



Today's Dads

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

March 2017

WFCF 2017 Annual Meeting

The meeting was held on January 23, 2017 in Madison, and was well attended.

We thanked the outgoing 2016 board. A special thanks (and plaque) were given to **Mike Landwehr** and **Peter Kerr** for **MANY** years of service with WFCF along with **VERY** significant contributions. Mike and Peter have stepped down off the board, as well as Leigh Jahn and Jacob Foster.

The **2017 board** was voted on and accepted: (**new members are in red**) **Tony Bickel**: President, **Rick Frazer**: VP / FNO Manager, **Tom Strickland**: Member at Large, **Alan Frey**: Leg. Liaison, **Devin Gattton**: Leg. Liaison, **Mary Ciano**: Social Media Dir., **Kevin Monahan**: Survey Master.

All **board member** info is on our website at :
<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/by-laws.htm>

The 2016 board accomplish 6.5 of the 8 goals we had established last Jan (16). **Notable accomplishments:**

Added 4 additional Fathers Nights Out, to a total of

8 FNO's now each month.to help people!

Publish **Today's Dads** **three times** in 2016, hoping for **four times in 2017**. We received feedback from Judges and Family Support offices that they appreciate and use our newsletter, AWESOME!

Increased our Facebook presence with frequently added content. All FNO's announced on that platform, **LIKES and followers** from 300 to **775**

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Town Hall Meeting in Fox Valley by *Alan Frey*

The idea of a **Town Hall Meeting** was brought up by Chuck George of Little Chute. Chuck had never organized a meeting like this in his entire life. **We invited** politicians, judges, various father's rights groups, 175 people from the WFCF database in the Fox Valley area, and promoted the event on Facebook. Our goal was to get the various stakeholders together, to discuss strategy **and** an important topic.

We set up the location at a local meeting place called Liberty Hall in Fox Valley. The price for the meeting room plus fantastic hot appetizers including bacon wrapped shrimp bacon wrapped water chestnuts baby Reuben sandwiches along with the obligatory vegetable tray came to a little over \$200.

Attendees included state representative **Amanda Stuck** from the 57th district. State senate president Roger Roth was invited but was unable to attend. Among the attendees were Rick Frazer (Fox Valley FNO leader), Steve Blake (D of W), Ben Kain (IFW), and KC Dickson (WFRM). Many pro equality organizations had representatives in attendance. The total attendance was around 24 people. This was tremen-

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dous given the early December meeting date along with this being the first time this type of event was held, **Chuck George** took initiative and really made it all work.

I was the main speaker and moderator. Being the moderator was a bit of a challenge. With emotions being what they are, different attendees wanted to take the meeting in different direction at times. That is why we had an **agenda with a timeframe handed out to every attendee**

We may have focused *too* much time on just the strategies for the equal placement bill. But this is the main focus of the various organizations that represent fathers that were denied equal access to their children. We are planning on the successful passing of the **Family Protection Act** in 2017.

The topic we agreed on was **co-parenting** and strategies to **make it work**. We wanted to focus on how we follow through on our responsibilities as a parent assuming we have 50/50 placement.

One of the questions we will face is now that we have equal placement and equal custody what will you do with it? The truthful answer is and should be, spend more time with my kids. Our goal is to spend our time and money on our kids, instead of attorneys, GAL's, and psychiatrists. The time and money spent on our kids is far more beneficial to our kids, then to all of the outside people who make large amounts of money on **children going through a transition in their family life**.

To summate here is some suggestions worth considering when organizing a town hall type meeting. Have a nice agenda with an outline available. Use a RSVP technique so you can provide a list of attendees email information, to everyone when they arrive. Keep the goals relatively low. And have a warm and friendly discussion on the upcoming positive changes in the state law. You will not be able to solve any problems at a meeting, but you can create the contacts and motivation to help move things forward. Most attendees were very positive on the results, and were very encouraged by the discussions.

