

Expect Success



FOR OUR CHILDREN

June 2008

Fathers Play a Vital Role in Children's Lives

By Nate Nichols
CSC Deputy Director

It seems so simple, really. Just a name on a form. But babies whose fathers are identified on their birth certificate have a much better chance of surviving that first precious year of life than their peers, research reveals.

And that's only the beginning. The statistical connection between father involvement and child development, while often underplayed in our society, is startling. A father's impact touches every aspect of a child's life: his health, his safety, his happiness, his success in school and in relationships.

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At Children's Services Council, a special taxing district, we help children begin life healthy, enter school ready to learn and thrive in quality after-school activities so they can reach their potential and succeed in life.

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Gaetana D. Ebbola

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TANA TALKS

Be Their Dad
Tana Ebbola
CEO

I had the occasion recently to attend the Touchpoints™ Network Annual meeting. We had workshops on such topics as Infant Mental Health and Families at Risk; we discussed brain development; we contemplated how different cultures have different approaches to supporting families and young children.

And as I listened to the PhDs and Master Clinicians and Practitioners, it occurred to me that they were all saying the same thing: Young children are critically dependent upon their parents and caretakers. That dependency is tied intimately and inexplicably to their relationship with those adults. And that relationship in early childhood will help set the course for that child's future relationships.

This has enormous implications to the importance of parents. And since the role of mothers often gets the bulk of the attention, today we're going to talk about Dads.

APPLAUSE

Kathy Steblea as Keynote Speaker

Kathleen Steblea, community outreach specialist for CSC's Parenting Center, delivered the keynote address at the Texas Council on Family Relations Annual Conference held the end of March. The Texas Council is one of the most active state affiliates of the national Council on Family Relations. Ms. Steblea's speech, Family Life Education: A Practitioner/Employer's Perspective, addressed the challenges for parent educators and providers to find common ground within communities that are ever changing – without sacrificing culture and values. About 250 attended the conference. ●

Babies see, hear, know and remember. And babies need their parents to be consistent, sensitive, loving and attentive.

Dads, your children need you to protect them from harmful, stressful environments – where there is yelling, hitting and feelings of anger and hate. Dads, your children need you to make sure that they and their mothers are safe and loved. Dads, your children need you to be with them, to smile, to play gently, to hold and to listen to them. They are learning from you all the time.

It does not matter how much money you make or the type of home you live in. To a young child, what matters is that they know, see and feel you are with them, you love them, you are their dad. ●

CSC's Building Receives Kudos

Children's Services Council's new building, which opened in July 2007, has been chosen as a Building of America project and will be featured in the upcoming Real Estate & Construction Review – 2009 Florida Edition. The Review, published annually since 1997 by Construction Communications, features the region's top projects. Projects are chosen based on how the team of owner/developer, consultants, architects and contractors worked together to build one of the region's most important, innovative or unique new construction or renovation projects. The magazine will be published March 2009. Each edition also is available online at www.constructionreviews.com ●



High Performing Employees

Great Performances

The following Children's Services Council employees have been cited by their peers for exhibiting high performance standards and an organizational work ethic that supports CSC's leadership philosophy, values and behaviors. The recognition is given each month at CSC's staff meeting. The winner is nominated and chosen by fellow staff members for exhibiting such skills as leadership, teamwork, customer service, innovation as well as ingenuity, productivity and commitment to quality.

The recipients for April and May, respectively, were: David Hepford, Financial Consultant II; Gary Graham, Senior Mentoring Outreach Coordinator. ●

Fathers Play a Vital Role in Children's Lives



By Nate Nichols, *CSC Deputy Director*

A recent Gallup Poll found that more than 90 percent of Americans agree “fathers make a unique contribution to their children’s lives.”

Yet nearly 25 million children live without their biological father. About 26 percent of absent fathers live in a different state than their children. About 40 percent of children who lives in fatherless households haven’t seen their dads in at least a year, while 50 percent of children who don’t live with their dads have never stepped foot in their father’s home.

The news isn’t good for these kids. Children whose fathers aren’t in their lives are more likely to be poor, abused, engage in criminal activity, experiment with controlled substances and suffer educational, physical, emotional and psychological problems.

Dads don’t just make a “unique contribution” in their children’s lives. They make a vital, sometimes life-and-death one.

Life-Altering Impact

Dads don’t just make a “unique contribution” in their children’s lives. They make a vital, sometimes life-and-death one.

When fathers are involved, research shows that pregnant mothers take better care of themselves. And healthier mothers mean healthier babies.

Babies with active, hands-on dads do a better job of regulating their stress levels. And, with dad’s encouragement, their moms are more likely to breastfeed.

