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for fatherless children

JANICE THOMPSON

Power up principle:
The power of possessions

MARK LARSON

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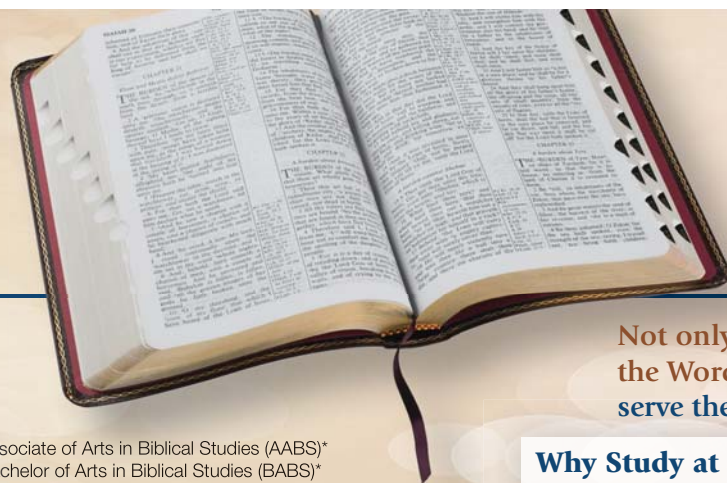
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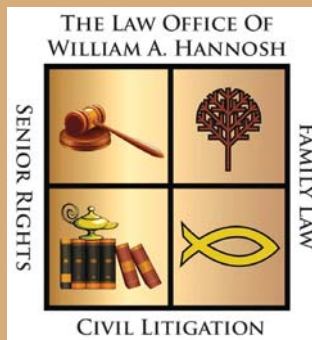
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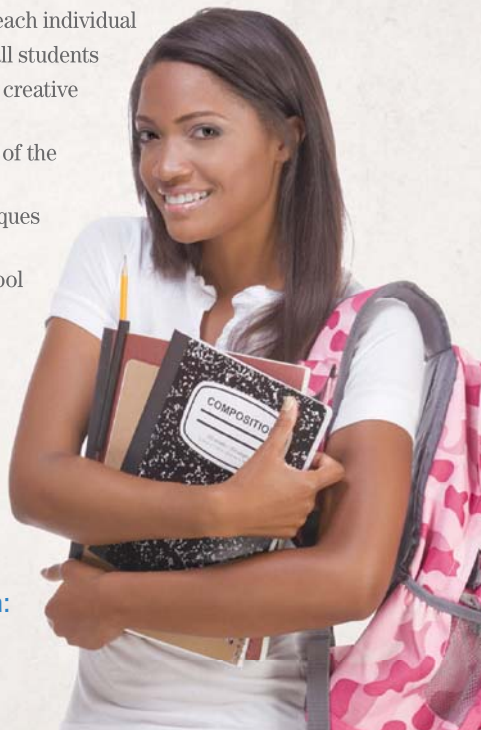
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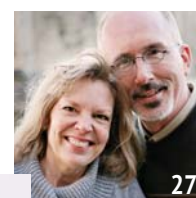
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COVER PHOTO BY SEAN CAPSHAW / RESOLUSEAN PHOTOGRAPHY

DEAN NELSON

Tangerines as soul food?

All of us have probably had a meal that we remember for very specific reasons. It might have been for a birthday or anniversary, or to celebrate a great achievement. I saw a news item about one of the San Diego County Fair's unusual food offerings—three cheeseburger patties with Krispy Kreme glazed donuts instead of hamburger buns. Reading about food like that makes me wonder why I didn't become a cardiologist.

Actually, I was visited by a cardiologist not too long ago because of a meal. After a wonderful dinner at an over-priced restaurant in San Diego, I went to bed feeling a little off-kilter. I got up in the middle of the night because of food poisoning, and I passed out on the floor. My wife thought I was having a heart attack. So did the emergency room when they transferred me to the cardiac unit. But no. The seared ahi I had ordered for dinner apparently hadn't been seared enough.

A few years ago, my friend Michael returned from Calcutta, India (now called Kolkatta), where he had been working in a facility started by Mother Teresa, called the Home for the Dying Destitutes. This is the place where, if you are dying and have no one to care for you, you can come for your final days. It is always a full house.

One of Michael's tasks was to feed the men who were too weak to feed themselves. One day Michael sat on the edge of the man's cot and spooned tiny bites of rice, curry and fish into the man's mouth.

But soon the man became quite agitated and his face distorted as if he were in pain. A fish bone was caught in the back of the man's throat, and his arms were too weak to reach up and remove it. He could only writhe and wimper. Michael figured out the problem, reached



The men's ward at Nirmal Hriday, Home of the Pure Heart, formerly Mother Teresa's Kalighat Home for the Dying Destitutes, in Kolkata, India.

deep into the man's mouth and removed the bone. The man was too weary and agitated to want any more rice or fish after that.

Dessert was half of a tangerine. Michael pulled the sections apart and brought them to the man's mouth. He ate those, and smiled.

While Michael fed him the last of the tangerine, virtually the only food the man actually swallowed, Michael noticed someone waving nearby. Two cots away, another emaciated man weakly motioned to Michael. He also had half of a tangerine, and he gestured that Michael could take it and feed the man he was helping.

"If a dying man can offer a few sections of fruit to relieve the suffering of another dying man, then I know I will always have something to give to someone else," Michael said. "I will never, never, ever say again that I have nothing to give."

Think of memorable meals in Scripture—Jesus and disciples in an upper room, Jesus breaking bread with disheartened followers after their journey on the Emmaus Road, Jesus fixing breakfast for his disciples on the shore after his resurrection and after they had returned to their old jobs. Elijah being

fed by ravens. Manna falling from the sky. Provisions for that time, for that place.

Author Henri Nouwen said that the expression "breaking bread together" is significant, because the breaking and the giving are one singular act.

"Isn't a meal together the most beautiful expression of our desire to be given to each other in our brokenness?" he wrote. "The table, the food, the drinks, the words, the stories: are they not the most intimate ways in which we not only express the desire to give our lives to each other, but also to do this in actuality?... Don't you think that our desire to eat together is an expression of our even deeper desire to be food for one another?"

It could come in the form of a Krispy Kreme triple cheeseburger, I suppose.

But may I recommend the tangerine?







Dean Nelson directs the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University. His book "God Hides in Plain Sight: Seeing the Sacred in a Chaotic World," is

published by Brazos Press.

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Holding tight

Brutal cancer journey prompts
young mother to cling to her faith

by LORI ARNOLD



PHOTO BY SEAN CAPSHAW /
RESOLUSEAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Erin Weidemann was stowed away in her parents' bedroom. She had run of the master suite, including their cozy king-size bed, for three straight days. But Weidemann, certainly not of her own volition, spent the better part of the time hugging the toilet as she sucked on Sour Patch Kids.

"Those three days were hands down the worst days of my life," she said. "I have never been in so much physical pain."

Far from a special retreat, Weidemann, then just 26, was recovering from a brutal treatment for newly diagnosed "aggressive variant" thyroid cancer. After a nine-hour operation to remove the cancer, doctors injected her with radioactive iodine, which, similar to a heat-seeking missile, seeks out cancerous cells, destroying them.

Because of the dangerous contamination, Weidemann had to be isolated from people for 72 hours, so after her injection, she rode home in the back end of a Suburban, covered by a blanket in an effort to protect her mom from radiation as she drove.

"When we got home, I had to sit on the curb outside so she could get the room ready," Weidemann, now 33, said. "This meant wrapping anything and everything that I might touch in the room with Saran Wrap because if my skin came into contact with anything, the radiation would stay on it for 60 days."

A cooler of food prepared in advance remained untouched, though she followed doctor's orders to eat the sour candies as way to flush the radioactive material out of her salivary glands.

"Being stuck in that room was very difficult because the radiation basically affects you the way chemo does—a lot of dizziness and vomiting," the Encinitas resident said. "I spent the good part of the first 48 hours lying on the shower floor crying because I was so sick and could not stand."

In the fleeting moments she was physically up to it, she would talk to family and friends.

"I was lying there, super helpless," Weidemann, a former college athlete, said. "No one was in there with me and I just felt so isolated and so by myself that I just prayed. It wasn't like it was just a few hours and it was over. I really had a long time in there without, you know, a hug from my mom."

"It was just a dark, scary place to be in there by yourself. I just cried. I was miserable. I finally realized I'm not in here by myself. God is in here with me. At the end of three days I got to come out. I got to hug my family and I was surrounded by all of these amazing, supporting people. When you hit your breaking point, talk to Him. All He wants you to do is talk to Him and let Him in and let Him know that you know He is there."

Fighting fear

In the years since, she's done plenty of talking to God after doctors quickly discovered that Weidemann's cancer had spread to the lymph nodes in both sides of her neck, up her brain stem and into the chest cavity.

"It was everywhere," she said.

After her initial treatment in 2007, the cancer returned every year through 2011.

Brent and Erin Weidemann with their newborn daughter, Rooney, who was born in March.



PHOTO BY SEAN CAPSHAW / RESOLUSEAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Her last biopsy in May was negative, the third straight good report.

“Because of the metastasis to the lymph nodes, they expect the disease will spread to other areas of the body eventually,” she said. “There is no way to know if or when this will happen. I don’t really think about it, to be honest. It’s not worth worrying about.”

Still, Weidemann admits that, early on, fear was a frequent companion.

