



## Shifting Tides

# Family Matters

HDFS News  
July 13, 2016

A report of good things that are happening to UNCG's Human Development and Family Studies family and friends (e.g., faculty members, students, alumni and interested parties). Please send us your **GOOD NEWS!**

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### Tributes to Marion O'Brien and Deborah Cassidy

This is a special issue of *Family Matters* devoted to the contributions of two very special members of our department:

Marion O'Brien who passed away December 21, 2015

And

Deborah (Deb) Cassidy who is retiring effective July 31, 2016.

Both Marion and Deb have been pillars who in multiple ways helped the department grow and become one of the highest ranking and most vibrant HDFS departments in the United States. Equally important Marion was and Deb is a wonderful person.

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## Marion O'Brien

### Personal Remembrances

A huge loss to the HDFFS family was that of Marion O'Brien who, although quite recently retired, continued to be involved in both research and friendship with people in the department. "Family Matters" is particularly apposite in Marion's case; not only did her own family matter immensely to her but also because she treated other members of the department as family.

Marion was wonderful about opening her home to friends for time together with good food and good conversation. She organized "dinner and a movie" with several of us to share a meal and watch a series of most accurate historical dramas. We brought bread, salad, and dessert while Marion always prepared the main course. Marion was an excellent cook and we enjoyed the dinners as much as the movies although the films were great. Having time together, sharing food and ideas was

important to Marion, and she was an expert host.

Bringing people together was so important to Marion. She also organized theatre night, supporting Triad Stage, and ensuring that another two or three people always got to see each of the plays. Once again, eating together was a central part of the experience.

Some members of the department also had the good fortune to travel with her, both in the United States and in other parts of the world, not only for conferences but simply to see and enjoy what this world has to offer. What a delight she was to travel with, always full of curiosity, heading into a local street market, taking a bus to see what was at the end of the line, checking out local restaurants. Marion was willing to try anything, made insightful observations, and was always responding with good humor when things didn't work out just as planned.

Other illustrations show the extent to which the families of colleagues also mattered to Marion. From Jon: Marion invited my wife, a professor at a Brazilian university, to take a position as visiting scholar for a year. The experience resulted in two excellent publications based on the work they accomplished that year and in the establishment of a cross-cultural collaborative project that received close to a million dollars in funding. Beyond the scholarly benefits, Marion ensured that Lia felt welcomed into her family.

From Mary: Marion and John were among the first colleagues my mother met when she first came to live with me in NC. It was one of those get-togethers at Marion's home, which allowed my mom to meet people and feel at home. Marion was good at that. When my mother passed away, Marion was a great support. She encouraged me to give myself time to grieve while reassuring me in my work. I still hear her words of affirmation.

Jon Tudge and Mary Morgan

I delivered two children pre-tenure before UNCG's new family leave policy for faculty went into effect. Both times, Marion taught my graduate seminar in Infancy for several weeks, over and above her normal job duties, so I could spend that precious time with my own babies. When I sent her a gift card to a nice restaurant expressing my gratitude, she promptly returned it noting that my husband and I would need a night out much more than she did, and she wanted to babysit when we used it! She always encouraged me to live a balanced life, putting my family at the forefront.

Esther Leerkes

Marion O'Brien was one of my mentors when I was a newly arrived Junior Faculty member in the HDFS Department. She was very generous with her time, expertise, and sympathy, and steered me through the process. Even after she retired, she used to help, like giving the most practical yet gentle advice on how to deal with strange professional situations, like a journal editor who didn't approve of my name (!). Her advice worked! She is someone who has a warm place in my memories.

Sudha Schreeniwas

I knew Marion as a friend and in my role as a past Chair of the Department. We talked politics at the departmental and national levels, sharing liberal leanings. She was a true leader. Within the department Marion spoke with a clear voice. As Associate Dean of the School of Human Environmental Sciences she worked dedicatedly with others to enhance research. She, herself, achieved a level of scholarship few can match. When I remember Marion, however, it is her vibrancy, her humanity and her compassion for diverse others that brings tears for our loss.

Dan Perlman



One of the many reasons Marion was an excellent mentor is that she was a friend first. We always started our

meetings talking about life and how we were doing before talking research. She also truly understood that work-family balance was key. She had that in her own life and she emphasized that with her students. Another fantastic

characteristic of Marion was her ability to let her students learn on their own while gently guiding them in the right direction. Marion encouraged me to share my ideas without judgment (despite the fact that many of those ideas were bad!). She simply encouraged me to investigate further, then smiled and nodded when I came back the next week to tell her that I realized these weren't good ideas after all. It seems like the more I study sensitive parenting, the more I figure out what Marion was really up to all those years!

