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When no day is Father's Day

By Daniel A. Cirucci

THIS JUST IN for Father's Day: Prince Albert of Monaco has done it again.

The only son of Prince Ranier III and Princess Grace (Philadelphia's Grace Kelly) recently acknowledged through his lawyer that he is the father of a 14-year-old California girl named Jazmin Grace Grimaldi.

The young lady is welcome in Monaco but cannot take the throne, and the royal family does not recognize her use of the Grimaldi name. Media reports say Albert, 48, had a brief affair with the girl's mother, Tamara Rotolo, in 1991 when she vacationed on the Cote d'Azur. Paternity was legally established prior to Albert's admission of fatherhood.

Albert, who has never married, acknowledged last July that he had fathered a child out of wedlock with a former flight attendant from Togo, in West Africa. The boy, Alexandre, is now 3.

Of course, with a personal fortune estimated at \$1 billion, Albert doesn't have to worry about supporting these children. But Albert Alexandre Louis Pierre Grimaldi of Monaco has already missed quite a few significant events in the lives of his children, and he can't be expected to be a real on-the-scene father for them anytime in the future.

An absent father is something that money can't replace. And if you think only the rich and famous act like this, you're wrong. According to the National Center for Policy Analysis, more than a third of American children, 24 million, or 34 percent, live in homes without their biological father.

And the center says that the best predictor of father presence or absence is marital status. Compared to children born within marriage, children born to cohabiting parents are three times as likely to experience father absence, and children

born to unmarried, non-cohabiting parents are four times as likely to live in a father-absent home.

Why is all this so troubling? Because living in a home without a father is not good for children. Studies reported by the National Fatherhood Initiative have shown that children who live absent their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents.

On the other hand, children with involved fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high-risk

behaviors such as drug use, truancy and criminal activity than children with uninvolved fathers.

And it's not just boys who suffer without a father. Now we know that this trend deeply impacts girls as well. Numerous studies have shown that girls reach puberty younger, become sexually active earlier and are more likely to become pregnant in their teens if their father was

absent from the home from when they were young.

None of this should surprise us this Father's Day.

Men must learn that fatherhood is a serious, lifelong responsibility. They must be taught this from an early age. And society must understand this and support fatherhood and the traditional family unit.

The truth is that Vice President Dan Quayle was correct in 1992 for criticizing the trend toward unwed motherhood and warning of the dangers inherent in the dissolution of the two-parent family.

Though he couldn't spell "potato," Dan Quayle was right. And though he may be worth a billion dollars, Prince Albert is irresponsible and dead wrong.

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