

# Family Living

## Father To Father-Fathers Are the Solution, Not the Problem



BY CHARLES BALLARD

I see a lot of angry kids in my work, but none can match the anger of a boy I knew years ago. He was the second youngest of six children; his mother was a housewife, his father was a coal miner. As a child no more than three years old, he used to wait for his father to come up from the mine after his shift. Then one day, his father was gone. His long bouts of illness had grown worse, and he was taken away to a mental institution, an asylum. The little boy was never told where his father went, and he never saw him again. Without his father around, that boy's life go a lot harder.

When the boy grew up, he left school before he graduated, and fathered a child with a girl he had no intention of marrying. To run away, he joined the Army, but he got into trouble and ended up in prison. That angry young man is someone I knew well, because that man is who Charles Augustus Ballard used to be.

Today, I pass many angry young men on the street. Many of them have children, but few have families. Few

share a home with their sons and daughters and their children's mothers. As a society, our approach towards these invisible fathers is a mix of anger and indifference: we're ready to condemn them for their flight from responsibility, and purse them for child support. Otherwise, we look right through them.

For 22 years I've been helping these fathers. In a social services universe of trillions of dollars and overlapping and interlocking programs at a local, state, and federal level, I'm still astonished at how few programs aim to connect fathers with their children.

The vast majority of assistance programs, ranging from social services to support payments are aimed at young mothers. At best, fathers are irrelevant; invisible men, drifting in and out of their children's lives. At worst, they are a presence that can disqualify a mother for government benefits. Fathers, teen fathers especially, get the message: They are the problem. I sometimes wonder whether any of us appreciate the radical experiment we are conducting in the inner-cities of America.

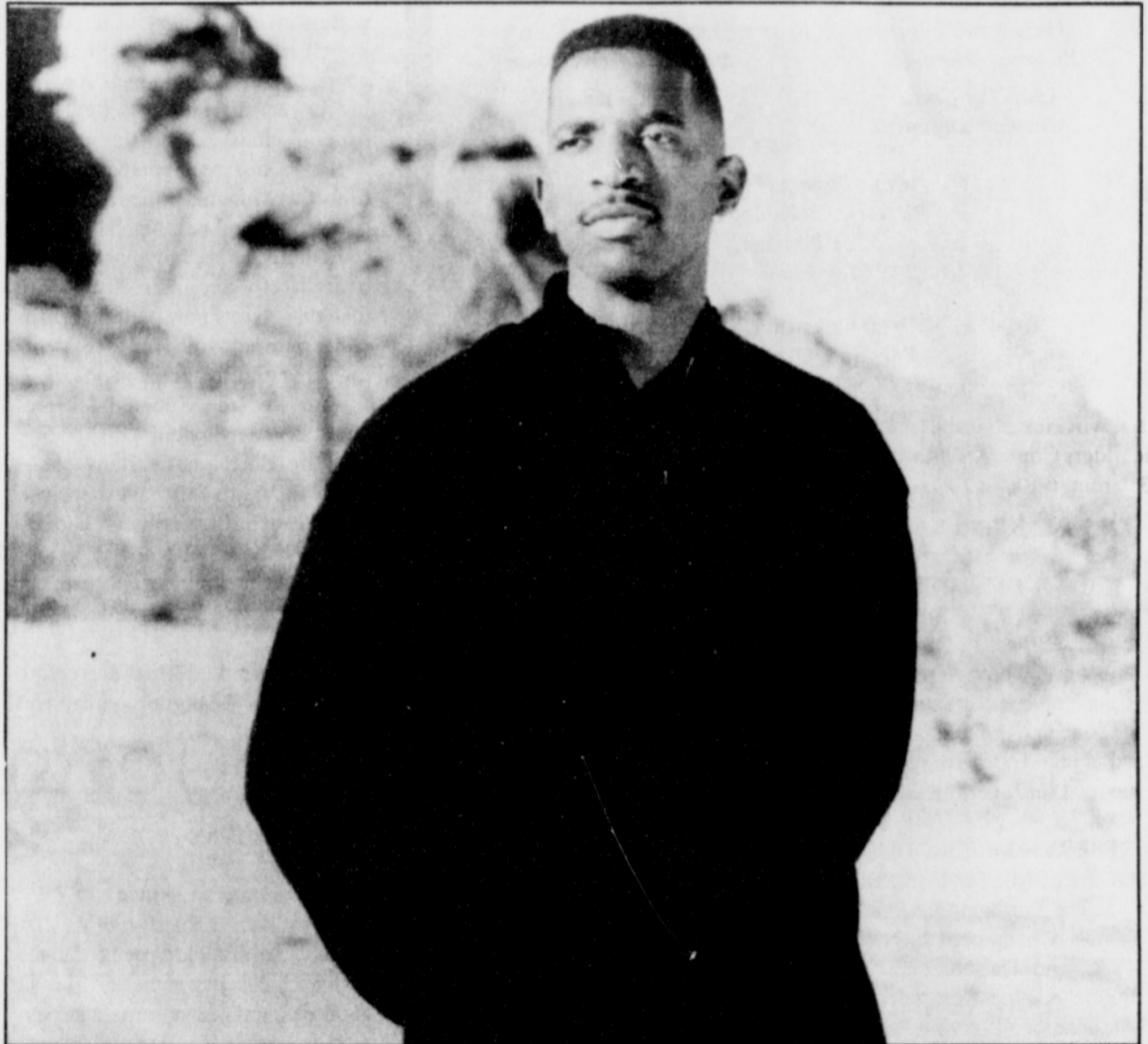
To me, the father isn't the problem. He is the solution. Look at the social pathologies that plague us today: drug abuse, homicide, gang violence and crime. Now

survey the youth who fall prey to any of all of those calamities, and ask them what role their father played in their lives or where he was when their lives took a turn for the worse. You'll find many say, "no role at all."

