

FATHER/SON RELATIONSHIPS

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Recently, I ran the second Father/Son Fun Friday program that I had organized this school year. As the fathers and sons were leaving the first one in February so many of them, and the volunteers, stated that they wanted another evening like that before the year was out. I was very happy to consider that, but the only time we could fit it in was the evening of the last day of school for the year. Despite the difficulties of doing this we went ahead. What an occasion! Boys from 1st grade through to the 4th grade came with their father or other significant adult male.

To see the joy on the faces of the boys and their dads made all the hard work worthwhile. We fed them dinner, followed by me reading a short inspirational story about Dr. Glen Cunningham. He had been so badly burned in a fire that the lower half of his body had no feeling or function. He was in danger of dying, but he ended up running the world's fastest mile in Madison Square Garden in the 1950's. I stressed the need for everyone to consider what he could achieve with such a healthy, active body as they had.

A tug of war outside with 1st and 2nd grade dads pulling against 3rd and 4th grade dads led to screaming and cheering. The smiles and laughter on faces was enough for me to agree to three of these events next year. They are already scheduled on next year's calendar.

Relays that mixed dads and sons sent us all into fits of laughter. Many of us were yelling out words of encouragement and yipping and hollering. Dodge Ball was a great success and from the sidelines those eliminated shrieked and laughed at what was happening as the sunlight turned to dusk.

Next came a trip to the gym to shoot goals. High fives and 'atta boys' reigned supreme. When we announced that it was time to leave after more than 2 hours of frivolity there were tears in some eyes and, "Oohhh, can't we play more?" Some fathers grasped my hand with two of their hands, looked me straight in the eye and thanked me so much for organizing such a great night.

It was not about me. It was about fathers and sons having fun together. To see the expressions and the interaction made me wish that all fathers could experience this. I probably saw the transmission of verbal and non-verbal communication that may not have happened before in some of these families. It was good to see that the fathers were learning from each other and were able to see what thrilled their sons.

All dads... listen up! You need to be your son's hero. You need to spend plenty of time with him. Talk. Joke. Ruffle his hair. Wrestle gently with him. Play ball. Set boundaries for him and ensure he operates within these. Affirm him with praise. Teach him to be a man. Teach him to be sensitive to others' feelings. Show him how to be a leader by being one in your own family. Ensure he is honest, loyal and very respectful to all people and himself. Encourage him to think of others first and to be outward in his thinking. Love your wife and show outward affection so that your son knows how to later respect his spouse. Above all, teach him to love God and live his life in such a way that he shows Jesus to everyone around him.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.