

YOUR INPUT MATTERS – REALLY!

by Brian and Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

A teenage boy gets drunk, gets into the driver's seat of his car with friends, crashes and is killed, along with several of those friends. What went wrong? Was the car at fault? No. Was somebody else to blame? Maybe. Was a poor choice made on the part of the boy? Most certainly yes! God created us with free wills and a good brain. We make choices...many of them wise and still others that are very poor. Why do our kids make poor decisions?

As toddlers, children begin to understand language and much later they learn to interpret body language and vocal inflection. Parents are given the responsibility from the very beginning of their children's lives to raise them with the values that both they, and society, adhere to. These values will shape the way they will approach and respond to decisions throughout their lives. Unfortunately, there are so many different influences in our kids' lives now, that unless we, as parents, take the lead and show them what we believe and what we expect of them, they will find it very difficult to make sound decisions when those times come. Never more important is that we keep up the positive input into teen's lives so they are not left to learn by their own mistakes.

We have a friend who's son won a scholarship to Vanderbilt University, one of the best universities in the country, but he flatly refused to go there because he wanted to attend some other lesser University. I wonder if that father sat down with his boy and rationally discussed the pros and cons of that decision? Sometimes our teens are not mature enough to make decisions that will affect their future. It is not appropriate to say, "Oh well, it's his life! He will make his own bed and lie in it." We have a responsibility to ensure our kids are given the tools to make the best choices, thus ensuring a great future for them.

So many times I have talked to young adults and even people in their 30's and 40's who have taken classes at college that gave them no useful resources for a career. If parents are paying for their kids' education, then they certainly have the right to strongly encourage wise curriculum choices. Many kids go through high school with no idea what they want to do with their lives, and I don't hear them mention parental guidance in the matter. When our kids were pre-teens we were watching to see what they seemed good at and helped them explore their adult life possibilities. They both knew what they wanted to do before they left school, and chose appropriate college courses. It wasn't a big deal.

As parents we are continuously under our children's microscope. What we say and what we do tells our children what they can say or do. It is irrational to believe that our kids will be that much different in their attitudes and behavior

than those we exhibit. If our message and modeling extols positive values and care for others, our child is less likely to get drunk. He is probably not going to drive a car while intoxicated. The last thing a parent wants to do is have to bury their child, yet our action, or lack of it, may lead to such a tragedy.

Without clear guidance and positive input into our children's lives they will not have the objective markers by which they may navigate their way through the tough decisions they have to make.

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.