“I was afraid and sad that I would die,” she confessed. “I would read the op report over and over and the doctor just said how much disease he had removed from my body. He was blown away that I was even alive. He referred to me as an ‘extremely diseased young woman.’”

“I was terrified that my life was over and I wouldn’t be able to get out and do some of the things I thought I would have a chance to do. I thought, ‘Well, no one will want to marry someone who might die soon,’ and ‘There goes my chance to have a family.’ I just put those ideas out of my mind as a way to come to terms with the fact—or at least what I thought was fact—that life was over and I would never have those things.”

Persistent pursuit

That was before she met Brent Weidemann at an alumni event for Penn State, where she earned her journalism degree. The two had never met on campus, where he earned a degree in marketing. Despite her reluctance, her future husband diligently pursued her.

“A few years ago, especially when my diagnosis was so fresh, I was so closed off to even meeting someone to date,” she said. “I didn’t really date (not) knowing if there was going to be a future because I honestly didn’t know if there would be.”

“He swore up and down, ‘I’ve got big plans for us and I know you don’t think you have a future in life and you never thought you would get married.’ He just kept saying ‘I have different plans. I have different plans.’ Now I know that was God because we are so blessed in our marriage.”

They married three years ago and their first child, daughter Rooney, arrived

in March.

“Even now as a mom, I so enjoy my time with her that I don’t really think about not being around,” Weidemann said. “I know whatever impacts I’m going to have on her life are impacts that God wants me to have. So if I’m around for many years or not many years or if she’s taken whenever she’s taken, she’s a gift and we’re her parents. It’s whatever God wants it to be.”

She’s also discovered that being independent is not necessarily a virtue, even as she was forced to give up her mortgage finance job and move back home during her initial treatments.

“I’m a tough person and I always operated under the assumption that I’m tough,” she said. “I can do it by myself, I’m very independent and I really don’t need anybody’s help.’ But it’s just not true. That experience really humbled me. It was a breaking point for me. It was hard and God was there for me.” ■

In her own words

First-time mom Erin Weidemann shares lessons she learned through her cancer journey.

Needing others: I am not supposed to carry the weight and stress of being sick all by myself. I am a strong person and, before this happened, I would have just put my head down and tried to get through it on my own. It’s good to be independent in certain situations, but not when you are supposed to rely on the Lord and lean into Him. For such a long time, I thought I could do everything on my own and that I didn’t need anyone’s help. I think as women, we are

taught that being dependent on someone is weak. That is not the way that God wants us to approach the trials He puts in front of us. He wants us to let go and put our faith in Him..

Unexpected blessing: Cancer can be one of the biggest blessings in a person’s life. When I look back on it, I am wholeheartedly grateful that the Lord saw me through and continues to see me through this very challenging experience. It allowed me to completely re-evaluate absolutely everything in my life. I went back to school to become a teacher so that I can use the gifts and talents God gave

me to impact kids. I met my husband and God softened my heart toward him and allowed us to build a faith-based relationship and marriage..

Fret not: There is no point in worrying. Worrying makes absolutely no sense. God already knows exactly what is going to happen, and He has everything under control. There were fleeting moments during my pregnancy when I wondered if my body was going to somehow cause our baby to be sick or to have complications. The truth is that God knitted inside me the exact baby He wanted us to have.

For whom the belle roles

Cancer survivor creates series about Bible heroines

By LORI ARNOLD

Erin Weidemann was just looking for an unusual birthday gift for her niece, Hannah. That's when the light bulb inside her cranium went off.

"I thought it would be so cool if we rewrote the story of Hannah from the Bible and then packaged it up and made it like this really cute, fun book. Then she would know where her name came from and it could be this great Bible story for her," the Encinitas teacher said.

The journalism graduate teamed up with her marketing husband, Brent, to create the gift book.

"In talking with Hannah and her sister we really came to realize that she not only didn't know who Hannah was, she had a lot of trouble naming any women from the Bible," Weidemann said. "She knew a couple ... but for the most part she had no idea that there were these amazing women in the Bible who could teach us all these good values and qualities to have as young girls."

She was certain that if Hannah, a regular in Sunday School, wasn't aware of female Bible heroes, she was not alone. So the couple created Bible Belles, a soon-to-be released series of books, e-books and mobile apps. Future plans include videos, devotionals and curriculum for homeschoolers and Sunday Schools.

"Girls today are impressionable and they are hit from all sides with the idea that physical beauty should be the ultimate goal," she said. "Additionally, today's role models and consumer brands spread the notion that being sassy and defiant of authority is what confident, independent young women should be. This truly breaks my heart, and I want to do something about it.

"Our vision for Bible Belles is to help girls everywhere to know that they are truly valuable and precious in God's eyes so that we can shift the current focus to-

ward serving others and the realization that beauty comes from within."

"Belle" is derived from the Latin word *bella*, the feminine derivative of *bellus*, which means "beautiful."

"Bible Belles intends to teach girls to become gracious, loving and beautiful representatives of God's chosen people," she said. "Through the relatable stories of these women, girls everywhere will learn how they themselves can become Bible Belles and remake the world from the *inside* out."

That message, Weidemann believes, is contrary to current social norms that teach girls to be loud and flashy.

"These (Bible) women were God's noisemakers, but the great thing about each of them is that they did so by being humble, gracious servants to others," she said. "They showed God's love to others by letting the goodness of their own hearts ring out a gentle sound for the Lord. They teach us that being a caring, tender witness of His love to others is what it means to be truly beautiful."

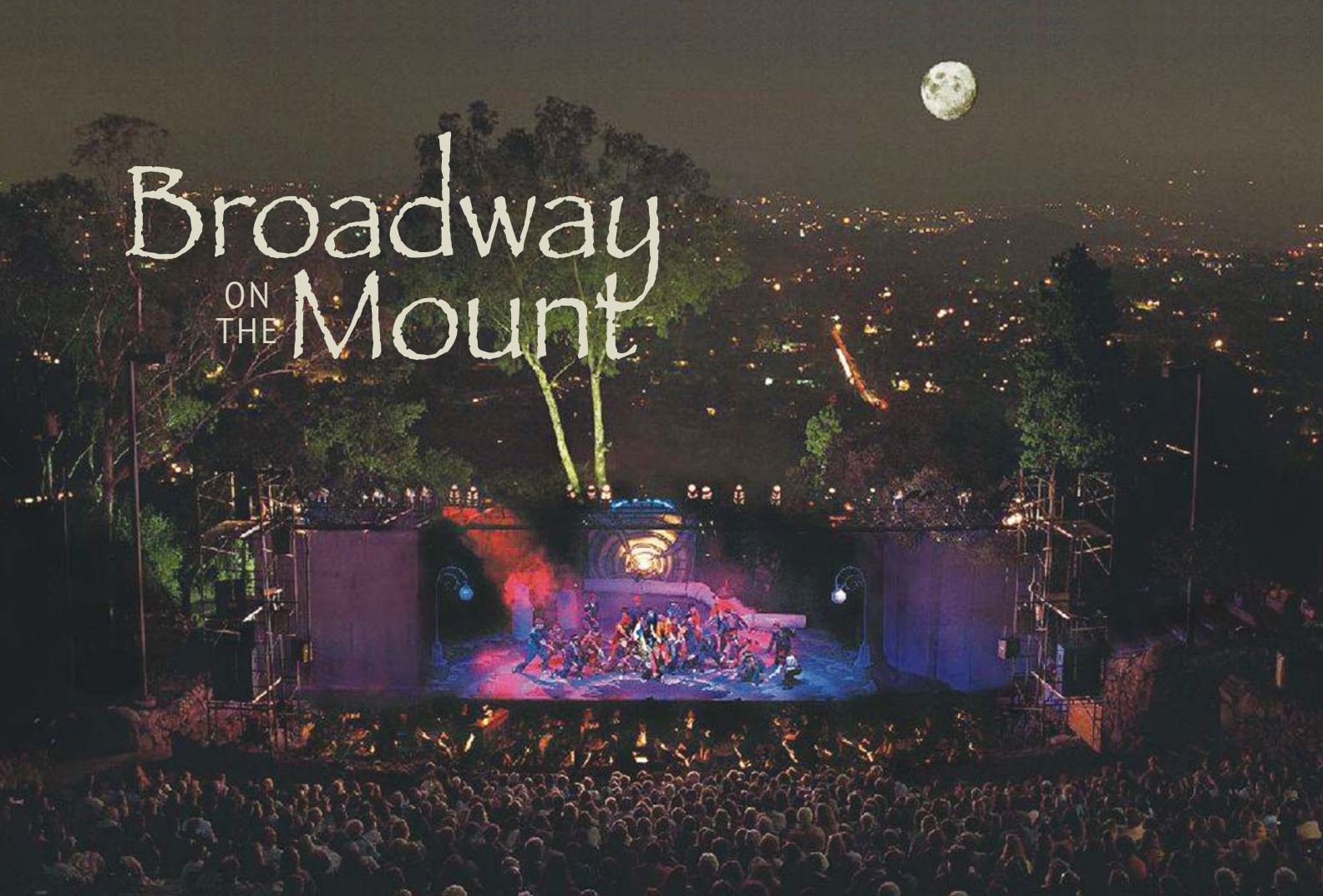
As new parents with full-time careers, Erin and Brent work on the project on the evenings and weekends. She does the writing, while he focuses on the marketing. They plan to release the brand early next year.

