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**The Importance of Fathers**

**By Rexanne Mancini**

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There is no doubt that mothers play an all-important leading role in the lives of their children. They are the obvious heroes of child rearing. But what about a father's role? Just how important are the dads of the world compared to the almighty image of mother? My belief is that fathers play just as important a role as mothers. Different, yes. Possibly not as nurturing, not as all-sacrificing but just as important in the developmental and emotional well being of a child.

Dads are the solid foundation of our lives. They are the shore we swim to when our arms and legs feel increasingly tired. They are the strength we rely on as we take our first tentative steps into the world. Dads can be tender, tough, fragile or powerful but they are probably the most uncomplicated love we will ever know.

For daughters, Daddy is the first man they adore ... the first man whose eyes shine with overwhelming amazement when they look at us. He is the first man to fall in love with us.

For sons, Daddy is the idol they first aspire to emulate ... their mirror image of what will be and possibly the only man they will ever feel comfortable loving.

Daddy is the first man who held us, as a loving parent, with a lump in his throat so huge, only the joy of that love could erase the overwhelming pain of choking on unexpected raw emotion. I think when a father holds his newborn baby, he is touched by pure vulnerability for the first time in his adult life, leaving him forever humbled by the unexplained miracles of life.

For mothers, the father of our children is the one person we can trust to watch over our babies as closely as we would. We are secure in the knowledge of their love for our precious offspring. Dad is the only other person in the world as fascinated with every nuance and murmur of our babies. He is the one person on the planet with whom we can indulge our need to brag and carry on about our kid's accomplishments and heartaches ad nauseum ... one who will be just as interested and never yawn in

## The Importance of Fathers

the face of our devotion.

Without dads, we wouldn't be moms. I would like to take the liberty of thanking them from all our hearts for this honor and for being our partners in this business of raising children.

Know how much you are loved and revered, guys! You are our trusted soldiers and we need you more than you will ever realize.

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Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters, Justice and Liberty. She is a novelist, freelance writer and maintains an extensive yet informal parenting and family web site,

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–Visit her site for good advice, award–winning Internet holiday pages and

some humor to help you cope. Subscribe to her free newsletter, Rexanne's Web Review, for a monthly dose of Rexanne:

### **Indianapolis Sees Success Involving Fathers**

**By Stacy Andell**

#### Superintendent Calls for Fathers on the First Day of School

Superintendent Eugene G. White's call to fathers in the Indianapolis schools has met with strong success. Mr. White asked fathers to bring their children to the first day of classes in order to establish a stronger presence on campus and hopefully continue to stay involved with Indianapolis schools throughout the school year. The event was dubbed, "The First Day is Dad's Day," and encouraged fathers to have a more active role on campus.

As Mr. White states: "Mothers are the backbone of IPS, but dads need to know they have a role to play in supporting their children's education, too. I look forward to seeing more dads in schools throughout the school year." Mr. White hopes programs like "The First Day is Dad's Day" will help change the way fathers view their role in their children's education and encourage more fathers to take an active interest in what their children are doing in Indianapolis schools.

#### Public Reaction to "The First Day is Dad's Day"

News stations across Indianapolis turned out to record "The First Day is Dad's Day" programs. WTLC, WEDJ, WISH–TV, WRTV, WTHR, WXIN, the Indianapolis Star and the Indianapolis Recorder all participated in getting the word out about the event as well as following up with the story later to see how dads, teachers, and students felt about the shift in the role of the father on campus in Indianapolis

## The Importance of Fathers

schools. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Many fathers took their children to school for the first time and saw the process from a parent perspective that they had not had before. The networks of fathers meeting each other and seeing their children at school should have a positive effect throughout the year as fathers feel more comfortable being involved in the Indianapolis schools.

Reverend Emory Davis watched "The First Day is Dad's Day" proceedings and collected many interesting anecdotes:

"Well, it was a wonderful day. I went to School 55. I got there shortly after 8 a.m. and was greeted by one of the staff members. As I told her what I was doing she got excited that someone was there to help.

"Given the title of 'stand-in' parent, I greeted children and parents as they came into the school, helped them with directions to either check the assignment board or that they were welcome to have breakfast. I met the principal, Mrs. Johnson, and she also thanked me for coming.

"I picked School 55 because one of the young men in our men's group at church attended that school when he was younger.

"One thing, I greeted a young man with I think two children, one of whom was there for kindergarten – although he looked as though in stature to only be about three years old. The parent already had a room assignment for his older child but needed information for the little one. I told the parent to see Mrs. Johnson. As they turned to their left toward the office, the little one came back and looked at me with eyes that would melt the hardest rock and said, 'Hello.' I had to bend down and obviously say

'Hello' right back. And with the he caught up with his dad and brother. That just made the whole day.

"Tell Dr. White 'Let's do it again!' "

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more information on Indianapolis schools visit

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