



April 2016

Father Talks ... fathers connecting with their children

Dear Collaborators, Supporters and Friends of SCFI,

The Summit County Fatherhood Initiative had the honor of co-sponsoring, with the University of Akron, President Obama's White House Champion on Fatherhood, Thabiti Boone, for his address at the University of Akron's Black Male Summit on April 8-9, 2016. Mr. Boone's address focused on The Role of Fathers in the Development of Young Black Males. A single father himself, Mr. Boone overcame many challenging circumstances in becoming a leading voice, and sought after speaker on fatherhood. He was born to a 13 year old mother, raised in the tough streets of Brooklyn, New York, and watched his mother attempt suicide when he was just 12. He became a teenage father, took his daughter to his college classes, and still became a college basketball star. He sacrificed his NBA dreams to raise his daughter, and has become a compelling success story in advocating for fatherhood.

The reprinted article below from the Beacon Journal summarizes Mr. Boone's address at the University of Akron's Black Male Summit. The "Did You Know" section below summarizes all of the locations where SCFI is now teaching/facilitating fatherhood classes (and some motherhood classes).

Bill Macchione

Ninth Annual Black Male Summit Addresses Economic and Racial Divides

By Marilyn Miller

Beacon Journal staff writer

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More than 1,700 people attended the University of Akron's ninth annual Black Male Summit held at the John S. Knight Center on Friday. The two-day event continues Saturday at the Student Union.

The participants included high school and college students, educators and mentors from 18 states, Washington, D.C., and Bermuda.

Keynote speakers Friday included Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, PBS talk show host Tavis Smiley and Thabiti Boone, a representative from the White House on fatherhood initiatives, among others.

Morial talked about investing in America's youth and the need for summer jobs and education for youth. He said it's a matter of priorities on how U.S. dollars are spent.

"The bank is not broke," Morial said. "Instead of spending money to build prisons and on the Iraq war, if the money was spent on early childhood education — making sure students had first-class, high-speed computers and access to affordable college — those would be tremendous assets to our communities."

In another room, Boone talked about President Barack Obama's programs aimed at closing the gap on fathers' absence and elevating the importance of fathers. He said fathers play a critical role in the lives of their children and families, and research indicates that "boys thrive stronger when fathers are in their lives, their masculinity is more secure, they have a higher aptitude for achievement, make better choices and develop stronger character and leadership skills."

He said the most critical bonding period is from birth to 5 years old — a time that sets the tone of security and shaping the child's personality.

"Black boys' lives depend on all of us, but mostly their fathers," Boone said. "A father's involvement has been linked to healthier pregnancy outcomes, higher cognitive development and better relationships with the child's mother."

He said becoming a father pushes men to lead healthier lives and have healthier bodies, a healthier state of mind and a better outlook on life. He said "men are happier fathers when they are supportive and involved."

Boone said Obama has opened up a conversation on how fatherhood and mentoring can work together and has created funding for black male programs to support fathers in the development of black youth.

"It must be a more father-friendly society, promoting the value of fathers, seeing fathers as equal partners, continuing to improve fathers' rights and eliminating barriers," Boone said.

He commended the Summit County Fatherhood Initiative program (330-630-6991) for taking a lead role in embracing fathers and equipping them with the skills and resources they need to thrive.

Impact on democracy

Talk show host Smiley, who has authored 19 books, also engaged the audience. He talked about the divide in America, racially and economically.

"One percent of the people cannot continue to control 40 percent of the wealth. The top 400 wealthiest people in America have wealth equivalent to the bottom 150 million of the rest of us ... democracy is being threatened more and more every day.

“When you take away people’s hope, they have nothing more left, you have a problem on your hands. You can’t render people hopeless or the suffering of everyday people, especially in black men and black youth. It is the token of truth that allows the suffering to speak,” Smiley said. “We are special people, we had hope when hope unborn had already died. We still found a way to hope. We can build a whole life on hope ... but even hope needs some help and that’s where you come in. Live a life seeking the truth, speak it and stand on it.”

One of the students, Kmoni Dodd, 17, a junior at Canton McKinley High School who belongs to a group called Men of Honor, said he enjoyed the summit because of the encouragement of the speakers.

“The message that no matter how bad things seem to be, we can prevail in our culture and education is the key,” Kmoni said. “It was inspirational.”

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Did you know?

SCFI is now facilitating fatherhood classes at Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority – Main Office (starting July), Akron Summit Community Action/Head Start – Five Points Location (new), Faith Temple Church – Akron, Grace Church - Barberton (new), Mountain of the Lord Church – Akron, Oriana House – Akron, Sanctuary of Praise – Twinsburg (new), Summit County Children Services, Summit County Jail, and Summit County Educational Service Center – Cuyahoga Falls (starting June 25). Motherhood classes are being facilitated at Mountain of the Lord Church – Akron, and OhioMeansJobs Center – Akron.

Fathers Talks are fatherhood stories brought to you by the Summit County Fatherhood Initiative (SCFI). SCFI is a collaborative, community initiative dedicated to helping men increase their fathering skills through programming, education and individualized services. SCFI was founded by three, prominent Summit County fatherhood service providers - Pastor Eugene Norris of Fame Fathers, Don Lykes of Fathers and Sons of Northeast Ohio, and Frank Williams of Man2Man. SCFI is supported by Akron Community Foundation, GAR Foundation, United Way of Summit County, and the County of Summit - Department of Job & Family Services. Comments or questions about this publication, or about SCFI’s programming and services, can be sent to Bill Macchione, william.macchione@jfs.ohio.gov

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