



August 1st 2008

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Family Ties

Family First Comes Together To help Homeless Families

Girls and boys, on a Friday night are sure to be out with their friends catching a movie, hanging together, eating out, just goofing off as kids do. But not the kids of Family First, who on Friday, April 18th met with their fathers in the prison Visiting



Room to work on a charity event for the Union Gospel Mission (UGM). Organized by the incarcerated men, this evening focused on helpfulness and putting together care bags for homeless people who arrive at the UGM. Prior to the event Family First fathers raised funds and petitioned local organizations for item donations. Over \$1,400

was donated and used to purchase toiletries, hygiene items, infant care items, toys, and non-perishable food. Over 1,500 items were brought into the Visiting Room prior to the event.

At the event the children and fathers first painted and decorated a portion of the 150 denim care bags that were donated by the Prison Blues Garment Factory. Family First kids are a group of kids who love to be creative and they did some amazing work on these 12 x 12 x 6 bags that will be enjoyed by whoever receives them. The families also combined Mary Anne Radmacher's donation of inspirational artwork





with their own art to create small “hope” posters for the care bags.

After the painting, Donna Armstrong, the Outreach Coordinator for UGM, delivered an engaging presentation to all the families. She explained UGM—how it helps homeless people with programs, clothing, food, and a place to sleep. She also spoke of the importance of helping others in need and how we live in a society where we have lots of stuff, but there are many people who struggle and need assistance.

Kids got to answer her questions about what homeless people face, their needs, and how we can help. It’s always great to see kid hands shoot up in the air ready to answer tough questions.

The third part of the evening was spent working to fill the bags. Each family took the denim bags, the shopping list, and shopped through the many tables overflowing with items for the bags. We had enough items for four types of bags: children’s, mother’s, women’s, and men’s, with each bag receiving between ten and sixteen items. It was a flurry of activity as families raced back around for more bags, turning it into a fun family competition.

With all of the bags filled, families then sat down and worked on a “Helpfulness Workbook” that the fathers prepared prior to the event. This booklet allowed fathers to talk with their children about the evening’s events: homelessness, helpfulness, charity, work, thinking about others, and how they can help.

These kids learned a lot about a tough part of life and showed just how awesome they are with their creativity and hard work. Things haven’t been easy in their own lives. It’s easy to conjure up images of children who have lived the trauma of losing a loved one to incarceration—the lonely sitting child with a tearful face, faced with an array of statistics that portend socioeconomic problems, and quite possibly, future encounters with the criminal justice system, but these kids aren’t going for that! These kids are healing and growing and becoming incredible people with talents and a desire to help others. These kids are amazing and they did some amazing work for UGM.





EVENT SPONSORS

Bi Mart
Ross Dress For Less
OCE Prison Blues Garment
Factory
Wal-Mart
The Wordshop (Mary Anne
Radmacher)
Beaverton Foursquare Church
Judy Babcock
Rose Rivas
Ernest Rivas
Christina Torres DC
Tanya Snider



UGM CARE BAG ITEMS

Baby Blanket
Baby Bottle
Baby Powder
Baby Wipes
Card Games
Carry Bags
Chewing Gum
Coloring Books
Combs
Cookies/Crackers
Crayons
Denim Bags
Inspiration Poster
Lady Speed Stick
Lotion Ultra
Raisins
Rattles
Razors
Tampons
Shampoo
Soap
Socks
Stick Deodorant
Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Toys
Travel Cup w/Lid
Washcloths



Scrap Booking Brings Families Closer

While most Family First events have a definite purpose with a structured itinerary that helps families learn to grow together, some events are meant to be free flowing and unstructured. In February we held our scrap booking event with the intent that families come together simply to spend time together doing a family activity. Children brought photos from home and spent the evening with their fathers designing pages for their family



scrap books.

We have found that this event, although unstructured, is one of the most rewarding for families. Working together on a creative project removes the stressfulness of the prison environment and creates a family atmosphere where a healthy dialogue can occur. This cannot be underestimated in a place where one-on-one time is scarce and close-by distractions are many. Normal visits can be overcrowded, loud, adult focused and unappealing to a child. Swap this out for some arts and crafts and some alone time and these kids open up, enjoy themselves, and experience family time. Fathers report that during extended times of being together combined with an activity allows them to approach and deal with deeper issues surrounding their incarceration or problems that their children are experiencing. This event gives fathers great opportunities to utilize parenting skills learned in their Parenting Inside Out class. Consistently we've found that this basic element - time together in shared activity - provides the best opportunities for depth and growth in these relationships. We feel that where we can build positive memories is the same place we can build healthy families. This recurring scrap booking event has consistently provided this forum



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Family First Hosts Dinner To Raise Funds

Family First members hosted an Enchilada Dinner at OSCI in February.

