



Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families

[www.opnff.net](http://www.opnff.net)

December 2007

## OPNFF Father-Serving Program Survey Tells a Story

by Calvin Williams, OPNFF President

Recently, OPNFF launched a first-of-its-kind survey of father-serving programs in Ohio. Using the OPNFF website ([www.opnff.net](http://www.opnff.net)), we distributed a nine point questionnaire seeking to learn who is serving fathers in Ohio. We received a total of 67 responses to the survey.

A sampling of some very interesting findings:

- 65% of respondents state that they serve fathers in a

community-based agency; as opposed to the next highest grouping of 25% serving fathers from a public agency

- Information and referral, along with parenting support topped the responses to "what services are provided..." (73.5%). Interestingly, 60.29% provide relationship education services to fathers.
- The respondents indicated that 58% have been operating for either 1 to 3 years

(31.3%) or 5 to 10 years (26.8%).

- The programs are supported overwhelmingly by foundation giving (40.3%) and individual contributions (32.8%). The next highest grouping saw local TANF funds (21%) and city or county general funds (19.4%) as sources of support.
- Only 13.9% stated that they have sustainable funding.

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## OPNFF Welcomes New Members

Sandra Laurenson  
 Susan Conover  
 Sherlyn Henderson-Young  
 Dustin Meyer  
 Kevin Rainwater  
 OD Leonard  
 Pastor Eugene Norris  
 Sabine Gerhardt  
 Donald Lykes  
 Frank Williams  
 Shane Fletcher  
 Fran Frazier  
 Charlie Johnson  
 Paul Bounds  
 Julie McMahan  
 Rev Kenneth Earl Rupert  
 Judith Gazik  
 Stephen Ward  
 Christie Chicotel  
 Albert and Latoya Hardin  
 Erin Schaefer  
 Marvin Smith  
 Monte Pryor  
 Becky Glasure  
 Elaine Baker-Johnsony  
 Beverly Brown  
 Yolanda Byrd  
 Gregory Allen Caldwell  
 Robert "Bo" Chilton  
 Deborah Ferguson  
 Roger Fisher  
 Anne Ghoram-Orr  
 Glenn Harris  
 Stephan Hawkins  
 Mindy Heathcoat  
 Yvette Kelly-Fields  
 Phyllis Lovelace  
 Bobby Luly  
 John Lynn  
 Carol Lynn  
 Tiara Moore  
 Charmaine Pope  
 Yvonne Young  
 Laurel Yee  
 Kim Newsom Bridges  
 Kristina Sanson-Berger  
 Andrew Berger  
 Lindsay Raymond

## THE DNA OF VIOLENCE

### Fathers and sons work to help end domestic violence

By Margo Pierce First published in CityBeat on October 14, 2007. Used with permission

Violence doesn't just materialize out of thin air; it's rooted in life experience. Getting at the source of violence means taking a clear-eyed look at violent behavior and that from which it grows. That's the goal of the second Father and Son Retreat hosted by the Family Violence Prevention Project ([www.embracehope.org](http://www.embracehope.org)) held during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The usual ways of reducing violence in our society haven't worked, so it's time for a new approach, according to Calvin Williams, program director for Lighthouse

REAL Dads ([www.lys.org](http://www.lys.org)), one of the event organizers.

"We've got to stop trying to beat people over the head and trying to make them behave the way we want," he says. "We've got to go in and start figuring out what's really bothering (men). Nine times out of 10 it's from the family of origin and what didn't go well there. We've got to see men as hurt human beings and not just these despicable monsters out there perpetrating all this violence. "What we're saying with this type of initiative is that, as opposed to talking to

men about domestic violence -- how it's happening, what men's roles are, how it shouldn't be happening, what you should be doing to prevent it -- we want to first go deeper. Say, 'Where is the violence, the hurt and the pain in your own life?'

Then we want to talk about and examine ways to not transfer that to your children, to your sons, who will then go out later in life and, without some intervention in this area, could possibly become perpetrators of violence themselves

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**JOIN US! We now have over 500 members committed to serving fathers and families!**  
[www.opnff.net](http://www.opnff.net)

## Promising Practices: Strong Start for Cuyahoga's Families

By Luis Vazquez, Cuyahoga County Office of Health and Human Services

Strong Start For Cuyahoga's Families begun its second year of services this last month. Through a five year Federal Grant titled the Healthy Marriage Demonstration Project and sponsored by the U.S.

Dept of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families Office, Cuyahoga County was selected among 1,700 applicants nationwide to serve couples who are either expecting a child

or have a new child that is 3 months old or younger.

Strong Start For Cuyahoga's Families is a voluntary program that is designed to offer a "one-stop" shop experience of

family support, education and resources for couples aimed to improve their child's live by; providing parents with the tools they need to have healthy and sustainable relationships; and improving parent's economic stability by providing personal financial training, career and employment assistance.

Our 12 week program focuses on the Better Together curriculum that is offered by the Center for Families and Children in Cuyahoga County. This particular curriculum has noted success in building stronger relationships and families. We are proud to report that during the first



year of service 42 couples completed our 12 week curriculum successfully. For more information contact Luis Vazquez, 216.443.7297 or email [lvazquez@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:lvazquez@cuyahogacounty.us)

**Is your program a promising practice? Please send articles and photos to us:**

**[info@opnff.net](mailto:info@opnff.net)**





## Cincinnati Fathers and Sons Focus on Ending Domestic Violence

By Margo Pierce *First published in CityBeat on October 14, 2007. Used with permission*

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based on their own unmet needs and emotional stress."

