

# Inspired Woman

KIDS



**INSPIRATION & INNOVATION**  
TWO MOMS TAKE ACTION FOR KIDS

**MICRO-FASHION:**  
BABY CLOTHING TRENDS

**KIDS' SUBMISSIONS**

SEPTEMBER 2017  
COMPLIMENTARY COPY

*Kara  
Ohlsen*

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# Contents

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

- 09**    **Parenting 101: Nurture Your Child's Strengths**  
by Noreen Keesey
- 10**    **Sharon Wallace: The Faithful Face of Kids Fit**  
by Stephanie Fong
- 12**    **Fun, Indoor Activities for Your Kids**  
by Lisa Dingeman
- 14**    **Look What She Did**
- 16**    **Micro-Fashions: Baby Clothing Trends**  
by Michelle Farnsworth
- 18**    **The Walk**  
by Patrick Atkinson
- 20**    **COVER STORY:**  
**Kara Ohlsen**  
*Treasure Every Moment*
- 28**    **A Back to School Assignment for Parents**  
by Sandy Thompson
- 31**    **Four Kid-Friendly Stops in North Dakota**  
by ND Tourism
- 32**    **Kids' Submissions**
- 34**    **Oh Boy**  
*Because Guys Inspire Too!*
- 36**    **Cooking With Kids**  
by Pam Vukelic
- 38**    **Inspiration & Innovation**  
*Two Moms Take Action for Kids*
- 42**    **Community Contributor**  
*Bismarck Doula Community*
- 44**    **Brighter Future for All Kids**  
by Betty Mills

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# North Dakota **TODAY**

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# Editors' Notes



*"While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about." —Angela Schwindt*

When you have a baby, everyone tells you to enjoy every moment, because it goes quickly.

I didn't believe anyone who told me that. I couldn't see past the diapers. Now, 18 years and four kids into this motherhood journey, I realize "they" were right. Time really does fly.

Just a couple of weeks ago, as we moved our oldest 500 miles away for college and as this issue came together, I was reminded why kids—my own and other people's—are awesome. They can cheer me up on the worst of days and make me slow down to appreciate the ant crawling across the sidewalk. My 10-year-old daughter has been begging to write something for the magazine—talk about a good reminder to me that kids are always watching us. Letting her tackle this month's "Oh Man!" was also a good reminder that we need to let kids try new things, even if they don't do them the way we would.

Our cover story will tug at your heart, as Kara Ohlsen talks about her young son's cancer diagnosis and fight. And our call for kids' submissions—you guys rocked it! Thanks for all the great stuff. We didn't have room to print it all, so please be sure to visit our website to check out all the amazing submissions we received.

From cover to cover, this issue is filled with stories about amazing kids and their parents. It's my hope that, much like my own children do for me daily, the children in this issue will remind you what life is all about.

*Jody*



When we are asked to name the people who inspire us, the answer it seems, is commonly adults—mentors and leaders who have helped shape us; whose character we respect and values we share. But what about kids?

Nadalie is my four-and-a-half-year-old great-niece—and my inspiration. Nadalie and I have "dates" every couple of weeks. They include tea parties, movies, crafts and coloring, and going to the park or chasing butterflies. Oh, and snacks. Snacks are important, as Nadalie is happy to remind anyone who forgets to pack them.

One way that Nadalie inspires me: she is encouraging and positive. When I suggest an idea for one of our "dates," Nadalie's response is always an enthusiastic, "that's a great idea, Mousie!" Nadalie is also thoughtful and kind, quick to forgive, funny, and generous. I recently watched as she first resisted sharing a toy with her one-year-old brother, Lochlan, but then turned and gave it to him with no complaint. This kid. Can you tell I'm a proud auntie?

I hope you are thinking of a kid who makes you proud and inspires you. They are all around us. We found amazing kids to showcase this issue—a young chef with fantastic kitchen skills, talented young writers and artists who share some beautiful and thoughtful work, and kids who have inspired adults to take action and be change agents.

I think it's safe to assume that as adults, we naturally believe kids will be influenced by us, our behavior, and ideas. But just when we think that, they turn the table—and those kids inspire us. Speaking of tables, I have a tea party to get to with the sweet little girl who inspires me.

*Marci*

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# PARENTING 101:

## Nurture Your Child's Strengths

by Noreen Keesey

For many years, one of the wall decorations in my home was a blanket by SARK with instructions on "How to Really Love a Child." Though I didn't always follow the directions to the letter, I tried to love my children well, and for that, I think they give me credit. I took the blanket down a couple of weeks ago. My children are now both in their 20s and I needed a space for a life-sized skeleton painting that my youngest created in art class. There are only so many places in my home big enough for life-sized wall art.

Kids are amazing creatures. One of the things I find fascinating about children is how early their unique personality characteristics start to show. My daughter's affinity for drawing became clear as soon as she was old enough to hold a pencil. I learned very quickly that my first child didn't prepare me well for parenting my second; they are very different people. Research supports my personal observation. As stated in the book "Strengths Based Parenting" by Mary Reckmeyer, PH.D., "A 23-year longitudinal study of 1,000 children in New Zealand found that a child's personality at age three shows remarkable similarity to his or her reported personality traits at age 26."

Unfortunately, too many of us lose track of our talents as we grow to adulthood. We live in a society that focuses more on improving our weaknesses rather than maximizing our strengths, and this has negative consequences on our personal satisfaction and professional success. In my work as a CliftonStrengths coach, I see people struggle to reclaim the gifts that they have spent years discounting and underappreciating.

Though we must all learn to manage our weaknesses, our time is better spent investing in our talents. In them lies our path to success.

We can begin this investment when children are quite young by noticing how they behave in different situations. Pay attention to how children react to others, what they become fascinated with, and how they behave in various situations. See if you can notice them exhibiting signs of achieving, caring, competing, confidence, dependability, discoverer, future thinker, organizer, presence, or relating. These are the Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer themes developed by Gallup. For children younger than 10, who are too young to take the assessment, this method to identify relevant themes is called StrengthsSpotting. Share what you are noticing with others who care for and about your child and discuss whether they are seeing the same patterns of behavior. By understanding and appreciating their preferences, you can create opportunities to support and nurture the development of their talents.

My beloved blanket is getting ready to be passed along to a dear friend with young children. One addition I would make to the sage advice it gives would be to recognize, support, and encourage the innate talents of children. Help them to grow up owning and appreciating the gifts they have to offer the world. *M*

For more information, check out the Gallup book Strengths Based Parenting by Mary Reckmeyer, PH.D. with Jennifer Robison



*Noreen Keesey is a Gallup Certified CliftonStrengths Coach and the mother of two. She believes parenting is about loving your children for who they are, doing the best you can, and forgiving yourself often for not being perfect.*

# SHARON WALLACE:

## THE FAITHFUL FACE

## OF KIDS FIT

by Stephanie Fong | Submitted Photos



On any given Wednesday or Friday, guests to the West River Community Center (WRCC) in Dickinson can peer through the windows of the Mac Gym and see a throng of preschoolers leaping, running, hopping, or singing enthusiastically.

