

# CASEY CONNECTS

A REPORT FROM THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

SUMMER 2011



Faith, Forgiveness, Fragile Relationships, and Responsible  
Fatherhood: Insights from a Decade of Investments

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## Faith, Forgiveness, Fragile Relationships, and Responsible Fatherhood: **Insights** from a Decade of Investments

**IN 1997,** the Annie E. Casey Foundation adopted a strategic framework that recognized the critical role persistent poverty plays in isolating families from support and opportunity and churning children into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The Foundation recognized that improving the odds for these kids requires community-based solutions to strengthen their families and neighborhoods.

The premiere edition of this newsletter in the winter of 2000 highlighted the launching of a decade-long effort to mobilize change where families live: in communities. “Our experience and the work of others who have toiled to improve the futures of disadvantaged children led us to conclude that it is simply not possible to make a difference for large numbers of children living in concentrated poverty without investing in and involving their families and neighborhoods. Our commitment to major reforms in the service systems that intersect with children and families has not faltered, but it must go hand in hand with an all-out effort to support and strengthen families at the neighborhood level,” the lead article read.

At the same time, the Foundation began to deepen its efforts to address critical obstacles struggling communities face. These include improving economic opportunities to help families build more financial security; helping local organizations expand their capacity to serve families comprehensively close to home; and better supporting vulnerable mothers and fathers in their critical child-rearing roles.

Flash forward to 2011—leaf through the pages of this issue, and you will learn about four inter-related initiatives that emerged out of those investments: tapping the strengths of faith-based organizations; removing stumbling blocks to opportunity for people returning from incarceration and their families; providing a foundation for healthy relationships and marriages; and supporting strong and responsible fatherhood. You will also read about how these efforts have helped individual people—and organizations collectively serving large numbers of families—change course in positive ways to give children in tough communities a better shot at success.

What a difference a decade makes. Times are different economically and socially, but even as some of these investments sunset, the lessons learned, alliances forged, and torches carried by countless champions have helped to spread and sustain this work.

Patrick T. McCarthy  
President & Chief Executive Officer

Ralph Smith  
Executive Vice President



## FAITH IN COMMUNITIES

Debbie Nealy of Providence, Rhode Island, had to give up her job as a receptionist after bone fusion surgery a year ago for degenerative disk disease, and her doctor still hasn't okayed a return to work. She's back on her feet, but feeding her sons, ages 7 and 9, would have been tough if not for the Providence In-town Churches Association Food Pantry. Food stamp recipients are allowed one visit a month to stock up at the free pantry, which has expanded its facilities and gone from serving 700 to more than 5,000 people a month—testament to the state's battered economy—in just two years.

"It has truly helped my family," says Nealy. "With the prices of food today, it is hard to get the things you like. They have the better brands, the more natural stuff here, an abundance of fresh vegetables," she says. "My boys are like bottomless pits, but they are eating healthy."

How the Providence In-town Churches Association increased its ability to provide services like the food pantry offers a glimpse into the way modest funding and technical assistance from the Casey Foundation, in partnership with other funders, has helped faith-based organizations improve and expand how they serve community members in need.

Casey sought to cultivate the faith community in launching its *Making Connections* initiative in the late 1990s. This initiative aimed to demonstrate how

residents, civic groups, and the public and private sectors could mobilize around an agenda to improve the odds for children by strengthening their families and neighborhoods. "Our aspiration was to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families by harnessing the unique strengths of the faith community," notes Carole Thompson, a Casey Foundation senior associate.

Targeting small and mid-sized congregations where faith leaders often have a strong commitment to serve but lack formal training and networks to help tackle complex social problems, *Making Connections* launched an intensive effort to identify the local faith community's strengths and challenges.

