

## **National Coalition of Free Men San Diego Activity Report**

1/14/08

Thanks to NCFMSD member Joe M. our chapter this year became eligible for the Combined Federal Campaign. The CFC is only program through which donations can be solicited directly from Federal Employees. Consequently, I gave several presentations to Navy, Marine, and Border Patrol personnel. I also passed out hundreds of NCFM brochures and thousands of copies of other informational brochures and articles. If anyone signed up to support NCFM-SD the first donations arrive sometime in March and then quarterly. We have to reapply each year.

In late November Michael McCormick, Executive Director, American Coalition of Fathers and Children flew in from the east coast to do some business in California. He spent an afternoon at our Men's Center discussing various issues and ways ACFC and NCFM might work together.

December brought a grant writing class I attended. Patricia Overberg, past Executive Director of Antelope Valley Domestic Violence Council and more things than I can possibly remember is working with us to develop programs and secure grants. I'm slowing her down because there's only one of me and it's hard to find the time needed to get her all the information she needs.

Just before Christmas we were invited by Safe Faith Place Communities to set up an informational table at a dinner to raise funds for their domestic violence outreach, education and referral program. They raised several hundred dollars and the spaghetti was pretty good.

NCFM-SD Larry Kerkman, President, the Children's Rights Initiative for Sharing Parents Equally (CRISPE) with the help of others from NCFMSD, the Children's Rights Council San Diego Chapter (CRCSD), and Coalition of Parent Support (COPs), developed a PowerPoint presentation about the need for equal parenting. The presentation was unveiled in West Virginia before advocates and legislators from several states.

We formed a new working group, Californian's for Equal Parenting (CAFEP), comprised of members from NCFMSD, NCFMLA/F4J, CRCSD, COPS, CRISPE, the Men's Legal Center, and others. The object of the group is to develop equal

parenting legislation, substantiate the need for such legislation, solicit endorsements from like minded organizations and individuals, find legislative sponsors, and facilitate passage of the legislation; or, some major part thereof. Other such efforts throughout the country have failed for a myriad of reasons, including two or three attempts in California. Advocates in Michigan, West Virginia, Washington, and other states are moving forward with similar efforts. In fact, our legislation is based on pending legislation in West Virginia. Earlier attempts in California not only had a more hostile legislative environment (not that ours is particularly friendly) but suffered from lack of resources and poor planning. They tried to do too much with not enough. Well, other than ourselves we have few resources as well. However, the public is generally more aware of related issues. Politicians have heard from concerned parents for years. Awareness is higher. Second, I hope we don't publically launch our effort until we have all the proverbial ducks in order, which includes a massive endorsement drive. We may not have money, but I believe we have sufficient support to cause considerable discomfort to legislators, particularly in an upcoming election year. I believe the effort will likewise be newsworthy which helps.

The "Tolling Project" made progress and took a kick in the mouth all in the same week. James Pauly, Director, Volunteers in Parole Mentors San Diego, arranged for a meeting with County correctional counselors. They were excited about the possibility of being able to help incarcerated suspend (or, "toll") child support payments while incarcerated. Until then it appeared that the San Diego Division of Child Support Services would facilitate the process, though earlier commitments waned. A few days later I found out why. Apparently, they don't want to do the paper work. Just before leaning this I finished a phone call with Del Sayles-Owen, Director, Division of Community Services, Department of Corrections, State of California. It seems Department-of-Corrections attorneys green lighted my proposal and information from DCSS San Diego about the legality of the process. We don't agree on methods, but the State has contract case workers who Del Sayles-Owens believes should help inmates complete the necessary paperwork. I believe we need third year law students so they can represent with some limitations the inmates. Hence, hopefully ensure the paperwork actually gets properly processed. Two years I've been working on this and we are just now starting to see serious movement at the State level and nothing more than a bad bowel movement at the County DCSS level.

NCFMSD member John Van Doorn has filed to run for County Supervisor. In the past few months John has taken classes on how to effectively run a campaign. He is already an accomplished speaker before the Board of Supervisors. He regularly attends meetings to tell the members what he thinks about Child Protective Services, his experiences with Family Court, and distaste for the refusal of the County to concern themselves with certain injustices foisted on John and his children. I think his opponent is in for a rude surprise. John ain't no dummy and is one heck of an articulate speaker; that is, when he's not red-faced with frustration.

NCFMSD member and NCFM National Secretary Kevin Young is sorting out information from the Registrar of Voters Office about judges soon up for re election, at least those that may run unopposed. In San Diego County the names of judges running unopposed don't even show up on the ballot. However, with a mere 100 certified citizen signatures we can force the names on the ballot. Which we are preparing to do; at least, once Kevin gets all the information sorted out.

Roughly two months ago NCFMSD volunteer Nancy F. arranged for us to be able to provide emergency shelter on a space available basis in conjunction with several sober living facilities. Since we do not have intake and assessment capabilities we are not promoting this opportunity, at least yet; or, we would be overwhelmed with work. However, we have thus far sheltered two men, offered shelter to another, and offered shelter to a single woman who was referred to us by another Women's Shelter program. We provided the makings of a Christmas dinner for 12 residents of one facility. Hopefully, next year we will have sufficient funds to provide food for all the facilities.

The Men's Center over the past quarter has fielded hundreds of telephone and email inquiries from around the country and Canada, as well as several walk-ins each week. Typical inquiries concern a wide range of circumstances centered around paternity, paternity fraud, parental alienation, child custody, child support arrears, domestic violence, false accusations, and requests for referrals for further assistance.

NCFM members John Van Doorn, Kevin Young, and myself serve on the State Department of Child Support Services Advocates Advisory Group. The State just sent us for review and comment a package on proposed changes to the Parental

Opportunity Program. You know, the program that gets men to say their fathers of newborns, whether they are or not; this should be fun.

Last, thank you to the NCFM members that financially support our men's center. Without that support there is no way we can do what we do. Absolutely no way...