

https://www.thetimes-tribune.com/news/fathers-find-support-help-through-scrantons-outreach-center/article_f1fca636-d18e-5c94-9305-0ef229c9f3fc.html

FEATURED

Fathers find support, help through Scranton's Outreach center

BY SARAH HOFIUS HALL STAFF WRITER
Jun 18, 2023

4 of 5



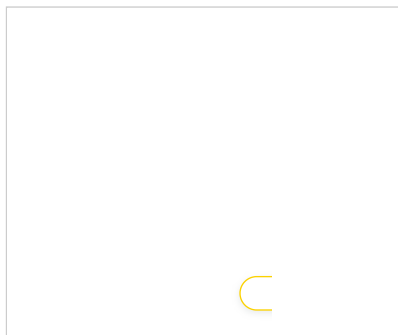
SCRANTON — Keenan Lewis climbs the stairs to the second-floor apartment in Minooka.

Olivia Duran greets him at the door, diving into Lewis' bag full of coloring sheets, games and toys.

The 3-year-old and her father, Daniel Duran, sit on the living room rug, coloring and laughing together. Lewis, a family development specialist with the Outreach Center for Community Resources, offers the father tips and advice.

Olivia loves the attention, while her father learns to be a better dad.

"Dads are very important," the 33-year-old Duran said. "I've had a past, but it doesn't define who I am as a person and a father. I truly trust this process."



Outreach, based in Scranton, wants a region full of stronger dads. In the last year, the organization has expanded its programs for fathers, including starting a support group and increasing father involvement in family offerings, such as the program that brings Lewis to Duran's apartment every other week.

Lewis joined the center's Parents as Teachers program in the fall, as the first male to hold the role. Lewis also helps lead the father support group.

"I remember being trained under another coworker of mine and noticing the possibility of changing families' trajectories in life," Lewis said. "Within the household, each member of the family has an important role. ... I think the community's fathers will see an opportunity for change on various levels."

New programs

Research shows numerous benefits for a child having an involved father. Children are at lower risk for: emotional and behavioral problems; neglect and abuse; poor school performance; criminal activity; and substance abuse, according to the National Fatherhood Initiative.

Outreach offers court-related services for prison and reentry, workforce development and parent-child programs, including home visits, family reunification and play groups. Staff members began hearing from families last year that fathers needed more support, so Outreach got to work.

The support group for fathers began meeting, and home visitors made greater efforts to include fathers in activities. A roundtable discussion with community partners earlier this year led to ideas, and staff placed information inside area elementary schools. Interest from fathers in the region grew.

"Strong families build strong communities. We all genuinely believe that here," said Lori Chaffers, Outreach executive director. "We want to see that impact. We know it will have long-term ripple effects for these kids and the kids around them."

Finding support

A sign in front of the room at Outreach's Seventh Avenue center reminds dads of the rules.

Listen attentively. No judgment. Speak from experience. Confidentiality.

Over plates of pulled pork sandwiches last week, the men discussed challenges and triumphs, preschool ratings and bedtime routines.

A diverse group of nearly 20 men — many single, some in recovery and a few with legal troubles — attend the support group regularly. Childcare is available.

"This is like nothing I've ever experienced before," said Bob Acobe, who has been in recovery for more than 20 years. "We're all just trying to help each other."

The 54-year-old dad, who has custody of his 12-year-old daughter, said the men help each other be better people.

"It's a way to give men a chance to change the narrative," he said.

Duran often helps lead the discussion during the support group.

"I have a lot of friends who are dads, and some aren't in their children's lives because of some of the choices they've made in their lives," he said. "Some have made bad choices, but they can come back and be stronger and better than ever."

Too Much Belly Fat? Top Cardiologists Share A Surprising Tip For Bedtime
WellnessGuide101.com | Sponsored

[Read Next Story >](#)

Duran spent time in prison and battled addiction. His focus has now shifted to doing what's best for his 3-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son.

"I want other dads to know they're worthy," Duran said. "It's possible for them, whatever they want in their lives."

Contact the writer: shofius@timeshamrock.com; 570-348-9133; [@hofiusHallTT](https://twitter.com/hofiusHallTT) on Twitter.

Start a dialogue, stay on topic and be civil.
If you don't follow the rules, your comment may be deleted.

User Legend:  Moderator  Trusted User

Loading...

Too Much Belly Fat? Top Cardiologists Share A Surprising Tip For Bedtime
WellnessGuide101.com | Sponsored

[Read Next Story >](#)

Support group

Outreach's fathers support group will meet on June 28 and then take a summer break. Dinner begins at 5 p.m., with the group discussion from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Meetings are held at the Outreach office at 431 N. 7th Ave., Scranton.

Registration is required by calling 570-558-7584 or emailing cgula@outreachworks.org.

Sarah Hofius Hall

Sarah has covered education for The Times-Tribune since 2006. [Read More...](#)

Too Much Belly Fat? Top Cardiologists Share A Surprising Tip For Bedtime
WellnessGuide101.com | Sponsored

Read Next Story >