

# Network Notes

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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.

161 Saint Anthony Ave. Suite 845  
Saint Paul, MN 55103  
Phone: 651-222-7432  
info@mnfathers.org  
www.mnfathers.org

Visit us online at  
[www.mnfathers.org](http://www.mnfathers.org)

## 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.

## Community celebrates Father's Day at the Zoo

By Bryan Hackbarth, Boyz II Dadz Program Coordinator, Duluth

Father's Day is soon approaching and plans are underway for the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Father's Day at the Zoo event in Duluth, Minnesota, on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

The event is organized and co-sponsored annually by the Boyz II Dadz Program in Duluth. Boyz II Dadz has supported and assisted young fathers in the Duluth area for over 10 years and has organized this special event since 2001.

Back in 2001, the program was still looking for an identity in the community and more importantly, a way to promote and celebrate fatherhood in the Duluth area.

We soon realized we did not have to re-invent the wheel; we just needed to embrace and support what was already in place. Father's Day, of course. What better time of the year? Now we just needed a venue that would attract fathers and their families. The Lake Superior Zoo, of course. What better place than that? As it turns out, we just had to open our eyes.

Fatherhood has been celebrated in this country since the early 1900's and surely in that time many families have enjoyed together a nice day at the zoo. So really, there was only one question left for us to answer. How can we promote Father's Day in the Duluth area?

Soon we were talking with people at the Lake Superior Zoo and we found them to be very supportive of our ideas and needs. Each year on Father's Day, the zoo has special animal exhibits and shows. Our relationship with the Lake Superior Zoo has been and continues to be the backbone for the event.

Continued on page 2, "Community collaborators".

## More incentives needed to encourage young men to achieve

A variety of recent discussions about welfare reform are focused on welfare's combination of "carrots and sticks" to support families while simultaneously challenging them to achieve self-sufficiency.

While the success of welfare reform is still being evaluated and debated, many recent writings are finding that welfare is failing to help young men and single fathers find their way out of poverty. Reports are finding that young men and single fathers are given far more deterrents than incentives to achieve.

The Earned Income Tax Credit, in particular, is cited as an important incentive tied to welfare reform — a "carrot" that encourages individuals to seek and retain employment. The EITC creates benefits for many families but fails to adequately support low-income men.

Ron Haskins from the Brookings Institution explains, "It was the combination of low-wage work and government work supports, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), food stamps, child care subsidies, and Medicaid health insurance, that helped so many mothers pull themselves and their children out of poverty. The key ingredients of overhauling welfare were the judicious combination of sticks and carrots."

"The public agenda for men includes

Continued on page 2, "EITC for men".



Celebrating five years of service to fatherhood advocates, educators and family professionals.  
2003—2007

## Community collaborators help to expand Father's Day at the Zoo

Continued from page 1.

The next thing we did was talk to people in our community about how they could help. For example, the Duluth Fire Department has contributed to the event from the beginning; these local heroes and their fire trucks are a hit with the kids annually. Local businesses make donations and our local TV news does a wonderful job covering the event on a yearly basis.

Support for the event continues to grow and with every year so do the contributions from the people in our community. For example, free face-painting and a small tractor exhibit for the kids have become popular attractions thanks to community members.



The **Boyz II Dadz Program** exists to help young fathers develop strong, healthy relationships with their children.

In the first 2-3 years of the event, we used a simple raffle drawing and a handful of free passes to help promote and attract fathers and their families to the zoo on Father's Day. Well, as you may have guessed, a nice day at the zoo tends to sell itself and lucky for us, the weather has been very cooperative over the years.

In the last 5 years, more than 600 free zoo passes have been given to fathers and their families in the Duluth area. Last year alone, 300 zoo passes and 300 meal tickets were given away at the event. About 900 people attend the event annually.

The Boyz II Dadz Program is honored to be a part of something so special in the Duluth area and the program is looking forward to organizing and co-sponsoring this event for many years to come. That being said, the program would like to point out that none of this is possible without the support of the Lake Superior Zoo, Ordean Foundation, Children's Trust Fund, Duluth Fire Department, volunteers, the local media, and most importantly the fathers and their families who attend.

