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OK, So Dads Make a Difference. This is News?

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The *Press-Enterprise* of Riverside, California is out with a big news flash — dads matter in the lives of their children. Sandra Stokley reports on the formation of “DADS,” a group dedicated to encouraging men to be more involved in the lives of their children.

The news story is nicely done, featuring the work of Robert Garcia, a father of three who is highly involved with his kids. From the story:

Garcia faces a 90-minute daily commute from Glen Avon to his job as a quality engineer in Costa Mesa. He also drives his three children to school every morning and walks them to class.

He makes it a point to be home at least three nights during the workweek to sit down to dinner with his wife and children. Family dinners on weekends are a given.

He taps into his vacation days so he can chaperone school field trips. He recently took a vacation day so he and his wife could take birthday cupcakes to his son's classroom at Pedley Elementary School.

And even on business trips, he fields calls from his children when they need help on their math and science projects.

For men willing to face the challenges that might block a healthy relationship, the rewards are enormous, Garcia said.

Robert Garcia is clearly a dad who loves his wife and children and is dedicated to being a father —not just a “male parent.” His commitment to his own family is admirable and his leadership in forming the DADS group is to be appreciated.

More:

In January, Garcia took over as president of DADS — Dedicated, Assuring, Devoted Special — a Jurupa-area group that promotes greater involvement by fathers in their children's lives.

Garcia and DADS members say the premise of the group is simple: fatherly involvement engenders personal fulfillment and pays big dividends for society as well.

“My research shows that if fathers get involved with their kids, they (the children) score higher on tests and stay out of trouble,” he said.

Since its incorporation last June, DADS has sponsored three events that organizers hope will act as a springboard to help fathers bond with their children.

“The reality is that fathers are role models for their sons and daughters,” said local businessman Tim Adams, who is one of the group's founders. “And you really see a difference in the attitude of kids whose fathers are involved in their lives.”

The importance of fathers to the family dynamic has been documented in numerous studies, said W. Bradford Wilcox, a professor of sociology at the University of Virginia and author of “Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands.”

“There is a real connection between fatherless households and delinquent and criminal activity on the part of adolescent males and young men,” Wilcox said in a telephone interview.

Fathers provide a template for their sons on how to handle difficult situations, conflict and frustration and how to interact with women, Wilcox said.

Daughters with involved and affectionate fathers are more apt to postpone sexual activity, Wilcox said.

Children in general benefit from seeing a father and mother treat each other with affection and respect, Wilcox said.

“It’s important in different ways for both boys and girls to have a father in the house who is modeling certain types of behavior,” Wilcox said.

The research is clear — fathers play a vital role in the formation of their children. The presence or absence of fathers, and the relative quality of the dads’ engagement with their children, makes a huge difference in the lives of both boys and girls. Professor Bradley Wilcox’s research is very revealing. Boys need to see dad as a role model for the man they should become. Girls also need dad, and it shows. Just look at the research.

The fact that *The Press-Enterprise* saw this as a news story worthy of coverage is very revealing in itself. We should appreciate the story. At the same time, it is sobering to reflect on the health of a society in which such a development ranks as news. Here’s the scoop — dads matter. Somebody call a press conference.

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