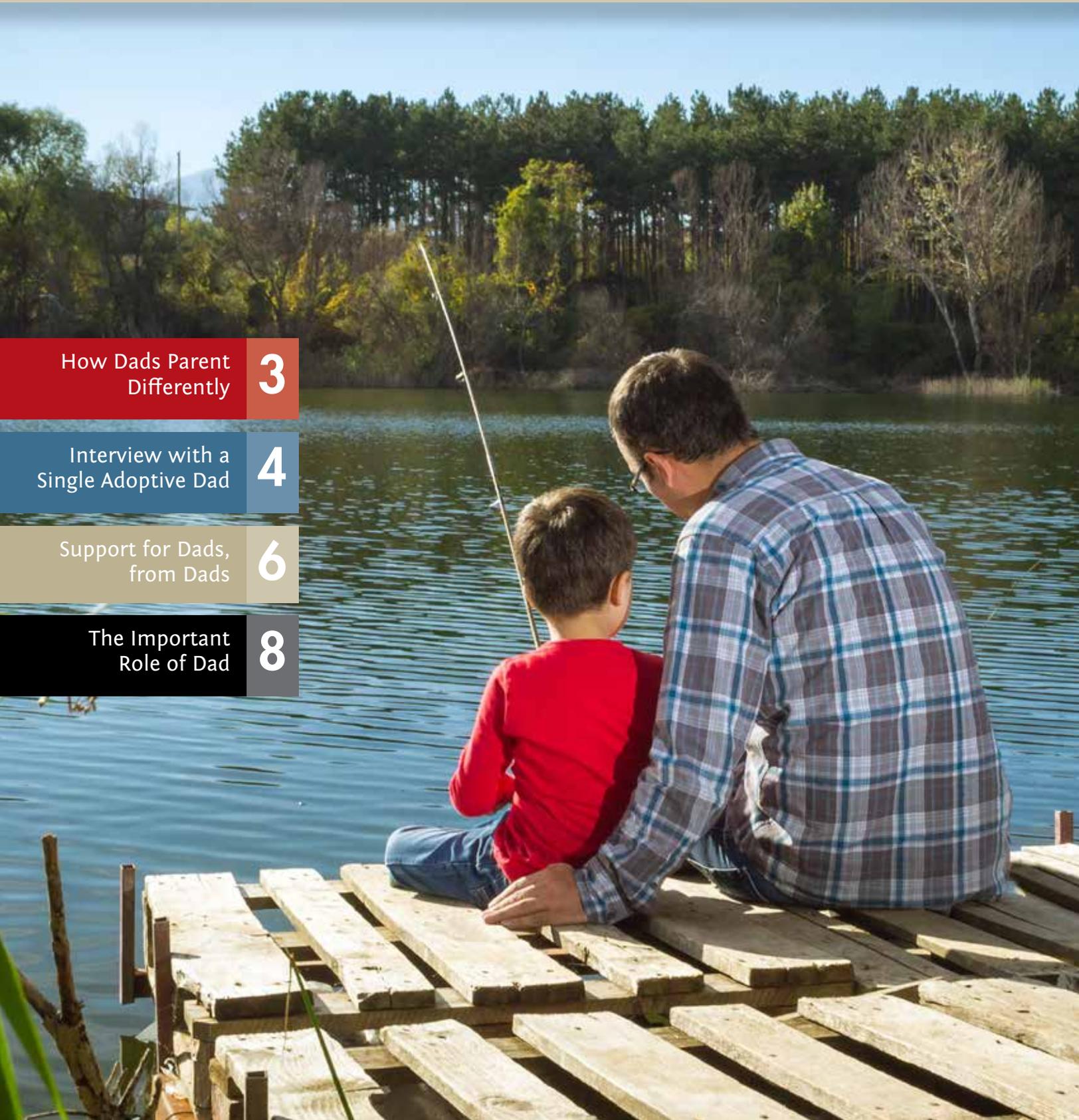




# PARTNERS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR WISCONSIN'S ADOPTIVE & FOSTER FAMILIES



How Dads Parent Differently

3

Interview with a Single Adoptive Dad

4

Support for Dads, from Dads

6

The Important Role of Dad

8



## FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

---

### Happy Summer Everyone,

As I write this, I am hoping that our weather is cooperating and that we have less cold rain and more sunshine and warmth.

