

RIDGE

The
Ridge
Project

Building a Legacy of Strong Families

Personal Letter From Our Founders

In 1991 our family was faced with something that shook us to our core, and changed our future forever. It was in that year that Ron was sentenced to 14 – 25 years for a crime he did not commit. Through this impossible situation, and despite the 15 years of missed birthdays, holidays and anniversaries, our family grew stronger. Through our challenges, we committed to keeping our family intact - no matter what obstacles came before us. We focused our energy on building a resilient family, because we had to – and our family became strong. We prioritized being good spouses and parents, in spite of the distance – and our relationships thrived. In the process, we found out that there were many families out there whose relationships were frayed and distressed – we could relate. More than relate, through our experiences, we knew that we could help others navigate, repair, and restore their families.

What began as an effort in survival for our family became a pathway of healing for others. Our experiences led us to found The RIDGE Project in the year 2000. The RIDGE Project is an organization dedicated to empowering youth and families so they can climb up from every valley and conquer life's ridges together. We believe that strong families produce

strong children, who will pass on that legacy of strength for generations. The information on the following pages highlight our successes as well as our ongoing work to stabilize, heal, and strengthen vulnerable youth and families. We hope that you find it informative and inspiring.



*RIDGE Co-Founders and Co-Directors
Ron and Catherine Tijerina*

Sincerely,

Ron Tijerina *Catherine Tijerina*

Look What We Get To Do!

The RIDGE Project is committed to changing statistics. We have the single goal of building a legacy of strong families for generations to come. In order to accomplish that goal, we offer three services: **Prevention, Intervention, and Redirection.**

- Our **prevention services** are primarily focused on youth through positive youth development, character and risk avoidance programs. However, we also provide prevention services for fathers and families in order to help stabilize marriages and families.
- Our **intervention services** focus on low-income, incarcerated fathers and their families, and/or ex-prisoner fathers and their families through family strengthening and workforce development programs.
- Our **redirection services** involve developing high character, changing the mind set of our clients, and developing unique training and leadership opportunities through our TYRO Accountability Fraternity and our entrepreneurial training opportunities.

"It is about their focus on the future. So many people fail to think forward. Ron and Cathy do that and they do it in an incredible way." -Gary Mohr, Director of Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections

The RIDGE Project's programs are unique in that they are based on the real life experiences of the Tijerina family. These programs have earned national accolades as best practices and are transforming families in miraculous ways every day.



Youth Services

Direct Services

The RIDGE Project's youth program provides positive character development, traditional values and life skills education through our Rites Of Passage (ROP) program to youth in Ohio's schools and detention centers. This program was originally developed by National Family Life and Education Center. We work to establish young leaders who can stand up against the negative influences, peer pressures and low expectations that exist for young people in society today. Youth leadership development is essential in creating a positive youth culture.



Film Camp

Film Camp began in 2003 as a vision of Blake and Brandon Tijerina, (Ron and Cathy's teenage sons.) They began developing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and TV shows while recruiting other youth to participate, and Film Camp was born! Since 2003, RIDGE has hosted an annual film camp for youth that has now grown to include youth from across Ohio. The youth are challenged to stand against

the negative influences of pop culture. They develop, star-in and produce their own 30 second PSAs. At the end of the week, they host a film festival at which a panel of judges chooses the winning PSA. That PSA is then distributed and aired on TV stations throughout the state.

Partnerships

We also have the privilege of serving as the lead administrative partner for the Ohio Adolescent Health Centers. OAHC is a collaboration of youth-serving organizations that collectively reach over 75,000 youth across Ohio. OAHC partners focus on risk avoidance to equip youth with the skills and information to abstain from sex until marriage, drugs, alcohol and other risky behaviors.

Adult Services

Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood

Our Adult Division provides fathers and couples with the relational and social skills needed to develop strong family bonds. Though we offer these highly effective programs to any person or couple, we specialize in working with families where the father is or has been incarcerated. One of the greatest challenges a family faces is when a parent is incarcerated. When a father is sentenced to prison, his spouse and children are sentenced with him. Without intervention, these families are sentenced to generational cycles of poverty, imprisonment and fatherlessness. We have the privilege of becoming Ambassadors of Hope.



Workforce Development

There is significant crossover between the skills that make a person a good spouse and parent with those that make a person a good employee and worker. Therefore we focus on workforce ethics, employment and job training, and placement. Program participants leave fully equipped to enter the job market as high performers. Their work ethic and passion to create a new legacy for their family translates into highly motivated employees determined to build better, stronger businesses! The RIDGE Project is the only workforce organization in the region to offer work ethic screening and training before placing a temporary worker.

