



Today's Dads

NEWSLETTER OF WISCONSIN FATHERS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
(<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org>)

Volume 22, Number 2 Summer & Fall 2010

From the Desk of The President

Peter Kerr
President WFCF

I am never in any doubt that the only variable is time. Equal Parenting will happen; it is only a question of when. And there is no more important time than now. With the up coming elections, we need to make sure that our political representatives echo our core values of fairness, respect and equality. Still today, it amazes me that special interest groups can be so selfish in their greed, to the detriment of the ambitions of tomorrow's women.

For many years, especially those of us with daughters, we have strived to give our children a fair and balanced world as they mature into adults, but still today, the lack of equality in the workplace is created by the lack of equality in the homeplace. You cannot set the example of inequality in a child's formidable learning years and then not expect that example to reflect itself in their adult years.

Those that still think the child/mother bond is more important than the child/father bond, that the parenting examples that the mother exhibits are more important than the examples that the father sets, will be seen - in time - for the dinosaurs that they are. Unfortunately, there will be far too many damaged children, that will have suffered at this act of selfishness and greed. To the parents who want to be involved in their children's lives and have suffered the "cookie cutter "Every Second Weekend and One Night Through the Week" cruelty of the family court system, it feels a generation of our most precious gift, our children's childhood has been stolen from us.

And let's get right to the point of this. Without

unequal placement, the child support transfer payments would be cut to a bare minimum, since both parents would be feeding, clothing and housing their responsibilities (and joys) equally - and what's wrong with that? The loser would be the monolithic government bureaucracy that earns its money from treating children unfairly and disrespectfully. I believe last year, the Child Support Department received \$104 million dollars of federal incentive for collecting about \$700 million in child support payments (If I'm wrong, let's not keep the amount secret, and I'll gladly apologize).

In my due diligence for the upcoming voting season, I was pleased to receive the following response from a candidate in my district, and you know whom I will be voting for!

"Hi Peter,

Thanks so much for contacting me on this. I believe in families and in the unfortunate situation of parental separation that both parents should have equal rights in regards to the children. So yes I do believe the starting point should be equal

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From the Desk of The President

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placement.

If you have any other questions or if I haven't fully answered your question just let me know.

Have a great day,

Jeff Kling”

There are incumbent politicians who purposefully keep the status quo, that vote down any amendments to what currently exists. And these are laws that enable a vindictive parent (and what custody dispute doesn't have at least one greedy selfish vindictive parent) to "win" a primary position that can and too often does, manipulate the other parent out of their child's life. The quickest way to dissipate the emotional turmoil of parental separation is to give neither parent the advantage and ability to use the children against the other parent. When you have laws that enable one parent to damage and sever the bond of the child with the other parent - then you have laws that damage and hurt children. As a new US Citizen - it's not something I'm very proud of.

As President of our organization, I urge you all to get involved, ask the simple question of your candidates and vote according to how to set the example in the homeplace, so our daughters can truly gain equality in the workplace.

Equal Parent as a starting point presumption will happen - our daughters will demand it - the only variable is time.

The earth is not flat, the sun does not revolve around the earth and there is a black man in the white house. I'll sign off now and watch one of my favourite movies - Rabbit Proof Fence - take some time out and watch it as well, it will open your eyes and mind - Oh and by the way, Australia does have Equal Parental Responsibility laws.

Being a dad means...

Teaching your kids there's dignity in struggle.

#553 from the book "1001 Things It Means to Be a Dad" by Harry H. Harrison Jr.

WFCF Member, Mike May, Helps Raise Suicide Awareness

James Wendt
Editor Today's Dads

WFCF Member, Mike May, participated in the first annual 5K Walk for Suicide Awareness in Kaukauna, WI on September 11.

As a divorced father of two children, Mike understands the challenges facing other divorced dads ranging from financial and job stresses to the devastation of not being able to maintain a relationship with their children due to non-maximized placement schedules and conflict with the children's other parent.

Too many men succumb to the stress and sorrow and take their own lives. According to multiple studies, a divorced man is nine to eleven times more likely to commit suicide than a divorced woman causing suicide to be one of the top ten causes for death of men after divorce.



