

# Network Notes

November 2006 ■ Volume 4, Issue 4



Our mission,  
as a statewide network,  
is to initiate, promote and support  
effective programs and to educate  
on public policy to enhance the  
responsible involvement of fathers  
in the lives of children, families  
and the community.

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## A Voice for Fatherhood

MFFN seeks to provide a voice for Minnesota's fatherhood and family services organizations.

If you have a *best practice* or information you would like to share, please contact MFFN.

"Network Notes" is published each February, May, August, and November.

## \$1.4 million awarded to four Minnesota fathers' programs

### Federal funds focus on promoting responsible fatherhood

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families recently awarded four "Promoting Responsible Fatherhood" Grants to organizations based in Minnesota. The grants will bring a total of \$1.4 million to the state annually for up to five years.

The grants were awarded through the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. The Administration for Children and Families announced over \$118 million in grant awards to 225 grantees across the nation to promote healthy marriage and/or responsible fatherhood. All four of the grants to Minnesota organizations fall under the responsible fatherhood category.

According to Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, "These programs will help couples form and sustain healthy marriages, and equip men to be involved, committed and responsible fathers in the lives of their children."

### The FATHER Project, Goodwill/Easter Seals

Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota will receive \$500,000 per year for five years to enhance and expand the FATHER Project. The FATHER Project's proven model promotes responsible parenting and fosters economic stability for low-income fathers in Hennepin County and surrounding areas, including young men age 17 and older. Over five years, the program proposes to serve 872 fathers, with about two-thirds of enrollees placed in employment.

A key element of the grant is the development of dynamic partnerships with other leading nonprofit organizations in the Twin Cities, such as African American Family Services, Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES), the Division of Indian Work (DIW), Parents as Teachers/Meld and Way To Grow. An employment counselor will be hired; mental health and violence prevention services will be added; parenting group

Continued on page 2, "Responsible Fatherhood".

## messages & messengers FOR HEALTHY FATHERHOOD

### 4th annual Minnesota Fatherhood Summit coming to St. Cloud in January

The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network will host its fourth annual winter conference at the St. Cloud Civic Center. The day-and-a-half long conference is geared toward practitioners, educators, students, policy-makers, advocates, and parents who are interested in learning about healthy male-involvement in early-childhood development, social services, family services, and related themes. Attendees will include employees and volunteers of state, county, faith-based and community-based agencies; educational institutions; family courts; and more.

MFFN is pleased to have keynote presenters joining the conference from around the world with former Minnesota **Governor Al Quie** opening the conference on Monday, January 22. On Tuesday, January 23, keynote presenters will include **Adrienne Burgess** Director of Policy and Research, Fathers Direct, London, England and **Tom Klaus**, Program Director, Advocates for Youth, Washington, D.C.

The conference will focus on the theme, "Messages and Messengers for Healthy Fatherhood". Keynote presenters and workshop sessions will highlight ways that each of us can be stronger advocates ("messengers") for healthy fatherhood — and will share ideas for promoting healthy fatherhood ("messages") in homes, communities, and public policy decisions.

Registration fees are just \$50 for MFFN members (\$70 non-members). Registration includes breakfast, lunch, snacks, handouts, and certificates of attendance.

**Minnesota Fatherhood Summit**  
**Monday—Tuesday, January 22-23, 2007**  
**St. Cloud Civic Center**

Opening session begins: 1:00 pm Monday  
Final session ends: 4:30 pm Tuesday

Details: Visit [www.mnfathers.org/summit.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/summit.html) or call (651) 222-7432.

## Promoting Responsible Fatherhood

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classes will be expanded; and an “in-home” assessment component will be developed.

Andrew Freeberg, director for education and youth services at Goodwill/Easter Seals, says there are two important changes to expect. First, the grant will allow the FATHER Project to expand its cultural reach into diverse communities, including Latino and American Indian. By working closely with CLUES and DIW the project will capitalize on those agencies’ cultural expertise. Many of the issues facing low-income fathers are universal, but the solutions need to be individualized and culture is often a factor.

“One of the things we’re most excited about is the opportunity to engage and serve the whole family,” says Freeberg of the second important change. Partnering with Way To Grow will enable the project to include mothers in issues of school readiness and child health. The mother and father are living together in some of the families the program serves. Often, however, family situations are much more complicated. The grant provides an opportunity to explore creative ways for couples to work together for their kids.

The objectives of the program are improving outcomes for low-income, minority fathers and families by:

- Reducing barriers to education and employment;
- Increasing the short- and long-term economic self-sufficiency of fathers and their families through educational attainment, employment and proactive involvement with child support;
- Improving parenting skills of fathers.

The FATHER Project began in 1999 as part of a national demonstration project. In 2004, the program became part of Goodwill/Easter Seals, where employment and training services were enhanced. All the key current partnering agencies, such as Hennepin County Child Support Services and Central Minnesota Legal Services, remain committed to the FATHER Project and its efforts to strengthen fathers and families.

