

FOR FAMILIES



.....the link between the need and the solution

SUMMER 2006 Newsletter

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FOR Families is a community service offered through the City of Irvine for those who live or work in Irvine.

Life as a Single Parent: Finding a Healthy Balance

By Deborah Brunn, MS, MFT
Manager of the FOR Families Program

***Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.
.....Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.***

We often hear parenting referred to as “the most difficult job there is.” But all too many parents are now taking on this role alone. In 2004, 23% of children lived with only their mothers, 5% lived with only their fathers, and 4% lived with neither of their parents (Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, 2005).

Whether by separation, divorce, or death, single parent families have persevered throughout history and are comprised of various forms. Single parent family situations may also include persons who have never married, women who may be nearing the end of their “childbearing years” and/or are established in their careers and decide deliberately to have children without a partner, persons in partnered relationships,

and friends or family members cohabitating together.



With the cost of living continually rising coupled with juggling work and family responsibilities, the challenges for single parents to make ends meet can be quite overwhelming given the countless adjustments that must be made.

Refiguring finances, delegating household chores, acting as the sole disciplinarian, adjusting to your feelings of loss, helping your children cope with their loss, and finding the energy and time to spend with your children are merely some of the pressures faced by single parent families.

The goal of this newsletter is to provide single parents with helpful tips and

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resources available in the community that may help individuals regain a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities, and to ease the burden of emotional and economic adversity. Additionally, the strength developed by single parents will be recognized and accentuated given the extraordinary responsibility single parenting entails.

Consider the following suggestions for instilling a healthy balance in your life:

- **Build a Strong Network of Support:**

Encourage yourself to make time for family and friends; seek spiritual guidance at a local place of worship, attend a support group, and/or find professional assistance if needed. Contact FOR Families staff for confidential assistance with support groups or therapist referrals.



- **Accept Help and Ask for Help:** Remember that you are only one person. As difficult as it may be to reach out to others, take advantage when family or friends offer to lend a hand.
- **Find Time to Relax. You Deserve a Break, Too:** Once the children are in bed, take some quiet time for yourself, even if for only 15-30 minutes before going to bed. Watch a favorite television program, review your e-mails, play your favorite music, or chat with a good friend.
- **Rearrange Household Chores:** Use your creativity in balancing life's daily tasks. Develop a schedule and encourage children

(when age-appropriate) to help out around the house with making their beds, placing their dirty clothes in the hamper, doing the dishes, or vacuuming. Give them encouragement and praises for helping to set a positive tone.

- **Develop a Budget:** Having to reorganize finances is one of the most strenuous issues that single parents are forced to confront. List your immediate needs and then create a budget on your own, or locate free or low-cost assistance from a credible community resource.
- **Seek Out and Utilize Community Resources:** Many agencies offer assistance such as support groups, financial aid, counseling services, or low-cost child care. Review the list of "Where to Turn in the Community for Help and Support" in this newsletter, or contact the staff at FOR Families for a personal consultation.
- **Work Towards Acceptance:** This can be one of the most difficult steps, but be sure to acknowledge and cope with feelings of devastation, depression, and grief. Talk with those whom you trust and consider consulting a medical or counseling professional for assistance.
- **Spend Quality Time With Your Children:** Read to your kids before tucking them in; set aside time to play a board game or create an art project; make time to take them to the park, beach, or zoo for family fun time.

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COMMUNITY SERVICES Summer Class Offerings

Parenting

Navigating the Teenage Years

Are you frustrated with increasing conflict and deteriorating communication with your teenager? Parents will learn a new approach to resolving problems, how feelings and interactions influence communication, and how to recognize pitfalls and workable alternatives.

Inst: Debra Solseng, MFT, RPT-S and
Blair M. Roberts, LCSW.

Location: Rancho Senior Center

#38704 W 7pm-8:30pm Aug 9-23 \$50

Teaching Character

How do you teach children and teens to be attentive, obedient, truthful and grateful? How do you develop character qualities like orderliness, diligence, responsibility, patience and initiative? Learn how to enhance the development of character qualities that will open doors of opportunity and leadership for them. Be proactive and effective in teaching your child 49 life empowering character qualities. Inst. Leo Lozano, LifeLegacy Character Institute.

