

# 'Sensational 60' named in Fatherhood Initiative

BY ASIA AIKINS  
*Palatka Daily News*

According to the National Fatherhood Initiative and the U.S. Census Bureau, one out of every three children in America lives in a home where the biological father is absent. This weekend, the Palatka Housing Authority will highlight not one, but 60 fathers in the community who are working to change this statistic.

The PHA and Heart of Putnam Coalition will celebrate fathers and father figures at the Fatherhood Initiative Father's Day celebration Saturday, from 10 a.m. until noon at the James A. Long Community Center and Park.

"The Sensational 60" was the result of a campaign to collect nominations for "dedicated, confident, loving, determined and unstoppable" fathers for the PHA's annual Fatherhood Initiative celebration. After less than a month of outreach, the PHA accepted 60 nominations for honorees throughout the community.

"We wanted to honor fathers," said PHA Director of Resident Services Aaron



CHRIS DEVITTO / Palatka Daily News

Fatherhood Initiative nominees stand near the Palatka Housing Authority buildings.

Robinson, accentuating the 's' in fathers. "Not just one Father of the Year like we did last year."

The celebration would bring together fathers, biological or not, empowering

each other and inspiring younger fathers to step up and be in their children's lives, Robinson said.

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Fatherhood Initiative nominees hold hands during a prayer near the Palatka Housing Authority buildings.

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# Fathers

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"Through this initiative, some of the fathers have actually grown interested in what's happening at the housing authority and in the community as a whole," he said. "There have been many benefits. This is something that is growing."

Last year's Father of the Year, Charles Cue, will join business owners, doctors, educators, ministers, law enforcement officers and everyday dads, making up what Robinson is calling The Sensational 60.

"Here we are, men of different ages, races, creeds, coming together to do something positive," said Terrill Hill, one of the honorees. "There's a lot of wisdom out here and we have to capitalize on it."

David Spell's seven children nominated him through their schools. The children and his wife, Ana, surprised David with the honor Wednesday morning as he arrived at the PHA main office for a photo with fellow honorees.

"They just told me to come here (PHA main office), and I was trying to think about why I would need to be here," he said. "It was a good surprise."

David and Ana have four children of their own, but also accepted custody of three additional children. The children are 13, 10, 10, 8, 8, 7 and 5 years old.

"Can you imagine doing homework with seven kids?" David asked. "But they are the greatest gifts

in the world."

Destiny Spell, 13, said she likes her dad because he lets her practice her magic tricks with him.

"He's awesome," she said. "He gives us everything we want and he's funny."

David, who has lived in Palatka for 40 years, said he and Ana work together in raising the children, splitting homework help and daily activities.

"We try to tell them that hard work pays off," Ana said.

Ralph Dallas Jr., another honoree, said recognizing "the creator" and having stability in the home are very important factors in raising children.

"Kids need a stable raising, parents that stuck with them, mother and father," he said. "We had no choice in us being where we were put in life, but we can make a difference in our everyday lives."

The honorees shared contact information Wednesday, and said they plan to continue the initiative beyond the Father's Day celebration.

"We're losing to many kids to crime, death," said PHA Executive Director John Nelson, Jr. "The only thing to stop it is for us to step up and lead as men."

Fathers who are not honorees are invited to attend Saturday's celebration. The event will begin with a "Fathers Walk for Children" from the PHA main office to the James A. Long Community Center.

The celebration will focus on "the father factor" and will feature speakers in addition to the recognition of the honorees. The event is free and will

offer food and information about education, job training, health and wellness and strong families and safe communities.

For more information, call Robinson at 329-0132 or email him at [arobinson@palatkaha.org](mailto:arobinson@palatkaha.org).

The following fathers will be recognized: Leroy Boynton, Tim Adams, C.S. Belton, Teddy Brown, Casey Caison, Al Carter, Earl Carter, Charles Cue, George DeLoach, Kareem Faison, Steven Oneal, Dr. Errol Findlater, Jehonathan Peters, Andrew Powell, Tony Ruth, Bobby Wilson, Willie Torrence, Dale Whitfield, David Spell, Justin Campbell, Terrell Hill, Rufus Borom, Baron Jones, Bishop Mark Jones, Reno Fells, Eddie

Parcher, Jason Shaw, Delton Nealy Sr., Alonzo Cooks, Ralph Dallas Jr.

Pascual Rivera Jr., Luis Cruz, Brain Dasher, Freddie Taylor, Brian Dasher, Theodore Cohens, John Nelson Jr., Emanuel Roberts, Elijah Session, Jarret Curry, Izell Hendrieth, Fredrick Smith, Ramel Hunter, Raymond Davis, Jeff Rawls, Larry Harvey, Elder Leo Parker, Rev. Johnnie Butts, Chattman Word, Alonzo Cooks, Jah Stuart, Lenwell Watts, Eric Felder, Abram Jones, Steven O'Neal, Mark Jones and four additional men whose names were not submitted at the time of publication.

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## VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

The Florida Department of Health in Putnam County (DOH-Putnam) needs medical and support volunteers for its Medical Reserve Corps unit.

Volunteers play a key role in natural disasters, emergency preparedness and public health activities.

Training is free!

**For more information on how you can get involved, call DOH-Putnam at (386) 326-3331**



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