



EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

1718 CLEVELAND AVENUE NORTHWEST
CANTON, OHIO 44703

ecresourcecenter.org

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Early Childhood Resource Center is to promote the healthy development of young children by strengthening families, improving the quality of early learning experiences, increasing school and community readiness, and informing public policy.

CENTER HOURS

Monday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Wednesday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Center is closed on weekends.

877.691.8521

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ECRC Community Chronicle

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER :: *Fall News 2019*

DADS ROCK!

As two very dedicated fathers, we're passionate about the critical role a father plays in a child's life.

Ideally, every child would have the benefit of both parents being actively involved and cooperating as a team. Each parent can provide a different perspective and bring different, but complementary, skills into play. For example, a mother might be more nurturing, while a father might focus on setting high expectations and preparing children for the challenges of the outside world. A child needs both kinds of parenting.

In our work, we have seen what can happen when a child doesn't have a father's guidance and support. The statistics about absent fathers are grim. But when dad is involved, a child is far more likely to grow into an emotionally stable, educated, and successful adult. That's why we at the Early Childhood Resource Center are working hard to ensure fathers are in the picture and have the skills and knowledge they need to be active parents.

We are thrilled to have received father engagement grants from the Ohio Fatherhood Commission, GAR Foundation, and Summit County Children Services. This work, in addition to our

collaborations with community partners that include the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, Right Path for Fathers, and THRIVE, will help us accomplish two goals:

1. Working for systems change, to ensure fathers are afforded the opportunity to be a meaningful part of their children's lives.
2. Working directly with fathers, to help them develop the skills they need to be great dads.

This newsletter focuses on fathers. Throughout this issue, we have featured the words of some of the fathers we serve. We truly believe fatherhood has the power to change our communities, one father at a time.

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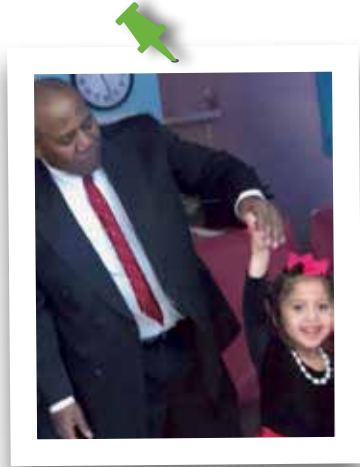
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The ECRC Board of Directors plays an important role in providing fiscal and legal oversight, making policy decisions, conducting strategic planning, and more. Chosen for their professional expertise and understanding of early childhood issues, each board member can serve a maximum of three three-year terms.



Engaged Fathers, Ready Kids

The halls of Emmanuel Christian Academy are filled with photos of smiling dads engaged with their children, both at home and at the child care center. It's pretty evident that dads are a big deal. As a result, fathers now ask to be photographed and added to the display.

Emmanuel Christian believes fathers and other male family members play an important role in children's education and socialization. The center embraces father engagement by celebrating fathers and planning opportunities for them to take part in their children's learning experiences. This past year, the center has established an open door policy. Fathers visit at their convenience and read to the children. The kids and dads have a great time.

According to Director Charlene Carroll, dads also enjoy the Parent Cafés, where they get to talk with other dads about the challenges and joys of raising young children.

One father said that because he didn't have a great school experience, he appreciates being made to feel welcome when he comes to his child's school. Another dad said that he grew up without his own father, and he's glad that there are chances for him and other fathers to share and discuss without fear of judgment.

Kozmic Korner Early Learning Center has also embraced father engagement by reaching out and planning events. Fathers and daughters dressed to the nines for a well-attended father-daughter dance, complete with a dance contest.

According to Director Vicki Miller, father engagement was a much-needed remedy for one Kozmic Korner student. She was struggling with aggressive and defiant behaviors in the classroom. Through participating in Parent Cafés and the *Father Reads* program, the student's father developed a relationship with center staff members. He became comfortable working with them to address concerns about his daughter. As a result, her outbursts have almost been eliminated and she seems to enjoy learning. This is just one example of how father engagement can strengthen a child's social-emotional development.

Emmanuel Christian and Kozmic Korner are two of 24 Akron child care centers receiving support from the Early Childhood Resource Center through the STARS (Supporting Teachers and Ready Students) program, which is funded by the GAR Foundation to promote school readiness through parent engagement and quality improvement. ♦



DADS ROCK!

The first thing I have learned to being a father is that I should be in my son's life as long as I can, because without me in his life, he will never become a man. — Zachery

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

I'm keeping my mind focused on the kids' needs and wants at all times, because they truly pay attention. — Bryan

Focusing on Fathers

Times have changed. While a father's role has always been important, it's fair to say that in past generations, the mother was seen as more important to a child's development. Changing norms—and an ever-growing body of research—mean that today's dads are understood to be equally critical.