For children ages three to five, coming to Kids Fit classes can be the highlight of their week. Bopping their little hearts out, finishing the hour-long class with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, the kids get a good dose of fun and exercise in one shot.

Depending on the season, the action may be led by the Easter Bunny, Father Time, Uncle Sam, the Queen of Hearts, or an inflatable dinosaur.

But no matter which special character appears, the steadfast face bringing the fun week in and week out is that of Sharon Wallace.

For the past 15 years, Sharon has been teaching preschoolers about muscle groups by encouraging fun and creative exercise through the Kids Fit class. What makes the sessions truly magical is a combination of enthusiasm brought by Sharon and the imaginations of the children in her class.

Sharon, a certified group fitness

instructor and personal trainer, has taught fitness classes to groups of all ages, but she especially loves working with the preschool-aged kids.

"They still have their imaginations. They are at a really fun, fun age. In class, they are using their imaginations and still getting a workout in. It's just fun—they don't even realize they are exercising."

### A FAITHFUL PRESENCE

While parents dot the outside perimeter of the gym and offer plenty of assistance, Sharon is often a one-woman show.

"I don't really have a back-up person. During the height of the oil boom a few years ago, we would have 75 kids show up at a time. It might look like chaos, but I say the more the merrier!"

For years, her family's summer vacations have been planned around the Kids Fit class schedule so that she is always in town to teach, ensuring not only consistency but also a certain comfort level with the kids.

"The kids are used to me."

That faithfulness to the program and the children in the community is a big part of what makes Kids Fit so appealing and successful.



## FUN AND LEARNING

Sharon has always had an interest in fitness. Simply put, her motto is, "Exercise should be fun!"

Each class is different, sketched out in Sharon's head each week.

"No notes—just in my brain!" she laughs. "I just sit down and come up with it. Sometimes my ideas work well, and sometimes not. The kids will be quick to tell me if we've done the same thing before."

One week the children might participate in an ABC Run, combining letters with exercise. The next, the kids may have a visit by local police or firefighters to learn about their jobs and vehicles. Another week, superheroes might be darting all around the WRCC campus as part of Sharon's superhero theme.

Every holiday is a chance to learn and celebrate, sometimes with social and snack time following classes.

Sharon finds that the social aspect of Kids Fit is sometimes just as important as the physical, especially for the parents. The class is a great way for those new to Dickinson to meet other parents, mingle, set up playdates, and feel included in the community.

## KIDS FIT:

**When:** Wednesdays & Fridays  
9:15 a.m. Mountain Time

**Where:** West River Community Center  
2004 Fairway Street, Dickinson, ND

**Cost:** \$2.00 or free with WRCC membership

## "IT'S A JOY"

Like any classroom teacher, Sharon has acquired quite a few supplies on her own, most notably a closet full of costumes for every occasion.

Sharon's youngest daughter Kayla, 20, offers help around her college schedule. Kayla was in Sharon's first classes as a child and is game for almost anything, often dressing up in a costume. "[Kayla] talked me into buying the inflatable dinosaur costume. I told her if she'd wear it, I'd buy it."

And Sharon's husband Phil, along with other staff members at the WRCC, are also great sports about helping bring her Kids Fit themes to life.

"They've all been very supportive. It's a joy," Sharon explains of the time spent planning and teaching Kids Fit year after year.

"I'm the kind of person that when I do something, I am passionate and gung-ho about it. I wouldn't be doing it if I didn't love it." *W*



*Stephanie Fong lives in Dickinson with her husband and two young children. She works in marketing and communications for CHI St. Alexius Health Dickinson and enjoys contributing freelance work to Inspired Woman magazine.*



# FUN, INDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR KIDS

by Lisa Dingeman



Fall is in the air—the weather is getting cooler and the kids are back in school. But physical education may not be a part of every child's school day; according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, only six states require physical education in every grade, K-12. So we parents owe it to our children to keep them physically active while at home. It can be a challenge to find ways for your kids to burn off extra energy. I've devised a list of fun, interactive indoor games for my own family to stay active. I'm sharing with you because the positive side effects are lasting and nothing short of amazing!

**Simon Says: Exercise.** Simon Says can be a good way to get the whole household engaged. By taking turns, everyone gets a chance to come up with unique ideas and be the boss for a little while. Make it fun by thinking up different exercises, such as bouncing on one foot or break dancing.

**Hide-and-Seek.** My three- and five-year-olds are all about hide-and-seek right now. Because they usually rat the other one out after they have been found, we've incorporated a way to keep them busy so the other one gets a fair chance to be found. Whoever has been found has to

jog in place, or in circles in our case, until the others have been located.

**Sing and Dance Party.** Again, with young children you can never go wrong with singing and dancing. As long as it's structured chaos, this is something that I can get on board with. Throw on some fun tunes and let your little ones show off their great dance moves and outstanding karaoke skills.

**Game of Dice.** I found some pretty cool and cheap dry erase dice on Amazon. Playing a game of dice with your own workout ideas on each side of the die is a unique way to get everyone to participate. Give everybody the opportunity to jot something down. It will be more engaging for the older kids when they have a say in what is done, adding a little humor, too!

**Scavenger Hunt.** Scavenger hunts can be fun at any age and can be a good way to get more than one use out of the Easter eggs that hide out in storage the rest of the year. Fill up the eggs with an assortment of handwritten activities, such as jumping jacks, burpees, or sit ups. (It's a good idea to keep the older kids



interested by keeping them guessing.) Put a few surprises in the eggs, maybe a couple dollar bills for the older kids and quarter machine toys for the little ones.

**Tape Games.** There are endless possibilities when it comes to using tape. You can make a hopscotch pattern on the floor, create fun obstacle courses, or tape lines on the floor and challenge the kiddos in some long-jumping. If you want things a little more structured you can use the tape to make boxes on the floor and play musical boxes instead of musical chairs.

Not only is exercise a good way to keep your kids active during the colder months, it is important for their growing

bodies. With regular exercise—at least three times a week for 30 minutes—comes development and strengthening of the muscles as well as building powerful bones. It will also help decrease the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, and lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels. It will keep their self-image and self-esteem high while improving their attention span—not to mention the positive outlook they will have when you show them your excitement for physical activity. *M*



*Lisa Dingeman is a devoted wife and the proud mother of two boys. She is a personal trainer at Family Wellness in Mandan and also participates in fitness competitions. Lisa has devoted her life to faith, family, and wellness.*



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## KRISTI FRAHM

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"I wanted to figure out a way to help students learn words for lifelong learning, not just memorize them for a test and forget them," explains Kristi. Kristi spent 30 years teaching high school English. She retired in 2014 and lives in New Rockford, North Dakota.

