

# the Sprout

News from Forty Carrots Family Center

SPRING 2004

## Forty Carrots Reaches Out To & Recognizes Unique Role Of Fathers

**Fathers enrich the lives of their children. Children enrich the lives of their fathers.**

It's this simple, but guiding truth that fuels Forty Carrots Family Center's *Father Inclusiveness Project*.

"We've come a long way since the days when the traditional role of father was provider and protector," said Forty Carrots' Co-Executive Director Diane Weiss. "Today, fathers play an immeasurable role in the lives of their children."

Indeed, Weiss said, it's the very differences in parenting styles between mothers and fathers that make them unique and provide children with the broader set of skills they need to solve problems and grow into healthy, well-adjusted adults.

Fathers help teach little boys how to be men and fathers. They teach daughters how to relate to men and help foster their sense of self-respect, dignity and future relationships. Fathers usually play a little rougher with their children, in ways that stimulate risk taking and independence, and reinforce valuable lessons in self control, discipline and respect for rules.

Unfortunately, at a time when society is finally recognizing and celebrating the contributions of fathers, more children than ever before are awakening each morning with no father in their home (and often in their

lives), said Mark Perlman, a local parenting educator who authored the Nurturing Father's Program, now taught in 650 programs across 47 states.

The number of children living apart from their biological fathers has more than doubled, from 17 percent in 1960 to more than 50 percent in the year 2000, mostly due to the higher rate of divorce and children born out of wedlock, he said.

The situation in Sarasota County is even worse, Perlman points out. The divorce rate here is 60 percent – 10 percentage points higher than the national average.

And in Florida, birth records reveal that 39 percent of women giving birth are doing so out of wedlock. Again, the rate is six percentage points higher than the national average.

"Those two statistics, taken together, make up the key ingredients in the crisis facing families and fatherhood today," Perlman said.

"Because of those two factors, more children are distanced from their children and more children are growing up without a father than ever before."

Although Forty Carrots is known for its sensitivity and success at reaching out to oft forgotten parenting groups – aunts, uncles, grandparents, guardians, foster parents – the staff is stepping up efforts this year to reverse the disturbing trend facing fathers.



Randy Salser and Annabelle



Tim Moloney and Michael

Recently, the organization invited Perlman to join in a creative retreat to help assess the center's "father friendliness" and brainstorm new ways to encourage father involvement.

And thanks to a \$3,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, some of those ideas will be implemented immediately, including new library collections of special interest to fathers, updated classroom materials that recognize the special role of dads and two new annual events, Donuts with Dads (a morning get-together for fathers and their preschoolers) and a special Dads Night Out with Perlman.

The retreat also renewed Forty Carrots' commitment to offering ongoing programs and classes for men, particularly some in the evenings to accommodate busy work schedules.

At least twice a year, they also host Perlman's Nurturing Dads classes, a 13-week program that helps men rethink what they learned from their own fathers and develop new, more nurturing ways to parent their kids.

After spending time with the staff, Perlman said he knows why Forty Carrots has such a "tremendous and well-deserved" reputation in town.

"Forty Carrots offers one of the most progressive parenting programs

Research indicates that children whose fathers are involved in the upbringing of their children demonstrate greater intelligence, math and verbal skills, self esteem, and relationship skills. Sadly, however, statistics show that 70 percent of white children and 94 percent of black children will live apart from one of their parents before they reach the age of 18.

Continued on page 2

## Center Director An Advocate & Role Model For Single Parent Families



Ashley Randall with her children, Tali & Oliver

When Ashley Randall helps plan Forty Carrots' special events with fathers, like Donuts with Dad, she does so with a cheerful smile but a knowing heart. Because for every child who excitedly pulls her father through the center's doors, Ashley knows there will be many others staying at home.

Children of single parents ... her own among them.

"It's never easy, but I just try to be aware of other families like us who don't have fathers in the home,"

said Randall, Director of Forty Carrots Parenting Programs and a single mom raising two young children, Natalia (Tali), 10 and Oliver, 3 1/2.

