

Ken Canfield

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Nancy & Andrea

I want to propose something that I believe will help move the fathering effort into a broader cultural framework. Over the next 12 months we need to promote a progressive commitment which can be monitored nationally and will enhance your efforts in the fathering arena. The scheme I am proposing is the result of a brainstorming session which Andrea, Lisa Gilmore, Menahem Herman, and myself were a part of about three weeks ago. It involves the collection of commitments over the next nine months--between now and Father's Day 2000--from 100 Cities, 1,000 Businesses, 10,000 Schools, and 100,000 Fathers.

private fund raising
The National Center can provide tracking for all who would sign on as a partner in reestablishing the practice of responsible fatherhood. Tracking the commitment of cities, businesses, schools, and fathers in their efforts to involve fathers more noticeably in community change creates a win-win situation by providing proof of the growing trend toward engaged fathers in America.

Below are the specifics to which each group would commit. The challenge could be made this fall, perhaps next week at the teleconference. The National Center would provide sign up and monitoring for each category. Each group would commit to the following:

Cities Pledge

Fathers play a unique and irreplaceable role in the lives of children. As a community, we recognize the need to encourage men to be engaged in the lives of their own children, and then to reach out to the fatherless children in our community. We are committed to inspiring men to be better fathers and father-figures and will implement three of the following actions in the next six months:

1. Issue a public proclamation honoring and affirming responsible fatherhood as an essential ingredient to community health, and petitioning fathers to commit to increased participation in the lives of children.
2. Encourage civic, service, and charitable groups, and faith communities to promote involved fatherhood in their programs and among their membership.
3. Institute and support father-friendly work place practices such as flex-time and leave banks for public employees.
4. Create an event/celebration around Father's Day to honor model fathers in our community.
5. Examine public programs and policies to ensure that they are father-friendly.
6. Support educational efforts to equip men to become better fathers.
7. Implement and champion efforts which encourage men to reach out to fatherless children.

No contract

Business Pledge

Fathers today face increasing pressures between work and family. As an employer of fathers we realize that good fathers make good employees. We are committed to providing a father-friendly work environment, and to encouraging and equipping the men of our organization to reach out to children. Over the next six months we will implement three of the following practices:

1. Institute flex-time and flexible work hours.
2. Initiate fatherhood education seminars for interested dads.
3. Implement a "Bring Your Child to Work Day."
4. Permit shift-swapping.
5. Encourage tele-commuting.
6. Provide comprehensive health benefit programs.
7. Initiate mentoring programs for fatherless children in our community.

Schools Pledge

Educational outcomes for children with involved fathers are far better than for those with distant or no fathers. Recognizing this, we are committed to engage fathers in the education of their children. Over the next six months we will achieve three of the following:

1. Participate in the "Breakfast for Dads" program on our school campus in October 2000.
2. Serve as a host site for father-training classes for dads.
3. Include specific father training in health or other classes that cover family life.
4. Initiate "Bring your Dad to School" day.
5. Provide flexible parent-teacher conferences scheduling to allow both moms and dads to attend.
6. Send progress reports to non-resident fathers.
7. Publicize opportunities for dads to volunteer for school activities with their children.

Father's Pledge

I recognize that I have a critical role to play in the life of my child. Because I am committed to becoming a responsible and engaged father, over the next six months, I am committed to putting three of the following activities into practice in my relationship with my child:

1. Read to or with my children weekly.
2. Spend time one-on-one with each of my children bi-weekly.
3. Visit my child's school classroom twice.
4. Make contact and communicate with my child's teacher.
5. Help with or monitor my child's homework.
6. Volunteer at my child's school or extra-curricular activities.
7. Meet with other dads for support and encouragement.
8. Reward or praise my children for their progress weekly.
9. Cultivate a team relationship with my child's mother.

Contract { The Vice President could announce or affirm the pledge initiative at the AFT meeting in January. It could also be reinforced in the *Tips for Dads Guide* we are developing with Lisa Gilmore at HHS, to be released in March 2000. The results would be announced at a major national event near Father's Day with a concluding event the week of October 2, 2000.

We are proposing an event for the week of October 2, 2000 where dads and kids would have breakfast together on school campuses. This activity would make a collective statement to the world that fathers matter to America's children. Site activities could include father/child discovery activities and bonding exercises.

We have begun discussions with a major corporate sponsor who will likely provide breakfast for the first million participants in the event.

Please, think through and critique this idea. I believe it is a valuable undertaking, and that this is the prime time for such a venture.

Respectfully,

Ken