

Positive Protective Factors:

Moving Fatherhood Forward

Mercer Council and Faith Christian Counseling Center hosted a full day Responsible Fatherhood Empowerment Workshop. Daryl C. Walls, founder and CEO of MINDS Leadership Consulting Firm was the keynote speaker for our first "Responsible Fatherhood Empowerment Workshop" held on October 10, 2014 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Hamilton, NJ. The Responsible Fatherhood Empowerment Workshop educated at-risk fathers on the importance of their role and influence on their children's lives. At risk fathers come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, but mostly, they are vulnerable for drug and/or alcohol concerns and issues which keep them being present at home and available for their families. Over 100 fathers attended the event and Trenton Mayor Eric Jackson was in attendance and spoke at the event also. As a very important prevention activity, this workshop spotlighted information that we have been aware of since 2002. We have known that within a community context, there is significantly more drug use among children who do not live with their mother and father. A father of two, Daryl Walls is the creator of the Acces2Success (A2S) Leadership Program, co-author of two books titled "Leadership Defined" and "Conversations on Faith." He is a Certified Situational Leadership and Anti-Bullying Trainer. "MINDS LCF shares in the vision of the Fatherhood Workshop to address the father absence crisis in America with this transformational opportunity for any father to experience and it will cultivate their ability to lead and build meaningful relationships with their children and families," said Mr. Walls.

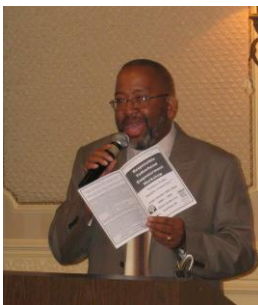


Our speaker stressed that many fathers are anxious to have more responsibility for the protection of their children, but the real tragedy is that we are missing a huge opportunity to improve children's lives by ensuring that non-abusive fathers can be at the heart of supporting their children. Fathers can provide some of the support vulnerable children need so that they do not miss out on opportunities for positive growth and options for vital care that can come from an able father and their extended families.

In addition, to Mr. Walls' sterling comments, an eight member panel from Mercer County shared their perspectives as well: Duncan Harrison - UIH Family Partners & Trenton City Councilman; Darren Freedom Green - Shiloh Baptist Community Development Corporation; Jason Rodgers - Fathers and Men United for a Better Trenton; Abdul Muhammad - Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy; Leslie O. Summiel, Jr. - Children's Future's Trenton, NJ; Darnell Johnson - Faith Christian Counseling Center; Samuel Matthews - Faith Christian Counseling Center; and Tony Pope - Faith Christian Counseling Center. Additional workshops addressed the following topics:

Domestic Violence, Fathers Statistics, Effects of Tobacco on the Body, Effects of Alcohol on the Body, and Effects of Drugs on the Brain and Recidivism.

A great example of this progressive movement is Faith Christian Counseling Center which has been helping fathers get the skills they need to be involved in their children's lives through the National Fatherhood Initiative's 24/7 Dad program. A group of 25 fathers go through a 12-session workshop that will give them the parenting, relationship and communication skills they need to be involved, responsible, and committed fathers. "I was inspired to call this Responsible Fatherhood Conference to order. I firmly believe that the educational components offered during this conference will help fathers see the need to step-up and be productive in their role and provide a positive influence in the lives of their children," Reverend Leroy Scott, Program Director shared.



The Mercer Council actively provides quality alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse prevention and early intervention programs and services in partnership with individuals, families, schools, communities, businesses and professionals throughout Mercer County. Funding for the Responsible Fatherhood Workshop was possible due to the Mercer Council's Trenton Municipal Alliance Grant (TMAC) received from the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction (GCADA).

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