

# Fastbreak For Fathers

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a monthly e-mail to help you be the kind of dad your child needs you to be.

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by Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Douglas County  
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In this issue: Fathering and Children's Friendships

## OBSERVATIONS

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**A British publication once offered a prize for the best definition of a friend.** Among the thousands of answers received, this one came out on top: "A friend is the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out."

How do we raise our children to become people who care for others and have deep friendships?

The other night as Pam and I snuggled in for the night she turned to me and said, "Aren't you glad for our kid's friendships?" We then spent a few minutes talking about our four children and their friends. All had a strong group of friends but each in their own way. Our oldest son consistently has had one best friend that he spends the majority of time with. Another son is always in a pack of boys, and girls I must say. It would be hard for him to identify a best friend. Each of my children have different levels of friendship and fortunately, for the time being at least, they form a circle of positive peer pressure.

It isn't always that way. Sometimes our children can become a part of a group that pushes the envelope. Recent research on teenage brain development indicates that the brain of a teen has yet to fully develop in the area of assessing danger and long-term consequences. (Check out the *Frontline* online program *Inside the Teenage Brain* for information on what scientists are learning about how the teenage brain influences behavior, both theirs and our!

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain)

One of our sons had a great friend, still does, but his family and ours soon discovered that when these two got together they would often do what neither of them had the guts or foolishness to do alone. Sometimes this proved to be great harmless fun, other times it proved disastrous. They are still friends, but they have gone through a period of closer parental monitoring that has helped them to stay out of trouble!

I want my kids to live life surrounded by friends who help them mature into responsible, compassionate adults who enjoy life together. I also want them to know that they have a friend in me – "someone who comes in when the whole world has gone out." This month's *Fastbreak* for Fathers may help you with both.



**Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.**

## RESEARCH

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Sean Brotherson, Assistant Professor and Extension Family Science Specialist at North Dakota State University, effectively summarizes the facts on fathers and children's friendships in – "Fathers and Children's Relationships," *Father Times, Issue 8* (2004).

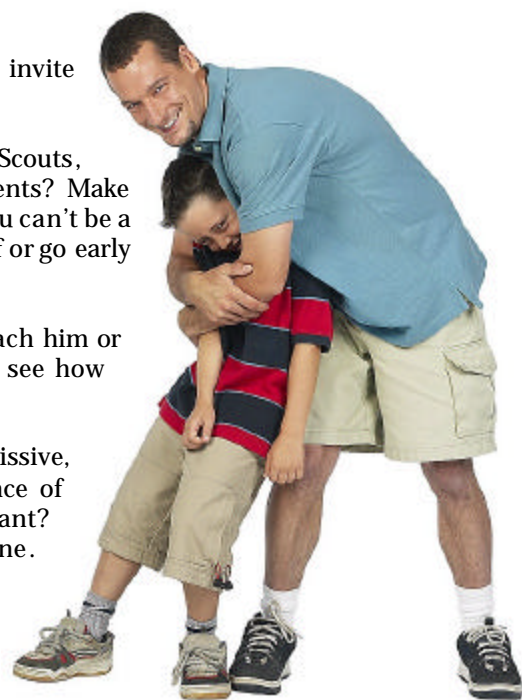
- Fathers who know the parents of the friends that their children select and play with have kids that are less likely to become involved in risk behaviors and more likely to avoid aggressive or antisocial behaviors.
- Children with fathers who are engaged with them in activities that provide social interaction, such as youth clubs, sports activities or religious groups, tend to have more friends and better relationships with their friends.
- Fathers who practice "parental coaching" when social challenges arise help their children by guiding them through a problem, teaching conflict resolution strategies, and following up to see how children have responded.
- If fathers engage in a "permissive" parenting style by giving in to children's desires and setting few or no limits, children are more likely to be aggressive, impulsive, or non-conforming in their social relationships. Children may take things that are not theirs or think little about the effects of their actions on others.
- Fathers who engage in a "power assertive" (authoritarian) parenting style by giving orders without explanation or using threats and physical punishment tend to have children who are more aggressive or sometimes shy and withdrawn in social situations. Children who withdraw may think they are powerless and social interaction is unpleasant, while those who are aggressive may have learned that acting aggressively will bring results.
- Monitoring the quality of a child's friendships and peer interactions is associated with having children who experience more satisfying and successful relationships with friends.