For more information about Father's Day at the Zoo and the Boyz II Dadz Program call 218-391-8330 or visit online: [www.thebuildingforwomen.org/BoyzIIDads.htm](http://www.thebuildingforwomen.org/BoyzIIDads.htm)

## Earned Income Tax Credit for men

Continued from page 1.

sticks and, well, sticks" according to Haskins. "Men generally do not qualify for cash welfare, child care, or Medicaid, and they qualify for an EITC that is worth only a tenth as much as the [custodial] mothers' EITC. The only major benefit for which they qualify is food stamps—to go along with continual pressure from child support and, for many, incarceration. Thus, the carrots are missing."

According to Erik Ekholm from the New York Times, "Childless adults and noncustodial fathers receive little from the earned income credit; their maximum benefit this year will be \$428 and begins phasing out at an annual income of \$7,000. Many economists and poverty experts are calling for more generous tax treatment of these groups, too, in part to increase the financial rewards of work for single black men, who have high rates of unemployment and incarceration."

Noncustodial fathers generally qualify for an earned income tax credit that is worth only a tenth as much as the mothers' credit.

The potential financial rewards accrued by single fathers would help the men to support their children, to stay involved in their children's lives, and to model positive behaviors in their families and communities.

"More than one in six taxpayers in 2004 received the Earned Income Tax Credit, highlighting its growing role in bolstering the incomes of struggling low-income parents," according to Ekholm.

"The federal credit, which offers tax refunds this year of up to \$4,716 for a parent with two children who makes \$12,000 to \$15,000, has emerged as one of the largest aid programs for the working poor" Ekholm continues. "The amount of the credit for such parents gradually declines, reaching zero as their incomes hit \$38,000."

Full citations and additional commentaries about the Earned Income Tax Credit are available online at [www.mnfathers.org/EITC.htm](http://www.mnfathers.org/EITC.htm).

## MFFN engages in strategic planning

Throughout the second half of 2007, MFFN will be conducting an organizational strategic planning process which will result in a new 3-year Strategic Plan and a 10-year Vision Statement. The planning process is supported by funding from the Otto Bremer Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, and other potential funders.

**Keep your eyes and ears open — we'll be asking for your input for a truly community-inspired strategic plan!**

## Federal study groups fathers and day-care providers in same category

Results from a long-term study of the nation's child care, funded by the National Institutes of Health, have been published in the March/April 2007 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

The study focused on non-maternal child care; therefore, results about fathers are limited and often grouped in categories with non-parents. The NIH "started the Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD)...in 1991 to collect information about different non-maternal child care arrangements and to determine how variations in child care are related to children's development," according to the agency's website.

"Child care was defined as care by anyone other than the child's mother that was regularly scheduled for at least 10 hours per week. This included care by fathers, grandparents and other relatives" (Medical News Today). In other words, actively-involved fathers were pooled into the same category as day-care centers and babysitters.

"The research showed that day-care kids are more argumentative in grade school but have better vocabularies than most of their classmates."  
- Neil Chethik

"That's right," cites Neil Chethik of the Lexington, Kentucky, Herald-Leader. "If your mother stayed home with you, you were cared for by your parent. However, if your father stayed home with you, according to the NIH study, you are the product of 'child care'."

Chethik continues, "When you're trying to change the culture, language matters. If we want men to participate more in the daily acts of parenting, let's not refer to what they do as child care or, worse, baby-sitting."

"The NIH study did examine the differences between children whose fathers stayed home with them and those whose mothers stayed home. And Chethik explains, "children turn out equally well whichever parent is around the house."

Of the 151 published papers that rely on the study's data, five papers mention fathers in the title while 18 mention mothers. And of the 65 presentations about the study since 1989, only the final presentation names fathers in its title while five mention mothers.

The NIH website has an application for researchers interested in accessing the study's datasets. The application and information about the study is here: [www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/secycd/overview.cfm](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/secycd/overview.cfm).

## SAVE THE DATE

5th Annual

### Minnesota Fatherhood Summit

Monday—Tuesday • January 14—15, 2008 • St. Cloud, Minn.

*For everyone interested in creating healthy connections between dads and kids.*

Details coming early fall 2007.

## "Fathers to the Forefront": Statewide action plan proposes steps to support low-income families and expand connections between dads and kids

In March, MFFN collaborated with the McKnight Foundation to host the latest in a series of meetings aiming to develop an action plan for the fatherhood field. The action plan will be released as a 20-page document titled "Fathers to the Forefront: a five-year plan for strengthening Minnesota's fathers and families".

