



OPNFF

Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families

www.ohiofathers.org

September 2009

“We’re Marching Forward”

By James McDonald, OPNFF President

Ohio must intentionally and strategically engage fathers in our work with families. In order to enhance the outcomes for children, families and our communities, dads must be at the table!

There are six OPNFF Task Forces currently working to achieve these ends.

- Steve Killpack and Rev. Brian Moore of Cleveland co-chair the Administrative Task Force and have **successfully satisfied the IRS requirements to designate OPNFF** as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation. We can now receive tax exempt donations.

- Terry Miller of Coshocton chairs the Resource/Research Task Force and with the assistance of David Witt, PhD, Akron University will be **collecting and analyzing fatherhood data throughout Ohio**. I urge you to go to the Programs for Fathers page on www.ohiofathers.org and take the Survey of Social and Health Services for Fathers. Over 190 fatherhood programs in the State have participated to date. We will share the results in the next newsletter.

- Scott Neely of Columbus and Steve Killpack co-chair the Public Policy Task Force and plan to partner with Tracy Robinson, Executive Director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood to **host an Ohio Legislators reception** in the fall. The Task Force continues to track sentencing and child support reform legislative initiatives as well as the federal Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009.

- Calvin Williams of Cincinnati and Brian Moore co-chair the Advocacy/Network Task Force and are working with the White House and the Region V Office of the Administration for Children and Families positioning Ohio to **host a Town Hall Meeting** on Fatherhood featuring representatives of the Obama Administration. We will keep you posted on our website.

- Muqit Sabur of Cleveland and Michelle Robinson of Lima co-chair the Training/Education Task Force and plan to **present at the 104th Annual Ohio PTA Convention** in 2010, and will coordinate OPNFF training and technical support. The Task Force also helped plan the 4th in our successful series of Advance Fatherhood

OHIO! Summits, held in Akron on September 24th.

- Eli Williams of Springfield chairs the Public Relations/Marketing Task Force and is aligning OPNFF to do Social Network Marketing on Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. Soon you will see the **new OPNFF brochure**. Today, check out the important updates on our website: www.ohiofathers.org. We have added a “What’s New” section on our home page to link you with the latest developments and our “**Fatherhood News**” page is full of information for practitioners and fathers.

We are making important progress and I want to say **THANKS** to all the members of the Task Forces for their diligent work. A few people are making crucial and irrevocable change.

Let’s march on!

Members of the Board of OPNFF can be contacted at info@opnff.net or emailed directly via our website. Look for the Board of Directors page on the About Us link.

Membership Update!

In just five years, membership in the Ohio Practitioners’ for Fathers and Families has grown to nearly 800 individuals, clear evidence that fathers matter and that many in Ohio are working passionately to engage and involve fathers in the lives of their children.

Our members represent 62 of Ohio’s 88 counties. Cuyahoga County boasts the largest membership with 238, followed by Hamilton (90), Franklin (66), Summit (45) and Muskingum (44).

If your aren’t a member yet, please join today. Membership is **FREE!** **Join online at www.ohiofathers.org**

Over 2500 Dads take their children to school in Summit County
details on the back page



“You guys have a good problem” 2nd Annual Summit County Fathers Walk A Success!

Throughout Summit County over 2500 dads, granddads, uncles, brothers, cousins, and mentors took children to school on September 10. This year the number of fathers quadrupled over last year. Twenty-nine schools in Akron, Tallmadge, Twinsburg, and Nardonía showed their commitment to children's education. PTAs throughout the county hosted hospitality rooms where fathers were provided coffee, juice, and pastries. School administrators and staff provided tools to enhance the engagement of fathers with their children.

Over 500 dads filled the Dodge Intermediate school gymnasium. The fire marshal stated, ***“You guys have a good problem. You are over capacity and you have all these fathers and men to participate with their children.”***

“Children were just beaming at these schools because their dads were there,” said event coordinator Vera Thomas. There was also a marked decrease in discipline problems on this day. Was it fear? Maybe, but I believe more pride and security because a man was in the house.

Lorenzo Lewis, northern coordinator for the Summit County Fatherhood Initiative and Director of Fathers for Family and Friends in Twinsburg and Nardonía, stated, “To see all the fathers and men come out and support the children was very heartfelt and emotional. Tears were brought to my eyes as fathers and children thanked me for helping to pull the walk together.”

Coordinators, Vera Thomas and Lorenzo Lewis stated, “It was worth the late nights of planning and putting together the event to keep the fathers and men connected with children”.

The walk would not have been the success it was had it not been for the Summit County Executive's office

who sponsored the commercial that aired on Time Warner, ESPN, BET, and the Disney Channel; or Children's Hospital who sponsored 2000 lapel stickers; and Helen Arnold PTA who sponsored 1000 stickers. PTA representative Joe Vitrano worked hard to coordinate PTA participation. “This was a whole community effort and I am so grateful for the support throughout the county.”

About 100 dads filled two rooms at the new building housing both Crouse Elementary and the Stewart Afro-centric program. “I had a lot of fathers from Stewart, a lot of fathers from Crouse and I had a lot of greeters from the community,” said Principal Angela Harper-Brooks.

Close to sixty greeters including judges, mayors, elected officials and community leaders greeted fathers at various schools. Greeters included Council President Marco Somerville and Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic who witnessed the influx of fathers at Crouse elementary. Mayor Christopher Grim greeted over 150 dads at Overdale Primary in Tallmadge. Judges Tom and Linda Teodosio, Jerry Larson, Orlando Williams and Jennifer Bheam, 100 Black Men, Councilwoman Renee Greene, Superintendent David James and Summit County Council members Cazzell Smith, Nick Kostandares, and Frank Communal were among the sixty dignitaries throughout the County who greeted fathers, signed them in, and gave them a sticker, ***“I Took My Child To School Today”***.

“I met a lot of new dads this morning from Crouse and Stewart, so that was pretty exciting,” Harper-Brooks said.

The Fathers Walk serves as an impetus to engage fathers in the PTA throughout the school year. PTA member, Destry Brooks stated, “We're going to go out and get the food, and the fathers are going to get

together and cook it and we're going to serve it. We're talking about old-school ~ chicken, barbecue, the whole nine yards. I talked to a couple of fathers who know how to make sweet potato pie, so they're going to make that.”

Last year, 17 schools and about 500 fathers participated in the walk, which is organized by the Summit County Fatherhood Initiative, an umbrella group of area organizations focusing on fatherhood issues. The Initiative (SCFI) serves as an advocacy group for fatherhood practitioners throughout Summit County.

Pastor Eugene Norris, SCFI Executive Director, stated, “The Fathers Walk is one of many events sponsored by S.C.F.I designed to foster committed, responsible and involved fathers.”

The Walk was a prelude to the **“Advance Fatherhood OHIO! Summit”** that will take place on **September 24th** at the Main Library in downtown Akron.

Again fathers will be provided opportunities to address topics such as custody, parenting time, child support and employment. State and local leaders including Tracy Robinson, Director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, luncheon keynote speaker, State Representative Dr. Vernon Sykes, and Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones will be present to help launch the initiative.

The Summit is **free** and open to the public, especially fathers. Lunch and materials provided but participants must pre-register on line at ONPFF <http://www.opnff.net> or call: 330.873.9397 *Parking \$3.00*