Location: Lakeview Senior Center

#39001 M 6:30pm-9:30pm Jun 19-26 \$40/person

#39002 M 6:30pm-9:30pm Jun 19-26 \$58/couple

To register or to find information on additional classes offered through the City of Irvine go to:

www.IrvineQuickReg.org

Or call

Program Registration

(949) 724-6610

Where to Turn for Assistance

Families Forward

(949) 552-2727

Transitional housing, food & personal care items prevention program— by appointment only

O.C. Social Services Agency

(714) 435-5800

CalWORKs, Welfare-to-Work, Food Stamps, Refugee Cash Assistance, MediCal

O.C. Child Support

(714) 541-7600

Family Support Division

Consumer Credit Counseling Service

(714) 547-2227

Free budget & credit counseling; educational classes for adults experiencing financial difficulty with debt or credit

Parents Without Partners (PWP)

(800) 969-4797

Recorded message gives information on group, family and individual activities for parents who are divorced, widowed, or separated

Irvine Family Resource Center

(949) 936-7950

Free or low cost family and student counseling services for families whose children are enrolled in the Irvine Unified School District

Parents' Morning

(949) 724-6638

Provides educational and networking opportunities for parents through monthly meetings

School Readiness Program (IUSD)

(949) 936-5870

Providing parent and parent/child education services for families with children 0-5 years

City of Irvine Child Care Coordination Office

(949) 724-6632

Provides a variety of services designed to enhance and maintain the quality of child care in the community; child care resources

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- **Do Not Expect to Be the Perfect Parent:**

There is no such thing! There is enough stress in taking care of the children, the household, and balancing work responsibilities. Try not to overwhelm yourself by striving to become a “superhero”... you already are.

In light of all of the stressors single parents experience, there are opportunities for rewards. Single parents are provided the ability to bond closely with their children by creating special memories that are just between them, and are able to teach their children effective coping skills when faced with difficult times.

Single parents may feel a strong sense of pride in knowing they taught their children the importance of values. Through their example, they are able to model standards such as responsibility, patience, frugality, teamwork, diligence, and organization which can undoubtedly serve as a benefit for their children well into adulthood.

Adjustment to single parenting may seem insurmountable at times, but we cannot forget

“Whether by separation, divorce, or death, single parent families have persevered throughout history...”

about the remarkable strength that materializes when you are responsible for handling so much change. Single parents have the incredible ability to manage or delegate multiple tasks alone such as housekeeping, making lunches for the kids, transporting them to and from school, attending children’s recreational activities, job pressures, cooking dinner, budgeting finances, etc. A sense of satisfaction ensues when a single parent realizes the amount of stress that has been carried and has learned to utilize various coping skills to manage life’s ongoing demands.

Despite the times when feeling alone, overwhelmed, frightened, and exhausted throughout the process, single parenting is an art that is learned through acceptance, perseverance, and dedication to yourself and to your children. Believe in your ability to embrace the ongoing challenges that are presented, keep focused on your values, and relish in the strength you created in yourself and your children by knowing you have tackled and continue to conquer what seemed at one time to be unbearable.

References:

Forum on Child & Family Statistics (2005).

America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. www.childstats.gov

About the newsletter author:

Debbie Brunn, FOR Families Program Specialist, graduated with her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Ecology from UC Irvine and with her Master of Science Degree in Counseling from Cal State Fullerton. She is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist experienced in counseling children, chronically mentally ill adults, and providing professional consultations to persons with dementia and their families. Debbie currently resides with her husband in Irvine and has been a resident since 1971. *Debbie may be contacted by phone at (949) 724-6650 or via e-mail at dbrunn@ci.irvine.ca.us.*

Answers to identify the pictures on Page 5—left to right: Clara Foltz, Mary Kay Ash, Ellen Ochoa, Sir Isaac Newton, Robert Frost, General Robert E. Lee, and Marie (Madam) Curie

In celebration of Irvine's 35 years as a City, here are some fun facts about 35 famous people who are currently or were single parents, or raised by single parents:

(Can you identify the following pictures...answers on page 4)



