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# Calling all dads: Be involved

## Class designed to foster father-son ties

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

When a young male commits a crime on Covington's east side, whether it's a petty theft or the murder last month of James Clowers allegedly by 17-year-old Howard Evans Jr., the neighborhood's leaders have a pretty good guess the teenagers involved don't have fathers at home.

To help combat this growing problem, several groups have banded together to offer an eight-week class called "Fathering: What's It All About Daddy?" The class is a program designed to help deepen father-son relationships.

"There was some surveying a little over a year ago to see what kind of things would be a benefit for the population. Fathers not being present or participating in their family's lives and their children not getting benefit of their role modeling was seen as a top issue," said Rev. Richard Fowler, executive director for OASIS, a community service agency.

ADVERTISEMENT National statistics support the conclusions of the Covington survey. The National Fatherhood Initiative reports 34 percent of children live absent their biological father and that "children who live absent their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents."

"We want to help fathers develop relationships with their sons, experience the joy of being a father and assume that responsibility," said Fowler.

The classes are sponsored by OASIS, the Eastside Neighborhood Association, Northern Kentucky University, the Human Rights Commission, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, and Covington Independent Schools.

The program is funded by a \$1,650 Fatherhood Initiative mini-grant from the Community Collaboration for Children.

"There's really a commitment on the part of the volunteers and the trainers involved to making this both a fun event for dads and sons as well as educational and really gearing it to what the father's needs are," said Karen Tapp, NKU's director of University Training Consortium who helped with the original survey and applied for the program's grant.

"It's a work in progress. We want it to be fun so they can feel free to express things. Then we can come back together to find the best ways to have a support group for these fathers," said Bennie Doggett, president of the Eastside Neighborhood Association.

"We're asking whoever has an interest in a male child - an uncle, cousin or whoever is playing a role - we're asking them to attend because we know that some fathers might be unavailable or incarcerated," said Doggett.

The class will be Thursday nights beginning Feb. 23, 6-9 p.m. at Ninth Street Baptist Church, 231 E. Ninth St., Covington. Contact Rev. Richard Fowler at (859) 441-5348 to register. Walk-ins are welcome. A meal will be provided each night of class.

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