Over the past decade, the Foundation's Faith and Families portfolio has served as a catalyst to bolster faith-based organizations' ability to serve in many ways, from providing training and educational opportunities to producing how-to reports on best practices. Casey has also co-sponsored local convenings to bring clergy together as well as highly visible national conferences that drew *Making Connections*

Page 1, Ravon Davis and Denise Andrews, with their son Jayden, participate in the Couples Advancing Together program at the Center for Urban Families in Baltimore, with staff member Otis Buckson. Above, the Providence In-town Churches Association Food Pantry in Rhode Island.



By **supporting** organizations, you are **changing the lives** of lots of people at once; it's a ripple effect. We **created** a community of learners.

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and faith leaders from around the country. These gatherings provided a forum to foster discussion and offer guidance on how faith communities could most effectively help strengthen families and communities.

Casey also supported development of a model effort to help faith-based organizations provide assistance to formerly incarcerated individuals as well as the families of ex-prisoners. (See story, page 6.)

When President George W. Bush established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2001, "It was timely in that we had started the exploration to find out how faith affects neighborhood transformation and family development," says Thompson. In 2002, the Administration for Children and Families launched the Compassion Capital Fund, which aimed to help faith-based and community organizations increase their effectiveness, enhance their ability to provide social services, expand their organizations, diversify their funding sources, and create collaborations to better serve those in need.

Providence, a *Making Connections* site, was particularly successful in garnering those grants. "Casey was letting all the *Making Connections* sites know there was an opportunity to make use of those funds and provided technical assistance and financial support to help us apply," notes Patrick McGuigan, executive director of The Providence Plan, a nonprofit that works to improve economic and social well-being.

McGuigan says the support Casey provided helped The Providence Plan overcome some issues that kept others from taking advantage of this important chance to strengthen faith-based organizations. "People were afraid of going after the money and facing too many restrictions and bells and whistles that wouldn't honor the church-state dynamic," notes McGuigan. "But we looked at the regs really carefully and we said no, this is a good opportunity as long as we make the rules of engagement clear."

Establishing detailed guidelines on how the funding could and couldn't be used, The Providence Plan set



Page 4, left, Debbie Nealy appreciates the healthy selections at the food pantry; right, Diana Burdett heads the Providence In-town Churches Association. This page, shoppers and volunteers at the food pantry. George Gaffett, pictured by the table, is the director of the pantry.

up a program in 2005 called New Roots Providence, specifically dedicated to helping community and faith-based groups get stronger and expand their services.

The Providence In-town Churches Association, a coalition of churches that has been serving the poor and homeless since 1974, was one of the first to apply for New Roots funding. It received a three-year grant that helped it restructure its board with much more community representation; develop a defined mission, strategic plan, and fundraising strategy; hire a larger and more experienced staff; and offer comprehensive case management.

This support “really increased the capacity of the agency and consequently our capacity to serve clients,” notes Diana Burdett, who took over in 2003 as executive director. The knowledge she’s gained from attending monthly training sessions New Roots offers also has equipped her to apply for additional funding—such as a \$25,000 Champlin Foundations grant that helped relocate and expand the food pantry.

This past May, New Roots awarded 27 grants, bringing to 108 the number of organizations in Rhode Island that have received support to strengthen management structures, develop new funding sources, and create partnerships to better serve their communities.

New Roots has garnered \$4.5 million from the Compassion Capital Fund as well as the Obama administration’s Strengthening Communities Fund, matched by \$800,000 in private foundation and state funds, for a total program expenditure of \$5 million.

Nzinga Misgana, a consultant and former New Roots director, notes that Casey support, which totaled \$381,000, helped draw “a lot of co-investment and millions in federal funding” to New Roots Providence, which in turn helped faith-based and community organizations serve more people more comprehensively.

“By supporting organizations, you are changing the lives of lots of people at once; it’s a ripple effect,” she says. “We created a community of learners by offering trainings and bringing people from different organizations together.”

Besides reaping the benefits of these training sessions, Burdett of the Providence In-town Churches Association also received guidance from coaches that “I could run ideas past and get turned in the right direction or get some validation.” She adds: “Initially, I was doing so much of this work myself. And that is the loneliest job in the world.”



