

Theme: Building the future together

Question: Tell about a time your family worked together to make the future better for someone else.

Teens and parents in conversation

HomeWord



Volume 7, Number 6



Teen Talk

by Aubrey Hess

Doing service seems to be common in many families. My family is pretty service-oriented, when we can fit it into our schedule.

I would have told you that my family was pretty boring, until I sat down and thought about it. I realized that we are always running somewhere: to sports practices

after school, to piano lessons once a week, to Renew meetings on Tuesday nights, to Bingo every fourth Friday, and to the many things that go on at the same time during the weekend. Among all that, we fit in service. The little things—like being an aid at Sunday preschool or a eucharistic minister at Mass—have to count.

For our family, the little things have to suffice in making a difference for others. I think this is due to the fact that we are somewhere in the middle: it's what I call the "medium factor." To me most things about my family and myself run in mediums. Not larges, smalls, extra larges, or extra smalls. Just medium. I wear medium-size clothes, my shoe size is medium, my hair color is medium

brown, and my height is medium. My family has a medium income, medium-size house. I think I have made my point.

With all our mediums, we do what we can to make the future better for others. Like many families, we give what we can afford financially.


In today's busy times, the little things have to count.

We give to fund-raisers at school, at church, and in our community. Every week I see that church envelope go into the collection basket. And it is not just my parents' money going into these ventures either. My sisters and I also donate money when we can. That's one way we all give to others.

Yet, as my parents have instilled in my sisters and me, it is not enough to give just money. You never know how or when you may impact someone's life. Parents begin by teaching morals and values to their children, and then those values are shared with many others who come into contact with the children and the parents. Fortunately, I have wonderful parents who taught me the value of service and that it's the little things ▼


Parent Talk

by Barbara Poole



My husband, Steve, was once given the chance to donate his time and talents to a program called Christmas in April.* A group of his co-workers got together, bringing their hammers and paintbrushes, and arrived very early one Saturday morning at the home of an elderly couple.

The little house needed extensive repairs: several boards were crumbling, the front porch sagged, some roof shingles needed replacing, and the ancient coat of paint was almost obliterated by wind and weather.



Steve and his buddies went to work, and by sunset the old couple stood in their tiny front yard, beaming with joy at the face-lift their home had received. A group photo was taken of the tired but happy workers, grins of accomplishment and pleasure visible on each face.

Such happiness and comfort is given with such little effort. I can't think of many endeavors more satisfying. A few boards and nails, a fresh coat of paint, and two happy souls knowing that these touch-ups will

keep their home in good repair for some time to come.

Opportunities for service are everywhere. My mother, the caregiver for my grandmother who has Alzheimer's, works diligently in the yard and garden at Grandmother's house, planting bulbs and other

perennials, knowing that Grandmother may never notice or appreciate her efforts.

Grandmother has been known to go out and dig up a freshly planted garden thinking she is helping. She picks green tomatoes no bigger than a quarter; she cuts sprigs off various bushes and plants them. This is very frustrating to an avid gardener like Mama, but she perseveres in the assurance that next spring her surviving perennials will emerge, and that Grandmother will enjoy the blooms and foliage. Mama does this to bring some color and pleasure to the few remaining springs that Grandmother will see.

Invaluable lessons for all ages can be absorbed by making life a little more pleasant for someone else. Yes, you may miss a Saturday morning of golf, ▼

Teen Talk *continued*

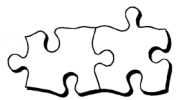
that count. We learned service together as a family. We learned our capacity for working with people and for working in different environments. My family works on the small things we can do for others.

I do not recall many major events at which we worked together, but I can recall several smaller ones. When I was in eighth grade, my mom and dad coached my volleyball team. Nobody expected anything great from our team. My parents believed in having fun over winning. My sisters were our cheerleaders. They got the parents involved and created a bond among everyone. That year eleven girls became winners when they won the tournament and brought home a trophy.

I have other memories of afternoons spent running concession stands with my friends and family. One time we rolled Airheads into balls and played catch with them in the hallway. Some Sunday mornings we ran around with the four-year-olds at preschool. Other days we worked at golf scrambles and carnival booths. We met and impacted countless people, hopefully for the better.

In today's busy times, the little things have to count. Considering the conflicting schedules of family members, the time we spend in service is valuable. And doing many little things together can add up to a lot.

Aubrey Hess is a junior on the journalism staff at Mercy Academy in Louisville, Kentucky



Why It Helps Young People to Be Involved

by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart, from the Saint Mary's Press tragedy Web site (www.smp.org/tragedy)

At a time like this [in the wake of terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC], . . . it is so good to let young people choose some activity in order to "help." Collecting money, writing letters, creating a prayer service, painting a mural—these can all be very beneficial. Letting young people decide what they want to do gives them ownership for the activity. When young people are empowered to make a difference with a project of their choosing, they feel less helpless, and they image themselves more as a valued part of the community, making a contribution. . . .

And naturally, being involved with prayer can be calming, and can also help young people develop a new perspective—regarding the pain of tragedy and loss, the courage and determination of rescue efforts, the peace of nonviolence and mercy, the comfort of community and support. Prayer puts us in touch with our God, who challenges and loves us, and who calls us to action. Prayer makes us better people.

Parent Talk *continued*

as Steve did. You may feel that you are toiling for an uncertain result, as Mama feels from time to time. Yet, it is sheer determination and resolve that provide our satisfaction, and it is the result of these strengths that impart happiness and a sense of the future to those we are helping.

Just think what a difference an entire family could make to someone. The time spent together, the camaraderie, perhaps sharing a picnic lunch, and the sense of accomplishment at the end of the day: this is quality family time—benefits for your family's side! A need fulfilled, a good deed rendered, a sense of blessing, a feeling of being loved and cared for—benefits for the recipient's side! How pleasing this must be to our

loving Creator, and what a wonderful opportunity to give praise and thanksgiving to our God.

* **Christmas in April** began in 1972 in Midland, Texas, with Bobby Trimble and a few of his friends. At last count, 225 Christmas in April chapters are at work in more than five-hundred cities and towns across the United States. Over the last twenty-five years, thirty-thousand homes have been made safer and more comfortable, and hundreds of nonprofit facilities have been renovated. To find a Christmas in April chapter near you, call 800-473-4229.

Barbara Poole writes and works at home in rural Tennessee, where she lives with her husband, Steve, and a beloved cat.



Family Outreach and Service: Tips for Parents

- Be invitational without inflicting guilt. Regularly invite your teen to join in works of mercy and works of justice.
- Expose teenagers to victims, their situations, and the advocates working for change. When your teen's fear and ignorance have been diffused, their reluctance to get involved may turn to passion for the cause.
- Actions should be within teen and family capacities, such as delivering food once a month to needy families via Saint Vincent de Paul, helping serve in a soup kitchen, visiting an elderly person on a regular basis, or volunteering with Habitat for Humanity.
- Integrate fun whenever possible. Combine the action with a fun event. Join with other families.
- Do "with" instead of doing "for." Respect and promote the dignity of others. Learn from those you hope to serve. Consider both works of justice and works of mercy. In addition to caring for victims, work to change systems that victimize them.

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