

Helioqram

Solutions to strengthen people and communities

Volume 2, Number 2

A Heliotrope Publication

Fall 1999

My Small, Steady Steps into the Next Millennium

Last night I reached my goal of walking 1,000 miles this year as my millennium project. For each mile, I donated \$3.00 to Somali Community Services of Seattle's youth group – as a way to benefit young people in the new millennium and reach out to other cultures.

heliotrope 1. A flower that turns to face the sun. 2. An instrument for making long-term observations. 3. A purple that is bluer and stronger than cobalt violet.

As I got close, I envisioned making the last mile special or symbolic in some way. Would I go and walk with the Somali children? End up on one of my favorite hikes? Walk into one of my favorite restaurants? Instead, when I realized I was less than a mile from the magic number, I asked my husband to join me in a walk around our neighborhood. We quietly enjoyed the crisp fall air and moonlight and remarked on how fortunate we are. It was the right kind of celebration for a quiet project that has constantly reminded me how small, steady steps add up to big things.

My wish. This is my wish for all of us for the millennium: I hope each of us can do some small things on a constant basis that are good for our children, our families, our communities, our planet, and ourselves. (Of course, a few big things would be great, too.)

For me, this means that after two years of tutoring, I feel ready to be involved in a young person's life on a different and closer level, and I have turned in my application to be a Big Sister.

Keep going. I plan to walk another 1,000 miles next year, to cover my bases for those who believe that is the *true* millennium. I will again donate to a youth program serving another culture. And, because I want to do more and this formula worked so well this year, I'm also adding a pledge for a strength and flexibility program. My goal will be to complete 2,000 repetitions of strength training for 8-10 major muscle groups, gradually increasing the weights and to do 1,000 minutes of stretching during the year.

I will donate to another youth program for meeting this goal.

I have been amazed at how this type of motivation has changed my whole attitude about sticking to an exercise program. And it doesn't hurt to remember that the demographics are such that there will be no health aides or nursing home workers available to care for us baby-boomers by the time we need them!

Thanks to my husband and good friends who supported my walking efforts and accompanied me on many walks and magnificent hikes. I plan to keep up the pace between now and January 1, so I don't lose my momentum for next year's goals. H

HELIOTROPE

INSIDE

The Many Faces of Fathers page 2

Balancing Work and Family page 3

Resources on Fatherhood page 6

The Many Faces of Fathers

"Data have clearly linked growing up without a father to underachievement in school, mental illness, drug abuse, youth suicide, delinquency, and crime." (National Fatherhood Initiative pamphlet)

Does this mean that women, who still do the majority of child rearing in the U.S., are not doing a good enough job? How much do factors like poverty and racism play into the difficulties faced by father-absent families?

A Complex Issue

For those of us who have worked or volunteered in the fields of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and sexual assault, or for anyone who has been directly affected, it is difficult not to scream loudly about the many acts of violence, abuse and terror that fathers inflict on their children. In many cases, it is easy to argue that *not* having a father in the house may be a very good thing.

As we began research for this issue of the *Heliogram*, we felt overwhelmed by the complexity of this issue. In the past several years, over 800 organizations focused on strengthening fathers' involvement have been formed across the U.S. And, like the myriad of women's organizations that began to form in the 1960's and 70's, there are many different ideological approaches to what it means to be a "good father."

But both the traditional "head of the household" approach and the more recent approach that challenges gender roles that designate women as nurturers and

continued on page 7

Welcoming Christina's voice

Many of you continue to tell me how much you enjoy *Heliogram*. I hope you'll enjoy this issue with a focus on fathers as much or more. Christina Malecka, Heliotrope's new Consulting Assistant, played a significant role in researching and writing this issue. She is a wonderful addition to Heliotrope and allows us to work smarter and combine our respective talents and ideas.

Heliogram Online—Friends Spreading the Word

You can now read *Heliogram* online at:
<http://www.fullcirc.com/helio/helioindex.htm>.

Thanks to our friend Nancy White at Full Circle Associates for making this possible. Full Circle Associates is a communications, facilitation and marketing firm with a special focus on online communities. Nancy White was instrumental in helping to conceive the document you hold in your hands. Be sure to click back to Full Circle's homepage after you check out the cyber-*Heliogram*.

Tell us what interests you

Speaking of ideas, we welcome suggestions for topics for *Heliogram*. Is there an area you would like to know more about, or a topic that you think people are interested in? Contact us and let us know. (Telephone: 206/526-5671, or email: nancyashley@halcyon.com)

We are grateful to do the work we do with the people with whom we work. We wish all of you a healthy millennium filled with the things that really count.

