

# "Working to Keep Fathers and Children Together"

## EQUAL PARENTS FOR CHILDREN, Inc.

Rochester Region Chapter of the Fathers' Rights Association of NYS, Inc.

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January 2009

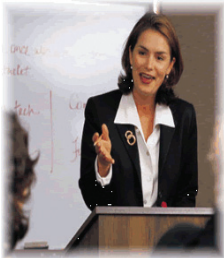
Monthly Bulletin

EPC Vol. 21, #1

### SAVE THE DATE

Monday, January 5

*A discussion with Susan Horwitz, Ph.D. on issues surrounding Domestic Violence*



*Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Family Medicine  
Division of Family Programs*

*University of Rochester Medical Center*

*Trainer, Family Therapy Training Program, Family Programs*

#### **Research: Domestic Violence**

Dr. Horwitz has taught family therapy seminars and clinical practice in the Family Therapy Training Program at the University's Medical Center since 1988. She has extensive experience as a family therapist, is a consultant to school districts regarding family issues and mental health concerns for students, and provides custody evaluations for the courts. Dr. Horwitz heads a team of therapists who screen and assess partner violence. She heads up the Partner Violence Intervention Project in the Division of Family Programs, which has two missions: community education (primary prevention) and intervention research.

There is the possibility that John Murtari may also attend and speak about his recent jail experience.

**7:00 – 9:00 PM  
Super 8 Motel,  
1000 Lehigh Station  
just off Rte 390**

### OUR MISSION

*To promote meaningful relationships between children and both parents regardless of the parents' marital status*

## fathers & parenting

### WHERE ARE THE FATHERS?

Our communities are asking that question since more children are dropping out of school, becoming parents at a young age and even dealing with ever-increasing violence.

Unfortunately, the general perception is that many fathers are deadbeats or absent from the family by choice. While there are men who fall into those categories, they do not represent the majority. And those who are absent from their families are not all deadbeats.

Several factors may be keeping them out of their children's lives. Main among them in New York state is the absence of legislation requiring the courts to award shared parenting rights unless such an arrangement is proven detrimental to the children. Custody and visitation rights are the biggest obstacles keeping fathers from participating in their children's lives. The problem begins when, for whatever reason, the parents fight over child custody. A simple solution is what is known as "shared parenting": The mother and father share equal custody and time with the children. In cases of shared parenting, child support becomes the equal responsibility of both parents. And both parents are equally recognized by the law as the legal guardians.



According to the Children's Rights Council, only six states — Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin — have legislation that promotes equal access to both parents. If more men were granted shared parenting rights, then we wouldn't be asking where these fathers are. While many may argue that many men either do not want the kids that much or are only going into a shared parenting arrangement to get out of paying support, it is a very weak assessment. If any parent who enters into a shared parenting agreement fails to adequately support or care for the child, this agreement can be rescinded at the judge's discretion.

Most studies have proven that shared parenting is in the best interest of the child and leads to better development of a child's social and educational skills. While it is true that it is hard being a single mother, it is just as hard being a single father. Men have to deal with trying to pay their own bills while in many cases having half their take-home income taken for support. Support is based on a percentage of your gross income, so it can have a more crippling effect on the dad's finances. Men in this situation often have to work more hours or take on another job just to make ends meet, and doing so limits their ability to spend time with their children.

When are we going to try something different?

Give the fathers who want more time with their children an opportunity to have it. Adopt shared parenting.

- Timothy Johnson

(full article available at [www.equalparentsforchildren.org](http://www.equalparentsforchildren.org))

## LAST MONTH'S SPEAKERS

The December meeting of the EPC welcomed Karen Hinchey, Resource Coordinator for the Monroe County Family Court, and Joanne Guarnere, Senior Probation Officer.

