

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Angel Ortiz: Hello, my name is Angel Ortiz. I'm a father; my daughter goes to South Hampton Head Start. How I got involved was -- it's pretty interesting 'cause what happened was my daughter's mother and I had went through a separation and she had lived out about 45 minutes away from where I -- I lived.

And it was difficult to see my daughter every day, and when I got to see her it was just -- it was emotional sometimes because it was something that I was going through, a transition from being with the family and now being a single father. And how I made it happen by getting in -- involved in -- in Head Start was going out to the school once in a while, you know, as much as time as I had. And between work, I would go out there and read a book to the class, sit in the circle time, have breakfast with them. And I saw the impact that I was making on my daughter just by like walking into the room and my daughter just running up to me and embracing me.

I just knew that it was something that -- that this was the beginning of, you know, something that I -- I knew I wanted to be involved with. And, again, what made me interested in the program was that they had a fatherhood program that I was able to be involved with. I thought -- I always thought as -- as a parent that it was only PTA, and by having a Fatherhood meeting it made me interested in becoming more involved with the program because I know it's very important for a child, boy or girl, to have a father just as a role model. And I wanted to be that role model for my daughter.

And I just wanted to become a better person, and I felt that Fatherhood really opened that -- that door for me to becoming more involved in my child's life because I was able to hear other stories, whether they were similar to mine or... I could -- you know, most of them I could relate to, because a lot of fathers are -- are in this program that are -- are single fathers and we were able to -- to share our stories and our experiences.

The only -- what I've learned also is -- and is -- is the fact that being involved in my daughter's life and being involved in her school, I was able to also share that with my own personal friends. Some of the friends that I had may have not been involved in -- in their child's life and -- and by me sharing my stories and my experience, it kind of influenced them to becoming more involved in their kid's life.

Again, you know, being that I'm not, you know, living with my daughter, it is tough. But, again, Fatherhood gave me a lot of educational material, literature that was able to strengthen that bond between my daughter and I. Just by making a simple phone call after school, just seeing what she learned for that day, what did she do, what did she eat, it just changed a lot, you know. And that's where I really appreciate the experience that I have with Head Start and the Fatherhood, and I wish that every father goes through that same experience of just embracing, you know, the -- the impact that they can make on their child's life.

And the only tip that I have for other fathers is that -- to really enjoy the moment, because the next thing you know your child -- they'll be starting preschool and then now they'll be getting married or they'll be going to college or something. And that's -- that's when you know -- that's when you know that life is just -- it can flash by really quick. So my -- my tip to fathers is that -- to continue being involved, whether you're married or not. It's very important for every child to have a father.

It's too many -- too many brothers out there that are just not really coming through, and -- and that's what gives us a bad name, a bad rep sometimes. And that's where I -- I'm here to really make that a -- a point that I'm -- I'm involved in my daughter's life, and -- and I encourage every father and I support every father that's involved in Fatherhood. Thank you.

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-- Premalink for viewing (requires Flash and javascript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000012-Angel+Ortiz+Parent+Interview-2010-Year-SD360p/208f59c96884ew44dc1936f1993a160fd75b>