

network notes

2011 May | Volume 9, Issue 2



MFFN hires new executive director



April 1 began a new era for MFFN when Bob Gustafson took the reigns as its new executive director. Gustafson replaces Paul Masiarchin, MFFN's first executive director, who left the agency in December after eight years of service.

Gustafson brings strong leadership and solid nonprofit experience. He most recently served as Development Director for the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and as State Director of the March of Dimes, Minnesota Chapter from 2002-2009.

"I'm excited to lead the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network. MFFN is highly regarded not only regionally but nationally. We have strong roots and I want to continue to grow MFFN as the statewide resource for increasing involvement of fathers in

the lives of children, their families, and the community."

Board President Michael Jerpbak, Associate Professor at Crossroads College in Rochester, says, "Bob's wide-ranging experience, fresh perspective, enthusiasm and energy will be instrumental in leading MFFN to the next level of excellence in support of fathers and families throughout Minnesota."

Gustafson and his family—wife Sarah and daughter Lilly—make their home in Plymouth, MN, but he's familiar with the character and challenges of greater Minnesota. Gustafson is a Thief River Falls native and graduate of Little Falls High School. He received a B.S. in Social Science and Secondary Education from St. Cloud State University. Before moving to the Twin Cities in 2000 to lead the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce, Gustafson served as the President of the Grand Forks, ND Chamber of Commerce. He fostered an environment of renewed interest and development and guided the city as it rebuilt after flooding. Major project involvement during his tenure there included construction of a \$80 million convention center, Base realignment and closure commission hearings, and membership development.

Board votes to let lease expire—MFFN to vacate office in June

With the staffing changes at MFFN and the end of its lease in June, the MFFN Board voted not to renew its lease for the eighth-floor office at 161 St. Anthony Avenue in St. Paul, MN in the Kelly Inn near the Capitol. In addition, Dads Make a Difference, the non-profit organization that MFFN has shared its space with for nearly five years, is moving to Stillwater.

"We felt that we could allocate our resources differently and embrace some cost-savings with virtual technology and new opportunities," said Karla Drown, MFFN treasurer. "We hope to find a solution that meets the needs of the organization, the needs of our new director, and allows us flexibility and freedom we haven't had."

As one of his first challenges, new executive director Bob Gustafson, is exploring ideas for MFFN's future office. "I haven't ruled out a home-based environment for MFFN, but I am considering

options that might allow us to partner with other organizations and maximize resources," said Gustafson.

Gustafson is reaching out to contacts and is putting the word out that he's interested in a creative arrangement for MFFN's future office. "Maybe that means MFFN's office will be virtual with agreements to use community space for meetings. Or maybe that means we'll find a corner in a larger office that's growing into its space. Or maybe that means we'll have a cubicle in an organization that lets us use administrative supports on demand," said Drown, "Or maybe there's something we haven't considered yet."

Gustafson is interested in working with MFFN's vast membership and partners in finding a solution. Contact Gustafson at 651-222-7432 or bgustafson@mnfathers.org to propose a solution, discuss collaboration, or pitch an idea.

Our mission

The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network enhances healthy father-child relationships by promoting initiatives that inform public policy and further develop the field of fatherhood practitioners statewide.

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 four times a year and is distributed online and in print.

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Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.

Recent funders

MFFN thanks the following entities for their support in 2010 and support for the Summit:

Bush Foundation
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University of Minnesota School of Public Health, Center for Leadership Education in Maternal and Child Public Health
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement
West Central Initiative

Contribute now

MFFN is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Donate online at www.mnfathers.org or call for details at (651) 222-7432. Thank you.

Celebrate Father's Day, June 19

From the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*:

Father's Day is a celebration honoring fathers and celebrating fatherhood, paternal bonds, and the influence of fathers in society. It is celebrated on the third Sunday of June in many countries and on other days elsewhere. It complements Mother's Day, the celebration honoring mothers.

Father's Day provides an opportunity to celebrate fatherhood and male parenting and it provides a formal day to honor and commemorate our forefathers.