## A POSITIVE RETURN

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With help from a Milwaukee interfaith organization called Project RETURN, Rodney Evans got a job cleaning his church when he returned from prison at age 37 and was later put in charge of facilities. Evans, now 45, recently started a six-month training program in the computer field and is on track to get a transitional job with a participating company, bolstering his odds for long-term employment.

Supportive services Evans received through Project RETURN (Returning Ex-offenders To Urban Realities and Neighborhoods)—including classes focusing on fatherhood, parenting, and relationships—also helped him reunite with his wife and 10 children, and today he’s an involved grandfather of eight. He also serves on various task forces to help ex-prisoners stay on track and assume their responsibilities as parents.

“Before Project RETURN, I was truly on a downward spiral,” says Evans, who spent 20 years in and out of jail as a result of drug addiction. If his parole officer hadn’t referred him to the program, he says, “I would be dead or in an institution.”

With Annie E. Casey Foundation support, organizations like Project RETURN have garnered city, state, and federal assistance to remove roadblocks thwarting former prisoners from becoming productive members of their communities.

Some 7 million adults—one in 32—are under criminal justice supervision in the United States, and 1.8 million children have a parent in prison. Largely because of barriers to opportunity, communities of color are disproportionately affected. African-American children are almost nine times, and Hispanic children three times, more likely than white children to have a parent in prison. Children of incarcerated parents are more likely to be exposed to parental substance abuse, extreme poverty, and domestic violence. Barriers to becoming gainfully employed and rejoining their families and communities land many former prisoners back in jail.

### Coordinated Effort

The impact of incarceration and reentry undermine the best efforts of families to achieve economic self-sufficiency and break the cycle of poverty that passes from one generation to the next. The Foundation’s reentry work supports programs, policies, and practices that improve the employment prospects of former prisoners in an effort to reduce recidivism, increase public safety, and improve outcomes for children and families affected by incarceration.

As part of *Making Connections*, Casey supported efforts to help align the work of community organizations in Milwaukee around reentry and work with state agencies to create a “workforce pipeline” of services to help ex-prisoners reenter the community successfully, notes Rita Renner, a Casey reentry

workforce consultant who has played a critical role in the Milwaukee work.

This work spawned several collaborative efforts that brought city and state officials and agencies together to improve and coordinate support for ex-prisoners and has helped:

- Place more than 1,500 formerly incarcerated individuals in jobs since 2008;
- Improve the Department of Corrections pre-release services like ensuring prisoners get photo IDs and social security numbers;
- Convene two statewide summits, sponsored by Casey, to bring together the Department of Corrections, Department of Workforce Development, and the Workforce Investment Board to better coordinate work preparation policies; and
- Restore driving privileges for 200 ex-prisoners since 2008 and spearhead state legislation revising driver's license suspension rules.

In October 2009, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections received a \$750,000 Second Chance Act grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to expand its "Windows to Work" program, which offers pre-release services starting six months prior to release and includes group and individual coaching, case management, and supportive services for a year after release. Local matching funds, including support by the Casey Foundation, brought the total investment in these efforts to \$1.5 million.

Without these efforts, "we wouldn't be nearly as far along in developing the collaborative process and helping this population get connected to jobs," notes Mary Kay Sergio, reentry director for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Participation in a data-mapping project supported by Casey that tracked patterns of incarceration and reentry also "helped us

Page 6, Rodney Evans enjoys an afternoon with family. At left, his grandson James Lockett Jr.; at right, his wife Charlotte, daughters Stephanie Erby and La Donna Evans, and son Jarrod Evans. This page, Rodney and Charlotte with grandchildren James and Kenneth Ezell III.

