

Talbert House Fatherhood Project – A Path To Nurturing Involvement

By Charlie Doan, Community Service Committee

At the CBA's Community Service Committee meeting at the Talbert House, the committee learned how the Fatherhood Project guides men on their path to becoming responsible, committed and nurturing fathers. The project is part of the Talbert House mission of "Building a Stronger Community ... One Life At A Time."

It is a 10-week program with classes one evening per week, offered three times per year and receives referrals from Hamilton County Department of Jobs & Family Services, the Hamilton County Juvenile Court, other social agencies and from its promotional brochures and through speaking engagements by Harold Howard, the Fatherhood Project manager. Harold usually facilitates the classes which include important information and insights from a psychologist, a child support specialist, a pediatric psychologist and a family law expert. Each participant is assigned a case manager, known as a "fatherhood coach," who is available to assist in setting goals and dealing with such issues as child support, visitation, housing and employment. More specific legal consultation and representation is available in select cases. Each participant also keeps "A Nurturing Father's Journal" which helps reinforce information and progress week-by-week. Between 20 and 25 men typically complete the course and then graduate at a special event often attended by families. To date, over 500 men have graduated.

I talked to two graduates who are eagerly making a difference in their children's lives. Antoin Martin, 40, graduated

in 2004 and was inspired to "get himself together," overcome chemical abuse issues and become much more involved in his son's life. They now have a close relationship and his son, 20, is working and starting college classes. Antoin credits the help he received from his fatherhood coach, Harold Stephens, who often made home visits when Antoin's job prevented attendance at the classes. Antoin also has a 4-year-old daughter and has transitioned from occasional long distance visitation with her to now having full custody. It was a two-year battle and he praises legal services coordinator Stephanie Markley for her assistance in court proceedings resulting in the award of custody.

Ron Yisrael, the Project's current Father of the Year, graduated in 2009 and went from minimal involvement with his five children, ages 7 to 17, to now having full custody of them, and says he couldn't have done it without legal help from the Fatherhood Project. He was also inspired to return to college for an associate's degree and to improve his housing situation. Overall, he describes the benefits of the Fatherhood Project as "priceless."

The Fatherhood Project welcomes volunteer input from CBA members in mentoring roles and for pro bono legal representation. Please contact Harold Howard, the manager, at (513) 961-3292 with any questions or to offer your assistance.

For more about the Fatherhood Project, visit the Cincinnati Bar Association Facebook page or go to <http://youtu.be/9tifv0VmGWw>

The CBA Community Service Committee Presents

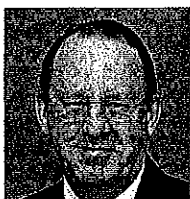
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