No one is perhaps better equipped than Ashley to be an advocate for those families. She has both the training and unfortunate experience to deal with life's unanticipated twists and turns.

From an unexpected pregnancy in college and a marriage shaken by a husband's spiraling mental health

problems, to overcoming poverty and homelessness, Ashley at age 31 has been through more challenging life circumstances than most people twice her age.

She was just 20, barely through her second year of college when she discovered she and her college sweetheart would soon be parents. Although she knew it would be a challenge to finish school, they married, confident in their love and aspirations, that they could finish their

Continued on page 3



## Directors' Letter

This issue of *the Sprout* is dedicated to fathers, VIPs in their children's lives. Too often, people equate the word parent with mother and consider fathers as occasional babysitters or mothers' helpers. At Forty Carrots we know that both fathers and mothers contribute to the development of their children. A father's contribution is immeasurable ... fathers have a unique way of playing with, caring for, and communicating with their children. Research is clear – children benefit from a healthy relationship with their father, or a step-father, adopted father, uncle, grandfather, neighbor, or coach – a male figure to provide love and nurturing care from a male's perspective.

In recognition of the significance of fathers, Forty Carrots offers a number of special programs designed with them in mind, including:

- A 13-week **Nurturing Fathers Program**, in collaboration with Children First and The Nurturing Dads Initiative
- **Desserts With Dads** in each preschool class
- **Evening classes and lunchtime seminars** to address the interests of fathers and accommodate their schedules

Over the years we have seen an increasing number of fathers become actively involved at Forty Carrots – reading stories before drop-off, greeting their little ones at pick-up time, taking tours of our Center, enrolling in parenting classes, attending parent-teacher conferences, and more. It's clear that fathers are not merely mother's helpers; they are VIPs – very important parents – and loving it!



In celebration of fathers everywhere...  
this Sprout's for you!

*Betsy Kane-Hartnett* *Diane Weiss*

Betsy Kane-Hartnett  
Co-Executive Director

Diane Weiss  
Co-Executive Director

## Grant & Foundation Support 2003-04

Bank of America Client Foundation/Julius Brandenburg

The George J. and Alice Pugh Fund and the Hilda Gold Fund for Children and Youth Services of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County

Florida Winefest & Auction

Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice

Sarasota County Government Grant-In-Aid Program

Wilson-Wood Foundation



Thanks to a \$63,650 grant from The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, Forty Carrots has been able to extend its series of free parenting education classes this year to silently at-risk families at three South County libraries – Jacaranda, North Port, and Elsie Quirk – and the Venice Presbyterian Church Early Learning Center. Last year, nearly 900 families with children under age 5 throughout Sarasota County participated in *Partners in Play*, a unique play-based Parenting Education program in which Forty Carrots Parenting Educators provide information on child development, positive discipline strategies and a variety of parenting issues throughout the play experience.

## Unique Role of Fathers — continued from page 1

I've ever seen," Perlman said. "They've really embraced this father initiative, just as they have programs that meet a host of other family needs. They truly are all about growing and developing children, and to do that, they focus on the family, whoever that family may be."

Benefiting from all that outreach are dads like Wally Dandy, who are redefining what it means to be a good father. A busy health care executive balancing the demands of work and home, he and his wife Maria are raising two young sons, Matthew, 3, and Cole, 1 1/2.

Dandy said the insights and parenting strategies shared by the staff at Forty Carrots have allowed him to let go of old disciplinary practices he learned from his own father and adopt new ones that provide a more rewarding relationship with his family.

"Before we enrolled Matthew in Forty Carrots' preschool, all I knew is what I heard growing up from my own mom and dad ... 'get away from that stove, get off that table, stop that right now ...,'" he said. "They were good parents in the traditional fashion of that time, but not the kind of parent I wanted to be."

So, rather than demanding blind obedience from his children, Dandy has learned how to dissect and address the source of his sons' anger or frustration. In general, he finds, there's few problems that can't be solved by

a little more 1-on-1 time, whether it's rolling around on the floor with them, taking them to the park or letting them clamber atop his lap for a good read.

