



Minnesota Dads At Home

Minnesota Dads At Home supports dads at home caring for their children. We engage with each other through local playgroups, educational opportunities, an electronic mail distribution, and a range of informal gatherings.

FROM THE PREZ

Hey everyone. I just wanted to say how excited I am about MDAH and how far we've come in the past few months. We added 18 guys to our roster in June and July to bring membership to 42. And, more significantly, more dads and kids are getting together at playgroups. That is fantastic! With the recent St. Paul Saints game and the many playgroups in July, I have met some great new people and look forward to meeting more of you in the coming months.

Thanks to all dads that came out to Hillcrest for the UPN interview with Chris Conangla. I appreciated the late Friday afternoon commitment. Now that was a playgroup (14 Dads and their kids)! If you want to host a playgroup in your neighborhood, please let Paul or myself know and we'll help you set it up and get the word out.

Hope everyone's summer is going great. I hope to see you out and about with MDAH very soon.

MDAH BUSINESS RECAP

Expect to see some changes to the MDAH web site! Planning is underway to launch a new look, new pages and resources in September. If you have ideas that you would like to share, we want to hear them! Send your ideas to our web team of Tom Vytlačil and Matt Keon. We have added a geographical listing to the directory. Do you know the other guys in your region? Finally, the board meeting for Aug. 5 is canceled due to our late July website meeting. Next board meeting is Sept. 2.

DAD'S NIGHT OUT - Not your Daddy's go-carts!

The August DNO will be at Davanni's and Thunder Alley Speedway in Brooklyn Center (5930 Earle Brown Dr), Wednesday, August 20, 7:00 pm. We'll meet at 7:00 at Davanni's (rumored to be next door to Thunder Alley) and head over to Thunder Alley around 8-8:30. It is three for two night on the high performance track. Buy two rides and get the third free (\$16.50 per ride). For those that don't want to ride, there is an arcade with billiards, air hockey, foosball, etc. We'll likely have a beverage after the cart riding at a nearby hot spot.

Address to the speedway is below, here are some basic directions. From 694, exit at Shingle Creek Parkway and head south (left for most of us). When you reach Summit Dr, take another left (east and then it bends south) to Earle Brown Dr (go right). The more the better for it's Buy 2 get the third free. \$16.50/ride otherwise. Hope to see many of you out. Contact Dave W. for more info. To find out more about Thunder Alley: (763) 566.SPEED (7733), www.indoorspeed.com

MDAH AUGUST CALENDAR

If you would like to submit an event for the calendar, send it to Paul Johnson at pjohnson@goldengate.net. For more info on playgroups and directions, contact the person listed or watch the Yahoo email group for announcements. We also have begun building a new file on the Yahoo files site with directions to playgroups and events. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mdah/files>

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AUGUST

7/31, Thu UPN Feature on MDAH, 10 pm News with Chris Conangla.

- 1, Fri Linwood Park (St. Paul) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Mike C.
- 4, Mon Pioneer Park (Stillwater) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Dave W.
- 5, Tue MDAH Board Mtg. **Canceled**. (Impromptu mtg on web site took place end of July)
- 6, Wed Wooddale Park (Edina) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Justin M.
- 7, Thur Linwood Park (St. Paul) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. **Note day change!** Contact Mike C.
- 11, Mon Pioneer Park (Stillwater) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Dave W.
- 13, Wed Wooddale Park (Edina) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Justin M.
- 14, Thur Linwood Park (St. Paul) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Mike C.
- 15, Fri Lake Hiawatha Park (Minneapolis) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Paul J.
- 18, Mon Pioneer Park (Stillwater) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Dave W.
- 20, Wed Wooddale Park (Edina) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Justin M.
- 20, Wed **DADS NIGHT OUT @ THUNDER ALLEY**. See notes above and watch Yahoo email group for info!! Davanni's (next door) at 7:00 pm, followed by two for three rides on high performance track or arcade games (billiard, foosball, etc.). Contact Dave W.
- 21, Thur Linwood Park (St. Paul) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Mike C.
- 26, Tue Minnehaha Falls, Wabun picnic area (toward Veterans home) 10:00 am. At 11:00, we will hike to Falls, throw some rocks, etc. Contact Paul J.
- 27, Wed Wooddale Park (Edina) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Justin M.
- 28, Thur Linwood Park (St. Paul) playgroup, 9:30-11:30 am. Contact Mike C.
- 9/2, Tue MDAH Board Mtg, College of St. Catherine, 7:00 pm. All are welcome. Contact Paul J.