This issue of *Partners* focuses on the theme of fatherhood. We wanted to write about this topic because we know that the significant role a father can play in the life of his children is not always discussed, and we want to acknowledge that men are taking on more and more active roles in the lives of children.

In light of the focus of this issue, I want to share the poem on the right with you.

As always, we hope the articles in this issue of *Partners* provide you with information and thoughts for further research and discussion. Please always remember we are only an email or phone call away. If we can't locate you what you need, we will work to connect you with those who can help.

Happy Father's Day to all of you who are working hard to play a significant role in the life of a child, whether you are a father by birth, foster care, or adoption, or an uncle, grandfather, brother, or mentor playing the "Dad-like" role. Helping kids strive, learn, and grow is the greatest extension of yourself you can give.

Best,

Oriana

### A Father's Wish - Author Unknown

*I may fail to be as clever  
as my neighbor down the street,  
I may fail to be as wealthy  
as some other men I meet,  
I may never win the glory  
which a lot of men have had,  
But I've got to be successful  
as a little fellow's dad.  
There are certain dreams I cherish  
which I'd like to see come true,  
There are things I would accomplish  
when my time of life is through,  
But the task my heart is on  
is to guide a little lad  
And to make myself successful  
as that little fellow's dad.  
I may never come to glory,  
I may never gather gold,  
Men may list me with the failures  
when my business life is told,  
But if he who follows after  
shall be manly, I'll be glad,  
For I'll know I've been successful  
as that little fellow's dad.  
It's the one job that I dream of,  
it's the task I think of most,  
If I fail that growing youngster,  
I'd have nothing else to boast;  
For though wealth and fame I'd gathered,  
all my future would be sad...  
If I failed to be successful  
as that little fellow's dad.*

Coalition for Children, Youth & Families  
6682 W. Greenfield Avenue  
Suite 310  
Milwaukee, WI 53214-3151

(414) 475-1246  
V/TDD (800) 762-8063  
Fax (414) 475-7007  
info@coalitionforcyf.org  
www.coalitionforcyf.org

*Partners* is published by the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, whose staff works to inspire, inform, and support individuals and families caring for children touched by foster care and adoption. The *Partners* Newsletter is written and compiled by members of the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families staff.

*Focus on the Father:*

# HOW DADS PARENT DIFFERENTLY



In every family, the relationships between each parent and child are unique. When it comes to dads, there are many benefits of a father's unconditional love. No matter what kind of family you have – a two-parent household with a mom and dad, a single father, or a two-dad home – a father's relationship with his children tends to look different than the relationship between a mother and her child. But both moms and dads can parent in a way that inspires independence and growth.

Fathers tend to be the parent who encourages a child to take more risks. They are the ones urging them to go a little faster, a little higher. This support and encouragement serves to strengthen a child's self-esteem and create independence. Just as important, is allowing your child to fail. At some point, they will try something they won't be able to do yet but, with Dad there to encourage them to try again, children learn resilience.

Fathers tend to engage in more physical play with their children. They wrestle or chase, become a scary monster or start a rough and tumble tickle fight. This kind of play teaches children their own limits. They learn when "enough is enough" and both boys and girls are less likely to be either overly timid or aggressive. Dads are the ones throwing the child in the air as they squeal "Higher!" unlike Mom, who can often be heard reminding everyone to "Be careful!"

Father and child relationships can also build special emotional connections. While it is true that fathers don't often use baby talk or emotional reasoning to communicate with their children, they form these bonds other ways. A father may be more inclined to tease or distract a child into starting or completing a task, such as getting ready for bed. Making it a game feels less confrontational than appealing to their emotions or love for parents to get them to comply. Fathers also tend to focus on more natural consequences. "If you don't share you won't have any friends," may be their warning, as opposed to, "not sharing may hurt someone's feelings."

As your child grows, you may need to get creative and explore different ways to connect with your children. Is your son is at an age where saying, "I love you" in public is a huge no-go? Dads are great at coming up with secret codes! Create and share a special handshake or a code word that means, "I love you" instead of saying the actual words. Stepping up to volunteer as a coach or at school is another way to show interest and support in all aspects of your child's life. There is no right answer to the question of how to build an emotional connection between father and child. Rather, it is simply important to find and pursue the ways that work for you.

