



Minnesota Dads at Home

Connecting At-Home Dads and their Kids to Play and Learn

[Minnesota Dads At Home Newsletter](#)

Volume 4 Issue 7

October 2006

[In This Issue:](#)

Recipe: Chocolate Halloween treats

Tips and advice: Halloween safety

Kids and School: The importance of Dad involvement

[Upcoming Events:](#)

MDAH Family Fun Day: Saturday, October 21st at Sever's Corn Maze in Shakopee. Meet in the picnic area at 11:30 AM. For directions and information go to www.severscornmaze.com or contact Mike Christianson: mchrist661@aol.com

Dad's Night Out: Vikings vs. Seahawks viewing party Sunday, October 22. Game time is 3:15 PM. Come "tailgate" and watch the game on the big screen. Bring beverages and a dish to share. Contact Doug Swanson at sdswanson1@comcast.net for more information.

THE MDAH NEWSLETTER IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS ON ANY TOPIC: SPORTS, FITNESS, A BOOK REVIEW, OR JUST YOUR SLANT ON AT-HOME DAD LIFE. TO SUBMIT, EMAIL: nate@mdah.org

Halloween treats

Here is an easy recipe for a batch of chocolate Halloween treats that your kids can help you prepare. Impress your mother in law with your culinary skills.

INGREDIENTS:

- Ritz Crackers
- creamy peanut butter
- dark or white chocolate, melted
- orange sprinkles or multicolored Halloween sprinkles

PREPARATION:

Have your child help you break up two or three chocolate bars. Toss them in your crockpot or stovetop to melt. Take the Ritz Crackers and make sandwich cookies out of them using peanut butter for the filling. Then using tongs or a spoon, coat each one in melted chocolate. (Be careful if the exterior of the pot is warm.) Place treats on wax paper. Promptly dump orange sprinkles on top. Place treats in the refrigerator to cool and set.

Keep Trick or Treat Time Free from Howls

"Trick or treat!" That's the phrase shouted with glee by many a youngster across the country every Halloween night. But before your ghosts and goblins trick or treat this year, parents should keep in mind these safety tips to make sure the only howls are those of fun.

Have each child carry or wear something lit, such as a flashlight, glow bracelet or necklace, or flashing attire for visibility. Light-up shoes are also practical, and ever so noticeable on a dark Halloween night.

Plan out a route in advance. Trick or treat in familiar neighborhoods or areas.

Require well-fitting shoes to be worn - preferably sneakers. Kids should wear sturdy shoes and not princess high-heels, extra large boots, or other too cumbersome shoes often shown with costumes. Their feet - and most likely you who may end up carrying either the shoes or the child - will be thankful.

Avoid costumes that drag on the ground. While cute initially, costumes that drag can trip up little feet, get caught on bushes, and create a tussle that sometimes results in the child wanting to remove the costume.

Pick costumes that are bathroom-friendly. It might also be a good idea to pre-plan a bathroom stop along the way.

Be sure a child's mask allows full visibility and breathing. Some masks only have small eye slits and nothing for the nose or mouth. If possible, find a mask that "breathes" and is easy to put on and off.

Only carry flexible props, wands, swords, lasers, etc, which can't cause injury if a kid accidentally falls.

Choose a smart trick or treat goody bag. Some of the seemingly fun ones that are sold in stores are heavy and cumbersome; others are too long and will drag the ground or have sharp edges that could scrape against tender skin. One simple suggestion is to have kids use a backpack to keep their hands free for their props or flashlight.

Keep track of time and don't trick or treat after 9 p.m. (general recommendation). That allows ample time for children to trick or treat, and by then, the excitement of the evening and the candy/treats means little ghouls will be tired, anyhow.

Do dads help kids perform better in school?

A recent study out of the University of Illinois found that when dads or other father figures get personally involved, kids tend to do better in school. The finding, says a University of Illinois researcher, suggests that schools should encourage male interaction, especially with at-risk kids.

Brent A. McBride, a professor of human and community development published the exploratory study. When father figures talk sincerely with kids daily, reading and math scores on achievement tests are higher, he said.

His research team looked at the cognitive impact of father-figure involvement, finding that it doesn't matter if the father figure is a biological dad, an adoptive father or just the adult male of a household. There were benefits to learning, he said, resulting from father figures simply asking their children about the activities of their school day, such as what they are learning and about their social relationships.

"The measure is of how often the father or father figure talks to his kids about activities being done in school," McBride said. "We wanted to look beyond involvement such as just dropping kids off and picking them up or helping out on field trips."

"When fathers become involved in a cognitive dimension of their children's education, it can negate such barriers as limited resources in both schools and families," he said. "What is most encouraging is that if you look at the strength of the relationship to a barrier of cultural differences, father involvement has a really strong impact on learning."

McBride's study considered input from teachers, administrators and fathers about school resources, math and reading scores on achievement tests, teacher-student ratios, family environments and neighborhood characteristics.

One disturbing aspect of the study involved family resources. Factors such as a lack of parental interest, poor management skills within families, illiteracy, and poor English-language skills all negatively affected learning. "The relative strength of the father-figure involvement to lessen such barriers underscores the need for schools to examine the ways in which they address these problems if they hope to help children overcome such risk factors," McBride said.

Most studies of parental involvement focus on mothers, placing the role of fathers into a secondary one, he said. "This is a much more tangible way for fathers to become involved. We think that having father figures taking on an active role has an additive benefit, and that may help knock down more barriers."