

# Elm City Fellowship for Children and Families

AN INVESTMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE



2010-2011 CLASS OF FELLOWS

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Faculty and staff for the 2010 - 2011 Elm City Fellowship for Children and Families: (from left); Jolie Bain-Pillsbury, President of Sherbrooke Consulting; Raj Chawla, Principal, OCL Group; Yolanda Caldera-Durant, Program Associate, The Annie E. Casey Foundation; and John Padilla, Associate Director, Workforce Development & Connecticut Programs, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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Building communities that support and strengthen families is a complex challenge that requires bold, imaginative, effective action. The Annie E. Casey Foundation believes that essential steps toward improving outcomes for families and communities include fostering the capacity of individuals, organizations, and systems to respond more effectively to the needs of vulnerable children and families. Inherent in this task is building and sustaining strong leadership among a diverse set of stakeholders that share accountability for achieving better results for children and their families.

The Elm City Fellowship for Children and Families, a leadership development initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and its direct service agency, Casey Family Services, is an executive training program designed to foster leadership within New Haven's nonprofit and public sectors. The Fellowship explicitly strives to increase the pool of diverse, visionary leaders with the confidence and competence to create supports and systems that help families achieve better outcomes.

## **Seeking Talented Professionals and Aspiring, High-Achieving Leaders**

The Elm City Fellowship seeks people who strive for excellence and want to make a greater difference. The Fellowship is designed around the following core components:

- Multi-cultural competency
- Organizational effectiveness
- A leadership development model built on self-awareness and reflection
- Management-skills training in areas such as supervision, governance, fiscal planning and management, strategic planning, and more
- Partnerships and strong social networks with peer mentors from the public and private sectors

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## Program Results

The Fellowship seeks people who have a vision for change, can translate their beliefs into action, think strategically, and are most likely to utilize their leadership abilities for the long-term benefit of New Haven. The Fellowship also aims to broaden the vision, expand the knowledge, enhance the leadership capacities, enlarge the networks, and increase the confidence of its Fellows.

***Broaden Vision:*** Fellows deepen their convictions about the possibility of, and pathways to, improved outcomes for disadvantaged children, fragile families, and disinvested neighborhoods.

***Expand Knowledge:*** Fellows learn about Casey's two-generation approach to family strengthening, as well as innovative programs, policies, and powerful strategies across the country that are leading to change.

***Enhance Leadership Capacity:*** Fellows hone their technical skills, improve their communications skills, deepen their formal knowledge, expand their ability to think strategically, and increase their self-awareness – all critical aspects of successful leadership.

***Expand Networks:*** Fellows gain exposure to new people, programs, and ideas that challenge their thinking and assumptions. This network building also helps Fellows develop relationships that will be important resources as they progress through their careers.

***Increase Confidence:*** Fellows build the considerable courage required to take on challenging career paths and lead significant change initiatives.

***Focus on Results:*** Fellows learn to use data to inform and improve program quality and apply a results framework to their decision-making.

## Program Description

The Fellowship focuses on the practice of leadership and the application of specific tools, techniques, and behavioral competencies in the participants' organizations and spheres of work. Leaders are introduced to skills, tools, and leadership approaches which they are expected to integrate and apply within their own organizations during the Fellowship. The workshops allow sufficient time for application of the skills and approaches between sessions. The following topics are included in the leadership effectiveness component:

- Personal leadership
- Coaching and peer support
- Supervision and mentoring
- Moving from vision to action
- Results-based accountability
- Strategies for reducing racial disparities

The Fellowship convenes for two days every month from September 2011 through June 2012, with workshops ranging in duration from full- to half-day sessions, with at least one overnight retreat. Except in unusual circumstances, attendance is mandatory for all sessions and failure to meet this requirement will lead to immediate dismissal from the program. The Elm City Fellowship also explores building bridges between the Fellowship participants and other leaders in the community through the introduction of an optional peer-coaching and support model. Fellowship graduates earn continuing education units (CEUs).



# Elm City Fellowship for Children and Families

**2010-2011 CLASS OF FELLOWS**



Elm City Fellowship Class of 2010 - 2011. Front (from left); Gloribell Lopez, Janet Aguilar, Erika Nowakowski, and Malwin Davila. Back (from left); Leonard Jahad, Jim Rushkowski, Qur-an Webb, and Nancy Roldán Johnson

# Janet Aguilar

Social Work Supervisor, Connecticut  
Department of Children and Families

Janet Aguilar's career as a social worker began as a life journey in her teen years. "One thing that I knew about myself was that I loved working with people, so that naturally led me to ask myself: 'How do I make a difference in people's lives?'" Aguilar recalls.

When she first came to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, Aguilar says, "I was fascinated by the possibilities and simultaneously overwhelmed with the bureaucracy." But she has learned over the years that nothing is impossible, and today she relishes her work as "an agent of small changes that have a big impact."

In the 17 years she has been with the Department, Aguilar has had many opportunities to participate in pilot programs and best case practice projects to evaluate and assess the agency's effectiveness in the communities it serves. But the Elm City Fellowship has been unique, she says. "I am learning

to master new techniques, deepen my understanding of how to create change, and build new relationships that will support and encourage my vision." Her ultimate goal is to leave a legacy of making a positive difference for the children and families she serves.



