Helping Families in Transition

On a Tuesday night in Cambridge, when most families are shifting from dinner to bedtime routines, a group of mothers gather for a parenting workshop. They all live in shelter at Transition House but do not know each other. Their languages, cultures, and backgrounds are different, and they are all tired—tired from school, working, and shuttling children to and from school and day care. But they do it all because they want the best for their children.

At first Tamika was rushed and skeptical. But soon it is clear this will be a different sort of meeting. She gets to talk about her kids! The Parenting Educator asks: “What is it about your child that brings you joy?” Tamika has a ready answer: “I love to see the joy on my son’s face when I make something good happen.” As Tamika warms to the group, she shares that she works hard to make life better for her son, but constantly feels guilty: that her son’s father isn’t in his life, that she can’t spend more time with him, and that she has trouble setting limits and providing structure in the shelter. Because of you, Families First is there to guide Tamika and the other moms and help them form crucial support networks.

Research shows that parenting is critical to improving outcomes for children who live with the chronic stress of poverty, homelessness, and violence. Because your generosity has allowed us to expand our offerings to more parents living in shelters, Tamika and her friends will fill their tool kits with knowledge and strategies that help them build self-esteem in their children, use positive discipline, and communicate more effectively. They will learn to be even better mothers for their children and to help each other too. When you give to Families First, you are transforming families like Tamika’s. Thank you.

As the major supporter of our Parenting in Public initiative, the TripAdvisor Foundation is making it possible for Families First to serve more homeless families, like the parents at Transition House. Already we have been able to expand into the high-need community of Brockton, where we began workshops for families living in scattered motel sites. In the coming year, our grant from the TripAdvisor Foundation will enable us to support new workshops at existing and new partner sites, including a domestic violence shelter in Waltham and a transitional housing organization in Roxbury. We are grateful to Rachel and Seth Kalvert for their efforts in helping to secure this generous grant from the TripAdvisor Foundation.

With Significant Support, More Families Benefit

Parents who participate in Parenting in Public workshops are now asked to draw “identity maps” that allow participants to freely communicate feelings and ideas around identity. The medium captures the conflicts and frustrations parents feel. This tool adds richness to our understanding of what parents gain from our workshops, but it is also a meaningful reflection and builds community among our Parenting in Public parents.

How I see myself as a parent...

This mother says she feels like a worker bee, always tending to the hive, with no time for herself as an individual.

www.families-first.org | 617.868.7687
Join Us for the 2013 Fathers’ Breakfast!

Fall is in the air, which means it’s time for our annual Fathers’ Breakfast! The Fathers’ Breakfast continues to be a unique event honoring fathers for the important role they play in children’s lives. Join us on Friday, November 8, at the Mandarin Oriental for this special morning, featuring remarks from Colin Stokes, who will speak about hidden meanings in popular children’s movies. For more information about tickets or sponsoring the event, please visit www.families-first.org.

Families First is grateful to John Hancock for their support of the Fathers’ Breakfast.

Friends of the Family Generous Donor Event

In May our generous donors came out for the Friends of the Family event. Hosted by Ken and Leslie Pucker, it was an evening for us to say thank you and for you to hear how you make a difference for families. Boston City Councillor Tito Jackson spoke about the challenges families living in poverty face, saying, “The biggest predictor of positive outcomes for children is what goes on at home with mom and dad. We need to do whatever we can to make sure parents can succeed.”

Roundtable Series

The Roundtable Series we started last year is expanding! Topics this year range from Fostering Gratitude in Children to Promoting a Healthy Body Image. At a recent Roundtable we heard from our very own board member, Professor Nancy Hill of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, about her research on how culture shapes the way our children learn, think, and develop values. If you would like to receive updates and invitations to the Roundtables, please contact Susannah Cintron at scintron@families-first.org.

Leadership Giving Circle

In celebration of our 25th Anniversary, Families First is introducing the Leadership Giving Circle to recognize you, our most generous donors. The annual Friends of the Family event is just one benefit for this circle. Visit www.families-first.org for giving levels and benefits.

Board of Directors
Elizabeth Cohen, President
Gayle Dublin, Co-Chair
Jennifer Kordell, Co-Chair
Michael Winkler, Treasurer
Leslie Zients Pucker, Clerk
Jody Cornish
Stacy Dell’Orfano
Dr. Julia DeVoy
Marianne Freiman
Pauline Hargreaves
Dr. Nancy Hill
Robert Holmes
Rachel Kalvert
Michael Kohn
Jeff Murray
Russell Oken
Molly Stearns
Judith Sydney
Linda Braun, Honorary
Susan O’Connor, Honorary
Staff
Elizabeth Cohen, Executive Director
Rachel Banks
Susannah Cintron
Sue Covitz
Stacey Ellsworth
Michael Goldman
Rebekah McKinney
Maureen O’Brien
Madeleine Otani Oldman
Magda Rodriguez
Parenting Educators
Milly Arbaje-Thomas
Pam Bailey
Shawne Blake
Debby Broadley
Marilyn Buckler
Carrie Bury
Yvette Cheeks
Carol Darcy
Alejandra Hernandez
Brigel Evans
Roxanne Hoke-Chandler
Rosalyn Levy
Lilly Marcelin
Susan Marx
Yesenia Menendez
Michelle Padden-Dragone
Gail Parsons
Stacy Randell
Marta Rivera
Lilly Vasquez
Doug Weinstock

Families First Parenting Programs