### Men in the Making, Employment Action Center, RESOURCE, Inc.

Employment Action Center (EAC), a division of RESOURCE, Inc., is operating Men in the Making with \$250,000 annually of Promoting Responsible Fatherhood grant funds. The focus of the program is on increasing the economic stability of the most disadvantaged fathers in the Twin Cities: low-income, primarily men of color with low educational attainment and limited work experience.

In the first year, Men in the Making will provide 100 fathers with comprehensive employment and training services including:

- Assessments that identify needs and barriers to employment and economic self-sufficiency as well as capabilities, potential career areas and support services needed for participants’ employment success;
- Remedial education including assistance with obtaining a GED and basic computer instruction;
- Scholarships for short-term vocational training for those unable to access traditional financial aid;
- Targeted job placement that helps participants obtain employment at living wages; and
- Job retention support to ensure participants’ long-term

employment success.

EAC and its partners will test and report on four innovative services designed to have a long-term impact on the men’s economic stability:

- Faith in the City Personal Finance Center will provide financial literacy training and opportunities for participants to build assets through Individual Development Accounts;
- Neighborhood Development Center will provide training and technical support in micro-enterprise business development to participants that are interested in pursuing self-employment;
- Men of color who have succeeded in the business world will provide mentoring and networking opportunities; and
- EAC’s job progression services will help fathers advance in their careers and increase their wages.

Fathers will also participate in comprehensive parenting support, skill building and father-child enrichment activities through EAC’s long-standing Young Dads program. Services include life skills education, healthy relationship and healthy marriage instruction, peer support groups, conflict resolution, and housing support services. Intensive case management will ensure that fathers receive assistance with establishing paternity, visitation and custody, and paying child support.

The Men in the Making program also emphasizes the need for fathers to be actively engaged in and give back to their communities. Participants are expected to participate in forums such as City Council meetings, Neighborhood Revitalization groups, and Parent Teacher Associations. Participants and their children also volunteer at local community service agencies.

Men in the Making’s primary outcome will be to assist participants to enter employment at an average wage of \$11.25 per hour (\$14.00 per hour for those completing skill training). Other outcomes are related to educational and skills attainment; asset building; micro-enterprise development, and parenting.

### Family Strengthening Project, Council on Crime and Justice

The Council on Crime and Justice (CCJ) is receiving \$400,000 annually through the “Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated Fathers and their Partners”, a unique category of funding granted to 15 organizations across the nation. The funding is directed toward a holistic program for incarcerated fathers, the Family Strengthening Project.

CCJ’s Family Strengthening Project will promote responsible fatherhood by strengthening marriages/relationships, fostering

Minnesota’s “Promoting Responsible Fatherhood” Grantees
<b>Urban Ventures Leadership Foundation</b> , Minneapolis, Responsible Fatherhood Single Activity Grant, \$250,000
<b>Resource, Inc.</b> , Minneapolis, Responsible Fatherhood Single Activity Grant, \$250,000
<b>Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice</b> , Minneapolis, Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated Fathers and their Partners, \$400,000
<b>Goodwill Industries, Inc.</b> , St. Paul, Responsible Fatherhood Multiple Activity Grant, \$500,000

## Minnesota's Responsible Fatherhood grantees expand services for men

Continued from page 2.

healthy connections with children, and increasing the family's economic self-sufficiency. The approach of the Family Strengthening Project is unique in its early intervention with incarcerated fathers and their families, as well as the longevity of the services. The project design is based largely on recommendations from the Children of Incarcerated Parents study completed by CCJ in January 2006. The Council on Crime and Justice plans to serve not only the incarcerated individual, as other programs have done in the past, but the entire family. Project services begin with a family wellness assessment at the time of intake to prison, and continue with couples counseling; classes in marriage/relationships, parenting, and finances; financial counseling; re-entry planning and employment placement.

With almost 50 years' experience researching and serving incarcerated individuals, and strong support from the Department of Corrections (DOC) and in the community, CCJ is well qualified to successfully deliver these essential services. The Council on Crime and Justice will work together with a wide range of partners including Minnesota DOC, Brakins Consulting and Psychological Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Goodwill/Easter Seals. Together with these partners, CCJ will work to reach these goals:

- 1) Intervening early with a family experiencing incarceration,
- 2) Strengthening commitment to marriage/relationships by building communication and conflict resolution skills,
- 3) Improving both parents' ability to support their children through incarceration and upon release, and
- 4) Increasing the family's economic self-sufficiency to provide a stable base for continued growth.

### Center for Fathering, Urban Ventures Leadership Foundation

The Center for Fathering will receive \$250,000 annually to supplement its work with men in families. The target population is low income African American and Latino men, ages 13-30.

The goal of the project is to help young fathers in poor neighborhoods of Minneapolis to be responsible parents by providing programming that improves participants' relationships with their children and facilitates reconnection with them.

The work plan provides for:

- 1) Recruiting fathers through street patrol outreach efforts.
- 2) Helping the fathers create individual development plans for addressing barriers to becoming more involved fathers.
- 3) Providing programs specific to each father's individual development plan:
  - Parenting classes including special classes for Latino fathers and for recently released prison inmates (the "Forever Strong" program).
  - Early Childhood Family Education program that brings the children and parents together.
  - Services through a licensed social worker that focus on men's health and family health / mental health issues.
- 4) Providing role-modeling for at-risk young men between the ages of 15-18, through the Elevations Program at three inner-city schools.

