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Illinois Early Childhood Fellows Announces Six New Fellows for 2011-13

(CHICAGO) Six young professionals with outstanding backgrounds and a passionate commitment to the field of early childhood are the new Illinois Early Childhood Fellows for 2011-2013.

The Fellows, selected in a competitive process over the last several months, are: **Melanie L. Garrett, Angela Hubbard, Artishia Hunter, TeeNeka Jones, Liliana Martin, and Saleem Hue Penny.**

“We are delighted to introduce the new Fellows, and we look forward to great things from them as they join the ongoing work of improving early childhood opportunities for all Illinois children,” said Phyllis Glink, Executive Director of the Irving Harris Foundation and co-chair of the Fellowship.

The 2011-2013 Fellows are the second cohort to join the program, which was founded by six Illinois funders to prepare new leaders and strengthen the field of early childhood policy and systems building in Illinois.

As Fellows they will work at local organizations, participate in bimonthly seminars exploring early childhood research, policy, and practice, and pursue their own professional development. Leaders in the field, both in the placement organizations and elsewhere, will serve as mentors. The Fellows program aims to give participants a solid understanding of public policy affecting early childhood and to help them build their leadership skills and professional networks.

“The Fellowship helps prepare diverse new leaders for the field of early childhood, in the hope that the policies we make in Illinois will ensure that children of all our communities get the best possible start in life,” said Edith Njuguna, Senior Program Officer at Grand Victoria Foundation and co-chair of the Fellowship.

The 2011-13 Fellows have been working as teachers, social workers, parent educators, and also include a researcher and an entrepreneur. They are:

Melanie Garrett has worked with families with newborns as a social worker at the University of Chicago and Mt. Sinai Hospitals and as a Healthy Start Manager at Henry Booth House. Melanie has an AM from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, a BA from Lafayette College, and an Infant Mental Health

certificate from the Erikson Institute. Her placement is with **HealthConnect One**; Consultant Laura McAlpine and Lead Trainer Wandy Hernandez are her mentors.

Angela Hubbard is a National Board Certified early childhood teacher who has taught for six years in the Chicago Public Schools and has also taught elementary school teachers through Northern Illinois University. Angela holds an MAT from National-Louis University and a BSBA from Washington University in St. Louis. Her placement is at **Ounce of Prevention Fund**. Diana Rauner, President and CEO, and Bela Moté, Vice President of Bounce Network, are her mentors.

Artishia Hunter has taught both elementary and preschool in Evanston and Bloomington, worked as a Head Start education consultant, and developed a child nursery for a non-profit organization. She has an MA in Early Childhood Administration from National-Louis University and a BA in Elementary Education from Illinois State University. Artishia served on the board of the Childcare Network of Evanston and chaired the Program Committee. Artishia's placement is at **Positive Parenting DuPage**; Executive Director Jeanna Capito and board member Michel Frenadian are her mentors.

TeeNeka Jones has worked as family support coordinator and parent educator at Chicago Child Care Society. She holds an MSNM in Human Services Administration from Spertus College, a BSW from Southern Illinois University, and an Infant Specialist certificate from the Erikson Institute. She has also worked as a lead infant teacher in Evanston. TeeNeka's placement is at **Health & Disability Advocates**. Her mentors are Amy Zimmerman, Director of Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, and Kakuya Shakur, a social worker at the University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital.

Liliana Martin is an aspiring lawyer, entrepreneur, and dedicated volunteer on behalf of children. She is working on a JD from Northwestern and holds a BA from Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey in Mexico City, and BSBA's in International Business and Management and Organizational Behavior from the University of Missouri. Liliana has sold real estate, worked with homeless children, researched early intervention for children with disabilities, and served as an interpreter at an elementary school. Liliana is serving her placement at **Latino Policy Forum**. Her mentors are Executive Director Sylvia Puente, Research and Policy Associate Reyna P. Hernandez, and Policy Analyst Martin V. Torres.

Saleem Hue Penny holds an AM in Social Work, with a specialization in community schools, from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and an MA in Psychology from Catholic University. His research has focused on teen parenting, domestic and community violence prevention, and school-based health care. Saleem's professional experience has included youth program development, community mental health, urban agriculture, and therapeutic arts. His placement is at **Illinois Action for Children**; President and CEO Maria Whelan and Choua Vue, Assistant Director of Community Engagement, are his mentors.

The Fellowship began in 2009, when the first Fellows joined the program. Members of the inaugural class are moving on to positions in government, nonprofit work and philanthropy. Candace Williams has been hired as Director of Special Initiatives at Positive Parenting DuPage, where she served her Fellowship. Arianna Cisneros has joined Arabella Philanthropic Investment Advisors as a Senior Analyst. Cemére James has taken a new position as Public Administrator Operations Expert at the Illinois Department of Human Services. Christine Tran will pursue a PhD at Columbia University in New York, where she will study inequality, health, and education.

Funders of the Illinois Early Childhood Fellowship are The Boeing Company, Grand Victoria Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, McCormick Foundation, and J. B. and M. K. Pritzker Family Foundation. Evanston Community Foundation is the fiscal sponsor. The Joyce Foundation was a founding partner and supported the program in its first two years.

More information is at the Fellowship website, www.ilearlychildhoodfellows.org.