Jackie Nelson, PhD Advisee (PhD 2011)

Folks may remember that Marion chaired the Search Committee that hired me as Chair of the Department. Even in those early interactions with Marion, I noticed an endearing quality that I'd like to emphasize here. Marion had an incredible way of remembering details of individuals' personal lives, asking for updates about how things were going, and showing a deep caring for the well-being of her friends. One summer, my wife and children were in South Dakota for about a month, and Marion and I did a pseudo-scientific "test" of the quality of various Indian restaurants around town. As

researchers, we kidded about trying to control for extraneous variables, trying to order the same items from each restaurant, and even thought about writing up our results. We never did write up our results, but we had a wonderful time and I will always cherish that memory. Before she retired, she often asked if there were ways that she could help out with any of my Chair duties and I must admit to taking her up on her generous offers on more than one occasion. As you might expect, when Marion took on a task, it was done thoroughly, competently, and very promptly—one major example is our Department graduation ceremony, which Marion originally took the lead on. To this day, grounded in the excellent way that Marion organized the ceremony, we still have such a ceremony every May and it has grown in size and stature. Even after she retired, we had coffee fairly regularly and she was always extremely supportive and caring. Most know about Marion's many important work contributions, particularly her outstanding scholarship, but I want everyone to also know what a deeply caring person she is/was.

Mark Fine

## Marion O'Brien Human Developmentalist Par Excellence

In addition to being a dear friend to many, Dr. Marion O'Brien was an exceptional teacher, scholar and mentor, and a passionate advocate for children and families. Indeed, one of the themes that permeated her work was her emphasis on the importance of relationships. Through her teaching, her research, and her service to her institution and profession, Dr. O'Brien reminded others of the

importance of studying, understanding, and improving the relationships and well-being of children in families, schools, and the larger community and culture. Her career accomplishments are witness to that commitment. Her work often involved studying children over time, trying to understand the way in which relationships impacted children's emotional, cognitive, and social functioning. She published on

topics ranging from the effects childcare to the need to attend to diverse developmental needs of children to the impact of childhood obesity. Here, we highlight some of the ways in which she impacted our field, our university, and ourselves as scholars.

Dr. O'Brien began her academic career as a professor at the University of Kansas in the Department of Human Development, where she also completed her graduate work. During her 16 years as a member of the KU faculty, Dr. O'Brien was instrumental in leading a number of research projects related to young children's early cognitive and social development. Most notably, Dr. O'Brien was one of the primary investigators of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD). The SECCYD is among the best large-scale longitudinal studies of young children in the field. Beginning in 1991, data were collected from 1,300 newborns and their families across 10 sites, including the Kansas site which was under Dr. O'Brien's guidance. The initial goal was to better understand the impact of early child care experiences on children's development by studying a large and diverse group of children over many years. This groundbreaking effort showed that despite common misconceptions, child care experience is not linked with adverse consequences for children and does not disrupt the quality of parent-child relationships. Rather, high quality care, both in child care settings and in the family, are critically important for healthy development. Beyond this important finding, the study has produced more than 250 articles on a range of topics and has added to our understanding of what predicts children's adjustment to school,

social competence, behavioral and psychological problems, and health outcomes. Dr. O'Brien was involved in most of this work and generously shared access to this data set with her colleagues and students in Kansas and at UNCG prior to it being made publicly available.

In 2001, Dr. O'Brien moved to UNCG, where she became involved in a number of collaborative projects with colleagues in HDFS and other departments. Working with colleagues in the Psychology Department, she was a key contributor to the RIGHT Track Research Project, which is a long-term study, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, of children's early behavioral and social skills and how they predict later academic and mental health outcomes. Dr. O'Brien primarily oversaw the assessments having to do with home and family functioning. She was actively engaged in mentoring students who worked on the project, which has produced more than 50 peer-reviewed papers, many of which focus on children's relationships with parents and teachers as having an important role in altering negative trajectories and outcomes.

