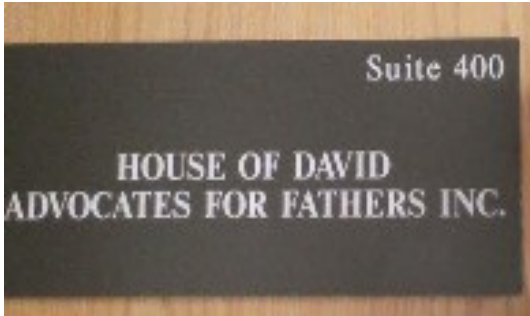


THE DADVOCATE

THE NEWSLETTER OF
HOUSE OF DAVID, ADVOCATES FOR FATHERS, INC.



NOTES FROM THE DESK:



Greetings!

I've come to realize that a sign on a door can mean much more than the words. From a business perspective, it serves as a marker, a placeholder to be exact, a symbol of occupying a space. For House of David, Advocates for Fathers, Inc., it serves as a commitment to the mission of helping Fathers. For me personally, it serves as the physical realization of a vision.

W hat You Can Do To Be A Total Dad

1. Be an involved parent in all aspects of your child's life, regardless of the marital living/visitation/custody situation.
2. Knowledge is Power. Continue to learn how to be a better parent.
3. Acknowledge your areas which need improvement and implement an action plan for improvement.
4. Share your knowledge with others.
5. Let other Fathers know why it is important to be a Total Dad.
6. Mentor a young man on the importance of involved Fathers.
7. Communicate to your children's Mother that you are jointly raising your child (ren) and must put the needs of the child first.
8. Consciously and strategically be a Total Dad model to young men and fathers who are struggling with their parenting role.
9. Raise awareness of and object to negative father images in the media.



Minutes after the family court judge rendered her opinion in March 2010, I realized that within 48 hours I would be solely responsible for the total care of two very young children for seven straight days. The first seven days were easy. My military background, along with other less-than-desirable experiences, have prepared me to endure hardship well. However, as the next week of a bachelor lifestyle came to an end and I prepared to again enjoy (and endure...as I smile back on those days) my children for another seven straight days, the reality of all that I had did not have and all that I did not know became evident. After serving as the financial officer for several non-profit organizations, all serving the needs of their respective clients, I realized that I had a need...and there was no organization that provided the services I needed. What began as a comical suggestion to a friend, began to be developed into a very real possibility. The research supported and identified a need for services for Fathers, the program delivery made sense, and with the many social ills in Baltimore City, almost all indirectly related to the absence of an involved Father's guidance, there was obviously a need. This concept for services developed over the next few years until finally the moon and the stars aligned themselves, pointing the way forward. The execution of the lease to occupy Suite 400 was the first step to delivering services to assist Fathers.

A sign on the door can also represent qualifications for entry. At birth, we are given the designation of "female/woman" or "male/man." Throughout our lifetime, we may select many other designations, or qualifications that literally open doors. Most of these are temporary, but the choice of selecting "Father" is lifelong. There are no courses, certifications, or licenses required for entry. The sign on the door at 200 E. Lexington Street, Suite 400 in Baltimore, MD represents a commitment to Fatherhood, which in itself, is a commitment to lead by example, acknowledge our areas which need improvement and set an example by striving to become better. It is my hope that once those Fathers read the sign and enter the suite, they will always look at the signs that read "men" and think of the underlying qualities, commitments, and responsibilities that also make them "Fathers."

All My Best,



SUPPORT THE CLOTHING EXCHANGE

In these tough economic times, it is even more important for parents to form support networks. As all parents know, children grow out of clothes most often while they are still in very good condition. Why not donate your gently used children's clothes to House of David so that they can be distributed to Fathers in need? Our take-one-leave-one policy ensures that Fathers, will in fact, "pay it forward."