Children with involved dads do better in school, delay having sex and are less likely to end up in jail.

All life-altering factors.

Rewards are Priceless

But nobody said it was easy. Fatherhood in even the best circumstances is tough. It’s emotional, frustrating, complex and exhausting. It’s also financially draining and, let’s admit it, time-consuming.

Fatherhood is even tougher when you consider how many relationships between mothers and fathers are fractured. Today, 17 million children live with their mothers in single-parent households. Nearly 1 in 4 first marriages end in divorce—and 60 percent of those divorcing couples have children. Countless other couples never marry, never even live together.

But no matter what the situation between adults, staying involved in your child's life is crucial. And, as I can tell you from personal experience, the rewards are priceless.

My own father was a quiet, steady, strong presence in my life. He taught my sisters and me the importance of education, hard work, character and respect.

To him, those weren't empty words. He was there when I was born and also when I was potty trained. He let me sit on his lap and feel like a man while, at 6 years old, I "drove" his car. And, a former professional ballplayer for the "Colored League," he was there to cheer me on during Little League games.

But he also made my sisters and me wait for our Christmas presents until after he'd given gifts to those in need. And even though he only had a 6th grade education, he drove me to school each day, spoke with my teachers and constantly reminded me of how important it all was.

The Power to Change the Future

I feel that I've had a great deal of success in my professional career. But as a father myself—a single father for many years—I can tell you that being a father is probably the most important, rewarding job you'll ever have. Becoming a father is easy. Fathering takes a great deal more effort and holds a great deal more responsibility.

The Children's Services Council believes that every child in Palm Beach County needs a dad they can count on. I'm determined to see that through.

The research is clear: Children thrive when their dads are involved. So this June, the month that highlights Father's Day, let each of us commit to being that kind of man.

Because whether you're a father, grandfather, stepfather or father figure, you have the power to change the future of our children. ●

SPOTLIGHT

One Child At a Time luncheon

For the 12th year, the Child Advocacy Board and Children's Services Council hosted the One Child at a Time awards luncheon to honor an unsung hero who quietly makes a difference in the lives of Palm Beach County's children. The event, held April 24 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in West Palm Beach, featured Mistress of Ceremonies AnEta Sewell of the South Florida Water Management District. This year, the 19 students in Geri Grocki's Teen Leadership class at Boynton Beach High School sifted through the nominations and chose Kimberly Joyce as the winner of the Extra Mile Award. Ms. Joyce, (seen with CSC Chair Kathy Adams) a family therapist for Oakwood Center of the Palm Beaches in the Glades, also is a Certified Family Life Educator with CSC's Parenting Center and a volunteer literacy tutor. ●



BY THE NUMBERS

The Father Factor

5X

Children in father-absent homes are 5 times more likely to be poor than their peers. *(In 2002, 7.8 % of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 38.4 percent of children in female-headed families.)*

1.8X

Children in father-absent homes are 1.6 to 1.8 times more likely to use tobacco and are 1.5 to 1.9 times more likely to use alcohol. *(The closer the relationship between a teen and a dad, the less likely the teen will engage in substance abuse.)*

2.3X

Infants without a father's name on their birth certificate were 2.3 times more likely to die in the first year of life compared to their peers. *(Babies with involved fathers suffered less anxiety and less crying when separated from a parent. Father involvement is the most important factor in developing empathy.)*

2X

Teens without fathers were twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and 7 times more likely to get pregnant. *(The longer a woman lived with both parents, the lower her risk of early reproductive development.)*

2X

Living in a single-parent home doubles the risk that a child will suffer physical, emotional or educational neglect. *(The overall rate of child maltreatment in a single-parent home is 27.3 children per 1,000, compared to 15.5 for kids living in a two-parent home.)*

2X

Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school. *(Father involvement in school was associated with the higher likelihood of a student getting mostly As.)*

Sources: The Father Factor, from the National Fatherhood Initiative



HELPFUL HINTS

“When dads spend time with their kids from the very beginning and work to keep close feelings between them, good things happen to the kids.”



Want to be more involved?

You can be active in your child's life, even if you're not in a relationship with his/her mother or living with him or her. Here are some tips for all fathers:

Encourage your baby's mother to go to the doctor regularly, eat right and breastfeed. What you do to help her stay healthy helps your baby be healthy, too.

Once your baby is born, do what you can to bond. Stare into your baby's eyes, play kangaroo (strap on an infant carrier and keep your baby close while you do your household chores), read aloud to your baby (even the sports pages!), and cuddle.