# Interview with a *Single Adoptive Dad*

If we asked you to think of a single foster/adoptive parent, Anthony would probably be the last guy you'd imagine. He was a care-free, eligible bachelor who earned a good living and was about to become an empty-nester. He was an involved dad and a great role model, but not someone who ever imagined himself becoming a tireless child advocate. Shy and reserved, he was the kind of guy who liked to “fly under the radar.”

**Q: How did you get involved in adoption?**

**A:** It was really by accident. When my daughter was a senior in high school, she had a best friend who was at our house all the time. She found out she was pregnant and her parents put her out. My daughter begged me to let her stay with us full time. When the baby came, I found myself in the position of being a single dad trying to teach this young lady how to be a mom. In a weird way, this was an opportunity to get it right. I was young when I had my daughter, and I know I made a lot of mistakes. I found out I was pretty good at it this time around, probably because of those mistakes.

**Q: You adopted the baby?**

**A:** (laughs) No, no, no! The friend eventually went home, with the baby. But several people suggested I consider doing foster care. I checked into it and realized there was a huge need, especially for positive role models for our boys and young men.

**Q: So, you had a lot of support in your decision to foster?**

**A:** Yes and no. For every one person encouraging me, there were ten who thought I was crazy.

**Q: Why do you suppose that is?**

**A:** It was a combination of things. There were a lot of misconceptions about a single male fostering or adopting. A lot of people are suspicious of your motives when you're male, or feel that single men have no business fostering or adopting. There were also folks who thought I was crazy to be “starting over” when my daughter was about to be on her own. Then there were those who believed I didn't know what I was getting into.

**Q: Did you know what you were getting into?**

**A:** (laughs) No. Not really!

**Q: So why did you get into it?**

**A:** It sounds cliché, but it was an opportunity to make a difference. Too many of our kids are coming up without a male in the home. Too many young black men are dying in our streets. We have to do more than just go to the prayer vigils and shake our heads at the senselessness of it. We need to step up. I was raised by a single mom. She's the strongest woman I know, but there are some things only a father can teach his son.



No child in foster care “wants” to be with you. They want to be home. It’s our jobs as foster and adoptive parents to create “home” for our kids, whether it’s just for a short time or for forever.

**Q: How did you go from fostering to adopting?**

**A:** (laughs) I didn’t set out to adopt. I wanted to give kids a safe place, to teach these young men things that would help them move toward a good education, a good job. I wanted them to feel like they belonged, that they were a valuable member of our family so they weren’t out on the streets looking for that. Some of them were able to return home. Some weren’t. I was offering a home for as long as they needed it. Some just happened to need it forever (laughs). Adoption kind of happened naturally for me.

**Q: How many children have you adopted?**

**A:** I’ve fostered 29 kids, adopted three.

**Q: What has been the hardest part of fostering/adopting?**

**A:** (laughs) All of it! But honestly, some of it was just the everyday stuff. Our kids have a LOT of appointments. I learned to carry a planner and even posted a huge calendar on the kitchen wall. Until I started writing EVERYTHING down, I kept messing up on team meetings, therapy appointments, dentist appointments, IEP meetings, home visits, visitation schedules, basketball practice, parent-teacher conferences. It was a lot. And I learned the best way to get on your case manager’s bad side is to miss a dentist appointment (laughs).

**Q: What’s the biggest lesson you’ve learned as a foster/adoptive parent?**

**A:** That’s easy. I learned to take myself out of it; not to take things personally. That would be the best advice I’d have for someone considering adopting through foster care. There was a particular young man who, after being with me for

two years without issue, started getting into trouble. Serious trouble. One night we had a blowout and he shouted, “I hate you! I don’t want to be here!” It couldn’t have hurt more. I remembered once hearing, “If a child doesn’t want to be with you, it’s never going to work.” As much as it hurt, I figured it was time to let him go. The night before he was supposed to leave, he slipped a letter under my bedroom door. He apologized for disappointing me and said he understood why I wanted him to leave, especially after he’d “messed up so bad.” What? I didn’t want him to leave! It never occurred to me he was saying he wanted to leave because he thought it was what I wanted. And I was only willing to let him leave because I thought it was what HE wanted. I was too busy being up in my own feelings to remember what he’d been through. Thankfully we talked that night. I discovered he was ashamed he’d “disappointed” me and assumed I wanted him gone. A blood relative had given up on him for less. Our relationship became even stronger from that point on. It’s still hard for both of us to talk about what we’re feeling, but we no longer assume anything without checking it.