Designed for grades 7-12, Kristi says "The Power of 200" is also a great option for homeschool parents because the single program can be used for multiple years.

"It's 200 words, but we never stop using and talking about the first word we learn. Research shows you need to be exposed to something 17 times before you learn it," says Kristi. "I could have easily done 1,000 words, but that would be overwhelming. I came up with about 75 of the words from novels, movies, and billboards. My students helped with the rest."

"The Power of 200" gives students one word a day to incorporate into their writing, speaking, and everyday life. Students get points for finding the words outside the classroom, such as in movies and books. Kristi said it was important to her to make the curriculum fun for the students.

"It's hard to find a high school vocabulary program that is user-friendly but also appeals to teenagers. They are a tough audience."

Learn more about "The Power of 200" at [frahmpublications.com](http://frahmpublications.com).



## VONDA DAHL

*"Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."*—Psalm 82:3-4

That's a verse that has guided Vonda Dahl's life since she was a teen. It eventually led her to a teaching job at Mandan's Mary Stark and Roosevelt elementary schools.

"I learned there were a number of our students living at a homeless shelter and I couldn't stop thinking about that," explains Vonda. "I called and asked if I could come read to kids. They said, 'sure!' No one was doing that."

Vonda bought \$200 worth of books and started reading. She wanted the kids to be able to keep the books they read together. Project Armchair was born.

"The name came from a mental image I had of a child in a big comfy chair, lost in a book. I know the power of a book to carry you away to another place," says Vonda. "I was loving what was happening, the people I was meeting, the whole experience. Using my teaching education and experiences in a volunteer capacity was exciting to me. So I went to work and started talking about it and my colleagues said, 'I want to do it!'"

Twenty teachers from Bismarck and Mandan now volunteer with Project Armchair, and teachers in Fargo and Minot have also started their own programs. More than 400 books have been given to kids through Project Armchair.

Learn more at [projectarmchair.blogspot.com](http://projectarmchair.blogspot.com) or find Project Armchair on Facebook.





## BETHANY ANDRIST

As a young girl, Bethany Andrist dreamed of being a Burning Hills singer in the Medora Musical.

"Every year my family would go to Medora. In the early 90s there was a girl from my hometown who was in the show. I was captivated and thrilled," Bethany remembers.

In 2006, Bethany's dream came true and she joined her longtime boyfriend on stage.

"Levi had been in the show since 2004. We were in the show together in 2006 and 2007," says Bethany. "He proposed to me in the Painted Canyon in 2006 and we got married in 2007 just two days before rehearsals started.

"We love Medora. We love the landscape, the history, the romance. It's a great family place to connect with your family," says Bethany. "We also love books and reading with our kids—ages six, three, and 10 months. When we travel with kids we always

look for books about places we visit so we can relive, explore, and learn about the places we visit. We have picked up a couple of books about Theodore Roosevelt, but there has never been a book about Medora, especially for little children."

Until now. Bethany's board book "Hello Medora!" hit shelves this summer. Bethany and Levi partnered with the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation to publish the book. All proceeds from the book go back to the Foundation.

"It's one of our favorite places in the world. What a way to give back," says Bethany. "They will keep all proceeds to further the mission of upholding the history and magic of Medora."

"Hello Medora!" is available for \$10 at most Foundation shops in Medora. You can also find a copy at the Chateau deMores, the Heritage Center, and on Amazon.



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## MICRO-FASHIONS: BABY CLOTHING TRENDS

Article and Photos by Michelle Farnsworth

Now that my firstborn is 20 years old and living on his own, I find myself looking at baby clothing. Wishful thinking? Maybe. But more than anything, I am truly in awe of all the options available for babies and toddlers. And shopping has never been easier! I found three boutiques—one downtown, one at the mall, and one online—that almost made me wish I had young children again. These boutiques have found a niche customer with new

moms and all those grandmas out there just itchin' to buy baby something special.

"We are focused on bringing Bismarck and surrounding towns the trendiest items for mama, baby, and toddler," says Miranda Bodvig, owner of Tinee & Trendee in downtown Bismarck.

A mother of three herself, Miranda is conscious of changing trends and bringing things in that she wished she would have had for her own children.

A brand of clothing that is a big hit for Miranda is Mayoral, in high demand because it follows the trends of adult clothing and making it easy for families to choose matching clothing.

"Micro-Fashion! Mommy and me, daddy and me are popular. The graphics are similar so the whole family has a cohesive look," says Seth Leno, store manager of Out of Town Clothing in Bismarck's Kirkwood Mall.

Walking into this boutique, I found myself wanting to wear the baby and toddler clothes. Tutu skirts, pink faux leather jackets, and cute little booties were just a few items I was coveting. There was even leather, flannel, and skinny jeans!

And like adult clothing trends, baby clothing changes with the seasons. Colors are changing from the pastels, brights, and prints to the darker and jewel tones of fall.

“

Our best sellers are outfits with funny, creative puns or movie quotes and clothing sets with modern colors and patterns you wouldn't typically see in generic baby clothing.

—Michelle Kaufaman,  
Violet and Mint Boutique



"Parents have more gender neutral clothing to choose from, making it easier to shop and prepare for babies on the way," says Seth.

The store's concept came from store owner Brooke Leno's idea to carry brands you once had to go 'out of town' to get.

"Our stores are a slice of urban, contemporary fashion in a small town environment," says Seth.

If you strictly shop online and don't have the opportunity to experience a local brick and mortar store, Michelle Kaufman offers an online shopping option.

Violet and Mint Boutique is primarily a business on Facebook.

"A changing trend in shopping for baby clothes, and clothing in general, is the recent explosion in Facebook based stores," says Michelle.

Michelle likes the fast, easy, and free platform which allows businesses like hers to get items in front of customers faster and easier than ever before. Shoppers find trendy styles, colors, and patterns without even leaving their homes.

"Our best sellers are outfits with funny, creative puns or movie quotes and clothing sets with modern colors and patterns you wouldn't typically see in generic baby clothing," she says.

If you're in the market for baby clothing that will make you ooh and ahh, shop local and see what all the fuss is about. *M*



*Michelle Farnsworth is a local writer and owner of her own Yunique Makeup and Skincare business. Two humans, one fur baby, and her husband Richard occupy her free time.*

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# THE WALK

by Patrick Atkinson | Submitted Photo

On the seventh day, when God finished creating the earth and decided it was time to rest, we mere mortals were left to our own devices.

One result is that we created babies. After that we became parents.

