



Robert Polk enjoys a laugh at one of the two weekly meetings of the Fatherhood Intergenerational Group earlier this month. This meeting was at Epworth United Methodist Church. Says one participant: "I wish I had this group 10 years ago." Karl Gehring, *The Denver Post*

For dads, other fathers know best

By Yesenia Robles *The Denver Post*

A group of Denver men leave their homes every week at the same time. They say their wives are suspicious, but once the women find out where their spouses go, they're shocked.

The men are part of the Fatherhood Intergenerational Group, a cadre of men united to help men be better dads. They meet weekly to talk about how to do well at one of the toughest jobs.

"As long as you have a breath left in your body, there's an opportunity to change," said Darryl Clark.

"So what can you do to become a better man?" he asked the roomful of about 30 men at one meeting.

Clark is a facilitator for the group of dads. More than 60 men regularly attend meetings held at two Denver locations.

During his two years with the group, Kevin Reynolds said he learned to listen to his daughter — even when it was something he didn't really want to hear.

Jose Sanchez said he learned to analyze what he says before it comes out wrong.

For Burrell Mitchell, the greatest

gift was re-establishing a relationship with his grown children after writing them a letter.

Participants in the group come from all kinds of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Some are Ph.D.s; others haven't finished high school, said Will Miles, a psychologist for more than 30 years who co-facilitates the weekly meetings. "Somebody in this room has experienced the same thing."

By gathering the diverse men to share what it means to be a father, the Rev. King Harris, a co-founder of the group, said he hopes to make an investment in children who often grow up without positive male role models.

Meeting weekly is one thing. Keeping involved with the kids is another. Group leaders help by gathering donated books so the men can read to their children, or tickets to ballgames or museums so the dads can spend time with their kids.

But the children aren't the only ones who reap the benefits of the group.

"It's been life-changing. It really lets you speak your mind," said Fredric Altman. "I wish I had this group 10

years ago."

Altman has been married for more than 26 years, but he says the last four months since he started going to the meetings have been the best.

"I told my brother-in-law, 'I think everyone is starting to change. They're nicer.' But he told me it's just me who's changing," Altman said.

Facilitator Clark is working to find new funding that will allow the group to expand to three more sites, including Fort Lupton.

Eventually he hopes to serve at least 100 men.

Organizers don't think they will have a problem getting more men to come.

"Here you get elders talking about decisions made in the '50s still impacting their family today. A lot of times you don't think of that," said Thom Foster.

"You usually go to people your own age for advice, and their bits of wisdom are not much more than your bits of wisdom."

For member Reynolds, who said he has always had a good relationship with his daughter, the lessons from the group give him peace of mind.

"I'm beginning to express to her

Where fathers meet

Meetings are held every week at:

Epworth United Methodist Church

3401 High St.

Tuesdays 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Friendship Baptist Church

880 Fairfax St.

Saturdays 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For information, call:

303-860-1013

how Dad feels and what a man is all about," Reynolds said. His daughter has noticed, and said she encourages her dad to attend the meetings every week — without being late.

"He's still that overprotective dad deep down, but now he listens more," said his daughter, Kamille Reynolds, who just finished her freshman year at the University of Northern Colorado. "I'm proud of him."

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