One other thing about that. No child in foster care “wants” to be with you. They want to be home. It’s our jobs as foster and adoptive parents to create “home” for our kids, whether it’s just for a short time or for forever.

If there’s any doubt about the impact foster dads can and do have, even with teenagers, Anthony reports his son is staying out of trouble and staying put. He will remain with Anthony when he starts technical college in the fall and says he hopes he can be the positive role model to the younger boys in the home that Anthony has been for him.



## Support for Dads, from Dads

A positive support system is essential for everyone. After all, we all need someone to lean on from time to time. This can be especially true for adoptive parents. And, for adoptive dads, there are times when connecting with another adoptive dad can make all the difference.

Simply put, there are times when no one knows what you are feeling, thinking, or experiencing better than someone who has been in your shoes. When adoptive dads can get together and connect with one another, they can share and learn from one another - and gain insight from one another's journey. That said, we also know that men and women very often find support in different ways and from different sources. What may be beneficial for Mom, may not be as helpful for Dad.

We see a lot of support groups - both online and in person - that are targeted to moms. And there are often advertisements for several different kinds of "Mom's Night Out" events. But what about dads? Where can they seek support and connections with other adoptive fathers? Some dads may jump at the chance to take part in a similar "Dad's Night Out" event, others might not feel as comfortable in that kind of setting.

Support can take many forms; what is most important, is finding what works for you. Below is a list of some broad ideas that may help get you started.

- Stick to the everyday stuff. For some dads, simply being around other adoptive dads is helpful. Maybe that means getting together at someone's home for pizza and beverages. But it might also be a pick-up basketball game or household projects worked on together.
- Reach out to others within your community of faith, if you practice a certain religion.
- Plan or attend a special event for other adoptive fathers to relax and unwind. Perhaps something like a sports outing (you can often find discounted tickets for a group) or a summer barbecue.
- Attend training opportunities. In a gathering of adoptive parents, it's easy to find others who are sharing this particular journey. Reach out to the other dads you see at such events; perhaps a meaningful and supportive friendship will form by doing so.
- Attend events with your local PARC (Post Adoption Resource Center) to meet other adoptive fathers and form vital supportive connections.
- Volunteer to be an ambassador for a local child-placing agency to help other pre-adoptive fathers who are starting the adoption process.
- Create or join a social media support group - There are several out there to choose from! Some are specifically for moms, but others are for both moms and dads. If you find a group that feels like a good fit, join and be active.
- Create or join a local support group for adoptive fathers - You can find [a list of support groups](#) on our website. But it is possible that what is currently available may not meet your needs. You might consider creating a new group for adoptive dads. We have [a tip sheet](#) that may help you as you create this group, and we would be happy to help you spread the word when you're ready to share!

## RESOURCES

### Tip Sheets

<http://postadoptccyf.org/Resources/Tip-Sheets>

- [Somebody to Lean On: Connecting with or Creating a Support Group](#)

### Additional Information

- [The Involved Father \(Focus on the Family\)](#)
- [The Role of Fathers in Childhood Development \(Harvard Extension School\)](#)
- [The Importance of a Father's Involvement \(Parents\)](#)
- [The Role of Fathers with Daughters and Sons \(Parents\)](#)
- [The Important Role of Dad, by Dr. Gail Gross \(Huffington Post Blogs\)](#)
- [The Role Model Crisis \(Father & Child\)](#)
- [It's Not Just Boys Who Need Male Role Models \(The Telegraph\)](#)
- [Why Positive Male Role Models are Vital to a Child's Development](#)
- [The Importance of Male Role Models \(WPRI News\)](#)
- [The Importance of Positive Male Role Models \(3 Pillars Project\)](#)
- [The Importance of Positive Male Role Models \(First Things First\)](#)
- [Blog: Single Dad Laughing \(About adoption, as well as parenting in general\)](#)
- [Blog: Mr. Dad \(Not adoption related, but resources for dads\)](#)
- [Blog: Confessions of an Adoptive Parent \(Faith-based\)](#)
- [Blog: Designer Daddy \(LGBT parenting topics\)](#)
- [Adoption – From a Man's Viewpoint, Obviously \(Bald Daddy Blog\)](#)
- [Adoption Diary: A Father's Story \(The Guardian\)](#)
- [Water Fights and Grown-Up Talk: How Dads Do It Differently \(Live Science\)](#)
- [Why Dad's Parenting Technique Can Be Better \(Parenting\)](#)
- [How Dads Parent Differently Than Moms \(Life of Dad\)](#)

