

## My Hero and Me

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*Literacy, Inc.  
New York, New York*

**A**s fathers, grandfathers, and godfathers entered the Head Start Center for the My Hero and Me workshop series, they were greeted by a male volunteer who set the tone for a father-friendly setting. Literacy, Inc. (LINC) worked with the Builders for Family and Youth Head Start program to create the eight-week series of workshops that promoted men's involvement in children's learning. The series included workshops in reading, writing, math, and basic carpentry, as well as a trip to the zoo.

On each My Hero and Me workshop evening, male greeters welcomed the men, provided them with informative handouts, and escorted them to the room designated for the activities. The fathers, grandfathers, and godfathers began each evening with dinner, conversation, and a chance to read through the handouts. The Head Start Family Worker reviewed the handouts and answered any questions. Head Start teachers conducted the 45-minute workshops. The first workshop featured a male presenter who had experience in working with men's groups. All workshops were designed to be hands-on and exciting, in an effort to keep interest high. The final ceremony featured a male keynote speaker.

The Literacy Committee took charge of planning the series. They purchased posters depicting men and their children from [www.fatherhood.com](http://www.fatherhood.com) to help publicize the activity. The Head Start Family Worker assisted the committee throughout the planning and implementation process.

LINC solicited local organizations to provide workshops for the men. This gave lo-

cal organizations and merchants business promotion, and made it easier for Head Start to sustain community collaborations. The local Assemblyman provided the men with t-shirts for the Bronx Zoo trip. The Councilwoman supplied buses for transportation. Several merchants assisted with meals. Head Start custodians helped with the set-up and clean-up for each workshop.

Since the series of workshops, more men are volunteering in the classrooms. Wives have noted that the fathers are helping more around the house and are spending more time with their children. The fathers have used the workshop activities at home with their children. One mother noted, "This is the first time my husband took my younger son out."

Teachers appreciated the opportunity to share with fathers and other male caregivers more insight into the children's daily learning activities. Many of the fathers remarked that they now understand why their child uses certain words or why their child is tired after school.

The My Hero and Me workshop series touched the lives of children, fathers, male caregivers, and everyone involved. As the Head Start Commissioner expressed, "These workshops didn't just allow males to bond but taught them how to bond with their children."

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