In 2003, Dr. O'Brien (along with colleagues in HDFS and Psychology) was instrumental in beginning an interdisciplinary project focused on better understanding the interplay between emotion and cognition among preschoolers, and their joint role in children's early adjustment to formal schooling. This led to a series of three short-term longitudinal studies named STAR (School Transition and Academic Readiness) involving over 600 local children. Dr. O'Brien oversaw the day to day operations of the first two studies, and continued to play a major role in the design and execution of the most recent study even after she retired. Under her

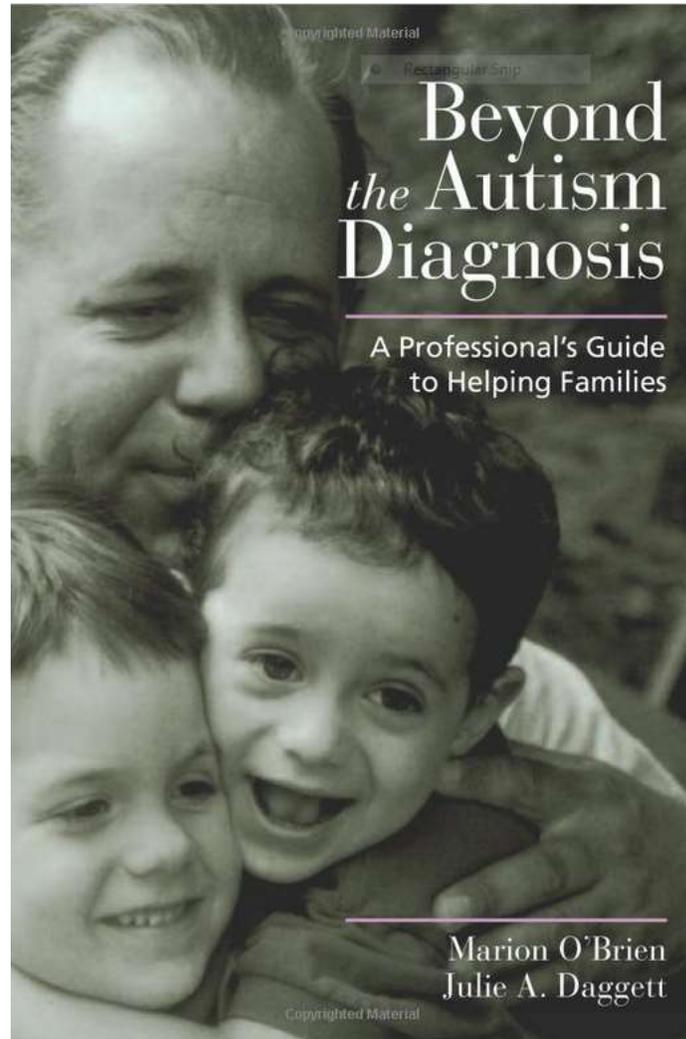
guidance, STAR was an effective training experience for a handful of pre-tenure faculty, over a dozen graduate students, and three postdoctoral scholars. To date, 20 peer-reviewed manuscripts based on these projects have been published with many more in progress.

Dr. O'Brien's commitment to advancing work that impacted children and families extended well beyond her research accomplishments. In her faculty role, as director of the Family Research Center, and later as the Associate Dean for Research in the former School of Human and Environmental Sciences (now Health and Human Sciences), Dr. O'Brien fought tirelessly to enhance the research infrastructure for faculty and students. She advocated for and planned new internal funding mechanisms (e.g., a competitive program to apply for a course release to write an external grant), providing pre and post-award support at the school level, funding for external reviews of grants prior to submission, providing workshops in advanced quantitative methodologies, and bringing in expert speakers to advance faculty and student research. Additionally, she was a founding member of UNCG's Child and

Family Research Network and served on its executive committee until her retirement.

A perusal of Dr. O'Brien's curriculum vita speaks to her measurable accomplishments as a teacher and scholar. She published extensively, was the recipient of numerous grants and awards including a Research Excellence Award in 2005, served on the boards of prestigious journals, regularly reviewed grants for the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, and advised undergraduate and graduate students and post-doctoral scholars. Dr. O'Brien was a frequently sought expert, most recently as the Barbara Mounds Hansen Visiting Scholar at Iowa State University in 2008. Beyond these concrete achievements, though, is a legacy that will endure for many years to come: she was a beloved mentor to her colleagues and students. Her work will continue to reverberate, because she patiently provided wise advice, engaged feedback, superb editing, and unending support through the relationships she established in her long and distinguished career.

