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FEATURES

6 Acting out

CCT/CYT founders celebrate 35 years of community theater



12 6 reasons society still needs dads

14 Tackling fatherhood

Former Chargers linebacker extols role of Mr. Mom

17 Aftershocks in Nepal

San Diego-affiliated orphanage spared from quake damage

22 County fair to showcase two Christian music festivals

22 Future Quest offers youth workshops, worship

24 Kevin Downes on faith, freedom and fatherhood



COLUMNS

5 Dean Nelson | in plain sight

Feasting on fellowship

25 Mark Larson | on the mark

Cast out fear and speak up

26 Janice Thompson | on the money

Practically speaking... Raising money-smart children

27 Daniel Jenkins | reality check

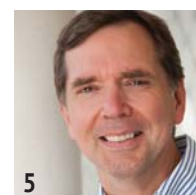
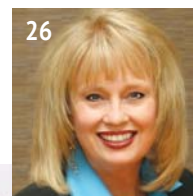
When your reality check bounces

28 Kim Jones | inspired living

When the ground shifts

30 Joanne Brokaw | that's life!

Picture perfect



DEPARTMENTS

20 Community news

23 Tunes

24 Outtakes

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Feasting on fellowship

When my grandmother reached her 90s, she lived in an assisted-living center outside of Chicago. In those latter years, she lost her grip on the present. She didn't know any of us when we visited.

The last time I saw her was when I had a layover on a flight from the West Coast to the East Coast. For years I had routed my flights through Chicago so that I could take a cab or have a relative pick me up and take me to see her for a few hours. On this particular trip she seemed to recognize me as someone from her past, but couldn't really muster my identity.

Regardless of who I was, her first words were, "Have you eaten?"

This was a typical question from her.

My grandparents knew the value of eating together. My parents, brothers and I lived with them when I was very young. On Sundays in particular, my grandmother prepared more food than the family warranted, with the idea that she might find a visitor or lonely person at church that day and invite that person home.

My mom continued the practice when we lived in our own house later. If she knew that someone was alone, or was going through a difficult time, or was from out of town studying at a local university, another place was set at the table. We even drove to various parts of the city to bring the person to our house for that meal.

Togetherness at mealtime was important. There was no agenda other than togetherness.

We experienced something around those tables. Sharing the food and drink, passing it to one another, serving it to one another, sometimes spilling it on one another, and in extreme cases, throwing it at one another, meant something. The shared experience meant that



we were more than just our individual selves. Around that table we were something bigger. We were a collective group. We had hunger in common and the food brought us together.

Theologian John Shea said that church is where we "gather the folks, tell the stories, break the bread." So I guess we had church around the table.

That day I visited my grandmother, I assured her that I had eaten. She asked the same question maybe 20 more times while I was there. We visited for a while, and I got her singing some hymns. Her alto voice was still strong. At one point she stopped abruptly and said, "Do we have enough food for tonight?"

"Who are we expecting to come over?" I asked.

"Everyone!" she said.

"What will we need?"

"Make a list—we'll need hamburger, chips, buns, lettuce, tomatoes."

I humored her by nodding.

"You're not writing this down," she said.

I got a pen and paper and took notes. I figured her delusion would pass soon, so I stayed in the chair and smiled at her.

"Why are you still here?"

"I thought I'd talk to you a while."

"GO!" She pointed at the door.

So I got up and left the room. I walked around for about 10 minutes, stopped in the TV room and watched a little Wheel of Fortune, and returned to the room. She was sound asleep.

Even right up to the end, having a meal together was on her mind. Some of her best moments in life were experienced while sharing a meal with others.

What do we experience by eating together? We share the host's hospitality. And hospitality is at the core of our spiritual life. Most of our day is spent experiencing how we are different from one another—our race, economic status, education, language, heritage, politics. Around the table, we experience what we have in common—hunger and a need for renewal.

Author Kathleen Norris said, "The bread of the Eucharist is called the 'host' after all, and for good reason."

May our hunger be quenched together.



Dean Nelson directs the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. His book about seeing God in everyday life is "God Hides in Plain Sight: How to See the Sacred in a Chaotic World."

Acting out

CCT/CYT founders celebrate 35 years of community theater

by LORI ARNOLD

Thirty-five years ago, Paul Russell stood in the rock-hewn amphitheater as the cast and crew rushed around in preparation of their opening night of “The Sound of Music.”

After spending weeks preparing the troupe for the play, the drama teacher was heartsick with the realization that there was more drama off set than on.

Shortly after paying a \$25 permit fee to secure usage of the otherwise free venue, Paul and his wife, Sheryl, quickly realized just how primitive the Mount Helix amphitheater, with its cement seats and a dirt orchestra pit, really was.

“We signed not realizing there was no electricity, no running water, no bathrooms,” Paul said. “So we had to bring

in long extension cords. We had to borrow electricity from the neighbor’s house down below and run extension cords so we put our lights on sawhorses, those garage clamp-ons. The whole thing looked like a horror movie, with lights shining up your nostrils and eye sockets. It was just horrible. It was awful.

“The truth is we couldn’t find a theater that was cheap enough because we had no money and Mount Helix, back then, was a county park and we could use it for free. That’s why we thought, ‘Perfect!’”

The Russells cobbled together resources for the production, operating everything out of the garage.

“I have a copy of our first audition notice,” Sheryl Russell said. “It looks like a



PHOTOS BY SARAH TOLSON PHOTOGRAPHY

ransom note. We cut-and-pasted it on our kitchen table.”

Sets for the epic musical were designed from Montgomery Ward, while performers were strictly confined to circles drawn on the stage, lest their voices not be picked up by choir mikes that dangled from ropes.

With those pre-production details worked out, the Russells headed confidently into the opening night. Once they arrived, however, they discovered that the portable toilets would not make it by curtain time. Thanks to a patron, they borrowed a Winnebago, which allowed them to offer accommodations to guests—one at a time.

In the rising chaos, Paul did the only thing he knew to do—he headed to the foot

of Mount Helix’s landmark 35-foot cross.

“Mother Superior had forgotten her lines,” he said, adding that he stood there thinking, “What is going on? This is so bad. I am so embarrassed.”

He walked to the top of the cross and said, “Lord, I am so sorry we started this. Please forgive us. We’ll never do it again.”

Despite the hiccups, about 5,000 people turned out for the inaugural show.

“For some reason people came and loved it,” Paul said, removed long enough from the painful embarrassment to offer up grateful laughter.

...

The Russells decided to initiate a com-



PHOTO BY SARAH TOLSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Paul and Sheryl Russell check out a costume designed for the summer production of *Mary Poppins*, which will take place on Mt. Helix in July and early August.

munity acting program as a way to add extra income to their growing family while they both had summers off from their teaching jobs. He taught drama at Christian High School and Readers Theater at San Diego State. She taught business at Christian High.

“He said, What if we put on a play this summer because the other teachers are going to paint houses or sell air conditioners and I don’t want to do that,” Sheryl recounted. “So, being the naive young mother that I was, with two little baby boys, I said OK.”

The curtain was raised on Christian Community Theater.

Her husband’s dream to start his own

drama ministry emerged four years earlier when the couple attended a five-week Readers Theater workshop in London as part of his work with SDSU.

“He came home and was just sharing that it had such an impact on him,” Sheryl said. “It was brand new. I was the must-see show (of the season) but the content was just the opposite message that we wanted to really live out in our lives.

“He remembers standing on the street corner in London in front of this theater saying, ‘God, if you can use me in this industry, with just the opposite message, just use me.’”

By then, Paul’s passion for Jesus and

drama was fully developed after intersecting early in his life. As a young child, he often preached sermons from a step stool.

“I was just mimicking Tim LaHaye because he was our pastor,” Paul said.

As he got older, Paul auditioned for numerous plays, including taking a shot at singing the title song from “The Sound of Music.”

“I sounded ridiculous because it’s a *girl’s* song,” he said. “Here’s this seventh-grade boy whose voice hadn’t changed...”

He was eventually cast in several roles in junior high and became even more involved with high school musicals at Crawford High School.

Unlike her husband, Sheryl said she inherited no talent in acting or singing, though she earned an “A” in speech class. As a student at Kearny High, Sheryl pursued her interest in business, which she parlayed into a teaching post at Christian High.

The couple met at what was then Scott Memorial Baptist Church, where noted pastor and best-selling author Tim LaHaye served as senior pastor. In

The benefits of the arts

According to the Russells, research over the past 20 years has highlighted the significant role the arts can play in child development. A video on the CCT website stresses that students who are in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement and more likely to be elected to a class office. They also have a higher rate of participation in math and science fairs, as well as higher grades, test scores and graduation rates.

“The knowledge that you learn from performing and music transfers so quickly,” Paul Russell said. “Test scores

go up 40 percent when a kid is involved in the arts. It’s the way God wired us. We learn when we sing it as a song but when you have to memorize something you can’t remember it. That’s why Jesus always told parables. He didn’t give us a list of do’s and don’ts. He said, ‘I’ll teach you it through a parable and you’ll remember the story and that will teach you how to live your life.’

