

# Milwaukee Healthy Beginnings



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## A Message from Rachel Morgan

A Message from Rachel Morgan, RN BSN, MHBP Coordinator:

The Milwaukee Healthy Beginnings Project (MHBP) a project of the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin, is dedicating this newsletter to the Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative. The MHBP was honored to co-sponsor the Fatherhood Initiative Summit "Strengthening Fathers and Families" on Friday and Saturday, October 13 – 14, 2006. The mission of the Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative is "To improve the well being of children growing up with involved, responsible and committed fathers in their lives." This mission goes hand in hand with the MHBP goal, which is to decrease infant mortality and improve maternal and infant health. The MHBP works with the whole family, and fathers are welcome. The Summit was held at the Mother Kathryn Daniels Conference Center.

On October 14 2006 the Summit consisted of a morning session which contained remarks from Mayor Tom Barrett, County Executive Scott Walker, and Alderman Ashanti Hamilton. The Summit utilized two rounds of workshops. The first round provided a mixture of seven workshops. A few of the presentations were entitled, Myths of the Single Father and Co-Parenting Through Separation and Divorce. MHBP contributed to the discussion on fatherhood by presenting a workshop entitled, "Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Before, During and After Pregnancy".

The second round of workshops consisted of a variety of workshops such as Avoiding Baby Mama Drama, and Getting on the Road to

Driving Legally.

Leonard Pitts a best selling author of, *Becoming Dad: Black Men and the Journey to Fatherhood* was the keynote speaker that separated the two workshops.

The summit was an complete success with 1240 fathers reinforcing the importance of fatherhood. This is truly a cause for celebration! Since the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel did not report this event, the MHBP would like to give you a brief highlight of some of the workshops, and

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## An Active Father

By La' Tonya Walls

On Saturday October 14, 2006, I had the pleasure of speaking with several young men on the subject of being *Active Fathers*.

*Active Fathers*

- Are a positive role model for their children.
- Can provide positive behaviors by setting a proper example for their children.
- Helps their children develop self esteem.

Children with high self esteem tend to be happier and more confident than children with low self esteem. When fathers are fully involved in their children's lives, those children learn they are highly valued.

- Helps their children's intellectual development and increases their chances for academic success.

When fathers are involved in their education, children tend to have higher verbal and math test scores and greater problem-solving and social skills. They are also more likely to be successful in school than children whose fathers are not involved in their lives. "These academic benefits

appear to extend into adulthood."

- Guide and disciplines their children.
- Active fathers play an important role in teaching their children proper behavior by setting and enforcing healthy limits.
- Gives their children a sense of physical and emotional security.

By being actively involved in a child's life, a father promotes a trusting relationship. The child does not have to worry about being abandoned.

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## “The Way You Do, The Things you Do”

By Tyrone Dumas

**M**y Milwaukee Fatherhood Summit workshop was titled “The Why You Do, The Things You Do, in Becoming Stronger, Committed and Loving Fathers and it was designed to be a musical journey about Fatherhood. I have named my presentation a “Musatalk”, which is a combination of music, comedy, poems, readings and lecture all rolled into one special presentation format. I began with an overlay of the poem by Ina

Hughes titled “We are responsible for the children,” spoken over the intro of the Temptations “Papa Was a Rolling Stone”. I made connections between the poem and the song, and between the poem and fatherhood.

The next component of my presentation included the song “Color Him Father” which pays tribute to fathers and I added a reading from the book by Bill Cosby titled “Fatherhood”.

I then moved into the critical

message that is a central part of my presentation which is “Change”! Sam Cooke’s “A Change is Gonna Come” was played as all of the audience participants stood up and closed their eyes to listen.

I asked seven questions about the changes needed to become a better Father and Man as one moves to the next level of professional and personal development.

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## A Message form Rachel Morgan cont...

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presentations.

Please note some of the following articles were written by some of the presenters and please remember, all children need a caring and committed father.

For any questions, contact Rachel Morgan, Program Coordinator at the BHC at (414) – 933-0064 or email at [rmorgan@bhcw.org](mailto:rmorgan@bhcw.org).



