

## DADS: Dads, Art, and Donuts with Students

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*Parents Plus*

*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

With the help of Parents Plus, a federally funded Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) in Wisconsin, John Muir Middle School put together an event that drew dads to school and left a good taste in their mouths.

Donuts with Dad was more than a breakfast drop-in, however. It included an art project that the men worked on with their children and a speaker who discussed the roles of fathers and other male role models in children's lives. "It was a perfect way to bring a school, a community organization, and parents together for a positive purpose," said the representatives of Parents Plus who organized the event.

The art project was a lively activity. School staff took digital photos of the students with their father or guest and printed them on white T-shirts. The school also provided paint and other materials so that the artistic pairs could further decorate the shirts. "Students were able to see their fathers involved in their school life, which is generally an activity where mothers dominate," said the organizers.

Alfonso Pettis of the Milwaukee Fatherhood Collaboration spoke to the men, addressing the difficulty of maintaining a strong relationship with their children, but stressing the value of overcoming the hurdles and hassles along the way. The 50 men who attended "got a chance to talk about the challenges they all face and hear that they were not alone. The men got a chance to speak passionately about their children," said the organizers.

Pettis gave the fathers information about community resources that can help them with issues such as child support and visitation rights. As an added attraction, the collaboration held a drawing for tickets to Milwaukee Bucks games for fathers and students.

Parents Plus followed the successful "Donuts with Dad" with a "Muffins for Mom" event at the middle school. Events such as these are among many that the resource center sponsors in Milwaukee schools to develop positive parenting skills and to improve student achievement by increasing parent involvement in schools.

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