## ACTION Plan

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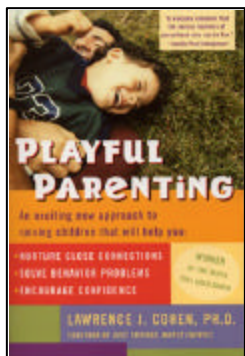
In light of the above findings:

- Do you know the parents of your child's best friends? If not, invite some of them over for a barbecue this summer.
- Do you send your child off to youth group, playgroup, 4-H, Scouts, sports practice etc. without ever engaging the other kids or parents? Make plans to connect with the people your kids spend time with. If you can't be a regular participant, plan to hang around when you drop them off or go early to pick them up.
- Instead of trying to "solve" your child's next relational issue, coach him or her through the problem instead. Don't forget to follow-up to see how *their* ideas worked?
- Check your style of parenting. Which do you tend to be? Permissive, Authoritarian (drill sergeant) or Authoritative (a healthy balance of structure and support)? Need some help to be less of a drill sergeant? Follow this link to a free online course on Responsive Discipline.  
[www.ksu.edu/wparent/courses/rd/index.htm](http://www.ksu.edu/wparent/courses/rd/index.htm)
- Ask your child how things are going with their friends. Help them think of ways to build supportive friendships.



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## RESOURCES



**Playful Parenting.** (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 2001) Looking for a book that justifies the amount of time you spend playing with your kids? Look no further than *Playful Parenting*. Cohen demonstrates how playing with your children can help them develop close relationships, grow in personal confidence and learn to recognize, express and appropriately handle emotions. A great practical resource that helps you put fun in parenting!

Just out for Father's Day, **Golden Slumbers – A Father's Love** is a collection of heartfelt songs celebrating the bond between father and child. Following in the footsteps of the Grammy nominated "Golden Slumbers – A Father's

Lullaby" the album brings together artists from all different genres sharing their own unique perspectives on what it means to be a dad.



## Connections (Metro Denver & Beyond)



**Denver's WB Work and Family** – Catch Rich Batten live on Denver's WB2 Morning News at approximately 6:40 AM every other Tuesday as Natalie Tysdal interviews him on work and family issues. Additional information on each segment is available at [www.douglascountyextension.org](http://www.douglascountyextension.org) (click on the WB2 logo). Upcoming segments include: May 31 – *Hyperactive Parenting*, June 14 – *Vacation Sanity Tips*, June 21 – *The Chore Wars*

### Bringing Baby Home

#### **A Workshop for Pregnant Couples and Parents of Infants and Toddlers**

Prepare yourself for life with your baby and learn how to be the best parenting team possible. Learn how to stay connected with your partner, interact with your baby, keep both parents involved, and deal with conflict in a positive way. This workshop will help to energize your relationship and prepare you for the most important and rewarding job you will ever have, *raising a child*.

Saturdays July 23 & 30 from 9 AM to 4 PM - \$150.00 per couple. Class size is limited to 12 couples.

This class is offered through the Sky Ridge Medical Center in Lone Tree. Call 720-225-BABY (2229) or visit [www.skyridgemedcenter.com](http://www.skyridgemedcenter.com) to register.



**This Father's Day Weekend**, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) will hold the third annual Golden Dads Campaign. Golden Dads is a campaign to acknowledge and reward everyday dads from across the country as they interact with their children in zoos, parks, malls, museums, and other public places where families gather.

This year, NFI will search places like ESPN Zone, Six Flags America, and several zoos in 20 cities across the country. Last year over 1,000 great dads were awarded with special prize packages. This year they plan to break 10,000. Visit [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org) to find out where and when they will be in your city. Denverites, I suggest being around the ESPN Zone Father's Day Weekend or City Park on Saturday, June 18th from 9am-12:00pm.

**You can't be the kind of dad that you want to be. You can't be the kind of dad that you wanted to have. You've got to be the kind of dad that your child needs you to be.**

**- Roland Warren, The National Fatherhood Initiative**

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**Fastbreak for Fathers** is a publication of the *Douglas County FatherWork Connection*, a countywide, research-based, fathering education and advocacy initiative committed to increasing the probability of every child in Douglas County Colorado being intimately connected to an involved, responsible and loving father or father figure. Images copyright © 2005 Douglas County Extension and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by  
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