"No matter how busy life gets, I make it a priority every day to spend quality time with my kids," he said. "I'm not trying to be a hero or a super dad ... One day, I just want to hear my sons say, 'I want to be just like my dad.'"

Studies by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reveal that 45 percent of parents who end their marriage do so within the first five years of the child's birth; about 15 percent of these parents end their marriage within 18 months of their child's birth.

The results can be tragic. Further research shows that children whose fathers are not involved in their lives are two to three times more likely to:

- Perform more poorly in school or drop out
- Become involved with drugs
- Become pregnant in their teens
- Become delinquent or behave aggressively
- Suffer from depression or commit suicide

## Join these generous donors and buy a piece of our future



Amicus Foundation, Taber & Celeste Chadwick, Betty & Marvin Danto, Kim & Charles Githler, Dan & Elita Kane, Janet & Stanley Kane, Betsy & John Kane-Hartnett, Graci & Dennis McGillicuddy, Jennifer & Laurence Saslaw, Tillie Jennie & Harold Schwartz Foundation, The Tarr Charitable Family Foundation, Diane & Robert Weiss, Edward & Ida Wilkof

## Corporate Partners

Thank you to our Corporate Partners for sharing our vision and supporting Parenting Education throughout the year



ABEL BAND  
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW

ABEL, BAND, RUSSELL, COLLIER, PITCHFORD & GORDON, CHARTERED



# Finally A Father ... It's Never Too Late

No one knows better than Taber Chadwick III how important a father is in the life of a young child.

At 42, after struggling for decades with deep-seated feelings of loss and abandonment, Taber is striving to be the father he once dreamed of and making peace with the one he grew up without.

Perhaps that's what makes him such an important member of Forty Carrots' board of directors. He brings to the table what many men realize only after a lifetime of fathering and grandfathering ... that nothing is more important than sharing your life and love with your child.

"I try not to dwell too much on those early years ... it can still make me cry," said Taber, reflecting upon his parents' abrupt divorce when he was just 5, and the days he spent sobbing under his bed, feeling such intense heart break and sadness it hurt him inside.

"It's a very painful part of my life ... but I'm not ashamed of those feelings. It's what made me the man and father I am today."

Shortly after the divorce, Taber's father remarried and made a new home with his wife that did not include Taber and his sister. His father settled in Chicago, while he moved with his mother and sister to Ohio. The children tried to fit into their father's new life, but the relationship became strained and the visits less frequent. Eventually, Taber said, the phone calls stopped too.

All that remained was the occasional letter, birthday cards and Christmas gifts. He still has the box of letters his father sent him, but the number is small compared to the stacks Taber sent his father, and none of his father's notes address the hurt and anger Taber expressed throughout his adolescence.

It would be nearly two decades before Taber spoke with or saw his father again. Over the years, he learned to tamp down those negative feelings, and warmed under the affection and guidance he got from frequent visits to his maternal grandfather's home in Florida. His grandfather showered him with the only love he ever felt from a man, and served as the young boy's mentor as he struggled to understand what it meant to be the "man of the house."

It was that bond Taber shared with his grandfather that prompted his move to Florida in 1980 and helped instill in him the strong family values he has today.

"I lived for those visits with my grandfather," Taber recalled. "He was everything a man should be: open and honest with his feelings, fun loving and kind. He really knew how to make you feel special."

While his mother's and grandfather's love was important, it was the feelings he tried to deny for his distant father that would spur him on to professional success. He always knew that one day he would face his

father again, and when that day came he wanted to be ready.

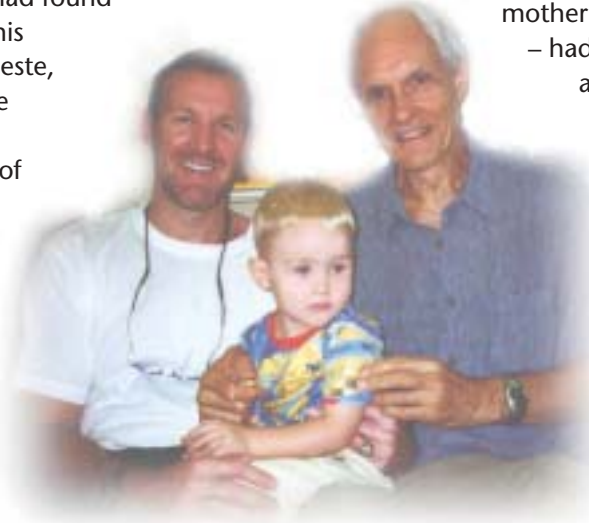
That day came on Father's Day, 1997. At age 35, Taber had built a successful estate jewelry business, he had found and married his soulmate, Celeste, and they were preparing to start a family of their own.