"We get to sit at home and bounce ideas off of each other, but he gets to use his talents, I get to use mine," she said. "At the end of the day it's really nice to be able, as a married couple, to work on something that we feel is a true need out there. We just want to further the kingdom by using our talents."

Learn more at www.biblebelles.com.



Mock-up draft of what a Bible Belle character may look like.



Broadway ON THE Mount

CCT returns to Mount Helix with 'Les Miserables'

by LORI ARNOLD

Travis Russell was just a kid when his parents, founders of Christian Community Theater, hosted summer musicals under the stars atop Mount Helix's amphitheater.

"It feels magical," he said of the outdoor performances.

Long considered a crown jewel of East County, the amphitheater and cross, constructed by the Yawkey family in 1925, was deeded to the county as a public park four years later. At 1,370 feet, the park, which has hosted Easter sunrise services for decades, is known as much for its 360-degree views and its towering 35-foot cross.

"We acquired some footage, old black-and-white, of the cross being constructed," he said. "It was amazing to see the community coming together and building a space they loved. It made me

proud to be able to carry on the tradition of being part of a community."

But the summer drama tradition was threatened in 2005 when several Mount Helix neighbors sued CCT over noise complaints. Although the theater ministry ultimately won the lawsuit, it spent \$90,000 in legal fees.

"Then the same neighbors complained about parking and that increased our cost of buses to the point where it cost us more for buses than putting on the production," said Travis' father, Paul Russell who, with his wife Sheryl, launched CCT with a 1980 production of "The Sound of Music" at the amphitheater.

In 2011, after 26 years of presenting as many as three shows a summer, CCT ceased its Mount Helix shows, instead using the USS Midway and the Lincoln

Performing Arts Center to present its popular San Diego Follies and the Traditions of Christmas.

On July 17, though, the tradition returns to Mount Helix when CCT presents the popular "Les Miserables." The show runs through Aug. 2, with dark days on July 21, 22, 28 and 29. The Russells decided to resume the mountaintop show after officials with the Mount Helix Park Foundation invited them back.

"People kept calling the office or emailing us to return," Paul said. "We had hundreds of families and patrons who would make (the) Mount Helix shows part of their summer plans. It had become a community tradition. During some of our best years at Mount Helix over 40,000 people attended musical theater."

Even as they prepare for "Les Mis-

The light of a near full moon casts a magical aura over the Mount Helix Amphitheater during the CCT production of 'Guys and Dolls' in the summer of 2004. CCT returns to the East County landmark this month with 13 outdoor performances of 'Les Miserables.'

erables,” the Russells are investigating ways to keep their largest expenses—buses, security and royalties—down so that they can continue the Mount Helix musicals.

“There is no other place that you can go see a show, hear beautiful music and enjoy a breath-taking view all at the same time,” Paul said. “Maybe the Yawkey Family was on to something when they had the vision of building this natural outdoor theater in 1925. Their original mission of the park was to bring glory to the arts, to nature and to God. I think their mission is continuing today.”

The Yawkeys’ mission, Paul said, dovetails with the founding vision they had in establishing CCT and CYT.

“When we started Christian Community Theater we knew there was amazing, talented people in the local churches,” he said. “We thought how wonderful would it be to bring all those people together and show the community what ‘Christians’ could do if we worked on a project together. Thus the name Christian Community Theater.”

That first year, nearly 47 churches were represented in the cast, crew, orchestra and volunteers.

“To perform under the historic cross of Mount Helix was so natural, so inspiring and such an honor,” the co-founder said.

Legacy of diversity

That diversity remains today, with 250 people auditioning for “Les Miserables.”

“That’s one of the things that is so fun about open community auditions,” said Travis, now director of communications. “You get such a diverse group of people. Not everyone is an actor by profession. We have police officers, doctors, executives, college students, homemakers, all working together as equals, to make the production come together. It’s amazing

IF YOU GO

WHAT: ‘Les Miserables’
WHEN: July 17 to August 2 | 8:00pm (dark Mondays and Tuesdays)
WHERE: Mount Helix Amphitheater
BRING: Comfortable shoes, blankets and seat cushions. Don’t bring glass bottles, chairs or pets
TICKETS: \$40, \$30, \$20
INFO: christiancommunitytheater.com

when you think about it.”

This show’s cast includes the wife of a former NFL linebacker, a SeaWorld performer and a local pastor.

“After watching my husband play in the NFL for 12 years, it is a real switch for us to have him cheering us on from the sidelines as we live out our passions,” said Taryn Smith, whose husband, Derek Smith, played most of his career with the San Francisco 49ers and one year for the San Diego Chargers. “We all just wanted to be a part of CCT’s ‘team’ and make a lasting memory together.”

While her husband helps behind the scenes, Taryn Smith will share the stage with her daughter, Cassidy.

Like most of the cast, Taryn Smith has long ties to CCT, starring in her first production in 1986 as Brigitta in “The Sound of Music.”

“Even though it has been 20 years since I have been in a show up there, I feel like I have come full circle,” she said. “There is nothing like being under the stars on a warm summer night.”

Another CCT alum is Tyler Tafolla, who is a character performer at SeaWorld. He began his affiliation with the acting ministry through CYT.

“My family always took us to see the summer shows up on “The Hill,”” he said. “I remember the first show I saw up on Mount Helix was ‘Peter Pan’ when I was about 9 or 10 years old and I remember just being completely blown away.”



Matthew Posner as Jean Valjean and Cassidy Smith as Little Cosette are part of the cast for CCT’s ‘Les Miserables.’

The show

Size of cast: 56.
Number who auditioned: 250+
Number of support crew: 30
Number of orchestra members: 30
Actors previously involved with CCT/CYT: 90 percent
How many rehearsal hours: 100
Cable needed for lights and sound: 2,000 feet
Number of lights: 300
Scaffolding for lights and sets: Six 30-foot towers
Number of generators: 10
Number of audio speakers: 20
Number of costumes: 120+
Set-up time: An entire weekend, plus additional time opening week
Props: Trucked in on “move in” weekend and stored in a designated area backstage
Number of porta potties: 14
Available concessions: Food trucks and “Dete’s Famous Cheesecake,” a show tradition.

The venue

Year amphitheater opened: Easter 1925
Seating capacity: About 1,000
Location of dressing rooms: Offices located under the amphitheater stage
Average night temperature: 60s
Number of rainouts: Zero

The trek

Walking distance to walk from parking lot: A steep quarter mile
Number of shuttle buses: Four 26-passenger buses and four to six 12-passenger buses
Percentage who use the buses: About 80 percent to 90 percent

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Foothills Christian High School

This time he returns in the role of Marius.

"Seeing shows up there every summer gave me such a greater passion for theater and it gave me a better understanding to just what theater can do for people," he said.

CCT newcomer Bruce Grecco, pastor of Summit Church in Jamul, said he auditioned for the first time as a way to recapture his passion for music.

"When we started our church six years ago, I laid down the music part of ministry completely," he said, adding that he previously served as a music pastor for 27 years. "When I heard that CCT was performing 'Le Mis,' I thought it would be a great opportunity to get my voice going again."

Travis said he is excited to see all the pieces fall into place, especially after a four-year hiatus.

"When everything comes together you can't believe what you are seeing," he said. "I don't think there is another venue like it in the world. There is a plaque on the mountain that says, 'For the inspiration and use of the people.' I love that."

Putting on any multi-week production is an exercise in patience and logistics: cast, crew, musicians, costumes, ticket sales, props, sound, lighting. Doing it in an open-air theater several miles from your home base only intensifies the effort.

"I've been reminded recently, working on 'Les Miserables,' how much work it is to do a show on top of a mountain," said Travis. "It really makes me appreciate what my parents did for so long. It really takes a determination and a willingness not to give up to make it happen."

Even so, Travis said it's more than worth the effort.

"There is a void in the community when there isn't musical theater on top of Mount Helix," he said. ■

COURTING KIDS

Former Michael Jordan double seeks to fill gap for fatherless children

by LORI ARNOLD

If Willie Briscoe had his way, school would have ended in early June, weeks before he would have to face the humiliation of celebrating Father's Day with his classmates. Each year the annual rite of crafting construction paper cards in tribute to dad was drudgery for a young man whose father was no longer a part of his life.

"I remember it being such a lonely, embarrassing time for me," Briscoe said. "As a kid you didn't know what to do with those emotions. You couldn't really make a card for anyone when you knew it wasn't going to go anywhere. A lot of times I just remember making those cards and then, on the way home from school when no one was looking just

dumping them in the trash. Now I have three kids of my own and to think about not being there for my kids ... it's a devastating thought."

Decades later Briscoe is redeeming that experience through Hope Leadership Foundation, a multifaceted ministry that is reaching inner-city children who are also floundering without the direc-



Willie Briscoe has found fulfillment in life by mentoring kids. He founded Hope Leadership Foundation, which offers sports camps as part of its overall program.

tion of their dads.

“The general theme in the inner cities and the Third World countries is the breakdown of the family unit where the father is not present, and that is what I had in my home,” the married father said. “For years I was confused about a lot of things. So the Hope Leadership Foundation really exists to fill in that gap.”

As is common in single-parent households, Briscoe was well on his way to giving in to the streets, but was pulled back by a sixth-grade teacher who refused to give up his grip on the student’s shoulder.

