

Reconnecting Fathers with Children

A pilot program is successfully connecting Milwaukee area fathers with the lives of their children.

The On My Shoulders program is improving the quality of father-child and co-parenting relationships among Milwaukee area families. The program is one of only a few pilot efforts being offered around the country. In Milwaukee County, it is coordinated by the Social Development Commission as part of the agency's Head Start Healthy Relationships and Marriage Enhancement Program.

On Saturday, March 26, 2011, all participants of the On My Shoulders pilot class sessions were invited to attend a father-child event entitled *Reading, Eating, and Doing Activities with My Dad* (READ). Fathers gathered at this graduation and



Father works on an art project with his child at On My Shoulders event.



Father enjoys the On My Shoulders program with his family.

For many of the fathers, *READ* is the 3rd tier of SDC's family strengthening program. The pilot is also part of the larger Fathers Strengthening Families program that seeks to create healthier relationships between mothers and fathers. Healthy

program celebration where they bonded with their children over various arts projects and literacy activities. Storyteller Tejumola Ologboni delivered drumming performances and engaging stories full of life lessons that touched on resiliency, ancestry, manhood, and fatherhood.



Father works on an art project with his children.

Relationships Program staff note the *On My Shoulders* program is helping fathers build more intimate, nurturing relationships with their children.



More involvement by fathers in the lives of children, staff say, will mean stronger and more stable families for the youngsters and ultimately stronger communities. SDC is currently seeking funding so the pilot program can be offered again to a new group of fathers.

On My Shoulders Father and his children.

For more information on the SDC Head Start Healthy Relationship Program, visit the agency website at www.cr-sdc.org, click on the “Programs” page and then on the link for Healthy Relationship and Marriage. Or call the program at 414-906-2765.

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