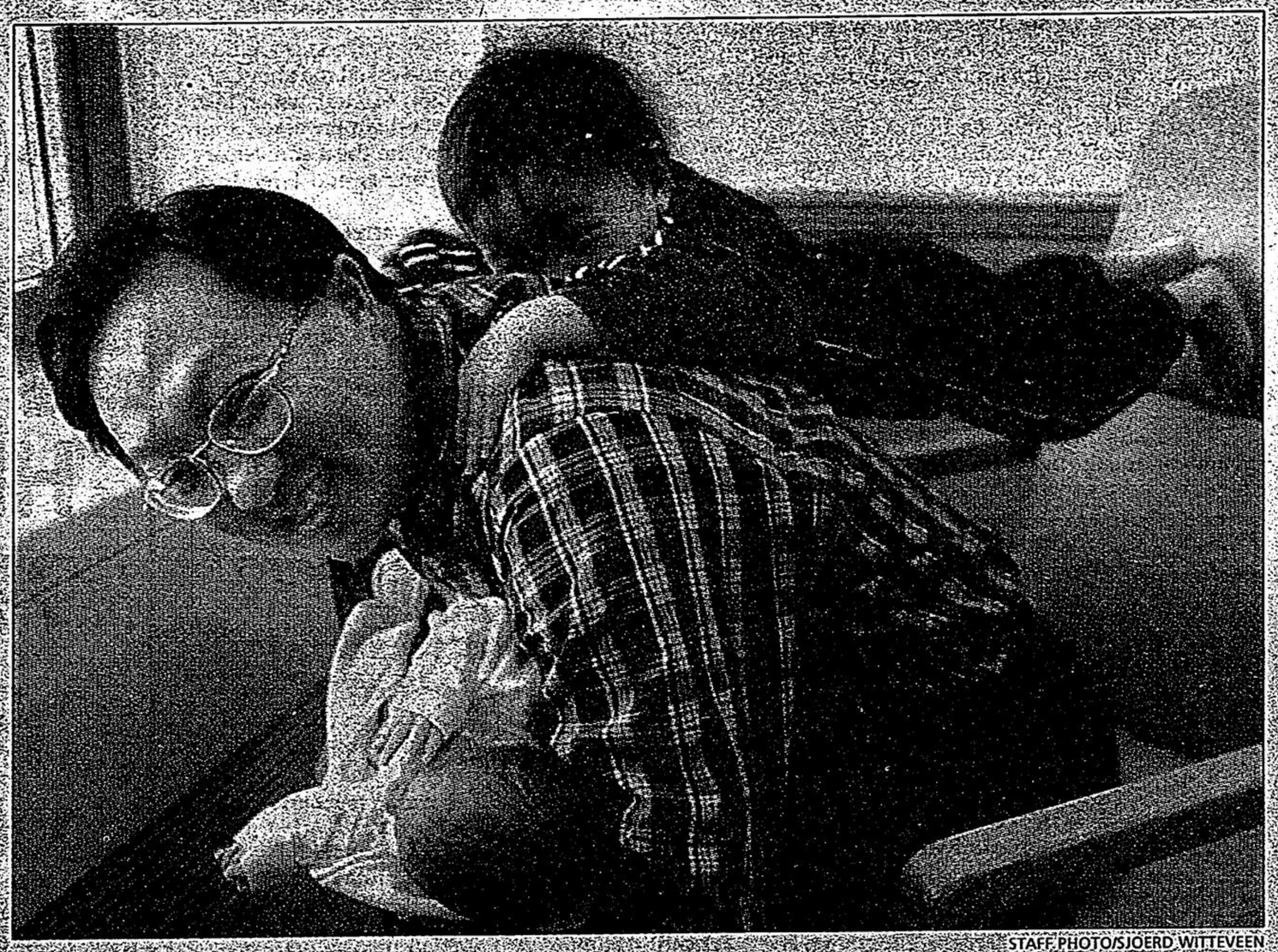
LIVING

Dad's the word



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Peter Chao holds his three-day-old son William as Nicholas hitches a ride on dad's back. Chao and his wife Anna, of Unionville, have two other children, Terrilyn, 8, and Ryan, 7. Dads across York Region can take advantage of management skills seminars offered to both new and experienced fathers.

Role of father defined for new parents

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

A series of programs aimed at reinforcing and defining the father's role in the parenting process is being offered across York Region over the next eight weeks.

Focus on Fathers will give dads insights, information and strategies on parenting children from newborn through age six.

A joint project of the Catholic Community Services of York Region and York Region Early Intervention Services, the program includes a three-session film festival for new dads, along with a pair of six-session management skills courses for new as well as experienced fathers.

The programs, which are being offered free of charge, are an attempt to stress the importance of fathers in an age of significant social change.

"There's a lot of emphasis on the role of the mother in parenting, but research has shown that if the father is not involved in the development process, it's a great loss to the child," said George Glover, executive director of Catholic Community Services.

Glover said today's fathers can feel confusion as to what their parenting role should be.

"As things have changed socially, fathers are more uncertain of their role in the family. They may feel that the values learned from their own parents are just not workable with their kids."

The next two films in the series, to be screened at Aurora Public Library, are *Making Your Child Smarter*, and *Caring for a Child With Disabilities*, to be shown Nov. 19 and Dec. 17 respectively. Times for both films are from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The management skills level 1 sessions are to be held on consecutive Thursday evenings that continue to Dec. 9 at the Early Intervention Services Offices located in the Yonge Mulock Centre in Newmarket. Times are from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Management skills 2 will also consist of six sessions to be held on consecutive Saturdays starting Nov. 13 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the YMCA Family Resource Centre and The Elgin Training Centre in Richmond Hill.

Glover said one purpose of the program is to convince fathers who are not sure of their role as parents that they are essential to their children's development.

"We want to reinforce the role of dads, to build up their self esteem by letting them know they are needed, that they are the only ones who can do it."

The bottom line, said Glover, is that children with involved dads are more successful in life. "A Statistics Canada study done just last year showed that where fathers play a supportive role, children do better."

While the management skills sessions are limited to eight to 10 fathers, Glover said it can be a challenge to convince men to attend such programs. A similar series held in Georgina last fall didn't draw as well as had been anticipated.

"Men in general can be reluctant to attend this kind of thing. You really have to work to get them out."

He said he's hopeful of a strong turnout for the program.

The Focus on Fathers program, which was originated in 1994, has proved successful in Peterborough, Scarborough and Montreal.

The programs are being offered on a trial basis in York Region. They will continue in 2000 if there is sufficient interest.

For further information or to pre-register, contact the Catholic Community Services of York Region at 1-800-263-2075.

HELP FOR NEW DADS

Management skills 1
Thursdays in Newmarket, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Nov. 11: Food management
Nov. 18: Time management
Nov. 25: Anger management
Dec. 2: My Father and Me
Dec. 9: Illness/disability management

Management skills 2
Saturdays in Richmond Hill, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Nov. 13: Stress management
Nov. 20: Food management
Nov. 27: Time management
Dec. 4: Anger management
Dec. 11: My father and me
Dec. 18: Illness/disability management

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