“He just reached into my life when I was probably running in the wrong direction, not doing anything really bad but just with bad group of guys,” Briscoe said. “He said I was called to be something different.”

As Briscoe’s childlike frame began to give way to something tailor-made for basketball, he joined a team started by his teacher as a way to keep students off of the street.

“You’re gonna get a scholarship because your mom can’t afford to put you through school,” the teacher kept pounding into Briscoe’s adolescent skull. “He was the first man to reach into my life and challenge me to do better.”

Even with solid guidance from his mother and the persistent mentoring of his teacher, Briscoe confesses that not having a father created an emotional vacuum. He recalls sabotaging a plan by one of his Little League coaches to convert Briscoe to a pitcher because of his long arms and big hands.

“I was pretty insecure about my abilities as a young boy and that fear kind of overrode any kind of deep desire to be a pitcher,” he said. “(There was) just a fear of showing up at a tryout with no one to represent me or pat me on the back or help me sign in or help me take some of



Willie Briscoe with his family: wife Kaci, son Simeon, daughters Brooklyn and Violet, nephew Ariya and niece Kaira.

those other first steps when the other guys had their dad to play ball with them and help them take those initial steps.

“I could have easily just faded into the background without anyone knowing I was there or not and let fear and insecurity play me. I think about the opportunities that I passed up out of fear and insecurities and the lack of having someone there to encourage me.”

Fill-in fathers

In launching his now-four-year-old foundation, Briscoe said his vision is to redeem his own experiences by providing resources and role models to other fatherless children.

“I do have a lot of memories about not having a father around to teach me how to throw a ball or catch a ball or to play a particular sport, so a lot of what we do is integrated with sports, the things that young boys and girls want to do. We want to be positive role models in their lives.”

In addition to hosting sports camps and other community outreaches, the

foundation now offers an after-school academy where 25 children from Barrio Logan are getting mentoring, tutoring and other services. The next phase will offer reconciliation programs designed to begin rebuilding relationships between fathers and their children.

Doubling for Jordan

Turning to sports to serve inner-city children comes naturally to Briscoe, who played college basketball for a couple of years before becoming a sports athletic model doing work representing Nike, Adidas, Powerade, Gillette and the Portland Trailblazers.

“I got to the point where I was Michael Jordan’s double and I was getting deeper and deeper in my sin. Money was not really an issue,” he said. “I just got to the end of myself and was sitting in a very dark situation one night and I just thought, ‘I can’t do this anymore.’ I was looking around at the people I was with and thought ‘I don’t want to be like that in the future.’”

“I do have a lot of memories about not having a father around to teach me how to throw a ball or catch a ball or to play a particular sport...”

So he prayed.

“The Lord miraculously intervened in life,” he said. “I had a very dramatic conversion. I went from running around doing a lot of knucklehead type of things and being a leader of a group of guys, 10 or 15 guys that were following me, to cutting it *all* off, changing direction to the point that people literally thought I lost my mind.”

He came to Southern California to put distance between his past and his new faith pursuit.

“I was basically on my face in the sand in Long Beach just feeling remorseful about my sin and understanding for the first time I had to apologize to God,” he said.

At age 30, Briscoe returned to college, this time at Point Loma Nazarene University, to finish his degree and to play basketball, a dramatic turn from his glamorous days living in the Pacific Northwest.

“I was all over billboards all over the world,” he said of his commercial work with Jordan. “That was the pinnacle of that world. You can’t do anything better, especially in the ’90s, than being Michael Jordan’s double.”

In the transition, his commitment to basketball shifted from an opportunity to make money to something far greater.

“When I got saved I began loving



After finding his faith as an adult, Willie Briscoe was mentored at North Coast Calvary Chapel, where he developed a heart for service.



Willie Briscoe spends some time with several boys from his program.

basketball, seeing it as a gift more than something that I did because I was tall,” he said.

A restored relationship

After earning his kinesiology degree, Briscoe opened up his own personal training business, serving residents in Rancho Santa Fe, Solana Beach and Carlsbad. In late 2010, responding to the inner tugging of his soul, he sponsored sports camps that morphed into his full-time foundation. He walked away from his fitness company.

“One restored relationship from a father toward his kid is worth it,” said Briscoe, who is now able to offer his own personal story of hope and reconciliation after finally reuniting with his own father. Their meeting— after a 31-year estrangement—came on the eve of Bris-

coe’s wedding.

Briscoe welcomed him back by including him in the wedding.

“We’ve been working on our relationship for the last nine years since he’s been back in my life, so it is never too late,” he said. “It’s going to look different for everyone but I thank God that God restored me back to my earthly father, who is a Christian now. I look forward to having something to do with that happening on a large scale in other kid’s lives.” ■

Learn more at www.hopeleadershipfoundation.org.

NEXT MONTH

Next month we examine the work of the Hope Leadership Foundation and how its programs are impacting urban youth in San Diego.



Tye Tribbett

Rock band drives home anti-slavery message

Christian rock band Remedy Drive has shifted gears in preparation for the September release of “Commodity,” a new release dedicated to highlighting the travesty of slavery and trafficking.

Its title single from the album released in May, debuted at No. 12 and by mid-June climbed to No. 7. Penned by founder and frontman David Zach and his brother, Philip, the song is a powerful declaration of war against slavery and trafficking. Philip is producing the album.

The four-brother band’s new mission was inspired by David Zach’s recent trip to Southeast Asia with The Exodus Road, a nonprofit coalition fighting sex slavery through covert investigation and rescue, prompting the band to commit their music and ministry focus to help combat

human trafficking.

“During this next chapter of Remedy Drive, we are going to do everything in our power to raise awareness and to fund rescue,” David Zach said. “I went undercover with The Exodus Road in the red light districts of several cities and am going to continue to go back because I believe freedom can only be achieved when we ‘develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness,’ as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said.

A Kickstarter campaign to complete the Commodity project, the band’s 10th, ended with \$27,710 in pledges, which outpaced its goal of \$20,000.

“We want to make a concept album on liberty, to shine a light on slavery, to protest oppression and to empower rescue,” the band founder said. “We want to add to the soundtrack of the resistance. My hope is that this album will sound like a captive’s dream of liberty—a defiant reminder, against all odds, that in the King’s Kingdom the oppressed can find refuge, the marginalized can find hope, the child soldier can find safety, and the trafficked daughter in the red light district can return to her innocence again as a princess of the Realm.”

www.remedydrive.com

“Once again it is an honor to offer these wonderful songs that have impacted so many congregations around the world, and now in Spanish. Our desire and goal remains the same ... to highlight the ever-growing influence of the Hispanic church in today’s worship.”

www.tsrecords.com

Tribbett in local HOB concert

Kirk Franklin, who already partners with the House of Blues nationally for the weekly Gospel Brunch Shows, will present Tye Tribbett in concert July 29 at the San Diego venue. Doors open at 6 p.m., with the show starting at 7 p.m.

Tribbett, who earned eight Stellar Gospel Music Award nominations, won for Male Vocalist of the Year. His latest album is “Greater Than.” In addition to his vocal prowess, Tribbett is a songwriter, keyboardist, choir director and producer.

Tickets are \$29.50 to \$46.

Dinner before the concert is available for an additional cost.

The concert hall is located at 1055 5th Ave.

www.houseofblues.com

Hide the Word in song

Grammy and Dove Award-winning CCM recording artist Steve Green has released his ninth project for children.

“Hide the Word: Bible Songs for Kids,” is designed to make memorizing God’s Word a part of everyday life.

Green wrote the music and adapted the Bible verses for all 15 tracks on “Hide the Word,” using some of the Bible’s most familiar promises, including John 3:16-17, John 14:6 and Psalm 23:1-3 (“The Lord is my shepherd....”).

In addition to featuring Green on lead vocals, the CD also features a children’s choir with individual kids quoting the verses. Green’s granddaughter, Addy, made her recording debut on the project as well.

“In the Scriptures, God has told us all we need to know for life and godliness,” he said, adding, “What’s more, the songs are just plain fun!”

www.stevegreenministries.org

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SoCal producer releases Spanish album

San Clemente resident Phil Sillas, the Dove Award-winning producer who has worked with Natalie Grant, David Foster, Aaron Neville, Jaci Velasquez and Plus One, has released *Mi Corazón Canta, Cantos de Alabanza Vol.2* (My Heart Sings, Songs of Praise, Volume 2). The album debuted at No. 1 on the SoundScan - Spanish Christian Music chart and No. 5 on the Billboard - Latin Pop Album chart.

The album contains 12 songs originally written by Hillsong, Chris Tomlin and Israel Houghton, among others. The songs have been translated as “the official and authorized Spanish versions” and are performed by Nic Gonzalez (Salvador), Jessica Cabral, Omar Galarza, Lily Cruz, Aaron, Barbosa, Aaron Encinas, Mark Gutierrez (GB5), Josh Lopez, Harry Samuel and Alfonso Hernandez.

'Planes: Fire & Rescue'

"Planes: Fire & Rescue," a new Disney comedy-adventure about second chances, featuring a dynamic crew of elite fire-fighting aircraft devoted to protecting historic Piston Peak National Park from raging wildfire, releases in 3D July 18 in theaters nationwide.