Christina

Nancy

HELIOTROPE



All contents copyright © 1999 Heliotrope. Permission to reproduce in whole or in part is granted with the stipulation that Heliotrope and Heliogram be acknowledged as the source on all copies.

For more information about Heliotrope, contact:

Nancy Ashley
1249 NE 92nd Street
Seattle, WA 98115
Tel: 206 526-5671
Fax: 206 522-6557
E-mail: nancyashley@halcyon.com

Balancing Work and Family

"No man on his deathbed has ever said 'I wish I had spent more time at the office!'" –Senator Paul Tsongas

In the past thirty years we have heard much about the burden that balancing work and family places on women in our society. The traditional gender roles of "breadwinner" and "homemaker" are no longer a reality for most families, yet statistics show that women are still doing a larger percentage of child rearing than men. Our society is only beginning to recognize that in order to adjust to economic realities and promote healthy families and children, women *and* men must both face the challenge of dual roles at home and at work.

Traditionally, much of a man's sense of identity and accomplishment has come from his career. The short-term rewards and accolades offered by the work place are very different than the long-term rewards of parenting. Although no man would say that his job is more important to him than his kids, a career often serves up "deadlines" and concrete achievement markers that eat into family time – especially in a society where fathers are still not expected to be their children's primary caregivers.

In his book *Real Boys*, William Pollack describes the phenomena of "nest-feathering," in which men feel that the best way for them to be a good parent is to be a competent "breadwinner." Indeed, popular media still perpetuates this "father as breadwinner" role. When we pursue "dead-beat" dads we are pursuing them for money alone – not money *and* quality time. Providing for a child's material needs is certainly noble and necessary. But to a child, time with Dad is what counts. A four-year-old doesn't comprehend that Dad shows his love by working hard to pay the mortgage. A four-year-old remembers Dad reading him a book or playing hide-and seek with her.

It is only recently that we have started reading about the importance of making work places *family friendly*, which includes meeting the needs of mothers *and* fathers. Below are some ideas to help further this trend. These are tips that will work for dads who live with their kids as well as divorced, non-custodial dads and single dads.

Tips for Fathers Who Want to Balance Work and Family

Schedule Family Time

If your career is demanding, you may not be able to make it to every soccer game or music lesson. However, you can plan ahead to attend your kids' "big events," such as a championship game or opening night of the school play by blocking that time off in your calendar, just as you would an important meeting for work. Try scheduling family dinners and events ahead of time, so that you can make them priorities before the boss asks you to take on another project.

Become a Time Management Whiz

Figure out what your most productive time of day is (for most people this is often early morning) and schedule your work day so that you maximize your sharpest hours by using them for the brain-busters: report writing, budget analysis, etc. See if you can manage your time to allow for several hours with your kids in the evening. Often you can answer work-related e-mails from your home computer, pay bills or do household tasks after the kids have gone to sleep.

Maximize the Time You Spend With Your Kids

By observation and talking to your kids, find out which activities mean the most to them and get

continued on page 7

What You Can Do Right Now

Rob Beem, Human Services Manager with the City of Shoreline, was so inspired by the article on boys and fathers in the last issue of *Heliogram* that he gave copies of it to his co-workers and the fathers of his son's friends. He said that sharing the article enabled him to open up thought-provoking dialogues on the special challenges associated with raising boys and being a father as we move into the millennium. He is considering taking the additional step of writing letters of appreciation to the fathers of his son's friends as his own millennium project. He values these men because they provide his son with positive male role models and support.

Tips for Involving Men in the Lives of Children

For Schools/Programs

- Set the expectation among all staff and personnel that men will be warmly welcomed
- Make all staff responsible for involving men
- Survey men with children in the program to find out their interests
- Invite men to participate and make the invitations loud, clear and frequent
- Encourage men who are involved to invite other men to participate
- Offer a variety of specific involvement opportunities that fill program needs and consist of more than discussion activities
- Promote men's involvement as something that benefits children rather than something that women want men to do

Ideas for Teachers

- When calling a child's home, rather than routinely asking for the mother, talk with the man who answers the phone
- Talk equally to both parents at parent teacher conferences
- Read and display children's books that show men and children together in a variety of roles and activities

Ideas for Community Groups

- Target support and activities for specific groups of men, such as first-time fathers, non-custodial fathers, teen fathers, stepfathers, incarcerated fathers and grandfathers
- Market support programs for men around specific child bearing issues such as behavior management, moral development, or raising a child of color
- Address men's interests and needs at teachable moments such as in premarital counseling, childbirth preparation classes, and when enrolling children in school and child care
- Provide fun and educational activities, recreation programs, and service projects for men and children