Esther Leerkes and Susan Calkins





## Deb Cassidy

### Educator, Mentor, Scholar and Advocate

It is with mixed emotions that we share the news that Dr. Deborah Cassidy is retiring from the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at UNCG. Deb spent her 26 years at UNCG providing research and service to the field of early childhood education. She is truly a remarkable individual who has utilized her many skills in teaching, scholarship, and service to make meaningful differences in the lives of young children, families, and teachers in North Carolina, the United States, and around the world. Deb has remained a tireless advocate to improve the ways young children are cared for, nurtured, and educated in early childhood education classrooms and programs, and has led the charge for the rights and welfare of teachers who provide services for these young children. Her impressive list of presentations and invited speaking engagements attest to the far reaching influence her scholarship has had on the early childhood field. We are convinced that children, families, teachers, students, and colleagues locally, nationally, and internationally

are changed for the better as a result of Deb's work.

Over the years Deb has taught hundreds of students at UNCG and beyond. She has developed courses at both the graduate and undergraduate level, helped facilitate the creation of new programs of study, and revised curricula to ensure that HDFS at UNCG is on the cutting edge of preparing early childhood education. In the 1990's she, along with colleagues, led the way in developing an interdisciplinary program in early childhood at UNCG across two schools because she knew that it was critical that early childhood students learn to work with children with and without disabilities in an integrated and cohesive manner—it was the “right” thing to do no matter the challenges. She incorporated these practices along with a child-focused curriculum into the Child Care Education Program, the university's laboratory school which she directed until 2002 and supported throughout her career. In addition, under Deb's guidance, the program achieved accreditation from the National Association for the Education

of Young Children and re-opened a classroom for infants as part of the program operations.

She has worked consistently to provide the best educational experience possible for students. In the mid-1990's Deb recognized that the articulation agreements between community colleges and 4-year institutions required students to repeat many courses. and worked to develop a stronger articulation agreement for students transferring into UNCG from community colleges. She then formed a team to investigate the outcomes of the new articulation agreement and found that transfer students were no different in their final grade point averages than traditional students who started at UNCG as freshman. The creation of this stronger agreement has allowed hundreds of students in the early childhood field, who may never have been able to afford a 4-year degree, to earn both an associate's degree and a bachelor's degree. Deb continues to advocate for these groundbreaking articulation agreements today and has impacted other articulation agreements around the state and nationally.

Deb's record of scholarship is equally impressive. Over the years, she and her colleagues have secured millions of dollars of grant and contract funding to further work in the field of early childhood and make a difference in the lives of children and families. Her work on the North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project is a clear example of this impact. Beginning in 1999, this project has completed thousands of assessments of quality in licensed child care programs and schools around the state. These assessments provide direct feedback to programs to improve in

their level of quality, thus impacting the experiences of the over 250,000 children enrolled in child care in North Carolina and progressively increasing the quality in child care across the state. This work has national implications as well, as Deb has regularly consulted with other state administrators and legislators to discuss how to improve the systems that exist in other states. This is just one example of Deb's many applied projects that are far reaching and impactful. Her impressive list of published work and presentations and invited speaking engagements attest to the far reaching influence her scholarship has had on the early childhood field.

Deb's record of service once again illustrates her breadth of influence. She has served on a vast number of departmental, school, and university committees that have beneficially impacted the lives of many students at UNCG. One of her greatest opportunities for positive influence in the state was during the four years she served as the Director of the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE). During her directorship she advocated strongly for improved wages for teachers of young children and for improvements in the quality of care and education that children were receiving. In her role as the Director of DCDEE, she helped guide and advocate for Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant funding that eventually brought nearly \$70 million dollars to North Carolina. In her role as the Director she also helped strengthen the early childhood system across the state, increasing the number of high quality programs and drastically

reducing the number of low quality programs, and working to bring programs and polices together for the betterment of young children and the professionals who work with them. Her future impact continues to be strong as she steps into the elected role as the President of the National Association of the Education of Young Children - the major professional association for the early childhood field.

In conclusion, Deb's legacy of work in the field of early childhood education is

clearly far reaching and influential and she will be missed in the Department. Deb's passion for the field and excitement to make a difference is contagious and she has significantly influenced her colleagues and students at UNCG, as well as around the state and nation. Her desire to provide the best possible environments for young children and professionals began early in her career and has been sustained for decades. She has truly had an impact on the welfare of the human race and while she is ending her work at UNCG, we know this influence will continue for years to come.

