

Men to shout out against kid abuse

Rally aims to help
fathers stop the cycle
of violence.

By TRACY IDELL HAMILTON

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Like so many Ramon Vasquez was horrified when he read about the starvation death of Jovonie Ochoa on Christmas Day 2003.

As he spent the next year watching the death toll of abused children rise, the single father of three knew he had to do something.

Vasquez, executive director of the American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Mission, went to members with an idea.

"I said 'Let's do a *grito*, a shout-out,'" he said. "We've got to end the violence."

That shout-out begins at 11 a.m. Saturday in the form of a San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign rally and resource fair, to be held at Avenida Guadalupe Plaza at 1327 Guadalupe St.

"We know the men that perpetrate this violence are also victims of violence, and more than likely by men who looked like them," Vasquez said. "It's time for us to say no more. No more violence against our children. No more violence against our women, and no more violence against ourselves."

"Know More — No More" is the rally's theme. By offering fathers information and support, Vasquez hopes men will help themselves.

That can be difficult, said Frank Castro.



Edmund Tijerina's Around the Town column will resume Tuesday.

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RAMON VASQUEZ

American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Mission executive director

Castro, the campaign's manager, often answers the Fatherhood Hotline, at (210) 227-3463. He says men often don't come right out and say they need help.

"They might need it, but they feel like it's weak to ask." But help is out there, and Castro knows events like the rally can spread the word.

Whether it's help finding a job or a place to live, or classes on parenting or anger management, almost a dozen social service agencies will be on hand Saturday.

Actor Jesse Borrego will speak, along with District 7 Councilman and mayoral hopeful Julian Castro and others.

"We're not pointing fingers," Borrego said. "We're reaching out to the men in our neighborhood, and our culture. We're saying, 'Let's deal with this. Let's take responsibility for our community.'"

The San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign, which began in 2003, is a partnership of seven organizations working to promote the role of fathers in the family through outreach and education.

"It's time for men to stand up and face the truth," Vasquez said. "We can't pretend not to notice the blood that spills in our community at the hands of our men. We must reach out to our young fathers and other men, acknowledge their pain, and show them another way."

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