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Jarma Wrihten: Okay. Well, hi, Daniel, and welcome. We're happy to have you here today; actually I'm real thrilled and excited. I always say happy, but I'm thrilled and excited to have you here today because you're representing the dads. Dan Tripp: Yes.

Jarma: And we know now that -- well, we've always known that dads have a unique role in the lives of their children, in their growth and development, and in all the areas of getting kids ready for school and -- and -- and life. And so, today I'd like to hear your points of view and your story about being a dad in the home, and your position on how you become a Head Start father, and what Head Start has done to help you.

Dan: Well, I've -- I'm lucky to have a -- a 27-year-old. I never got to be around him because I was -- I was always in trouble. I was young, and it took me 25 years to decide, "Well, I want another -- another child." I wound up meeting this -- a wonderful lady that I'm with now. We're not married yet, but I want to get married, and we have a three-year old son.

Well, she works for Early Head Start, and that's how I wound up getting involved with Early Head Start. Was -- I was going to the parent meetings with my son, and they elected me to be on the Policy Council. So that -- that's one -- one of the ways that I wound up getting involved. And I go to school with my son. I participate with him at school. All of his little friends -- everybody in his school is his friend. "This is my friend."

He don't know their names, all of them, there he just calls them "my friend." They come and they play around with me, you know. They -- and -- and he'll go, and he'll disappear. He'll go do his own little thing and it -- it's -- it's really fun being around all them kids, and teaching them and playing with them and...

I -- I have a lot of fun with the -- with the program, but I don't see no fathers, and I -- I'd like to -- like to be able to get more fathers involved, you know. The mothers bring them to -- to school, you know, and it might be because the fathers have to go to work. But -- and I've seen fathers drop them off, but when it's time to pick the children back up, it's somebody else in the family that has to pick -- pick the children up, because they have to work. And we have father nights once a month where we have pizza and we do stuff with -- with children -- with the children, you know.

And last year, we had one that was a father -- a father night. A Night at the Movies, we called it. We took -- took cardboard boxes, and we had different -- different materials to work with. We made little cars, and the kids sat in their boxes and watched a movie. And -- and, you know, we had pizza and -- you know, it was -- it was real -- real interesting. Jarma: So having that opportunity to be engaged with your child in Head Start has been meaningful for you?

Dan: Yes. Yeah, it's helped me a lot on -- on wanting to teach him -- teach him to have a better education, because I didn't have that education when I was a kid. I read at a sixth-grade level, and it's hard for me to comprehend what I read. I want him to -- to not be like that, the way I was -- the way I was with my education. I was -- all the way through high school, through grade school, elementary, junior high, my books were recorded for -- for I could learn -- learn what -- what I should have in -- in school.

And I want him to have a better opportunity to -- to be able to -- to learn and -- and it's helped him out a lot. He is very smart for being three years old. I -- I shared -- the other day I shared pictures with -- with Thomas -- and he was going to put them in his presentation yesterday, but we ran out of time -- where my son was shaving in his -- in the mirror, you know. Jarma: [Laughing]

Dan: He's -- he's -- he's only two -- he was two years old, he was shaving in the mirror. I showed him pictures of him

working in my workshop. He was putting screws in the rafters because my little workshop is a metal building. It's got metal rafters, and he's putting these screws in these holes, and he was doing stuff like that in this videos.

And then I was airing up a tire -- well, he was helping me air up that tire. I give him the air hose. He took the air hose; he put it on the valve stem. He knew what -- exactly what to do with this hose, you know. What he was -- what he was doing, and he -- he thinks he was a big guy. [Laughing]

Jarma: Absolutely. All those things, they are so treasurable, and you have to keep those. And you're taking all the videos -- the video pictures and then regular still photos. Dan: Yep. Jarma: But you're a real role model.

Dan: Yeah. Jarma: Believe it or not, you are your son's role model. Dan: Yeah. Jarma: Everything you do and say, he's emulating you. So he's acting as if he is you, and walking in your shoes. So what's the one thing -- the most valuable thing you do want to teach him as a father?

Dan: How to be a good father, a good provider, be there for his kids. I -- I was -- I was raised with my father; I was raised without my mother. I didn't know my mother for 40 years. I'm 47. She wound up losing custody of me because she was into drugs and stuff. Well, a little bit of that rubbed off onto me, and it took me up 'til I was 21 to realize I didn't want this.

I had never got to see my son 'til he was eight -- he was... I met my son -- he's 27. He was -- he was 23 when I finally met him, and I didn't want -- want to do that -- live through that again, because this is -- it's horrible, you know. It's a horrible feeling.

Jarma: It's an experience, but you should be proud of yourself today because you've made those connections, you have your young one now, and he's following after Dad, so you've done everything you could do. So how do you think you've turned your -- not so much turned your life around, but added to your personal and professional goals as a result of the experiences you've had?

Dan: Well, it's -- it's helped me out a whole lot. You know, it's -- I don't want to follow -- I don't want to follow the -- the footsteps I -- that I had been doing. And it took me 25 years to realize it -- or 23 years to realize that. And -- and when I found out that I was going to have a son, I was -- I was joyful, you know, and I wanted to be there. I want to -- I want to teach him.

Jarma: Okay, and you -- and I think you're doing a great job. You sound like -- everything that you're doing now sounds wonderful. What advice -- as we begin to bring this to a close, what advice would you give to other fathers across the nation about being involved in the lives of their children?

Dan: I think fathers should be involved with them because it's a -- it's a -- it's a good asset to have your -- have your -- your -- your male role models in -- in your life. They should -- they should get involved with -- with the -- the child's education, what he's doing, his -- his education, what he's doing in school, how he's doing, you know. A -- a -- a father always wants him to just do sports, you know. Let him learn how to cook. I'm a very well -- very good cook. I'm a better cook than my girlfriend is. [Laughing]

Jarma: [Laughing] Dan: So I do all the cooking at home. You know, a father needs to -- to be involved in all that stuff. Get involved with -- with their education especially, because that's -- push them towards bettering themselves, go to college.

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