### Library

- *And Tango Makes Three*, by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (children's book)
- *What About the Dads?*, by K. Malm, J. Murray, and R. Green
- *Birth Fathers and Their Adoption Experiences*, by Gary Clapton
- *Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers: A Collection of Poems*, by Mary Ann Hoberman

# THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF DAD

By Jade Johnson

I remember the days of my childhood when I learned about tools and how to fix things from my dad. I was often his shadow and loved going to check on the cows, helping him fix fences, and do many other farm chores. I also remember a special project we worked on together when I was older, fixing a boat motor. We took it apart, made several trips to the store for parts, put it back together (properly eventually) and got it to run again. I remember feeling proud about learning something new and being able to fix that motor and getting it running again. I also remember the feeling



of being connected to my dad, that we had shared something together as father and daughter, coming together with a common goal and interest. Those memories are especially comforting and continue to help me feel close to him since he is no longer with my family. I inherited my dad's blue eyes, his hair color, his sense of humor, and a sometimes stubborn nature—things no one else could have given to me.

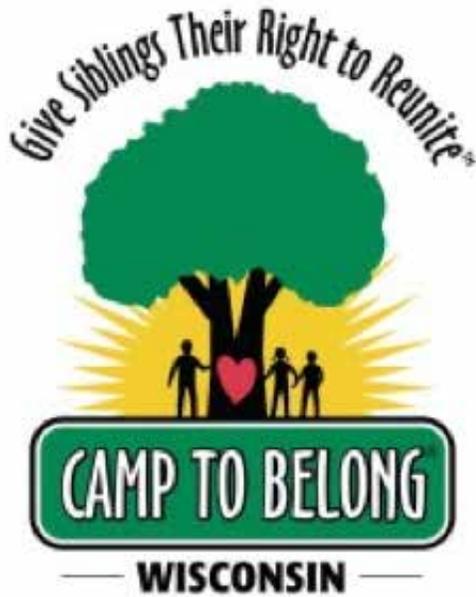
My dad wasn't the only important man in my life when I was growing up and into adulthood. I am lucky to have had two grandfathers I was able to spend quality time with, a step-dad who has helped me move (more times than I can count), an uncle who taught me how to fish and bait a hook, and the fathers of a few close friends who helped to guide and influence the person I became. All of these men helped shape the adult I am through their guidance, discipline, and support. These wonderful men played an important role in my life and helped me learn new things, step out of my comfort zone, and helped give me a sense of confidence and self-worth.

The makeup of the modern American family has changed a lot over the last several decades. We see more families where both parents are working outside of the home, or where Dad is the stay-at-home parent. There are increasing numbers of families headed by single parents or same-sex parents. And more and more families are blended or formed through a combination of birth, foster care, and adoption. No matter your family's makeup, having a positive male role model as a part of your child's life may provide connections and bonds that will be very important throughout their lives.

A quick Google search can provide several studies and articles that speak to the important role dads play in the lives of their children. Many will even stress the importance of involved and engaged dads. Children with engaged fathers or father figures have been shown to have greater academic success, fewer conduct problems, better self-esteem, and lower levels of depression. In addition, these children have a greater likelihood to grow into adults that have greater career success, longer lasting relationships, and increased ability to manage stress. There is no doubt that the roles that both moms and dads play are important for children.

Dads do not even need to live in the same household in order to have a positive impact on a child. Today's technology has made staying connected easier than ever for families. And, for those families that are led by single moms or by two moms, or for the times when a father is unavailable for other reasons, other men might be able to help fill the role of role model. The important thing is that they are emotionally connected, spend time together, and help out with everyday tasks.

