



Ohio Practitioners' Network
for Fathers and Families

Spring 2009 SPECIAL EDITION: Ohio Fatherhood Initiative

NEWS and UPDATES from Programs Funded by the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

Region 2 in the News: Dads helping dads

By Clara Engel, *The Toledo Parent News*, February 2009

Assistant Director of the support program Northcoast Fatherhood Initiative, Mark Robinson, husband and father of two, has made his passion for being a father into a full-time job.

"Fortunately, I've always been an involved father," says Robinson, "but many fathers have different needs, challenges, experiences and issues dealing with their children...when I see and speak to these men, it fortifies my desire and efforts to be the best father I can be."

Robinson, who was raised by his mother in New Jersey, grew up without the constant presence of a father figure in his life, until his mother remarried when he was thirteen. After finishing high school, he first studied accounting at Alabama A&M University, but later switched his subject of

choice to social work, earning a bachelor's and then a master's degree from Syracuse University in New York. "In Syracuse, I worked for Head Start, a community action agency, and started a male involvement program," says Robinson. "It was successful in getting fathers of the children in Head Start to get more involved with their children." After nine years in Syracuse, Robinson moved to Toledo to develop a similar program.

Since January 2007, when Robinson and his partner David Justus started the Northcoast Fatherhood Collaborative group and later the Northcoast Fatherhood Initiative (NCFI) in Toledo, Robinson has been working to carry out their mission to strengthen the position and role of

fathers in the family and society throughout Northwest Ohio. "Our overall goal is to empower fathers to be actively and responsibly involved (with their children), and therefore have a greater impact on the lives of children," says Robinson.

The collaborative side of the organization is made up of partners within the community that meet monthly to create and support community-based and faith-based organizations that provide services to fathers. After the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood issued a request for proposal for a regional fatherhood initiative, Robinson and Justus answered the call, acquiring one of only ten grants awarded in the state in June 2008. Fully implemented in October, the NCFI now works in conjunction with the Dad's Club and many family and community centers to offer assessment, counseling and strong support systems, helping men to reinstate themselves as fathers. "The majority of the fathers that we work with have had no father figure or role model in their lives," says Robinson, "and they'll tell you 'I didn't have a father, and I don't know how to be a father' so we try and teach them how

Region 4 in the News: Dadz Time Breakfast brings fathers, children together

story by Samantha Summer, photos by Marshall Gorby, *Springfield News-Sun*, February 6, 2009

Scott Parks likes that his 8-year-old daughter, Adrianna, studies hard and cares deeply about other people. She likes that her dad is funny and wears shorts all the time.

The father and daughter sat down and shared what they liked about each other at the first Dadz Time Breakfast at her school, Perrin Woods Elementary, on Friday, Feb. 6. Scott Parks also signed up for some fatherhood classes.

"I'm going to take (it) to become a better parent instead of how my dad was to me," he said.

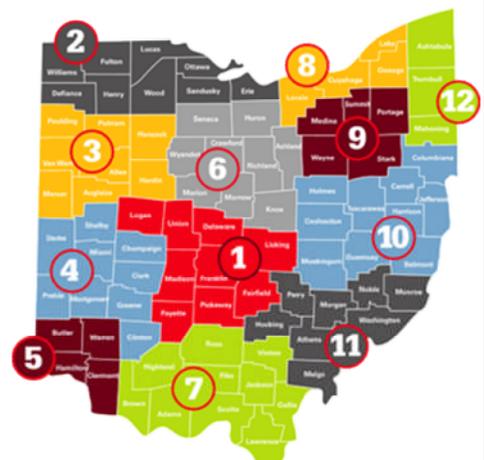
That desire to be a better father is what Rev. Eli Williams of Urban Light

Ministries hopes the more than 300 people — fathers and their children — took away from the breakfast.

