

National Head Start Parent of the Year

by Donna Marsh

Weeks after being selected as National Head Start Parent of the Year, Charles Ramsey is still overwhelmed by the honor. Ramsey, a single father in CAA's Head Start program, won the top billing out of a pool of 1.3 million parents nationwide at a Dallas conference.

Mr. Ramsey and his son, Charles Jr., were in the Head Start program for three years. Ramsey recently completed his two-year stint as chair of the Policy Council, the governance board of Head Start. He is an active participant in the program's Male Involvement Initiative and with the agency's Fatherhood Conference planning committee.

Ramsey is candid about the challenges he's faced in life, including homelessness and substance abuse. He gives credit to God for giving him the faith and strength to address his problems.

He is also equally open about how the agency—and Head Start—played a role in his personal transformation. When he found himself homeless and in the middle of a divorce with a toddler to raise, he found his way to CAA.

Ramsey has been able to take advantage of CAA's integrated services on his path to self-sufficiency. He has been a tenant in the agency's transitional housing complex and attended computer and leadership training through Head

Start. And since graduating from CAA's Microenterprise Initiative, he has launched his own paint contracting business, It's Done by Rams-z.

"This agency helped me wake up to my own potential and I don't plan to stop now," says Ramsey.

"CAA has empowered me to do better things with my life. I hope I'm a better father to all my children now (he's a father to five and grandfather to six)...Winning this award is more than anything that I would dreamed of. I didn't ask for it or pursue it, but I cherish it because I hope this award is a message to other parents, especially to fathers. 'Look at me. If I can do it, you can too.'" *