“We’re wired to be storytellers. We’re wired to connect our emotions with what we’ve learned. School tends to take all of that out and just say,

‘Here’s your list, learn your spelling, and we’ll test you it on Friday.’”

He said students who have participated in shows like “Schoolhouse Rock!,” which put educational information to music, retain the information much longer.

“They have learned so many basic things because they have muscle memory and a song to go with it,” he said. “If Christendom would do the same thing we would have our churches packed with kids loving the arts but also filled with His Word.”



PHOTO BY THEREA KEENER

Last summer, CCT returned to the outdoor Mt. Helix Amphitheater with 13 performances of 'Les Miserables'

addition to the Christian school system, LaHaye went on to establish what is now San Diego Christian College.

Paul said LaHaye encouraged him to develop plays and street dramas that could be presented while hanging out at the beach or along local bike tours.

"They were farcical and silly but they talk about a man's soul," he said.

• • •

After the initial run of "The Sound of Music" concluded, it was lights out for the Russells, who were discouraged and ready to find something else to fill their summers—until a dinner meeting with a Lakeside pastor.

"He said, 'This is what God's called you to do. You need to keep doing this; it's touched so many lives,'" Paul recalled.

The Russells scoffed.

"No," he told them, "it's not just about the audience. It's about the people that were involved in the cast."

Lost in the planning was the fact that

47 different churches were represented through the cast, crew, orchestra, house management and parking volunteers.

"This truly was a Christian community coming together and unifying around something that we could all agree on," Paul said. "So let's put on a show, versus arguing over the doctrinal issues of are you dipped or dripped or whatever.

"We continued doing it and it continued to grow," he said.

The Russells were also approached by area parents who were concerned that budget shortfalls at local districts were resulting in the termination of arts programs in the schools.

"The parents said, 'You've got to do something for our kids,'" Sheryl said.

So the following year, they launched Christian Youth Theater. The program, offered to children ages 8 to 18, featured a series of classes three times a year, with students from each session producing a full-fledged production. They had 24 participants.

Four years after launching CYT, Paul was able to come on staff full time, and

they moved into their first office space, a whopping 300 square feet of freedom.

"We thought we had arrived," said Sheryl, who handles the logistics for the nonprofit.

"I'm definitely the business side," she said. "I don't sing. I don't act. I like to dance, like tap, but I'm not a performer."

In San Diego, CYT operates five regions: South County, East County, Central San Diego, North County Inland and Tri City out of Carlsbad. The ministry has

DID YOU KNOW?

CCT's best-selling show on Mt. Helix was "Jesus Christ Superstar." The show, presented in 1995, created a stir among many Christians because of the provocative content of the original movie. Sheryl Russell said their interpretation of the script maintained the integrity of Scripture, while news stories about the controversy ignited ticket sales.

"In 'Jesus Christ Superstar' we had Christ rising from the dead and I think it was truly telling the biblical story and not making out Mary and Jesus having an affair. It could go that route with how (other companies) direct it. I think that's why it was well received."

Paul Russell oversees set construction for the summer production of 'Mary Poppins'.



PHOTO BY SARAH TOLSON PHOTOGRAPHY

also expanded outside of San Diego, with a total of 25 affiliate programs across the country. Inquiries keep coming in and several more locations are expected to be added this year.

The ministry has also begun work on adapting their program for several international programs in China and Africa. With the increased demand, the non-profit split into two separate entities: CYT Inc., the national branch, which employs both of the Russells, and CYT San Diego, which has its own staff.

After several more moves CCT and company landed in a 26,000-square-foot warehouse in El Cajon that houses all of the costumes and props needed for their repertoire.

Once again, though, CCT is looking for new digs to move to when their lease expires next year. This time they are

praying to find something more centrally located, and are about to launch a capital campaign in hopes they can purchase a permanent home. Reaching the goal will not be easy, a lesson they have learned over the years. Sheryl notes that it can be difficult to compete for donations with other solid nonprofits that are “saving starving children or abused children.”

But she believes that CYT addresses the same problem, only from a different angle.

“We really believe the arts keep good kids good,” she said. “We’re keeping them so busy they don’t have time to get in trouble. We are being proactive so they don’t end up being abused.”

• • •

While there is no discounting the impact that CCT and CYT has on the 20,000 or so children served annually through its programs, the ministry has also transformed the Russells as they have learned to overcome obstacles, including a lawsuit filed by several Mount Helix residents who challenged the hilltop shows because of noise. Although CCT prevailed, the legal bills topped \$90,000.

“In your mind you are going, ‘OK, what is the Lord trying to teach us here?’” Paul said. “Does He really want us off the hill? Or does He want us to persevere even through hard times? Or how is He going to provide the means for us to pay back our attorneys?”

“There have been so many, times when we’ve been very, very close to shutting the doors and then God touches

somebody’s heart and a new door opens, we take another pathway, and it’s certainly nothing of what we did. I think He keeps reminding us of that all the time.”

For Sheryl, the ongoing lesson has been trust.

“I think the credit goes to God, because I shouldn’t really be doing what I’m doing,” she said, adding that her duties go well beyond her business degree.

“It’s just been by saying ‘OK, let’s do it’ and partnering with Paul and learning as I go. The greatest change for me personally is taking the risks that I’m uncomfortable with, taking on challenges that I never dreamed I would be doing. And yet, to me, that just shows it’s the Lord, because He’s the one working through you.”

Paul admits to learning his own lessons, sometimes more than once.

“I don’t have to be involved in it for the process to work,” he confessed. “That to me is comforting, but it’s also humbling. I think, ‘Well I’ve got to do it for it to really be successful,’ and God’s going, ‘Get out of the way, get out of the way and let Me do it.’”

“So many times I’ve gone to programs in another city or here in town and I’ve had *nothing* to do with it and it’s touching lives and bringing families back together and kids are making commitments to the Lord in a powerful way and families are being blessed and it has nothing to do with me. I think that’s a very healthy thing and I get the privilege of being a part of it.” ■

Learn more at www.cytsandiego.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

Christian Community Theater was established in 1980 to bring wholesome entertainment to the community while providing an avenue for the public to pursue acting and theater production opportunities. CCT produces numerous shows each year, including the popular “Senior Follies” and “Traditions of Christmas.” Last year CCT brought back its renowned outdoor performances at the Mount Helix Amphitheater. This year, CCT will return there with 16 performances of “Mary Poppins,” set for July 9 to Aug. 2.

IF YOU GO

WHAT: ‘Mary Poppins’
WHEN: July 9 to August 2 | 8:00pm
 (dark Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays)
WHERE: Mount Helix Amphitheater
BRING: Comfortable shoes, blankets and seat cushions. Don’t bring glass bottles, chairs or pets
TICKETS: \$18-\$45
GROUPS: Call 619-588-0206
INFO: christiancommunitytheater.com

CYT flourishes nationwide

CYT San Diego: Launched in 1981, Christian Youth Theater offers three courses a year at each of five regional locations. Students ages 8 to 18 receive acting and crew training that culminates with an actual production.

Although the word Christian is in its name, the nonprofit is registered as an educational, not religious, organization. Their motto is “Developing character one stage at a time.”

“We chose that specifically because we are not representing any one denomination or one church,” Sheryl Russell said. “People think because Christian is in our name we are church but we’re not. We have Jewish children and unchurched children, a variety of denominations.

“We feel the Christian part of our name is what Jesus said: to love God and love people. So by our example we’ve seen many people either get back to their faith or discover it for the first time, but it’s more lifestyle of the actions of love.”

While enrollment is open to any child, Paul Russell said students are held to spiritual values during their training. That also means that certain shows are off limits because of their content.

“A lot of youth programs and high school programs, I am blown away,” he said, adding that he sometimes finds himself thinking, “You’re really doing that?” and says, “I would pull my kid out of school.

“We want to show the parents that when their kids are involved in our programs, the shows that we do, and the values and the morals that we teach, are all biblically based and are going to be based on Judeo-Christian values.

CYT Inc.: The youth program has proved so popular that licensing agreements have been reached with 25 affiliate groups around the country, including Riverside, Santa Cruz, Tri-Valley (Pleasanton, California) Sacramento, Portland, Oregon,



Spokane, North Idaho, Phoenix, Tucson, Denver, Kansas City, Wichita, Waco, Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Nashville, Atlanta, Upstate South Carolina, Kansas City, Fredericksburg, Virginia, and New York City. CYT Inc., the national nonprofit that handles the affiliate programs, is also developing international programs.

CYT San Diego has eight employees, plus area coordinators and 60 part-time drama teachers, specialists and directors.

CYT Inc. has three full-time employees and three-part time curriculum writers who are working out of state.

“We had no idea how to duplicate ourselves. We had duplicated locally but not out of state,” said Sheryl Russell, who with husband Paul is employed through CYT Inc. “We kind of look at San Diego now as the test kitchen. If we are going to create new curriculum or a new idea or revise a manual, we work with San Diego and then from there after we kind of test it, then we roll it out to the nation.”

CYT@School: This is an on-campus training program where CYT-trained drama specialists conduct eight-week courses that conclude with a 30-minute production at the school. Sometimes underwritten by the PTA, the program helps school administrators meet performance arts training without having to hire a teacher.