When world-famous air racer Dusty (voice of Dane Cook) learns that his engine is damaged and he may never race again, he must shift gears and is launched into the world of aerial fire-fighting. Dusty joins forces with veteran fire-and-rescue helicopter Blade Ranger (voice of Ed Harris) and his courageous team, including spirited air tanker Dipper (voice of Julie Bowen), heavy-lift helicopter Windlifter (voice of Wes Studi), ex-military transport Cabbie (voice of Captain Dale Dye) and a lively bunch of brave all-terrain vehicles known as The Smokejumpers.

Together, the fearless team battles a massive wildfire and Dusty learns what it takes to become a true hero. Directed by Bobs Gannaway ("Secret of the Wings") and produced by Ferrell Barron ("The Fox and the Hound 2"), "Planes: Fire & Rescue" hits theaters in 3D on July 18, 2014.

Other voice stars include Curtis Armstrong, John Michael Higgins, Hal Holbrook, Brad Garrett, Teri Hatcher, Stacy Keach, Cedric the Entertainer, Danny Mann, Barry Corbin, Regina King, Anne Meara, Jerry Stiller, Fred Willard, Kevin Michael Richardson and Patrick Warburton.

www.Disney.com/planes

Political thriller could be 'ripped from the headlines'

Politics and religious liberties are on a crash course in the Millennium Entertainment film "Persecuted," which releases July 18.

The film stars actor James Remar ("X-Men: First Class," "Dexter," "Django: Unchained," "What Lies Beneath," "Red") as John Luther, a modern-day evangelist.

Luther is the last hold-out for a na-

tional endorsement to make sweeping reform in freedom of speech that would compel religious leaders to provide equal time to those of other faiths as a U.S. Senator, portrayed by Oscar-nominated actor Bruce Davison ("X-Men," "Lost", "Castle"), and his political allies create a sinister plan of denial and scandal to frame Luther for murder.

Suddenly his once-normal life is turned upside down as he becomes a fugitive vowing to expose those responsible. It is a mission that brings him face-to-face with the coming storm of persecution that will threaten the moral ethics and freedoms of America.

"'Persecuted' is a wonderful House of Cards-type political thriller that imagines what would happen if the country's most famous religious leader refused to go along with the politicians in Washington and the mayhem that ensues," said Fred Thompson, a former U.S. Senator, presidential candidate and actor who co-stars in the film. His former credits include "Law & Order," "Die Hard 2," and "Hunt for Red October."

The film, written and produced by Daniel Lusko, also stars Dean Stockwell ("Air Force One," "The Manchurian Candidate," "Star Trek"), Brad Stine (recognized as "God's Comic" by The New Yorker, social commentator on Fox & Friends, "Marriage Retreat") Raoul Trujillo ("Apocolypto," "Cowboys and Aliens," "The New World"), Natalie Grant (five-time Dove Award-winning singer and songwriter) and Gretchen Carlson (Fox News Channel).

www.persecutedmovie.com

'Rocket Pack Jack'

"Rocket Pack Jack and the Babylon Virus," a new faith-based adventure film from Seventh Story Productions and LifeWay Films, drew a star-studded audience to its recent world premier at the historic Belcourt Theatre in



Nashville.

The evening featured appearances from several "Rocket Pack Jack" cast members, including 14-year-old Steven Dady, who stars as the story's unlikely hero, Truett. He is recruited to help Rocket Pack Jack prevent Karnivor, a group of high-tech villains and their evil robots, from releasing a virus designed to corrupt all the world's documents.

The teen actor is quickly gaining notoriety as a leading young actor in Hollywood. He has already appeared in an episode of CBS' "Criminal Minds" and will be seen in two upcoming feature films: "11 Seconds," starring Casper Van Dien and Catherine Oxenberg; and "The Secret Handshake," with Kevin Sorbo and Amy Grant.

The film will be available at LifeWay retail stores beginning in August.

www.lifeway.com/rocketpackjack

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Thrive conference

EL CAJON — “Thrive,” a two-day educational and empowerment conference to help wipe the tears for women from all walks of life, will be held Sept. 26 and 27 at Narratives Church. The conference is the West Coast debut of “Thrive,” which has held events on the East Coast for the past few years.

In addition to keynote addresses and workshops from several indigenous missionaries, Southern California’s own Mary James, an Inspirational Country Music Award-winning singer and song writer will present a session on “Beauty From Brokenness.”

James, who has won two ICM Female Vocalist of the Year Awards, will also lead worship with Chris Surdock, a San Diego resident who also has his own album, “Excited.”

Some of the global women’s issues to be covered include women coming out of extreme Islam, medical missions, single women serving in difficult mission fields, and sex slavery.

The event is sponsored by International Women’s Ministries, a division of Advancing Native Missions.

The church is located at 450 Fletcher Parkway, Suite 224.

Learn more by visiting www.advancingnativemissions.com/thrive or call (619) 249-9853.

Sexual ethics workshops offered online

SAN DIEGO — The Salt & Light Council is hosting a weekly, national Biblical Sexual Ethics Workshop as part of its heritage education series. The one-hour online workshops will be held Tuesday nights through Aug. 12 and start at 6 p.m.

The event is hosted by Dran Reese, founder of the council.

Special guests for July include Dr. David Kyle Foster, founder and director of Mastering Life Ministries, July 1; Dr. Joe Nicolosi, co-founder of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, July 8; Pastor Paul Blair,

chairman of Reclaiming America for Christ, July 15; Jennifer Roback Morse, founder and president of the Ruth Institute, July 22; and Tony Nassif, founder and president of the Cedars Cultural and Educational Foundation and the Preventing Abuse Foundation, July 29. The speaker for July 15 will be announced at a later date.

The August speakers will be Charles LiMandri, Esq., president and chief counsel of the Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund, Aug. 5. The final session on Aug. 12 will feature Reese, the Salt & Light founder.

Learn more at www.saltandlightcouncil.org.

Therapeutic talk on debt, anxiety

LA MESA — “My Therapist ‘Sez’...” a monthly community-oriented panel discussion featuring various mental health professionals from the region will be held from 6:45 to 8 p.m. Aug. 6 at Skyline Church.

The topic will be “Getting Out of Debt and Anxiety.” The program will be moderated by Dr. Don Welch, founder and president of the Center for Enriching Relationships and counseling pastor at Skyline.

His guests for the session will be Jerry Troyer and Jerod Fenton.

September’s topic is “Overcoming Pornography.”

The monthly sessions are held the first Wednesday of the month.

The church is located at 11330 Campo Road.

Learn more at (619) 660-5000.

Women’s fellowship has pamper day

SAN DIEGO — The monthly meeting of the Professional Women’s Fellowship will be held July 19 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the home of one of its members.

This month’s theme is Pampering with PWF and will include a mini-get-away day for guests. The focus will be on

fun, fellowship and food. Swimming is optional with the access to both the pool and sauna.

Learn more at www.pwfsd.org.

Concerts under the stars

SAN DIEGO — Westminster Presbyterian Church will host its free weekly Music at Dusk summer concert series beginning at 6:30 p.m. July 21 in the church’s amphitheater.

The opening show will feature Peter Sprague.

Guests are encouraged to pack a picnic dinner, bring a blanket and enjoy music under the stars.

Subsequent shows will showcase Fred Beneditti, July 28; Billy Hawkins & Band, Aug. 4; Pacific Sound Brass, Aug. 11 and Matrix, Aug. 18.

The church is located at 3598 Talbot St.

Learn more at www.westminstersd.org/events.html or call (619) 223-3193.

Special agents at VBS

VISTA — Lifeway Baptist Church will hold its free Vacation Bible School from July 14 to 18 for children who have completed kindergarten through the eighth grade. Sessions start at 5 p.m.

Children who attend will be invited to become Agency D3 special agents as they use their best high-tech operative skills to examine eyewitness reports, physical proof and biblical accounts to uncover and defend the truth about who Jesus really is.

Topics will include “Is Jesus Really God’s Son?” “Was Jesus More Than Just a Good Man?” “Was Jesus’ Death Real?” “Is Jesus Alive?” and “What Do I Do With the Evidence About Jesus?”

The church is located at 1120 Highland Drive.

For more information, call (760) 724-2280.

EVENTS ONLINE

For a Calendar of Events for San Diego County, please visit www.refreshedmag.com.

Summer treasure

SAN DIEGO — City View Church will host a weeklong summer day camp on its campus from 9 a.m. to noon Aug. 4 to 8.

This year's theme is SonTreasure.

Children who are 5 years old or entering kindergarten through the sixth grade are invited to attend.

Activities include wacky games, songs, crafts and Bible stories.

The church is located at 8404 Phyllis Place.

Learn more at www.cityviewsd.com or call (858) 560-1870.

Really wild VBS

SAN DIEGO — First United Methodist Church of San Diego will hold its Wild Animals Vacation Bible from July 14 to 18. The classes start at 9 a.m. daily.

Wild Animals is a habitat filled with incredible Bible-learning experiences kids see, hear, touch, and even taste: sciencey-fun gizmos, team-building games, cool Bible songs, tasty treats.

Extended child care before and after VBS is available for an additional fee.

The church is located at 2111 Camino del Rio South.

Learn more at www.fumcsd.org/vbs or call (619) 297-4366.



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When immigration takes a human face

I recently looked out my front door and saw a woman sitting on the stairs of my patio. She was out of breath, sweaty and had a large basket next to her full of cans and plastic bottles to be recycled. She looked desperately in need of some rest and refreshment. I'm pretty good at ignoring people in need (sadly), but when they come to your physical doorstep, I couldn't imagine not stepping outside to check on this woman.