- Sponsor one-time events such as a "Father's Fair" as well as ongoing programs for men and children
- Include a column written by men or about fathers and men in newsletters
- Make ongoing contacts with colleges to recruit men for human service positions

Ideas for Men

- Attend schools events such as open houses, parent meetings and teacher conferences
- Become involved with your child's school at your level of comfort and interest – for instance, by eating school lunch with your child, volunteering in the classroom, going on field trips, participating in the parent-teacher organization, or serving on a school committee
- Learn the names of your children's friends; greet them by name and invite them to go on outings with you and your child
- Get to know the parents of your child's friends
- Talk with other men, women, and your parents about the changing roles of men and women in caring for children
- Read with your children, especially sons, so they don't think of reading as a "girl thing"

Ideas for Women

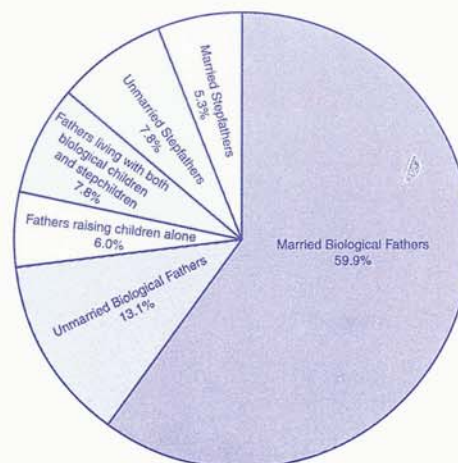
- Share information with a child's father that the teacher, school, or program has shared with you
- Accept that men and women may diaper, feed, and play in different yet beneficial ways
- Speak well of the child's father to your child and other adults rather than sharing your side or relationship disagreements
- Encourage the man to spend time with the child and accept this as a special time when they can enjoy themselves

(The above tips are taken from the pamphlet: "Involving Men in the Lives of Children" by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. You may order copies of the pamphlet by calling 202/232-8777 or going to NAEYC's website at <http://www.naeyc.org>. Pamphlets are 50 cents each or 100 for \$10.00)

Statistics on Fathers

Types of Fathers Living With Their Families

■ Married biological fathers	59.9%
■ Unmarried biological fathers	13.1%
■ Married stepfathers	5.3%
■ Unmarried stepfathers	7.8%
■ Fathers living with both biological children and stepchildren	7.8%
■ Fathers raising children alone	6.0%



(Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding)

“Unconventional Fathers” make up about 40 percent of all fathers who live with their children. Studies show that cohabiting fathers and stepfathers are particularly common, at 13.1 and 7.8 percent, respectively.

(Source: Pleck, Joseph H., *Balancing Work and Family, Scientific American Presents: Work, Home and Play*, 1999, p.42)

- Today nearly 4 out of 10 first marriages end in divorce, 60 percent of divorcing couples have children, and over one million children each year experience the divorce of their parents.
- One out of every six children is a stepchild.
- There are nearly 1.9 million single fathers with children under 18.
- Twenty six percent of absent fathers live in a different state than their children.

(Above statistics from: “Fatherhood Today”, Winter 1998/99, a publication of the National Fatherhood Initiative, 301-948-0599)

- The United States continues as the world’s leader in fatherless families. An estimated 24.7 million children (36.3%) now live in father-absent families, up from 8 million in 1960.
- Girls who live in single-parent households are 53 percent more likely to give birth as teenagers and 164 percent more likely to give birth outside of marriage.
- The chief predictor of crime in a community is the percentage of households with absent fathers. The majority of criminals—60 percent of rapists, 72 percent of adolescent murderers, 70 percent of long-term prison inmates grew up in fatherless homes.
- A 1998 National Fatherhood Initiative study found that only 14.7 percent of TV programs featured fatherhood and only 3.9 percent portrayed fathers positively.

The most troubling evidence of ongoing cultural ambivalence about fatherhood is in how we talk to boys and young men about it. True, an increasing number of programs around the country address the issue of teen fatherhood, but most parenting programs virtually ignore young men. Men do tend to avoid such programs, but most parenting programs don’t do much to recruit them. Last year, The Florida Times-Union surveyed the teen parenting programs sponsored by the public schools of Duval County, Florida. Here’s what it found: The Beulah Beal Young Parents Center served 171 females, 0 males. Andrew Jackson and Fletcher high schools: 68 females, five males. The Children’s Home Society 78 teen mothers and 11 teen fathers. The Young Parents Vocational Program 50 females, 0 males (Above statistics from: *Fatherhood 1999*, by Richard Louv, which can be found at: The Benton Foundation’s web page at: http://www.connectforkids.org/benton_topics1544/benton_topics_show.htm