The first retreat, held in 2006, is the basis for the Oct. 26-28 weekend at Woodland Lakes in Amelia. Some of the life experiences shared by the fathers last year -- "violence perpetrated by stepfathers; violence in the form of inappropriate discipline techniques; violence in the form of being an infant, toddler, preschool-aged child and having critical needs not met" -- serve as an example of the violence they experienced and still influence their behavior, Williams says.

"I believe the actual deep, deep core of violence in the community comes from physical, psychological and emotional violence in families," he says. "The bottom line is when people's needs aren't met ... the nurturance, patience, compassion and respect that they need -- it hurts. In turn, given enough of that over time, and add in

some intense circumstances like extreme poverty, drugs or alcohol, the violence is going to come. It's going to come out primarily on those that are closest to me."

Describing an exercise from the first retreat, Williams says the sons were put together in a group to learn about basic human needs and then prioritize what they wanted their fathers to provide. When the fathers and sons came back together, the boys voluntarily stayed together in a cluster. One by one the boys stood up and said, "Here's what I need from you." "There was a huge emotional struggle with the fathers to hear their sons saying that. One, it goes against that typical parenting: 'I shouldn't be hearing this. I work hard, I do all I can.' Secondly, the father's feelings of inadequacy, guilt, shame really drove them into some pretty strong states of emotion, not so much anger, but I would call it a combination of fear and grief over the fact that, as good as they think they're doing, they're missing the mark in some

areas with their child. We're getting into the DNA of these relationships, getting in to where things hurt, where things are hard."

Digging into family history is hard, according to one of the fathers at the event last year, Terry Alexander, also known by his stage name, Hip Hop beatboxer Chesta T. He describes the session the fathers had while their sons talked about needs as extremely difficult -- and essential.

"A lot of the fathers had to look down the hardest points of our lives. ... Self-reflection, taking the time out, comparing our lives to other father's lives was a big help," Alexander says.

"Sharing a collective knowledge of parenting skills and a lack of parenting skills; humbling ourselves to say that we want to be the best fathers but we're not always certain and to share that with our sons, to let them know that if you do become a

father it's OK to humble yourself."

Ade Alexander, 13, thinks the weekend has made a difference in his relationship with his father. "I've been able to come to my dad a lot more," Ade says. "We understood each other a lot more, and we've been using some of the things that we learned. We learned a lot about each other and got to understand each other better. We learned how to interact with our father if we feel uncomfortable or if we want to talk to them about something -- how to do that."

More than a "touchy-feely" way to dance around the issue of violence, the Father and Son Retreat is not for the faint of heart because it's confronting the problem instead of merely reacting to it.

The Father and Son Retreat is for boys ages 10-14 and their fathers.

The program is free. For more information call 513-891-3320, x 120 or write [clwilliams@lys.org](mailto:clwilliams@lys.org)

**Look for our next OPNFF Newsletter in January 2008**, featuring an article by Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones, who was recently elected Chair of the newly formed Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. In addition we'll have two articles on promising practices in Zanesville, Ohio: the Forever Dads program and Boot Camp for New Dads. In future newsletters we will also feature articles about faith-based programming for fathers and families and a report from the Northcoast Fatherhood Collaborative, a new network of father-serving agencies in Toledo. **Visit [www.opnff.net](http://www.opnff.net) for newsletter archives.**

www.opnff.net



Ohio Practitioners' Network  
for Fathers and Families

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**JOIN US! And be part of a growing network of over 500 fatherhood advocates & practitioners.**

**Membership in OPNFF is FREE: join online today  
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By Calvin Williams, OPNFF President

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The survey helps tell the story of fatherhood in Ohio. Father-serving programs are proliferating in our state; yet they are not well supported financially, while serving 3,680 fathers per year, based on the top three groupings of respondents. Given that fathers typically have on average two children, one could posit that almost 7,400 children are affected by these programs. Low income, young and expectant fathers top the categories of target populations served, indicating where survey respondents feel the need is greatest.

Previously in this space we have offered that fatherhood development is the last best option for improving the lives of children and families. For years, social, public and criminal justice policy has been developed with moms and children described or identified as the family unit needing attention and resources. There will always be a father. He will always hold the key to family stability, protection and provision; even if he is not in the home. He needs support and assistance to flourish in that role. More and more people around the state are seeing that and reacting to it.

**Would you like to participate in our Father-Serving Program Survey? Go to <http://healthyfathers.opnffprogramsurvey.sgizmo.com> to complete the survey or access the link from the OPNFF homepage.**

**Would you like to know what father-serving programs are operating in your county? Contact us at [info@opnff.net](mailto:info@opnff.net) for more information.**

You have been waiting for this and just did not know it. You have been searching for this but did not know where to look. You have been asking for this but could not find the words.

Well it is here!



A magazine for fathers. Not just a magazine for fathers but a tool written by dads and people working to give voice to our *Fathers Perspective*. Yes, *Fathers Perspective* is being introduced to the world through the sacrifices and efforts of Greg and Theresa Johnson. For those of us knowing Greg and Theresa, their journey in the fatherhood movement has been without pause, with tremendous commitment to children, families and each of our communities. Many of us remember the first fatherhood conferences they held in Cleveland; the loss of their son; the launch of *I Am A Dream* . . .; their newsletters; the public speaking; their strong advocacy and much more.

Well, now they have produced a high quality magazine for every father and mother to have in their household. We thank them for this valuable asset to fathers and invite each and every one of you to purchase a subscription to keep it going by visiting their web site at [www.fathersperspective.com](http://www.fathersperspective.com), and ordering on-line today. We also encourage you to take out your email listing and share the announcement of this great resource with everyone you know. Once you receive your copy you will be very proud of the professionalism put into this, the first parenting magazine for dads. Celebrate with us and share it with the world every chance you get. You will be proud of it, just as those of us that have received the pilot copy are very proud.

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