Over 150 inmates at OSCI who have demonstrated clear conduct for an extended period were allowed to attend the dinner. We prepared enchiladas, taco salad, burritos, and for dessert: ice cream sundaes. Everyone overate but it was a real treat to eat great food and raise money for Family First. The money earned at this event will be used for future Family First events.



Chaplain Farris Plans to Retire

Family First started in December of 2005 with just a few families and a lot of hard work. Chaplain Doug Farris was instrumental in this developing program with his ideas of family and constant support. Most certainly, without his work, Family First would not be up and running as it is today.



We found out recently that he is planning on retiring sometime this summer and we would like to take the time to thank him for everything he has done to make Family First as great as it is. He brought his beliefs of the importance of family to Family First and has continually pressed us to be good men in or children’s lives. He has worked to make every event powerful in the building the relationships between

incarcerated fathers and their children. He truly believes that families hold the primary key to men succeeding in life, and that parents hold the primary keys to children succeeding in life. We are thankful for his teachings and his dedication to Family First. We expect to see him regularly but his daily presence will be missed

Care Giver Appreciation Dinner

In December Family First hosted its Second Annual Caregiver Appreciation Holiday meal. Fourteen families were in attendance with children and fathers working together to honor and serve the caregivers a full meal of ham, turkey, and all the trimmings. This is always an amazing event as for some of the children, it is the first time for them to sit and eat a meal with their fathers.



In addition to preparing the meal, we were able to gift beautifully crocheted shawls to the caregivers. These shawls were crocheted by men here at the prisons that are part of the crochet program, and by Karen Bennett with her wonderful team of ladies. We really appreciate all the late hours they put into making them.

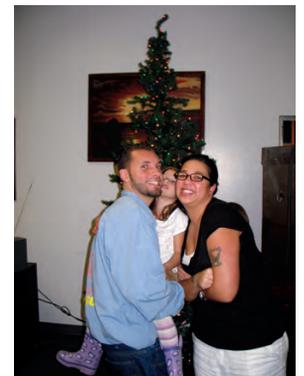
This year we made Christmas a part of the event. After dinner families worked together to paint Christmas ornaments and hang them on the Christmas tree in the Visiting Room where they were displayed throughout the holidays. Being away from our families, especially during the holidays, can be stressful. With this event families in attendance enjoyed quality time with their loved ones that transcended their current situations. It was an event to be remembered.



“This is always an amazing event as for some of the children, it is the first time for them to sit and eat a meal with their fathers.”



For the wonderful people who continue to care and tend to our children - wives, mothers, grandmothers, foster parents - we are grateful, and having the Appreciation Meal allows us to demonstrate this appreciation.





A Proud Father by Tim Willard

I have a 15 year old daughter who is a freshman in high school. Jennifer enjoys playing sports and is currently playing club tournament volleyball while also playing multiple



positions on the freshman softball team. Jennifer has recently been practicing with the varsity softball team and will be playing in games with them as the season progresses. She enjoys school and currently has a 3.6 GPA that she thinks is too low but for which I am very proud of her. Jennifer is interested in learning a second language and is currently taking Spanish this year and plans to continue through out her years in high school. Jennifer has also taken on the added responsibility of summer work by getting a part time job working for a local veterinarian. She has earned her drivers permit this year and as I hear it, is doing very well in learning to drive. Jennifer also enjoys scary and action movies. She has many talents and unique qualities that make her a wonderful young lady. I believe she may also hold the current world record for text messages sent in one month. However, I am most proud

“She is proof to me that no matter what the obstacles a person faces, they ultimately choose the person they will be.”

Tim
Family First
Dad

of the person that she has grown into despite the obstacles she has had to face, the hardest of them may be dealing with an incarcerated parent while growing up. Jennifer has managed to

to over come that and has developed in to a positive, happy & caring young adult. She is proof to me that no matter what the obstacles a person faces, they ultimately choose the person they will be. I am more proud of her than she may ever know and I love her with all my heart.