“That turned us around because we weren’t just dependent on the kid’s families to come and see the show,” Paul Russell said. “It was whole schools bring-

ing their whole student body and all of a sudden there was a cash flow.”

Now on 25 campuses, the program has proved to be their best marketing tool.

“I went to one last week and it was packed (there were) so many video cameras trying to get a glimpse of their little kid. It was so encouraging,” he said. “The formula works.

“The little kids would see their peers up on stage. They would go home and say, ‘Mom, we want to take classes. We want to do this.’”

CYT Tour Company: Tour Company students are the ambassadors for CYT, bringing CYT to the community in smaller settings and for a variety of occasions. The CYT Tour Company performs for school assemblies, at organizational dinners and meetings, as pre-event entertainment, for community fundraisers and health fairs, for private parties, special occasions, and at theme parks. Directed by Tony Atienza and Kim Messina, this year’s company features 28 CYT veterans.

More CYT: In addition to its major programs, CCT/CYT offers a monthly Bible study, an annual EXPO conference that includes its Improvathon, numerous age-appropriate summer camps, and a rental service offering costumes, sets, backdrops, special effects and lighting. Among other projects in development is CYT@Church, which would provide congregations with drama kits featuring Bible stories that they could present in Sunday Schools or drama programs.

— 6 reasons — Society still needs dads

by MICHAEL FOUST

There's a river about half a mile from my house that my 7-year-old son and I enjoy. We hunt for fossils, skip rocks off the water, and watch boats speed along. Every now and then, we even catch a beautiful sunset.

It's a perfect father-son destination and brings back memories of that opening tranquil scene in "The Andy Griffith Show"—minus the whistling, of course. But on one recent afternoon, my son did something that could have been set in fictitious Mayberry.

He picked up a stick and was writing in the sand, shielding his creation from my eyes.

"Don't look," he demanded.

A few seconds later, he asked me to turn around.

"I love Daddy," it read.

It was one of those "awww" moments that every parent has, the kind you want to bottle. But on this night—after he went to bed—I began thinking not about him or me but about our society. According to the National Fatherhood Initiative, one-third of all children in America live in a home without their biological father. Meanwhile, we are in the midst of a great cultural debate over whether children *need* both a mother *and* a father.

No doubt, there are heroic single mothers who do an amazing job and overcome obstacles every hour of every

day, but what is the *ideal*?

Fathers, it turns out, are still needed, despite what culture may say. Why would God require both genders to *make* a child, but not to *raise* the child? Yes, God has gifted moms and dads in unique and complementary ways.

With a hat tip to sociologist W.

Bradford Wilcox's excellent research for points 4 to 6, let's look at why kids still need dads:

1 Children need male role models. Studies show that girls without fathers in the home are more likely to enter puberty sooner. Crazy, huh? My daughter needs me to affirm her and tell her each day she's beautiful, or else someday she'll seek affirmation from boys who don't have her best interests in mind. My two sons need a man in the house who has experienced what they're experiencing—who once *was* an energetic boy who liked dirt and hated girls, and then a pubescent teen who liked girls and hated dirt. And they need to know it's OK to like *both*.

2 Children need marriage role models. Our society's objectification of women is tragic, and I tremble thinking what my children will learn if they simply watch the culture. If my sons are to learn how to treat women—whether it's their future date or their

future spouse—they will learn simply by watching how I interact with their mom. Likewise, my daughter will see how *she* should be treated as she grows and begins interacting with boys. I feel inadequate for this role, but honestly, it's good motivation.

3 Children need a well-rounded home. Most moms and dads have different interests—vastly different interests. Kids with a dad in the home often learn about traditional male interests—whether it be fishing or football, car repair or carpentry—from their father. They also learn what it's like to interact closely with a father, who, after all, is part of a group that comprises half of all people on earth. That seems pretty important.

4 Children need a different form of discipline. A male presence—even the male voice—can force a child to behave when nothing else will. My sons know that I'm big enough (and willing enough) to pick them up and carry them to their rooms when they're misbehaving. Dads and moms discipline differently, and a tag team approach is often required.

5 Children need a physical style of play. Some may call this stereotyping. I call it the norm. For the most part,

dads play rougher with children—wrestling on the floor, rolling in the yard, even holding a child high over their head. What does a child learn from this? Simple: They learn not to kick, hit or bite. They learn to control their emotions, and they learn boundaries for physically interacting with their friends. Moms *can* do this, but dads for the most part *want* to do this.

6 Children need an intimidating form of protection. The average size of the American adult male is 69 inches, 195 pounds. For women, it's 63 inches, 166 pounds. Men simply are bigger and stronger, and this gives them unique abilities to protect their family. The mere presence of a man around a woman and child can scare away potential predators. Often my tiny 3-year-old daughter will ask me to carry her in public, as she holds on tightly and asks in her sweet voice, "Will you protect me from the mean people?"

And, of course, I do. ■



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

Tackling fatherhood

Former Chargers linebacker extols role of Mr. Mom

by LORI ARNOLD

Editor's note: *In our May issue, we celebrated motherhood with a profile on KGTV news anchor Kimberly Hunt and her thoughts on being a busy Mom. Her story is unique in that her schedule and that of her husband Billy Ray Smith Jr. were staggered so that she was Mrs. Mom in the morning and he was Mr. Mom in the afternoon. This month, we celebrate fatherhood by looking through the eyes of Smith.*

Billy Ray Smith Jr. was a second-grader playing Pee Wee football when his dad—already a successful NFL defensive lineman for the Baltimore Colts—taught him a transformational lesson from the bleachers.

“A guy knocks me down and as I was trying to get back up, he pushed me down again,” said the junior Smith, who went on to make his own name as a linebacker and defensive captain with the San Diego

Chargers. “I could hear my dad, over everybody else in the crowd, laughing. He’s not laughing at me, He’s just laughing because he thinks it’s funny that I think I’m a real (tough) football player and yet they’re knocking me down. They’re pushing me around. I could hear him laughing and, boy, I tell you it just flipped a switch. It was something else.”

The memory unleashes within Smith a deep laugh, one with a ringing quality



No. 54, linebacker Billy Ray Smith Jr. snags an interception for the Chargers.



likely reminiscent of the head rattle he dished out upon his on-field victims.

The episode taught the young Smith the value in not taking yourself too seriously, and the self-deprecating character he developed from it has served him well in his post-football career in TV and radio broadcasting. It also established a foundation for what he calls his biggest role: Dad.

“I think what’s most important is to share the lessons you have already learned and save them from the heartbreak and anguish they would have to go through from learning it themselves,” said Smith, who shared parenting duties with wife, Kimberly Hunt, the long-time Channel 10 KGTV evening news anchor.

Smith, who for years co-anchored the morning Scott and BR sports radio show—first on 690 AM, then 1090 AM—was home most afternoons and evenings with their daughter, Savannah. It wasn’t until Savannah, now 23, was away at col-

lege that the radio show changed to the afternoons.

“I say this all the time, no dad—*no dad*—got to spend as much time with their kid as I did because of our situation,” he said. “I got pretty much to be Mr. Mom and it was the greatest thing that I think I’ve ever done. Everything played out the way that I saw it playing out, that I wanted it to play out. Spending those evenings watching Kimberly on TV, and Savannah would normally lay on my chest, and we would just sit there and watch Mom. Then we would look at each other and we’d laugh. Then we would watch Mom a little while longer. That was the first two, three years.”

Over the years, Smith would help with homework, though her appreciative parents describe Savannah as a self-starter.

“I’m great with math. Second grade math, I’m cool. You sit me down with an algebra book, I might have a problem or two,” he said, another peal of laughter

BILLY RAY’S FOOTBALL CAREER

- Texas Class 4A high school state champion
- 2-time All American, Arkansas Razorbacks
- Inducted into College Football Hall of Fame
- 1983 #1 draft pick, #5 overall
- Played 10 years, all with the Chargers
- Career: 15 interceptions, 26.5 sacks
- Team MVP ‘87
- Team Defensive Player of the Year ‘85, ‘86
- Second-team All AFC ‘86, ‘87
- Second-team All Pro ‘89
- Voted as one of the 50 greatest Chargers of all time in 2009
- His father Billy Ray Smith Sr. had 13-yr NFL career with Rams, Steelers, and Colts

In Dad’s footsteps

A self-professed homebody, Billy Ray Smith said he was motivated in life by a strong respect for his own father, which led Junior to follow his dad’s footsteps to the University of Arkansas. Taking another cue from his father, Smith Jr. earned a degree in finance. After retiring from the Colts in 1971, the elder Smith became a stockbroker.

“I never thought I could do the job my dad did,” his son said. “He worked so hard as far as the stock brokerage thing. I was just glad that there was a radio station and a TV station that wanted old players to come on and talk.”

While nursing an injury prior to his own retirement from the NFL in 1992, Smith began doing scouting reports for KGTV, a gig that eventually led to sports

anchoring duties. By 2001, he and his radio partner Scott Kaplan launched the Scott and BR Show. That was also the year that Smith lost his father.

“As far as being a father, I looked to him and all the examples that he set,” the sportscaster said. “The core values that I learned from my dad, I think that was the number one thing that Kimberly and I—because her parents were just like my parents—passed on to Savannah. I think that we both did a good job kind of passing on the good things from our parents to Savannah.”