“This amazing program is uniquely qualified to offer a way to create dignity, motivation and responsibility for both individuals and families. Ron and Cathy’s story of triumph and restoration is one of the most inspirational accounts you will ever hear.” -Cosette Bowles, Executive Director of Anthem Strong Families

Family Is Special

The RIDGE Project believes that there is something special about families. The family has long been considered the building block of society. It is within a stable family structure that children are best equipped to succeed. On the other hand, where there is not a stable family structure, children pay the harshest price. According to the National Fatherhood Initiative, children from father-absent homes are more likely to be poor, be abused or neglected, use drugs, drop out of school and commit crime.

*More than **1.7 million children** in the United States have an incarcerated parent! (The Sentencing Project/Research and Advocacy for Reform, Feb. 2009). ...and **more than 7.5 million children** have a parent in the judicial system.



TYRO (Latin, n): an apprentice, novice, or young warrior, someone learning something new, or founding father. The TYRO Dads program offers men a clear picture of what a responsible father looks like, and how they can achieve success within their own family. Just as a child needs a father, men need a hero or mentor to follow.

"All I can say is thank you for giving me the steps to work. Now I walk the walk and work hard every day to be the best husband and father I can be. Thanks to all of you that have been there for me and my family. I am a better man today, and I am a man worth waiting for. Thank you all, this program works if you work it and want to change."

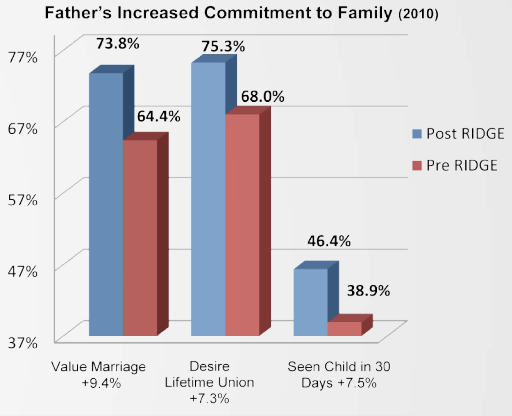
-TYRO Dad



Making a Difference

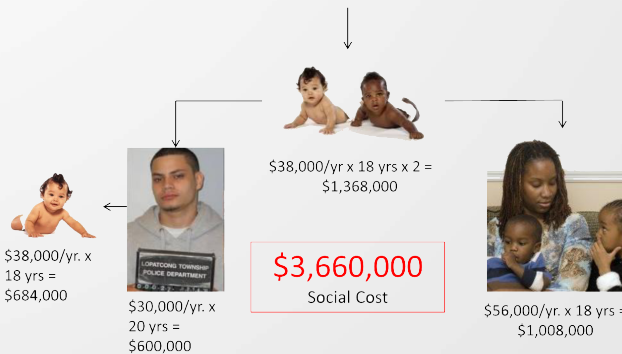
A recent study of The RIDGE Project showed significant improvements in attitudes towards family perspectives among fathers.

We are passionate about making a difference for their futures. Fractured families have a tremendous social and financial impact on our communities and neighborhoods. This graph describes what typically happens when a man fathers two children and then is absent from the picture.



Daughters are statistically more likely to become single parents, and sons are more likely to become incarcerated. Most often, the families are left in poverty and receive state and federal assistance. Within 2 generations, one absent father can leave taxpayers with a \$3.66 million debt.

IRRESPONSIBLE FATHERS



RIDGE

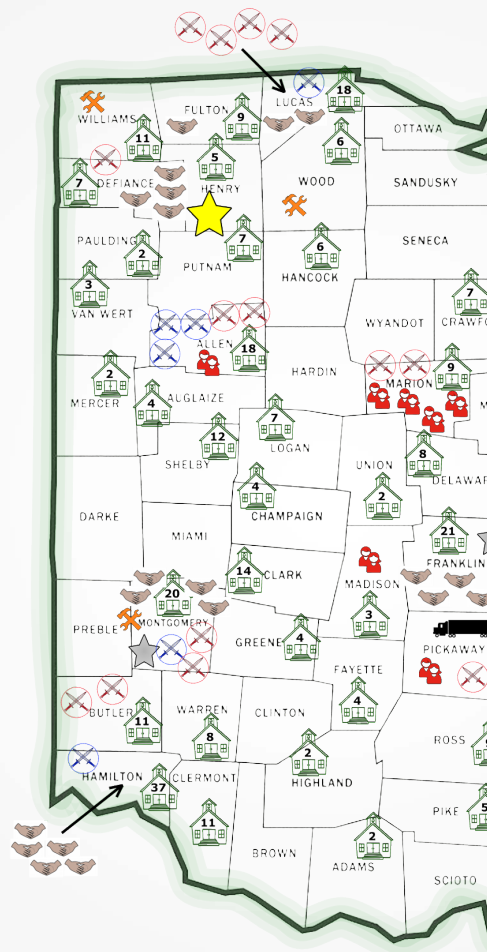
The Ridge Project
Building a Legacy of Strong Families