WFCF Represents Dads at the Walk for Suicide Awareness

The goal of WFCF is to help men during the very difficult process of divorce and to let them know, "It gets better, don't give up, we're here for you and for your family." Mike's participation in the Walk for Suicide Awareness during a rainy Saturday in September sends the message to dads that they are not alone and that there are people who are fighting for them and their families no matter how dark the clouds may be.

I sure hope the other dads are dorkier than me

Ben Bromley

Reprinted from the Wisconsin State Journal (8/29/2010)

I went to my daughter's dance recital recently, and I couldn't spot her on stage.

Claire's group took the stage as scheduled, but all I could see were tall, grown-up looking girls. No sign of my little Claire Bear.

So I did a second scan across the stage. That's when I saw her and realized she is one of those tall, grown-up looking girls. I don't know who did this, or when, but I would like to speak to whomever is responsible immediately.

At age 9, my daughter is on the verge of adolescence, a period more experienced parents tell me best appreciated from a distance, such as an ice cave in Antarctica.

Like any father, I am troubled by this. But I am trying to look on the bright side. She hasn't hit adolescence yet, which means Dad is still cool. Or at least, he isn't any less cool than he used to be.

Claire still snuggles up to me. She still listens when I talk. And she has yet to hide behind a tree rather than admit in public that I am her father.

I'm told that this golden time in the father-daughter relationship is about to run out, so I'm trying to savor it. Sort of like when you move into an apartment in the middle of the month and get Showtime free for a couple weeks.

I asked a couple of battle-tested fathers how long I have before things go bad, and the news isn't good.

My friend George said he officially became uncool—after a long, gradual slide from his previous status of hero—when his daughter started fifth grade. He went from a knight who could slay dragons to a guy whose every word and deed is a complete embarrassment, sort of like Mel Gibson.

"As the dad, you are cast as a humorless, inept, unreasonable dictator who needlessly grills the child with torturous questions such as, 'What did you do in school today?' 'Who called?' and 'What?' (when you didn't hear the question the first time)." George sated. "By the way, the an-

swers to those questions invariably are 'Nothing,' 'Nobody,' and 'Nevermind.'"

Those are hardly comforting words. Things didn't get much better when I consulted my father. His theory is that trouble strikes at puberty, when females feel a biological imperative to identify potential mates and reject Dad.

Surviving this phase requires luck, Dad said. First you hope to have a daughter who is kind of forgiving of your dorkiness. Second, you hope her friends' fathers are dorkier than you are.

"If the fathers of your daughter's friends are control freaks or otherwise embarrassing nut jobs, you have a chance to look good by comparison," Dad said. "Then her friends will be telling her that she's lucky she doesn't have a father like theirs. And her friends will be nice to you because you're not as wacky as their own dads. When your daughters sees them being nice to you, she'll follow suit."

In the meantime, he advises setting the bar low. In other words, I should try to be a little less cool now, so that my inevitable fall from grace won't seem so precipitous.

"In your few remaining days flying under the coolness radar, it's important to work on not being cool. Never do anything that might be cool. If you're not sure, and you might end up doing something cool, do it incorrectly," Dad said. "The secret is to get the standard so low that a corpse could meet it."

My buddy George tried to cheer me up with this advice for a father whose daughter hasn't yet holed up in her cocoon of adolescence:

"Treasure the time when she still wants to hold your hand walking down the street, or sit on your lap to read a book or watch TV." George said. "No matter what stage of life they're in, take comfort in knowing that—despite what they say or do—they always love you and they will always be your little girl."

Even when they're hiding behind a tree and pretending you're a perfect stranger.

Throwing out the wheel

Rachel Bauer

Founding Director of Prevention as a Cure (PAAC), Human Relations Architect and WFCF Member

rachelb@preventionasacure.org

I will not reinvent the wheel



Instead I have decided to throw out the wheel. What has been done and redone or even arguable undone will only succeed in keeping us stuck repeating the same mistakes, following the same patterns, and wearing the same circular path in our history.