Keep your child safe. Never shake your baby, no matter how frustrated you are. Quit smoking and eat healthy, your health and habits directly impacts your child. Denounce violence and show your child what healthy, nonviolent relationships look like by setting a good example. Use carseats and other appropriate measures when traveling in a vehicle with your child. Encourage your child to practice other safe behavior, such as wearing a bike helmet and only swimming when an adult is present.

Provide a listening ear. Your child needs to know you care – even if you can't be there in person as much as you'd like. So talk to your child and, just as importantly, listen when he or she speaks. ●

Sources: *Maps for New Dads*, a handbook by Healthy Families San Angelo, TX; Men's Nonviolence Project, Austin, TX; Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County

IN OTHER NEWS

Project Helps Foster Children Find Homes Faster

By Laura Fleischman

CSC Research & Evaluation Team Leader

First-grade teacher Edward Parker did the most natural thing when he corrected a little boy's behavior in the Timber Trace Elementary cafeteria. Little did he know that encounter a year ago would change so many lives.

The next day, that little boy named Johnathan offered Mr. Parker, a father of two, a lollipop and then asked him a stunning question: "Do you want to be my father?"

While still so young, Johnathan had already lived a lifetime of sorrow. His father was dead and his mother, who had been incarcerated, had left the family years earlier. Johnathan and his little brother had been living with his aunt and uncle. But then his aunt passed away and his uncle, unable to deal with him, handed him over to the state child welfare agency. For half his life, Johnathan had no permanent home.

Later that night, Mr. Parker asked his wife, Tracey, if she wanted to adopt a child. Without hesitation, Mrs. Parker answered, "Why not?"

There "was a spot in our home and our heart," said Mr. Parker, explaining that the couple had recently lost an infant daughter, who'd been born premature. "She guided him to us."

The Parkers wanted to take Johnathan into their home right away. But due to the boy's emotional and behavioral problems, the state Department of Children & Families was reluctant. They believed he first needed therapeutic treatment. However, Johnathan had the lawyers from the Foster Children's Project fighting for him. And after a long battle of meetings, legal motions and court hearings, Johnathan was allowed to go home with the Parkers.

This past March, Johnathan, now 8, officially became one of the family (please see photos). Now the Parkers are trying to find a way to adopt Johnathan's 4-year-old brother, who Johnathan hasn't seen in years.





A clear-cut goal

Beginning in July 2001, Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County has contracted with the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County to provide attorneys for children entering shelter care because of abuse, neglect or abandonment. When FCP was created, many children remained in substitute care for more than three years—often bouncing from place to place, constantly changing schools, neighborhoods and friends. Their lives were marked by grief, loss and separation.

So the Foster Children's Project's goal became, and remains, clear-cut: Either help children return safely home to their families or find them an adoptive home as quickly as possible.

The program, which has expanded twice, now provides legal representation and other services to a continuous caseload of about 350 children ages 12 and younger, and their siblings.

"We simply believe that children have a right to have parents that they can grow up with," explained CSC's CEO Tana Ebbole.

A boy who belongs

Today, the likelihood of that happening for children like Johnathan has greatly increased. An unprecedented, independent evaluation of the Foster Children's Project just completed by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the

University of Chicago has found that children in the program exited foster care 60 percent faster than their peers in a comparison group.

FCP's success is centered on aggressively advocating for children in the system, including petitioning the court for termination of parental rights, when appropriate. FCP also recruits adoptive homes, and most importantly, works with the state social service agency to design prescriptive case plans so children can find permanency faster. Now other state and national organizations are looking at the CSC/Legal Aid model to see whether it can be replicated.

Mr. Parker also attributes FCP's success to the diligent and tenacious people involved. He believes Johnathan would not be a member of his family today without the help of FCP lawyers, whom he considers "saints."

That's surely the case for Johnathan. At the end of the day today, he'll go home to his family. He'll share toys and a bedroom with his 8-year-old brother Christopher. And he'll feel the wonderful protection of his older brother, Craig, 11. Despite the challenges that lay ahead, since Johnathan continues to have health and academic problems, Johnathan knows where he belongs. And, most importantly, he knows he's loved. ●



NONPROFIT TOOLBOX

Google Offers Nonprofits Free Web Services

Google opened a new portal of its site to help charities raise funds and spread the word about their work. Available tools include mapping software, blog software, tools to analyze Internet traffic and a grants search engine. These are all available free to nonprofits. The software is equipped to actively engage donors with software like calendar features to send reminders to donors about upcoming events and technology to collect and process donations online. Nonprofits can also set up an e-mail account through Gmail, customized for the charity's domain.

RDI is a collaboration between Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County and the United Way of Palm Beach County.