Meeting in the Middle

by William O. Walker II

When Mykela was a baby she would crawl to me wherever I was and put her arms up (her way of saying "pick me up Daddy"). I never grew tired of carrying her around; there was something about her that calmed my soul. I remember when I taught her to walk. All I had to do is hold her hands and walk in her opposite direction. Sure enough she tried to follow and before we knew it she was walking on her own.



When Mykela was 2 years old she would accompany her Mom to pick me up from work and she would stare out of the window knowing that Daddy was about to show up. As soon as she saw me, her face would light up and she would slap the window to get my attention. Once I got into the car I would give her my undivided attention, but it wasn't until we arrived home that I could see just how much she missed her Dad.

I would always step out of the car at the end of the driveway to retrieve the mail while they pulled into the garage. As soon as Mykela was out of the car seat, she would put her new walking skills to work and prove, once and for all, that walking leads to running. She would take off down the driveway (in that awkward

way that only a toddler can) with her arms stretched out in front of her, a perfect loving smile, and the biggest beautiful brown eyes you've ever seen.

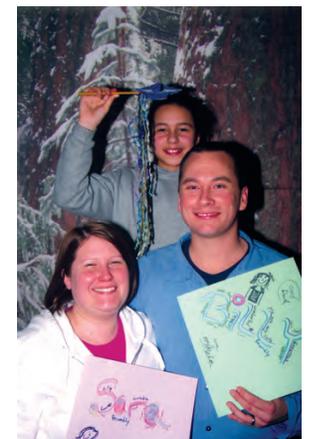
I remember being scared that she could fall, so I would run to meet her. She would always jump toward me just short of her goal, so I would swoop her up just in time. My reward..... A ton of baby kisses, light slaps on the face and the kind of hugs that can only be given by someone that loves you more than anything in the world.

Now that she is 12, she no longer runs down the driveway or jumps into my arm. But her face still lights up when she sees me; she still hugs me like only she can; she looks to me for wisdom and she shares her concerns with me. But most importantly she still trusts me to catch her when she jumps.



"Mykela shares her concerns with me, but most importantly she still trusts me to catch her when she jumps."

William
Family First
Dad



We meet in the middle, and find happiness there.



“What an awesome blessing it is to be the father of two great young men.”

Gary
Family First
Dad



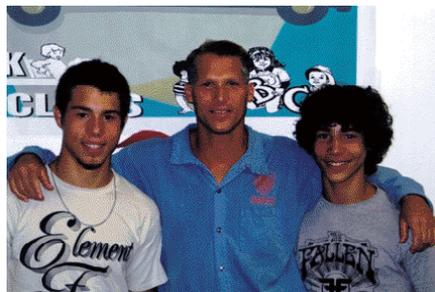
The Blessings of Fatherhood by Gary Babcock

What an awesome blessing it is to be the father of two great young men like Noah and Meshach. It seems like it was just yesterday when they both entered this world, and now they are teenagers, Noah 16 and Meshach 15.

I have a lot of fond memories of both boys when they were little, each one having brought me numerous moments of laughter and joy in their own unique way. Meshach for instance was the kid that continuously made messes with food in his high chair. You know the bowl of soup over the head routine. Noah on the other hand was the one who loved to play in the bathtub for as long as you let him, singing and laughing while playing with his favorite toys.



When the boys were a little older I remember going on walks with them at the University of Northern Florida. The trails there meandered around a large lake that was full of wildlife, namely gators. The boys



and I would play a game where we would pretend the gators were chasing us, and we would run as fast as we could to escape. Sometimes I would create a little space between myself and the boys and then take off running. They would often scream at the top of their lungs, “Daddy, Daddy!” Once they caught up, they would cling to my leg with all their might. After it became apparent that no gators were in sight, I would pry them

off my leg and they would beg for more. I can't see being able to pull the gator trick off on them any more, but I look forward to creating more fond memories with them in the near future.





“She will always be my baby girl, no matter how old she is.”