When I opened our front door she looked up at me with a bit of concern on her face thinking I might ask her to get off my patio. To calm her nerves, I simply sat down on the steps next to her and we exchanged warm smiles. Because she offered me a greeting in Spanish, I quickly realized she didn't speak much English and I gave my best shot at speaking in Spanish. Over the next 10 minutes, we simply sat on my patio overlooking the main street of our Golden Hill neighborhood that runs in front of my house. Sometimes we talked, sometimes we just sat in comfortable silence. Her name was Conchetta. Finally, I asked if I could get her some food and a cold drink and she quickly said, "yes."

After taking in some needed nourishment, Conchetta, offered me a warm smile filled with the richness of humanity and

gratitude, and leisurely went back to work assembling the best of our neighborhood's "trash" so she could bring some life to her family.

Our faith community has spent a lot of time over the years becoming students of our neighborhood. As a result, we discovered that roughly 60 percent of our neighborhood residents are Latino (most are Mexican because of our proximity to the border) and a high percentage of those are undocumented. In fact, it's a safe assumption that my new friend, Conchetta, is undocumented.

As the "immigration issue" continues to be discussed in our country, for me, it is becoming much less of a political talking point and much more about genuine, human relationship. They are my friends. They are my neighbors. They are human beings who live with the same needs, desires and aspirations as the rest of us. They have kids, grandkids, parents, brothers and sisters. They are children of a God who reigns over a global kingdom. A kingdom that was inaugurated in a Jesus who spent his life crossing borders to tangibly love the outsider and remind them of their sacred identity as sons and daughters of the Father and citizens of His kingdom.

In the context of relationship, like I

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

So, how can we practice relational living with our immigrant neighbors? Here are a few suggestions:

- Build friendships.** Friendship not only humanizes issues, it moves us to action.
- Learn more.** The Evangelical Immigration Table is a great organization that offers resources, spiritual disciplines and tangible actions around a biblical view of immigration.
- Serve others.** Walk with your immigrant friends toward citizenship. There are courses we can take (offered by World Relief) that give us the credentials to offer immigration counseling that is desperately needed by those seeking citizenship.

now have with Conchetta, "they" become "us."

Obedying the greatest commandments of loving God and neighbor leaves my faith community and me with no choice but to pursue this issue with radical love and moral obligation. This isn't yet another political debate to be waged in such a way that widens the partisan divide. It is a human reality with human implications and the Jesus Community must be waging peace right in the middle of it.

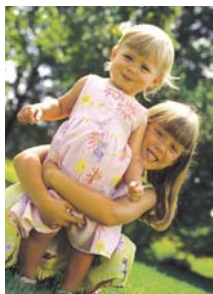
May we walk with our friends—whether immigrants, ex-convicts, orphans, etc.—out of the shadows and into our homes, around our tables, and begin co-creating a better future in the neighborhoods, cities and world in which we have each been entrusted.



Jon Huckins is the co-founding director of The Global Immersion Project, Missional Leadership Coach with Thresholds, family man, speaker and author of "Thin Places" and

"Teaching Through the Art of Storytelling." Follow his blog at www.jonhuckins.net.

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Footloose summers a thing of the past

We interrupt this issue for an important update from the hammock.

Summer's here and with all the busy schedules of the season, it's important to recharge personal batteries with occasional relaxation—but with a purpose.

Full disclosure: I'm not really in a hammock right now. I don't even own one anymore. The last one I had caused more visits to the chiropractor. But I can still find tranquil places to enjoy the same effect.

Nothing beats my childhood memories of vacations at Eagle River, Wisconsin. Happiness was being tucked into a canvas hammock hung between birch trees. If my mind wandered away from the

pages of a book, there was all creation above me, a natural cathedral. I could also keep an eye on what other family members were doing so I wouldn't miss a beat. It was enjoyable and yes, refreshing.

Reading allowed my imagination to soar, especially when learning about real people and bold explorers who fearlessly traveled the world. The process also helped me to develop speed-reading and comprehension skills, without realizing it at the time. Lesson: The more a person reads for fun, the easier it is to do.

When I was growing up in the 1960s, summers were all about kids just "getting out there." Politicians didn't need to lecture us to grab a book, create our own fun or to explore the unknown.

We certainly didn't need public service announcements telling us to move off the couch and play for an hour a day.

When school was out for the season, our generation had a pretty simple to-do list, enforced by parents. Here it is:

Clean up your room, and do any other chores. Then go outside! Do something! (Anything legal.) We'll call you for dinner when it's time.

That's it. We were not cocooned in bubble wrap or other protective devices. No one hauled us off to non-stop planned activities like today, often organized by parents who mean well but never give kids time to breathe in the busy schedule. We were allowed to create our own fun, within certain boundaries.

When it was time for evening dinner, the yards and alleys were filled with loud voices of neighborhood moms, calling us all by first

names. It was time to go home and report on what we were up to, including details on what we learned.

Hours outside kept us from piling on the pounds, too. We ran, jumped, climbed trees, fell out of trees, got bitten by bugs the size of birds and explored all kinds of other things that worked our guardian angels overtime.

The only really structured time was when we could afford to go to camp. Trips to the YMCA also allowed swimming pool use and even learning how to use a firearm, though not at the same time.

Our best excursion was going off for a week to Camp Willabay in Williams Bay in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Yes, they had a hammock or two. And trampolines and a swimming pool with its very high diving boards. Water slip-and-slide mats, too. And horses, campfires, horseshoe tossing and archery. All the things often frowned upon in today's world, with no pile of legal paperwork to fill out first.



The various buildings at Willabay had proud Native American tribal names. One cabin was "Chippewa," another "Apache", then "Seminole" and so forth. Someone with a non-PC sense of humor designated the building where the boys and girls restrooms were as "Potawatomi." This allowed us all to laugh about "needing to go to the Potawatomi." Now that name is emblazoned on an area casino. Really.

And of course there was plenty of time to read, in a hammock or not, including eagerly learning about the outdoor life, including life in Indian tribes. Inspired by the names on camp buildings, we found those stories fascinating, and wanted to be warriors, too.

There was zero sensitivity training or over-the-top worries about a kid skinning a knee while attempting something semi-heroic.

Recently I drove past the old site of Camp Willabay. Long ago the facility I loved closed and relocated. The land was too valuable for recreational use. Now the place is covered with wall-to-wall higher-end condos.

I'm guessing many of those homes are now occupied by risk-avoiding attorneys, who would have been very nervous about our outside activities on the same site "back in the day."

They would not approve of many things we experienced, especially climbing into a dangerous hammock, unsupervised, without wearing a helmet.



Mark Larson is a veteran Southern California radio/television personality and media consultant. His voice is heard on KPRZ 1210AM, and his weekday talk

show airs mornings 6-9 on KCBQ 1170AM. Learn more at www.marklarson.com.

MICHAEL FOUST

‘Can I help?’ 5 reasons to let kids help with chores

Some of the most frustrating moments in my life have involved household jobs that required far more time than I initially envisioned. Fixing that stopped-up sink. Painting the room. Changing that broken ceiling fan switch. I consistently underestimate how long it will take.

Now that I have three young children, I have trouble finding time to do any chore—and my children (ages 6, 2 and 2) are often wanting to help.

Parents always face a dilemma when a young child wants to tag along when Mom or Dad are working. The time it takes to accomplish the chore easily could double or triple with a kid in the picture. Will the child truly help—or simply break something else along the way? Shouldn’t I just get my spouse to keep him or her away?

Lately, though, I’ve tried to allow my children to help more with jobs and tasks, and I’ve discovered we’ve all enjoyed it. Just the other day, for example, they “helped” me fix my car’s broken thermostat.

Here are five reasons I’ve done this:

1. It teaches patience. Patience is one of those fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) that we often struggle with, but that Scripture nevertheless commands. Nothing will teach patience like trying to do a job with a 2-year-old. But choose your chores carefully. I did allow my 6-year-old son to help with that stopped-up sink and that paint job, but he didn’t get to help with the ceiling fan switch. Household jobs teach him patience, too; those jobs that he thinks are all fun don’t get accomplished in five minutes.

2. It’s great for bonding—and for funny moments. I rarely finish a task



with my son and regret letting him help. Most of the time, each of us walks away with great stories—him telling everyone how he got to “help Daddy” with a big task, and me telling everyone something funny he said. I won’t ever forget the time he said excitedly, “Dad, I can’t believe you can pick up that big tree limb!”

3. It lays the foundation for a solid work ethic. From the jobs at home to the tasks in the office or on the farm, chores require perseverance. It’s good to begin teaching this great life lesson to children early, and they’ll pick it up quickly by watching us. I heard my son say quietly to himself once as he was playing a game, “Don’t give up.” He had heard me say that to him, over and over, as we worked together. And when the job is over, both

you and your child can celebrate. God is glorified when we work with a good attitude and a correct perspective (Ephesians 6:7). He also wants us to have a good work ethic—and to teach our children the same.

4. It teaches them they are not a burden—and it gives them skills. We’ll always be able to fold clothes better and clean up the kitchen faster. But if we are always impatient, not letting our children help, what are they learning about us—and themselves? I’m a sports fan, so I like the concept of a “team.” I tell my son that we’re the “Foust team” and that team members help one another. I’ve even awarded “Team Member of the Day and Week” awards (he wins it every time). Letting children help also teaches them skills. I know about car repair, gardening and beekeeping because my father had patience to teach me.

