

■ WHEELING

## Children Spend Quality Time With Men in Their Lives



Photo by Shelley Hanson

Five-year-old Jayden Drewitt talks with his uncle, Justin Poling, on Wednesday during the "Dads, Paps and Uncles Day" at Northern Panhandle Head Start No. 4 in North Park.

### Annual Dads, Paps and Uncles Day Held at Head Start No. 4

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," teacher Valerie Whetsell said. "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.

Wheeling resident Bill McWhorter attended the event with his 4-year-old son Bryce. McWhorter said one of his daughters attended Head Start at Orchard Park in the past, and now that a favorite teacher from that program came to North Park, they decided to follow her despite having to drive a little further from Elm Grove.

"We trust the teachers here. ... He loves it here," McWhorter said of Bryce.

After eating lunch, the children did a craft project.

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