David
Family First
Dad



“I am very proud of my sons. They are chips off the old block”

Eric
Family First
Dad

The Opportunities We Are Blessed With

by David Liggins



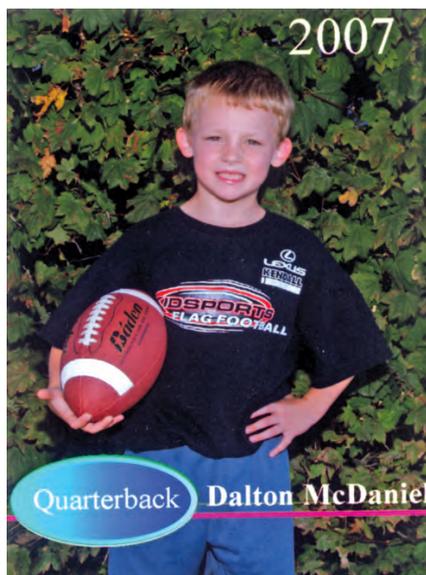
As the years have passed I've watched my daughter Treasure grow and become a young lady. I often think back to the time when I first got to hold her. I couldn't hold her while she was awake because she didn't know me, but when she was asleep, she

was all mine and I treasured that just like her name. Due to the opportunities that Family First has provided us we have grown closer as a family in spite of our current situation. I am no longer a stranger in my daughter's life. Now, I am her Father, friend and role model and through love and dedication I plan to live up to all three of these roles.

Star Athletes

by Eric McDaniel

Congratulations to Dalton and Bryson McDaniel on their successful year as All Star athletes. At age 8 and 5 they have shown great skill in their positions as they continue to lead their teams to victory. We look forward to seeing them play next season.



Kaylee's Show Dog

by Tyson Fortner

Kaylee is eight years old and one of her favorite activities is to show her Boston Terrier at dog shows. Kaylee began showing her Boston terrier when her Grandma introduced her to the hobby a few years ago. The only dog that Kaylee shows is a female Boston terrier named Treasure who turns two years old in October.

At such young ages Kaylee and Treasure have had a lot of success at their adventures. When I asked Kaylee how many ribbons Treasure and her have won she replied, "so many that I can't remember". She thinks somewhere between fifteen and twenty.

Kaylee and Treasure have competed well at their shows. With a total of seventeen points and two majors, Treasure has earned the status as a champion of her breed. For a Boston terrier to become a champion they must earn no less than fifteen points and two majors. Points are awarded to dogs for earning first place in different categories. A first place score in the dog's weight class will award one point and earns a chance to compete in the Best of Breed Class. Winning a Best of Breed Class potentially earns three points. This is a difficult and high honor in a show.

Kaylee and Treasure are best of friends. Kaylee says Treasure is a sweet dog and for such a small stature, isn't afraid of much, although she is afraid of the noisy vacuum cleaner. Even though she is small, Treasure is protective of Kaylee and she whines when Kaylee is not around.



she's happy with ribbons and points. Before we finished our interview I asked Kaylee what she wants other kids to know about showing dogs;

"Sometimes you have to have a perfect dog so you win more. At first it is really scary. You have never seen a situation [with all those people watching you] like that, but eventually you get used to it and then [showing] becomes really fun. You've got to remember you don't always win."



"You've got to remember you don't always win."

Kaylee
Family First
Child





“I am a better person just being part of their lives.”

Jason
Family First
Mentor



Such A Joy by Jason Corey

I haven't any children of my own, but there are three boys that I have a strong bond with. Let me share a little about each one.

The oldest is Pherson and he is 9 years old. He is a bright, funny, and caring person. He is currently involved in baseball and piano, and he is good at both. He loves to play music for people and he wanted me to bring in a piano so he could play for Family First. He enjoys watching movies, and playing with his friends, and he enjoys beating me in cards.

The second is named River. He is 3 years old and is so full of energy. He is all over the place and into everything. He is curious about books and likes to look at the pictures in them and have you read to him. He really likes Goofy in the Disney books. He likes to follow his bigger brother around and do what he is doing some times, and he likes to hang around his mom getting all her attention, and maybe some sweets to eat. For his age he is a smart little fellow.



The smallest is named Eitan and he just turned one. He is the cutest little guy and he has this way he can get me to give up my last animal cookie to him. He has me wrapped around his little finger. He is now starting to walk on his own now all over the place. He loves to play patty cake, and be sung to. All three boys bring such joy to my life. Just spending time with them enriches my life. I am a better person just being part of their and their parents lives. I am considered a part of their family, and I have learned a lot from being around the boys. I hope I am able to have a positive influence in there lives as the years move ahead.