Annual meeting continued from page 1:

WFCF has provided personal **HELP** to

346 people in 2016:

8—From ALL-Dads phone helpline

12—Facebook help via *chat*

24—new people helped at FNO's

302—Email helpline responses to individuals

ALSO WFCF now has **1,030 members**. The 2017 board has big goals as well , to follow up on the 2016 accomplishments. The 2017 goals can be seen (*along with all board meeting minutes*) at:

<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/by-laws.htm> , and click on **board meeting minutes**.

We had two presentations at the meeting. Kevin gave a presentation on the **SURVEY's** he has done (*see the Dec issue of Todays Dads*), and Alan gave a presentation about the **Town Hall Meeting** (*see page 1 of this issue*) and how to arrange this type of valuable and effective activity.

We also had **Dads of Wisconsin** and **Families for Equality** give presentations on current and future legislative actions regarding shared parenting.

Things are happening in 2017!

2017 will be a VERY IMPORTANT time for separated/divorced parents with children. With that in mind the 2017 WFCF board convened immediately after the annual meeting. The 2017 WFCF board voted unanimously to initiate an **independent lobbying effort**, effective immediately. We will continue to support actions with D of W, IFW, and FRM, as well as taking independent actions to assist in **furthering legislation that is father and family friendly**.

HELP WFCF

With the legislative push in 2017 for equal parenting rights we need more than ever to increase our membership. More members add more creditability to our legislators, which tells them there are a LOT of voters who want this change to come about NOW.

WFCF is **life** membership rate ONLY **\$30!**

Everybody knows 5 other people who feel fathers are an important part of children's lives.

We want to maximize our membership so it adds maximum credence to our rally call for equal rights for BOTH parents.

Please let **at least five other people** know that by joining our group they will help insure that **ALL fathers** have an opportunity to be a parent to their children.

If we do this, it will not be 1000 people asking for equality for BOTH parents, it will be **5000 people asking for equality!**

FATHERS ARE IMPORTANT

Please ask at least 5 people to consider a tax deductible donation

**[http://
www.wisconsinfathers.org/
join.htm](http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/join.htm)**

Click on **buy now** to join
WFCF

Shared parenting after *divorce/split* is best for children, has the endorsement of 110 world experts, is supported by 43 peer reviewed papers, **is favored by 70% of the Population** and was the **conclusion of the largest study on children of divorce**. Even the Council of Italian Bishops endorses **shared parenting as best for children and society**

FOX Valley FNO Group



Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families

Do It Yourself
Pro Se Help

Dads Helpline

Legal Resources

Fathers Night Out

FATHERS NIGHT OUT

Northwest WI Central WI

LaCrosse Fox Valley

Milwaukee

Madison Racine

Beloit

WISCONSINFATHERS.ORG | Facebook.com/WisconsinFathersForChildrenAndFamilies

“Maintaining Perspective: Keeping Personal Life in Balance with Family” By Marc Kotz

My daughter was three years old when her mom and I divorced. Despite the separation of the family, and all the difficulties it presented, the memory of the wonderful times I spent with my daughter (from taking cross-country road trips to volunteering on a weekly basis in her classroom) fills my heart with such joy that I am certain that everything I did to optimize my involvement in her life as she was growing up was well worth the frustration, pain, and -yes- anger, that I sometimes endured in the process.

But as time went on and she entered middle school, increasingly not wanting my presence in her social milieu, establishing her own identity as an individual person, I realized that the parental participation that I had struggled and fought so hard to establish, was not necessarily going to be permanent, or at least the same kind of, involvement that I had come to treasure so dearly.

Now, that natural growing-up process is hard for any parent to weather, but to a single parent, particularly one with non-primary placement and no immediate family nearby (as in my case), it presents additional difficulty. In particular, the challenge of how to take care of my own needs, while I, as a parent, am aware of how important it is to not confuse or impose my personal needs onto my child(ren). Meeting this challenge appropriately often results in the deferral of those personal needs to a later point, when the demands of child-rearing are not so great.

I believe it is common for any single parent to not have the time, resources or moreover, to simply forego, the development of their own personal lives. Add to that the challenges of finding, introducing and blending new relationships and involvements into an already stretched situation for our child(ren), and it is no surprise why single parents often stay single. But, if we stay a single parent (*and even if we don't*) there are issues to attend to as our children grow up that don't really have anything to do with their maturation - yet can impact our ability to be a healthy model for them, as well as our ability to mentor them in later life.