Credit for the first Father's Day is given to Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, WA, who, in 1910, learned of the new Mother's Day who felt strongly that fathers also needed recognition after Mother's Day was recognized. Dodd also wanted a celebration to honor fathers, like her own, who raised a family of six children after his wife died in childbirth.

It took many years, support, and effort from organizations such as the YMCA to make the holiday official. In 1913 a bill to accord national recognition of Father's Day was introduced. President Calvin Coolidge stopped short of issuing a proclamation in 1924. In 1957, Maine Senator Margaret Chase Smith wrote a proposal to Congress accusing them of ignoring fathers for four decades while honoring Mothers as only "...just one of two parents." Finally in 1972, President Richard Nixon signed Father's Day, as the third Sunday in June, into law.

Let MFFN help you help the families you serve celebrate the importance of fathers.

MFFN's web site contains valuable resources including links to books, reports, studies, and presentations. These sources focus on the strengths that fathers provide to their families, the positive impact that father involvement has in the lives of children, and how healthy fatherhood influences healthy communities. If you work with families or provide direct services to fathers, these resources and links are a must—use them, copy them, talk about them. Build your knowledge and spread awareness.

Check out the 20 Info Sheets for brief topical introductions to fatherhood—especially *InfoSheet 5: Father's Day—Everyday* which provides tips for dads on how to be involved with their children. Find the Info Sheets online at www.mnfathers.org.

Much activity amidst change: MFFN project updates

2011 Leadership Circles

The Rural Minnesota Leadership Circles, supported by a grant from the McKnight Foundation, are busy at work in Rochester, Chisago, Alexandria, Moorhead, and Park Rapids. The project Director is Pat Krauth. All sites have completed their second training and planning visits.

The mornings are devoted to community training and the afternoons involve community leaders doing planning around the topic of helping the community become father aware, father friendly, and father engaged. First sessions went very well with Joe Kelly as the presenter of Fatherhood 101! The second sessions are featured the topics of co-parenting and gatekeeping in four of the communities featured U of M Extension staff Rose Allen and Ellie McCann. Alexandria is featured Joanne Mooney on the topic of healthy fatherhood and preventing domestic violence.

Each site should have established objectives and action plans in place by June 1 so they will be busy over the summer working with Pat on implementing their plans. For more information contact Pkrauth@MFFN.org.

Focus on prisoner re-entry

Mind the Gap is a pilot project targeted at fathers who leave the Minnesota Correctional Facility at Faribault. Its purpose is to promote fathers' re-entry into communities and reengagement with their families. The project addresses some of the formidable problems ex-offenders experience, including finding employment and payment of child support. It is funded through a grant from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. Key partners include MFFN, Goodwill/Easter Seals (FATHER Project), the Minnesota Department of Corrections, The Child Support Enforcement Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and Hennepin and Ramsey County child support departments.

The project, now serving 32 cases, has been operational since May, 2010. Participants get specialized case management which helps in accessing wrap-around services. These services include a mentor who works individually with the participants (provided through a related project funded by a Department of Labor "Second Chance Grant"). Additional components of the project are also under way, including efforts to increase information sharing and collaboration between agencies.

Order modification Grant Project helps parents who owe child support deal with economic changes

Project Update

Under contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Support Enforcement Division (DHS-CSED), MFFN is a partner in a federal 1115 demonstration grant that is helping improve processes to change child support obligations when family income or situations change.

With the help of subject matter experts and feedback from key focus groups, MFFN is developing materials to help parents and service providers navigate the system. Materials include a brochure, a guide, and a training curriculum.

Another project deliverable is to develop and implement a fast-track modification for parents who have a child support obligation and receive services from a county child support office. Relief may be available if the parent has experienced a significant change in certain circumstances such as unemployment, disability, or incarceration.

Parents who want their order adjusted can ask their child support worker to review their case or the parents can file an action in court. Not all situations qualify for an adjustment and both processes take time. The project goal is to make the system more efficient so that adjustments can be made before arrears accumulate.

Information about modifying child support orders when a parent experiences a job loss is online at www.dhs.state.mn.us under child support. In addition, parents who want to file an action to change their child support obligation without help from an attorney, may use the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Self Help Center. The Self Help Center offers assistance in person in some districts, by phone, and online at: www.mncourts.gov/selfhelp/.