Even with the strong role modeling from his dad, Smith admits he wasn’t prepared for the full scope of fatherhood—and its impact on the heart.

“I don’t really know that you have

that parental, the paternal, type of love. That is something that I had no idea until it actually happened,” he said, pausing as his linebacker defenses fade. “I’m getting a little gushy now.”

The most difficult moments, Smith said, were the times that he helped his daughter process emotional pain.

“To see anybody that you love cry is the hardest part of parenting,” he said before pausing to swallow, “but if you can be funny, if you can exploit it, if you can make her feel better and stop crying, then that’s why Dad’s there. That’s why Dad and Mom are there. ... Those would be the situations that I realized that it was a lesson that had to be learned and that she’d be stronger on the other side of it.”

Billy Ray on faith and culture

Raised in the South, with strong Southern Baptist roots, Billy Ray Smith Jr. said his personal faith played a crucial role in his own family life.

“It was chief in my marriage and when we were dating,” he said. “It was something that we both recognized as giving us the framework of our family that we would start building on. I learned that, guess where? From my parents and from my grandparents.”

Those values also helped to shape his view of the importance of fatherhood, something that is not always honored by culture.

“It’s cut-and-dried. It’s 50 percent,” he said. “You have a mom and her role is incredibly important, but it’s no more important than the father’s. It’s a team effort and you have to have both sides.

“I say that, knowing that some children don’t and the tremendous gap that that leaves for some kids. There are people that would sit me down and say ‘I was raised by my mother and that’s all we needed and I turned out fine.’ I’m just saying that my experiences, having the mother that I had ... and having my dad, I couldn’t imagine even just the early years without my mom and dad. That’s got to be incredibly hard.”

With his daughter now graduated from college and working in New York, Smith may be physically removed from parenting, but definitely not emotionally. Both he and Kimberly stay connected with Savannah through regular texts and calls.

“I enjoyed everything about being a dad, even the hard stuff, because you have to go through the hard stuff to get to the finish line,” he said.



The Scott and BR Show, featuring Scott Kaplan, right, and Billy Ray Smith, airs weekdays from 3 to 6 p.m. on The Mighty 1090 sports radio in San Diego.

escaping a wide grin.

Smith also enjoyed helping Savannah with history, one of his academic loves. As a child he often pored over the books in his dad’s library, reading about the Civil War and absorbing presidential biographies.

“It was a really cool way to learn about history, just one guy at a time,” Smith said.

Decades later he can still recite the names of all the presidents in order of their election, though he needs to sneak several breaths to maintain his cadence.

Bleacher view

As Savannah got older Smith attended most of his daughter’s volleyball games and rehearsals and, as with many of his other parenting skills, he reached back to his childhood for guidance.

“I remember my dad and how he handled it,” he said. “Savannah could hear me laughing like I heard my dad. If she messed up a play I would laugh—and Kimberly would nudge me a little. That tells her that’s OK. If you can’t laugh at yourself in any situation—but most importantly when you are in front of a couple hundred people in a high school gym or a junior high gym—you are taking it way too serious. You’ve got to have a

good time. If you can’t have a good time then we need to sit you down and try to drill that into you a bit.”

Smith learned how to have a good time while hanging out with the Baltimore Colts, where his dad played for 10 years, including a Super Bowl victory his last season.

“When I say I’m the luckiest guy in the world, I was the luckiest kid in the world,” he said. “Every summer I would be a regular at the Colts practices with Johnny Unitas and Mike Curtis and Bubba Smith and Billy Ray Smith and Don Shula and all the great players and coaches that the Colts had in the ’60s. I was just right there walking around... When I got out of college and made the jump to the pros, it wasn’t a big deal to me because I had been there.”

As much as he learned from his dad’s on-field prowess, the younger Smith said he appreciates the example his father set off the gridiron.

“It was family and discipline and honor,” he said. “You had to be incredibly honest. Regardless of whether you were playing in front of 70,000 people or you were just walking down the street there was a code of honor that my dad lived by that he taught me. It was something that we talked about a great deal.” ■

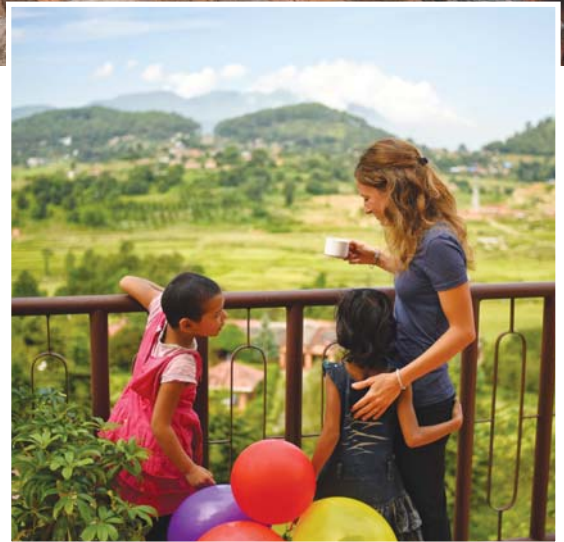
RIGHT: Monkeys and people live among the ruins in Kathmandu after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake slammed the region.

BELOW: Entire neighborhoods were wiped out in the April 25 Kathmandu earthquake.

BELOW RIGHT: Deborah Eriksson, executive director of Restore International, visits with Susmita, left, and Asha while having breakfast at a nearby hotel with the whole team. The girls love playing with balloons.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MCDONALD



AFTERSHOCKS IN NEPAL

San Diego-affiliated orphanage spared from quake damage

by LORI ARNOLD

Deborah Eriksson and her team were near the end of a three-hour drive to deliver supplies to a remote village in the Sindhupalchowk region of Nepal. Once the road ended, they faced a 30-minute hike down a steep path leading to the village.

“The car suddenly started swaying back and forth,” Eriksson said. “I didn’t realize what was happening at first until someone shouted that it was an earthquake. We jumped out of the van and ran away from the road and climbed up the embankment so we could get out of the way of possible landslides into the road.”

The May 12 earthquake was actually a 7.3-magnitude aftershock to the 7.8-magnitude quake that slammed the Kathmandu region of Nepal in late April. The quakes have killed more than 8,400 people, including at least 110 in the aftershock. Eriksson, executive director of San Diego-based Restore International, was in Kathmandu to assess the group’s orphanage, which opened in August.

The orphanage, a private home that

houses six girls and their house parents, only sustained minor cracks, and a subsequent structural inspection showed no damage.

“We’re thankful we picked a newer house with a solid foundation,” Eriksson said. “This has reduced a lot of our worries since the earthquake, knowing the girls are safe.”

Confident that situation was under control with the orphanage, Eriksson and her team were heading out to help others when the second quake hit, just as they were nearing foot access to the village.

“We could hear screams echoing through the hills, coming from scattered homes throughout the valley,” she said. “To our left, we could see a brick structure that had just fallen into a pile of rubble. The tremors kept rolling through every few minutes and we could see landslides and avalanches on the steeper hills across the valley.

“As they crashed down, huge billowing clouds of dust rolled up and out from

the piles like the clouds after a bomb. The entire valley gradually became hazy with all the dust. On our side, perched as we were by a tree and overlooking the valley, it was oddly peaceful—aside from the tremors (and) the unease from some of those on our group who were feeling extra scared.”

They waited there for several hours as the tremors subsided, eventually deciding to soldier on with the supplies before heading back to Kathmandu.

The return trip brought a few minor obstacles.

“We came upon landslides and huge boulders in the road we had to drive around. Twice we passed through towns where people had died,” she said.

Back in Kathmandu, with their tents pitched for the evening, they shared dinner and stories. A second team that was working to demolish a damaged wall outside Kathmandu had decided to take

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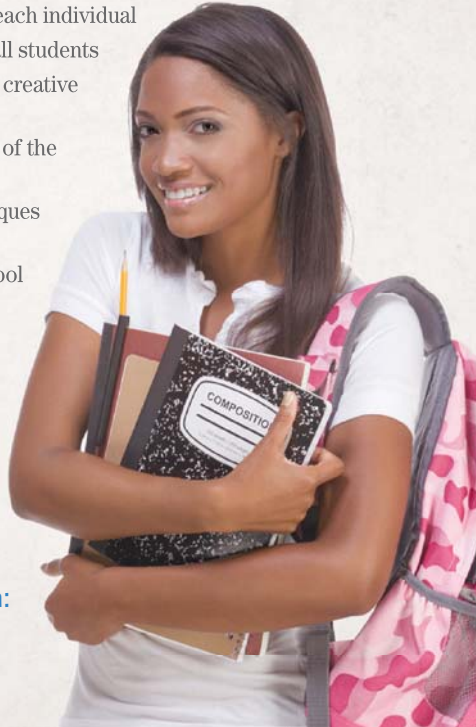
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a rare lunch break before continuing on into the afternoon.

“Five minutes after they reached the car and drove away, the earthquake hit,” Eriksson said. “They stopped the car and saw buildings and telephone poles swaying, and people running out from their houses in terror. One man had been showering and ran out with just

At a glance

Restore International, which was founded by Bob Goff, an adjunct professor at Point Loma Nazarene University, works to support freedom and human rights through educational and justice programs.

