

Best Start Pre-Conference Showcase
February 27, 2008

Father Involvement & Transition to Parenting

Presented by:

Nancy Wai and Howard Ford

Health Promotion & Program Support

County of Lambton

Community Health Services Department



Community Health Services

Outline

- Father Involvement Initiative
 - Background
 - Goals
- Funding source
- Programs and activities
- Evaluation
- Questions/comments



Father Involvement Initiative Background

- Father Involvement Initiative created in 2004
- Overall goal is to support the development of nurturing relationships between fathers and children
- Partners
 - Ministry of Children and Youth Services (Early Childhood Development Project)
 - Family Counselling Centre
 - County of Lambton Community Health Services Department



Goals of the Father Involvement Initiative

- **Primary outcome goal:**

To increase the skill and capacity of fathers and male caregivers to be active and involved in their child's upbringing

- **Secondary outcome goal:**

To develop the ability of fathers to share their parenting roles with their partners and to enhance healthy relationships through the parenting journey



Funding Source

United Way Venture Grant

- Short term funding (1-3 years)
- February 2007 application submission
- Presentation to funding committee



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Funding Source Types of Projects Supported

1. New Services
2. Services not previously funded by the United Way
3. Funded Agency status



Funding Source

United Way Funding Priorities

Current five funding priorities are:

- **Poverty and Working Poor Families**
- Preventive Medical Programs and Services
- Senior's Programs
- **Rural Programs**
- Youth with Physical, Mental and Social Challenges



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Programs and Activities

- Father's Day Celebration
- Cooking with Dad
- Non-competitive games
- 10+1 Ways to be an Involved Dad



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Programs and Activities

Community Events

- Early Years Picnic
- Boys Home Run
- National Child Day
- Preconceptional Health Fair



Programs and Activities Dads Connect

- Clients – dads of children 0-6 years
- 4 week series
- Partnership with Ontario Early Years
- Clients set agenda



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but messy - but you can make them tidier this winter

C3



Recreation Area in Taiwan is drawing tourists with clean air

C9

Make room for Daddy

FIRST-TIME FATHERS, LIKE DUSTIN DENLEY, HEAD TO THE CLASSROOMS FOR A UNIQUE PROGRAM

By JACK POIRIER
The Observer

Dustin Denley admits he was a little apprehensive when he became a new dad.

The 22-year-old Sarnia man had the usual first-time father jitters — whether he'd be a good parent, be too protective or not enough, or have the financial ability to raise a family.

Unlike prenatal classes, where expectant moms and dads can learn the how-tos when it comes to early child rearing, or nursing programs for mothers, there are no such dad-101 classes.

Or so he thought. "I wanted to make sure I'd be a good dad," said Denley.

"There's so many challenges. There's so much stress involved ... so it's good to be able to learn strategies on how to deal with kids."

Then he heard about Dads Connect, a program geared specifically to fathers.

Although his girlfriend signed him up, Denley said it was a welcome relief to know there were others who had the same hesitations and questions he did.

"You don't know what to expect (as a new dad), it's good to be able to meet with other young dads and learn from each other. I figured I had nothing to lose, but lots to win."

The program, offered through Sarnia-Lambton Ontario Early Years Centre, in conjunction with the Family Counselling Centre, is planned around the interests of the group and each participant.

It's part of the Father Involvement Initiative, to promote healthy child development for newborn children to age six by supporting the transition to parenting. It's designed to be a resource for new fathers.

It is guided by fathering specialist Howard Ford, providing the members with a forum to talk about being a dad, with other dads.

As a father and a grandfather, Ford's certainly had practical experience.

The program evolved from another that Ford oversaw, Nobody's Perfect for Dads.

"We look at a wider array of issues," Ford said.

Topics include nutrition, toilet training, custody issues, safety, stress management, discipline, and more.

But, being an involved dad isn't easy and it takes work, said Ford, a retired educator with a long history of success in facilitating group forums.

That's why this program is as worthwhile as any he's been involved in, he said. "It's a forum for the dads. If they want to just sit here and talk, that's fine."

What Denley enjoys about the program, in addition to the free meal each night that accompanies the weekly evening gathering, is the fact the men can talk openly on subjects affecting dads without fear of offending wives or girlfriends.

"Everything is confidential," Denley said. "Nothing is taboo."

Three-month-old Halen is Denley's first biological child. His girlfriend also has another child, two-year-old Mackenna, from a previous relationship.

The impact children have on your social life was one issue Denley brought up to the others.

"I don't do half the stuff I used to do," said Denley, an avid musician. "I'd rather stay at home now, anyway. I'm hooked on kids' shows."

The program also affords the guys a chance to enjoy a little male bonding.

For Denley, he gets to talk about guitars and music with Judd Brown, an 18-year-old dad.

For Brown, the program marks his second dads-only discussion group. It's been an invaluable tool, he said.

"There's a comfort here," said Brown, whose son Seth is two.

There's a sensitive side the guys get to share as well, whether it be discussing their children's first steps and words to that feeling of love and pride when junior calls for his daddy.

