White stands out as leader of Children’s Institute

As the Director of the Office of Mental Health Promotion (OMP), which White created during her time as a student at the University of Rochester Medical Center, White had the inspiration and experience the Children’s Institute was looking for.

“Ann Marie brings a wealth of knowledge on mental health to our agency and is the right person to guide Children’s Institute as we work with partners and leaders to help expand our programs to reach more children in need,” said board president, James Lewis, Jr., and Elizabeth Stowe, CEO.

With degrees in human development and psychology from Cornell University, Columbia University, and the University of Rochester, White also brought with her the educational background necessary to successfully run the Children’s Institute, a Rochester-based nonprofit that works to strengthen children’s social and emotional health.

White said that she was earning her bachelor’s degree from Cornell that she received to focus on human development.

“Having the opportunity to attend graduate school to always be able to work through the intersection of research on science, community improvement efforts and schools or institutions is the community that work on behalf of children and families,” White said. “I always wanted to be in that intersection and now I’m able to leverage my research, education, and expertise. It’s a thread bored again that once woven together is not easily broken.”

For those驾龄 more than 15 years ago, White had worked for former U.S. Senator Susan Davis in Washington, D.C., for Children and Families. Then, from 1991-1994, White served as a staff member for the Senate Committee on the first Senate Children’s Caucus and authored the family and Medical Leave Act.

White also had experience working at the National Institute of Health in the office of the directors, where her focus was on promoting leading edge ways to accelerate scientific progress and the pace of advances in the care of children.

It was at NIH that she met the chair of Ur’s psychiatry department. White had been working on creating a new way to do science which engaged the community as a whole.

“Our child could think of all the classes science holds that it’s not a diverse profession,” White said. “One of the ways that he can try to change that is by acknowledging that there are so many things alive, and there are so many different stakeholders. We open science up to other perspectives then we’re not some new interest and some interesting innovations and all the new improvements.”

White was able to bring the idea of community engagement to work, where the psychology department at the medical school could meet to research and that is came to health promotion in the field of psychology.

When at Ur, White developed participatory research with volunteer “nurse helpers” seeking to support urban neighborhoods and increase education activities. Joining the Children’s Institute, White was the next step in her career. The agency works without research and development and to prevent promote education and early prevention programs and best practices for babies, schools, and communities.

Children’s Institute is affiliated with the University of Rochester and has served the local and national community for more than a decade.

The organization was founded as the Primary Mental Health Project in 1957 when a Rochester City School District psychologist and an AOCD social worker met with University of Rochester faculty and renown child psychologist to craft a grant that would enable them to look at young children who were having difficulties in school.

In 1979, Primary Project as it had been known, became a nonprofit with the goal of providing services for children, schools, and families and to work with schools, communities and collectively. Gwen served as executive director of the agency until his retirement in 1999,

Children’s Institute has two areas: programs and service, which develops, implements and trains on different types of programmatic approaches to children, and research and development, through which staffs conduct ongoing work in a continuous improvement forum, as well as basic research.

Our current mission, based on our last five year strategic plan, is to support and equip those that work with children so they can help children succeed,” White said. “Mostly, research fundamentally an organization, care about every child.”

Collaboration is one of the keys to the Children’s Institute’s success. White said, “We work and align with different groups all the time,” she said. “A lot of our work is also done as a coordinated team, so we’re often in collaboration with others and, and often working on systems integrator. It’s the effort of Congress on Medicare. We also work to align with many other agencies and individuals that really care about families in our area.”

With an annual budget of more than $5 million, the Children’s Institute is funded in a variety of ways: through federal and state and local education and Mental Health Services Act, state and local funds and foundations. The organization has grown significantly in recent quarters and employs many more.

White’s goal for the Children’s Institute differ from her predecessor.

“Most important to me is really understanding how change happens and being able to hold both the stability and change processes that need to be kept good things going and help us understand how to help other people we want to move more people and work on systems integration,” White said.

White said the next wave of growth for the Rochester community is to think inter-sectorally at a system level and organizational level on how to work together on behalf of children and families.

“We both have the expertise and we both have the ability,” White said of the agency’s partners. “My parents said to me growing up, they said Rochester is a great place to be a family. And I want that to always be true. Where we can point to great stories and there are bright spots that help our community.”

White was named one of the top 50 leaders in America’s top 50 awards for 2021. White is on Facebook.

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