2009 Calvin Edwards and Co. Best Practices Site Visit Report find RIDGE's organizational and programmatic best practices to be "many."

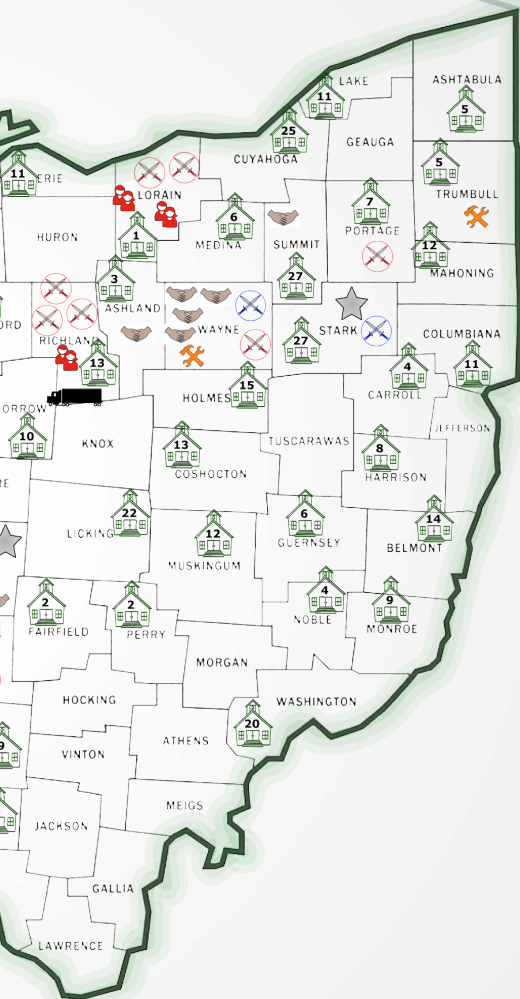
2010 One of 7 Programs in the Nation to be featured in How to Implement Promising Practice, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services publication.

2010 Program Creativity Award from the National Abstinence Education Foundation.

2010 Impact Award from Smart Marriages® for work with incarcerated fathers and their families.



-  Corporate office in Henry
-  Regional offices (Franklin, ...)
-  Tyro Dad classes ([Re-Entr](#)...)
-  Number of schools served (...)
-  Workforce Training Partner
-  Couples Communication (...)
-  MOU Partnerships for TYR



2011 Identified as a Best Practice by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

2011 Identified as a Best Practice in publication from National Fatherhood Initiative and Bureau of Justice Assistance at the US Department of Justice.

2012 Recognized at the White House as a “Champion of Change” in the field of fatherhood. Each program was presented as having developed and implemented “Best Practices” as identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

2012 Rites of Passage (ROP) youth sexual risk avoidance program recognized by US Congress for curbing teen risk behavior.


County (McClure)

Stark, Montgomery)

y classes / Pathways classes)

in each county

55 counties, 406 schools, 75,919 Students!)

rs  CDL Training for PI&I Trucking

CC1 and CC2) classes

O, Keeping Faith, & Youth Services

Ground-breaking Partnerships

Finding stable employment is always a challenge. The RIDGE Project has pioneered unique multi-lateral partnerships between state agencies and private employers. We have partnered with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, PI&I Motor Express (a private company), and Trainco (an affiliate of Owens Community College) to offer CDL training for incarcerated fathers who complete our TYRO Dads classes and qualify to obtain a CDL.



