

News Today

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Fatherhood Initiative to Boost Local Efforts

The problem of absent fathers has reached epidemic proportions, a variety of state and national experts say. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 24 million children—or 33 percent—lived apart from their biological fathers in 2009. That was up from 11 percent in 1960.

Children who live apart from their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely:

- To live in poverty,
- To use drugs,
- To experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems,
- To be victims of child abuse, and
- To engage in criminal behavior.

Although the problem is national, solutions must be found and implemented on the local level, experts say. For that reason, the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood has embarked



(Left to right) Tracy Robinson, executive director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood; Director Colbert; and Anthony Trotman, director of the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services, joined other community leaders at the Franklin County Leadership Summit on Fatherhood.

on an ambitious campaign to encourage more fathers to be engaged parents.

The commission, which is housed within

Continued on next page

Spelling Bee Moves to Air Center Tuesday

Due to the overwhelming requests of Air Center staff to be included in the second annual Executive Spelling Bee benefiting Operation Feed on Tuesday, **May 31**, the event has changed location from the State Office Tower to rooms A118-199 at 4020 E. Fifth Ave. The event is still scheduled to begin promptly at noon and end at 1 p.m.

Sponsored by the Office of Employee and Business Services, the Spelling Bee will feature ODJFS deputy directors or their designees spelling a combination of words found in the dictionary, as well as unique and challenging ODJFS program

area words.

Prior to the event, participants will collect pledges for the opportunity to receive “wild-card” passes. For every \$20 pledged to Operation Feed, participants will receive a wild-card pass allowing them to stay in the Spelling Bee if they misspell a word. Participants will collect pledges until Friday, **May 27**.

Multiple participants from each program area are permitted. The program area that raises the most money in support of their participant(s) will receive a certificate and recognition in *News Today*.

Continued from previous page

ODJFS, is working in partnership with the National Fatherhood Initiative, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing the number of children growing up with involved, responsible and committed fathers.

To accomplish that goal in Ohio, the commission launched an Ohio County Fatherhood Initiative in January. Twelve counties are participating: Clark, Fairfield, Franklin, Greene, Guernsey, Lorain, Mercer, Montgomery, Muskingum, Stark, Summit and Trumbull.

So far, all 12 have completed Community Needs and Asset Assessments, in which they identified existing resources, needed resources, overlaps and challenges. They're also holding Leadership Summits on Fatherhood, in which community leaders come together to review the assessments and create action plans. After submitting their final reports, the counties will

each receive \$10,000 in grant funding from the commission.

"I look forward to helping strengthen fatherhood in Franklin County," said Tracy Robinson, executive director of the commission, at Franklin County's Leadership Summit, which was held May 24 at the New Salem Baptist Church in Columbus. "This document will help guide our work in fatherhood programming here in Franklin County."

Added Charleta Tavares, a state senator and keynote speaker for the event: "This is a great start, these 12 summits. Our next step is most important. It's the action plan. We've got to hold each other accountable."

All summits will have been held by the end of May. The commission will post updates on its Web site, at www.fatherhood.ohio.gov.

GOT NEWS?

To submit an article or idea to News Today, e-mail NewsToday@jfs.ohio.gov. Photos should be sent in JPEG or TIF format.

Feeling Stressed?

Help is available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) by calling 1-800-221-6327.