Whether it be from my grandfathers, my uncles, my step-father, and the others I mentioned earlier, I have gained so much from having a positive male role model around. For your family, that might be a male relative. Or maybe there is a coach, teacher, neighbor, or mentor with whom your child shares a special connection. Fathers of friends or connections made through programs like Big Brothers, Big Sisters or others at your child's school or within your faith community may also provide a positive connection – and make an important impact – for your child or children.



**This camp is designed for brothers and sisters who have been separated in the foster care system, by adoption, or other out-of-home placement.**

**Camp to Belong-Wisconsin is a six-day/five-night summer camp that reunites brothers and sisters who have been separated by the foster care system. Children 7 to 21 years of age are able to attend camp with their siblings to have fun, strengthen connections and create life-long memories together.**

**Where:** Camp Anokiji in Plymouth, WI

**When:** August 13-18, 2017

**How:** Caseworkers, parents, or foster parents can send an inquiry email to [registration@ctb-wi.org](mailto:registration@ctb-wi.org). The email should include contact information for the person making the inquiry. The referral deadline is June 30, 2017.

Once a referral has been made, you will be contacted by one of the Camp Directors or a member of the Camper Selection Committee to discuss the sibling groups' eligibility for camp. If approved, an application for camp will be issued at that time.

Additional Information: Camp fees are \$500/camper. We have full scholarships available. If your sibling group is approved, we ask for your assistance to provide camper fees through state or county funds, or other types of contributions. We will work with you to identify funding sources.

For further information, please visit <http://www.ctb-wi.org/>



**Coalition for Children,  
Youth & Families**

6682 West Greenfield Avenue  
Suite 310  
Milwaukee WI 53214

T/TTY 414.475.1246  
FAX 414.475.7007  
TOLL FREE 1.800.762.8063  
[info@coalitionforcyf.org](mailto:info@coalitionforcyf.org)

**Family of websites:**  
[coalitionforcyf.org](http://coalitionforcyf.org)  
[wiadopt.org](http://wiadopt.org)  
[wifostercareandadoption.org](http://wifostercareandadoption.org)  
[postadoptccyf.org](http://postadoptccyf.org)

An umbrella of services over foster care and adoption; information and referral; recruitment; training, education and support for families and professionals.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>President</b>	Dennis Krakau	Associated Bank
<b>Secretary</b>	Richard Larsen	Community Volunteer
<b>Treasurer</b>	Steve Lilly	Cortina Asset Management
<b>Past President</b>	Lawrence Burnett	Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren SC
	Joan Bruce	Community Volunteer
	Ross W. Draegert	Community Volunteer
	Tameica Greene	Community Volunteer
	Charlie Holmes	Kohl's Department Stores
	Maria Kreiter	Godfrey & Kahn S.C.
	Thomas W. Lacy	Robert W. Baird Co.
	James Madlom	Mueller Communications
	Bruce Miller	National Insurance Services
	David Osswald	Miller Coors
	Troy Peterson	HY Connect
	Michelle Reed	Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin
	Tom Richtman	U.S. Bank
	Joseph Rock	KPMG LLP
	Jennifer Schiellack	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
	Lauren Schudson	Marketing & Communications Consultant
	Robert Stubbe	Madison National Life Insurance
	Mark Volz	Tri City National Bank
	Joseph Wall	U.S. Department of Justice
	Cyd Walters, CPA	C.L. Walters, Inc.

## STAFF

Oriana Carey, Chief Executive Officer
H. Monte Crumble, Director of Administration & Finance
Shannon Malnory-Silbernagel, Director of Development
Tiffany Meredith, Director of Programs & Quality Assurance
Diane Behm, Resource Specialist
Amy Bottin, Project Coordinator
Libby Budde, Resource Specialist
Jenna Czaplewski, Communication & Development Coordinator
LoriAnn D'Acquisto, Training Coordinator
Cindy Diaz, Program Support Specialist
Mai Her-Lee, Program Supervisor
Jade Johnson, Lead Resource Specialist
Nikki Talakowski, Resource Specialist
Julie Wallace, Resource Specialist

© Coalition for Children, Youth & Families 2017