Even in the poorest neighborhoods, you can see a difference from one street to the next when the fathers are home. On the street where you see fathers, you'll see a safer street. That street will see less crime. It won't have a crack house on the corner or stripped cars at the curb. Most important, chances are that having a father in the family means children won't have children of their own.

When I funded the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization I had every specific goal: teaching men to be better fathers. I was inspired by the words in the book of Malachi: "...and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers." Unlike the social services system, which concentrates on symptoms of fatherlessness, with programs designed to provide material things missing because dad's not there, our centers come from a different direction. We're doing something we believe to be more meaningful, more lasting, better for both the children and the communities they live in: Giving them back loving and compassionate fathers.

## NBA Star A.C. Green Tells "Why I Have Refused Sex"



A.C. Green

In an Ebony exclusive NBA star A.C. Green tells why he has remained a virgin and why he defies the image of single NBA players. In the August Ebony.

A.C. Green says, "I choose to be abstinent because of the self respect and the high regard I have for my body." Green, 34, a star forward with the Dallas Mavericks, previously with the Phoenix Suns and the L.A. Lakers, was a member of two NBA championship teams. He tells his colleagues that they are "playing with fire" when they have sex with women

out of wedlock. "These guys have so much to lose. It's crazy to me to put yourself in that position." Green is currently the NBA's Iron Man for breaking the NBA's consecutive game streak with 907 straight games and says, "I'm not super human. I am definitely a man. I'm not perfect; but I know what's right."

Green is a native of Portland, Oregon where he owns twelve Denny's restaurants and is the author of the book, "Victory: Principles For Championship Living." Green says, "No man or woman, boy or girl, should put

their trust in a piece of rubber. A condom never stopped a person from experiencing a broken heart or a shattered dream no matter how many you put on. For Singles-SAFE SEX IS NO SEX. Period. That's a 100% guarantee."

Find out why Green is proud to be a virgin and how he stays away from tempestuous women. Also find out why he warns women about NBA players who may treat them like a piece of meat and explains that NBA sexual promiscuity is "a game within a game," in the August Ebony.

## Parenting by Grandparents, II

Many seniors are taking a second turn at parenting.

More than 3 million American children currently live with grandparents or other relatives. In nearly one-third of these households, grandparents are the primary caregivers.

"Divorce, single parent families and financial hardships are just a few of the reasons why we see more grandparents stepping back into the roles of mother or father," said Nancy Wilson, an assistant professor at the Huffington Center on Aging at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "This can be overwhelming

for many older people and cause them to neglect their own personal and health needs."

Grandparents should recognize that maintaining their own health is critical. This means following through on doctor appointments remembering to take prescription medications, getting plenty of rest, eating a healthy diet and reaching out for help when necessary.

"Talking with others who are in similar surrogate parenting roles can be very helpful," said Wilson. "It's a way to exchange ideas, vent frustrations, share information and develop friendships."

Seeking support is also a way to learn information valuable to the entire family.

Resources include the child's pediatrician, teachers and school counselors. Grandparents can also take advantage of parenting courses offered by hospitals, seniors' groups and charitable organizations.

"Caring full-time for grandchildren can be challenging, but it can also help grandparents develop unique bonds with their grandchildren and strengthen relationships that can have a lasting impact on the children," said Wilson.

## Cooking Corner

Tips To Help You

### Cranberry-Oat Muffins

(NAPS)—Those who prefer fitness to fatness may delight in this delicious recipe by Ms. L. Paula, recipe contest winner at the Kansas State Fair.

It uses Country Crock Churn Style, which has a rich, creamy, sweet, fresh-from-the-farm butter taste, but with less fat than butter or margarine, and no cholesterol.



### CRANBERRY-OAT MUFFINS

- ¾ cup fresh or frozen cranberries, halved
- ½ cup confectioners sugar
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- 2 Tablespoons wheat-germ
- ½ cup oats
- 1 egg, well-beaten
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 6 Tablespoons Shedd's Spread Country Crock Churn Style\*

Preheat oven to 375°F. Mix the cranberries with confectioners sugar; set aside. Sift the dry ingredients into a large bowl. Stir in the wheat germ and oats, make a well. In another bowl, mix the egg, buttermilk and melted Shedd's Spread Country Crock Churn Style. Add all at once, stir with a fork, only until moistened. Fold in cranberries. Fill greased muffin tins two-thirds full. Bake for 25 minutes or until done when tested with a wooden pick and golden brown. Remove to cooling rack. Makes 12 muffins. ©



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