

# FATHERING STRONG

*Helping Fathers Build a Better World for Children and Families*



**Powered  
by**



*Turning the hearts of fathers to their children.*

501(c)3 31-1451586

## Introduction

Nearly 18.5 million U.S. children are living in homes absent their biological fathers. Needless to say, that's not good.

It is a well-researched fact that kids with a dad at home perform better in school than their father-absent peers. Such children tend to also be in better health – emotionally, behaviorally, and physically. They are less likely to abuse drugs, to be poor, or to get into trouble with authorities. The very best thing for children is for their dads and moms to lovingly raise their children together. Too often, tragically, the dad and the love are missing.

Realistically, today a traditional family is not a possibility for many boys and girls. The failure of families to form, divorce, incarceration, and many other causes leave kids without the parenting support they need to grow up healthy, safe and ready to thrive. The research is clear that those children are far better off when their live-away fathers are consistently and healthily involved in co-parenting them. Unless they are a danger to their children, all fathers should be encouraged, equipped, and supported as valued parents, whether they live with their kids or not.

## Statement of Need

The growing youth mental health crisis, an opioid epidemic, among other things point to a society in deep trouble. Mass shootings, which have become increasingly common in recent years, have claimed the lives of over 200 individuals and injured over 12,000, a shocking number of whom were children and teens. Fatherlessness is at the root of the crises. The following is an excerpt from the 2023 publication *Fathering Strong – The Real Epidemic Today*, page 8.

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Researchers concluded that children with a positive psychosocial influence are less likely to engage in mass violence. In 2016, psychologist Dr. Peter Langman compiled biographical data on 56 American school shooters. He found that 82% had grown up in dysfunctional family situations, usually without two biological parents at home. The trend sadly continues. The shooter in Uvalde, Texas had not lived with his father in years. The Sandy Hook shooter hadn't seen his father in the two years leading up to that massacre.



Over the years, various fatherhood initiatives have endeavored to strengthen the institution of fatherhood with minimal impact upon the culture. A new approach is needed to create a 21st century culture that embraces fatherhood, and engages, encourages, and equips fathers to excel at effective fathering. A strategy that directly reaches and edifies individual fathers while building community among them, facilitating peer support and enables skill-building will be more effective over time. To do that, fathers must be reached where they are – on their mobile devices. In the past 12 months approximately one-quarter million searches of Urban Light's website for fatherhood resources have demonstrated the need.



## Organizational History

Urban Light Ministries (ULM) is a nonprofit organization established in 1995 in Springfield, Ohio serving children and families. Starting with local fatherhood classes in 2006, ULM progressed to leading the Miami Valley Partnership for Fathers in 2008. The regional project comprised four organizations serving fathers in 11 centers across 5 counties. In 2011, ULM began what became a model of community mobilization in Clark County. In the decade 2009 to 2019, ULM served an average of 500 fathers per year throughout the Dayton region in various settings including jails, prisons, social service agencies, churches, schools, and in our own facilities.

Program participants gained tools for nurturing parenting, relationship building, and personal growth. James C, one of the participants stated: *"Out of the 13-week course, I've learned how to communicate with my kids without being intimidating or abusive. I've learned to listen to their needs... not only with my kids, but also with other people, and with my kids' mother. I listen to their thoughts versus being demanding or controlling."*

In 2019, ULM began offering online programming, including daily and weekly fatherhood devotionals, fatherhood courses, informative blog articles, and more. The organization's 2020 strategic plan called for development of online and mobile resources to engage more fathers. The COVID-19 pandemic added urgency to the project. Research and planning for Fathering Strong have proceeded since then. After 12 months utilizing digital marketing strategies, the ULM website has generated approximately 250,000 searches for fatherhood resources and information. The Fathering Strong project is nearing beta launch stage.

## Project Goal

1,000 (83% of engaged) fathers will self-report an increase in their knowledge of best parenting practices, a deepening of their commitment to effective parenting, improvement in their co-parenting skills, or other advancement.

## Project Objectives

By 12 months from official launch, ULM's Fathering Strong project will engage 1,200 fathers in online communities where they are regularly inspired and equipped to be their best as nurturing dads for the sake of their children and families.

- Launch and continue development of the Fathering Strong website (beta) where dads will discover helpful information and resources for enriching their parenting and relationship skills.
  - Fathers join online communities with others facing similar challenges.
  - Fathers enroll in courses to develop new parenting skills, self-study or group.
- Launch and continue development of the Fathering Strong mobile app (beta).
  - Fathers receive regular notifications of resources available on the website and events in their geographic local area.
  - Fathers engage in chats with other dads for mutual edification and encouragement.
  - Fathers contribute posts and articles.
- Continue to build the resources available on Fathering Strong while bringing on new partners.
- Leverage digital marketing strategies, including the Google Ad Grant to promote and grow Fathering Strong reach and impact.

## Timeline

12 months from start date. Following the official launch of the website and mobile app, the project will phase in additional features.

## Budget Summary

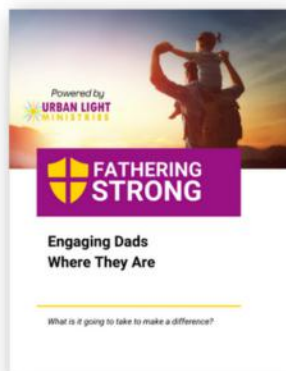
The total cost of the Fathering Strong launch project is \$276,600. Urban Light Ministries has committed \$76,600 to the project and we are seeking \$100,000 from grant makers. We are asking individuals, churches and corporate sponsors to fund \$100,000 of the project budget. Our organization's annual budget is \$420,000.



## Future Funding

The ongoing costs of Fathering Strong will be defrayed by project income generation. Although there will be no cost to participating fathers for the basic membership, there will be charges for some resources.

- Resource Sales
  - Books, branded items such as hats, tees and mugs.
- Premium Access
  - Practitioners' Portal for professionals
  - Business Portal for corporate partners
- Conferences
  - Event Sponsorships
  - Exhibitor fees
  - Registration fees
- Donations
  - Members
  - Others
- Grants
  - Foundations
  - Corporate



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