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### **MONTANA FATHERS IN THE FIELD PROGRAM TO HELP FATHERLESS BOYS**

**HELENA, MONTANA** – According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 50 percent of America’s children—over 25 million kids under age 18—grow up in homes without their fathers. The statistics on this epidemic are staggering. The Minnesota Psychological Association reports that children raised in fatherless homes face greater risk of substance abuse, depression, poor school performance, gang and criminal activity, homelessness, poverty, and suicide.

Recognizing the implications of these statistics on both the individuals and society, Fathers in the Field is expanding its programming in Montana by dedicating a Regional Field Missionary to work with churches, fatherless boys, and father figures.

Doug Fournier, a former pastor and Montana Regional Field Missionary for the Colorado, faith-based organization, began his new role in Helena this spring. He is reaching out to churches across the state with a goal of recruiting 5-7 new churches this year. The churches provide the setting to bring together fatherless boys with father figures, using the organization’s principles of faith, fatherhood, and forgiveness.

According to Fathers in the Field, “mentored children are 46 percent less likely to use drugs or alcohol, 33 percent less likely to resort to violence, and 59 percent more likely to attain better grades.”

Mentor fathers and boys meet four times a month to bond, serve others in the community, worship together, and plan an end-of-year outdoor activity. This capstone Rite of Passage, such as a fishing, hunting, camping, automotive or skiing trip, further strengthens the relationship.

John Smithbaker, Fathers in the Field founder, launched the organization in 2005 to help young boys overcome abandonment issues. “Fatherlessness is tearing at the fabric of our country. It is the #1 societal issue that is decimating the American family. The only way to heal the wounds of fatherlessness is through the radical, counter-cultural truth of forgiveness. Our goal is to help these boys heal and become the men they were created to be. Our Regional Field Missionaries work with local churches to accomplish this.” Smithbaker says. “Our goal is to have a missionary in each state to help achieve this.”

Doug Fournier asserts, “Fathers in the Field will have a great impact upon our communities in Montana in so many ways. As men mentor, they themselves are strengthened in their faith and their commitment to their own families. It helps single moms, who are cared for by the local church. The fatherless boy is helped as he hears and learns about the power of faith. As the Regional Field Missionary I am here to help local churches reach into their own communities to offer healing and hope.”

The Fathers in the Field Montana program is funded by a Gianforte Family Foundation grant. The Gianforte Family Foundation, based in Bozeman, provides philanthropic support to organizations that improve lives and create lasting change.

For information on how to connect your church with Fathers in the Field, contact Doug Fournier at 719-431-2408, [dfournier@fathersinthefield.com](mailto:dfournier@fathersinthefield.com), or [fathersinthefield.com](http://fathersinthefield.com).