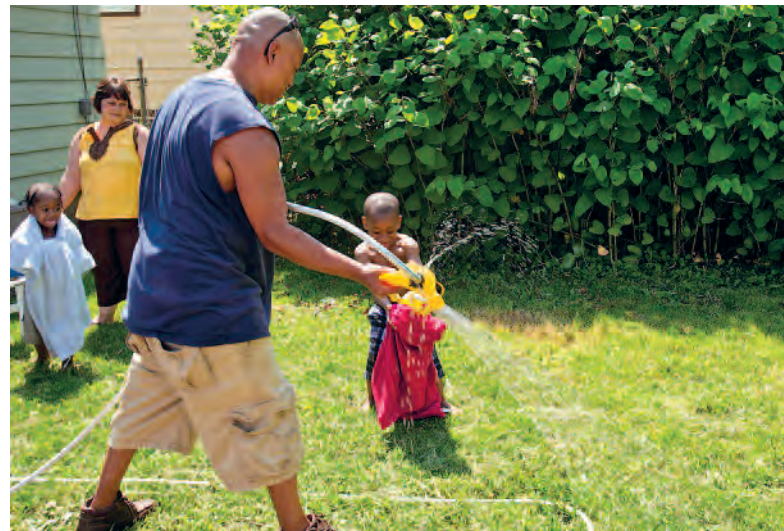
appreciate the different demographics in the specific regions and tailor our efforts to them," says Sergio.

"There has also been a renewed interest around using data for more informed decision-making and workforce accountability, so that everybody who is involved in funding can come together and talk about results on the same level," says Peter Zarimba, results facilitator for Casey's Reentry Workforce Initiative.

"The Foundation's focus on using data to track employment outcomes for returning individuals is a core strategy," notes John Padilla, a Casey associate director. While some restrictions on hiring ex-prisoners are statutory, others are "urban myth," he says. "People will say we don't hire them, but often it's a manager or recruiter in H.R. but not a written policy."

Other states also have made progress on reentry reforms. In Florida, for example, a Casey-supported task force helped the state to become the first to comprehensively inventory employment restrictions for ex-prisoners and formed the basis for a federal law requiring a 50-state inventory of such restrictions.

Casey grantees such as the Urban Institute, Council of State Governments, and Public/Private Ventures also have contributed to the field through reentry mapping and research; a national reentry resource center; and a pilot program with the U.S. Department of Labor on work attachment and using mentors to curb recidivism.



The **impact** of incarceration and reentry **undermine** the best efforts of families to achieve economic **self-sufficiency** and break the cycle of poverty.

### Culture of Healing

One of the most significant roles Casey has played has been providing guidance for faith groups on reintegrating former prisoners.

Building on the strengths of faith-based organizations in its *Making Connections* sites, the Foundation developed *Healing Communities*, a comprehensive effort to help faith-based organizations support reentry. Designed by scholars in the field including Robert Franklin, Stephanie Boddie, and Harold Dean Trulear, *Healing Communities* has been adopted by the Michigan Department of Corrections and promoted by groups such as the Progressive National Baptist Convention, the Christian Association for Prisoner Aftercare, National Women's Prison Project, and Council of State Governments' National Reentry Resource Center.

The model reflects Casey's signature strategy of "looking at the distinct strengths of organizations on the ground and how to mobilize them toward a particular social problem, in this case reentry," notes Trulear, an associate professor at the Howard University School of Divinity. He is director of *Healing Communities* at the Philadelphia Leadership Foundation, which is now managing the project.

"*Healing Communities* has been a tremendous asset for the faith-based community," says the Rev. DeeDee M. Coleman, pastor of the Russell Street Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit and chairman of the Social Justice & Prison Ministry Commission of the Progressive National Baptist Convention Home Mission, which represents 2,000 churches and 2.5 million members. "One of the biggest improvements I've seen is how knowledgeable pastors are now about reentry," says Coleman, who notes that some 300 pastors in Detroit regularly come together to exchange information with experts and interested parties.