The Miami Valley Partnership for Fathers, a division of Urban Light, put on the Dadz Time program. The partnership recently received a \$224,000 grant to address fatherhood issues. Dads and their children ate breakfast together, shared what they liked about each other and listened to a brief talk from J. Tracy Robinson, executive director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.

Robinson encouraged dads to follow the three Ps of fatherhood —

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Region 2: DADS helping dads

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to be the best father they can be."

Robinson is also on the board of the Ohio Practitioner's Network for Fathers and Families and the head of RESTORE Inc., his own non-profit organization that works to reinstate fathers back to the head of the family through the gospel of Jesus Christ. "First, I am a child of God created in God's image and his likeness," says Robinson when asked about himself. "But beyond that I would say that I'm a devoted and committed father, because the highest honor that a man can receive is that of a father."

Comments from Mark Robinson—

There are no "If, Ands, or Buts" about it. A dad has to do what a dad has to do! Once a man (or a boy) becomes a dad, life as he knows it has to change. Sacrifices have to be made. Life changing decisions have to be made. Priorities have to be rearranged. Where do you begin? How do you begin? If you grew up without a father in your life, the answers to those questions seem to not exist. But a dad has to do what a dad has to do. That's where the Northcoast Fatherhood Initiative comes in.



DADZ Time Breakfast photo used courtesy of Springfield Sun-Times

Region 4: DADZ Breakfast

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presence, provide and participate. By showing up for the breakfast, dads followed the first, being present physically and emotionally. Bringing so many men together also gave them affirmation, Robinson said.

"That's important because many men claim they didn't have a good role model," he said.

Research shows children with involved fathers do better in school, are less likely to commit crimes leading to incarceration, Williams said, and are more economically stable. He hopes to bring the breakfasts to all local elementary schools, funding permitting. The grant doesn't cover food or transportation costs, and donors or sponsors are needed.

The breakfasts are a way to bring dads into schools, show them available resources, and give them a chance to spend time with their children, Williams said.

"I hope that a good new memory was created between fathers and children," he said.

Comments from Eric Smith, Miami Valley Partnership for Fathers—

The Miami Valley Partnership for Fathers (MVPF) is a new initiative providing programming for fathers and youths in a nine-county region in Southwestern Ohio.

Urban Light Ministries, Inc. (ULMI), the lead agency in this new collaborative effort of four organizations, has been offering Nurturing Fathers classes to both incarcerated and community fathers, stepfathers, and father-figures in Clark County area since 2006. The infusion of support from the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood has allowed the Nurturing Fathers program to be expanded to four new counties since October. As well, a new Wise Guys premature fatherhood prevention program has been added to the services being offered to schools.

Apart from programming, the MVPF initiative is striving to mobilize communities around the issue of fatherhood. As part of this effort, ULMI organized a Dadz Time Breakfast in conjunction

with Perrin Woods Elementary School. The event exceeded all expectations with over 300 fathers and children in attendance. The feedback for the event, and for the remarks by Mr. Tracy Robinson as Executive Director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, was extremely positive.

Region 1: Alvis House - Changing Communities One Dad at a Time

Alvis House is working to change the lives of children by enhancing the parenting skills of incarcerated fathers. Alvis House has created a fatherhood program with funding from the Ohio Fatherhood Commission and the Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives to rebuild and/or maintain relationships between fathers and their children. One of the various components of the program is the parenting class. Alvis House uses two curricula, *Redirecting Children's Behavior*, and *ACT (Adults and Children Together) Against Violence*.

ACT Against Violence focuses on violence prevention in the family. Fathers learn how to handle their own anger, and also to teach their children how to handle theirs. In conjunction, ACT teaches the long term effects of exposure to violence, not only in the family but in media and video games as well.

Redirecting Children's Behavior (RCB) explains that misbehavior in children is a child's effort to communicate to the parent that his or her needs are not being met. RCB works to enhance fathers' ability to decipher messages sent through the behavior of his child and teach his child to express feelings more effectively.

