



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

— *Lee Holloway* —

Chairman of the Board

June 18, 2007

For Immediate Release

Contact: Harold Mester, Public Information Manager

414/278-4051 or harold.mester@milwcnty.com

**BRINGING FATHERS AND SONS TOGETHER:
POSITIVE FAMILY ROLE MODELS HELP FIGHT CRIME IN MILWAUKEE**

It's time for the fathers we honored yesterday to step up to the plate and help their sons

Milwaukee, WI – Milwaukee County Board Chairman Lee Holloway is encouraging fathers to take an active role in their children's lives, saying strong, positive role models can lead to a reduction in violent crime in the City of Milwaukee. "Yesterday, we honored fathers in Milwaukee County. But today, we ask fathers to do their jobs. It's time for them to step forward, embrace their children, and contribute to their family and society," Chairman Holloway said during a news conference this afternoon.

"Many children in Milwaukee have grown up with no consistent man in their lives," Chairman Holloway acknowledged. "They are missing out on the ingredients necessary to help them grow up to be responsible and productive members of our society. Fathers play a crucial role in the well-being of their sons."

Albert Holmes, President and Co-Founder of the Milwaukee Fatherhood Collaborative told reporters, "Crime, teen pregnancy, school dropouts and almost all negative social indicators can be traced to the lack of a positive family role model."

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* recently featured a series of articles outlining crime crews that are damaging central-city neighborhoods in Milwaukee. The articles detailed many cases where young men had grown up without a father figure ever coming into the picture.

"At least 85% of young males incarcerated come from fatherless homes," Reverend LeHavre Buck of the Milwaukee-based Center for Self-Sufficiency said recently. "If you're a child with no father living at home, how do you expect to grow up to become something that you've never seen? It takes a man to raise a boy that becomes a man. A mother can be a good mom, but it takes a male to fill the role of a responsible father. We must figure out ways to keep fathers involved in a positive way early on."

In 1989, the paternity establishment rate in Milwaukee County was below 60%. Now, it's over 90%. Establishing paternity gives fathers the right to be involved in their children's lives. "That's when they become responsible fathers," said Lisa Jo Marks, Milwaukee County's Child Support Enforcement Director. "Many times, men take a more active role in their children's lives when they are forced to pay child support. That's why it's so important for our office to establish paternity."

"Establishing paternity can assist in fighting crime," Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr., said earlier. "People are less likely to get involved in crime if they have a good relationship with their father." Supervisor Elizabeth Coggs-Jones added, "When a father has a job, kids benefit from that positive role model. Those are the types of people our kids should look up to, rather than criminals who murder and deal drugs."

"While police are important in tackling Milwaukee's crime problem, creating a police state in Milwaukee could take resources away from child support enforcement," Chairman Holloway concluded. "We need to do everything we can to make sure our children have responsible fathers who will keep them away from crime and violence."