In a way, this might be the single parent's version of the “empty nest” dynamic. In the case of single parents, however, it might be expressed as something more like “is there life after raising children?” If we as single fathers (and some mothers may share the same predicament) expend much of our life's energy, resources and assets in simply maintaining a home and schedule that enables us to have a fair shot at raising our children, then at the end of that road (of actively raising our children) we may have little or nothing to show in terms of a career or worldly assets that enable us to move into later years with ease and grace. But we owe it to ourselves (and to our children) to not give up hope that we can have a happy and productively satisfying life despite enduring years of hardship and strife to simply keep home and family intact.

The reason for evoking such an issue or question is predicated by the belief that prolonged exposure to unreasonable or inequitable conditions in life has a way of forming one's outlook to accept conditions that might not otherwise be acceptable. I'm not talking midlife crisis here, but the effects of conditions like court-mandated dictates that one knows in one's heart are not necessarily helpful to one's children or supportive to one's self in being a parent, yet are imposed on one as an obligation, which if not fulfilled, puts one at risk of breaking the law and being imprisoned. This sort of forced servitude has a way of oppressing one's outlook over time, and can subdue the motivation or spirit to realize one's fullest potential later on.

So, coming back from such an “oppressive” and lengthy journey requires determination, insight, patience and probably help or support in reclaiming (or building anew) a life that is dignified, prosperous and connected to community in a positive way. But then, what better aspiration can we have for ourselves, or for our grown-up children, than to pursue resilience in order that we might find the fulfillment and happiness that we may have not been able to locate or create in our lives previously?

It is my own deepest and sincerest hope to eventually offer my daughter the fruits of an ongoing quest and growth from following a personally redemptive path as I continue on with life...

Wisconsin Child Custody/Placement

Information Provided by: Max D. Harris, Esq.

In Wisconsin the term "legal custody" refers **not to where the children are to live but to the allocation of decision-making authority** among the parties with respect to major decisions. The term **"physical placement"** is used to refer to where the children are to live, and the term "periods of physical placement" refers to the time the children are placed with a particular parent or custodian

Legal custody may be sole or joint, or mixed sole and joint (joint in some areas but sole in others). **Joint legal custody means both parents have a right to participate in major decisions affecting the children**; sole legal custody means only the parent with legal custody has the right to decide major decisions affecting the children. Occasionally the court will grant joint legal custody on most issues but identify certain areas where one parent has sole legal custody.

The court may grant joint legal custody if it finds that it is in the best interests of the children and either both parents request it or one parent requests it and the court finds all three of the following: 1) both parents are capable of performing parental duties, 2) no conditions exist which would substantially interfere with the exercise of joint legal custody, and 3) the parties will be able to cooperate in the future decision-making required by joint legal custody.

Under certain circumstances the court may transfer legal custody to a relative of the children or to an agency if the court finds that neither parent is able to adequately care for the children. This third-party custody decision under a divorce decree is rare but seems to be becoming more common as more and more children are left with relatives by distressed spouses prior to divorce.

The court will want the children to spend time with both parents, and by statutory law must allocate periods of physical placement between the parties unless the court finds that physical placement with a parent would endanger the children's physical, mental or emotional health. Absolute denial of periods of physical placement is very rare, but if ordered, may provide a basis for eventual termination of parental rights. In most cases each parent is awarded periods of physical placement of the children. The actual placement arrangement may take one of three basic forms:

- **The Traditional Form** - One parent has primary placement of the children and the other parent has periods of placement which usually take the form of every other weekend during the school year plus extra time in the summer. There is also usually an alternating of holidays and a sharing of Christmas.
- **Shared Placement** - In recent years the idea of the parents sharing placement of the children more equally has grown in popularity. This may take the form of equal shared placement, such as alternating week or two-week periods, or some other form of shared placement which is not equal but in which the parent with less time has substantially more time than the noncustodial parent under the traditional form. Parents who work different shifts may also find shared placement an effective way of sharing responsibility and care of the children. There is a special shared placement child support rule which lowers the child support obligation in recognition of the additional care and support provided by a shared placement format.
- **Split Custody** - Occasionally, and for a wide variety of reasons, children are split up between the parents, with each parent having periods of placement with the child or children primarily placed with the other parent. With split custody, the visitation schedules are usually set up to have the children together every weekend and for substantial times in the summer. There is a special split custody child support rule which offsets and nets the child obligations of the parent.