One of its newest projects is an orphanage in Kathmandu, which opened last fall with six girls. The home will eventually house 10 girls.

“We wanted to create a home, a family, for little girls who had lost their parents and had nothing,” Eriksson said. “More than just an orphanage, we wanted to actually give these girls a supportive, loving home which could attempt to heal the hurt and loss they’d experienced and give them a future bright with support and opportunity.”

The ministry also wanted to break down some of the barriers that exist within the caste system in Nepal.

“Some of our girls are from the Dalit caste, which is considered by many to be the lowest of the low,” she said. “Often, higher castes refuse to touch Dalit people or even drink from the same water. By breaking down these barriers and raising the girls as a family, we hoped to address some of these prejudices in a small but hugely impactful way.”

a towel wrapped around him, holding a bar of soap in his hand. Parents were frantically trying to find their children and rushing to the middle of the streets, away from the buildings. We found out after that a wall fell over right on the spot they were working before they left for lunch.”

Eriksson said despite widespread news coverage of the earthquake, she was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the damage. In one older neighborhood they found the brick-and-mortar buildings were no match for Mother Nature.

“Within a couple of blocks, we had to start climbing over rubble since the streets were literally filled with broken bricks, pieces of wood, trash, broken furniture, and debris,” she said. “In a lot of areas, it looked as if the city had been bombed. It felt like we were on the set of a war movie. Piles of rubble extended from the street all the way up to second stories of buildings. Wooden beams jutted out from partially destroyed walls and floors. Pieces of furniture like beds sat among the rubble. Dusty pots and pans and baskets were strewn throughout the mess.”

After assessing the damage, Eriksson said Restore has decided to support the relief effort by providing shelter to families living in Sindhupalchowk, Harisiddhi and Khokana.

“We will be buying sheet metal, bricks, tarps and other supplies so that these families can build semi-permanent structures to live in while they re-build their homes,” she said, adding that materials will get double usages since they can be re-used in the new home construction.

“We would love to have help in funding these structures,” she said. ■

Learn more at www.restoreinternational.org/nepal.

FATHER'S DAY June 21 at Whole Life Church

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Hobby Lobby opens in La Mesa

LA MESA — Christian-owned Hobby Lobby Stores Inc., a widely popular Midwest-based crafts and home décor chain, has opened a store in La Mesa, the first in San Diego County.

The chain is listed by Forbes magazine's annual list as one of the nation's largest private retail companies, despite its commitment to remain closed on Sundays. In all, the company operates more than 650 stores, with the average size at 55,000 square feet.

With the opening of the La Mesa store, Hobby Lobby now operates 15 stores in Southern California, including one in Temecula.

Founded in 1972 by David and Barbara Green, the company opened its first California store in Visalia in 2010. In addition to remaining closed on Sundays, another distinguishing business philosophy is that company carries no long-term debt.

While the Oklahoma City-based company has earned fans for its vast inventory of 70,000 crafts, hobbies, home decor, holiday and seasonal products, it has also earned fans by its open commitment to Christian values, as evidenced on its website.

"We believe that it is by God's grace and provision that Hobby Lobby has endured," its company page reads. "God has been faithful in the past, and we trust Him for our future."

The La Mesa store is located on Grossmont Boulevard in the same shopping center that houses Toys R Us, Ross Dress for Less and Walmart Neighborhood Market.

Learn more at www.hobbylobby.com.

Creation class on 'Creepy Things'

SANTEE — Just in time for summer vacation, the Creation and Earth History Museum will hold four themed events for children in July.

Through the sessions, children will receive instruction on "The Age of the

Earth," July 8; "The Garden of Eden," July 9; "The Seven Ages of the Dinosaurs," July 10 and "The Mysteries of Ancient Man," July 11.

In the meantime, the museum will hold its monthly Creation Club Workshop at 10 a.m. June 6. The theme for June is "Creepy Things."

The museum is located at 10946 N. Woodside Ave.

To register for workshops or classes call (619) 599-1104.

Learn more at www.creationsd.org.

Future Conference to feature 50+ speakers

LA MESA — Skyline Church will host a free four-day conference, June 14 to 17, with more than 50 speakers addressing the theme of "What You Thought Was Coming... Is Here Now."



Bishop Harry Jackson

Prominent national speakers will explore the culture and how its views are impacting Christianity. The faculty includes Bishop Harry Jackson, Star Parker, former Congressman Bob McEwen, Mat Staver, Ted Baehr, Tony Perkins, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and Lou Engle.

Topics to be addressed include the culture, poverty, racism, economics, persecuted Christians, reaching millennials, Israel and radical Islam, religious liberty, terrorism, prison reform, civil government, fasting & prayer, civil disobedience, media, entertainment, emergency preparedness, radical evangelism, marriage, pornography, and human trafficking.

The conference will be hosted by Pastor Jim and Rosemary Garlow. Offerings will be taken during the sessions.

Although there is no admission fee, pre-registration is requested at www.futureconference2015.com.

Free writers workshop

RANCHO BERNARDO — The Church at Rancho Bernardo will present a free three-week "So You Want To Write" workshop featuring San Diego author Susan Meissner, beginning on June 3.

The series runs from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesdays through June 17.

Meissner, who has a background in community journalism, is the author of "A Fall of Marigolds," which was named to Booklist's "Top Ten Women's Fiction titles for 2014" and "The Shape of Mercy," named by Publishers Weekly as one of the "100 Best Novels of 2008." Her most recent novel, "Secrets of a Charmed Life," is on Amazon's Top 10 of "100 Hot New Releases in Historical Fiction."

During the workshops, Meissner will discuss writing skills and offer knowledge and wisdom for the creative writer, the aspiring author, the poet or anyone who wants to harness the power of the written word.

The event is open to all age groups. The church is located at 11740 Bernardo Plaza Court

For more information, send an email to joyce@thechurchrb.org or call (858) 592-2434, ext. 347.

Hillsong youth concert

POINT LOMA — Hillsong Young & Free, a music-based youth ministry affiliated with Hillsong Australia, will perform in concert at 6 p.m. June 10 at Rock Church. Doors open at 5 p.m.

"This is a generation called to stand strong in their youth and in their freedom, refusing to allow others to dismiss them for their age, and not allowing the chains of their history to leave them



EVENTS ONLINE

For more Community News and an online Calendar of Events for San Diego County, please visit www.refreshedsandiego.com.



Australia's Hillsong Young & Free will perform in concert on June 10 at Rock Church.

shackled,” the group’s website says. “This is a generation awakened to their purpose in Jesus and empowered to step out into their calling.”

The concert is presented by Transparent Productions.

Tickets are \$20 and \$30, with group discounts available for 15 or more people. VIP tickets, priced at \$50, provide exclusive access to the afterparty with Young & Free, as well as preferred seating.

Learn more at transparentproductions.com or order tickets by phone at 1-877-840-0457.

Tomlinson 5K and fun run

POINT LOMA — The 3rd Annual LaDainian Tomlinson 5K & One Mile Kids Fun Run will be held June 13 at NTC Park at Liberty Station. Registration begins at 7 a.m. Start time for the 5K is 8:25 a.m. for runners and 8:30 for walkers, while the kids fun run—now in its second year—is slated for 9 a.m.

Proceeds from the race will benefit Tomlinson’s Touching Lives Foundation, which engages in a number of programs designed to promote educational, social and cultural awareness and positive self-esteem to enhance the lives of children, families and communities.

In addition to the race, the family-friendly event will include music, bounce houses, games, contests and other activities, such as an autograph booth featuring current and former Chargers players and local celebrities, and a free food court, including bundt cake samples, and drinks, provided by race sponsors.

Those who register for the walk/run will receive a commemorative LaDainian Tomlinson event finisher medal and an event T-shirt.

Learn more at www.lt5k.com.

Rejuvenate with worship

EL CAJON — Narratives Church will host Rejuvenate Worship, a free night of worship and praise music at 7 p.m. June 12.

Worship leader Josh Gates and the Narratives worship team will lead the night’s musical session. Several guests are also expected to take the stage.

The church is located at 450 Fletcher Parkway, Suite 224. For more information, call (619) 379-5674.



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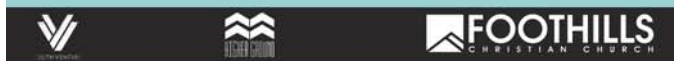
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County fair to showcase two Christian music festivals

June is a blockbuster month for Christian music as both the single-day Spirit West Coast and the 11th annual Gospel Days are held at the San Diego County Fair.

First on the schedule is a re-formatted Spirit West Coast which, after a two-year hiatus, moves from a multi-day to single-day event. Set for June 25, the concert features Third Day, Rend Collective, Brandon Heath and The Afters.

Tickets for the concert include fair admission.

Festival founder Jon Robberson said the new format has allowed them to cut structural costs that can be passed on to lower ticket prices.

In addition to the San Diego concert, Spirit West Coast is presenting similar concerts in Ontario and Concord on June 12 and June 14, respectively.

