2015, Joseph Catania led research to improve the effectiveness of oral self-testing kits among 15- to 19-year-olds. Because of low literacy rates, researchers had to convert the test kit’s instructions to a picture book and a video in Swahili. The project is part of a broader effort to increase HIV testing, treatment and prevention.

Today’s youth face decisions that can affect the rest of their lives. Providing information they can trust will help them choose wisely.

**Peggy Dolcini**  
Professor  
Health Promotion and Health Behavior



## Tobacco isn’t just a public health risk. It’s a social injustice.

Everyone knows cigarettes will kill you. Yet, every day more than 4,000 youth start smoking, and according to Kari-Lyn Sakuma, tobacco companies focus their marketing in low-income communities and communities of color. Her research found patterns of marketing and strategic undermining of cessation efforts, as well as higher levels of tobacco-related morbidity and mortality in these communities. She’s studying the effectiveness of interventions — such as reducing exposure to point-of-sale and social media advertising — to prevent youth from starting or help them stop using tobacco.





# Our work changes lives. And that will never change.

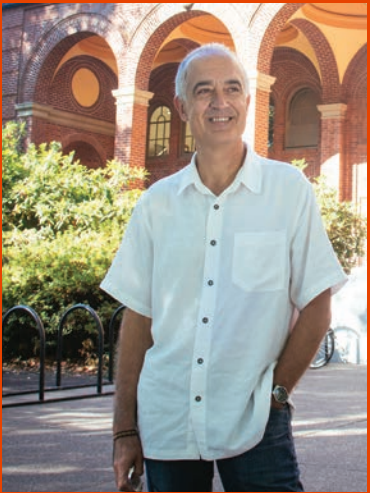
Since its founding, the Hallie Ford Center has been a home for knowledge and application to help every person, family and community flourish. As we look forward, we expand our commitment to:

- Increasing resilience among children and families, especially during times of hardship and uncertainty.
- Helping families navigate big transitions, from developmental milestones to changes in schools, peer groups, neighborhoods and family life.
- Understanding the sources and consequences of inequality, responding to crises of housing instability, food insecurity and school success.
- Building research capacity on the mental health of children, youth and parents.
- Nurturing work in epigenetics, gaining knowledge on the connections between gene-environment interactions during childhood and later chronic conditions in adulthood.
- Probing the long-term effects of childhood experiences on adulthood and aging.
- Collaborating with other great minds in centers and institutes in the Pacific Northwest and California, and across our nation and world.

We’re making a difference.  
Let’s keep going.



# Tough questions are worth answering. No challenge is too daunting.



“I believe that investing time, research and resources for children, and the families and communities caring for them, is the single most important thing that our society can do to improve public health and the health of current and future generations.”

Javier Nieto  
Dean  
College of Public Health and Human Sciences

To join us, visit  
[health.oregonstate.edu/hallie-ford](https://health.oregonstate.edu/hallie-ford).





“It’s not what you have,  
but what you give to your  
family, your community  
and your country.”

— Hallie E. Ford, 1905-2007

A TRIBUTE TO  
HALLIE E. FORD

A girl from the Oklahoma Territory  
she lived the Great Depression,  
saw the shuttered Dust Bowl farms,  
the black rollers that blew the prairie bare.  
She hugged mothers and sons  
Dorothea Lange might photograph,  
felt their spirit-crushing want.  
Hardened, independent, she  
put herself through college so she  
could share her love of books and art  
and common sense.  
Headed west to Oregon, to teach.  
Knew the grunts of men pulling  
green chain, the whirling blades,  
the smell of fresh fir planks.  
Raised two children, raised them proper  
She read, painted, loved her kids,  
said fewer words than most.  
Never stopped learning.

1931  
1951  
1996

It's not what you have, but what you give  
to your family, your community  
and your country."







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2631 SW Campus Way  
Corvallis, OR 97331



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