One study of more than 2,500 families showed that a supportive relationship with a father or stepfather was just as important for a child's social-emotional well-being as the child's relationship with the mother.¹

Babies who have emotionally engaged fathers grow into happier children who have stronger relationships and fewer behavioral problems.² Father engagement is even important to cognitive development: babies whose dads were engaged during play were better able to recognize shapes.²

Recent research also shows that fathers play a distinctly different role than mothers do. While mothers can often be more nurturing, fathers devote more energy to preparing their children to deal with life, and they're often better at predicting problem behaviors and cognitive issues.³ Because of this, father involvement is associated with better academic performance, as well as lower rates of delinquency and substance abuse.³

What's most important is making sure dads themselves understand the importance of their role and are equipped with the skills and strategies they need to be good fathers. That's where the Early Childhood Resource Center comes in.

We're working with dads throughout our region. Our parenting classes teach dads how they can foster proper child development. They also offer lots of strategies for partnering productively with co-parents, child care providers, and educators.

Dads don't need to work harder at fathering. They may just need to parent differently. We're here to show them how, every step of the way.

For more information, visit ecresourcecenter.org/wba/content/families/fatherhood-services ♦

Notes: 1. gov.scot/publications/growing-up-scotland-father-child-relationships-child-socio-emotional-wellbeing/pages/8/ 2. bbc.com/future/article/20190606-how-to-be-a-good-father-to-a-newborn-son-or-daughter 3. ifstudies.org/blog/acknowledging-the-unique-role-of-fathers

After taking this class I have learned about communicating and thinking before I act to be a better father for my children, so they can look at me and be proud of their father. — Anonymous



I want to live in a world where the phrase "Wait until your father gets home" is met with a giant smile and a resounding 'YES!' from every child who hears it.

*Greg Santucci,
Pediatric Occupational Therapist*

Meet Our Dedicated Dads

Our classes strengthen families by giving parents the tools they need to bond, communicate, and grow with their children. So, what kinds of dads take parenting classes? Meet Kevin and James.

Kevin Mills has six children ranging in age from 27 years to six months. He called the Early Childhood Resource Center seeking help to become the father he wanted to be. He's so glad he made that call.



After taking the *First Five Years* and *Active Parenting Now* classes, Kevin has become a much more patient and engaged father, because he understands what his children need developmentally and how he can meet their needs.

As he learned about each developmental stage in class, Kevin began to understand how he might have handled situations differently with his

older children, in order to prompt a different outcome.

He was astonished to learn how fast the brain grows during infancy and early childhood, and that a tremendous amount of information is absorbed during that time. Learning this helped him really understand the influence that positive parenting strategies can have. He understands now that creating a trauma-free atmosphere and being an engaged and positive parent will help his baby son, Malekhi, develop properly.

Kevin loves coming to the Early Childhood Resource Center's Inspiration Station with Malekhi because there's so much to look at. Kevin's noticed Malekhi isn't the only little one who's engaged and smiling; there are happy children all around.

Kevin intends to continue taking classes. He feels knowledge and perspective make all the difference, and he's committed to being the great father his children need.

DADS ROCK!

I've learned to work on my communication and be patient, to be a positive role model to my children. — Nate



"I'm not a big fan of classes. But that one? I was all in. Who wouldn't want to be a great parent?"

James Cutler has never met a stranger. The gregarious barber is the dad of a three-year-old and the stepdad of an eight-year-old.

James didn't know his own dad. He always promised himself that if he ever had a child, he would become the best father he could possibly be. But with few parenting examples from his own life to draw from, he started out raising his children the same

way he was raised, which was unproductive and frustrating.

He's better able to fulfill his promise to himself after taking the *24/7 Dad* class offered by the Early Childhood Resource Center, which he calls "a gem."

The class was a game-changer, offering helpful parenting strategies from the very first session.

As James described it, "I opened up that book and it was full of skills. I'm not a big fan of classes. But that one? I was all in. Who wouldn't want to be a great parent?"

One of the first things he learned was that talking works much better than yelling. Learning that helped him step up his parenting game. Now, he takes every opportunity to bond and be gentle, instead of scolding and spanking. Using his words first is a productive communication strategy he intends to continue.

He has also brainstormed with other dads during Parent Café sessions, which foster open discussion about common, relatable parenting topics.

Now James is a much more confident parent. Because he now has the right information and strategies, he says, "I feel like I've got an 'S' on my chest." ♦

I've worked much harder as a stay at home dad than I have at any job I've held. — Bryant

Supporting Fathers To Navigate Next Steps

It's hard enough to prepare for the transition out of incarceration. But when an infant or young child is in the picture, the situation becomes even more complex.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 10% of Ohio children have had an incarcerated parent.¹ The vast majority (92%) of those parents are fathers.² And they're in need of support that will help them be the best parents they can be. After all, "Where the criminal justice system sees a convicted criminal, a child only sees mommy or daddy," according to Renuka Mayadev, executive director of Children's Defense Fund-Ohio.³

Fortunately, help is available. Over the next two years, our Parent Engagement Coordinators will help over 500 fathers in Stark and Summit counties as they transition from incarceration to managing life, fatherhood, and employment. The program is made possible by funding from the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, which is part of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

The state has a vested interest in helping them. A smooth transition will benefit their children well into the future.