Mi Familia by Eddie Sepeda Sr.

My family is everything to me and as time passes, our love will only get stronger and stronger. Yes we will have our struggles, but being a family will get us through the hard times together. A strong family is what I have always prayed for and a strong family is what we have become. Through the good and the bad we are family.



Mi familia es todo para mi. Mientras crecemos juntos, mas fuerte nos ponemos. Si vamos a tener nuestras batallas, pero siendo familia, saldremos adelante juntos. He orado por una familia fuerte Y una familia fuerte es lo que somos. En las buenas y las malas, somos familia.

Watching Them Grow by Brian Mikesell

Sam and Gina have both inspired me in many ways. They are both very smart and have great attitudes about life. Seeing them makes me feel alive and full of joy.



They have taught me to focus on what is really important in life. I feel very blessed to share a life with the both of them as the special bond between father and daughter is priceless.

There are days when they are the only thing that keeps me going and their laughter and the smiles on their faces bring great joy to my life. I am really looking forward to seeing the both of them grow into beautiful young ladies. They make me so proud to be apart of their lives and I love them both very much.



“Through the good and the bad we are family.”

Eddie
Family First
Dad



“The special bond between father and daughter is priceless.”

Brian
Family First
Dad

Current Family First Members

- Gary Babcock - Family: Noah, Meshach, Ken & Judy
- James Burkett - Family: Taimane, Tavita, Mizzy & Tenisha
- James Clark - Family: Tyler, Eileen & Kim
- Jason Corey - Family: Clarrisa, Pherson, River, Eitan & Clarissa
- Daniel Dukes - Family: Danielle, Micah & Christian
- Tyson Fortner - Family: Kaylee & Family
- Gerald Greenwood - Family: Hope & Angela
- Kevin Gregory - Family: Alicia, Skylar & Denise
- Victor Herrera - Family: Victor, Adam, Alisha, Joseph, & Nathaniel
- David Liggins - Family: Treasure, Javan & David
- Eric McDaniel - Family: Bryson, Dalton & Cheryl
- Bryan Mikesell - Family: Sam, Gina & Tracy
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- Eddie Sepeda - Family: Emilio, Eddie Jr., Nathaniel, Carlos, Angela & Allysa
- William O. Walker II - Family: Sara & Mykela
- Timothy Willard - Family: Sue & Jennifer



Bobby Bunny, By Usagi Conejo

<p>Mom and I are going to see my dad. We go about two times a week.</p>	<p>My dad lives in a jail. We have to stop and tell the man in the tower that we are here to visit my dad.</p>	<p>Mom and I have to walk through a machine that beeps if she forgets to remove her car keys from her pocket. It's funny.</p>
<p>At first this place was strange, but now I can usually find a kid I know, and I've made some good friends.</p>	<p>Hey there's Jimmy. Our dads are friends too. Sometimes Jimmy and I team up and play dodge ball against our dads in the playroom.</p>	<p>Mom always gets snacks but, we always wait for dad before we open them.</p>
<p>Sometimes it seems like we have to wait for dad forever, but...</p>	<p>It's always worth the wait, and my favorite time of each visit is when I see him enter the room and I run to him.</p>	<p>I love you.</p> <p>My dad tells me that it doesn't matter where I am or what I've done, he'll always love me. And I feel the same way about him.</p>





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Jeff Holloway
Michael Meehan

Volunteers And Contributors

Tanya Snider
Volunteer

Don MacLeod
Mardie MacLeod
Volunteers

Karen Bennett
Crochet Program

Dan Wells
Volunteer

Beaverton Foursquare Church

OSCI New Horizons Club

About Family First

Family First is a Department of Corrections family program at the Oregon State Correctional Institution that is dedicated to strengthening the relationship between children and their incarcerated fathers. This unique program is directed by the OSCI Administration.

Superintendent Gary Kilmer has established a comprehensive vision that incorporates the importance of family relationships with regards to rehabilitation, recidivism, and raising healthy children.

Assistant Superintendent Carla Tupou over sees Family First with support from Religious Services and the Recreation Department. She, along with dedicated OSCI staff, work with inmate coordinators to organize structured events in the Visiting Room that provide a forum for family growth.

If you have questions or comments, would like to contribute or enlist, or have ideas you would like to share, please contact Carla Tupou or Kelly Rath.

