

## Background on Citizen Father Project Partners

The Citizen Father Project is an extension of the FATHER Project, providing an opportunity for fathers to develop as leaders, applying personal lessons they've learned to impact the broader community.

The FATHER Project was established in 1999 to empower fathers to overcome barriers that prevent them from supporting their children economically and emotionally. The FATHER Project provides holistic services that center around supporting personal development and the development of parenting skills. The FATHER Project became part of Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota in 2004.

The **Citizen Father Project** was created through a partnership between Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota and the Citizen Professional Center at the University of Minnesota, which brought the Families and Democracy approach to this work.

### For more information, please contact:

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**GOODWILL · EASTER SEALS**  
MINNESOTA

Our mission is to assist people with barriers to education, employment and independence in achieving their goals.

[www.goodwilleasterseals.org](http://www.goodwilleasterseals.org)

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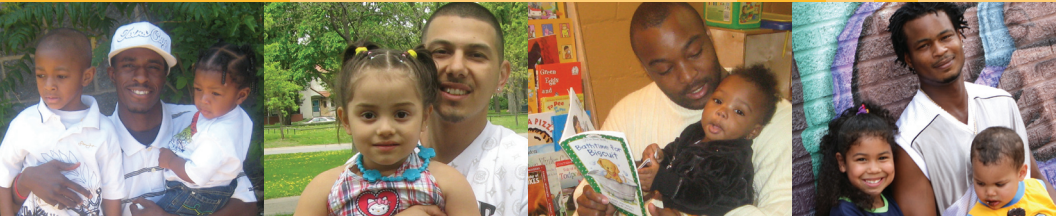


## Citizen Father Project

An initiative of the FATHER Project at Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota

### Our vision

Fathers changing the image of manhood and fatherhood in the urban community and beyond.



## Citizen Father Project

### Our mission

Fathers working together to support, educate and develop healthy, active fathers and to rebuild family and community values.

### Who is a Citizen Father?

A man who is dedicated to his children and works to build a community that supports and develops healthy, active fathers.

### The creation of the Citizen Father Project

In the summer of 2007, a group of high achieving fathers involved in the FATHER Project and several fatherhood professionals came together to start a citizen engagement and leadership development project. Our goal was to create a community action project to **impact the problem of too many fathers not being positively involved in the lives of children**. Together we developed an understanding of the problem in our own collective language and discussed the impact on our community. In 2008, we developed messages about the importance of healthy active fathers and identified key audiences. In 2009, we began to take action.

### We are taking action through two key strategies:

- Deliver a series of ongoing community presentations to key audiences (current)
- Develop a documentary to deliver messages on a broad scale through various media (future)

### We've taken our message to five key audiences:

- Fathers in the community
- Incarcerated fathers
- Mothers
- Youth
- Professionals
- Faith congregations

### The basis of our work:

#### The Families and Democracy Model

- See all personal problems as public issues too
- Look to family and community resources first
- See families and communities as producers, not just clients or consumers
- See professionals as citizens and partners, not just providers
- Let citizens drive programs rather than programs serving citizens
- Make sure every initiative reflects the local culture
- Grow leaders, and then more leaders
- Make all decisions democratically
- Go deep before taking action
- Think big, act practically, and let your light shine

### What the community is saying about the Citizen Father Project

“I believe a lot of men just don't know what to do, so they don't do anything. These dads gave me hope.” — *Father in the community*

“Words cannot express my gratitude ... I have learned more about dads over the past hour than I have my entire adult life. They helped me understand my past relationships and the men in my life, both past and present.” — *Mother in the community*

“They are amazing role models ...” — *Mother in the community*

“There is a true sense of enthusiasm and appreciation that the dads displayed in having an opportunity to give back ... and a strong sense that they're going to contribute.” — *Professional in the community*

“I did not grow up with my dad and I always wondered why he chose not to be in my life. I have a better understanding that there are two sides to every story. I will make sure I don't make the same mistakes when I become a dad.” — *Youth in the community*

“I learned today that there is a “right and wrong time” to have a baby. The dads today helped me learn that being a parent is more difficult than I imagined, especially for young dads.” — *Youth in the community*