The fathers in the program have been very receptive to learning new skills and thinking about different ways to parent their children than they have in the past. Many of the fathers in the program have been exposed to violence, had little role modeling or have been absent fathers due to incarceration. The path that they are choosing by being in the program is allowing them to engage their children on a new level and/or develop skills to enhance the father/child relationship they wish to have once released.

-Cinnamon Reiheld

Around the State - OFI Program UPDATES!

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Regions 2 & 6: WSOS Community Action Commission

WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc., is operating a program from the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services and Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives. Both programs target married, unmarried, non-custodial fathers and cohabitating fathers there are no income requirements. The goals are to assist fathers and their children in building positive and strong relationships.

The Ohio Fatherhood Initiative for Region 2 "VIP Program-Very Important Padre" serves in partnership with other community action agencies Wood, Sandusky, Ottawa, Erie, Lucas, Fulton, Henry, Williams, and Defiance counties.

The Ohio Fatherhood Initiative for Region 6 "FatherConnection" serves in partnership with other community action agencies Seneca, Huron, Wyandot, Crawford, Richland, Ashland, Marion, Morrow, Knox counties.

In Region 2 we are currently serving about 75 fathers most of these fathers have been recruited from our Head Start Programs. These fathers are participating in our weekly Responsible Fathering classes utilizing the 24/7 Dad curriculum, attending father and child literacy events and fun nights with dad with their children, we are assisting fathers in areas of employment, successful parenting education workshops, financial literacy events one on one case management, referral linkages, and volunteer activities.

In Region 6 we are currently serving about 90 fathers most of these fathers are recruited from our Head Start Programs. These fathers are participating in our weekly Responsible Fathering classes utilizing the 24/7 Dad curriculum, attending father and child literacy events and fun nights with dad with their children, we are assisting fathers in areas of employment, successful parenting education workshops, financial literacy events, one on one case management, referral linkages, and volunteer activities. -Stephanie Fisher

Region 7: Southern Ohio Fatherhood Coalition

The Southern Ohio Fatherhood Coalition (SOFC) has seen a positive reaction from fathers/ father figures in our entire Appalachian region. Our initial events and activities have proven the need for developing fatherhood involvement. Positive reinforcement and guidance from trained facilitators from the SOFC provides a service that was not addressed before the Fatherhood Initiative was implemented. There is a continuing development of interest and participation as father's awareness of the program increases.

Fathers that were not initially enrolled in the program are continually contacting SOFC facilitators with needs that can now be addressed along with assistance being provided. The SOFC is already seeing positive responses from fathers, of varying lifestyles, wanting to better themselves to become beneficial fathers and role models. Fathers' needs that have been discovered range from establishing a consistent visitation with their children to guidance for help with substance abuse.

With the implementation of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood Intranet by Tracy Robinson and the ability to interact conveniently with other grantees we anticipate continual development of the Ohio Fatherhood Initiative into a program that will have a positive impact on the fathers and children not only located with Southern Ohio, but the state as a whole. We look forward to continued growth and development of father involvement through the Ohio Fatherhood Initiative.

The SOFC would like to thank Tracy Robinson for his ongoing support and guidance, without which we could not operate the program in the capacity that we are. -Kenny Walters

Region 8: Families First Fatherhood

Summer is coming and Cleveland Eastside Ex-Offender Coalition is

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gearing up for fun in the sun and some learning activities too for the fathers in their Families First Fatherhood Services initiative. CEEC's program basically targets incarcerated dads but will serve any father; father-to-be, uncles, granddads, brothers or just about any male assisting with the care and nurturing of a minor child.