Third Day is currently promoting its latest album, *Lead Us Back: Songs of Worship*, which debuted at No. 20 on the Billboard Top 200, at No. 13 on the Sound-

Scan Top Current Albums Chart, and No.1 on Billboard's Top Christian and Gospel Albums chart in March.

Sharing concert dates with Third Day is Brandon Heath, whose latest album, *No Turning Back*, released in February, while Rend Collective will head to California fresh off an international tour, with stops in the United Kingdom, Hungary and Switzerland.

The Afters appeared in early May at Festival de la Esperanza (Festival of Hope), organized by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Franklin Graham presented the message, which drew 25,000 people over two days.

Gospel Days will mark its 11th year at the county fair. Produced by Mandate Records, the June 27 Gospel Festival will headline Tamela Mann, Donald Lawrence and as many as two dozen other artists.

This year has proven to be a big year for Mann, whose album *Best Days* was certified gold by the Recording Industry



Association of America for selling more than 500,000 copies.

In addition, Mann is anticipating the June 26 broadcast of her spring performance at the White House before President Barak Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. Mann performed her No. 1 hit "Take Me To The King" at the "The Gospel Tradition: In Performance at the White House." The show will be broadcast at 6 p.m. on PBS.

Starting at 10 a.m., the gospel festival boasts four stages and, like Spirit West Coast, fair admission is free with the purchase of concert tickets.

Learn more at www.sdfair.com.

Future Quest offers youth workshops, worship

Future Quest, the annual youth training conference sponsored by Foothills Christian Fellowship, will be held from June 24 to 26. The conference is open to any student who will be enrolled in grades seven through 12 for this fall's school calendar.

This year's theme is "Restored."

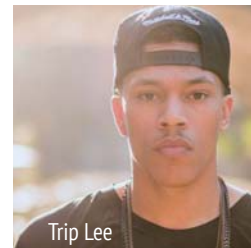
Each day students can choose from among at least 15 workshops designed to give them practical help in becoming young men and women of God. The 50-minute workshops will deal with such issues as helping friends in crisis, dating and purity, body image, influence of the media, leading friends to Christ, worship leading, missions, developing a devotional life, godly goal setting, outreach training, dealing with divorce, holiness and prayer.

Complementing the educational offerings, the conference will also offer several ministry outreaches. Students opting for the Beach Reach will use a workshop session to will learn how to

simply listen to people and share God's love. Those interested in Urban Ministries will team up with a ministry in downtown San Diego to serve the working poor and homeless.

Perennial speaker Bill Wilson, founder and pastor of the Metro Inner City Ministries in Brooklyn, N.Y., returns to shares his success in inner-city ministry. His Metro World Child operates programs in some of the toughest neighborhoods in the world, including more than 200 sites in New York City, as well as in the Philippines, Romania, Kenya, India and South Africa. Nearly 100,000 children are reached each week through Metro World Child.

Other guests include hip-hop artist and teacher Trip Lee; Tim Barton, an ordained pastor and speaker for WallBuilders; solo artist Lacey Sturm, a spokesperson for Whosoever and former member



of Flyleaf band; Mike Van Meter, the junior pastor at Foothills; and Mark Hoffman, founding co-pastor at Foothills and executive director of Youth Venture Teen Centers and Higher Ground After-School Bible Clubs.

In addition to the worship and workshops, the event offers a skatepark, prayer tent, game lounge, DJ lounge, inflatables and a BMX course.

The early registration fee is \$35 per person before June 15. After that deadline, the rate is \$42. Those wishing to attend for one day will be admitted for \$20. Youth leaders will be admitted free for every five students who register as a group.

The church is located at 365 W. Bradley Avenue in El Cajon.

Learn more at www.futurequest.tv or call (619) 442-1467.



Audio Adrenaline

Audio has a chart topper

Audio Adrenaline's *Sound of the Saints*, the band's second album since reforming in 2012, debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's Top Christian Albums chart after its May 5 release. The Fair Trade Services project also entered the *Billboard 200* at No. 69 for the week of May 23.

Adding to the traction was the decision by "MLB Now" to use the album's lead track "Move" for the show's opening theme. The show airs on the MLB Network. Another highlight of *Sound of the Saints* is the title cut, described as "a foot-stomping, Americana-tinged anthem" co-written by founding member Mark Stuart and frontman Adam Agee, along with Seth Mosley and award-winning singer/songwriter Jared Anderson.

'God's Not Dead' roars to Platinum status

Four years after its initial release, The Newsboys' *God's Not Dead* album, featuring the iconic anthem, "God's Not Dead (Like A Lion)," has been certified Platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America, thanks in part to the success of last year's Pure Flix film by the same name.



Written by Daniel Bashta, "God's Not Dead" was a multi-week No. 1 hit and helped inspire the blockbuster Pure Flix film of the same name. Both the *God's Not Dead* album and single earned RIAA Gold certifications last year.

"'God's Not Dead' is among Christian music's most significant songs of the decade," said Mark Lusk, president of Inpop Records, which recorded the album. "Newsboys' impassioned performance of

Daniel's powerfully penned statement of Truth is not only a defining song in Inpop's history, but it continues to encourage people around the world to stand for Christ."

The band, featuring lead vocalist Michael Tait, has been performing across the country this spring as part of its God's Not Dead tour.

Sada K. debuts solo album

Sada K., former lead vocalist for Press Play, has debuted her first solo album, *Long Story Short*. Sada K returns to the Christian music industry four years after a devastating knee injury nearly that temporarily derailed her career.

The album includes the song, "Live Love Laugh," which creatively tells her story.

"I hope the song will encourage people through the life les-



Sada K.

sons I've learned through my ups and downs," said the artist, who also discovered that both her parents had cancer. "Through all that I've been through I've truly learned that it's important to take a moment and remember what matters the most and never forget to live life to the fullest, walk in love and find joy in something every day."

"Complaining is not an option for me," she said. "I have my private moments, when I cry out to God and have to gather myself, but I know that I have to be strong and that there is something to learn from everything I go through. Helping people, while fulfilling my purpose, is my destiny. God never gives us more than we can bear, and I have learned through this journey, I am a lot stronger than I ever knew."

Cal Thomas



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Kevin Downes on faith, freedom and fatherhood

'Faith of Our Fathers' opens July 1

by ANN-MARGRET HOVSEPIAN



'Faith of Our Fathers' follows the story of two men (played by Kevin Downes, left, and David A.R. White) who are strangers but whose fathers were friends in Vietnam. The sons use letters to discover more about each other's family, and they then embark on a journey to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

By the time the Vietnam War ended in 1975, more than 3 million people had been killed. This summer, fifty years after the start of the war, millions of people will remember loved ones who either fought (well over 500,000 American military personnel were involved by 1969) or lost their lives while fighting (at least 58,000 Americans).

On July 1, 2015, producers and brothers Kevin and Bobby Downes will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War—and honor the troops who served—by releasing *Faith of Our Fathers*, a film that celebrates faith, freedom and fatherhood. The story spans the 25 years between two young men reporting for duty and their sons later meeting as strangers, thanks to handwritten letters their fathers had sent from the battlefield.

Kevin Downes, who plays the character of John Paul George in this film and is also known for his roles in faith-based movies such as *Courageous* and *Mom's Night Out*, was drawn to this story because "it explores and expresses the importance of fathers in our own lives. We need dads so much. They are there to guide us on our paths and we should never take that for granted."

Though the Downes' father was a teacher and didn't serve in the military, two of their uncles fought in Vietnam and their grandfather had been a soldier too. "I have incredible respect and love for my dad," said Kevin. "He gave up so much so that my brother and I could

have the options we did growing up, always supporting what we wanted to do. That sacrifice is not lost on me and this film is an opportunity to honor that."

In *Faith of Our Fathers*, two men team up—not without butting heads or stumbling across obstacles along the way—to piece together their fathers' relationship during the war and take a road trip to the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C.

The visit to the veterans memorial was a first for Downes. "It was overwhelming," he said. "To be able to stand there with all of those names—it was so vast, so huge—and to realize that each one of those names sacrificed their lives. It literally brought me to my knees and I cried for 15 minutes." Downes then recounts how the shooting of the scene at the wall unfolded. "You have to go through a long process to get permission to enter. We had to be done by 9 a.m. and the park service provided no guidance about what to do with tourists." The crew prayed that God would open the doors for them and, during the one hour needed for filming, not a single tourist walk through the set. "The moment we called cut, a hundred tourists pulled in!"

Asked how he feels about the recent increase in faith-based films being produced, Downes said, "I think it's incredibly positive. I commend the filmmakers whether or not they're Christians. Some of them have a take on those stories that

might not line up with my views, but it brings about discussion and awareness." Downes would like to see more evangelicals "craft the stories we're passionate about. These are opening doors for us."

Since the start of his career in 1994, Downes has done nothing but produce faith-based films, nearly one a year. In 2015, Downes Brothers is releasing two. Three months after *Faith of Our Fathers* hits theaters, *Woodlawn*, based on the true story of a high school football team torn apart by racism and hate in the early 1970s, will be released. "It's about reconciliation and love," said Downes. "I'm passionate about that. It's a call to revival through the telling of a true story and true perspective... I love producing and making films that glorify God and bring people to a better understanding of how God loves them."