The Associated Press reports that on July 29, Van and Shirley Hughes of Arizona officially adopted 10 siblings who had been abandoned by their parents.....Van took early retirement from the Navy to take on the job of full-time dad to six boys and four girls, ages 4 to 17. He now works the night shift as a security guard at Phoenix City Hall to help with the \$1500 monthly grocery tab. “They’re brothers and sisters,” Van said, “they belong together.” (from the Dads And Daughters web page, <http://www.dadsanddaughters.org>)

Developmental Assets Illustrated*

- #1 Family support
- #14 Adult role models
- #26 Caring

Resources on Fatherhood

Organizations

(Most of these organizations have fantastic web sites that are chock full of resources and links. We selected only some of the most comprehensive sites.)

The Fatherhood Project

307 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1906
New York, NY 10001
Ph: (212) 465-2044 x301
Fax: (212) 337-0948
<http://www.fatherhoodproject.org>

The Fatherhood Project sponsors a national training initiative that helps Head Start and other early childhood programs to involve fathers and other significant men as well as workplace seminars to help companies become more father-friendly.

Dads and Daughters

PO Box 3458
Duluth, MN 55803
Ph: 1-888-824-DADS
Fax: (218) 728-1997
<http://www.dadsanddaughters.org>

Dads and Daughters is a national membership organization of fathers with daughters. DADS provides tools to strengthen relationships between fathers and daughters and to transform the pervasive messages that value girls more for how they look than who they are.

National Fatherhood Initiative

One Bank Street, Suite 160
Gaithersburg, MD 20878
Ph: (301) 948-0599
Fax: (301) 948-4325
<http://www.register.com/father>

National Fatherhood Initiative is one of the most visible national groups. A non-profit, non-sectarian, non-partisan organization, the Initiative conducts public awareness campaigns, organizes conferences and community fatherhood forums, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and disseminates informational material to men seeking to become more effective fathers.

At-Home Dad

61 Brightwood Ave.
North Andover, MA 01845-1702
e-mail: athomedad@aol.com
<http://www.athomedad.com>

At-Home Dad provides its readers with the At-Home Dad Network as a free service. This network is a national list of at-home dads distributed quarterly to subscribers so they may connect with each other personally, by phone or electronic mail via the internet. The network has been credited with

starting several dads' playgroups across America. The newsletter and web site also provide tips for home businesses you can run with kids at home, personal stories from other at-home dads, and various resources available for the father and his children.

The National Center for Fathering

P.O. Box 413888
Kansas City, MO 64141
Ph: 1-800-593-DADS
Fax: (913) 384-4665
<http://www.fathers.com>

The National Center on Fathering is focused on new fathers, fathers of pre-school and school-age children, fathers of teens, empty-nesters, and grandfathers.

National Fathers Network

Kindering Center
16120 N.E. 8th Street
Bellevue, WA 98008
Ph: (425) 747-4004
Fax: (206) 284-2859
<http://www.fathersnetwork.org>

The National Fathers Network is a non-profit organization, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, that advocates for men as crucially important in the lives of their families and children. The network puts special emphasis on fathers with disabled children or children with special needs.

Father to Father

c/o Children, Youth & Family Consortium
University of Minnesota
1985 Buford Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108
Ph: (612) 626-1212
Fax: (612) 626-1210
<http://www.Cyfc.unm.edu/FatherNet>

Father to Father was created in response to Vice President Al Gore's call to action, issued at "Family Reunion III: The Role of Men in Children's Lives," in Nashville, Tenn., in 1994. The organization provides Father to Father kits to anyone who wants to create similar programs in their communities, and also sponsors FatherNet, a web site that offers a wealth of information on research and public policy, as well as a way for fathers to converse electronically.

Connect for Kids

<http://www.connectforkids.org>

By going to this Benton Foundation web-site and doing a search on the keyword "fathers" you will access many useful resources and links on fathering.

The Many Faces of Fathers

continued from page 2

men as breadwinners have one thing in common: a goal to provide a strong, loving foundation for children.

Women's and Men's Voices are Crucial

Many fathers' groups stress that a focus on dads does not negate the incredible achievements and talents of women who have been struggling with this "balancing work and family" issue for years.

As James Levine writes in his book, *Getting Men Involved*, (Scholastic, Inc., The Family and Work Institute, New York, NY, 1-800-631-1586), "the stereotype that women alone should care for children or that they alone are capable of caring for children limits the opportunities and talents of both sexes... (this stereotype) perpetuates the devaluation of women and children, linking them together in a 'feminine' world that is deemed less serious and important than the world of 'masculine' activities."

