

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES UNITED NEWSLETTER



My Father, My Dad

Over the years I've learned how important it is for children to have dads in their life. Children grow up feeling more stable, secure and are more likely to be successful parents themselves when they have their dads in their life.

Children that grow up without fathers are five times more likely to live in poverty. A survey of teenage girls found that 76 percent said that their fathers were very or somewhat influential on their decision to have sex. When the father is absent in a teenage girls life, the girls tend to be more prone to have difficulties with relationships. Perhaps always looking for that "father figure" they never had.

My father left when I was 12 years old. Never saw or heard from him ever again. It was very difficult for me at that time although now I think maybe it was for the best. My father was physically abusive and perhaps maybe it was a blessing that he left. Things could have gotten much worse.

Years later my mom met my step-father and over the years he became my dad, He became the dad that I looked up to and went to for

advice. He's the one that I celebrated on Father's Day. He's the one that I couldn't wait to call to tell him about things that were going on.

He loved the outdoors and seeing different sites, especially the mountains. My dad had a stroke 20 years ago and it made it more difficult for him to travel or to get out to see those sites he loved so much. I was always eager to show him pictures that I took during my travels and trips to the mountains and he was always eager to see them and to ask questions.

In February of this year, my dad passed away of a heart attack. It's been difficult to not have him around and not to be able to share things with him. I would do anything if I could just talk to him one more time and tell him how important he was to me.

I'm grateful to have had him in my life and to have had someone to call "dad". We should all be so lucky to have "dad" in our lives.



*In Memory of My Dad,
Leroy Donley*

Written by: Denise Hoffman, FCU Member

Strengthening Families and the Five Protective Factors

Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors:

- **Parental resilience:** The ability of families to get through difficult and challenging circumstances, recover, and even grow from the experience.
- **Social connections:** A network of people who care, listen, share parenting values, and offer help.
- **Knowledge of parenting and child development:** A basic understanding of how children develop and what children need from their parents, as well as parenting skills and strategies for guiding children's behavior.

- **Concrete support in times of need:** Access to needed resources, including financial help, housing support, mental health or substance abuse services, health care, and more, through formal and informal supports.
- **Social and emotional competence of children:** The age-appropriate ability of children to understand and cope with feelings such as anger, happiness and sadness, and relate to others.

For more information on Strengthening Families and the Five Protective Factors: <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families>

Submitted by: Denise Hoffman, FCU Member

Families and Communities United (FCU)

Families and Communities United
Pennsylvania Child Welfare
Resource Center
403 E. Winding Hill Road

Phone: 717-795-9048
Fax: 717-795-8013
E-mail: dmh104@pitt.edu



Families and Communities United (FCU) advocates, educates, supports and empowers individuals involved with family service systems to be resources for themselves and their communities.

Families and Communities United (FCU) is a passionate group of family members and professionals working together to improve the lives of children, youth and families involved in the child welfare system and impact positive change within the child welfare system.

VISIT US ON THE WEB
WWW.FCU.PITT.EDU



“Working with children and families is truly a blessing”

What it means to me to be part of FCU

I asked our Families and Communities United (FCU) Advisory Board members, “What does it mean to you to be part of the FCU Advisory Board”? This is what I received from one of our members who works as a County Casework Supervisor at Dauphin County Children and Youth.

Working with children and families is truly a blessing and I feel we all should view it as a privilege. However far too often, and due to the complexities and challenges that come with the nature of this work, the family voice gets lost, community resources are overlooked or underutilized, and people work in isolation. FCU gives me the opportunity to not only hear and really listen to the family voice,

but also to ensure that whenever possible others have that same opportunity. I appreciate having the chance to not only be part of these conversations within my own county, but at the state level. It is our responsibility to ensure that whenever possible, we are making decisions that keep the concerns and needs of the families that we serve at the forefront and I feel honored to be a part of this process through FCU.

Written by: Sarina Bishop, FCU Member