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## A Local young man strives to be a great father

By Gail Brown  
Editor

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Erica Sykes said her husband Albert wakes up everyday on a mission: "to be the father he never had."

The Sykes have two boys: Aidan, 2 and Ethan, 11 months. "Part of my job is to make sure they are raised in the right way," Albert Sykes said.

He and his brother grew up in a single parent home. He said his mother, Falcia Garner, was both mother and father to them until she married their stepfather. Sykes, now 24 was 11 at the time. "My stepfather taught us what it is to be a man, something our biological father was not around to do," he said. "My step-dad was good to me and my brother."

The Young People Project (YPP) organizer said growing up he had always planned to make sure his children would have a complete family unit. He believes that fatherhood is extremely important. "Walk-ing in the right way; talking in the right way, setting the right example for your kids are qualities of a good father," he said. "I see my kids as my creation and my responsibility."

The YPP is a math literacy program, which is an outgrowth of the Algebra Project.

Erica 23, who works as a pharmaceutical tech, attests to her husband's strong desire to be a good father, husband and provider. "He is great with our kids. Sometime when he comes home, I know he is tired, but he lets the boys climb all over him and play, never complaining," she said. "He has so much patience with them."

As a provider, she recalls times when he would go in his pocket and give her his last money for lunch. "He would go all day without eating on those days, and I sometime wouldn't know it until later."

When asked whether the fellows tease him about his commitment to family life, he said, "no." "Most of them respect me for it."

His opinion of what it will take to decrease the number of 'dead-beat dads' is that there needs to be an internal reversal of the way fatherhood and family are viewed in our culture. He explained that fatherhood has become less important in our cultural.

"Most of the people I know grew up without their fathers. So often young people think that's the way it's suppose to be when it's not."

"I always felt strongly about having a complete family unit," he said about his belief in marriage.



Albert Sykes, holding his oldest son Aidan and his wife Erica, second from left, holding Ethan, are shown above with celebrities Harry Belafonte and Malia Lazu at the Hilton Hotel on County Line Road.



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Sykes is not only a father and role model to his own children, he and his wife also help with his best friend's daughter as well. His best friend was killed last year by a 16-year-old. "So, since her dad is gone, I and her grandfather serve as father figures to her. She needs to grow up learning how a young lady is suppose to be treated by a man.

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Way to go Albert! "

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