

WHERE DO PARENTS STAND?

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I met a very nice English guy the other night and I enjoyed his lively conversation regarding his goals and achievements. He told me that last year his goal was to ride a 120 mile-cycle race. He did it. He said that this weekend he is going to run the New York marathon. This is no mean feat. He told me he has enrolled, but not been accepted to run the marathon twice before. By the 3rd year you are guaranteed a place, so he is fronting up this weekend after some very serious training. He is excited. Next year he told me he plans to do a triathlon. Good for him. Here is a guy who isn't just sitting on a bar stool dreaming about such things. He plans, he trains and then he does them. I love to find people that are so focused in their endeavors.

Hard on the heels of telling me about his aspirations, he turned to his fiancé and said, "So far it has been all about me. When we get married I will take second place and then when we have children, I will take third, fourth and fifth place, depending on how many kids we have." He had me right up to that point. I understand that he was saying he would put his needs and wants on the back-burner for his family's sake. But at this point I had to disagree with him.

Our kids need to learn about dreaming and achieving goals from us, their parents. If they have no example of the incredible satisfaction and excitement brought by our successes, then they may never know how to experience it for themselves. At the very least we should help them identify heroes to inspire them, but why not be our kids' heroes. The message is loud and clear in our schools. We are a, 'we can do anything we set our minds to' culture, but we need to show our kids how.

Parents need to be right up front in being the role models and leading the way in the family. We should be setting family goals and helping and encouraging our children to do the same. As parents, we should never take a back seat in the family for any reason. If we do, then we lose control of the family and when we are not in control, someone or something else will take over and that is never healthy. In this case it might be the children taking control.

Parents are the ones who set the tone and create values for the family to follow. Our kids need to feel our love and know our expectations and boundaries. They need to have a clear understanding of right and wrong and know the consequences of disobedience. All of these aspects of training help our children grow into mature, responsible members of society.

We need to show our children how to look beyond their own needs and care about others. I saw a fabulous story on TV last night about a local family

who go to 3rd world countries around three times a year to give aid. Here are parents who are showing their kids first hand what compassion looks like.

Parents are in the best position to observe their children to see what they love to do and what they excel at. They need to get involved by helping their kids to be the best they can be. But at the same time, we need to continue to create and achieve our own goals, too.

Before our children were born we were out singing regularly. When our first boy was born we continued to do the same and he slept under the coffee table 'while the band played on'. We took him to as many functions as was reasonable and he grew up joining us. We did not stop our own lives purely to watch our children grow. They came with us. They were part of our lives, not the center of their own. They have thanked us many times for their fascinating early lives. Now they are doing the same thing with their children.

The parents' role is to lead the family, be in control of it, love each member and model how they want their children to behave and live.

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.