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2NOT1 picnic honors involved dads, calls on fathers to act

By Darla Carter • dcarter@courier-journal.com • June 20, 2010

Shawn Gardner dreams of a day when single mothers no longer have to take credit for being both a mother and a quasi-father to their children.

Even though moms often try to be a replacement for absentee fathers, "there's something about being around a man ... and that's what a lot of these young men are missing," Gardner said during a Father's Day picnic at Shelby Park on Sunday.

The picnic was organized by 2NOT1 Fatherhood & Families, a grass-roots organization that Gardner founded to provide support and educational opportunities, such as workshops, to dads who want to be a driving force in their children's lives, whether they live with them or not.

The event attracted more than 80 people, including several fathers and their children, for an afternoon filled with food and games, including flag football.

Many of the children also took advantage of the park's spray fountains and an inflatable jungle gym.

The second annual event was designed not only as a way to celebrate the holiday, but also to allow men to see what they should

be doing as men, said Gardner, 36, of Louisville.

It's normal for men to spend time with their children, but some people have come to see it as just the opposite, said Gardner, who is the father of four girls: Tiye, 13; Nicole, 10; Malia, 8; and Sydney, 6.

"When you're with your kids have you ever heard someone say, 'You're baby sitting?' or 'You're playing Mr. Mom?'" he said to event-goers who'd gathered in a shady picnic shelter for opening remarks and prayers. It's time to get past the notion of "playing father," he said.

Dads in the crowd included Anthony Smith, 41, of Louisville, who attended the event with his 12-year-old son, Chase.

"We (fathers) like to relax, but I think one of the best ways we bond with our children is that we just like to have fun," said Smith, a member of 2NOT1's board. "We like to do fun things. We like to help them burn energy, so I just think this is a great idea.

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It's an easy way for kids to be able to do something with their father."

Society often is focused on fathers who are not doing right by their children, Smith said, but the picnic provides an opportunity for kids to show good fathers they are appreciated.

Neil Brents II, 11, who helped to open the event with a prayer in honor of dads, later praised his father, also named Neil Brents, to a reporter by saying, "He's the greatest."

Some mothers, including Gardner's former wife, Kaia, also were on hand to salute the dads.

"We always need to support our men, especially in our culture and in our neighborhoods," she said.

Reporter Darla Carter can be reached at (502) 582-7068.



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JaCory Brents tries to get away from Davetrick Smith during a game of flag football at the 2NOT1 Fatherhood & Families Father's Day picnic in Shelby Park. (By David R. Lutman, special to The Courier-Journal) June 20, 2010



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DeShon Washington, Sr. enjoys some food and chat with his son, DeShon Jr., age 11, at the 2NOT1 Fatherhood & Families Father's Day picnic in Shelby Park. (By David R. Lutman, special to The Courier-Journal) June 20, 2010

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