

Minnesota Dads At Home Newsletter

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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

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Dad's Holiday Helper: A few tips and activities to get you through the Holiday season

Music: "High and Mighty" Rock the Minnesota Music Cafe

Rochester Playgroup: An update from Shriver and the gang

Viewpoints: "Evolution" by Scott Marshall

December Special Events:

- Dad's Night Out at Gameworks Wednesday, December 14th.

School-Break Boredom Busters

Try these sure-fire tricks to cure cabin fever fast.

1. Make snow angels!
2. Fill a jar with 25 chocolate kisses. Beginning December 1, give one kiss a day until the jar is empty.
3. Create one-of-a-kind gift-wrap with brown paper, rubber stamps, markers, stickers, and glitter.
4. Give gifts of time--an hour of babysitting; a load of clean laundry--with "friendly freebie" coupons.
5. Set up a jigsaw puzzle in a quiet corner where kids can escape the holiday hoopla.
6. Let kids decorate their rooms with tinsel, paper chains and window gel stickers.
7. Pick one must-do project, and tackle it together. Go ice-skating afterward.
8. Plan a movie night. Try *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *Miracle on 54th Street* or *A Christmas Story*.
9. Start a new family tradition: Open stockings in bed, take a holiday hike, or perform a concert.
10. Check with your local Red Cross to help Hurricanes Katrina or Rita survivors.
11. Remember, kids need routine--so try to stick to a normal schedule around the Holidays as much as you can.

Cook Up Some Holiday Fun

- Make popcorn balls! Use frosting to assemble balls into snowpeople; decorate with candy pieces.
- Use graham crackers for the walls and roof of a no-bake gingerbread house. Glue sides with frosting; decorate with candies.
- Form a heart with 2 candy canes; secure with school glue. Tie with ribbon and hang on the tree.

- String garlands of popcorn, cranberries, and apple and orange slices. Drape on branches outdoors for a bird buffet.
- Invite neighborhood kids over to decorate cookies. Set up stations with sprinkles, frosting, gummy bears, and more.

Music Review

Josh Taulbee knows how to get his funk on

Last winter, the Minnesota Dads at Home ventured to Saint Paul's Minnesota Music Café to hear the rhythm and blues band High and Mighty. The dads were treated to an evening of fun funk music with a whole lot of soul. Bandleader and bass player Josh Taulbee has been a stay at home dad for several years. His band is comprised of several guitars, four part horn section, and vocal harmonies that will knock your socks off. The band plays songs by artists like Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, The Blues Brothers, BB King and many more. In January, the Dads are going to get another dose of soul when we return to the Music Café'. Check out the band at www.high-mighty.com to see pictures, listen to audio tracks, to check their schedule, and even view video shot from live shows.

Evolution

By: Scott Marshall

“Hey, Mr. Mom – how’s it goin’?”

Like nails on a chalkboard, that question. Although there are times I wish I had my mom’s patience and endless, loving maternal instincts, I am decidedly no one’s mother.

Not me – I’m all man. Got me a checklist and mental map of how to get from the top to the bottom of that list in the most efficient manner. No time to enjoy “the journey” thank you. I’m lookin’ at the business end of two girls under two-years-old far too often every day to “enjoy the journey.”

But wait a minute. I don’t remember either Rose or Ruby showing up with a checklist or a mental map. Huh. Well, Rose? Ruby? What should we do then?

Back to that journey. Every day I find myself in this awkward neverland of “process” rather than the familiar territory of product and it’s stretching me to grow in ways that feel so foreign that I wonder whether or not I’m doing the right things.

Wouldn’t it just be easier to go to work? And shouldn’t *I* be the one to bring home the bacon? Where did I go wrong that my wife Shareen brings home the family’s money and benefits instead of *me*? And why would I ever consider that “wrong?” Anyway, how many kids go through daycare and come out just fine? And wouldn’t Rose and Ruby benefit from the day-to-day interaction with their “classmates” in a daycare situation? I could come home from work one night and see that Rose hit a language milestone and that Ruby was starting to walk (earlier than average because of their daycare interactions). Wouldn’t that be great? Check *those* accomplishments off the list. What’s next?