The two speakers discussed the types of orders of protection: Refrain, which allows for interaction between the parties, and Stay Away. They mentioned that there has been a marked increase in the last few years of filings for Stay Away orders to protect pets. They spoke of a "Domestic Violence Consortium composed of many groups and it was suggested that the EPC might apply for membership. Both speakers seemed to agree that there are no safeguards against false accusations in their court, and no penalties for lying. They believed that penalties for perjury exist only in the criminal court. They spoke of no "guilt or innocence" proclaimed in the DV court, only "findings." They said that the consequences for these "findings" regarding allegations consisted of mandatory mental health evaluations, counseling and group intervention programs. Remarkably, they admitted that these programs were for men only, and that currently there are none for women. One EPC member asserted that until battered men began to call 911 and press charges against their batterers, there would be no progress in the recognition that domestic abuse knows no gender.

Type in [www.equalparentsforchildren.org](http://www.equalparentsforchildren.org) and you'll find the EPC schedule for upcoming meetings including a preview of our guest speakers & archived newsletters.

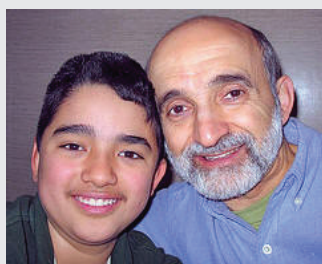
# LOCAL UPDATE

## John Murtari and A Kid's Right to Both Parents

The Civil Rights and Human Rights Side of Child Custody and Support

John was arrested on the night of November 17th, two days before he was to appear in court. It was clear that the town of Lyons, New York simply had it in for John due to the courageous stand he takes against the violation of his parental civil rights. John was followed by police officers who stopped and arrested him only after he had arrived home. John did not resist, but he did not cooperate. He was cuffed and dragged away. In jail, John was hit in the face with pepper spray (for refusing to walk to his cell) which was excruciatingly painful, and he feared there would be permanent scarring to his eyes and face. John refused to eat or drink in protest. On Friday the 21st, fearing kidney failure, they carried John to a hospital for IV fluids. After 16 days of incarceration, John's hearing was moved to Dec 3rd and he was released for having served his sentence for a "crime" he refused to acknowledge. John is considering suing for brutality and entrapment. Here are some of his thoughts sent from jail:

The problems I face are a consequence of my decisions. I knew years ago when I first "resisted" the system that I could lose everything. It now appears that bill may be coming due! Cause for depression & despair? You bet! As you hear my brief complaint, I know so many of you mothers & fathers have been through a lot worse struggles -- mine looks like a cake walk!



John & Dom

I was talking to one of the Guards and he summed up I was in "a heap of trouble." But you know what, I told him it was all worth it and an easy trade!

I know so many of your stories. The worst of all is not to have your children around you for the holidays -- especially Thanksgiving & Christmas. And the worst of those, at the coldest level of Dante's Hell, are those moms and dads that have (adult) children who despise you. What a terrible tragedy. I am so fortunate that Dom and I have remained very close through it all.

Easy to be depressed? You bet! A time perhaps to rediscover a loving God and to cry to him for help and to be inspired to new hope and action. I'm

still reminding myself of that here! Still afraid of what the future could bring. I cry for the faith and wisdom to see it through.

Are children alienated forever? I don't believe that for a second. Do I believe parents & children give up on each other because it hurts too much to keep trying? Yes.

You can't control how someone feels. But I hope (and it's easy for me to say) that any alienated parent would keep trying to call, write, and send the holiday gifts to their kids. Don't let them forget you are there and that the door is open. Never let that little fire of faith & hope burn out! And if you have stopped, there is nothing wrong with starting again. There is an old Roman saying, "Hope springs eternal!"

Again, thanks for all your efforts to help me. It is a good model of how NonViolent Action can work: A small group of people that can make sacrifices. A larger group providing support to those people and using their efforts to call public attention to injustice & indignity. History has proven this can be a winning combination. No name calling or anger required.

For more information, call the EPC number or visit the [equalparentsforchildren.org](http://equalparentsforchildren.org) website or John's website at [akidsright.org](http://akidsright.org)

## New York Shared Parenting Bill

As you no doubt know, no progress has been made toward any version of a shared parenting bill being introduced, voted out of committee, and voted into law in New York State. Yet, this is probably the one best hope for cutting the legs out from under an unjust and unconstitutional system of divorce and custody. This presumption of shared residency and joint custody that has meaning, would reduce the irrationality of divorce battles, reduce legal costs, reduce the abuse of domestic violence allegations and reduce the destruction of the split family.