We fed our children and watched as they stretched out limbs and tore through shirts, shoes, and toys. They made us laugh.

Then they became teenagers and stopped talking to us.

What did I do? I wondered. Had I yelled at my son a little too loudly, or corrected him one too many times in front of his friends?

Or maybe I was too easy on him. Was he in trouble? I wondered.

"No," I decided after weeks of pondering how I had blown it. "He must be going through a stage, a phase, or a sign of the times."

While not perfect, I had done my best. Still, I missed him and often thought about how he was doing. Did he miss me, too?

It seems like I didn't know him anymore, and even though we shared the same dinner table each night, I wanted him to come home again.

"What are you doing?" I asked one beautiful evening when I stepped outside and found him sitting alone on

the steps.

"Nothing," he said.

"Great! Let's go for a walk."

My voice exuded confidence and I started to move. Inside, though, I was afraid he would say 'no' and the gap between us would grow wider.

With an inspired lack of enthusiasm, my son rose and began to walk beside me. Or behind me, as was his preference. I slowed and let the inches between us disappear. I spoke first.

"Man, I can't believe..." and told him what happened at work that day.

Silence.

"Look at that..." I said and pointed to something I found interesting.

No response.

"What do you think about?" I asked out loud, more to myself.

"I don't know," he answered. "Maybe if..." and gave a complete answer.

I was so excited he had even responded—I wanted to jump back in and give my opinion. "Just listen," something told me.

For the next several minutes, I stopped being his parent and started to be his friend. I learned that he tuned out when I lectured, which is what he heard through his filtering system when I shared my wisdom and experience.

I also learned it didn't become

uncomfortable when he said something he knew I wouldn't like while we walked, or when we had a minute of silence, because we were moving. Either of us could buy an escape or a reflective moment by switching to talk about the houses we saw or people we met.

Most of the time, my job was to listen. On a good night, I might get in a brief three-sentence lesson.

We grew to love our walks and looked forward to them whenever we could get out.

All children, young and old, want to know they are loved, protected, respected, and accepted. And even during their toughest years, they need to know they have a parent who is there for them, and loves them... regardless.

While my son never doubted I would always be his papa, when we went for our walks, he wanted me to change hats and also become an older friend he could trust; a sounding board with whom he could talk, and never use what he said against him.

We are now both older and our occasional walks together far fewer. When we do get out, we talk about family and jobs, and what the other will do when the first of us goes home to God. We know each other's deepest secrets and trust that they are safe.

We recently took our last walk together as father and single son. It was around a lake and the night before he was to be married. As his bride watched from a distance, my boy quietly said he'd be walking with his future wife now and she would know secrets I could never know. I would have to be okay with that.

Both with sadness and joy, I understood what he was saying and thanked him for the tremendous honor he had given me to be his father. I also thanked him for our many years of wonderful walks together.

Those will never end, he promised, as he gripped my hand.

Far too soon our evening together ended. He went on to be with his bride while I walked on alone. Over the years, I realized, he had been listening, too. *M*



*Bismarck-native Patrick Atkinson is the Founder and Executive Director of The GOD'S CHILD Project (GodsChild.org) and the Institute for Trafficked, Exploited & Missing Persons (ITEMP.org). His most recent book, Message For My Child, is available in 13 languages worldwide.*



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# Kara Ohlsen

TREASURE EVERY MOMENT

by Jody Kerzman | Photography: Photos by Jacy

The story that is the past three years of Kara Ohlsen's life can best be told in numbers:  
**1,180 chemo treatments. 275 days of school missed. 55 trips to Fargo.**





And the numbers that started it all: 2-25-2014. That's the day Kara's son Dash, then seven years old, was diagnosed with leukemia.

"Everyone always asks, 'how did you know?'"

To answer that, Kara says, one must go back to the days leading up to February 25, 2014.

"Dash had been having fevers off and on since the end of January," recalls Kara. "It was a pretty high fever, but it came and went and he didn't have any other symptoms. On February 18, we took him to see our family doctor, Dr. Jeffrey Smith, who is also a close friend of ours. It had been about seven days of the off and on fevers and he thought it was probably just viral, being there were no other symptoms to suggest anything else. A typical virus lasts seven to 10 days so we decided to give it a little more time to see if the fevers would go away on their own."

Meantime, on Saturday, February 22, Dash began complaining that his ankle hurt. Kara and her husband, Taner, chalked it up to Dash's recent wrestling practice or growing pains. But the ankle pain worsened and by Sunday, the pain had moved to his hip and Dash's fever returned. So the Ohlsens returned to their family doctor's office on Monday. Dr. Smith decided it was time for further testing.

The next day, life returned to normal: Dash and his brother, Chaz, went to school, Taner headed to Minneapolis for a meeting, and Kara had a house full of kids at her in-home daycare. Kara was changing a diaper when she got the news.

"Our doctor said, 'Dash has leukemia.' All I remember saying is 'no, no, no.' And then I broke down."

Dr. Smith instructed Kara to bring Dash to the hospital immediately where a pediatric oncologist was waiting for them.

"Usually they tell you to call and schedule an appointment. The fact that they were waiting for us was a sign of just how serious things were," says Kara. "My mother-in-law had heard what was happening and had come to help. But I couldn't move. I remember sitting on

the floor. I couldn't do anything but cry. I had this house full of kids and I couldn't function. And then I got a call from the school that Dash's ankle was hurting again. That's when I clicked into action mode. I ran downstairs and grabbed my daycare files, which had all the kids' emergency contact information in them. I handed the files to her and told her to start calling parents and tell them to come and pick up their kids. I pulled myself together and went to the school to get Dash."

By the time Kara got to the school, only a few blocks away from their home, Dash's ankle hurt so badly he couldn't walk. With help from the school nurse, Kara got him to the car and took him home to wait for Taner; he had only made it 100 miles when he got the call from their doctor. Taner got home shortly after Kara and Dash and they immediately headed to the hospital, where the pediatric oncologist explained the leukemia diagnosis.

## **A LIFE-CHANGING DIAGNOSIS**

Within hours, the family was at the Sanford Children's Hospital in Fargo, North Dakota, where they met Dash's oncologist, Dr. Nathan Kobrinsky. They affectionately refer to him as Dr. K.

"I'll never forget it. Dash was lying on the hospital bed and Taner and I were on the couch. Dr. K. started talking directly to Dash, explaining leukemia in a way a kid could understand. He told Dash, 'I'll never lie to you and if you have questions, just ask me.'"

Later that night, Dash underwent more lab work to determine what type of leukemia he had and the best course of treatment. Before anything could begin, he needed a blood transfusion because his hemoglobin was extremely low.