The Philadelphia Leadership Foundation, whose chief executive officer is former Philadelphia Mayor Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., also houses the Amachi program, a partnership of secular and faith-based organizations working to provide mentoring to children of incarcerated parents. Amachi—named for a Nigerian Ibo saying meaning, "Who knows but what God has brought us through this child?"—involves faith institutions, human service providers, and public agencies working to match children of prisoners with adult mentors.

Currently, 250 such programs in 48 states have partnered with more than 6,000 churches to serve at least 100,000 children. Early Casey support and investments in a national training institute have helped deliver technical assistance to 500 sites between 2000 and 2010. The Foundation's 10-year support for a similar effort by Big Brothers Big Sisters has also served 35,000 children between 2001 and 2010.

An Atlanta-based organization called "Foreverfamily" (previously Aid to Imprisoned Mothers), another Casey grantee, has provided services for more than 10,000 children of prisoners and to mothers in prison, as well as to fathers and caregivers.

With modest investments in training and technical assistance, programs like these can have a significant impact. "The *Healing Communities* model is relatively new, but because it has been adopted by reliable, credible organizations, it will continue to live on," notes Casey Senior Associate Carole Thompson.

The impact is anything but fleeting for Rodney Evans. "One of the main things that happened to me when I came to Project RETURN was that I was able to vent and share and not be judged," notes Evans. "My counselor always made me see the good side of things, and that helped me to finally have confidence. Once I saw things in that light, I was so ready to go out and live life."





## NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

To develop healthy relationships, you have to let go of unhealthy ones. Jacqueline Stewart, 24, and Brandon Menjares, 18, learned that lesson from a program on healthy relationships offered by YouthBuild in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

“They helped teach us the difference between love and lust, what the difference is when you really love somebody, and how you want to see each other happy and achieving your goals,” says Stewart, who gathered the strength to let go of a relationship that had become too aggressive.

The program also motivated Menjares to move on from a dead-end relationship. “It helps you with relationships with partners and other people in your life,” he says. “I speak to people in authority differently now, and I have learned to cope better with people I don’t like.”

When the Annie E. Casey Foundation was looking for settings to implement a curriculum for promoting healthy relationships, it reached out to YouthBuild USA, a youth and community development program with 283 sites in communities across the country. YouthBuild helps low-income young people ages 16 to 24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing. About 50 to 60 percent of participants are single parents or at risk of early teen pregnancy.

With Casey support, a curriculum called “Love Notes,” developed by Marline Pearson, was piloted in 10 YouthBuild sites nationwide. Helping to steer young adults away from unhealthy relationships before they get married or become parents is part of a broader Foundation effort to improve outcomes for vulnerable children by strengthening the positive bonds between their biological parents.

When the George W. Bush administration first established the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center in 2004, Casey was the first foundation to lend financial support. But under the leadership of Casey Senior Associate Carole Thompson, the Foundation sought to expand the focus beyond marriage to the building and maintaining of healthy relationships.

Recognizing the “heroic” roles single parents play in low-income communities, the prevalence of domestic violence, and the need to help prevent teenage pregnancy, “we wanted to tip the focus so it could emphasize healthy relationships, not just healthy marriage,” says Thompson. “Whether parents marry

Jacqueline Stewart, in the center of the photo on the left, and Brandon Menjares, in the photo on the right, both say YouthBuild’s healthy relationship program helped them make better decisions. Also pictured are Ashley D’onofrio, a YouthBuild student, and Emma Bayer, a LIISC AmeriCorps volunteer.

or not, there is a bond and responsibility for the joint welfare of their child.”

Addressing issues like conflict resolution, de-escalation techniques, and good decision-making gives young people tools “to navigate the world better,” notes Joel Miranda, a graduate and now assistant program manager of YouthBuild’s Just A Start program in Cambridge and Chelsea, Massachusetts.