As we go to print, several focus groups are being held on the documents and the training curriculum and trainers guide are being drafted. Training will be scheduled for late Summer and Fall. For more information contact MFFN consultant Pat Krauth at Pkrauth@MFFN.org.

DHS-CSED wants direct service providers to encourage the families they work with to know that child support obligations may be modified when criteria are met and that help is available. A limited number of large "stoplight" posters that explain the modification steps are available at no-cost to agencies and organizations that work with parents.

To request a plastic coated large poster, contact Lisa Lazzaretti, DHS-CSED Project Manager at lisa.lazzaretti@state.mn.us or 651-431-4453. Elec-

tronic files of the poster are available to download and print the poster from DHS eDocs at <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-6040A-ENG>.

Should you ask the court to change your child support order?

It depends on how much your income or expenses have changed.



The court is not likely to adjust your order if the ONLY change since your last order is:

- You had a new baby with someone else
- You believe the other parent doesn't need the money
- You or the other parent recently married or divorced
- Your minor child no longer lives with the other parent
- Your minor child has had a baby.

The court MIGHT adjust your order if any of these things changed since your last order:

- You or the other parent earn more or less money than before
- Your expenses have gone up because of unusual circumstances
- Your medical insurance has changed
- You quit your job to go back to school
- You receive the support and lost your job through no fault of your own.

The court very likely CAN adjust your order if any of these changes happened to you since your last order:

- You owe the support and the minor child now lives with you
- You owe the support and lost your job through no fault of your own
- You owe the support and are in prison
- You now receive public assistance
- You receive support and believe the other parent has a much better paying job
- One or more of your children turned 18 and are not in high school.

Important: This is only general information about adjusting child support orders. It is not meant as legal advice. For more information on how to adjust your child support order, contact your county child support office or visit www.mncourts.gov/selfhelp for forms and instructions.

For information about your child support case, visit www.childsupport.dhs.state.mn.us



Order Modification Grant Project Awareness poster DHS-6040A-ENG. Available from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Support Enforcement Division.

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Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.

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Fall Seminar Series Topic:

How father involvement is key to healthier, more active children.

MFFN will again convene a day-long fall workshop at various sites throughout Minnesota. This year's series will focus on how fathers can influence children's nutrition, activity levels, and physical and mental health, and why it's important for fathers to have a place at the table. Joe Kelly, Fathering Educator for the Emily Program and MFFN board member, is working closely with MFFN's executive Director, Bob Gustafson, to coordinate details and planning. Contact Joe for more information at joe.kelly@emilyprogram.com. Should your organization be interested in sponsoring, hosting, or collaborating with MFFN on this series, contact Bob at bgustafson@mnfathers.org.



Sector Update

Early childhood sector analysis surveys point to challenges

With funding from the McKnight Foundation, MFFN continues its second sector analysis project by looking closely at father involvement in early childhood programs in Minnesota. More than 500 professionals and fathers have responded to data collection surveys showing an understanding of the importance of father involvement in early childhood programs and revealing challeng-

es to father involvement which MFFN may investigate further. Early analysis indicates that the top three barriers are:

- Fathers' lack of time/time conflicts
- Difficulty knowing how to get fathers involved
- Lack of male staff

MFFN's contractor, Tom Fitzpatrick, is coordinating the research and conducting the analysis. For more information, contact Tom at tfitz@hotmail.com.

MOAPPP is now TeenWise Minnesota

Positioned for the future

At its 20th Annual Conference on May 5-6, 2011, the Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting announced its new name—TeenWise Minnesota. The new name frames teens in a positive light while it encourages adults to help create environments that help young people make wise life decisions. MFFN was happy to be part of the conference as an exhibitor and participant and partner in the Minnesota Young Fathers Action Collaborative (MYFAC). MYFAC is a group of organizations and individuals who work to promote supportive and effective practices in working with young fathers. For more information about MYFAC or to get a copy of the "Myth Busting" presentation, contact Sue Fust at sue@teenwise.org.