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Intelligencer

Photo by Shelley Hanson

Ted Bowers, left, eats lunch Wednesday with his granddaughters Raih Bowers, 2, and Sariah, 3, along with the girls' father Joseph Davis of Wheeling during the "Dads, Paps and Uncles Day" at Northern Panhandle Head Start No. 4 in North Park.

■ WHEELING ■

## Children Eat, Play With Dads, Paps and Uncles

By **SHELLEY HANSON**  
Staff Writer

Children who attend Northern Panhandle Head Start No. 4 got to spend the afternoon eating and playing with their dads, grandpas and uncles on Wednesday.

The annual Dads, Paps and Uncles Day was held at the school located in the North Park neighborhood of Wheeling.

"I've done this for 18-to-20 years, every year — even when I was in Brooke County," said teacher Valerie Whetsell. "It's vitally important to have father involvement. There is often a mom figure, but the dad is absent or dad is left out or doesn't get to see the child."

Whetsell said the North Park lunches began in 2002. Next month, students' moms, grandmas and aunts will be invited to a similar event. "Having dad or grandpa or uncle, we're not leaving anyone out. They

can bring their significant person in their lives, that male figure, and start bonding with them as they should," she said. "Without our families we are not a program. It takes our families to bring our lives to us, and the family dynamics are not there anymore. It's really important to have them share their dad or uncle or pap."

Whetsell said the lunch is also important for the parents. "It's good for the parents if they aren't with that child that often. They get to spend the day and see what child knows and they're how progressing. Some come here and don't know how to talk or use manners or even socialize. We bring the family in and they help us learn how to help that child," she said.

Northern Panhandle Head Start serves pregnant women and families with children, birth to 5 years old in Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, Marshall and Wetzel counties.