Before bringing a child into the world, however, Taber knew he had to heal the one still hurting inside.

So, he invited his father for a week to Cape May, NJ – a place his father most enjoyed with his son before the divorce. Barely more than strangers, the two men did little but talk for the next seven days. Never able to share his feelings with the younger Taber, Taber's father finally opened up to the older, more insistent son.

"It was a very important step for me in the healing process," Taber said. "I needed to know who my father was ... and I needed him to know and accept who I was."

Today, Taber reflects back on the past decade with a sense of fulfillment he never expected to feel. When his own son was born nearly four years ago, the two people most important in Taber's young life – his mother and grandfather – had already passed away. But in their place stood his own father, ready to hold and nurture his first grandchild. And after years of uncertainty, Taber was glad to pass on the family tradition and name his son Taber IV.



Three generations of Chadwicks

Recently, Taber sold his business so that he could spend more time with his son during the formative years. As a father, his biggest worry is that he will suffocate him with all the pent-up emotion still simmering inside.

"I want him to have everything I didn't as a child," said Taber. "I don't mean toys and fancy schools. Education is important, but more than that I want him to grow up knowing his parents love him and that, no matter what, they will always be there for him."

## Ashley's advice for talking to children about their single parent family:

- Follow the child's lead. Often we are surprised by children's questions and statements, but frequently they are just the place to start a conversation about your unique family. Point out how everyone's family is different and that there is no right way for a family to look.
- Answer questions simply and honestly.
- Establish routines and rituals that strengthen your family and provide predictability, as well as connection for your children (i.e. Saturday morning breakfast, or an after school story time).
- Leave adult feelings for adult conversations. Whether the child support is late or some legal matter is making you steam – as challenging as it is – it's important to allow kids to be kids and keep adult issues separate.
- Talk about feelings regularly.

## Single Parent Families — continued from page 1

education and make a happy home for their baby.

Then life threw her its first curve ball. Just weeks after the birth of their daughter, Tali, the demands and pressures of fatherhood began taking an unusual toll on Ashley's husband. He began suffering bouts of anxiety and depression, episodes that gradually lengthened from hours and days to weeks and months. The downward spiral made it difficult for him to continue his schooling, and more importantly, help support the family financially.

With a nursing infant, Ashley did what she could to carry the load, but the former nanny and preschool teacher found her employment opportunities very limited. The family, who lived in California at the time, moved frequently in an attempt to find more affordable housing, but for a time, wound up homeless, relying on friends to provide a roof over their heads.

"Those first years were very intense," Ashley said. "Talk about the cards being stacked against you. We had to adjust not only to the added expense and pressure of caring for a baby, but the uncertainty and confusion surrounding mental health issues."

By the time Tali was 6, both Ashley

and her husband had completed masters' degrees (Ashley's in Family Relations and Human Development), and life seemed to be back on track. Although her husband still suffered at times from bouts of depression, it appeared to be under control, and together they made the decision to have a second child. Three weeks after Oliver's birth, however, fatherhood became too much for him again.

He left and never came back.

It's been almost four years since her divorce and the feelings Ashley felt that first year as a single parent have made her keenly aware of what many other families also face. She and the children moved to Sarasota to live with her mother, and Ashley began the difficult process of answering Tali's many questions about life without dad in the home.

Father's Week at her daughter's school and the school's annual Fall Family Picnic were difficult on Tali and on her. Although her natural instincts told her to stay home where it was safe, Ashley put on her teacher's hat and began reciting the words and wisdoms she had shared with so many struggling and at-risk families over the years to her own children.