I will not encourage or be part of the squabble that so readily flows from the argument over He vs. She or Man vs. Woman. I am disgusted by the idea that men were once permitted to do harm to women and this was justified by the law because he "owned her" and that women are now permitted to do harm to men and this too is justified by the law because she "owes him." Her bad behavior is not only defensible but often celebrated because he had an affair and deserves what he got. This purest form of mediocrity is leading us right down the path of stupidly repeating our own history with the only goal in sight being to remain stuck within the trenches of vilifying one another. Are we not capable of seeing the big picture here?

How quickly we forget that women were once faced with the public terror of rejection by both sexes for having been accused of the crimes of love and passion, a.k.a., adultery. While not condoning these activities as justifiable they carry with them enough shame and pain to last all parties a lifetime without having to heap loads of our own covert guilt and remorse onto others difficult choices as a

means of avoiding the truth within ourselves and the ugliness of this deep gash in our social and cultural history.

Who are we to judge? Why do we see ourselves as so angelic and justified in our own perfection that we can't imagine ever being faced with such heart wrenching choices ourselves? If you deem yourself immune you have not considered a perspective outside of your current one, think harder and then consider honestly that you are imperfect and can be pushed to reach the limits of your own human capacity. It is not possible for any of us to be certain of our choices in extreme situations until we have ourselves been exposed to the circumstances that take us there. We can only imagine what we would do for survival if stripped of our comforts and necessities to thrive. If left for dead we would find ourselves capable of the unthinkable. Hollywood has graced us with scenes of plane crash victims surviving on the flesh of their friends and pushed our imagination to the limits of what we will do if our desperation for survival becomes great enough.

Who are we I invite you to consider. Do we really think is conceivable to deny ourselves just about any measure of comfort or chance for survival no matter the risk in the face of death?

Facing death extends psychologically to the rage we feel when we learn that a loved one has betrayed us and murdered the life of the very thing we have given ourselves and lives to, our relationship. Intimacy is at its core our most worthy of needs. We seek this fulfillment in different ways but we must feel as though we belong to something and to someone, our very survival depends on it. Our souls plead for revenge in the face of its impending destruction. In this terror and confusion we forget that we are not wild tigers charged with protecting the pride, yet we often react as though we are.

Women who discover the infidelity of a partner often immediately lash out in revenge and rage, pulling their children behind them, speaking harshly of their protector, making every attempt to harm the one who has caused them such pain by wallowing in their misery. In defense of their pride

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Throwing out the wheel

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they justify their actions and the harm they do to their children under the guise of protecting them when nothing could be further from the truth. Often littering their minds with information adults can barely comprehend and children should never have to. Any action taken to attack him directly or indirectly or to withhold his children is seen as a justifiable response. It is in fact ludicrous and destructive to all parties.

Rewind several centuries and men who discover the infidelity of their wives are justified in removing her children, her possessions, her reputation, her means of survival, and her health in cases where she is beaten or maimed and to the extreme killed. How can we not see the irony in where we are heading now?

Once again a household sports figure has taken his vows to be faithful and just to his family and perhaps forgotten them in the current of celebrity culture, sports and power. How will we respond if the allegations prove to be true? Perhaps some of the ladies in this small-yet-famous-mid-western-town will rush to her aid and offer to bring their husbands and his former teammates over to the house so they can tackle and crush him upon his return and her confirmation of the rumors. After all isn't this what our country encourages, justifiably revenge by any means possible and justifiable? Even if you were not born and raised here and even if you don't plan to take your children and fly back to Europe to hide out with your family and away from the tabloids in the aftermath of your violent, yet well protected secrets and lies.

Have we learned nothing in the past 300 years? I am certain that it is time we threw out the wheel and start from scratch. No positive change can come from the effort to attack, place blame, shame and accuse one or the other for wrong doing. The future of the children are what is truly important and if we are going to protect them and do what is best for us all, I am certain we are going to need a new model in which to work from. It's going to require the strength and leadership of the strongest men and women among us and a commitment to working together.

Being a dad means...

Worrying you're going to run out of money. And your kids is only five.

#744 from the book "1001 Things It Mean\$ to Be a Dad" by Harry H. Harrison Jr.

WFCF is Building an Attorney Referral Database and Needs Your Help!