JUST ONE OF THE DADS: Tom Vytlačil

Who: Tom Vytlačil age (38)

Wife: Linda

Kids: Max(well) (27 months) and soon to be adopted Emma (2.5 months)

Residence: North Oaks, MN

At Home Dad Since: November 2001

Education: BS in Biomedical Engineering (Marquette Univ in Milwaukee, WI) and MBA (Univ of Minn)

Prior to being a stay home dad:

Marketing Manager for a small biomedical company in Arden Hills, MN

Hobbies:

Curling (winter), Biking (summer), Watching football (Green Bay Packers), Video editing

How did you hook up with MDAH?

Mother-in-law told me about Slowlane.com. Found MDAH through Slowlane.

What made you decide to become a stay-at-home dad?

My wife and I always knew one of us would stay home. We waited until the first child to decide who. After 7 years with my last job I was ready for a change. She was only 2 years into her current job and still thrilled with the challenge. Fortunately it also made good financial sense at the time.

What is most rewarding about being a stay-at-home dad?

Seeing the little changes that occur from day to day with my son. Realizing that I have lot to learn about child-raising and being a better parent. So this job will never get boring.

Tom Vytlačil, Cont.

What do you like the least?

The continual struggle to get other things done without sacrificing my son's learning opportunities (can you feel the guilt??)

How long do you plan to be a stay-at-home dad?

This has shifted from just til they are in school to possibly until they leave the nest. It also depends if Mom ever wants a shot at the fun. I am sure when they start school I will pick up some type of freelance or part-time career during school hours. But there will always be someone home when the kids come home from school.

Best advice for other dads:

Make the firm commitment to do right by your child first. I do playgroups and classes not for my benefit of talking to other adults but to give my kid another life experience. If I get some benefit, great. But I do not go into the activity expecting anything for myself.

WELCOME TO NEW GUYS (JUNE/JULY)

Southwest:

Mark Burns (Minneapolis), Mark Henderson (Chanhassen), Justin McCarthy (St Louis Park)

Southeast:

Greg Bury (St Paul), Tom Clark (St Paul), Anthony Collins (St Paul), Mark Dahl (St Paul), Michael Kehoe (St Paul), Matt Keon (St Paul), Steven Kylo (St Paul), Theo Olson (St Paul), Tiny Proctor (Woodbury), Fletcher Smith (St Paul), Mark Smith (St Paul), Daniel Sogin (St Paul), Tim Wood (South St. Paul)

Northwest:

Andrew Warcken (Brooklyn Park)

Northeast:

Abba Blum (Fridley)

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Claire Kehoe, 1

Alex Postma, 3

Nicole Abraham, 5

Philip Morley, 15

Ethan Seabury-Kolod, 17

MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS: Okal Twins Update

We are happy to report that JP (JonPaul) and his family are doing well. Spirits seem to be up and JP expects the twins will come home in a couple more weeks. JP reports they have to get a little better at suckling, swallowing, and need to add a little weight before the transition home can commence.

The twins are still being tube fed but are no longer in NICU which is good news. However, the family can't camp out over night in a private room anymore. JP is excited to get the twins home and also anxious to meet up with the MDAH gang soon. Keep an eye out for a future playgroup in River Falls. JP could use a little support about now. We'll keep you all posted on that field trip.

A LITTLE MEDIA ATTENTION

Catch the UPN (ch. 29) 10:00 pm news with Chris Conangla on Thursday, July 31! Chris interviewed Paul J. at his house and Dave W., Justin M. and Mike C. at the Hillcrest playgroup.

TRAVELING BY CAR? YOU BETTER READ THIS ... by Mike Christianson

We have taken a couple long trips with the kids in the past four months. Drive times have ranged from 7 plus hours to 4 hours. We have stumbled on a couple things that have worked for us. There is no guarantee that they will work in the future.

Morgan is five and has more mobility in her booster seat than Sam (3) who is still cinched into his four point chair. Mobility, or at least the illusion of, seems to make trips more bearable. By the illusion of mobility I mean having things packed around the child so they can reach for them themselves.

The following is a list of things that are working for us now.

Travel toys – the only time the kids see these toys, is when we are traveling. We keep them in a larger bag and place it between the kids so they both can reach and rummage through it.

Their own bag of stuff – we let each child pack a small backpack. The only limit we have on this is that the toy has to fit in the backpack.

