



Our  
Mission:

MFFN enhances healthy father-child relationships by promoting initiatives that inform public policy and further develop the field of fatherhood practitioners statewide.

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Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.

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# Network Notes

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## Awards recognize outstanding support for fathers and families in Minnesota

The Excellence in Fatherhood Awards honor individuals, programs and institutions that make outstanding contributions to fatherhood policy and practice in Minnesota. The fourth annual awards were presented by MFFN on January 15, 2008, at the Minnesota Fatherhood Summit in St. Cloud.

### **Program of the Year: Parenting Time Program of Perspectives, Inc., St. Louis Park**

Perspectives' "Parenting Time Program" provides opportunities for fathers to learn and practice effective parenting skills within a supervised environment.

Jeffrey Postuma, director of parenting programs, stated that this award recognizes the efforts of parenting time programs across the state of Minnesota – which includes dozens of programs in urban, suburban, and rural communities. These services are often provided by court order for fathers who have allegedly abused their children. The caring environment at Perspectives is designed to create a sense of safety for the child and to build upon the strengths of the father.

Continued page 2, "Awards".

## MFFN hires staff for outreach and public policy work

After five years operating with one full-time employee, the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network is excited to double its staff capacity in mid-February.

Melissa Froehle joins MFFN as the new full-time Policy and Program Director. Along with current Executive Director, Paul Masiarchin, Ms. Froehle will enable MFFN to expand its reach in areas of public policy education, professional development offerings, and technical assistance outreach for fatherhood and family programs across Minnesota.

Through this new position, funded principally through a 3-year grant from the Bush Foundation, Melissa will divide her time between two discrete projects. On the public policy side, she will work to educate state, county, and local officials about father-friendly and father-inclusive policies. On the program outreach side, Melissa will begin to offer a wider array of professional training activities for individuals interested in creating programming that is suited to meet the needs of men in families.

Melissa has been involved with MFFN since its inception. She has presented at numerous MFFN-sponsored workshops and training sessions. Additionally, Melissa has written a number of documents that cover legal issues for fathers and fatherhood professionals. Through this new position, Melissa will develop a wider array of these valuable publications.

Melissa comes to MFFN from Central Minnesota Legal Services and the FATHER Project where she has worked for five years as a staff attorney, advocating on behalf of low-income and non-custodial fathers.

Melissa, a native of north Minneapolis, holds a law degree from New York University School of Law and a Master's Degree in Public Affairs from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School.

Please help to welcome Melissa in this important new position.

## Award recipients

Continued from page 1.

Fathers who come to the program have a desire to change their abusive relationships with their children. The staff at Perspectives works with the fathers in several ways; they provide supervised parenting time, case management services, parent coaching and education. In addition, the staff provides additional cooperative resolution case management to fathers to assist them, ultimately, in moving from a traditional supervised level of service to unsupervised parenting time. The fathers at Perspectives are men of strength. The fathers who reach out for help and participate in the programs have a strong desire to create a better life. The fathers are willing to go to great lengths and to withstand humbling restrictions in order to parent their children. Both the fathers and the children served by Perspectives demonstrate great resiliency. They have come through unbelievable traumas and still they forge ahead and believe in creating a better tomorrow. Perspectives exists to make this happen.

### **Advocate of the Year: Tammy Swanson, Woodbury**

Tammy Swanson is a principal attorney at the Swanson, Drobnick and Tousey law firm in Woodbury. The firm specializes in Federal Indian Law, American Indian Law, Indian Child Welfare, Tribal Court Practice, Adoption, Child Custody, Child Support, and various other aspects of Family Law. Tammy received the Advocate of the Year award for her work representing clients involved in the child protection system and especially her principal work representing Native American families. Tammy has been successful in advocating for fathers to gain access to parent their children, as well as getting fathers engaged in supportive ser-



**2008 Excellence in Fatherhood award recipients (L-R):** Tammy Swanson, Wayland Campbell, Jeannie Seeley-Smith, Jeffrey Postuma, Laura Arne, Rebecca Ahlstrand, and Deb Wright.

VICES. This provides fathers with a sense of empowerment and responsibility for their children. Tammy has provided fathers with a high quality legal service and personal advocacy. She has been involved in the development of the Tribal-State Agreement and has proven to be a strong advocate for Minnesota's families and children. On the morning of the awards presentation in January, Tammy successfully garnered custody for a father from the Fond du Lac community near Duluth; she has been involved with families from many of Minnesota's tribal communities. Tammy explained that her passion for fatherhood stems from her own life experience. Her work is a tribute to the belief that children deserve access to healthy families.

### **Individual of the Year: Deb Wright, Walker / Akeley**

The 2008 Individual of the Year, Deb Wright, has been involved in fathering issues and healthy families since the early 1980s. As a student at St. Cloud State University, Deb's passion for fatherhood was ignited by Dr. Glen Palm; this passion continues to shine brightly 25 years later. Since

then, Deb has successfully started fathering focused programs in various communities in central and northern Minnesota. All of the programs that she started continue to operate and to serve fathers – now reaching thousands of men across Minnesota. As a family advocate, mentor, teacher, program director, and executive director, she continues to build father based programming and stays true to her mission to engage fathers in all aspects of a child's life. Deb prefers to stay somewhat behind-the-scenes when it comes to leadership. As a person who does not seek attention or credit, she tends to focus on the individual and serves as an excellent role model. She is known for her dedication, willingness to serve others, and for her integrity. Fathers in Cambridge, Duluth, and Walker will certainly recognize the dedication and commitment demonstrated by Deb Wright.

