

Super Summer Newsletter



STARFISH
FAMILY SERVICES



A Special Starfish Family Services Newsletter

Recognizing Fathers



A Note from the CEO



Our Mission:

Strengthening families to create brighter futures for children.

Our Philosophy:

We believe in the potential of all children and the power of healthy caregiver-child relationships to break the cycle of poverty and create long term positive outcomes for children.

Questions, Comments, Newsletter ideas?

We'd love to hear from you. Contact us at devdept@sfish.org

Dear Starfish Supporters,

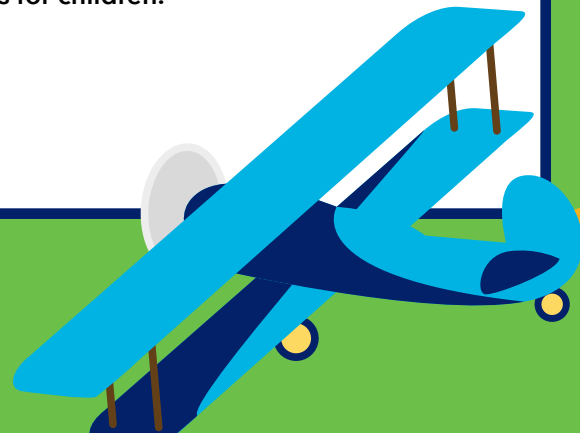
If you dropped by our offices on a school day you might be surprised to notice the many fathers carrying out drop-off duty. Kids in tow as they juggle backpacks and jackets, these fathers serve as a visual reminder that as a society we've left behind the notion that raising children is "women's work." Modern fathers are actively involved in every day child rearing activities.

At Starfish, we thoughtfully create programs that are designed to engage and support our fathers. We're glad to report that they are working. Our Starfish fathers attend play groups, parenting classes, fatherhood forums, and volunteer daily in our classrooms. They are an important, dynamic part of our community and encouraging proof that most fathers, regardless of socio-economic factors, strive to be present in their children's life. It's no surprise that research confirms that children with involved caring fathers have higher I.Q.'s, better social and emotional development, and better educational outcomes. It's imperative that we continue to advocate for programs that recognize and support fathers important role in the development of healthy children.

As we celebrate Fathers' Day this June we hope that you'll enjoy learning more about our spotlighted fathers and be inspired to continue to support our work strengthening families to create brighter futures for children.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann".

Ann Kalass
CEO



Summer Salutations

& Starfish Success Stories



Dante's Daughters

Dante usually has a trail of ladies following in his wake. Not surprising since he and his wife Rachelle have five daughters ranging from ages 5 to 13. He's a recent graduate of ProsperUS, a Detroit based training program dedicated to helping business owners. Working to build his business and a better life for his family keeps Dante a pretty busy guy. No matter how hectic life gets, Dante doesn't let that stop him from being an active father. He's a daily presence at

Starfish, dropping off and picking up youngest daughter Uriah. Never hurried, he helps Uriah and

her classmates hang up coats, change shoes, and get settled in for a day of playing and learning. The effects of his presence are easy to notice. Ms. April, Uriah's teacher experiences the benefits every day. "Uriah is our little helper. She's confident and curious and always willing to help the other children. You can tell that she has engaged parents." But the positive effects of his involvement extend far beyond his daughter. Ms. April notes that because he always takes an interest in all the children, helping them, asking about their day, she finds that they are particularly responsive to Dante. Keeping abreast of the classroom activities also allows him to continue Uriah's learning at home. Skeptical of the program at first, it took a visit to HighScope Headquarters in Ypsilanti and learning about the curriculum to win him over. The hands-on dad's efforts have been rewarded; all four of his youngest children have attended Starfish and all are advanced and doing very well in school.

"They were absolutely prepared for school. All are excelling at math. The teachers here did a really good job, and I think all kids should do an Early Head Start program when they can. It's a really big advantage."