Children need both parents, both families, and both homes. Until the courts are forced to recognize this truth, there will be only a slow painful end to the divorce and custody mess which children are experiencing. It will come to an end through reform, societal and economic pressures, but not soon enough. Why not preserve our nation's families, though split, and our children now by demanding that our politicians pass a shared parenting law? It is what's right, just and fair, and what's best for the children.

To find out how you can help make this happen, or for support in your own shared custody battle, call or write the EPC or visit [www.equalparentsforchildren.org](http://www.equalparentsforchildren.org)

## Court Watch Group Forming Locally in 2009

If you would like to be involved in a Monroe County Family Court watch group now forming, or if you would like the group to attend your Family Court hearings or trial, contact the EPC by phone or email or visit [www.equalparentsforchildren.org](http://www.equalparentsforchildren.org)

## How dads boost kids intellectually, developmentally, and socially.

Fathers play an important role in a child's development from birth through adulthood. In fact, numerous studies have reached the same conclusion: Children with involved fathers have an advantage -- socially and academically -- over children with distant or no relationships with their dads. "We found that fathers who are involved with their children have children with fewer problems," says Maureen Black, PhD, a researcher and professor of pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "That added involvement from a father helps children tremendously." Specifically, her research found better language skills and fewer behavioral problems in children with an actively involved father. Interestingly, this result holds true even if the father doesn't live in the same home as the child -- for example, in divorce situations. It appears that how involved the dad is -- not where he lives in relation to the child -- is the crucial factor.

- By Kristen Finello From: American Baby magazine



We have all heard horror stories about divorce and custody battles where one parent seems locked in a winner-take-all mentality with no seeming recognition of the child's best interest, health or happiness. Perhaps you are still battling this mentality years after the divorce has become final. The emotions rampant during and after a divorce make co-parenting difficult for many. Here are some thoughts on dealing with a difficult personality from "Dealing With Control Freaks" by Thomas J. Schumacher, Psy.D. R-CSW.

## Some Coping Strategies

- 1) Stay as calm as you can. Control freaks tend to generate a lot of tension in those around them. Try to maintain a comfortable distance so that you can remain centered while you speak with them. Try to focus on your breathing. As they get more agitated and demanding, just breath slowly and deeply. If you stay calm and focused, this often has the effect of relaxing them as well. If you get agitated you have joined the battle on their terms.
- 2) Speak very slowly. Again the normal tendency is to gear up and speak rapidly when dealing with a control freak. This will only draw you into the emotional turmoil and you will quickly be personalizing what is occurring.
- 3) Be very patient. Control freaks need to feel heard. In fact, they do not have that much to say. They have a lot to say if you engage them in a power struggle. If you just listen carefully and ask good questions that indicate that you have heard them, then they will quickly resolve whatever the issue is and calmly move on.
- 4) Pay attention to your induced reactions. What is this person trying to emotionally induce in you? Notice how you feel when speaking with them. It will give you important clues as to how to deal with them more effectively and appropriately.
- 5) Initially, let them control the agenda. But you control the pacing. If you stay calm and speak slowly, you will be in command of the pacing of the conversation.
- 6) Treat them with kindness. Within most control freaks is a good measure of paranoia. They are ready to get angry and defend against what they perceive is a controlling hostile world. If you treat them with respect and kindness, their paranoia cannot take root. You will jam them up.
- 7) Make demands on them-- especially when dealing with the type 2 control freak. Ask them to send you something or do something for you. By asking something of them, you will be indicating that you are not intimidated or diminished by their behavior patterns.
- 8) Remember an old but poignant Maxim: "Those who demand the most often give the least." Keep in mind that control freaks are not trying to hurt you -- they're trying to protect themselves. Remind yourself that their behavior toward you isn't personal; the compulsion was there before they met you, and it will be their forever unless they get help. Understand that they are skilled manipulators, artful and intimidating, rehearsed debaters and excellent at distorting reality.

You have to understand that whatever you do will have a limited effect. These people are angry and afraid to let go of you. Hence, it is your job to let go of them, protect yourself in the process... and grow.