Nor do responsible groups which encourage fathers to be strong supporters for their children ignore the issues of violence in the home. A child's right to be free of hurt and harm in his or her own home is fundamental.

Let Us Know What You Think

For this issue of *Heliogram*, we have attempted to pull together some of the most intriguing resources in the fatherhood movement. As always, we are faced with the frustration of skimming the surface of the extensive research and resources available on complex issues. We are eager to hear what you think about this topic – would you like to see more on this? Are you able to apply this information to your work and your family? Let us know. **H**

I've got a couple of pretty good friends who I can count on for some of the small things. But when something big comes up or I'm feeling really down, I go to the one guy who really understands and who can really help – and that's my dad."

—Tyler Williams, age 12 (from *Real Boys* by William Pollack, Ph.D., Henry Holt and Co, 1998, pp. 113)

Developmental Asset Illustrated*

#2 Positive family communication

Balancing Work and Family

continued from page 3

involved with those activities. By coaching a team, learning to play chess or making art with your kids you will be sharing their passions, having fun and being a friend.

Take Your Kids to Work

Do you remember the thrill of visiting Dad's office or warehouse? Taking your child to work will make them feel special and grown-up. It will also allow them to "place" you during the day and to make more of a connection with how important your work is to you and to your family.

Consider Deferring Career Goals Until After Your Kids Become Independent

When Robert Reich, the former U.S. Secretary of Labor, left his post to become a more active father he stated, "there will be ample opportunities for me to sink myself 200 percent into another job. But there will never be another opportunity to father a twelve-year-old and a fifteen-year-old." Explore the possibility of getting off the "fast-track" while your children are young.

Talk to Your Employer About Creating a Parent-Friendly Work Environment

Talk to your employer about instituting family friendly policies such as flextime, family leave and telecommuting for both women *and* men. In *Real Boys*, William Pollack discusses research that shows that good fathers make *good workers*: "This of course makes sense, since the 'new' workplace – just like the 'new' two-parent family – is known to demand less hierarchical, more flexible interpersonal styles for achievement. One succeeds these days with empathic skills that support colleagues and staff and leadership capacities that subordinate self-interest to the goals of the team – all the skills honed by nurturant dads." **H**

Sources: Ryan, Robin, "Strategies Help Dads Manage Career, Kids," *The Seattle Times*, October 20, 1999, PP C2

Pollock, William, Ph.D., *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1998, pp. 127 and 134

More Resources on Fatherhood

Books and Brochures

Working Fathers: New Strategies for Balancing Work and Family

By James Levine and Todd Pittinsky

Offers a game plan for fathers, mothers and employers to manage the competing demands of home and work.

Available from The Fatherhood Project, (see contact information on p. 6)

New Expectations: Community Strategies for Responsible Fatherhood

By J. Levine and E. Pitt

Offers research and suggested actions to increase the involvement of men in children's lives.

Available from The Fatherhood Project, (see contact information on p. 6)

Getting Men Involved: Strategies for Early Childhood Programs

By J. Levine, D Murphy & S. Wilson

A hands-on guide for people working in early childhood programs who want to involve fathers and other significant males in children's lives.

Available from The Fatherhood Project, (see contact information on p. 6)

Father Facts

By James F. Horn

A review of current social science literature on fatherhood and family trends.

Available from the National Fatherhood Initiative, (see contact information on p. 6)

(Source: Louv, Richard, "A Guide to Fatherhood Groups," on the Connect For Kids Website: http://www.connectforkids.org/content1554/content_show.htm)

"Joe Kelly, Executive Director of Dads and Daughters (DADs), took action. When he learned that Footlocker and J.C. Penney stores were carrying the Trash Talk line of T-shirts, which sported hostile slurs and sexual innuendo about girls, he and other fathers from across the country immediately circulated action alerts asking that people contact the stores. Within a week, J.C. Penney pulled them from their shelves, proving, Kelly says, that even a small group of people can 'make things happen'." (from *A Father's Role: Making a Difference for our Daughters* by Caitlin Johnson which can be found at The Benton Foundation's web page (see address at left).

Developmental Assets Illustrated*

#11 Family boundaries

#28 Integrity

#37 Personal power

* Developmental assets are 40 "ingredients for success" for kids that have been identified through research and surveys of youth. Please contact us if you would like a complete list of assets.

HELIOTROPE



Nancy Ashley
1249 NE 92nd Street
Seattle, WA 98115