Starfish Supporting a Father's Important Role

Most teen fathers want to play an active role in their child's life. However, relationship conflict with the mother and shame over financial constraints are common issues. Young dads may find it difficult to seek help for these issues and decide it's better to stay away. Earning these dads trust is the first hurdle to helping them become more involved in everyday child rearing. Recognizing that men typically like to bond by sharing in side-by-side activity, our Teen Fatherhood Counselor, Joshua Howard, can often be found shooting hoops, attending sporting events, and playing board games with teen fathers. Teen fathers more readily share their concerns on the playing field than they do in a clinical office setting. Joshua's easy going nature and genuine concern for the teens he works with make him very successful at creating trust and rapport with the fathers. As a son of teenaged parents, and young father himself, he can relate to the young men. And, also provide a living example that it is possible to have been a teen father and graduate college, find work you love, and be an everyday presence in your child's life.

Once, a month Joshua hosts Barbershop Talks, an event where fathers can share advice, parenting tips and encouragement while enjoying food, fellowship and a complimentary haircut. Men of all ages speak candidly on the challenges of fatherhood while Joshua moderates the discussion. Typically he has a specific topic planned, but the round table arrangement ensures it never feels like the young dads are getting a lecture, instead they are receiving an outlet and an opportunity to mentor and be mentored.

Joshua explains, "Men are looking for relationships opposed to programming. Barbershop Talks began as a strategy to figure out how I could get more young fathers to come out and receive assistance."

He lets the fathers know, "I can relate, I was in your place and in your child's place. I am here to support you."

Barbershop talks are held on the third Monday of every month at the Booker T. Dozier Recreational Complex in Inkster. If you'd like to attend rsvp to: jhoward@sfish.org

Determined to Dad

Meet Emmanuel Peters,
Starfish parent and Fatherhood Outreach Coordinator

How did you come to work for Starfish Family Services?

I was laid off from my previous job. I love spending time with my daughter so I started volunteering in her classroom. I saw how kind the staff are, how everyone cares about the entire family not just the kids in the classroom. I formed a bond with the "red room" teachers who suggested that I apply for the position. I applied three times before I finally got it. Each time I put in more effort and was more prepared. I did research, re-worked my resume, sought advice from staff, and had letters of recommendation. By the third time; I was ready.

Is persistence something you try to instill in your daughter, Emani?

Persistence and confidence. I'm 29 and just starting to feel confident in my abilities. Not having confidence held me back when I was younger. I don't want her to have that same experience.

How is Emani faring academically?

She's finishing her last semester with Starfish this June. Her mom, Antonia, and I are so proud of her. She scored a 97% on her entrance examine for the Foreign Language Immersion and Cultural Studies school in Detroit. Next year she'll be learning Chinese.

Best advice you have for new fathers?

You have to make sacrifices for your children. These sacrifices may not be easy, but will give you great joy at the end of the road.

Best reason to be an active involved father?

My dad wasn't around when I was growing up, but I remember how it felt to have older cousins and uncles who cared about me and loved me. I've been volunteering here at Starfish all year and now I work here, I see the impact it has on these children. When I come to the classrooms to talk and play with them, it just lights up their day. For me, fatherhood extends beyond my own children, I love all the kids and I hope to be a shining light in their lives.

How do you encourage other Starfish fathers to be more involved?

I try to encourage other fathers by being an example, showing them that it's ok to run around the playground, get dirty in the sand box or just sit down and have real conversation with them. I believe encouragement by words is a good thing, but leading by example is the best way.





...On Being A Dad

"Being a father is the best thing that could of happened to me, there is nothing better nor a better love than what I share with my kids."

- Aaron Caddell

"Let nothing stop you from being there for your children." - Gospel Okereke

"Put all your effort into building the character of your children now and you won't have to worry about their character as an adult."

- Andrew Crushon



The Father Factor

Research shows that children with involved, caring fathers:

- have better educational outcomes
- higher IQ's
- higher self esteem
- are more patient and can handle the stresses associated with schooling more readily than children with less involved fathers
- are less likely to live in poverty
- have better romantic relationships as adults





Please Donate Today!



Help us ensure that our children are provided with the childhood development programs they need for a successful start to school. And that our parents are engaged with programs that empower and educate them to become their child's best and most important teacher.

Visit us at www.starfishonline.org to make your donation. On behalf of the children and families you strengthen, thank you for your generous support of Starfish.

Starfish Family Services is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax deductible as outlined by IRS tax regulations.