The Center for Fathering has provided fatherhood services for ten years. The effectiveness of the program is due to the nature of recruitment (by street patrol) and the program leaders who have pulled themselves out of life on the street and prison to become engaging role models for the young men served. The Urban Ventures Fathering Program was started in response to elements missing in the urban family including a sense of powerlessness that exists today in poor urban communities which manifested in the lack of personal governors of behavior which leads to low self esteem. The challenge of dealing with complex issues often results in a "do-nothing" attitude from dads. Fathers throw up their hands in frustration and often abandon the problems at home.

Motivation to complete the course is due to the quality of curriculum specifically designed for the target population, the ability of staff to make topics relevant and engaging, and a personal relationship with each participant. Booster courses are built in, because 90% of the participants voluntarily repeat the 16 week course for a total of 32 weeks. The fathers discover they learn new things the second time around.

Major partners include the Harriet Tubman Family Alliance, the Council on Crime and Justice, and the African American Men Project. Over the next five years, the program will expand existing services aimed at rebuilding fragile family relationships through fathering classes, cultural heritage information, male responsibility classes, and service to the community.

View the list of federal Responsible Fatherhood grantees: [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/grantees/list10-06.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/grantees/list10-06.htm).

For more information on Minnesota's grantees:

- FATHER Project, Goodwill/Easter Seals, Andrew Freeberg, Director of Education and Youth Services, (612) 724-3539
- Men in the Making, RESOURCE, Inc., Kirkland Johnson, Program Director, (612) 752-8836
- Family Strengthening Project, Council on Crime and Justice, Michael Bischoff, Director of Projects, (612) 596-7622
- Center for Fathering, Urban Ventures, John Turnipseed, Director, (612) 822-0802

**Nominate a local program or colleague!**

**Minnesota's**

**Excellence in Fatherhood Awards**

The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network annually recognizes outstanding contributions to fatherhood policy and practice in Minnesota.

Please nominate individuals, agencies, policy makers and programs that deserve to be recognized by their peers. With your help, we can honor the remarkable efforts going on throughout the state. Awards will be presented on Jan. 23, 2007, at the Minnesota Fatherhood Summit in St. Cloud. Nominations are due December 4, 2006. Nomination forms are online: [www.mnfathers.org/awards2007.pdf](http://www.mnfathers.org/awards2007.pdf) or contact MFFN at (651) 222-7432 to receive a fax/mail copy.

## 2006 Board of Directors



The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network is committed to hearing the voices of fatherhood practitioners from throughout Minnesota.

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## Fatherhood research roundup

### Recent documents examine aspects of fatherhood

#### The Economic Costs of Teen Childbearing

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy recently released new reports about the public costs associated with teen childbearing. The reports analyze national and state-level economic data, and make the case for a greater emphasis on adolescent pregnancy prevention. We know what works to prevent teen pregnancy. We need to find the public will to invest in proven approaches. To read the full reports, visit [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org).

#### Building Bridges Between the Healthy Marriage, Responsible Fatherhood, and Domestic Violence Movements: Issues, Concerns, and Recommendations

The Center for Law and Social Policy explores how the healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood, and domestic violence communities can promote the well-being of families and children. It explains barriers to building bridges between the three communities and suggests issues around which cooperative work is possible. Online: [www.clasp.org/publications/buildingbridges\\_brief7.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/buildingbridges_brief7.pdf) (Sept. 2006)

## Child support group honors fatherhood advocate

The Program Awareness Award is given annually by the Minnesota Family Support and Recovery Council, the state's association of child support professionals, to a person who promotes the ideals of the child support program thru education and awareness and significantly helps in the promotion of a positive image.

Stephen Onell, of FathersFIRST!, received the award in October 2006. His work promotes understanding of child support, family law, conflict resolution, and custody/visitation issues. Mr. Onell's initiatives include free family law clinics, education programs for teen parents, anger management classes, and counseling for fathers and couples. Mr. Onell helps create awareness of the important role fathers play in the lives of kids and at the same time encourages fathers to take responsibility for supporting their children. He teaches parents to use mediation to resolve their conflicts and to put the focus back on the kids.

Mr. Onell has collaborated with the Dakota County Child Support office for more than two years. According to the Dakota County staff who nominated Mr. Onell, he is "knowledgeable and experienced in the fields of social work, counseling, and mediation." Additionally, "he is a valuable resource and advocate for families. He brings a dimension of service that the agency alone cannot provide." Dakota County staff praised Mr. Onell by stating, "The Program Awareness Award is a way to give some well deserved thanks to Stephen Onell for raising awareness about the importance of child support and helping us meet our mission one family at a time."

### Support for MFFN is provided in part by:

The McKnight Foundation, Bush Foundation, Grotto Foundation, Initiative Foundation, International Dairy Queen, & MFFN members.

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