**“If we give our partners the same respect we expect when learning something new, we’ll benefit in the long run.”**

## Being the Only “Semi-Expert” Can Be Frustrating

By John Gay

**W**omen usually have more experiences than men in caring for babies. We learned the basics-babysitting, caring for a younger sibling or playing with our dolls. Most men never had these early experiences and when baby arrives, they’re totally in the dark.

The steady demands of a newborn keep mothers busy. We assume everyone else is support staff. When our partners look to us for guidance we, become impatient and irritable. It suddenly feels as if we

have two children.

If we give our partners the same respect we expect when learning something new, we’ll benefit in the long run.

In time Dad can assume a greater portion of the responsibility because he is no longer in “training”, And we can relax because we are no longer fully in charge.

Source: Meditations for Mothers  
Beth Wilson Saavedra



## Fathers Trying to do the “Right Thing”

By Jim Addison  
HIV/AIDS Program Coordinator

I was blessed to be a participant in the Fatherhood Conference held here in Milwaukee on October 14, 2006. The Black Health Coalition was asked to coordinate a workshop for this event. This workshop had a panel of presenters that provided various perspectives on the needs of Mother and Child related to infant mortality. I was asked to speak from the perspective of a father attempting to support his wife during and shortly after pregnancy. I must say that I was very impressed by the

number of African American Men that attended this event. These men not only attended this event, but they came hungry for answers on how to better their situations.

Through conversations with the men that I came in contact with, I found that many of these men took off from work to be present. Not a vacation day or any other kind of “paid” absence. They lost money. I walked away from this event with the overwhelming feeling that most of these men truly want to and are doing the right thing. These Fathers are everyday individuals attempting to

handle their business in a system that seems more designed to punish than to help. If you would have contacted some of these men six months to a year earlier they could have been able to give the presentation that I was asked to give. Here we find them one argument, one mistake or one lost job later and they are in the system. I realize that there are many men who fit the category of “dead beat dad”, but I walked away feeling that most of these men don’t fit that category. I felt as if there was a thin line between the presenter and the ones being presented to. Too thin for me.



**“I must say that I was very impressed by the number of African American Men that attended this event.”**

**- Jim Addison  
HIV/AIDS Program Coordinator**

## “They Way You Do The Things You Do” cont...

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1. Identify areas of your life where change is attempting to push through.
2. Examine your thought processes, belief systems and the resulting behavior.
3. Learn How to “take your foot off the brake” and not be controlled by fear.
4. Give approval to listen to your inner (“Gut Feeling”) for direction.

5. Remove the mask(s) you’ve been hiding behind.
6. Redesign your life according to your own goals and ambitions.
7. Learn techniques that increase creativity and productivity.

I added some special exercises that would examine our individuality and our collective/community abilities to change those things around us that need to be changed.

The last exercise about teamwork, featured group of audience volunteers who became the Temptations and distributed applicable items that tie into the song “The Way You Do The Things You Do” as the song played in the background.

We ended the workshop on an upbeat as we stood up and clapped to the song “Hold on Change is coming” by the Sounds of Blackness.



## Active Fathers Cont.....

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- Help children develop morally.

Fathers, like mothers, help children to develop a sense of right and wrong that serves as a foundation for establishing moral character.

- Promote healthy gender identity in their children.

Boys and girls benefit from having healthy role models from both sexes.

- Helps their children learn life skills.

Most of the essential life skills that children need to survive are learned within the home.

- Play with their children.

Fathers and children who play together are developing their bonds. Fathers play with their children in different ways than mothers do. Fathers tend to use a more physical style of play, such as wrestling, that

offers a number of benefits to children, including enhanced cognitive ability.

Fathers help their children learn how to be healthy and productive adults. No doubt about it, children need their fathers. Make a commitment to be an active father. Your children need you!



## MHBP in 2006

### Current Events

- BHC has moved!! BHC will be located at the Women African American Center located at 3020 W. Vliet Milwaukee WI, 53208
- January is our bi-monthly MHBP meetings. Call Aretha at (414) 933-0064 ext. 212 to arrange childcare or transportation if you are planning to attend.



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