James Wendt

Editor Today's Dads

While we would all prefer that divorce and custody issues could be sorted out peacefully between two reasonable people, it is a fact that attorney's are a "necessary evil" when a situation cannot be resolved collaboratively.

Many new WFCF members join the organization not just for the help and support we can offer but for advice on how to pick an attorney, what attorney to pick based on their situation, their location and even their budget.

In order to better assist other WFCF members, we are building an attorney referral database that will contain information about the legal professionals used in "real-world" cases of other Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families members.

We are asking that you send us information on your attorney with their contact information. Include basic information such as address, county where their office is located and phone number along with your take on how they managed your case.

Basic information we request:

- ◆ How responsive was your attorney? Did phone calls get returned in a reasonable and timely manner?
- ◆ Was billing fair and accurate?
- ◆ Was your attorney a strong advocate for fathers?
- ◆ What was your attorney's style: Aggressive, Collaborative, etc.
- ◆ Any other details you feel would be helpful

*Please e-mail any information you have to
editor@wisconsinfathers.org.*

Letters to the Editor...

As editor of Today's Dads, I personally invite you to share any feedback, thoughts or copies of any interesting articles on father and family issues you may have.

Please e-mail: editor@wisconsinfathers.org

Government need not parent

Malcom Hatfield, M.D.

Originally Published in the Opinion Section of the Journal Times

Regarding the Jun 21 Journal Times story on child support enforcement facing cuts, Judge Barry was quoted saying, "If you bring a baby into this world, that is the least you can do... pay child support."

Up to 90 percent of people polled support shared parenting by default in divorce. We the people believe that if a fit person brings a baby into the world, the least that Judge Barry and Family Court could do is put aside their greedy abuse of power that destroys the parent-child relationship and allow shared parenting.

How is hiring more government workers to pit one parent against the other stimulating our economy? Why not do away with big government and use all that saved money to stimulate the economy to produce goods and services others want? Charging any fit parent with a felony after first removing their kids from their lives and then forcing them to pay someone else to raise their child is absolutely despicable and goes against the laws of nature, religion and ethics. There should be a clear and convincing proof that a parent is unfit before the government gets involved.

Response to Miguel Morga's letter:

Malcom Hatfield, M.D.

Written in response to Child Support work Miguel Morga's letter published in Today's Dads (Volume 21, Number 4)

I read with great interest the letter published in last month's "Today's Dad" periodical and thank the writer for the time and effort made in both

reading the newsletter and fashioning an eloquent summary of his experience as Child Support Investigator for Crawford County. I do have several comments to make that might explain how and why non-custodial parents (NCPs) perceive him and others like him and thus might act in an "immature fashion" and have a "negative stereotype" of people who do his job.

By the time the NCP first deals with a child support investigator, he/ she has already been put through the ringer over months and sometime years dealing with and paying for agents of "Family" court. This includes but is not limited to psychologists, mediators, family court counselors, guardians-ad-litem, social workers and custody evaluators. These agents would have already poked and prodded their way through every nook and cranny of their lives. These same people would have made reports and recommendations to the court regarding who gets to be the custodial parent.

These third-party "experts" would have made assumptions and allowed their own personal biases to enter into one of the most important decisions one can have in their lives. These people would have made these decisions behind closed doors and the NCP would have been given no good reason why they cannot see their children and least 50% of the time despite legislation passed in 2000 that clearly states that "Family" court must choose the parenting plan that maximizes contact with BOTH parents.

Months and even years can go by and the NCP will quickly learn that he/ she has no control over their children and will have been relegated to a visitor status in the lives of their children despite the fact that they have done absolutely nothing wrong. They will quickly learn that if the winner parent alienates their kids against them, those same government agents will do nothing. They quickly learn that if the winner parent doesn't want the loser parent to see their kids, there is very little they can do.

I can say from my own personal experience in dealing with Racine County Family Court that I had to call my State Legislator on two occasions

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Response to Miguel Morga's letter:

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before I was allowed to see my child. Only when she called the courthouse did my attorney finally get an immediate hearing and access to my child. In addition, I had to wave goodbye as mom moved to Illinois despite my rigorous objection and continued to restrict my visitation and continued to poison my relationship with my daughter.