Faith of Our Fathers, co-produced by Pure Flix, stars other familiar faces such as Stephen Baldwin, Candace Cameron Bure, Rebecca St. James and David A.R. White, who has worked on several films with Downes and played a key role in exploring and developing this story. Downes said he and White fell in love with it because "we can all relate to the themes. We all have a heavenly Father who loves us so much."

Ann-Margret Hovsepian is a freelance writer. Visit www.annhovsepian.com.



Cast out fear and speak up

From my elementary school years (shortly after the earth cooled), one of my earliest memories is this: My teacher asking me to “Speak up” as in “We can’t hear you!” Considering what I do for a living this may sound ridiculous now, but back then my shyness was real.

In Mrs. Hoffman’s kindergarten class there was no shortage of the sounds of amped up 5-year-olds bouncing off the walls, trying to get used to a new pattern of organized activity. I was great at playtime, but not so hot at speaking in public. Pressure was on when asked to answer a question in front of my peers.

It didn’t take long to realize that speaking, and speaking freely, takes some courage. Yes, it’s important to choose what is said and where, what’s appropriate for the surroundings and the audience, but most people hate the thought of speaking in public.

Throughout life, the heat is on to say the right thing in the right place, or else. “Political correctness” has now made free expression even more challenging.

At most weddings, there comes a point where the minister will say, “If anyone can show just cause why this couple cannot lawfully be joined together in matrimony, let them *speak now* or *forever hold their peace*.”

In that one moment, it’s make it or break it time. Most often the only time someone pipes up at that point is in the movies.

More questions come to mind: First, *forever* is a long time. So don’t miss the opportunity. But what if you were having a “cat’s got your tongue” moment (whatever that means)? You also have to avoid being distracted by “looking a gift horse in the mouth.”

And is it “peace” or “piece?” I will assume the old saying means, “Well then, don’t ever bring up anything in the years ahead. From this point forward,

put a cork in it.”

If the spelling makes it “hold your *piece*,” we may enter a new dilemma about Second Amendment and “concealed/carry” gun rights in public gatherings.

But I digress. Back to Kindergarten.

I’ve shared the breakthrough moment in my columns in recent years but it bears repeating: Mrs. Hoffman helped knock me out of my early shyness when I turned in some sloppy work and sheepishly whispered, “I’m sorry I made a mistake.” Her loving, yet in-your-face way to shift my gears was to yell, “**MARKIE, I’M SICK AND TIRED OF YOUR MISTAKES!**”

These days she would be sent on a trip to a little room with attorneys, but then she was spot-on, and it worked. Tough love.

Learning tools

Moving forward, I was encouraged to create, to flourish, to paint and draw and express myself. Out my self-imposed shell came I, finding ways to rise above shyness. As the next couple of years went by, I dabbled in self-taught ventriloquism and magic tricks, testing my show biz skills on other kindergarten classes.

In retrospect, the ventriloquist props I created may have helped me most. I could still hide behind my occasional shyness by living through the little goofy doll sitting on my knee. It was sort of an accidental “Public Speaking for Dummies” lesson. I was the one doing the learning.

Eventually I discovered that using voice impersonations would help me find a new comfort zone. (I once emceed an entire junior high talent show using everyone else’s voices, except mine). In

the years after that I realized I could simply be me.

Teddy Roosevelt said, “Speak softly, but carry a big stick.” The Tremeloes sang “Silence is Golden,” while Simon and Garfunkel belted out “The Sounds of Silence” (fairly loudly, too).

Winston Churchill minced no words: “If you have an important

point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once, then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time—a tremendous whack.”

It’s also been said that if everyone likes what you say, something is wrong with your message.

Here’s my point: Life is about expression. We are all entitled to our opinion, and among our God-given rights are those reflected in the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment.

So use it or lose it, and don’t miss your moment.

What do you need to express—to write or say—in your relationships, career and in the public square? Sure, it’s important to choose the right time, factoring in love, empathy and facts. But what’s keeping you from doing this, from finding new strength, boldness, courage—and *peace* of mind?

Speak up.



Larson is a longtime Southern California radio/television personality. His voice is heard on KPRZ 1210AM and his weekday talkshow airs 6 to 9 a.m.

on AM 1170 “The Answer.” He’s also a news analyst on KUSI TV. Learn more at marklarson.com.

JANICE THOMPSON

Practically speaking... Raising money-smart children

My earliest childhood money memory was with my father kneeling beside my bed and counting out my 10-penny allowance.

“One for Jesus, one for your savings, and the rest for you to decide,” he would say.

The priority of giving and saving was never a struggle as an adult because the habit was deeply embedded in my life from a very young age. One of my favorite areas to explore with new clients is how they saw money modeled. My unscientific conclusion after decades of working with people: the way we handle money is more often than not greatly influenced by the money habits we learned growing up.

Let’s explore three tools that can help raise money-smart children: an allowance, a spending plan and credit cards. And in case you haven’t already guessed, it all starts with modeling good money habits ourselves! It is hard to teach with conviction what you do not practice in reality. Bring your children along on the journey and let them learn from both your successes and mistakes.

An allowance

While there is much debate about the merits of tying allowances to performance of basic household chores, we chose a different path with our children. Our end goal was to raise responsible, self-motivated and productive children.

Therefore, they assumed age-appropriate responsibilities from toddlerhood through young adulthood simply because they were members of the household. Basic chores like putting away toys, gathering trash or setting the dinner table, were expected because those inherent skill sets would be necessary to function independently in their grown-up world.

Privileges and responsibilities were closely linked, but we did not tie basic responsibilities to their allowance. That

allowed us to use their allowance to teach basic money management principles much like my parents did with me. Giving, saving and spending less than they “earned” were the top priorities. If they wanted something beyond what they could reasonably save for, a list of special projects with an associated earning value was posted on the refrigerator. This worked particularly well as our children entered their teen years. If a name brand item was important to them, they could work extra hard for the funds to pay for it. It helped them determine if the want was worth the work attached to it.

There are many resources available to help you determine the appropriate amount for allowances at various ages. Much of it is based on the family’s resources. The bottom line is this: It’s not so much about the dollar amount but the teaching opportunity this tool affords.

A spending plan

This was the next logical step as our children matured. When they became teenagers, we carved out items related to their needs from our family Spending Plan and turned these over for them to manage with their own Spending Plan (for example: clothing, birthday gifts, etc.).

The first few months it looked like a lot of money to them! When they found their month lasted longer than their money, however, it didn’t take long to learn how to wisely manage their increased funds. This exercise, while still living under our roof, allowed us to observe their maturity and gradually turn more over to them as they proved themselves responsible.

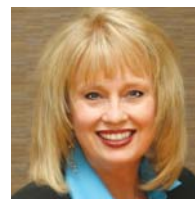
Credit cards

Knowing that building a good credit history is imperative in the world we



live in, we opened credit card accounts for our children when they turned 17. We closely supervised the card use and they learned to use this tool wisely while we still had the opportunity to influence them. Since credit cards can be either a terrific tool or a terrible master, paying off all charges incurred during the month was non-negotiable. The credit cards worked well throughout their college years. They learned how to wisely use a valuable tool and graduated from college with high credit scores and a well-established history.

One of the most predictable ways to handicap your children is by giving them too many privileges without corresponding responsibilities. As adults we understand there are always consequences for our actions. If you provide them with life skills that will serve them well—no matter what their age or net worth—you will give them the foundation needed not just to survive but thrive!



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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When your reality check bounces

Around this time of year, when college finals have been given and grades recorded, I frequently get some version of the following message in my email: “Dr. Jenkins, I am so unhappy about my grade on the final exam. I knew the material forwards and backwards. I studied for a *long* time! I cannot believe that I received a D on the final.”

I usually respond with compassion, explaining that no test is perfect since it is only a sample of what we really know. Taking a test can be an eye-opening experience because it points out to us what we don’t know. My student had

feel safe and secure. If life is filled with unexpected experiences, we start to feel anxious and upset. In fact, anxiety and worry are primarily experienced as an anticipation of future negative events, not the actual events themselves.

In this way, we predict a reality, but when events actually unfold it’s not nearly as bad as we thought it would be.

Sometimes things go the other way: We expect something good is going to happen and yet we are not prepared for them. For example, teenage drivers sometimes predict that their driving ability is so good they will not have any

problems. It can be quite a shock to receive that first ticket from law enforcement.

But reality checks are good for us. They bring us back to where we truly are on the continuum of skills and abilities. Failures are just a fine-tuning

of our understanding and expectations of the world. My student, for example, may think he deserves an “A” for studying a couple hours, but after a few failures he may revise his study habits. For most of us, a reality check is feedback that has a way of correcting our expectations.

Did you know that 9.1 percent of the population does not have this ability when it comes to relationships? Research indicates that individuals with *personality disorders* have a rigid and unhealthy pattern of thinking that prevents them from learning from relational reality checks.

Here are different types of personality disorders, a variety of conditions with

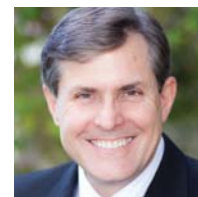
one thing in common: the inability to learn from experience. In consequence, the same maladaptive coping mechanisms are used over and over again, with a corresponding failure rate.