"It was a rough night. I don't think I slept at all. I remember I laid in bed and cried and listened to all the new and unfamiliar hospital sounds and watched Dash closely during his first blood transfusion. I remember the sound of the IV machine humming. It was a new sound; now it's almost a comfort sound but at that point it was such a new and strange sound. I remember all these little

details so vividly. It was the beginning of a different type of life for us that day.”

The next day Dash had surgery to place a port in his chest. He would receive chemo treatment through that port for the next three and a half years. On that first day, he also had a lumbar puncture and his first chemo was injected into his spine. The lumbar puncture would determine if there were any leukemia cells in his spinal fluid; if there were, it meant the leukemia had spread to his brain. Much to everyone’s relief, Dash’s spinal fluid was clear. Dash was diagnosed with B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

“We were lucky he had the type of leukemia he did because while the treatment is longer, the prognosis is better than other types of leukemia.”



### **COPING WITH LEUKEMIA**

Kara started a journal during those first days. She would eventually fill three books with notes, dates, and lab reports throughout Dash’s cancer journey. She also started a Facebook page, which became a sort of public journal.

“When the news of Dash’s diagnosis got out we were flooded with texts and phone calls. We couldn’t keep up with them, so we created the Team Dash Facebook page. Initially it was just to let friends and family know what was going on, but it did turn into more of a coping mechanism for me. It helped me to know that there were people out there that cared and to have a place to say ‘please say a prayer for Dash.’ Knowing people were praying for him helped me mentally. And I do truly believe those prayers helped him. I never expected the Facebook page would grow to the size it did. More than 4,000 people follow the page now.”

While Dash became a Facebook celebrity, his older brother, Chaz, remained his biggest fan.

“They’re best friends,” says Kara. “On our first trip to Fargo we were so focused on Dash and trying to help him until Dr. K. asked when Chaz was coming. He insisted he get there as soon as possible. My mom brought him to Fargo and when he arrived, Dr. K. sat him down and talked



Submitted Photo



to him about what was happening to Dash and what his role would be. He told Chaz to be patient and to know that Dash would need some extra time and attention from his parents. He told him to look out for his brother and to stick up for him if kids made fun of him when his hair fell out.”

Dash did eventually lose his hair, but no one teased him about it. In fact,

(MIDDLE)  
Dash ringing the  
bell on June 8  
after completing  
treatment at  
Roger Maris  
Cancer Center



Submitted Photo



Submitted Photo



many friends and classmates at Solheim elementary shaved their heads too.

"Those kids, and the teachers and staff at the school, were so supportive of Dash and Chaz and of our whole family. Seeing how they wanted to help, sending cards, or Skyping with Dash when he was gone was so incredible."

Dash missed 275 days of school during his treatment—sometimes for treatment,

other days were because his blood counts were low, or there were too many germs and ill students at the school. But he stayed on top of his school work, thanks to some accommodating teachers and his mom, who took on the role of teacher when Dash couldn't go to school.

"I gave myself the title of 'Momcologist'—a mom, a doctor, an oncology nurse, and a teacher."

Dash took his last dose of chemo, in pill form, on May 21, 2017 at a party at Sky Zone. His family, friends, and teachers were all there to cheer him on. Dr. Smith was also there to be part of the special day.

"It was an extremely emotional day," recalls Kara, with tears in her eyes. "It felt like ages. When you start treatment, you look at the whole process and know we have about three-and-a-half-years of chemo and think at that point—will we ever get there? To actually have him take that last dose of chemo surrounded by friends at such a fun place was so amazing and memorable for our entire family."

## SHARING TO HELP OTHERS

Looking back, Kara says cancer touched her family's life in many ways, and while cancer is a negative thing, Dash's battle brought many positives to their lives.

"The connections we've made with people and the relationships we've built with other cancer families has been amazing. We've lost friends through this process, but we've gained a lot more than we've lost. Taner got really involved in Brave the Shave by taking on the role of family representative and we have bonded with a group of families through that. They're a group of 'cancer parents' that just get it. That's been incredible—having someone to talk to that understands the medical terms, the fear, and all the emotions. It's been great to see how Brave the Shave has been developing and growing over the years. Money raised through that event goes to childhood cancer research and to a family fund that is helping North Dakota families affected by childhood cancer. It's a great

(MIDDLE LEFT)  
Kara and Dash  
during a chemo  
treatment at  
Roger Maris  
Cancer Center

(MIDDLE RIGHT)  
Dash helping the  
nurse draw blood  
from his port for  
labwork



organization and I hope it continues to grow.”

Kara hopes people’s understanding of childhood cancer continues to grow as well. She will do her part by sharing her story.

“It’s almost as if people are scared to talk about childhood cancer. But I enjoy sharing our story and I think it’s important for people to know that this stuff happens. I was blind to the fact that kids could get cancer. It never even crossed my mind. When Dash was diagnosed it opened my eyes to this whole world of kids that are dealing with this adult disease. It’s not fair because they didn’t do anything. They’re so innocent. I still ask myself why did this happen? But, then I tell myself to stop wondering that because there isn’t an answer to my question. It just doesn’t make sense to me how a child can get cancer.”

### A NEW NORMAL

While Dash finished his cancer treatment in May, his immune system is not fully recovered. That could take six months to a year. He will have monthly labs for the first six months after treatment. Eventually he will just have lab work done once a year, for the rest of his life.

“There is always a chance Dash’s cancer could come back or he could develop a secondary cancer. That’s one of the risks of chemo. The biggest chance of a relapse is in the first year,” says Kara. “I try not to think about that and stay positive. Every month when he has his labs, things stop for us until we get those results.”

Dash feels better and life is slowly returning to normal, but Kara isn’t sure what “normal” is anymore.

“The hardest thing right now is deciding when I should go back to work and what I want to do. My daycare closed literally the minute Dash was diagnosed. I couldn’t reopen because we couldn’t have kids and germs in the house because of Dash’s suppressed immune system and I needed to be available to take him to treatments and to stay home with him when he couldn’t go to school. The thought of having a job again—of

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and also Leukemia Awareness Month. We’ve got links to learn more about both on our website. Visit [inspiredwomanonline.com](http://inspiredwomanonline.com).



being tied to a job and not available to Dash—scares me,” Kara admits. “When he was diagnosed everyone said, ‘this is your new normal’. I hated that term, but it’s true because at that point our life changed and everything revolved around cancer. Now we’re onto another new-normal and I haven’t figured it out yet.”

One thing she knows for sure, is the importance of family. Whatever she decides to do in the future, she’ll make sure to put her husband and sons first. Because if she’s learned anything in the past three and a half years, it’s to treasure every moment together. *M*



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# A BACK TO SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT FOR PARENTS

by Sandy Thompson

The children in our communities have ended their summer adventures and have gone back to school. While there, they will reconnect with old friends and make new ones. Some children will also be active in their hobbies and/or jobs. Regardless of their interests, some children will also be exposed to the idea of using alcohol and other drugs for the first time.