“We could get them to pass a GED, get a high school diploma, or place into a college course, but it was the interpersonal skills when they got out” that impeded them, he says. “We saw the number of young people completing the program improve and the number moving on to successful job placement improve” as they developed stronger relationship skills. Another benefit was “a decrease in misogynistic and homophobic language and a greater appreciation for each other.”

### Healthier Outlook

An evaluation of YouthBuild sites using the program showed participants had improved attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors associated with healthy relationships, such as pacing relationships, managing conflict, setting appropriate boundaries, avoiding violence, and increasing their knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases and preventing pregnancy.

“The evaluation showed that this program increased not only the knowledge but the behaviors of young people about when to start sexual relationships and how to get out of one,” notes Michelle Quinn-Davidson, director of the Academy for Transformation at YouthBuild USA. “They also developed more positive relationships with their own parents and improved their parenting skills.”

The Foundation also provided funding for a relationship program called “Within My Reach,” piloted in eight sites by the National Crittenton Foundation for two years. The Portland, Oregon-based national organization has 26 member agencies that serve young women involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, including many who are pregnant or have children. “We wanted to embed

this into a national program for teen mothers to make it part of a two-generation strategy,” notes Thompson.

Shaniqua Smith, a participant in a Crittenton site in Manhattan who recently had a baby boy, thinks she wouldn’t still be in a relationship with the baby’s father without the program. “We were on the rocks bad. We were going through a lot of arguing, and it taught me how to listen more and not cut him off every time to get my point across,” says Smith. “We are getting along a lot better as result.”

Jessie Domingo Salu, director of programs and communications of the National Crittenton Foundation, says participants have learned “how to make better decisions for themselves and their kids and be aware of relationships they are in and whether they are potentially waving red flags.”

Although Casey’s funding has ended, “most of the agencies are going to continue to implement it, and we’ll keep working with them to fine-tune it and update it,” says Jeannette Pai-Espinosa, Crittenton’s president.

When President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (better known as welfare reform), it included provisions for marriage strengthening and incentives for states to reduce teenage pregnancy. Under the leadership of Wade Horn, assistant secretary for children and families under the Bush administration, the government launched a National Healthy Marriage Initiative in 2002 and later awarded grants to 226 organizations to promote healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

The federal government also provided funding for eight sites to participate in Building Strong Families, an effort to study the effectiveness of providing relationship skills education and other support services to unwed couples who are expecting a child or have just had a baby. The Casey Foundation provided additional assistance to the Center for Urban Families from 2005 to 2010 to help it recruit families and provide services for the Baltimore site.

The first phase of an evaluation by Mathematica Policy Research showed that the program did not achieve its “primary objective of improving the stability and quality of the couples’ relationships.” Programs in six sites generally had little or no effect on relationships as compared to a control group. But a program in Oklahoma City had a consistent pattern of positive effects on relationship outcomes, while the one in Baltimore had a number of negative effects. Baltimore participants were significantly more economically disadvantaged than those in other sites.

“For me, a gap in the early strategy was that it didn’t recognize the challenges of urban low-income couples,” says Joseph Jones, president and chief executive officer of the Center for Urban Families. “The lessons we learned helped us to redouble our efforts to provide a blend of services that deal with relationship skill-building and economic circumstances.”

As a result, the Center for Urban Families received federal funding for Couples Advancing Together, which infuses topics like financial education, budgeting, child care management, and family planning into relationship building. “If you don’t address all

of these things together, you are limited,” notes Jones. “Stress related to finances can kill almost any relationship.”

Couples Advancing Together participants Ravon Davis, 24, and Denise Andrews, 21, say they are working on their workforce goals and waiting until they are more secure financially to marry. But thanks to the relationship skills they’ve learned, they are planning a future together with their infant son. Without this support, the couple says they wouldn’t have lasted five years and be living together.

“Both of us grew up without fathers,” notes Davis. “We already know what it’s like firsthand to not have your parents together.” Adds Andrews: “Our parents hated each other, and we wanted our child to have a totally different experience.”