Working with one of her new colleagues in the Fellowship, Aguilar is exploring the idea of developing an evidence-based assessment instrument to address the challenges faced by young women aged 12 to 18. "The Fellowship is teaching me tools

that I can use to learn to develop effective collaborative strategies and negotiate systems so that more of our work is preventive and proactive," she says. "I want to continue to operate from the basic principles of integrity, genuine compassion, and to have the courage to do the job that few others want to do."

## Malwin Davila

Program Associate, William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund

Malwin Davila has always valued education in its formal and informal manifestations, and he has a driving passion to ensure that every young person has a strong and rich educational experience. In his career in the youth development field, Davila has had the opportunity to work directly with young people to help them achieve and attain their educational aspirations. In his current role as a program associate with the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, he supports the capacity-building efforts of community partners working to get kids ready for school by age 5 and to help them become successful learners by age 9.

The Fellowship has armed Davila with tools to examine himself, his colleagues, and community partners—and to capitalize on opportunities, recognize obstacles, and break through the boundaries of the status quo. “Working at a community level can be really challenging, but the Fellowship has helped me understand and put into perspective how to be more effective with collaboratives, and how to get them to focus on collective performance and change.”

Davila describes his training facilitators as the Mickey to his “Rocky,” the title character in the movie by that name. “Just when I thought I was stretching far enough, they helped me stretch farther,” he says.

Davila has already begun to implement what he has learned in his work at the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, and he expects to keep building on these successful approaches. “The Closing the Gap analysis is a powerful tool for helping local groups to quantify what it will take to improve an indicator in their community, and I can’t wait to start using it,” he says. “What I have are real and practical tools that I can exercise in the leadership roles I occupy today.”



## Leonard Jahad

Chief Probation Officer, Court Support Services  
Division State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

As Chief Probation Officer in New Haven, Leonard Jahad has been active in many collaborative efforts aimed at improving conditions for youth involved with the justice system. “I’ve been doing this for a long time, and over the years we have done a lot of good things, such as community engagement, mentoring and coaching, and offering a variety of services for our youth,” he notes. “But we could never measure whether our efforts were effective, and we could not say clearly that we were making a difference – and that always nagged me.”

Jahad came to the Fellowship seeking a new set of management tools that could help him answer these questions and examine his own role as a leader. “Through the work of the Fellowship, I have gained effective tools for working through change and moving from talk to action. I have never been bashful about holding myself accountable for my work and actions, but the understanding I have gained about results and accountability from the Fellowship has given me a much smarter and systematic approach to working with collaboratives. The focus on examining who is better off as a result of our work is a powerful approach to making change at a population level.”



“I did not expect the intensity of the work and learning, but quickly found that it was top-notch – and that I had to come prepared,” says Jahad, who adds that the Fellowship has given him a framework for self-reflection that benefits his professional growth and personal leadership. “I have met a wonderful group of friends, and working with

them has created the space for me to critique my own leadership style and exposed me to new ways of thinking. This has been among the most rewarding experiences in my professional career.”

# Nancy Roldán Johnson

Co-founder and Executive Director,  
The Latina A.R.M.Y., Inc.

Nancy Roldán Johnson applied to the Fellowship to gain a deeper understanding of her role and influence as a leader so she could help her organization thrive.

“I worked in the private sector for a number of years,” she says, “but as a relatively new executive director in the nonprofit sector, I wanted to learn from others in the field while strengthening my own leadership capacity. Our organization’s mission is to mobilize successful women to mentor and empower at-risk girls. I wanted to gain insight on how to build strong collaborations to support our work in influencing the lives of girls – and ultimately the Greater New Haven community.”

“The Latina A.R.M.Y. was born from my deep desire as a young girl for everyday Latina role models. In fact, the name stands for Accomplished Role Models Motivating Young Latinas. As the first in my extended family to attend and graduate from college, I wanted to pave an easier path for other first- and second-generation Latina girls to pursue their education and goals,” says Johnson. “I am excited by the vision that in the not-too-distant future, there will be a group of leaders in New Haven working on behalf of families and children who all share the Elm City Fellows experience!”

Johnson believes increased trust among partners, better use of data, and a focus on results will promote stronger programs and collaborative efforts in New Haven. “Using reflective practice as a learning mode has been a rich experience. Our facilitators work with us to deepen our understanding of ourselves as leaders from a personal and systems perspective,” she says. “The Fellowship has provided me the space, support, and knowledge I needed to learn and understand what this all means for me.”



## Gloribell Lopez

Director of Real Estate Development,  
NeighborWorks New Horizons

After earning an undergraduate degree at Boston College, Gloribell Lopez returned to her native city of New Haven, determined to improve the quality of life for families in its neighborhoods. As Director of Real Estate Development at NeighborWorks New Horizons, Lopez has a strong vision for developing permanently affordable, quality housing as an anchor for strong, healthy, and vibrant communities. She has worked in both the public and non-profit sectors, focusing on housing and community development in and around New Haven. Wanting to deepen her impact on the community, she also volunteers her time to youth-oriented and community programs that bring positive experiences to low-income communities.