Books and books on tape – we go to the library a day or so before we leave to they can pick out books. They do not get to look at the books until we are driving.

Tape player – we have a Fischer / Price tape player. I highly recommend this, they spend a lot of time listening to books on tape, although Arthur's first sleep over gets old after the eighth time. It kills a lot of time, sharing is difficult but at some point but they work their way through it. They use the player quite a bit at home as well.

Grab bag – this is a good diversion and great bribery. I will fill ten plastic Easter eggs, ten for each child in their own bag, with stickers, candy, cheerios, 99 cent bag of animals from Target, pennies or anything that will fit in an egg and not be swallowed if you have that problem. I can always get five minutes of quiet for an egg.

Magnet doodle - they spend a fair amount of time drawing on this. This and the tape player are good tools to practice sharing.

Color crayons and new cheap coloring books

Paper and scissors – if your child is old enough or if you have safety scissors this is a good time killer. It is quite messy but the quiet time is worth every scrap you have to pick off the floor.

Water bottle – one for each child

Snacks – we bring carrots, apples and fishy crackers

A sucker of last resort – the kids usually hit a wall with half an hour left. We will pull out a Tootsie pop which is more for our sanity. This can be used at any point you are about to lose it.

We do not have enough room in our car for a VCR but if we did I would bring it in a heartbeat.

The main thing I have found is to have things within arms reach of your child. That allows them to dig through bags to get what they want and drop it on the floor for a parent to retrieve. Our method is not clean, we start out organized but that is gone in five minutes and I spend a half an hour cleaning the car after we arrive. But it is worth it because our last four seven hour trips and two four hour trips have been good. Our last long trip we only had to stop twice, once for gas and once to use the potty. Good luck! -Mike

FREE CAR SEAT FITTINGS

As many as half of all child safety seats are improperly installed according to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration. Incorrect installation or improper use of a child safety seat may result in serious injury or death to a child during a traffic accident. The Minnesota SAFE KIDS Coalition has partnered with the St. Paul Police Department the St. Paul Fire Department and the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department to provide free car seat fitting checks with a trained technician. You can make an appointment to check your child's car seat by calling the Minnesota Safety Council at 651-291-9150. Appointments are half hour per car seat and are done at two stations depending on the day- the St. Paul Fire Training Facility at 1683 Energy Park Drive and the fire station at 505 Payne Ave/West 7th. Call now. Appointments are currently booked through November.

THIS IS NOT MOMMIE'S ECFE

ECFE (Early Childhood and Family Education) classes are great for learning about children's learning and caring needs. The Minnesota Dept of Children, Families and Learning maintains a state-wide list of programs (<http://cfl.state.mn.us/ecfi/ecfe.htm>). Many ECFE participants find the expertise of the child educators and wisdom and camaraderie of other parents invaluable in their role as parent. Have you done ECFE and been the only Dad among a dozen women? Pre-registration has already begun for many ECFE programs so don't delay. Pre-register early to get your preferred choice of site and time.

Try a Dad's group! There are a few Saturday morning ECFE Dad groups in St. Paul and Minneapolis. But, in St. Paul, there are a couple of weekday options for stay at home Dads! They will meet Mondays, 9:30-11:30am at Galtier Elementary and Thursdays, 1:30-3:30pm at Rondo Education Center. The facilitator is Todd Seabury-Kolod, a 20-year ECFE veteran and parent of two, ages 16 and 6. Class topics focus on all the usual parenting issues but with a particular emphasis on topics that particularly pertain to at-home dads. If you would like to try a Dad-focused ECFE, contact Todd at 651-230-9589 or todd.seabury-kolod@spps.org.

CUB FOODS SUMMER MOVIES

Cub Foods is sponsoring movies! Tickets are available at the service counter of any Cub every Wednesday at 10:00. Doors open at 9:30. Get there early because the word is out! Bus loads of daycares and headstarts are jumping in line. There are four weeks left:

July 30 Jimmy Neutron

Aug 6 Agent Cody Banks

Aug 13 Shrek

Aug 20 Snow Day

The movies are showing in four locations:

Mega Star Cinemas:

Southdale, 400 Southdale Center, Edina

Arbor Lakes, 12575 Elm Creek Blvd, Maple Grove

Muller Family Theaters:

Lakeville, 20653 Keokuk, Lakeville

White Bear Township, 1180 Co Rd J, White Bear Township