At left, Jacqueline Stewart, a participant in YouthBuild’s healthy relationship program, talks to Ethan Rubin, a carpenter, at a building site in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At right, YouthBuild participants Karina Gonzalez (front) and Amanda Ferullo (back).





## FATHERHOOD FIGURES

They say you have to walk a mile in a man's shoes to know how he feels. But if that man is Rahiem Salaam, you might have to walk nine miles twice a day to and from the Center for Urban Families in Baltimore.

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That's what Salaam, now 45, started doing every day after he learned about the Center from his parole officer in 2007, because that's how much it meant to him to try to be a better man upon release from an 18-month prison stint.

Taking advantage of the Center's programs "seemed to me to be the best recovery in asking for forgiveness," says Salaam, who first and foremost wanted forgiveness from his 17-year-old daughter, Ikea Jawazzana. She did not appreciate visiting him behind bars. "She was highly upset with me," says Salaam. Participating in the Center's Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project "gave me the essentials to work with in communicating with her" when she was facing decisions about her life.

The program "opened the avenue for me to be more expressive with her and to share with her the mistakes I made when I left Chicago to move to Baltimore," says Salaam. His daughter is now 21 and a scholarship student at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. Salaam married for the first time last year and has benefited from the

fatherhood program's teachings in parenting his 6- and 10-year-old stepdaughters.

"It also helps me in helping other fathers," says Salaam, who serves as one of the Center's reentry mentors for other men getting back on their feet after incarceration.

Salaam, who also works as a receptionist and assistant at the Center, has benefited from its holistic approach. The Center, which receives federal support and has been a longtime Casey Foundation grantee, encompasses workforce readiness and career path skills, building strong families, reentry counseling, and helping couples support each other's workforce development while promoting healthy relationships and marriage. (See story, page 9.)

### Shifting Attitudes

While married couples in healthy relationships may offer the ideal environment for children, millions of the nation's children live with single mothers, many of whom are poor, live in disinvested neighborhoods, and don't have the father of their children actively involved in family life. The Casey Foundation began investing in responsible fatherhood in 1995, starting with a KIDS COUNT essay that identified the need for governmental attention to fathers. The report cited mounting evidence that children living without

fathers are at increased risk for multiple emotional and behavioral problems, lowered school performance, drug use, failure to complete high school, and criminal behavior.

Casey's major aspiration was to shift the punitive attitudes toward absent fathers to a policy environment that acknowledges fathers who are disconnected from their children need support—and economic opportunity—to fulfill their responsibilities. During the course of its responsible fatherhood work, the federal government's promotion of two-parent families enabled Casey to carve out a niche to ensure that culturally sensitive curricula recognizing the needs of different family arrangements were available to the field.

The Foundation pressed the view that children should have the support of both parents, regardless of whether the parents live together, and that responsible fathers who play active roles in child development and family economic success help create strong families, which lead to better outcomes for children. Casey supported investments promoting two premises: 1) fathers should take personal responsibility for their children and have the necessary resources to fulfill their parenting roles and responsibilities, and 2) policymakers should support public policies that affirm and promote responsible fatherhood.

When Casey started this work, most family policy focused largely on mothers and children, the emerging fatherhood movement was fragmented, research on effective programs was lacking, and disconnected fathers were portrayed as irresponsible and uncaring. "Casey invested in mobilizing a 'big tent' of advocates representing a number of sectors across ideological,

racial, ethnic, and gender interests," notes Paula Dressel, vice president of JustPartners, Inc., a non-profit consulting firm.

In 2005, a series of meetings launched under the leadership of Casey Program Associate Maurice Moore led to the creation of a National Fatherhood Leaders Group, which worked to build consensus among diverse players. "There were a number of people involved in this work, but there was no core national group and no cohesion," notes Moore.

Casey "contributed to building a strong field with some identifiable lead organizations, recommendations for practice, and a changed message," notes Dressel. Legislative initiatives emerging from the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations increasingly recognized "the importance of supporting fathers as part of families."