The Elm City Fellowship “forced me to slow down and examine systems and processes, my role within them, and what difference I was making,” says Lopez. “The workshops are tailored to helping aspiring leaders who want to excel in their work and service. The Fellowship provided me with



the frameworks and disciplines to propel me forward in my management capacity and in helping to build the overall effectiveness at my organization.”

Lopez says the depth of discussion and learning of practical principles in the program provided her with the confidence and tools she needed to take the next step in her personal and professional development. “The Fellowship is the first time in my professional career that I have intentionally reflected on where I want to be in five years, on how to make a broader impact in my work, and

on how I was going to achieve that,” she says. “The coaching and interacting with my peers created the space for that reflection,” adds Lopez, who is also grateful for the lessons she learned about results accountability. “I believe that these practices are what will bring me and my organization to a higher level with proven results.”

# Erika Nowakowski

Court Planner II, Court Support Services  
Division State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

Erika Nowakowski puts her passion for improving the lives of vulnerable children and families to good use as a court planner for the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch. Among her accomplishments has been launching a community-based prevention program for juvenile status offenders and their families in response to changes in Connecticut's Families with Service Needs law.

Nowakowski, who has been with CSSD since 2007, is developing mentoring services for children and youth who are on probation and working to improve educational advocacy services to help engage families and empower young people to improve their academic success.

Before joining CSSD, she worked in an organization in New York City charged with guiding foster care agencies through the complicated accreditation process.

The Fellowship has offered her a unique opportunity to examine how she leads, accomplishes her work, and communicates. "This experience has given me the tools to look at a project and identify and utilize the strengths and skills each person brings to get to the end result. I aspire to use a results accountability framework for creating change and ensuring effective programming."

The Elm City Fellowship has helped Nowakowski test her theories with a supportive group of facilitators and peer coaches.

"The facilitators have gently challenged and taught me the value of accountability and how to use it in my projects and in day-to-day interactions. I see this group of Fellows as leaders that I will turn to in the future to provide insight and support."



# Jim Rushkowski

Court Planner, Court Support Services

Division State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

Forging community partnerships has been an important part of Jim Rushkowski's work as a Court Planner in the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch. Rushkowski oversees statewide adult residential services and special projects, a job that involves managing federal grants, funding programs for people with limited English proficiency, and implementing collaborative projects with the Department of Corrections and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

"Being accepted into the Elm City Fellowship has helped me to establish many new community connections," says Rushkowski.

Rushkowski's participation in the Fellowship has inspired him to make a commitment to lower the recidivism rate in Connecticut by offering alternative programming for people in the judicial system.



A major focus of the Fellowship is to help participants delve deeply into their personality types to inform their leadership style. "Gaining an understanding of personality types has helped me to better communicate with my CSSD colleagues and beyond," says Rushkowski.

Learning more about results accountability has been another bonus of the program, he says. "The Fellowship has given me the opportunity to take the concept of Results Based Accountability

to the next level. RBA has been a buzz word within CSSD for several years... but I have learned so much more from the Fellowship about how to use it as a tool and to be able to work from ends to means."

## Qur-an Webb

Social Work Supervisor, Connecticut  
Department of Children and Families

Qur-an Webb's career has been dedicated to helping children and families in need. A social work supervisor in the investigations unit of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), Webb has held a variety of positions since joining the agency in 1999, and he has supervised units focused on adolescent transitions, treatment, and investigations.

Webb has also been involved in events connecting DCF to the broader community. As project manager for the Community Awareness 5K/Run/Walk, he assisted in the recruitment and retention of resource families. He also participated in the Connecticut Comprehensive Outcomes Review Team, which closely examined the practices of regional DCF offices by reviewing data, conducting interviews, and debriefing selected cases.

Webb says the Elm City Fellowship has helped broaden his knowledge about what it takes to be an effective leader and reaffirmed his commitment to results accountability.

In addition, the Fellowship has helped him “gain a deeper respect for the private sector,” Webb says.

Webb has found interacting and sharing perspectives with the other Fellows very beneficial, and the program has helped him better understand his personality and leadership style. He wants to be able to implement what he has learned at DCF and also in other professional and personal endeavors.



“The Fellowship has helped me to hone my leadership skills and to expand my involvement in the community,” explains Webb. “It has allowed me to take a giant step forward.”

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## 2011-2012 APPLICATION PROCESS

Candidates may apply or be nominated to participate in the Elm City Fellowship. Applications will be accepted from **June 27, 2011, to August 5, 2011**. Application and nomination forms are available online at [www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org). From the Quick Links menu, select “New Haven Direct Service Grants Program” for Fellowship information.

### Please Mail Application to:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
Attention: Elm City Fellowship for Children and Families  
127 Church Street  
New Haven, CT 06510

Any questions regarding the Fellowship may be directed to John E. Padilla, The Annie E. Casey Foundation at 203.401.6899 or [jpadilla@aecf.org](mailto:jpadilla@aecf.org).

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION  
CASEY FAMILY SERVICES

127 Church Street  
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[www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)  
[www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org)

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public sectors.*



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