"Research shows that children with fathers who are present in their lives have better cognitive outcomes, self-esteem, academic achievement, and economic stability," according to Kimberly Dent, who is the Executive Director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. "They have healthier development as children, are more empathetic, and are less likely to have problems with drugs and alcohol as teenagers."⁴

The men will begin by taking parenting classes. The classes will help them understand their important role in their

children's lives and will equip them with strategies for positive parenting and developing productive relationships with their co-parents.

The relationships that develop during the classes are key. The participants naturally tend to lean on each other, forming a support network. And as our staff get to know the dads, they'll offer case management to those seeking help to navigate individual life challenges.

Case management involves regular meetings, journaling, setting goals and benchmarks, and reflection. It's an intensive process that helps to set the participant firmly on the path to success (as it's defined by the individual). Case management can also include the support needed to navigate the family court system, deal with child support, custody, or visitation issues, or find a good job or affordable housing.

These men are about to take some very important next steps. The Early Childhood Resource Center will be there to help. ♦

Notes: 1. aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-asharedsentence-2016.pdf 2. fatherhood.org/fatherhood/fathers-behind-bars-the-problem-and-solution-for-americas-children-infographic 3. dispatch.com/article/20160425/NEWS/304259831 4. fatherhood.ohio.gov/Portals/0/ODJFS%20Press%20Release%207-22-19_1.pdf



DADS ROCK! *I learned that there's more to being a father other than money, so I've started spending more time and doing things more than I used to. – Dale*

AJ: Right on Track



Aaron Dukes is a proud father. At a recent parent-teacher conference, the kindergarten teacher said his son, AJ, is doing very well indeed. He's recognizing words, he's speaking well, and the teacher has no worries about his ability to succeed.

Aaron feels that the SPARK kindergarten readiness program prepared AJ well for kindergarten. SPARK children are screened for any issues that might prevent school readiness. For AJ, speech therapy was offered as a wraparound service, in addition to SPARK lessons. AJ did so well that he no longer needs any speech therapy at all.

For two years, a SPARK parent partner visited every month to guide AJ and Aaron through a lesson designed to get AJ ready for kindergarten. At every visit, the family received a book, an



activity card, and supplies.

Aaron loved having SPARK lessons right in the family home. SPARK visits were the perfect time to connect and bond with his son. He was thankful to have a scheduled time devoted just to that.

As Aaron says it, "It's easy to be busy and get wrapped up in daily life, and forget to spend that time just bonding and learning with your child." ♦



Be Part of a Lifelong Memory!

Starting kindergarten is a very big deal. It's a milestone parents and children alike will never forget.

Now you can be a part of a SPARK family's lifelong memory. Sponsor a backpack filled with supplies for a SPARK child who's beginning kindergarten. We will attach a tag that you've personalized with special words of encouragement.

To sponsor a backpack, send your \$25 check in the response envelope provided with this newsletter, along with your note to a SPARK child. You'll help to start the school year off right!



CDA Gold!



We're proud to have earned the Child Development Associate (CDA) Gold Standard training certification, which signifies that the Early Childhood Resource Center has met the high standards of the Council for Professional Recognition. CDA Gold Standard certification indicates that we meet three core requirements:

- Alignment with the CDA formal education coursework in the eight CDA subject areas.
- Sound business policies and practices.
- High-quality services that meet students' educational and professional needs.

According to the Council for Professional Recognition's CEO, Valora Washington, "The CDA Gold Standard was created to assure value and integrity in the early childhood profession by verifying connections between the Council's proven early education training competencies and the quality of training resources available to CDA students by organizations like these. I'm so excited to congratulate everyone for achieving this quality recognition."



Early Childhood Resource Center Receives Award

In September, the Ohio Conference of Community Development gave the Early Childhood Resource Center a President's Award for Innovative Practices, for its program that helped Canton residents establish their own family child care businesses. The President's Award recognizes programs that address significant needs and have the ability to sustain themselves over time.

The program was supported by Community Development Block Grant Funding from the City of Canton, and it was designed to pave a career path for participants while also increasing the availability of high-quality child care in the southeast and northeast areas of the city.

This program is a game-changer for dozens of Canton families. According to Rollin Seward, the city's development director, "It empowered women to have their own businesses, at the same time educating our babies and early toddlers to be high achievers."¹



1. cantonrep.com/news/20190725/canton-makes-push-for-more-in-home-child-care-centers

The First Day of School Was So Much Fun!

On September 5, the Early Childhood Resource Center welcomed 150 people to the rooftop of Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium for the *First Day of School* fundraising event.

Proceeds from the event will go toward books, supplies, and home visits for families participating in

our SPARK kindergarten readiness program.

We thank our event sponsors. We're so grateful for their support, and for the support of all the businesses and individuals that made the event so much fun. ♦



I have learned that my actions will reflect down to my children. – Earl