Writing the action plan has been a collaborative effort of 50 professionals who work in fatherhood focused non-profits, various state and county agencies, educational institutions, and other organizations that promote the well-being of Minnesota's families. The professionals have identified four key "arenas" for on-going work: Education, Public Policy, Social Services, and Research/Advocacy.

The action plan provides a blueprint for increasing supports for fathers and families. The document, to be completed by early summer 2007, will be disseminated with the hope that social service agencies from across the state will commit to advancing one or more of the benchmarks for healthy fatherhood over the next five years.

Watch the MFFN website, [www.mnfathers.org](http://www.mnfathers.org), for the upcoming release of the action plan.





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

- Rebecca Ahlstrand, Carlton County Child Support, **Carlton**
- Jayne Anderson, Nicollet County Social Services, **St. Peter**
- Mary Anderson, Fatherhood Advocate, **Perham**
- Jason Giese, Southwest Minn. Private Industry Council, **Montevideo**
- Jon Harper, Adventures in Fathering, **Crystal**
- Jan Hayne, Dads Make a Difference, **St. Paul**
- Michael Jerpbak, Crossroads College, **Rochester**
- R. Clarence Jones, Southside Community Health Services, **Minneapolis**
- Gar Kellom, St. John's Univ., **Collegetown**
- Joe Kelly, Dads and Daughters, **St. Paul**
- Nancy Norbie, Kandiyohi County Family Services, **Willmar**
- Glen Palm, St. Cloud State Univ., **St. Cloud**
- Velura Peterson, Social Services, **Virginia**
- Tamy Reese, Morris Early Childhood Family Education, **Morris**
- Jack Sharp, Fatherhood Advocate, **St. Cloud**
- Dwaine Simms, Twin Cities RISE!, **Minneapolis**
- Enrique Soto, Banta Corporation, **Long Prairie**
- J. Neil Tift, Dads and Families Center, **Stillwater**
- Laura Turner, Employment / Fatherhood Advocate, **St. Paul**
- Tina Welsh, Boyz II Dadz, **Duluth**

## Fatherhood research roundup

### Gender and Racial Imbalances Persist in Children's Entertainment

The latest research from Dads & Daughters' See Jane program shows that live-action children's television programs have gone far in reducing gender and racial imbalance — but the imbalances remain entrenched in G-rated films and animated TV shows. For this study, researchers randomly sampled 1,034 shows across 11 network and cable outlets — the largest sample of children's television content ever constructed to assess gender portrayals. Researchers then coded attributes and behaviors of speaking characters using more than 75 criteria. Read the results at [www.seejane.org](http://www.seejane.org).

### Early Head Start and Teen Parent Families: Partnership for Success

The Center for Law and Social Policy released an issue brief focusing on the special needs of teenage parents and their children and how the unique set of services offered through Early Head Start programs can support them. Go to [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org) (click on "child care and early education") to download a copy.

### Adoption and Foster Care by Lesbians and Gay Men

The Williams Institute and Urban Institute have released a study that explores characteristics of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals who are adoptive or foster parents, and the children/youth in their care. "Research measuring well-being among children raised by LGB parents shows no negative consequences," said Gary Gates, researcher at the Williams Institute. "In fact, studies show that these parents tend to have a higher percentage of qualities that are highly desirable. On average, LGB adoptive parents and same-sex couples raising foster children are older and more educated than other foster parents. In addition, many LGB adoptive parents have access to more economic resources than other adoptive parents." The report is online: [www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute](http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute).

### How to Involve Parents in Programs to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy has released a publication that provides strategies for addressing the challenges programs face when involving parents in preventing teen pregnancy. Available online: [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org).

### Report Draws Connections Between Poverty and Teen Pregnancy

"The time has come for a reinvigorated fight against inequality and despair," say Brookings Institute scholars. "The next President should launch a new generation of effective policies based on a comprehensive work-family-education assault on poverty and inequality, including funding teen pregnancy prevention, premarital education and family planning efforts." The paper, *Attacking Poverty and Inequality* is available by visiting [www.opportunity08.org](http://www.opportunity08.org) (click on "Our Society" and then select "Poverty").

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

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

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  - an anonymous contribution.
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