"I knew if I kept looking at my family as if it was broken, my children

were going to feel that way too," she said. "I didn't want them to ever think that because their father was not with us, they were somehow less than the families around us."

Today, her children realize that single parent families can be happy and intact. Oliver is still young enough to be content with the occasional toy car he receives in the mail from his dad. As for Tali, while she may long at times for a full-time dad, she no longer lets father-daughter day drive her to tears. Instead, with her mother's encouragement, she has begun writing letters to the organizers of those events, recommending ways they can be more sensitive and responsive to families like hers, and to kids like her best friend, whose father died this year.

Indeed, Oliver and Tali have become Ashley's motivation to advocate for families, in all their diversity.

"That's why when we plan Dessert with Dads at Forty Carrots, we also plan Muffins for Moms and Family Week, to celebrate not just fathers, but also mothers and grandparents, aunts and uncles, or friends close to the family," Ashley said. "It's about bringing everybody together, not holding up one and letting the others fall."



NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 229  
MANASOTA, FL

Forty Carrots Family Center  
1500 South Tuttle Avenue  
Sarasota, Florida 34239  
941-365-7716  
Fax 941-952-1711  
www.fortycarrots.org

SPRING 2004

News from Forty Carrots Family Center

# the Sprout

## Thank you to our many sponsors

### carrotcakes 2004

Linda Roe Dickinson, Broker-Associate	Practical Car Rental
Michael Saunders & Company, Licensed Real Estate Broker	Premier Orthopedic & Injury Center
Bank of America	Sarasota Pawn & Jewelry Co.
Corvus International	Shoppers Bazaar Mall
abc7, WWSB	The Steinwachs Family
Abel/Band	Vineyard Brands
Anchor Builders	Wall Street Live For Youth
Bert Rodgers Schools	The Law Office of Steven T. Wittmer
Fleet Bank/Private Clients Group	1st Health Medical Group
Gecko's Grill & Pub	A-1 Professional Employer Group LLC
Hat Shack	Dr. & Mrs. Tom Arne
Insurance Benefits Consultants	Dr. John C. Babcock, D.D.S.
The Jemison Family	The Chu Family
Krouse & Crane, D.D.S.	The Eyre Family
Luhrsen & Walsh	Gold Coast Eagle Distributing
Graci & Dennis McGillicuddy	The Kane-Hartnett Family
The Met	The Pitchford Family
Oasis Outsourcing	Turner Tree and Landscape
	Lee Wetherington

## carrotcakes 2004: Sea the Possibilities

### A Friend- and Fund-Raising Success

Any way you look at it – as a fundraiser or a friend raiser – *carrotcakes 2004* was an utter success! The auction alone raised a total of \$75,000; the event netted about \$100,000 – an all time high for Forty Carrots' annual fundraiser. Three top bidders – Jenny & Ken Pendery, Jayne & Ron Gelbman, and Lynn & Tim Morris – won dinners with long-time friend of Forty Carrots, Chef Joe, for a total of \$7,500. Two rival bidders – Nora & Billy Johnson and September & George Dramis – both won a week at Betsy & John Kane-Hartnett's Napa Valley home for a grand total of \$9,000. Auction Chair, Amy Christensen, sent husband Stu home with an adorable Goldador puppy, while she and Event Chair Beth McGregor and her husband Tom kept working until the wee hours of the morning.

The success of *carrotcakes 2004* was thanks to the dedication and hard work of the carrotcakes committee and to the generosity and support of our donors and attendees.

If you missed *carrotcakes 2004*, don't miss out on *carrotcakes 2005*... scheduled for March 18, 2005. Mark your calendars now!

### Thank you to Forty Carrot's Board of Directors 2003-2004

Taber Chadwick III	Tammy Karp	Keily Salser
Kim Githler - CHAIR	Mimi Klein	Diane Weiss (ex-officio)
Nora Johnson	Nancy Liss	Richard Williams III
Stanley Kane	Graci McGillicuddy	Meg Wittmer
Betsy Kane-Hartnett (ex-officio)	Jan Pitchford	

