**An Interview with WATCH D.O.G.S. Founder Jim Moore**

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A Transcript of an Interview with Jim Moore, founder of WATCH D.O.G.S.
Conducted by Ken Canfield, founder of the National Center for Fathering

**[KEN:]** Jim Moore has started an exciting initiative that encourages fathers to be more involved in their children's education. Hey, Jim, tell us how this came about.

**[JIM:]** Thanks, Ken. A little over five years ago I, like most people in my home state, watched in absolute shock and disbelief because two young men possibly thought the answer to their life's problems were to bring weapons to school, pull the fire alarm and watch as that student body went out on that playground and they gunned down four kids and a teacher.

And I began to think about, you know, what can we do as concerned parents, mothers and fathers, to try and keep something like that from happening in our community and our schools? And I began to take a look at our own school and what was good and what wasn't, and who was there and who wasn't. And it really stuck out that dads were no longer there, that somewhere along the line fathers bought into a lie that said moms will do all the education and they'll do the parent-teacher conferences, and we began to plant seeds of inattention and abandon our children. And now, because of that, our schools are fatherless schools.

So we put together a program called WATCH D.O.G.S., and the acronym for ‘Dogs' stands for Dads of Great Students. And it's a program that gets dads, or granddads or stepdads to be actively involved in their kids' lives at school, as many times of the year as they can for two important reasons. First of all, just for security, just to be an extra set of eyes and ears, just to bring additional security to the campus.

And the second reason they're there, and just as important, is for support. Meaning this: the day that they are a Watch Dog, their job is to eat with the kids or play with them or read to them or do flashcards, or have the child read to them-whatever it takes to sow seeds of success into those kids' lives. It's really whatever that dad can sacrifice. If it's one day, we're honored. We will take it. But there are some dads that can be there once a quarter, some dads can be there once a month, some dads are there once a week.

**[KEN:]** Jim, I'm delighted the National Center is partnering with WATCH D.O.G.S. to establish these programs in schools all across America. What does it look like when a dad volunteers at his child's school?

**[JIM:]** Well, we want them to get there plenty of time in the early morning hours, because we want them to be there to open up the doors for the kids when they get out of the car or the get off the bus, just for the security standpoint. And then, he goes through an orientation time with the principal, and then, over the course of the next seven or eight hours, once an hour, to walk around the perimeter of the building, making sure it's what it needs to be, that it's a secure building. And walking throughout the hallway with an identifiable T-shirt and a walkie-talkie. And we kid a lot, Ken, because half our dads are Watch Dogs just so they can carry a walkie-talkie.

But over the course of the day we want them just to positively interact with the students so they can have lunch with them, go out on the recess, be in the gymnasium with them, take them to the library, doing flashcards, reading, helping with homework, talking in business classes-with older classes-about how important it is to study and to learn and to read math and science and all those basic skills.

So we want that father to be there to get his eyes opened and to make a positive impact on his child's life, but not only his child's life, but the student body as a whole, and also to build a community between the home and the school, possibly stronger than many other organizations.

I've never had a dad in over five years walk up and say, "You know, guys, I've been a Watch Dog, and I hated it, and I'm never going back." I've never had that happen; I don't expect it to happen.

But we have men all the time walk up and say, "You know what, I went to school with my child not knowing what to expect, but yet after a day that was there, it was incredible." I had one ... a father, a stepfather of a child, stand up at a school board meeting and say, "I was never close with my son until I became a Watch Dog. And because of the program and spending time with my stepson at school, we have now connected as a dad and son should be."

Another man in Memphis, Tennessee, walked up and said, "You know, I've recently quit my job and gone to work on the night shift for one reason and one reason only -- so I could be a Watch Dog all day long, Monday through Friday, at my kids' school, because I want to be with my children."

**[KEN:]** So, what you're doing is leveraging this father time. You're getting a father to show up, and another father finds out about it and before you know it, this school has become a more secure place because dads are there, these Watch Dogs. As Watch Dogs spreads all across America and you rally dads to be involved in their kids' education, what's your vision? What's the bigger picture?

**[JIM:]** Our ultimate vision is to change culture. We want fathers and kids to spend time together and want to spend time together, and especially as the kiddos grow into the teenage years where, a lot of times, there's this misnomer that the kid doesn't want Dad around.

Our belief is very simple: If fathers in the elementary and middle school years will spend time with their child and that becomes part of the daily routine, and that's an annual thing, to where dads are just around, by the time that child is sixteen or seventeen and turns into a young man or a young woman, they will want to have their father to be with them at school, because that father has grown up through elementary and middle and junior high school ranks, and therefore culture is changed because kids will want to spend time with their fathers. And that will lay the groundwork for their next generation's children.

**[KEN:]** That's great. Jim, I know you're a Watch Dog, too. How has this impacted you as a father?

**[JIM:]** Since I'm working to get more dads involved, I see these dads in action all the time. Still, when I drive up to my children's school and drop them off, and I see another man there -- sacrificing his day not only for his child but for my children also -- it does a lot of good for me. Personally, being a Watch Dog, it is one of the greatest things that we can do as a father. Because we can give our kids a lot of lip service how important they are, but until we make that ultimate sacrifice of our time to change their life and to be there for them, that is one of the greatest things we can do. So even though this is a job, I love to get away, put on the Watch Dogs T-shirt, grab the walkie-talkie, go to school with the kids, and absolutely have a great time with them.