Factors for Determining Placement

If the parties cannot reach an agreement about the placement arrangement for the children the court may have to decide the issue after a trial. The interests of the children are represented at the trial by an attorney, known as a guardian ad litem, appointed by the court to represent the children's interests. A custody study is usually prepared for the benefit of the court and plays a significant role in the guardian ad litem's position and the court's decision.

The court shall consider the following ten factors in making its determination:

- The wishes of the parents.
- The wishes of the children.
- The relationships of the children with the parents and other significant persons. (*continued on page 6*)

- The children's adjustments to home, community, school and religion.
- The mental and physical health of the parties and the children.
- The availability of child care services.
- Whether one party is likely to unreasonably interfere with the children's relationships with the other party.
- Whether there is evidence that a party has engaged in child abuse.
- Whether there is evidence that a party has engaged in inter-spousal battery.
- Whether either party has a significant problem with alcohol or drug abuse

What can a parent targeted by

Parental Alienation do?

Amy Baker, Nov 2008

Parents who are concerned about the other parent trying to turn their child against them should definitely take this concern seriously. Targeted parents should not assume that, because they have a warm and loving relationship with their child, this same child is immune to parental alienation efforts. Targeted parents should also not assume that this problem will go away by itself. Often, a child who experiences parental alienation becomes increasingly alienated until the child is completely out of the parent's life

1. Document the sources of concern, including the specific dates, times, and events – It is possible that putting this list together can shed light on the situation and help a parent see that the situation is much better or worse than originally thought to be. The list could also offer clues as to likely strategies to be used by the alienating parent in the future, which could possibly be thwarted with some ad-

vance knowledge and planning. If a parent concludes that parental alienation is a legitimate concern, it is very important that a team of mental health and legal professionals, who are familiar with the problem, is pulled together. Should the situation involve a court case, it is important to work with professionals who understand the dynamics of PAS

2. Hold himself or herself to the highest possible standard of parenting – That means the targeted parent should never being late for pick-ups and showing up for all visitation and activities, no matter how difficult that might be and even if it is highly likely that the child will not be made available. Targeted parents need to realize that every misstep will be greatly exaggerated by the alienating parent and that it hurts the “cause” to behave in a way that gives the appearance of being untrustworthy or unloving.

3. Do not engage in lengthy debates with the child about the alienation – Children do not want to be told that they are being manipulated and that they are not thinking for themselves. Such an attack is likely to entrench the child further into the alienation. Similarly, targeted parents should not spend too much time – if they have any actual visitation time left – engaging in arguments about any of the specific areas of disagreements. It is completely understandable why parents would want to defend themselves when their child is falsely accusing them of some misdeed. However, what the child may take away from such an encounter is a bad feeling about the time spent with the targeted parent. It is much wiser to make whatever time is available with the child positive, warm, and loving – or at least not actively negative and hostile. That being said, it is suggested that targeted parents respond to an accusing child with the following statement, “I hear that you believe that I (insert specific accusation), and I am so sorry that you believe that. I do have my own perspective on that and am willing to discuss it with you if and when you want. In the meantime, let's (insert enjoyable activity here).” This puts the targeted parent on the record that there is another side of the story, without forcing the child to face a reality she is not able to accept. On a related front, the best way for targeted parents to show their child who they are is to be their best self and to maintain their love and support for the child. Many targeted

parents – overcome with grief and frustration – become tempted to cease reaching out to the child, but this can be a mistake. Even the most alienated and rejecting child does not really want the targeted parent to go away for good. The targeted parent can help the child and their relationship by behaving in a consistently loving and available manner – no matter what. Thus, even if the child has cut off a targeted parent, that targeted parent can still send letters, text messages, e-mails, gifts, and so forth. Even if the targeted parent is certain that the cards and gifts are being thrown out or not being brought to the child's attention, it is important to have a system for consistently trying to make contact, in the event that the child does become aware of these efforts. At the same time, these points of contact should not be guilt-inducing or manipulative in any way. The most important message to convey is, "I love you, and I am thinking of you. I would love to spend time with you whenever you want."

