

Fastbreak For Fathers

a monthly e-mail to help you be the kind of dad your child needs you to be.

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In this issue: *Reconciling with Dad*

OBSERVATIONS

"Is this Heaven?" Ask a woman that question and she will look at you with an expression that clearly asks, "What in the world are you talking about? Ask a man and he will likely respond with "No it's Iowa . . . the place where dreams come true." Both lines are from the movie *Field of Dreams*, which was recently re-released in a 15th anniversary edition DVD. More than a fantasy about baseball, *Field of Dreams* is about a son seeking reconciliation with his father.

In the film, Iowa farmer Kevin Costner tells his story: how his mother died when he was two, so his father gave up his efforts to play pro baseball in order to raise his son. The boy grew older and didn't have time to play catch with the old man, who died after the boy left home at seventeen to protest war and all the things his father stood for. Now the son is grown, with a wife, a daughter, and a farm in Iowa. But feels something is missing in his life.

The story continues until father and son are reunited on a magical baseball field with the other classic line in the film, "Dad? Want to have a catch?" I've seen more grown men cry watching that scene than any other movie clip ever. Why? The father and son don't even talk much. They just play catch. Yet the film dramatically captures the lifetime mourning of grown men for the father they couldn't get close to.

Reconciling with fathers is important stuff. While it may not happen on a "field of dreams," it is the stuff that heaven is made of. Interestingly the last sentences of the Hebrew book of the prophet Malachi states, "I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." Whatever your beliefs about heaven – whether it is in an afterlife, something we experience on earth, or the figment of our imagination – it most certainly is a place of reconciliation and that is a place where dreams come true. How is your relationship with dad? If it is strained it will probably be up to you to take the first step. Hopefully the ideas and resources highlighted in this issue of *Fastbreak* can help you on a journey of forgiveness and ideally reconciliation.

Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

IDEAS

In a *Parade* article published in 1993 – *If Only I Could Say "I Love You, Dad,"* Ralph Keyes offered the following seven suggestions for adult children who want to reach out to their fathers. In the situation of an abusive relationship these should be taken with the help of a trusted friend or counselor.

- Take the initiative. Children are in a better position to do this than fathers. If children don't begin talking to their dads, the conversation may never take place.
- Don't begin a conversation with grievances, no matter how justified. Ease into a discussion of your feelings about your father with more general conversation about his childhood and yours.
- Listen to what your father has to say. Don't butt in, argue, or mentally compose a response as he's talking. Look for dimensions of your father that you didn't know existed.
- Search for common ground. Are you experiencing some of the same things he went through? Do you have fond memories of time you spent together? Say so.
- Keep in mind that your father is a son, too.
- Remember, it's as important for your father to hear that you care for him as it is for you to hear this from your dad.
- Tell him. Soon. Next year may be too late – or next week, or even tomorrow. The best day to tell your father that you love him may be today.

RESEARCH

Harvard psychologist Samuel Osherson in a thoroughly revised edition (originally published in 1986) of his bestseller, *Finding Our Fathers* (McGraw Hill) shows how a man's "unfinished business" with his father affects his relationships with his spouse, children, friends, and boss. Osherson's work is a great place for men to begin to understand the impact of their father on their life and how to become the father they long to be. Information on *Finding Our Fathers* and other publications by Osherson can be found at his website: www.drsmosh.com

If your wife has a difficult relationship with her father, I suggest that she check out Dr. Linda Nielsen's book, *Embracing your Father: Creating the Relationship You've Always Wanted with Your Dad* (McGraw Hill). Nielsen began teaching her "Fathers & Daughters" course at Wake Forest University in 1991 – the only college course in the country that focuses exclusively on father-daughter relationships. More information on Nielsen's work and *Embracing Your Father* is available at her website: www.wfu.edu/~nielsen.

CONNECTIONS (specific to Douglas County Colorado)

Father's Day Fair & Walk-a-Thon – Thursday, June 17 from 1 – 5 PM Denver Human Services, 1200 Federal Blvd., Denver. 1 – 3:30 Information Fair with resources for dads. 3:45 – 4:45 Walk-a-Thon for dads and kids. Games, prize drawings & entertainment. Call 720.944.2840 for more information.

Are you a Golden Dad? - The National Fatherhood Initiative will be on the prowl outside the ESPN Zone in Denver on June 19 from the hours of 11:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. All Golden Dads are invited to "get caught" being an involved, responsible, and committed father! Dads, get spotted at or around the ESPN Zone and you could receive an official Golden Dads

award packet - including a Golden Dad pin, a gift certificate for a free Auntie Anne's pretzel and drink, and a CD sampler of the soon-to-be released Rendezvous Music CD, *Golden Slumbers: A Father's Love*.

The Parent University – Parenting classes for both dads and moms offered through the Douglas County School District. Call 303.387.0128 for more information, or follow this link to view an online course booklet: [The Parent University](#).

Father Fraternity – (Parker Adventist Hospital) Classes for new dads. Next series of classes begins. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

Coming Soon – New dad classes at the Sky Ridge Medical Center in Lone Tree, Colorado.

“You can’t be the kind of dad that you want to be. You can’t be the kind of dad that you wanted to have. You’ve got to be the kind of dad that your child needs you to be.”
- Roland Warren, The National Fatherhood Initiative

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Fastbreak for Fathers is a publication of the *Douglas County FatherWork Connection*, a countywide, research-based, fathering education and advocacy initiative committed to increasing the probability of every child in Douglas County Colorado being intimately connected to an involved, responsible and loving father or father figure.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by
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