Being a pre-teen or teenager is a tough job in our fast-paced world. With the advances in technology they are living in a world of instant gratification and, in a sense, have more social pressure than any other generation thus far. Some of our children will succumb to the social pressures, including experimenting with substances. For some kids it will be just that—experimentation. Others may find that they like how using substances makes them temporarily “check out” of their busy minds and lives. The following are some signs and symptoms that your child may be experimenting with substances:

- Presence of drugs or drug paraphernalia in their room or car
- Sudden use of eye drops, room deodorizers, or incense
- Slurred speech
- Noticeable changes in school performance and attendance
- Sudden change in friends
- Secretiveness about friends or activities
- Sudden change in family relations

- Noticeable change in personality and mood
- Deterioration in physical appearance
- Involvement in legal problems or delinquent behavior
- Unusual financial problems, repeated pawning or selling of personal items, or money missing from family members
- Extreme change in dress, language, opinions, or behavior

If you suspect that your child is using substances, ask them about it! Remind them what your expectations are regarding underage alcohol use, misuse of prescription medications, and illegal drug use. Be diligent in being a positive role model for your child by making wise choices about your own use of alcohol, prescription medications, and illegal drugs. Not intervening now may lead to your child moving from experimentation to excessive use of substances.

A few things parents can do to increase your supervision of your child's time and activities may include:

- Set tighter limits with clear consequences and follow through.
- Have productive conversations with your child: LISTEN, remain calm (even if what you hear is upsetting), and share your concerns.
- Closely monitor your child's behavior and activities.
- Create more opportunities for



your child to participate in family activities.

- Make an effort to get to know your children's friends and their parents.
- Create a safe and inviting space for your child and their friends to "hang out" at your home.
- Get outside help and support if necessary.

Another great tip: You and your child can create a "secret code" that can be

used if your child finds herself in a scary situation. It can be as easy as your child texting you "call me." Once you call they can easily then tell their friends that there is a family emergency and you are coming to pick them up. *W*



*Sandy Thompson is a ND Licensed Addiction Counselor, Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) trained recovery coach, and owner of Path to Pono, specializing in business consulting and Family Recovery Coaching. She has a passion for helping people. Sandy enjoys reading, the Pacific Ocean, and German food.*



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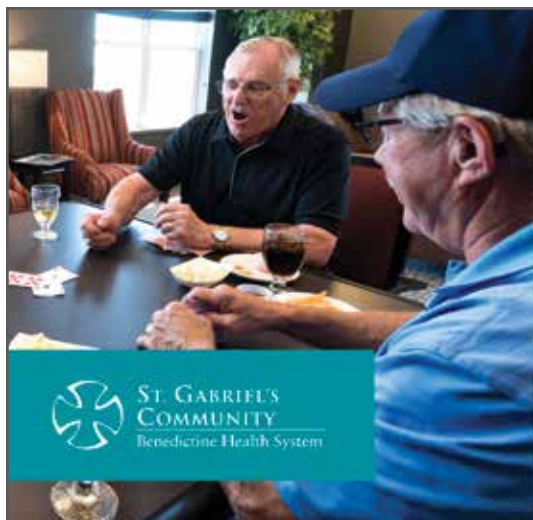


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## FOUR KID-FRIENDLY STOPS IN NORTH DAKOTA

by ND Tourism

In North Dakota, school children take North Dakota studies as part of the fourth- and eighth-grade curriculum. But why limit their learning to the traditional classroom? An automobile can serve as a mobile classroom, where children and adults can have fun and learn a little bit more about legendary North Dakota at the same time.

ND Tourism has compiled a list of 15 best places throughout the state that are interesting to both kids and adults. They range from state museums to zoos to national parks and each has a unique component that blurs the line between fun and learning.

Collections at the North Dakota Heritage Center and State Museum cover everything from prehistoric creatures to the future of energy in the state. A gallery of photos introduces visitors to prominent Native Americans who played a role in shaping the unique cultural history of the state. Other similar museums include the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Washburn, Cowboy Hall of Fame in Medora, Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center near Williston, Pembina State Museum at Pembina, and National Buffalo Museum at Jamestown.

Statewide forts and historic sites enhance the message of how we all came to be here. Zoos in Minot, Bismarck, Fargo, and Wahpeton exhibit animals that call North Dakota home and some that come from around the world.

Alas, not everything has to be a learning experience. Sometimes kids—and adults—just want to have fun.

**Sometimes they just want to play in the water.** In the summer, there are lots of outdoor options, including lakes, rivers, pools, and Raging Rivers Waterpark in Mandan. During the winter, escape the cold at Splasher's of the South Seas in Grand Forks. You can find many other indoor and outdoor waterparks in the state.

**Sometimes kids just want to get dirty.** Let them get absolutely filthy looking for T-Rex at one of the annual fossil digs conducted by the North Dakota Geological Survey. It's "Jurassic Park," but in a good way.

**Sometimes they want to go, go, go.** Turn them loose on a hiking and biking trail and you will spend the better part of a day twisting and turning; riding or walking up and and down the hills. Don't tell them it's good for them; let them realize it when they hit the sack that night back at the hotel, yurt, camper, or tent.

**Sometimes they want to go for a boat ride.** The Lewis and Clark Riverboat awaits in Bismarck, while Lake Sakakawea, Devils Lake, and countless other rivers and streams beckon with whopper walleyes, northern pike, and perch. *M*

Follow North Dakota Tourism on Facebook at [TravelND](#) or on Twitter and get tips on what to see and do all year long.

# KIDS!

## SUBMISSIONS

### **"Broken Ones"** by Abigail Blesi, 17

A once priceless collection of glass figurines  
Riddled with cracks and broken faces.  
Many scorn the collector, believing him  
Foolish for keeping such worthless pieces.  
Yet he ignores their words, only to  
Tell them that they cannot see how  
Much like the figurines that they are.

"Your hearts are like glass,"

He says, picking up one of a woman  
And hurling it at the hard wood floor.  
"You seek something to repair the cracks,  
But the moment you fail, you ignore the  
pain."

The others flee, leaving him to stand  
Amidst the pieces of a shattered figurine.

Most would have seen those many pieces  
Of that broken woman as unfixable.  
However, the collector bends over carefully  
To pick up each and every sliver of glass.  
With glass in hand, he halts for a moment  
To look over the rest of his broken collection,  
Wishing they, too, would be made whole.

"They cannot see how cracked their lives are,"  
He whispers, walking towards his workshop

And laying the glass upon the worn bench.  
"One cannot fix that which has been broken  
Until they themselves have been repaired."

The pieces of the woman merely wink  
In the bright light, bringing some hope.

