



Fatherhood Conference Sends Message: Fathers Vital to Children, Families and Communities
Aug. 13 Event Features Workshops for Fathers, Attorneys and Others

Cincinnati (June 18, 2010) With Father's Day around the corner, Hamilton County and Lighthouse Youth Services have teamed together to present a Fatherhood Conference aimed at strengthening fathers, families and the Greater Cincinnati community.

"A Brighter Future: Strengthening Fathers for Families and Community" is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aug. 13, at the Kingsgate Marriott. The event, sponsored by the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, Lighthouse Youth Services and the Ohio Practitioners Network for Fathers & Families, is free to the public and is targeted to fathers and attorneys, court personnel, probation officers and social service agencies who work with fathers and families.

"We all know that children are better off when a strong, positive father is engaged and playing an active role in their life," said Moira Weir, director of the Department of Job and Family Services. "Every day, our agency sees abused children who would benefit from the presence of a positive father, or children who do not receive the financial support they need because their fathers are absent. Efforts such as this conference drive home the message of how important fathers are to their children, their families and their community."

The conference will feature workshops on child support, parenting, relationships, family violence and mental health. Attorneys can receive free Continuing Legal Education credits (CLE's) for attending two hour-long breakout sessions coordinated by Hamilton County's Child Support Enforcement Agency. Sessions on several other topics also will take place. In addition, fathers who have had their drivers' licenses suspended for delinquent child support have the opportunity to get them reinstated (drivers' license amnesty) during the conference.

Congressman Steve Driehaus will be the lunch keynote speaker. He will present Judge Thomas Lipps, presiding administrative judge of Hamilton County's Juvenile Court since 2005, with a Congressional Proclamation during lunch. Judge Lipps will also receive the Child Support Hero award for his longtime commitment to furthering child support collection efforts.

The conference will include a continental breakfast and lunch and close with a community dialogue on fatherhood. Further details will be announced soon, including speakers and presenters. To register, visit online at <http://healthyfathers.brighterfuture.sgizmo.com> or call 513-487-6780.

"Generally, most people aren't aware of the scope of work being done with fathers in the name of strengthening families," said Calvin Williams director of the Lighthouse REAL Dads program. "The fatherhood field, while about 25 years old, is still developing, and our goal is to reduce the systemic barriers that alienate fathers from being involved with their children."

Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services and Lighthouse Youth Services have a five-year partnership to help fathers who owe child support achieve life skills that will lead to employment, responsible payment of child support and more meaningful relationships with their children. The program, entitled REAL (Responsible, Effective, Accountable, Loving) Dads, has been responsible for the collection of \$423,000 in child support since its inception (currently \$20,000 a month).

REAL Dads, which won a 2009 achievement award from the National Association of Counties for innovative programs that contribute to and enhance county government, helps eliminate barriers to employment and engagement with the child. The program provides counseling, job coaching and child support information to fathers who are at risk of failing to financially and emotionally support their children.

The County's Child Support Enforcement Agency handled more than 90,000 cases and collected more than \$143 million last year for families that might not otherwise have had the money necessary to pay for such items as food, medical care, child care, school clothes and school supplies. Many of the children who do not receive child support turn to public assistance, with taxpayers providing financial support.

About Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services

The Department of Job and Family Services administers federal, state and local programs for those in need. The Department helps with local child protection, elderly protection, child care, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food assistance and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands each year and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.

About Lighthouse Youth Services

Since 1969 Lighthouse Youth Services has received national recognition as an innovator in services for families in crisis; housing for homeless teens; group homes for young people who need a therapeutic environment; education, counseling and training for youth and families; and foster care for abandoned and abused children. LYS operates the areas only direct access around-the-clock sanctuary for homeless, abused and neglected youth and a juvenile corrections program serving youth from all over Ohio. Lighthouse Youth Services is funded in part by the City of Cincinnati, is a United Way Agency Partner, and meets Better Business Wise Giving Alliance Standards. For more information, visit on-line at www.lys.org.

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