During the Memorial Day weekend, CEEC will host a three-day "Daddy Day Camp" for 100 fathers and children at the Stafford Community Park in Maple Heights, Ohio. The event begins Friday, May 22, with a Wieney Roast and Bonfire. On Saturday, an all-day learning camp and picnic will be held with the dads and children and on Sunday, May 24, the parenting partners of the children in program are invited to a Sunday Brunch in the park. Recreational activities include live ponies; a 'S'mores' cookout, games, prizes and fun activities and a catered picnic. The learning camp for fathers and their children will feature workshops and break-out sessions for the dads and for the children separately. On Sunday, the Brunch will include a separate session for the fathers; one for the mothers and then a joint session for both parenting partners together with a buffet brunch. Later in June, a parenting partners retreat will be held in honor of Father's Day. Guests are welcome but a fee and reservations are required. There is no cost for the Families First Fathers. Interested parties can call Cleveland Eastside at 216/426-9012 for reservations or more information.

- Caroljean Gates

Region 10: FatherTime

The goal of *FatherTime* in Columbiana County is to help former and current Head Start fathers in a six-county area better connect with their children in fun and informative interventions, and also

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www.opnff.net

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identify the positive or negative aspects of their parenting. The Community Action Agency of Columbiana County is the lead partner in the GOFBCI grant that involves

other Head Starts in Jefferson, Belmont, Harrison, Carroll and Tuscarawas counties. The initial goal is to have 100 fathers, or father supports within the home, and their children involved in programming.

Plans call for them to attend weekly sessions in their communities headed by a *FatherTime* case manager and co-facilitator, who are also involved in a Head Start fatherhood committee. While a Head Start educator and two teen-age associates have the children in enrichment programming, the fathers participate in the nationally-known "Nurturing Fathers" curriculum that challenges them to become an effective and caring parent.

The 18-week program also includes gasoline voucher incentives and field trips and educational activities for fa-

thers and their children.

-Dave McCamon

Region 10: ForeverDads

ForeverDads is proud to host the Spring 2009 Advance Fatherhood Ohio Summit.

Research is clear that two-parent families are more socially and economically viable. Unfortunately a third of all children in the United States live without their biological fathers. Children without the love and support of their dads often struggle at school and at home. When a child fails, we all pay the price. The aim of this Summit is to reduce father-absence by strengthening father-inclusive policies and practices in our communities.

-Burl Lemon



**April 30th and May 1st, Salt Fork Resort and
Conference Center, Cambridge Ohio**
Register Now Online at www.foreverdads.com

- Model Father-Specific Programs
- Appalachian Dads
- Sentencing Alternatives to Manage Arrears
- Child Support and Parenting Time Policy
- Heart of G.O.L.D. Celebration Banquet

Ohio Fatherhood Initiative Program and Referral Contact Information

- **Alvis House** (Region 1) - Contact Cinnamon Reiheld, program manager, at 614.258.9284 or 614.223.1499, or by email at creiheld@alvishouse.org
- **Northcoast Fatherhood Initiative** (Region 2) - Contact David Justus, program director, at 419.917.9204 or Mark Robinson, assistant program director, at 419.917.8648 or either by email at northcoastfathers@yahoo.com
- **V.I.P and Fatherhood Connection** (WSOS, Regions 2 & 6) - Contact Stephanie Fischer at 1.800.775.9767 or 419.447.0084 or by email at safischer@wsos.org
- **Miami Valley Partnership for Fathers** (Region 4) - Contact Eric Smith, program director, esmith@urbanlight.org, 937-776-2233
- **Southern Ohio Fatherhood Coalition** (Region 7) - Contact Kenny Walters at 740.533.9077 or by email at kwalters@headstartworks.org
- **ARCA Inc** (Region 8) - Contact Gladys Hall, executive director, at 216.432.3310 or by email at gladysh@arca-cleveland.org
- **Families First Fatherhood** (Region 8) - Contact Caroljean Gates, executive director at 216.426.9012, toll free at 1.877.426.3030 or cjgates@clevelandeastside.org
- **ComeUNITY** (Forever Dads, Region 10) - Contact Burl Lemon, project director, at 740.455.4340 or by email at info@foreverdads.com

The mission of the Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families is to enhance the outcomes of children, families and communities by providing information, training and encouragement to father and family-serving practitioners. www.opnff.net