5. The time will come when they won’t want to work. Think back to your teenage years. When I was a teen, I didn’t run eagerly to the garden to help pick peas. Oftentimes, I moped about it. Young kids, though, often enjoy helping. Take advantage of it.

When I truly don’t have time for my children to help with a task, I find a way to do it by myself. But more often than not, they’re tagging along with me, happy to just be doing whatever they can, jabbering away or asking me a dozen questions. Those are times I’ll always treasure.



Michael Foust is the father of three small children, a writer and editor, and blogs about parenting at www.michaelfoust.com.

Power up principle: The power of possessions

What's that in your hand?

Moses was given a God-sized task to lead His people out of bondage. In Exodus 3 and 4 we find Moses protesting with an assortment of reasons why he wasn't the one for the job. In Exodus 4:2, God asks Moses, "What's that in your hand?" That sobering question gives me pause every time I read it. Ultimately God used a simple rod in Moses' hand to illustrate a powerful lesson and produce incredible impact.

Someday we will hear God asking us these questions: 1) What did you do with my Son? and 2) What did you do with my "stuff?"

My passion in life is to help people discover the Son and wisely manage all He entrusts to them. People experience great joy when living out His stewardship principles. This joy is especially compounded when they learn how to maximize their giving impact. It typically starts with these four questions:

Why give? So often our initial approach to giving is from an attitude of obligation but when you think about it, giving is actually an act of grace. It began in John 3:16—God so loved the world that He gave! As His children, giving becomes a part of His nature in us as well. God is serious about giving. He tells us we will be better off for it. His promised



rewards extend beyond financial blessing, too. Material reward may follow a faithful giver, but God's blessings come in many other powerful ways—growing faith, influence, favor and wisdom—just to name a few.

Many blessings we won't even see this side of heaven. Giving helps us align our priorities with Him and multiplies His impact in the lives of our family, those around us and throughout the world.

How much should I give? If we don't start with the right premise, we'll not get to the right answer to this question. Everything we have belongs to God and is on loan to us. This fundamental ownership principle must be settled first. Giving to God is often an afterthought, but the secret to giving joyfully is to decide in advance to make His priorities your priorities.

Next, you need to answer how much do I and my family need? The optimal word here is "need." Distinguishing between needs (must haves) and wants (nice to have) is critically important.

Finally, going through the process of identifying your financial finish line so you can definitively answer that question is liberating. I've seen so many instances where giving resources can be freed up sooner because the finish line had been clarified.

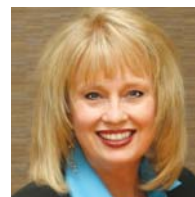
Where should I give? This is a question only God can answer, so start by going to the Owner and prayerfully asking Him for direction. He has also given us guidelines outlined in Scripture. For example, it is very clear that His Word, His church, widows, orphans and the poor are very close to God's heart. Between the guidelines in the Bible and the pas-

sions He has put on your heart, you will find joy-filled opportunities to be His hands and His feet in the needy world around you.

Is there a better way to give? It is so exciting to explore the answer to this question! A great deal can be done with strategic planning and tactical tools. For example, if you have appreciated assets or you find yourself asset-rich and perhaps cash-poor, there are great opportunities to leverage your giving tax-efficiently while turning assets into cash flow. This is where professional assistance might help you identify high-value giving solutions.

In Exodus 4:20 we find Moses has set out on his journey of obedience with the rod of God in His hand. Your "rod" might be your bank account, your portfolio, your real estate or your business. It might even be your relationships or influence. God has put something in everyone's hand that can be multiplied for His purposes. There are so many giving strategies that will help you simplify and leverage your giving not just in the future, but now! God never asks us to do what we can't, but as a faithful steward, He demands we do all we can with what we've been given.

What has God put in your hands?
What are you doing with it?



Janice Thompson is a certified financial planner and co-founder/CEO of One Degree Advisors, Inc. A frequent speaker on financial topics and mentor for financial

professionals, she also serves on the board of directors for Kingdom Advisors. Learn more at www.onedegreeadvisors.com.

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KIMBERLY RUBY

Winning back a fit body this summer

Summer is here and the most awaited event is taking place as I write—no, not the first day of The Del Mar Fair, but the Miss Universe Pageant. Two very different venues on quite the opposite spectrums of the calorie scale.

Here by the sea, deep-fried, batter-covered everything and miles away on my TV set, uncovered waif-like beauties up on a stage.

As I rejoiced for the size-zero winner from Nevada, I got up and examined myself in the mirror. This has to be the only time I was actually grateful for diminishing eyesight! My generous silhouette was screaming the truth, and I had already resolved to make a few “Summer Resolutions.” I thought longer days, vertical sun rays and a bounty of magazine recipes would make this warm season the easiest to shed excess pounds for she who has super knowledge but not super powers. I am admittedly struggling.

What makes this so unfair and ironic is I AM the weight loss expert, the “go-to” gal for overhauling the human frame. People fly in to see me and wait at very long border-crossings.

It's my reluctant niche and my appointment book is always bursting. The more successful I become, the busier (and bigger) I get!

I know how to lead people to more vibrant health, increased energy and leaner bodies, but I can't seem to get to the front of the line to take my own advice. Lab coats hide a multitude of sins and elastic rules!

It's high time I join my own support group, the one I've been facilitating for more than 10 years, and become an active participant! We've lost over 50,000 pounds and I'm looking to add 15 more pounds to that number!

In the spirit of truth and transparency, as one who regularly calls on the

Most High for the most needy, I'll share what my patients tell me have greatly helped in keeping them on track for summer success. Yes, I am taking notes and will be a compliant patient as well, since it is I who originally created the following tips!

This is summer vacation; it's not a vacation from healthy habits. Re-visit your “why” for seeking and maintaining optimal health and don't be derailed by



the seductive sights and smells of summer. Remember to change the way you think before you change the way you eat, and temptations will be tolerable. You will look at barbecues, reunions and trips to foreign lands differently as you ask yourself “what will be the price to pay tomorrow and the next day if I take more than my body needs for sustenance?”

Be pro-active and have a strategy for long road trips, airport delays and limited options for healthy dining while traveling. Planning ahead is key when it comes to eating healthy on vacation. Trader Joe's has perfect “take with”

snacks such as nuts, dried fruit and protein bars. Consider packing Blue Ice in a small cooler and stopping at grocery stores along the way for fresh fruit and vegetables.

Yes, resting and relaxing are great ways to recharge when you are “getting away from it all” but incorporating a walk every day while on vacation should become a normal and healthy tradition. Watching your kids kayak, swim, run, play, hike and ride bikes does not burn any calories for you; participating does!

If you're not planning on leaving the area this summer, local activities in America's Finest City are plentiful and often free. There are many miles of beaches and new parks to explore. Consider trying paddle ball or another aerobic but fun activity that may not feel like “exercise” but will do the job and get your heart rate up.

I'll give you an update on my “Summer Resolutions” next month and the progress I'm making. With prayer and perseverance we can make this a time of looking ahead with courage and grace. Can't forget that grace!

Please feel free to email me at kim@ucprx.com if you have any nutritional challenges or questions you would like to see in a future column. We're in this journey together.



Kimberly Ruby, certified nutritionist at University Compounding Pharmacy, has been in the wellness industry for more than 20 years. She has been facilitating one of the

longest running weight management support groups in the nation, meeting weekly in the North County for 10 years. Her health segments have appeared on local news channels.

3 ways that conflict helps you learn and grow

“We never fight!” Denise says brightly, talking about her relationship with Jason. Sitting beside her in a busy Starbucks, Jason nods his agreement.

Sounds like an ideal relationship, doesn’t it? Or maybe just typical newlyweds who haven’t unpacked their boxes yet after the wedding and honeymoon.

What a beautiful, wonderful, conflict-free life they have.

Or do they?

Often when a couple is not experiencing conflict, one partner is holding back his or her opinion, in order to “go along” or to “get along.” There may not be open conflict, but the primary reason is that there isn’t really any open discussion, either.

Do you really plan to marry someone who agrees with you on everything?

Do you really believe such a person even exists?

In real life, a husband and wife often have very different ideas about how to raise the kids, how to manage the money, how to fold the laundry and many other things. Each partner brings his or her perspective and values into the marriage.

In real life, couples have intensely heated arguments.

This is because two very different people have two very different opinions about something—and both people believe they’re right. So the point of the whole argument is to convince the “wrong” person to agree with the “right” person.

Good luck with that!

In another column for another month, we’ll look at some tips for how to work through your conflict in healthy and positive ways. For now, we’ll simply explore the reasons why conflict itself can be healthy.

First, conflict usually means that both of you are openly expressing your true thoughts and feelings about a given subject. That’s healthy! Couples get in trouble

when one person holds back, often building up inner tension or hidden resentment while seeming to ‘agree’ with an idea or a decision. It is healthier to express your ideas openly, rather than “put a lid on it” and start boiling inside with suppressed anger, anxiety or tension.

Second, conflict is a chance to learn more about your life partner. In general, most of your differences will come from one of two categories—your experiences before marriage, and your expectations of what marriage should be. You have been formed by your life experiences, and you have been composing a set of (often hidden) expectations about what marriage will be. Until you and your spouse have been together for a while—and frankly, until conflict has opened up a lot of these topics for discussion—you won’t have learned the deep and meaningful truths about the person you married. Sure, you both love “Coldplay,” but hey, isn’t it time to go a bit deeper?