A fortnight of work, hard and mundane,  
Filled with numb fingers and frustration.  
Yet at the end of it, one figurine stands  
As if she had never been broken in her life.  
Gently, the collector returns the woman  
To her place, looking with satisfaction,  
For at least one he has managed to repair.

"You have thought yourselves so wise,"  
He tells those who have gathered there  
And his face fills with unfathomable grief.

"Seeking to make yourselves whole  
When all along the answers were here."  
Many turn away, unable to believe,  
Yet a few lingering, remembering failed  
attempts.

A figurine is given kindly to each  
Riddled still with cracks and flaws.  
Few have learned how to repair  
The flaws that linger within everyone.  
Yet the collector welcomes each one  
To his humble home and tells them  
The secret to become whole once again.



### "He"

by Makenna Cavanagh, 15

I was lost, confused, small in a big world,  
Then he found me.  
He taught me how to love,  
How to be loved.  
He taught me how to shape,  
Without being shaped.  
He taught me how to lead,  
As a follower.  
Then he set me free.  
Just when I needed him most,  
He let go.

I was lost, confused, small in a big world.  
Then I found me.  
In all he taught me,  
I survived.  
I lived off of loving others,  
Shaping my big world,  
And leading from behind.  
Then I fell,  
I fell down, really far down.  
I didn't know what to do.

Then he found me.  
He picked me up over and over again,  
Until I learned how to stand.  
Then I learned he never left,  
He always had my back.  
He led as a follower.  
He taught me how to dream,  
Without limitations.  
He taught me how to succeed,  
Even after failure.  
He taught me how to fly,  
Without falling.  
Then he set me free.  
Just when I needed him most,  
He let go.

But he was always there,  
Holding me up,  
Pushing me ahead,  
Watching from behind.  
He taught me how to be myself,  
How to love myself,  
How to change my big world.  
And he is still here,  
Cheering me on.  
And now, I don't have to turn  
around to know who's there,  
Because whenever I need him,  
All I have to say is, "Dad."

### "How I Remember Things"

by Victoria Richter, 10

Have you heard the tale  
About a whale?  
Or the one about a bug  
Who got trapped in a rug?  
Or about milk  
That a fairy turned into silk?  
I can't think of other rhymes  
That would be good this time!  
Maybe I'll remember soon,  
The one about the bear in the moon!  
There's one about a dove  
Who Larry was her love.  
I like the one about the frog  
Who married a dog  
Or was it a hog?  
My memory isn't good  
But I know it could.  
Someday I will get it right  
And even know day from night!

**We asked and you delivered!  
We received some amazing  
submissions from some talented  
kids. Be sure to visit our website  
to see all the submissions.**

### "My Mother"

by Hans Huizenga, 9

My mother cooks our food  
She gets our feet shoed  
My mother teaches us school  
(I think the science stuff is kind of cool!)

My mother makes us go outside  
(I like that part, at least the slide!)  
My mother buys us good books  
At church she makes us have good looks

My mother loves me and I love her  
(Of that, I'm sure!)  
My mother helps us pick up our toys  
(That's because we're her boys!)

# BECAUSE GUYS INSPIRE TOO!

# OH BOY

**PARKER HINTZ: CHEF PARKER**

by Lizzy Kerzman | Photography: Photos by Jacy

Eleven year old Parker Hintz loves sports, school, and cooking. But we're not just talking about cooking a frozen pizza or a box of macaroni and cheese. Parker likes to study cookbooks and try new recipes from scratch. When I went to Parker's house to visit with him about his love of cooking he was making homemade cream puffs. (They were delicious, by the way.) Parker and I had a long and interesting conversation about cooking, including how he got started and what he enjoys about it.

### **How long have you been cooking?**

"Since about fourth grade. I started making eggs for breakfast everyday. I started adding things to the eggs, like cottage cheese. My dad told me it was better to whisk the eggs

before I put them in the pan."

### **Why did you start?**

"My mom and dad were training for a marathon and taught me about using food as fuel so I started making eggs for breakfast before running cross country."

### **What is your favorite part about cooking?**

"Obviously the eating!"

### **Do you dislike anything?**

"Definitely the cleaning up!"

### **What is your favorite dish to make?**

"We mostly try new things all the time. But if I had to choose, I'd pick 'Crispy Mac & Cheese.'"



### Have you ever made anything that didn't turn out?

"Yes. I tried a pizza crust three different times and it flopped every time. My mom and I finally decided the recipe must be wrong. We changed the recipe and it turned out much better."

### What does your family think about you cooking?

"Well my brother, Owen, loves it. My mom's brother is a chef in California and his wife works at a bakery. It's fun to talk to them about things I make. Mom said maybe being a good cook runs in our family."

### Have you tried new foods since you started cooking?

"I have. I made a beef pasta dish that had

tomatoes and mushrooms and onions, which I didn't like. But after I made that dish, I realized I like those things. I also made bruschetta, which is tomatoes and I really, really liked that."

### What is your favorite meal to cook? Breakfast, lunch, supper?

"I really enjoy making brunch like eggs, waffles, and hashbrowns."

### Do you like cooking or baking better?

"Cooking, because there is less waiting around to eat it." *M*



*Lizzy Kerzman is 10 years old and in the fifth grade. She enjoys baking more than she likes to cook, and she really likes decorating cupcakes and cakes. Lizzy also enjoys writing and swimming, and just like Parker, she also does not like cleaning the kitchen.*

## CHOCOLATE PROFITERÔLES

### Ingredients:

½ cup cold water  
4 tbsp butter, diced  
½ cup all-purpose flour, sifted  
2 eggs, beaten

### For the filling:

½ tsp pure vanilla extract  
1 cup heavy cream

### For the chocolate sauce:

4 oz dark chocolate, broken into small pieces  
2 tbsp butter  
2 tbsp maple syrup or honey

### Equipment:

Baking sheet  
2 medium saucepans  
Wooden spoon  
Soup spoon  
Oven mitts  
Knife  
Electric mixer or whisk  
Large mixing bowl  
Teaspoon  
Heatproof bowl

Preheat the oven to 400° F. Grease a baking sheet and sprinkle it with cold water. This will generate steam in the oven and help the dough to rise.

Place the butter and cold water in a medium saucepan and heat gently until the butter has melted. Then turn up the heat and bring them quickly to a boil.

Remove the saucepan from the heat and add all the flour at once. Then beat the melted butter and flour together with a wooden spoon until the mixture comes together.

Allow the mixture to cool for a few minutes. Then beat in the eggs with an electric mixer or wooden spoon, a little at a time, until the mixture becomes smooth and shiny.

Use a soup spoon to place 12 golf-ball-sized dollops of the dough on the baking sheet.

Bake the profiteroles on the top rack of the oven for 20-25 minutes.