"We are excited to be involved...this type of cooperative effort will give these men the opportunity to break the cycle that has taken so much from them and their families."—Joseph Kerola, Owner, PI&I Motor Express

"This unique partnership promises to provide significant opportunities for offenders to change their lives in a real and tangible way."
-Gary Mohr, Director, Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction

In 2012, this innovative project was launched in two Ohio state prisons. This nationally modeled program is designed to give fathers the chance to give their children the American Dream.

*A father's second chance may be
his children's only chance.*

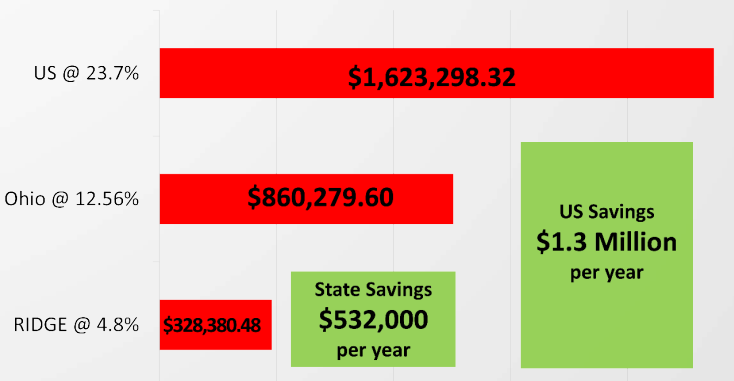


Transformational Reentry

We understand that successful families mean successful communities and a stronger economy. Helping re-entering fathers take personal responsibility for their families and their futures is proven to reduce recidivism. This translates into significant taxpayer savings as a result of lower incarceration costs, and in more vibrant communities from the presence of stronger, stable families and high-character employees.



Recidivism Spending Per Percentage of 270 Released



This assessment shows the positive fiscal impact our programs have on the state of Ohio.

Testimonial

Neil Smith, TYRO Dad



“I am a man who was given a second chance at life and now desire to make those choices that will be beneficial to me and my family. As a young man, I made many poor decisions that caused me to abuse alcohol and drugs. Eventually, as with many who travel that road, I ended up in prison where I served over 20 years.

I signed up for The RIDGE Project when I was at my weakest point in life, at a point of giving up, because everywhere I turned it just wasn't any good. Ever since I have been a part of TYRO, it has been tremendous. It has definitely been a big turnaround for me. Seriously, I have no words to express how the TYRO program has woke me up. This is what it is all about! It is about having the opportunity to re-capture a life...a real life! To be a man.

That is what being a TYRO has taught me. You are somebody. When you make the right decisions in your life, you learn to be trusted. What a great feeling! The RIDGE Project and the TYRO Dads program gave me hope...gave me a second chance at life! It has given me something to build and strive for. I have been given a second chance and I don't plan to waste it. I am definitely a TYRO. A Suit and a Tie...Yeah, I see myself in this. Yeah, I am a somebody!”

THE NEXT CHAPTER

There is a fraternity of TYROs who hold themselves to the highest standard; they are the elite who stand in the gap for their children and families. They are the resolute who rise up to define generations.

~The measure of a man can be weighed by the legacy he leaves.~



What People Are Saying

"Your children are going to learn about you...what type of legacy do you want to leave them? Do you want them to look at you as a man of integrity? A man they want to be like? Then you have to live it."

TYRO Dad

"You know how so many cultures have a passage which moves a boy into manhood? Well, I never had that passage. I was 42 years old and still a boy."

TYRO Dad

"The RIDGE Project has shown me that my development into manhood is a process, is ongoing, and I will always be changing."

TYRO Dad

"The RIDGE Project sees that we have redeeming qualities within us and their goals are to reach inside of us and pull those redeeming qualities out of us so we can go forward, day by day, reflecting the values of a real man."

TYRO Dad

"Through Couples Communication, The RIDGE Project is strengthening the families so they have something positive to go back to. They are working on issues here so that, when they get out, they have a unified front."

Robert Welch, Warden at ToCI

"This is the first resource on the outside that genuinely cares for the lives of these men, and both they and their women know it. It is working with the entire family, allowing these men to actually do tasks with their kids so they can build relationships. The women are changing, along with the incarcerated men, so that when they come home there is a completely different dynamic then when they left."

That is the KEY to their success."

Kelly Kollen, Unit Manager, ToCI



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How do you want to partner?

_____ Financial Gift \$ _____

_____ Sponsor (RIDGE will contact you)

_____ In-kind giving (RIDGE will contact you)

_____ Volunteer ☐ Youth Div. ☐ Adult Div. ☐ General

_____ Prayer Partner



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