"One of the most significant accomplishments has been Casey's willingness to maintain its investments in responsible fatherhood across administrations and in periods when there were ebbs and flows in support from the Executive Branch and agencies as well as Congress," notes Joseph Jones, the president and chief executive officer of the Center for Urban Families. "Casey stayed in the game and continued to make strategic investments nationally."

A key federal commitment was the provision of \$50 million per year between 2006 and 2011 for responsible fatherhood initiatives authorized under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Congress has approved \$75 million for such programs in the 2012 budget.

This investment has helped support a variety of efforts to counsel and mentor fathers on the benefits

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of marriage and two-parent involvement for children, healthy relationship skills, domestic violence prevention, parenting education, and financial planning. It also supports activities that help fathers improve their economic status so they can better support their children.

Other important developments have included federal directives on integrating fathers in family-related work, strengthened child support policies, creation of a White House Task Force for Fatherhood and Healthy Families, an increase in state efforts to support and strengthen fathers, and fatherhood components being added in settings ranging from Head Start programs to YMCAs to correctional agencies.

With modest investments, Casey grantees have leveraged millions of dollars in federal, state, and local support. The National Center for Fathering and the National Fatherhood Initiative, for example, have provided training and programmatic assistance to congressional offices, state and local governments, and organizations and have generated positive media coverage on responsible fatherhood.

Page 12, left, Rahiem Salaam, a Center for Urban Families employee, assists client Tyrone Johnson. Right, clients Shirome Owens and Leeishya Workman. This page, left, center employees hold a mock job interview with clients; right, fatherhood program specialist Eddie Pitchford with participant Joshua Crawford. Page 15, Shirome Owens with center employees Wayne Cooper (left), mentoring coordinator, and John Laur, a social worker.

“The yield from Casey’s investments has been significant,” notes Jones.

Fatherhood programs evaluated over the past 15 years have shown a positive effect in improving co-parenting, strengthening fathers’ relationships with their children, and bolstering their prospects in terms of vocational plans and employment. National data also show that the percentage of children that have had paternity established increased from 64 percent to almost 94 percent between 1998 and 2009 and that child support collections have more than doubled since 1991, creating what has been called a “culture of compliance.” Teen births also have declined, most significantly for





African-American women but across all racial-ethnic groups, since the early 1990s.

Stacey Bouchet, who has worked as a Casey consultant on faith, healthy marriage, reentry, and fatherhood initiatives, says they all intersect around the concept of building strong families that have the right resources to best support and nurture their children. “They all converge in a meaningful way,” says Bouchet, co-director of Women in Fatherhood, a nonprofit organization Casey helped fund that promotes family and community well-being through the support of positive father involvement and healthy family relationships. “We were able to infuse in really vulnerable populations opportunities to receive the skills and knowledge they need to improve their interpersonal relationships.”

At the Center for Urban Families, 20-year-old Joshua Crawford, father of newborn son Jamiah Marley, graduated from the Center’s STRIVE employment readiness program and enrolled in the fatherhood program when his child was on the way. “I got in the program before my son was born so I could better myself,” says Crawford. Besides tips on child support, appropriate behavior around a child, and parenting techniques, Crawford says he’s learned to interact better with Jamiah’s mother. That’s no easy task when you’re stressed and sleep deprived, but his fatherhood teacher assured him the first three months of a baby’s life are the hardest on a relationship. “Ever since that day, it put a light in my head that if I can make it with her now, I can always make it with her,” Crawford says.

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**CASEY CONNECTS**

*Summer 2011*

*A newsletter published by  
The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
Deborah L. Cohen, editor  
www.aecf.org*

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*The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.*



Above, Navidad Garcia, and below, Mirtha Mendez, customers at the Providence In-town Churches Association Food Pantry in Rhode Island. The Casey Foundation has worked to improve outcomes for children by harnessing the unique strengths of the faith community.