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## Dads Making a Difference

PAPÁS event celebrates fathers who are involved.

By [Michelle Santos](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 14, 2011 [Print](#)

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"Every child deserves an involved accessible and present father or father figure in his or her life," APÁS project director Deutron Kebebew said.

PAPÁS is a nonprofit, which was established in 2003 to support father involvement.

In honor of fathers and family, PAPÁS fifth annual [Father's Day Event](#) will be held the Saturday before Fathers Day, on June 18, from 1-7 p.m. at [Ramsay Park](#). This year's theme will be rodeo circus. Luckily, costumes are welcome.

"Usually Father's Day is a quiet holiday—dads get a book or tie and that's it," said Kebebew. "But we're trying to raise awareness about children who don't have fathers and father awareness."

The event, cosponsored by the city of Watsonville, Bay Federal Credit Union, Watsonville Rotary Club and Register-Pajaronian, will be an interactive, hands-on event with games, live performances, food, raffle prizes and a drum circle. The community-nominated Father of the Day, Month and Year will be announced.

PAPÁS, which is housed in the [La Manzana Community Resources center](#) on West Beach Street, encouraged nominations all spring.

"This year we will be posting their stories in recognition of all nominees," said Kebebew.

Jesus Lopez was named Father of the Day at the event in 2009.

"It felt pretty good," he said. "They had it on local television, so I received a lot of comments from people that I didn't know. Even with my inner family, it felt really good. My dad was so proud that he kept the award because for him it was an honor."

Lopez was nominated by coworkers at WIC where he is an educational specialist, providing classes on everything from nutrition to breastfeeding. This year, he will be at the event to demonstrate how to make a white bean and spinach dip, in an effort to emphasize healthy recipes that can be made with foods that WIC participants receive.

"The role of PAPÁS is very important in Watsonville because there's not a lot of support for dads," Lopez said. "A lot of the dads are thankful for the support. It helps guide dads who want to make change but don't know how to go about it."

Serving more than 800 children and their families, Headstart of Watsonville is closely aligned and works with PAPÁS.

"PAPÁS trains our teachers," Jennifer Winner, Santa Cruz County Headstart education director, said. "The collaboration and training PAPÁS has provided has

been phenomenal for raising awareness of how crucial fathers and father figures in the their well-being and academic success.”

Winner said that PAPA’S Father’s Day event is important because it emphasizes the value of the role of fathers in children’s lives and raises awareness of how important fathers are.

When not preparing the marquee event this weekend, PAPA’S staff provides trainings to other organizations and conduct research on the affects of father involvement as part of a statewide effort.

“Our ultimate goal is to reduce child abuse in our community through father involvement and co-parenting,” said Kebebew.

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