



With fathers being honored this month, it got me thinking about this question:

How many dads have I had?

I am lucky enough to say that I have had more than one father. I have a wonderful relationship with my dad. But I also have shared important moments with men who temporarily filled a fatherly role when, for whatever reason, mine could not. These men were there when I needed them. They helped shape who I am today.

Not everyone can say they've had a father who was present in their lives. And others may say the father they did have was not worthy of the title. But I think it's important to recognize those who willingly served as father figures when they were needed most. The times in my life that role has been held by a teacher, a coach, a neighbor, a friend's dad...you know those types. We can recognize them across the course of our lives by how we have looked to them for guidance, wisdom, support, and protection.

Recently, I read a story about such father figures that really resonated with me. In celebration of Father's Day, I hope this story inspires you to reflect on how powerful an effect the presence a father figure can have.

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Within the first three weeks of the school year at Southwood High School in Louisiana, 23 students were arrested, expelled, or suspended due to fighting. As a result, a heavy police presence began to take root at the school, which only served to make the students feel less safe. So, the principal held an emergency meeting with parents to discuss solutions on what could be done.

The group bounced ideas off each other for a few hours without success. How could they ensure their kids' safety while at the same time making the school a relaxed and enjoyable place to be?

Then, one father had an idea: Who better to solve this problem than **us**?

Five fathers volunteered to be a rotating presence. They called themselves "Dads on Duty." Dads started by going to the school in a group to monitor the hallways. It expanded when they started *talking* to the students and making sure they got to class on time. They even shared a few (terrible) dad jokes.

Students didn't welcome them with open arms right away, but they warmed up to them. But then the "Dads" went above that call of duty, by investing in the students' success. They actively engaged in discussions with the students on entrepreneurship and alternatives to gang culture. They inspired these kids by focusing on their goals and helping out with home life. Even with those who were not their own flesh and blood.

This group of five eventually became 40. All volunteer their time to cover daily shifts. As one of these *founding fathers* explained, "Because there are some folks who don't have a father or don't have such a great relationship with their father, and it's our goal to let them see what the right relationship with a male figure is supposed to look like"<sup>1</sup>

Just having these dads on campus made a *huge* difference with both the students and faculty. The fighting and misbehavior declined – and student morale rose. More and more, the students, teachers, and parents bonded with and supported each other.

Fights have been almost nonexistent since these dads went ‘on duty’. It has created such a huge impact in the community that the mayor wants to implement the program city-wide. And the “Dads on Duty” want to expand across schools all over Louisiana and then go nationwide.

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What a difference a dad makes. While my own father holds a significant place in my heart, I know that other men I’ve encountered have also shaped my journey through their influence.

I think the lesson for all of us is, it doesn’t take a lot of effort to make a difference in someone’s life. In this case, it was just a few people who consistently gave time, a lot of love, and (maybe) some well-placed dad jokes.

And while I will be spending time this Father’s Day honoring my own dad, I will also be spending some of that time acknowledging those men who were “Dads on Duty” during a critical moment in my life – and who played a role in shaping the person I am today.

I hope that you will do the same.

On behalf of everyone on my team, I wish you a happy Father’s Day!

Sincerely,



Barbara B. Hudock, CIMA®, CPM®  
Chief Executive Officer  
Founding Partner

<sup>1</sup>“Fights erupted at a high school in Louisiana. So these dads took matters in their own hands,” *CNN*, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/29/us/dads-on-duty-louisiana-school-cec/index.html>