Linda Hestenes and BK Faculty



A Tribute to Deborah J. Cassidy

A fast 15 years has gone by  
as we have played in our field  
and shared the yields of our lives.  
I am humbled.

Listening and connecting  
the echoes  
of human story,  
advocating for practice,  
to ensure the children  
are happy.

Vision, leadership, and craft -  
the wisdom to hone and release,  
to converse with truths  
as we understand them to be.  
I hope you see,  
I am grateful for the scholarly gifts  
you have given to me.

And for your life,  
shared along the way,  
I have reverence.  
My advisor, my mentor,  
and my friend,  
I will forever carry you with me,  
on this journey,  
blessed be.

With love,  
Joanna K. Lower

## Personal Remembrances

Fortunately for the State of North Carolina, but unfortunately for me, I only had the pleasure of working with Deb for 3 years because she served as the Director of Child Development for the State for 4 years, 2 of which were after I began working at UNCG. I had known of Deb's reputation in early childhood education and development long before I came to UNCG and it was an honor to have the opportunity to experience her major contributions first hand as a colleague. Other than her major contributions to the field, one of her many positive qualities is her deep commitment to the causes that she believes in. Deb has deep commitments to children and families, to the Department, to the B-K area, and to faculty colleagues and students. She is a pillar in the field nationally and internationally (as evidenced by her incredibly prestigious election as President of NAEYC), but, perhaps just as importantly, she is an icon in Greensboro, UNCG, and the Department. And, as we all know, it is very difficult to shine so brightly both locally and nationally. I also have greatly appreciated and enjoyed my interactions with Deb—not only is she extremely competent, but she is fun to work with. We have been so fortunate to have Deb on our faculty for so long and I hope that her retirement allows her to play as much golf as she would like and that the Cubs have a great season!

Mark Flne

I have had the opportunity to know and work with Deb Cassidy for nearly 20 twenty years. Along with others, I have

benefited professionally and personally from being her colleague. Her commitment to young children and their teachers, as well as the energy she brings to her work is contagious for those around her. She has long recognized that providing a supportive environment and adequate compensation for teachers in the early childhood field is one of the most important ways of providing high quality learning environments for young children. Her career reflects this commitment and her enthusiasm inspires and encourages others. Her enthusiasm often leads those around her to accomplish goals we might not have attempted on our own. This spirit and leadership encourages many collaborative approaches in our department, particularly among the BK faculty.

Over twenty years, I have had the opportunity to observe Deb in many roles: within our university, with colleagues from other universities, with elected and appointed officials, with students, with child care providers, with teachers of young children, as well as with young children. It is always remarkable to me, that no matter the prestige of her position or the distinction of the group around her, most of us know Dr. Deborah Cassidy as "Deb". While we all wish Dr. Deborah Cassidy the best of everything for her retirement from the university, we recognize we will miss "Deb" but look forward to her continued enthusiasm for the early childhood field to inspire us.

Sharon Mims

It is a great privilege to know, worked with and learned from Deb Cassidy over the past 25 plus years! While it is difficult to identify all of her accomplishments, she has made major contributions to the field of early childhood which has ultimately enhanced the lives of young children and their families internationally, nationally and locally. Her passion for quality programs, policies and services for young children, their families and providers has dominated her research, teaching and service activities. Deb is an international leader as her expertise has been requested through presentations, symposiums, key note addresses and is now President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. It was fortunate for me that Deb and I arrived at UNCG the same year as we immediately started working together on grants, manuscripts, presentations and ultimately collaboratively coordinating the BK programs for many years. Blending the knowledge and practices of our two disciplines (early childhood and early childhood special education) guided the development of a strong BK program at UNCG. Deb and I also co-taught a number of different courses which was a wonderful learning experience! Deb's expertise in developing the five star rating system for early childhood programs has served as a model throughout the nation and has been included in the Race to the Top guidelines. Deb strongly advocated and successfully implemented articulation agreements between community colleges and State IHEs in North Carolina. She has been so successful that she has been recruited to share her expertise with other states. As the State Director for the

North Carolina Division of Child Development, she advanced State policies and practices for child care programs and their staff ensuring high quality learning environments for all children in the State. Under Deb's leadership the State of North Carolina became a model in the nation for early childhood. Deb is an outstanding international, national and regional leader in early childhood and I am honored to also call her my friend.