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RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Unique Local Foundation Cares for its Neighbors

Tanisha Hudson

Resource Development Specialist

In Palm Beach County, just as in many areas across the United States, the costs of housing, gas and food are constantly rising while our economy worsens. Our living expenses increase, while in many cases our pay remains static. These economic hardships lead to detrimental situations for our children, elderly and disabled residents, who often need the most assistance in maintaining healthy lives. With scattered resources and limited funding, it seems impossible for optimism during dismal times.

The optimism and philanthropic nature of a special group of residents in Lost Tree Village is what makes this charitable foundation unique. The Lost Tree Village Charitable Foundation, created in 1981, is a local funder in Palm Beach and Martin counties whose residents wanted to make "a substantial contribution" to the well-being of their community by creating a foundation to meet the needs of their neighbors – especially the young, elderly, disabled and homeless. Its first grants totaled \$4,050. In 2008, its giving grew to \$1.5 million.

This foundation is also unique in that it prefers to fund primarily capital expenses such as construction projects, building renovations, transportation and equipment needs. It also funds general items such as office furniture, playground equipment and household items. Lost Tree funds local agencies and national agencies with a local scope, south of Hobe Sound/Indiantown and north of Delray Beach. Grants are awarded in the following categories:

- Health Programs
- Family Programs
- Homeless, Housing & Food Programs
- Education Programs
- Programs for Adults and Children with special needs
- Summer Camps
- Information & Referral Programs

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



While Lost Tree is always mindful of emerging issues in the county, like affordable housing and food security, the foundation has a history of supporting agencies that provide much needed resources to the community. Among many other agencies that have housing and food programs, the foundation recently funded Adopt-A-Family, Inc., which received a pledge towards the construction of a nine-unit Community Land Trust rental facility.

This foundation also has a collaborative spirit, working with many other local funders in the county. In 2004, after Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne and again in 2005 after Hurricane Wilma, The Lost Tree Foundation joined with Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County, Quantum Foundation, United Way of Palm Beach County, Sun-Sentinel Children's Fund and the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties to provide hurricane relief assistance to local agencies. The Foundation awarded more than \$300,000 for facility repairs, client assistance, loss of revenue and other emergency needs.

In certain circumstances, Lost Tree may consider programmatic support, start-up costs and general operating expenses, but only if discussed prior to submitting a proposal. If you are interested in submitting a proposal, applicants must complete and submit an Initial Proposal Summary by **Aug. 15**. For the upcoming year, grant awards will range from \$1,000 to \$100,000. Those agencies wishing to submit a proposal for \$100,000 or agencies who have never applied to the foundation before should first contact Executive Director Pamela Rue to discuss the feasibility of the projects prior to submission. The foundation encourages projects that are well-informed, have clearly defined objectives, demonstrate strong community ties and promote healthy values in all aspects of health and human services. To view additional information and proposal requirements visit, www.losttreefoundation.org. ●

Responsible Fatherhood

Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants

Funding from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to fund Responsible Fatherhood promotion activities to reverse the rise in father absence. This opportunity is awarded annually through a federal Request for Proposal. Grants will range from \$200,000 to \$2 million for up to five years. Average award is \$700,000. Deadlines for proposals are as specified in the program announcement or application instructions, which will be posted via the ACF website. For more information: www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/index.html or www.grants.gov

Dollar General Literacy Foundation

Various programs including, Family Literacy Grants Programs. Dollar General Literacy Foundation uses the federal government's definition of family literacy when reviewing grant applications. Family literacy programs applying for funding **must have the following four components:** 1) Adult education instruction; 2) Children's education; 3) Parent and child together time (PACT); and 4) Parenting classes that teach parents to be the primary teachers for their child. Funds annually; applications usually available each year in January with applications due in March. For additional requirements, visit www.dollargeneral.com/Community/Pages/GrantPrograms.aspx ●

CSC Releases Birth Outcomes Update

Fewer babies are dying in Palm Beach County and more are born at healthy weights, according to the latest data released by the Florida Department of Health. Also good news, of the 15,702 babies born in 2006, fewer were born to young teens, 14 and younger. But the number born to teens ages 15-19 actually increased for the first time in eight years. And fewer women are accessing prenatal care in the first trimester, according to the data.

These statistics, as well as other vital data and analysis, are available in the Children's Services Council's **Birth Outcomes Update**, part of CSC's annual *State of the Child in Palm Beach County* report. The report not only offers information but also examines areas that need improvement in order to provide direction for educational efforts, program activities and policymaking. And the report examines specifically how women and babies served through CSC's Healthy Beginnings Program are faring. Of note, outcomes for those women were better than the county as a whole, in some areas.

For more information about the Birth Outcomes Update, please visit www.cscpb.org or call 561-740-7000. ●



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