Single Parents

1. Betsy Ross, maker of the first American flag, did tailoring for George Washington
2. Diane Keaton, actress, is restoring a 1920's home in Laguna Beach
3. Marie (Madam) Curie, 2 time Nobel Prize winner developed radium
4. Katie Couric, newscaster, one of her all time favorite books is "To Kill a Mockingbird"
5. Williamina Fleming, during her lifetime she was the most famous American woman astronomer
6. George Lucas, Star Wars director—the numbers 1138 can be found in nearly all Lucas movies
7. Erin Brockovich—instrumental in constructing a class action case that was awarded the largest settlement in US History
8. Barbra Streisand, singer, actress, director. Once dated former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau
9. Mary Kay Ash, founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics. Her magic formula was—"Everyone is important!"
10. Cleopatra, 70 -30 BC, female leader of Egypt took the throne at 18 years old
11. Clara Foltz, first woman to practice law in California; her husband left her with 4 children and 1 child on the way
12. J.K. Rowling, author—Harry Potter—she hates spiders and doesn't read fiction
13. Barbara Walters, broadcaster—journalist, once worked undercover as a Playboy Bunny
14. Wilma Rudolph, 1976 Innsbruck Olympic Gold Medal winner—track—one of 22 children
15. Ellen Ochoa, first Hispanic woman astronaut, majored in physics SDU, enjoys playing the flute
16. James Garfield, 20th President, could write with both hands
17. General Robert E. Lee, was offered the opportunity to command either side during the Civil War
18. Alan Greenspan, economist, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve, originally wanted to be a musician
19. Queen Latifah, actress, singer, worked at a Burger King
20. Sir Isaac Newton, physicist/mathematician, born on Christmas 3 months after his father died
21. Rickey Henderson, baseball player has played for Oakland Athletics, Yankees, Padres, Angels, Dodgers, etc.
22. Bill Clinton, 42nd President, was 32 when he became the Governor of Arkansas
23. Ed Bradley, CBS news correspondent, 60 Minutes fame, was wounded in Cambodia in 1973
24. Robert Frost, poet, famous poem "A Road Not Taken;" his father died when he was only 11
25. Cary Grant, actor, born Archibald Alexander Leach in England
26. Rutherford B. Hayes, 19th President, had the first telephone installed in the White House
27. Mother Theresa, nun—her father died when she was 9 years old
28. Elvis Presley, entertainer, poured Log Cabin syrup on everything he ate
29. Andrew Johnson, 17th President, did not learn to read until he was 17 years old
30. Audrey Hepburn, actress—born in Belgium in 1929 and had her first child in 1970
31. Oprah, TV personality, actress, most highly paid entertainer according to Forbes
32. Princess Diana, Princess of Wales—was a good ballet dancer
33. Ingrid Bergman, Academy Award winning film actress, turned down a starring role in "The Miracle Worker"
34. Pierce Bronson, film actor, "007" fame was born in Drogheda, Ireland
35. John Hancock, American statesman, first and only signer of Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776

Raised by Single Parent

About FOR Families

The FOR Families Program provides short-term support and information to families and individuals living or working in Irvine who need assistance identifying and accessing needed services and resources. The FOR Families staff offers **free, confidential consultations** to determine community members' needs and develop action plans to help meet those needs.

Some of the issues FOR Families addresses include:

- relationship difficulties
- separation and divorce
- substance abuse concerns
- parenting issues
- stress and depression
- financial and legal issues

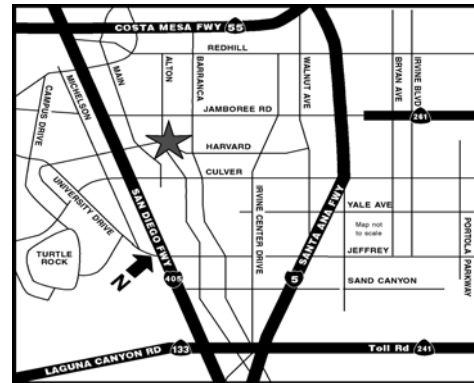
FOR Families will assist with creative problem-solving, resource linkage, and referrals for counseling.

Hours: 9-5 Monday - Thursday and alternate Fridays

Phone: (949) 724-6650

Fax (949) 724-6608

www.irvineforfamilies.org



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