4. Maintain empathy for the child, no matter how disagreeable he behaves – It is helpful to think of the child as a nested doll (a doll inside a doll inside a doll) in which the innermost doll is the real child and the outer dolls represent the defenses and distorted beliefs that separate the child from the parent. No matter how ugly the child behaves, the real child is still somewhere deep inside, needing the targeted parent to love him

5. Never give up hope – Even the most alienated child can eventually have a realization and want to reestablish contact with the targeted parent. There are many different catalysts for having the realization that one has been manipulated by a parent to forgo a relationship with the other parent. The targeted parent may be the last person to know that the child is in the process of having a change of heart. That is why the targeted parent must always let the child know that the child is valued and loved and will be welcomed back whenever she is ready. It may be useful to think of an alienated child as lost in a dark forest of lies and confusion. All of the points of contact that the targeted parent initiates are like a trail out of that forest, guiding the child back to the targeted parent.

6. Become educated and get support – Being a targeted parent is one of life's most painful and sorrowful experiences. Few people understand PAS unless they have experienced it firsthand. There are support groups on the internet and in some communities for targeted parents. There are also a number of good books and websites for targeted parents

Parental Alienation Awareness Organization

(PAAO)

<http://www.paawareness.com/>

2017 will be the year that WFCF will be asking you to stand up and have your voice be heard.

2017 will have at least one, if not two legislative initiatives coming up. With that in mind we will be communicating frequently with all our members and contacts **with updates and specific calls to action** regarding communicating with state legislators.

We will be asking people to call, email, and personally attend gatherings to send a clear message that **PARENTAL EQUALITY** is **VERY** important to **MANY PEOPLE...who vote!**

PLEASE strongly consider joining WFCF in taking actions this year!

WFCF will provide **support information** to help **individuals** voice a **clear and compelling message**, that PARENTAL EQUALITY is the right thing to do.

WFCF will let you know when the time is right to initiate this contact, and we hope ALL of our members and contacts step up to this call to action. **WE ALL MUST be ready to ACT in 2017!**



Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families

P.O. Box 1742
Madison, WI 53701-1742
<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org>

Return Service Requested

WFCF Membership Form

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip Code :

Phone:

E-mail:

Please enclose \$30 for a lifetime membership

Fathers Night Out

Support and Social Meeting

Milwaukee: Milwaukee area meetings are held the *second Tuesday of the month* 7:15 PM at:
BAR LOUIE, 5750 Bayshore Dr., Glendale, WI 53217

Madison: Madison area meetings are held the *third Monday of the month* 6:15 PM at:
World Buffet, South Town Mall, 2451 West Broadway, Monona, WI 53713

Fox Valley: Fox Valley area meetings are held the *third Tuesday of the month* 6:30 PM at:
5th Quarter, 2101 American Dr, Little Chute, WI 54140

Central WI: Central WI area meetings are held the *second Monday of the month* 7:30 PM at:
Korner Kitchen, 4890 Hwy H, Edgar, WI 54426

NW WI: Northwest WI area meetings are held the *third Thursday of each month* 7 PM at:
Milwaukee Burger Company, 2620 E Clairemont Ave, Eau Claire, WI

Janesville: Beloit/Janesville area meetings are held the *first Tuesday of the month* 7 PM at:
World Buffet, 2701 Milton Ave, Janesville, WI

La Crosse: La Crosse area meetings are held the *second Thursday of the month* 6:30 PM at:
Sheninigans, 2100 Dawson Ave, La Crosse, WI

Racine: Racine/Kenosha area meetings are held the *third Friday of the month* 7:30 PM at:
Asian Buffet, 3701 Durand Ave, Racine, WI

Visit: www.wisconsinfathers.org