THE DADVOCATE



LAW & ORDER

HB687 – By: David W. Smith Sr. (Co-Director, Children’s Rights Fund) *What is family law court? What is child custody?...* Well if you were to ask most fathers and those mothers without custody who have or who are going through it, they would tell you that it’s a real life nightmare! Yes, a nightmare where you lose everything, even your pride and joy (literally – your children). In a nation where we’re told that we are supposedly all created equal and entitled to fair justice, in the “family law courts world,” that’s a different story.

However, there are a few states that are challenging and working to reform the standards within the family law courts; the State of Maryland is one of those states. Since 2012, Maryland has been labeled as the state of “Equality for All” from our Governor Martin O’Malley who stated; *“We’re one Maryland with equality for all.”* However, there is no “equality” when it comes to our children and their parents when they encounter the family law court system. We hope this will all change with HB687 (Commission on Child Custody Decision Making).

In April 2013, the Children’s Rights Fund, with the support of its legislator sponsors, was able to pass legislation bill HB687 with overwhelming support in both the House and the Senate and which Governor O’Malley signed into law. One of the requirements within HB687 was that the Commission was to hold 5 public hearings across the State of Maryland in different jurisdictions to gather the public input on these matters. This past fall/winter the Commission held those five public hearings in which both sides came out to express their concerns. There was testimony and discussion as to whether a “presumption” of equal/shared parenting or 50/50 joint custody is in the best interest of those involved. The Commission submitted its report for the 2014 Maryland General Assembly Legislation, but has until December 31, 2014 for further study. Its members are to form committees and hold meetings throughout 2014 to address outstanding issues.

FATHER IN FOCUS: Frank Dukas



The hardest part of being a Father:
The intense level of worry and concern when one or both boys are not feeling well.

The best part of being a Father:
The pride I feel when they only want to be with me.

Words of Fatherhood Wisdom: Give them room to make mistakes then redirect them to the right path. Forgive your children as quickly as God forgives you of your shortcomings.

The Children’s Rights Fund will be following the progress of the Commission very closely and working with others to support what we believe is overall in the best interest of children, parents, and families which is a “presumption” of equal/shared parenting. The Children’s Rights Fund plans to present a strong supportive legislative bill for equal/shared parenting in 2015 with hopes of a supportive recommendation from the Commission.

EQUAL PARENTING = FAMILY EQUALITY

You can check out information and updates to the Maryland Commission at www.mdcourts.gov/family/cccdm.html, email them your concerns at childcustodydecisionmaking@mdcourts.gov, and follow our activity at www.childrensrightsfund.org. We must continue *“Serving children first; supporting family always!”*

We’ve done our homework ... and we have determined that we need your help.

Non-profit organizations provide many services that are generally not needed until a moment of crisis or dire need. Often times, those non-profits provide the very services that are needed to make a drastic change in our lives. Non-profits rely upon grant funders and the generosity of individuals who believe in the mission and work of the organization.

House of David has taken a strategic and purposeful approach to obtaining funding from grant makers. By initially focusing on programmatic outcomes and service delivery, we believe that our presentation and grant requests are strengthened with factual versus hypothetical data and experiences. We have not only begun to deliver services, but have also built partnerships with appropriately related organizations and referral sources. As we move into the “Ask” phase of our strategy, we are identifying grant funders and their application schedules. Rest assured, we will leave no stone unturned.



And about those generous individuals....

As a 501(c)3 organization, your contributions are tax deductible. You may contribute either through our webpage, or by calling the office to use our secure credit/debit processing system and immediately receive a receipt via email. Donations and pledges are used to help offset such operating expense as insurance, office space rent, printing and postage and most importantly towards the cost of a Father attending a session. For many of our clients, financial stability is the largest obstacle towards being involved in the lives of their children. Although they are in need of our services, this is simply an expense which many cannot afford. Your in-kind donations are just as important. Please visit our website to see our wish list of items that are critical to the program success.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, and the Fathers we serve, I sincerely thank you for your support.

Do you have an article, picture, or thought you’d like to share? Send to: AdvocatesforFathers@house-of-david.net.