Judy Niemeyer

Mentor, Collaborator, Friend

Upon joining the SES faculty in 2004, I was immediately assigned to co-teach two courses with Deb in the Fall and Spring semesters. What a great way to start my new career in higher education! Deb provided guidance throughout our weekly planning sessions and class meetings that year as I learned the nuances of college teaching. Likewise, Deb made it clear that she was open to new ideas and together we created new assignments and other course revisions, some of which are still used today. Of course all who know Deb have the good fortune of experiencing her quick wit, so the courses we co-taught were great fun as well. The friendship and collaboration we developed that year was the foundation for creating and implementing a training program in Guatemala the following summer. More than 150 administrators, teachers, and niñeras from early childhood programs near Guatemala City participated in the two week training course. Deb's collaboration and teaching were essential to its success and a favorite of the attendees.

Belinda Hardin

During the subsequent years, Deb continued to demonstrate her mentorship and collaborative spirit to all of us on the BK faculty as a colleague and the Co-Director of the undergraduate and graduate programs (along with Judy Niemeyer in SES). Her commitment to these aspects of professionalism at UNCG and beyond touched students and colleagues alike across the years. Deb will be missed at UNCG, but I hope she takes solace in the fact that her lifelong commitment and success will continue to make a positive impact on children and families for years to come, as it did for me during that first year and my tenure at UNCG.

Twenty years ago, I arrived at UNCG as a brand new assistant professor. One of my clearest memories of those first few weeks on campus was the warm welcome provided by one particular colleague in HDFS - Deb Cassidy. Each time I saw Deb, she greeted me as if I was her favorite person in the world - and soon she became one of mine! Deb was always quick to offer her assistance and support as I struggled to figure out what being a faculty member was all about and how to balance work and family. Her gracious sharing of her time was all the more impressive in light of Deb's tremendous responsibilities in the department related to an active research program, steady stream of external funding, the Child Care Education Program, and directing the department's early childhood education program. Deb will forever be cemented in my mind as the absolute best person to be assigned to work with - being on a committee with Deb was always a guaranteed good time. She was simultaneously the consummate professional and a whole

lot of fun. Deb, thank you for never hesitating to speak your mind, for loving and respecting your colleagues, for your great sense of humor and perspective, and for being the guiding force that resulted in the absolute best early childhood program in the state/country/world. You have modeled everything that makes HDFS great for decades. I missed you every day when you were on leave from HDFS, and I will miss you every day of your retirement!

Anne Fletcher

“Invested in people” is a phrase that I think describes Deb Cassidy. On a broader scale, Deb has worked tirelessly to improve compensation for early childhood educators—she has invested time and energy through research and advocacy to demand higher wages for teachers and providers in Greensboro and throughout the country. She passionately believes that this investment in the people who work directly with children is critical to improving the quality of care our children receive. Within our HDFS department, Deb has invested heavily in our students. Undergraduate and graduate students with whom she has worked have benefitted from her time and expertise, as well as enthusiastic emotional support, she has dedicated to their success. On a personal level, Deb has been a mentor throughout my career in HDFS. As a new faculty member in 2003, I turned to Deb for advice and support. She happily included me in projects to help me get my research program off the ground, and has guided me through the Promotion and Tenure process for over a decade. Indeed, Deb invests heavily in the success of other people—those she knows personally and

people who work in our early childhood field—and we are all better off for it.

Catherine Scott-Little

Deb has made a difference in the lives of teachers and children in North Carolina and beyond. This we know from her prestigious career efforts and her extensive CV. But just as important, Deb has made a difference in the lives of people with whom she works - not just scholarly, but personally. Because of her, many of our graduate students are equipped with the skills and the inspiration to produce research that can make a positive change in the lives of early childhood educators, children, and families. Because of her I understand the importance of building lasting, genuine connections with the people with whom you work – and I've learned through Deb that this is sometimes best accomplished through an impromptu meeting, sitting at a restaurant in the afternoon discussing life-altering career choices. She paved the way for research, policy, and practice to explore how best to support teachers and children, but for me she paved the way for my career. And although the research experiences and publications she has supported me through have made my job prospects that much better, what I've learned from these things pale in comparison to what she has taught me about being a supportive mentor and friend. Getting to work with and get to know Deb has been and will continue to be such a pleasure.

Liz King, PhD. 2016

Organizational psychologist talk about task and social emotional leadership.