Some days I wish I *were* at work furthering my career, making money, interacting with adults. Some days I wish – no, I *pray* - Shareen would walk through the door four

hours early. Some days I want to lay down and take a nap right in the middle of morning play time. Some days I beg for the girls' nap time to hurry up and be NOW. But every day – *every day* - I look back on the fun, the struggles, the growth, the setbacks, the smiles, and the tantrums and thank my lucky stars that I have the opportunity to be a part of this journey.

I don't think I am particularly different from most moms and dads. The ones who *work* all day tell me they wish they had my "lifestyle" – you know, coffee with Cathy Wurzer every morning and more Neil Conan than I know what to do with every afternoon. And the ones who are *home* every day with their kid(s) share similar emotional ups and downs ("Get me outta here!!!" or, "She said 'Mommy' for the first time today!!!")

My dad asked me once how I was tolerating being home. The way he figures it – and he told me this - women are just better built to withstand the process of raising kids (in particular being home with them from day-to-day). I was offended. I thought, "Just because you didn't stay home with us kids (or couldn't have bared it) doesn't mean I can't thrive at it. I can do this as well as any mom, thank you. They're *my* kids after all. And what other 'job' would you dare tell me I'm less suited for compared to...umm...a woman?"

So maybe that's it: a double-whammy. Mom's out making the money *and* I'm at home trying to figure out - with varying success I might add - what women for centuries have been doing and is now part of their genetic code according to my dad. Add to that the fact that our society still doesn't get it that raising healthy kids is the single most important mission on the planet, and you get the *triple*-whammy.

Sheesh. The whole deal is stacked against us. No wonder we feel blue now and again. No wonder some of us who grew up in *very* traditional dad-goes-to-work-mom-stays-home-with-kids families end up feeling melancholy or become out-and-out depressed.

But here's the deal: *we* know what's up. We understand that while many people look at us as revolutionary ("You stay home with your kids?! That's GREAT!"), we aren't. We're *evolutionary*. It's exactly because attitudes are slow to change that we feel external pressure that causes our internal tension and angst. *We* know our mission and its ultimate importance and we've chosen to accept it. We'll do what we have to do in order to keep ourselves mentally and physically healthy for the sake of our kids: we'll see counselors, talk with each other, lean on spouses, compete in triathlons, build stuff, rehab old cars, and (*insert manly pursuit here*).

So on the days I'm feeling blue I remind myself that it's all part of the process. And on the other days when every one else is all smiles, I am the one with the *biggest* smile. But either way, I'll tell ya, when Rose and Ruby grow up to be healthy, happy, positive contributors to society, I'll celebrate checking *that* off my list.

Scott is a stay at home dad in Minneapolis. You can email him at scottethan@mac.com

Rochester Dads at Home Update

Ryan Shriver has set up a regular playgroup in Rochester. The group meets Tuesday mornings 9:30-11:30ish at Pipsqueaks, located at the Olmsted County United Way building. Here's a link for everything you would ever need to know about it: <http://www.rochestermn.gov/departments/park/facilities/pipsqueaks/>

Pipsqueaks is located in the gymnasium of the United Way of Olmsted County Inc., 903 West Center Street in Rochester.

- From downtown Rochester, follow Center Street west to 9th Avenue. Turn right. United Way will be on your left.
- From Highway 52, take the Second Street SW exit and go east to 11th Avenue. Turn left on 11th Avenue and go 3 blocks to First Street NW. Turn right on First Street NW. United Way will be on your right.

Enter through the new Pipsqueaks entrance. Parking is free and is available adjacent to the building.

Price:

- \$2 per child per day
- \$5 for up to 4 children per day

Ryan is also working on organizing a Rochester area DNO for after Thanksgiving. Details to follow.

Order Your MDAH T-Shirt Now!

Minnesota Dads at Home is proud to announce that you can now purchase MDAH gear on the web! MDAH member Dave Weiss has set up an online “store” at www.cafepress.com/mdah where you can purchase a variety of T-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs, a tote bag and more, all with the Minnesota Dads at Home logo. All items sold are for promotional purposes only, and MDAH nor none of its members collect any proceeds. This is a great way to show your pride and spread the word about MDAH. If you are on the el-cheapo budget, like me, there is a basic tee for just \$9. Check it out at the link above. If you have any questions feel free to send them to: nate@mdah.org