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A newsletter for fathers and families of children with special needs.

A Great Time at the Fathers Network Conference

Our 2016 annual conference was held on October 8th at Tyee Middle School in Bellevue. There were eight wonderful breakout sessions with topics ranging from *Get the Most from Your Active Play Time* to *A Parent's Journey to Advocacy* to *Understanding Your Insurance*. As always the Big Time Daddy Award was presented. This year the award went to Sugely Sanchez and her husband Eddie Sanchez, who is a long time Network member, for the work they do, not just in the Network, but out in the community to support fathers and their families.

Of course, the highlight of the day was having the dads spend time getting to know each other. And, three of the dads that we all got to know much better were those who were on the dad's panel, Martin Sarmiento-Blaha, James Hall and Burke Stansbury. Each provided a very impactful story and I want to thank them once again for being willing to share that story with everyone.

This was my first Network conference and I now understand why dads speak so highly of it and why dads come back year after year. If you haven't been I hope we see you next year.



The Network Website Has Been Updated

In case you haven't seen it lately take a look at the Network [website](#). It went through a major update in late September. In an effort to attract more dads the focus of the website is on dads who are not familiar with the Network. Someone looking at the website will find a detailed description of what we do, information on the Network leadership, contact information for the various chapters, our blog entries, information about our events, testimonials, other dad organizations we are affiliated with and a joint activities calendar for all the dad organizations. Under the About Us tab our recent video can also be found.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the website please send them my way. And, please share the website link with others, I think it's a great marketing tool for us.

Legislative Forum Draws a Big Crowd and Powerful Testaments

In case you didn't attend, I want to recap a bit of what happened at the November 21st legislative forum held at the Doubletree Hotel in Southcenter. The forum is put on by the King County Board for Developmental Disabilities and the Arc of King County. In attendance were 21 state legislators, 6 state legislative staff, 3 Congressional staff, the WA State Director of Early Learning, King County Executive Dow Constantine and 550 audience members.

They were there to listen to the 14 people who came to tell their story related to the following legislative recommendations:

- Young Children Need Birth-to-Three Early Intervention
- The Unserved and Underserved Need Equitable Access to Services
- Families in Crisis Need Locally Based Crisis Stabilization and Planned Respite
- Young Adults Need Employment Services
- People with Disabilities Need Stable and Equitable Community Based Residential Services



And, to the 6 people who told their story related to the following principles and values:

- Child Care
- Behavior Supports and Training
- Inclusion
- Living Independently
- Community Life
- Language Access

It was a powerful evening full of impactful and moving stories. Hopefully these stories and the strong audience turnout will positively influence the legislators on the importance of these issues as they vote and allocate funds. If you haven't been to the forum and it's something that you can fit into your schedule I'd recommend it for the people you'd meet, the stories you'd hear and for the show of support you'd give. The forum is held at the same location every year on the Monday just before Thanksgiving.



Looking for Stories of How the Network Has Positively Impacted You

The Washington Department of Health, who funds the Network, is asking for stories of how the Network has positively affected the life of you and/or your family. These are not stories about how wonderful the Network is but stories that address the following:

Situation: What was the situation before you found the Network

Response: How did you find the Network and why did you stay connected?

Outcome: What has changed as a result of belonging to the Network?

I know there are many stories that would describe individual success related to membership in the Fathers Network. If you would, I'd appreciate it if you'd tell your story. It doesn't have to be long and I'm hoping this wouldn't take too much thought or effort, I suspect it's a story that you've told on many occasions. Stories can be sent to me at louis.mendoza@kinding.org.

Quick Bits

YMCA Bellevue Special Needs Respite Pilot Program

The mission is to provide a safe, wholesome environment for special needs individuals, allowing parents some time to address other family and personal needs. The program is targeted for middle school aged participants, there is no cost and it is not necessary to be a Y member. The last pilot session will take place on Saturday, December 17th from 3:00-6:30 pm. Contact Daniel Astudillo at dastudillo@seattleymca.org or 425.746.9900 to ask questions or to register.

Boy Scouts Look for Input on How to Best Serve Families with a Child Who Has Special Health Care Needs.

The Boy Scout [Chief Seattle Council](#) is looking to hold community conversations with families. Meetings are currently being planned for early next year with the Bellevue, Shoreline and Highline school district special needs PTAs. As meetings dates and times are firmed up they will be posted on our website blog and Facebook page.

Network Alum Starts the Colorado Fathers Network

Christopher Cady, who used to attend WA State Fathers Network meetings has moved to Colorado and started a Fathers Network there. He's currently developing a video much like the one we created earlier this year. Since he's just starting out the number of dads he has to draw from for photos and quotes is small. If anyone would like to help Chris by sending him a photo or quote please contact him at christopher.l.cady@gmail.com to get more information on exactly what he needs.

Ellensburg Chapter Getting off the Ground

Robert Truex, who used to attend Network meetings in Yakima is creating a chapter in Ellensburg. If you know of any organizations in the area that serve families that have children with special health care needs, please contact Robert at truexr1986@gmail.com

Bellevue and Bothell Dads Meet Over Dinner and Drinks in Kirkland

Now that chapter meetings have stopped in Bellevue and Bothell, a group of dads have started meeting, once or twice a month, over dinner in Kirkland. Please contact James Hall at jamesjeunes@yahoo.com for information on meetings dates, times and place.

Next Year's Campout

Just a quick reminder to save the date for our annual campout in Anacortes over Father's Day weekend next year. Next year those dates would be June 16-18.

Connecting to Other Dads on Social Media

If you're looking to connect on social media with other dads two sites to consider are Kindering Dads (for current and alumni dads of Kindering Center) and P2P Dads of Special Kids. Both are closed Facebook groups so you have to ask to join.



The mission of the Washington State Fathers Network (WSFN) is to promote fathers as crucially important people in their children and families' lives. We firmly believe men are superb resources for each other and fathers have special needs of their own when it comes to raising a child with chronic illness or developmental disability.

WSFN, a program of Kindering, is funded by the Office of Children with Special Health Care Needs Program - Washington State Department of Health, grants, and private donations.