In therapy, the biggest challenge is simply getting a person with this diagnosis to accept responsibility for his or her own problems. Blame is always placed at someone else’s feet. Without acceptance of personal responsibility, reality checks are going to bounce all over the place and not provide corrective feedback.

King David’s lesson

A wonderful biblical example of a reality check can be found in 2 Samuel 12, where the prophet Nathan confronted David over the death of Uriah the Hittite. David really wanted Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, so he sent Uriah to the front lines to ensure he would die on the battlefield. Nathan used a therapeutic analogy to bring the truth home to David. It was a brilliant reality check that didn’t bounce because David received the feedback and confessed the evil of what he had done.

God has a magnificent way of using reality checks to turn a temporarily bad situation into something exceptionally good for eternity. We are all “diamonds in the rough” and if we can see how painful feedback can improve us, then we draw closer to becoming the person God wants us to be.



Daniel Jenkins, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist at Lighthouse Psychological Services in Mission Valley. He is also a professor of psychology at Point

Loma Nazarene University. Learn more at www.lighthousepsy.com.

Reality
Just Ahead

a hard time accepting this reality and went on to blame the test. You might say that his reality check bounced.

The brain is all about making predictions on what is going to happen next. The baseball outfielder predicts where he needs to be to catch the ball. When you walk out into the parking lot after getting groceries you predict where your car should be based on the last time you saw it (unless you are older than 60, then someone keeps moving it!). The musician predicts what note will play when a certain key is struck. We are constantly predicting what is going to happen next, and when our predictions fail we experience a reality check.

When life is stable and predictable, we

When the ground shifts

Editor’s note: *An April 30 crash in front of West Hills High School in Santee took the life of one student and two others were injured. The following is a mother’s reflection on her son’s role in providing care to one of the young crash victims.*

There are moments when you know something has shifted under your feet. As a mom I have always been aware that the time I get with my kids is fleeting. The years have gone so quickly, and as they emerged into teens I felt the clock hands move even faster toward their launch from the nest.

And although I know somewhere inside that each day with them is a gift and that I cannot control how many of those days I will get, it’s something I don’t want to think about: not having them. But then the ground shifts.

On April 30 after the bell rang, Zach was moving toward his car to leave campus. With the crash of metal, two cars collided in front of West Hills High School in Santee. Hearing the crash, his first instinct was to run to the accident. When he arrived he found a mangled car with the passenger door open. Inside were Ryan and Cory Willweber, two teammates from Zach’s Cross Country team—brothers and students at West Hills.

First to the scene, Zach climbed over the two boys to turn off the ignition, as gas poured out of the engine and onto his shoes. He knelt down on the pavement next to Cory’s seat, took his hand and put his head on Cory’s shoulder and began to talk to Cory and pray out loud. Zach tells me that he sensed Ryan, the driver, was already gone—that he felt he was there at that moment for Cory. Agitated, Cory’s eyes were closed and he was moaning but unable to talk. As Zach prayed, Cory settled down and soon the first responders arrived and Zach quietly

moved away from the car.

While Zach was with the boys the horn was stuck and blaring, Zach’s ears were ringing and several people were running around the outside of the car yelling. But inside the car there was peace. And God’s presence was there. Zach felt it so strongly in those few moments. He came home and relayed his story to me, and very soon we heard that Ryan was, indeed, gone. And over the following few days as I’ve watched Zach, I know that something has shifted for him, too.

I’ve been thinking about God’s presence. Recently, our worship pastor, Jason Denison, spoke about Presence being the point. That we were made to relate to something beyond this place. That we are meant to be conduits for heaven to hit earth. That we are made to be a people shaped and molded by His presence.

I had a light bulb go on. I’ve thought of God’s presence as something I ask for when I need it. I knew on some level that He is always with me, but I don’t live in that. That He is Emmanuel. God With Us. All. The. Time.

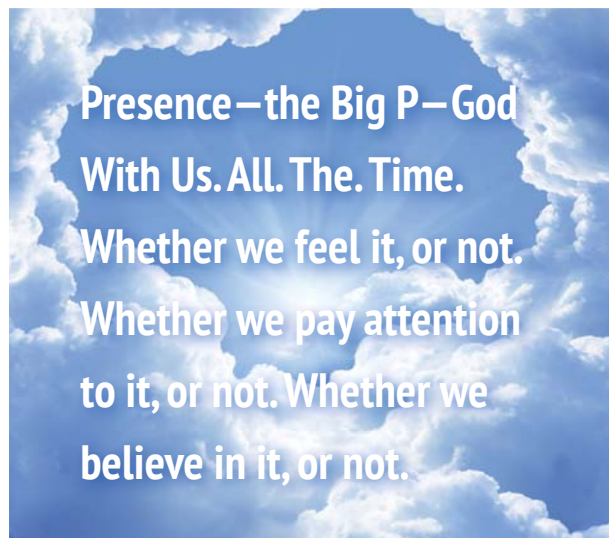
And then I watched my man-child begin to navigate what I expect is a life-changing moment. An experience where he was a part of heaven hitting earth. A conduit.

When we are conduits it is not about us. It’s about being available.

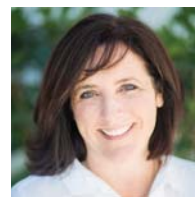
The horrible loss of Ryan Willweber isn’t about Zach. There is no way I can fathom the loss the Willweber family is feeling. And my son’s small role in the

event is not the primary narrative.

But I do know that Presence really is the point. Our presence (little p) in what’s going on around us. Our willingness to lean in and not miss the divine appointments that come our way. And Presence—the Big P—God With Us. All. The. Time. Whether we feel it, or not. Whether we pay attention to it, or not. Whether we believe in it, or not.



And so I lean in. Into the pain and the loss. Into the hope that I was made for something more. Into the knowledge, running deep in my soul, that every once in awhile I get to see a glimpse of heaven. That a veil is thin enough. That a young man, who is also my son, is showing me the way today.



Kim Jones attends Journey Community Church. She owns a marketing company and does External Relations for Point Loma Nazarene University’s Center

for Justice & Reconciliation. Read her full blog at <https://kimberlyjones.wordpress.com>.

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JOANNE BROKAW

Picture perfect

I recently found myself in need of a head shot. For those of you who don't know, a head shot is a photo that shows you from your shoulders up and conveys whatever you want to convey about yourself, in one picture. For example, if you're a businessperson, your head shot should say, "I'm smart, successful and can make money for your company. Hire me." If you're an author, your head shot should say, "I have something to say that will transform your life. Buy my book."

I needed a head shot that said, "I'm talented and creative and can be anyone you want me to be. Cast me in your play." I don't have a decent photo of myself that doesn't also include a cat, dog or chicken. My current head shot is a snapshot of me and my cat Murphy, taken with the self-timer button on my camera. The photo screams, "Look at me! My cat knows how to take a picture!"

Fortunately, a guy in my improv class is a professor at Rochester Institute of Technology, world-renowned for its photography programs. He offered his improv classmates the opportunity to have head shots done for free if, in exchange, we would be willing to let his students experiment on us with different lighting techniques.

Sign me up!

It worked like this: One group of students would take our photos using natural light, the other group would use studio lighting. Michael, the professor, would then do a session using strobe (or flash) lighting. The final photos would be cropped from the shoulders up, so we were instructed to bring a few different shirts but not to worry about what else we wore.

Translation: I could wear pajamas in this head shot and no one would ever know.



I decided that while wearing pajamas for pants is acceptable for college students, middle-aged women should still wear actual pants in public. But I did bring a few different shirts in case the T-shirt and sweater I was wearing didn't work. (Side note: the sweater is actually a bathrobe that looks just like a regular sweater! Hahaha! I'm still wearing pajamas in public!)

The first trio of photographers sat me on a stool next to a wall of windows, and for the next 15 minutes bounced light off little screens while they snapped photos. They seemed pleased with what they were getting.

The next trio snapped a few basic shots under hot studio lights. We got to talking about high school yearbook photos, so I started mimicking poses. At one point, I took off my glasses, crossed my eyes and made fish lips at the camera.

You can imagine how the rest of that session went.

The last session was with Michael, and by that time I was about done being a photography experiment. I was tired and hungry, and the hot lights combined with my hot flashes made the studio feel like a pizza oven. Who knew being a supermodel was such hard work? But I soldiered on. And then we were done.

On the way out of the building, we ran into a photography student getting ready to do a photo shoot with two dogs

and a pig. I considered asking if I could have my photo taken with the animals, but I figured that the students and Michael must have taken at least one photo of me that would be suitable for a head shot.

A few days later, Michael sent me proofs. Everyone did a great job! The pictures looked so professional! But the model?

Um, is that what I really look like?

When I looked at the proofs, most of them seemed to say, "You should really meet my cat." Michael told me not to be so hard on myself, but it did make me think. Does it matter that the me I see in the mirror doesn't match the me the camera captured? I decided that it doesn't. In my head, I'm 20 years younger and 30 pounds lighter, and that's the me I think I project to the world.

Although I still wonder if I should have taken at least one picture with the pig.



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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