### **Policymaker of the Year: Wayland Campbell, St. Paul**

Wayland Campbell, Director of the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) at Minnesota's Department of Human Services, and his staff, initiated a project to help low income families in 2007 entitled, Strategies

Continued page 3, "Excellence".

## Excellence in fatherhood

Continued from page 2.

for Helping Low Income Families, better known as SHLIF. As a result of this project, County Child Support staff throughout Minnesota have a goal of preventing the accumulation of child support arrears in the process of establishing reasonable and equitable support orders. In addition, they are evaluating case history on cases with existing orders and determining whether the current support is set at an appropriate amount and modifying inappropriate support orders. Wayland's leadership in collaboration with community partners like MFFN has been a key to the success of this program. Because of this project and these collaborative efforts Minnesota non-custodial parents, many of them being fathers, are now actively par-

ticipating in an equitable order setting and modifying process. Under Wayland's careful guidance and leadership, CSED is demonstrating that children can benefit in numerous ways when counties engage both parents equitably.

### **Member of the Year: Rebecca Ahlstrand, Cloquet**

The 2008 Excellence in Fatherhood Member of the Year Award was presented to Rebecca Ahlstrand, a long-time promoter of healthy fatherhood in Minnesota. Rebecca has shown a strong commitment to working with fathers and helping them to stay positively involved in the lives of their children. She was a member of the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network's initial Organizing Committee, has been involved with regional networking

meetings in the northeast reaches of the state, and has hosted various family law clinics for many years. As the Child Support & Collections Supervisor of Carlton County, she was an early advocate for creating a child support system that is father-friendly. With limited funds, she demonstrated how a community collaborative can promote healthy fatherhood; for years she focused her passion and energy to promote the Fatherhood Program of Carlton County. She is an outstanding person of integrity who has selflessly and tirelessly promoted MFFN's sustainability and impact. Rebecca is a founding member of the MFFN Board of Directors, a dedicated mother, and a frequent volunteer in community and faith-based initiatives.



**MFFN's new board members** (L-R): Don Eubanks, John Klinke, DeeAnn Gieseke, Lowell Johnson, Molly Crawford, John Stark, Brian Thorbjornsen, (not pictured) Ellie McCann

## New leadership to guide MFFN's future

In December, the members of the Minn. Fathers & Families Network elected eight individuals to join the 21-person Board of Directors. The new members represent a broad array of social service programs, educational institutions and government agencies from across Minnesota. Board members serve 3-year terms; they may renew one time.

MFFN also elected the 2008 Executive Committee:

President: Jon Harper  
 Vice Presidents: Tamy Reese and Dwaine Simms  
 Treasurer: Jason Giese  
 Secretary: Nancy Norbie

Congratulations to all of MFFN's leadership team!

### **2008 MFFN Board of Directors**

Rebecca Ahlstrand, Carlton County Child Support, Carlton  
 Mary Anderson, Fatherhood Advocate, Perham  
 Molly Mulcahy Crawford, Minn. Dept. of Human Services, St. Paul  
 Don Eubanks, Minn. Dept. of Human Services, St. Paul  
 Jason Giese, Southwest Minn. Private Industry Council, Montevideo  
 DeeAnn Gieseke, Watonwan Co. Early Childhood Collaborative, St. James  
 Jon Harper, Adventures in Fathering, Crystal  
 Jan Hayne, Dads Make a Difference, St. Paul  
 Michael Jerpbak, Crossroads College, Rochester  
 Lowell Johnson, Brainerd Lakes Early Childhood Coalition, Brainerd  
 Clarence Jones, Q Health Connections, Minneapolis  
 Gar Kellom, Center for Men's Leadership & Service, St. John's Univ., Collegeville  
 Joe Kelly, Dads & Daughters, St. Paul  
 John Klinke, Red Lake Schools, Red Lake  
 Ellie McCann, University of Minnesota Extension, Moorhead  
 Nancy Norbie, Kandiyohi County Family Services, Willmar  
 Glen Palm, St. Cloud State Univ., St. Cloud  
 Tamy Reese, Morris Early Childhood Family Education, Morris  
 Dwaine Simms, Twin Cities RISE!, Minneapolis  
 John Stark, St. Louis County Child Support, Duluth  
 Brian Thorbjornsen, Fond du Lac Social Services, Cloquet



Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.



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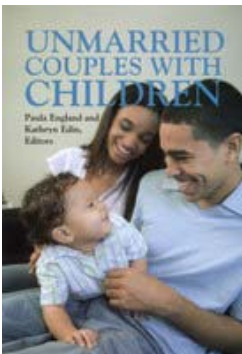
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## Recent Book Release: *Unmarried Couples with Children*

A third of American children are born outside of marriage, and rates are even higher among low-income Americans. This troubling statistic does not necessarily signal the demise of the two parent family—over 80 percent of unmarried couples are still romantically involved when their child is born and nearly half are living together. Yet half have broken up by their child's third birthday. What keeps some couples together and what tears others apart? After a breakup, how do fathers so often disappear from their children's lives?



*Unmarried Couples with Children* is a landmark study of the family lives of nearly fifty American children born outside of a marital union. Editors Paula England and Kathryn Edin's latest work answers many of the questions about family formation, personal values, and child wellbeing. Online: [www.russellsage.org](http://www.russellsage.org)

## I'd like to support MFFN's work!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_



Clip and mail this form with payment to MFFN / 161 Saint Anthony Ave. Suite 845 / St. Paul, MN 55103. MFFN is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

### Help us to support healthy child development through positive father involvement.

My gift is (please check one):

- membership registration (basic membership is \$20 annually).
- a gift to MFFN.
- an anonymous contribution.
- in memory of: \_\_\_\_\_
- in honor of: \_\_\_\_\_
- other: \_\_\_\_\_