**EQUAL PARENTS FOR CHILDREN BULLETIN**

*The Equal Parents for Children Bulletin* is printed monthly

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Your submissions are welcome at our mailing address or by email:  
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**The Lanyard**

by Billy Collins, U.S. Poet Laureate

The other day as I was ricocheting slowly off the pale blue walls of this room, bouncing from typewriter to piano, from bookshelf to an envelope lying on the floor, I found myself in the L section of the dictionary where my eyes fell upon the word lanyard.

No cookie nibbled by a French novelist could send one more suddenly into the past--- a past where I sat at a workbench at a camp by a deep Adirondack lake learning how to braid thin plastic strips into a lanyard, a gift for my mother.

I had never seen anyone use a lanyard or wear one, if that's what you did with them, but that did not keep me from crossing strand over strand again and again until I had made a boxy red and white lanyard for my mother. She gave me life and milk from her breasts, and I gave her a lanyard.

She nursed me in many a sickroom, lifted teaspoons of medicine to my lips, set cold face-cloths on my forehead, and then led me out into the airy light and taught me to walk and swim, and I, in turn, presented her with a lanyard.

Here are thousands of meals, she said, and here is clothing and a good education. And here is your lanyard, I replied, which I made with a little help from a counselor.

Here is a breathing body and a beating heart, strong legs, bones and teeth, and two clear eyes to read the world, she whispered, and here, I said, is the lanyard I made at camp.

And here, I wish to say to her now, is a smaller gift--- not the archaic truth that you can never repay your mother, but the rueful admission that when she took the two-tone lanyard from my hands, I was as sure as a boy could be that this useless, worthless thing I wove out of boredom would be enough to make us even.

**NON-Custodial EITC Revisited**

(from December issue)

To be qualified you must:

- be a New York Resident Taxpayer
- be 18 years of age or older
- be a noncustodial parent and have Child(ren) that do not reside with you
- have paid 100% of the current amount of child support due for given tax year and;
- have earned income less than \$32,341 per year

If you meet these qualifications, you might be entitled to the credit. As a non-refundable credit, you can receive these funds even if you owed no tax in the tax year. To find out more, visit the NY state Department of Taxation and Finance website and complete Form IT-209.

- Gary Castine, CFP, CDFA

**A Father's Gift**



After the war, my father was known as the father of the neighborhood in our section of Indianapolis. Anyone in need could call on him and he would find a way to help. He fixed cars, radios, televisions, furnaces, air conditioners, and did plumbing and electrical work and charged nothing. He bought groceries for people he knew were in need, and we were not a wealthy family. He loved unconditionally and always strove to see the good in people. He was a magnificent, courageous, generous, caring, loving man who had been spiritually wounded by the racism of his day but never became embittered by it.

He still believed that people were basically good.

- Joyce Turner Heathcock, from *Wisdom of Our Fathers*

**Equal Parents for Children**

**Our Purpose:**

We believe that no greater vocation can be had by a woman or man than to be a parent. Our purpose is to promote the equality of that vocation and to offer men and women an organization for the mutual support to pursue their equal rights.



**We are committed to:**

1. The importance of mothers and fathers and the recognition of the unique qualities that they offer their children
2. Joint custody in temporary and permanent court orders
3. The just enforcement of equal parenting time
4. Professional standards for mediators and a system that would presume mediation over adversarial resolution of domestic matters.
5. The equal parental and custodial rights of unwed parents
6. Equality and fairness in child support legislation



**Your kids  
ROUTINELY  
Need you**

*Don't let that right be taken away!*

We need your support!  
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JANUARY 2009

*“Working to Keep Parents and their Children Together”*

**Equal Parents for Children**

# Monthly Meetings



**Ensure our  
Kids' Future  
Join EPC today**

Peer support, monthly newsletters, professional referrals, premiums, local/state/national networking, linkage to women and men dedicated to our mission

**Peer Support  
Speakers  
Resource Center**

7:00 PM —9:00 PM  
Super 8 Motel  
100 Lehigh Station Road  
(Off Route 390  
in Henrietta)

**We need your support!  
Please consider us as  
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# 1st Mondays