All of this despite legislative efforts to stop it. Meantime, government workers like Mr. Miguel go about their jobs completely oblivious to the harm they are doing by "looking the other way", and just "doing their jobs". The vast majority of NCPs would love to be equal partners in the parenting of their kids. They would do a fine job in well over 80% of the time.

If there were shared parenting by default, there would be no need for 80% of the people like Mr. Miguel who feed from both government and parent's troughs and restrict or chase away well meaning parents who have done nothing wrong.

Malcolm Hatfield, MD

14 years NCP Racine County "Family" Court

Your Thoughts Please...

James Wendt

Editor Today's Dads

President Obama proclaimed that October was "National Domestic Violence Awareness Month" and Esta Soler, president of the Family Violence Prevention Fund, wrote an article inviting husbands, fathers and sons to help end domestic violence.

I agree that we all need to work together to end domestic violence. *(and by "we all" I also mean that women need to be as opposed to female violence directed toward men as they are to male violence directed toward women.)*

Please read Ms. Soler's article below and share any thoughts you may have which we will publish in an upcoming issue of Today's Dads. Agree? Disagree? Does she go too far? Not far enough?

Please find Ms. Soler's article in the next column...



Inviting Husbands, Fathers and Sons to Help End Domestic Violence

Esta Soler

President of the Family Violence Prevention Fund

Original Article Published at www.whitehouse.gov on 10/15/2010

When he proclaimed October to be National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, President Obama said, "Ending domestic violence requires a collaborative effort involving every part of our society." He couldn't be more right.

I remember a time when domestic violence wasn't discussed much in public, and when it was perfectly acceptable to joke about it. In those days, if there was a serious public conversation about abuse, only women were inclined to join it.

Today, I am so proud that men work alongside us, in every facet of our work. This October, the men who run sports teams, businesses, media outlets, foundations and community centers are just as likely as the women who run them to be taking part in National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The inclusion of men is also evidence of our steadfast focus on prevention. To end abuse we must teach the next generation that violence is always wrong. Boys listen to their role models, so we all need to encourage men to teach boys to reject violence against girls and women in all its forms. Today, any man who wants to help stop domestic violence is welcomed and supported.

October is an important month for those of us who work to end domestic and sexual violence. People are paying attention to the issue. At a time when four women are murdered each day in this country by current or former husbands or boyfriends, when rape and sexual assault plague college campuses, when teen girls think his jealous rage is a form of love, when adolescents think violence is a normal part of dating, we have a lot of work still to do.

We are so proud to be able to do that work with an Administration that is truly committed to stopping domestic violence and to know that, as we go forward, we will have millions of men with an unwavering dedication to this cause at our side.

HELP WANTED!

Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families is looking for help in the following areas:

- ◆ *Member notification calling tree "specialists" who we can count on to "spread the word" to other members.*
- ◆ *Father's Night Out "coordinators" who will help expand our valuable monthly FNO efforts*
- ◆ *Child Support Agency "investigators" who will take the time to visit their local child support agencies to ensure that fathers are treated fairly and given good information.*
- ◆ *Local and regional news "monitors" who will read their local newspapers and write letters to the editors encouraging fair and accurate reporting of father-related issues.*

If you want to help in any of these areas or if you can offer any other time or talent to WFCF, please e-mail editor@wisconsinfathers.org or call me directly at 920-915-8505. Thank you - James Wendt

Fathers Night Out

Support and Social Dinner Meeting

Milwaukee: Milwaukee area meetings are held the first Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at **The Chancery Restaurant** 7615 W. State St. - Wauwatosa, WI (between corner of Harwood and 75th)

Madison: Madison area meetings are held the third Monday of the month at 6:15 PM at the **Yes Buffet** 3038 Fish Hatchery Rd. - Madison, WI (approximately half a mile south of the Belt-line)

Fox Valley: Fox Valley area meetings are held the second Tuesday of the Month at 6:00 PM at the **5 Generations Restaurant & Bar** 134 W. Wisconsin Ave. - Neenah, WI (corner of Church St. and Wisconsin Ave. downtown)

Call 608-ALL-DADS or visit
www.wisconsinfathers.org
for more information

Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families



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