For Denley and Brown,

they've been able to swap stories about watching the miracle of childbirth from the hospital delivery room, cutting the umbilical cord, and being the first person to hold the newborns.

"It's cool being able to talk with the guys about things we've all experienced," Brown said.

Mike Hart is the elder statesman of the group at 37, which is about 10 years older than the average age for a Canadian first-time dad. But, just like the others, he too is a first-time parent, with the birth of his son Caleb just over six months ago.

"Being a first-time dad, I thought 'Oh my, am I going to be able to cut it?' This (group) has been good."

That's because there's been a camaraderie between the four-man intake, Hart said.

"We can say one thing and everyone here understands what we're talking about," he said. "Sometimes, as a parent, you're at your wit's end. Just talking helps."

For Hart, one of the big tricks to being an effective dad is being able to find activities you can enjoy doing with your child, he said, while munching on some KFC.

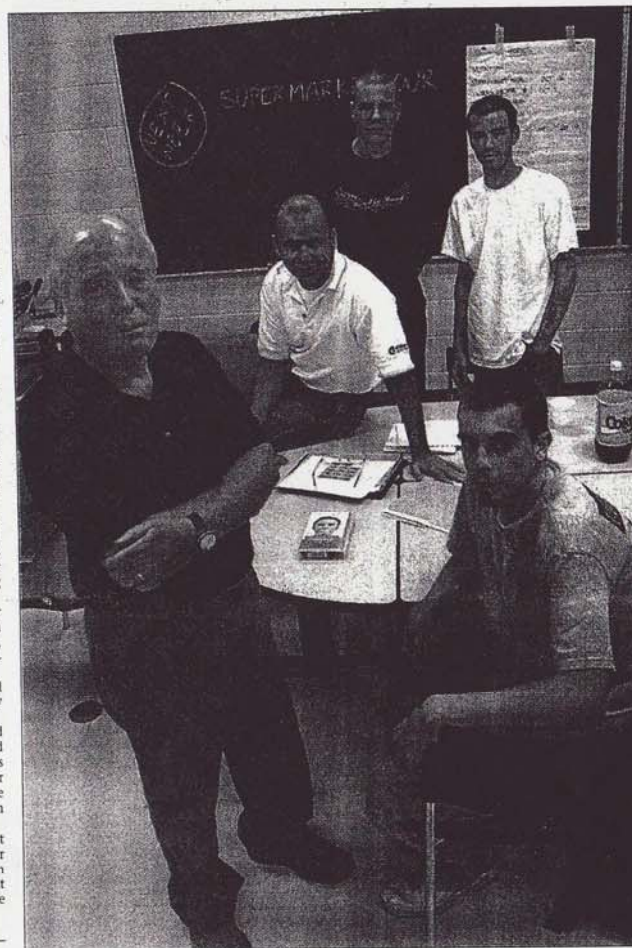
"You see the looks on their faces, when they accomplish something for the first time, and that's great. It's like experiencing life all over again."

To a man, all four said they'd recommend this course to any new dad.

Matt Hart, the 22-year-old step-dad of 18-month-old Lukas, said the best things about the program is no matter what issue pops up, one of the other guys has likely been through it.

"You can talk about what worked and didn't work for them," Matt said. "And you can learn different things that maybe you wouldn't have thought about."

The six-session course is offered Wednesdays, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Anyone interested in more information or to register can call 542-6100.



NORA PENHALE The Obs

Howard Ford (standing) gives instruction to future first-time dads. Clockwise from left, Tom, Matt Hart, Mike Hart, Judd Brown, and Dustin Denley.

Programs and Activities Prenatal Transition to Parenting

- Prenatal programs from
 - Lambton Community Health Services
 - Lambton Children's Services Teen Prenatal
 - North Lambton Community Health Centre
 - Aamjiwnaang First Nations
- Agenda for Transition session
- Male/female discussion groups
- Reunion





Programs and Activities

Prenatal Transition to Parenting

Agenda

Have snacks and drinks out at beginning of class.

1. Icebreaker – Howard
2. Give “Life Changes” form
3. Brainstorming – 15 min (male/female groups)
 - ✓ Biggest challenges in first months following birth
4. Group – Howard – 5 min
 - ✓ Best gift you can give your child
5. Group – 10 min
 - ✓ Who are my supports
6. Paper Exercise – 10 min (individuals/couples)
 - ✓ Partners’ strengths and own strengths

BREAK – 10 min



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Programs and Activities

Prenatal Transition to Parenting

Agenda con't

7. Group Breakout – 25 min

- ✓ Styles of parenting and strengths/weaknesses of each style
- ✓ How did your parents' style affect you?
- ✓ What style do you think you/your partner will be?

8. Conflict Management Exercise – 10-15 min

- ✓ Discuss types of conflict in male/female groups, then discuss
- ✓ Introduce equality wheel and flow into conflict management
- ✓ Use worksheet to determine how responsibilities within relationship are divided

9. Role Playing – 5 min

Evaluation

Wrap-Up and Draw



Evaluation

- Post session evaluation
- Follow up at reunion (within 6 months of prenatal class)
- To meet United Way's outcomes measurement protocol



Any questions or comments??



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