Finally, conflict is a great time to discover how to communicate better—that is, more clearly and more wisely. Conflict gives you a chance to learn how to support or defend an idea—without attacking or accusing a person. Since most of us have insecurities in at least some areas of our lives, most of us can get a bit (or a lot) defensive when our ideas or opinions are being attacked. Conflict is a great time to learn how to explain your own thoughts and feelings without verbally attacking someone else who has different beliefs.

As counselors, it’s a red flag for us when someone like Denise tells us “We never fight,” while husband Jason nods his agreement. If you’re in the first five or 10 years of your marriage and you never argue, then you just aren’t getting



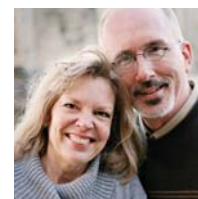
acquainted! You aren’t taking your relationship to the deep places and strong connections that it really needs.

Later—two or three decades into your healthy marriage—it may be fine if you rarely clash. By now you’ve learned who you are and who your partner is. You’ve learned how to love and respect each other. You’ve learned how to communicate more wisely. You’ve done life together so long and so well that disagreements are much less frequent, and are much more quickly resolved.

Still in the early years of your marriage?

Conflict is not only OK, it’s actually necessary. It helps you learn and grow, and conflict will bring you the togetherness you deeply want. Meanwhile, as we’ll explore in an upcoming article, it really does matter “how” you do your conflict, and also “when” you choose to work out your disagreements.

Stay tuned for that. Meanwhile, don’t be afraid of conflict. It can be both helpful and healthy when you openly disagree.



Dr. David and Lisa Frisbie serve together as executive directors of The Center for Marriage and Family Studies in Del

Mar. They are the authors of dozens of articles and 25 books about marriage and family life, including their recent book “Right from the Start: A Guide for Couples” (Beacon Hill Press).

Achieving meaningless #purpose

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1 (KJV)

“I am so busy these days” is a phrase I hear—and use—a lot lately. Life is full. I am a husband, father, pastor and educator.

I used to find a tremendous amount of satisfaction in personal achievements and the more I added to my resume, the more significant I felt. After all, we all have a need to contribute and make a difference. Right?

But somehow in the process of working toward making a consequential difference, the achievements become burdensome and our original intent gets lost. “Doing” trumps “meaning” as we substitute achievements for purpose.

I recently turned 50 and had a revelation about the seasons and times of my past and my perspective on purpose. Life is not determined by a calendar, routines or accomplishments!

My children were growing up, my marriage was functional, the church I pastor was functional; in fact, every

was going to crash, everything I had worked so hard to achieve was going to give up the ghost. I turned to alcohol to resolve my denial. Sounds horrible, I know, and even sharing this weirds me out. But I learned valuable life lessons during this season.

People matter most.

Through God’s amazing grace He opened my eyes to the vanity of my own worthless pursuits and my heart shifted back to my wife and family. Through this season of repentance and change I was genuinely loved and accepted—with respectful accountability—by my church family, by my friends, and mostly by my family.

King Solomon became a significant mentor. In Ecclesiastes Solomon describes how he spent his time pursuing meaning. The Ecclesiastical Teacher described his pursuit for meaning and life in extensive building projects and worthy social causes. He tried to find satisfaction and purpose in women. He even tried rabble-rousing as an alcoholic partier. He described his acquisition and wealth. He even declared

in 2:19, *“Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure.”*

Wow! Here’s a man living the dream! But then when you read Ecclesiastes 2: 22-23 Solomon is forced to ask himself a difficult question: *“So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless.”*

Solomon experienced the pursuit of meaning through an array of life choices throughout seasons of his life. I’m sure that some of those experiences were brought about by his own choices, perhaps based on how he felt or what he deemed was best based on the logical sequence of presenting events. He,

no doubt, made decisions based on his own desired outcomes without taking into consideration those he was leading—the nation of Israel. Others were likely brought on by unforeseeable circumstances.

Nonetheless he came to the conclusion that all of his attempts to find purpose in pursuing achievements brought anxiety. He learned that ultimately God was in control of seasons, time, matter and energy and that God alone determines life. Solomon teaches us that God holds the fragility of life together and He alone judges the intent of man’s achievements. Hopefully our achievements, our works, display God’s grace to others. Relationships matter most.

During this season of my life I am practicing purpose. I encourage you to practice purpose in your life by...

- Spending meaningful time with people daily (Put the cell phone away.)
- Learning to love what you do, not for you, but for others.
- Loving your family, even with all the quirks.
- Working hard, but setting achievement boundaries.
- Getting plugged into a local community of faith (Be authentic).
- Most importantly loving—and judiciously serving—God every day.

#PURPOSE



Mark Miller is the pastor of Narratives Church in El Cajon. He is an adjunct professor at Horizon University and a doctoral candidate in Organic Organizational

Leadership at Bethel Seminary. He has a heart for training young people into a lifestyle of intentional servanthood.

I felt that life was going to crash...

circumstance that I was leading or involved in was functional—and that’s it. I was missing out on *truly* watching my children grow. My wife became a product to take care of the kids and our home. The congregation I pastor was just a group of people called a church. Authentic relationships were missing and I was oblivious. Why? I was trying to keep anxiousness at bay by making sure I didn’t drop one single ball that I was juggling.

Exhaustion proved to be the best thing for me as it brought me to a place of “I just can’t keep all this stuff (achievements) going.” I felt that life



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JOANNE BROKAW

Bats in the belfry

It's midnight and I'm lying in bed reading a book, when all of a sudden I hear the pitter-patter of little feet scurrying in the ceiling above my head.

Uh-oh. Something's in the attic.

My dog Bandit cocks his head to listen, then jumps down from the bed to follow the sound around the room, eyes fixed on the ceiling.

Great. It sounds like maybe two somethings. I call to my husband, "David! Something's in the attic!"

He's just gotten home from a long day at work, just taken a shower, and he isn't interested in whatever phantom noise I'm shouting about. Spring usually brings a procession of bugs and spiders and weirdo beetles I'm always calling for him to kill.

But this is no spider. I wait. The scurrying continues. "There's something in the attic!" I call again, my voice rising with just a hint of panic. When David comes into the room, he's wearing an impatient frown. And then he hears it, too.

There's a critter line dancing right above our heads.

We mull over the options. What can we even do at midnight? I make a few suggestions. I could sleep downstairs. I could take another Benadryl and knock myself out.

As we talk, the scurrying picks up intensity. When I ask David what he thinks might be up there, he tells me it's probably a squirrel.

I've never seen a squirrel awake at midnight, but I have seen a possum. In our backyard. Now I'm freaked out. "Is it actually in the attic rooms?" I ask him. "Is it in my boxes of books and old clothes and books?" Panic. "Is it in my books?" He shrugs and replies, "I don't know."

We stand quietly, neither of us sure what to do next. "How about a bat?"

I ask. "Could it be a bat?"

"A bat is a definite possibility," he says. That's a relief. We're old hats at dealing with bats. In fact, for a few years our house was the meeting place for the neighborhood bats. They'd swoop through the living room and bedrooms and around the yard. Bats, I know. I can live with a bat in the attic.

Maybe.

I go into the bathroom and the critter follows overhead, scurrying and scuttling. "Seriously? It's following me!" I call out through the closed door. When I head back to the bedroom, the critter follows.

I stop on the way to stuff towels under the attic door, sealing off any openings to the rest of the house. Whatever is up there, I'd like it to stay up there.

David heads downstairs and when he returns he's suited up with long pants tucked into boots, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves, a hat and goggles. He's carrying a tennis racket.

Darling husband is going bat hunting.

Bandit and I crawl back into bed and cower together under the covers. I hear David go up the attic stairs, hear him open the crawlspace doors and check the areas right under the eaves, and then hear him slowly advance through the rooms. I hear some slight thumps as he moves boxes. The scurrying gets louder directly over my head.

And then it's silent. David isn't moving and neither is the invader. Bandit and I are snuggled together, eyes still locked on the ceiling. Several minutes tick by.

Then I hear loud footsteps, some-



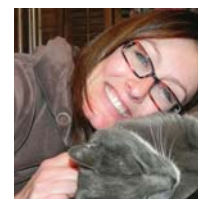
thing being slammed against the wall, more commotion. Then more silence.

Soon David comes downstairs. As he opens the attic door and emerges from the dark he says, "There's good news and bad news."

Several scenarios run through my head. It's a possum and it got away into the bedroom walls. It's a squirrel and it had babies and now I have more material for my column. There's nothing there and it's all in my head.

"The bad news is that it's a bat," says David. "The good news is that it's dead." And like a trophy, he holds up a grocery bag that holds the body. Fortunately, he explains, there was probably only one bat up there (as opposed to a whole nest of squirrels). But if there's another bat, we can deal with it. Squirrels would have been a major problem.

I settle back into bed while David takes the bat corpse out to the trash. When I look up at the ceiling again, I see a giant spider, right over my head. I get up and whack it with a book. Darling husband's done enough tonight.



Award-winning freelance writer Joanne Brokaw spends her days dreaming of things she'd like to do but probably never will—like swimming with dolphins, cleaning

the attic and someday overcoming the trauma of elementary school picture day. She lives with two dogs, a cat, six chickens and one very patient husband. Learn more at www.joannebrokaw.com.

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