Deb Cassidy has manifest both in spades. She's had a career of great accomplishments: spearheading the North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project that helped improve child care in North Carolina, Director of the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education, and President of the 70,000+ member of the National Association for the Education of Young Child (NEAYC), to name a few. Behind her accomplishments, what stands out for me is the way Deb has gone about things. She connects with others, she's creative, and she's energetic. She's a person who has advocated for early childhood education and social justice. She's a person who has made things happen. And what is most wonderful, when things happen around Deb, they benefit others. She has been a terrific departmental colleague as well as a player on the state and national stage. It has been said that "A legacy is etched into the minds and carved into the hearts of others." Deb's legacy is deeply etched into my mind and my warmth for her is carved into my heart.

Dan Perlman

I have been fortunate enough to have worked with Deb for many years and in different capacities during my time at UNCG. She was instrumental in helping me secure work at the Child Care Education Program. At the time Deb was the director of the program and we shared many experiences, some of them good, some of them not so good. Deb was always a huge advocate for myself and all the other teachers at CCEP. Deb also supported me in my endeavor to achieve an AP instructor position when the student teaching coordinator opportunity came about. I

have come to understand what a unique and wonderful person Deb is, and consider myself lucky to have a been even a small part of her tenure at UCNG. On a professional level I am happy for Deb to move to this next phase in her journey through life, on a personal level, I will miss her very much. Deb- you are the best!

G. Stradley Smith

I have known Deb Cassidy for years in many capacities, having first met her when we both served in the community on various boards and committees. When I later returned to graduate school, largely due to Deb's encouragement, she was my advisor and the professor of some of the courses I took. I have learned from Deb in many ways, including much needed specific knowledge that applied to working in my field. What I learned from Deb that has been the most valuable, however is related to her attitude, rather than to her vast expertise in BK. Deb teaches people how to be leaders by being a good role model and by conveying her confidence in them. It is no small matter to have Deb Cassidy believe in you. I also learned to always say, "How can we make this work?", and never to even consider that something won't work. I have sat in meetings when Deb would say to the group, "we will have no naysayers!" That is a powerful statement that sets the tone for the meeting and the importance of the work we are doing there. Deb Cassidy has always had the capacity for a far-reaching vision and her "Can Do" attitude is the reason she has benefitted BK, HDFS, UNCG and each person she has touched.

Kathryn Aldridge

The terms "mentor" and "mentorship" are used ever more frequently. With increased usage, the unique and special features the terms should convey have been lost to the mundane. Fortunately for me, this is not true of my relationship with Deb Cassidy. When I was her student, Deb was my mentor. Her mentorship of me was more like the original model of mentorship - that of Athena taking on the education and development of Telemachus. I am not alone.

With her students, Deb was generous with her time. She was patient and kind, but she also pushed us. As her research assistants we covered the state collecting data. But she made sure that we were also co-authors on publications based on that data. She was always looking for ways to build our skills, and our vita. Deb focused on and helped us build our strengths, and she was always proud of our accomplishments. Deb's mentorship allowed me to grow from student to professional, and even now she continues to support my growth and development.

As a professor myself, I can see even more clearly how lucky I am to have Deb for a mentor. Deb's generative, courageous and creative spirit continues to provide a model of the faculty member I strive to be. I am forever thankful to have had the opportunity and privilege to have been her student. I am grateful that she continues to support my career and that she continues to be my colleague and friend.

Martha Buell

What an honor and pleasure it has been to work with Deb Cassidy during her time at UNCG! When I joined the department nearly 10 years ago, she instantly made me feel welcome and a part of the Birth-Kindergarten team. Certainly one of Deb's strengths is her ability to connect with others and to foster collaboration. In her interactions with students and colleagues, she has truly embodied our emphasis in the early childhood field on positive, respectful relationships. Another of Deb's remarkable qualities is the depth of her passion and commitment to promoting high-quality, equitable environments for young children, their families, and the professionals who work with them. She has been fierce in

her advocacy of these goals, though you might not suspect it from her easy-going nature and wonderful sense of humor. Deb's impact on North Carolina's early childhood system and the field nationally (and internationally) has been tremendous and will continue. Yet, as accomplished and influential as Deb has been in her career, she is also humble and generous with her time and talents. She has been an inspiration and role model to me professionally and personally, and I will surely miss seeing her as part of our department's day-to-day functioning. However, I know that Deb deserves to enjoy a wonderful retirement and I hope that our paths will continue to cross...often!

Danielle Crosby