Using oven mitts, take the cooked profiteroles out of the oven. Make a slit in the side of each with a knife to let the steam out, being careful not to burn your fingers. Let cool.

Add the vanilla extract and the cream to a large bowl. Whip them to form soft peaks using the electric mixer or whisk. Use the teaspoon to spoon the cream into the buns.

Place the chocolate, butter, and maple syrup or honey into a heatproof bowl. Place the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water and gently melt the contents. Stir well.

Carefully spoon the chocolate sauce over the profiteroles using a soup spoon. Serve the profiteroles immediately with any remaining sauce.



# COOKING WITH KIDS

## IF THEY PREPARE IT, THEY WILL EAT IT

by Pam Vukelic | Submitted Photo

Pam loves having help in the kitchen. Pictured here is her 22-month-old granddaughter, Claire, daughter of Meredith and Shaun.

Our kids left home years ago but we still have many boxes, bins, and totes in the basement that say “Save for Reed” and “Save for Meredith.” I suspect when the time comes to go through them there may not be much that is of value anymore. There is one thing each child had, however, that never went into a “Save for” box. It was the personal recipe book each of them created.

We went through a phase when our children were responsible for preparing one meal a week for the family. Both kids kept track of their favorite menu items in a spiral recipe card notebook. The recipes ranged from the very simple (Tuna Sandwich Filling) to complex dishes (Cheese Soufflé). It included their favorites (Scalloped Potatoes with Ham and Cashew Chicken). The notebook is a compendium of some family standards (Tator Tot Casserole and Chocolate Chip Banana Bread) that are as much about tradition as they are about good eats. And, when they moved out, they took the recipes with them. Reed still refers to his and adds to it (Smoking Alaskan Salmon). Meredith has transferred her recipes to a more permanent book and adds new favorites (Asian Slaw) to it, many of which she finds on Pinterest.

Having your child help with meal preparation is one way to get him involved in cooking. When he prepares it, he will eat it. Being responsible for the whole meal is rewarding. The child experiences the joy of doing something for his family members, especially as they provide praise and encouragement as feedback.

A few guidelines are important to remember. Plan the difficulty of the



recipes to match the maturity of the child. The younger the child, the less cutting and chopping in a recipe is a good plan. Also, no-cook recipes eliminate any concerns about burns. Instill good habits from the start. Insist on regular hand-washing, timely refrigeration of perishable foods, and using separate cutting boards for meats and vegetables to eliminate chances of cross-contamination. Assign a particular meal to each child and make it a habit by committing to it every week.

For fun, think of using food as the container. Make a waffle sandwich by putting ham, egg, and cheese between two small waffles, heart-shaped ones if you're Norwegian. Press bread with a rolling pin, coat it with peanut butter and jelly, roll it up, and slice it to make kid-friendly sushi. Lettuce leaves (Butterhead and Belgian Endive) can serve as individual holders for nutritious mixtures of chicken salad.

To pique your child's interest in cooking, order a subscription to a cooking club. One example is “kidstir.” Once a month your petite chef will receive a package containing recipes and tools. Meredith still has some of the small tools and pans that she got through her membership. It would be fun to start a kids' cooking club of your own—choose

a theme, decide on a meeting place and schedule, and recruit friends. Use it as an opportunity to try new foods.

Does your child have a favorite literary character? Check out a book listing to see if there is a related cookbook. Some examples are "Cooking for Muggles: The Harry Potter Cookbook," "American Girl: Breakfast and Brunch," "Fancy Nancy: Tea Parties," and "The Little House Cookbook." There are numerous cookbooks designed to appeal just to boys, too.

As I write this I'm monitoring the status of a Delta flight from Anchorage. Reed is due in at 11:20 p.m. Though it's late, the smell of one of his favorite recipes from his notebook, Scalloped Potatoes and Ham, will provide one familiar olfactory note of welcome home. *m*

## SCALLOPED POTATOES AND HAM

6-8 large russet potatoes, peeled and sliced  
1 c ham cubes  
4T butter  
¼ c flour  
2 c milk  
salt and pepper to taste

Generously grease a two-quart casserole dish. Place potatoes and ham in dish in layers. In a small saucepan, melt butter then stir in flour. Cook briefly until foamy. Add milk, salt, and pepper and heat gently, stirring often, until thickened. Pour white sauce over potatoes and gently lift to mix. Bake at 350 degrees until potatoes are fork-tender, 60-75 minutes.



*Pam Vukelic is an online FACS (Family and Consumer Science) instructor for the Missouri River Educational Co-operative. Now that her children are grown, she enjoys spending time making memories in the kitchen with her grandchildren, Connor, Elvin, and Claire.*

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# INSPIRATION & INNOVATION

TWO MOMS TAKE ACTION FOR KIDS

by Marci Narum | Submitted Photos



(TOP)  
Connor, Alysia,  
Michael, Dillon

(MIDDLE)  
Liz Jones

(BOTTOM)  
Alysia Budd



Painted Paire Photography

*"No one is perfect. That's why pencils have erasers."*—unknown

Making mistakes is part of life, but they can still be painful. If you're a mom watching your own child struggle in school, the pain is double—you feel yours and his. That was true for two Bismarck women who both knew they weren't alone in the pain, nor were their kids. And they each took matters into their own hands. One has been helping students and families abandon their frustrations and celebrate success. The other is offering children and parents a new opportunity for success in learning and growth.

## ALYSIA BUDD: INSPIRING MINDS

Alysia Budd has watched her twin boys, Conner and Dillon, build and design amazing structures since they were old enough to put together Lego pieces.

"You should see the stuff they build," says Alysia, her face beaming and eyes wide. "It's incredible."

The 11-year-olds will be designing and reading blueprints someday. Dillon says he wants to become an engineer; Conner—an architect. Both careers will require plenty of education. But a few years ago, Alysia saw her boys begin to struggle in school.

"The boys went from loving reading to absolutely hating it and crying and throwing books and papers across the room. It was heartbreaking."

As an occupational therapist, Alysia saw the boys' behaviors as warning signs. She had a hunch it might be dyslexia. Her husband has the neurologic condition, and because it's genetic, she had the boys screened. Alysia's suspicions were confirmed.

## DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT

"I spent an entire day crying because I hadn't caught it sooner. Then I pulled myself together and knew I needed to do something about it; I needed to help other families and children that were going through the same thing we were."

Alysia became a dyslexia consultant and screener, certified in the Barton Reading & Spelling System, and got



her graduate certificate in dyslexia and language-based disabilities.

"Once I began teaching my boys using Orton-Gillingham based structured literacy instruction, the frustrations for them and myself were no longer there. This approach works for all students but it is absolutely essential for individuals with dyslexia."

In 2015 Alysia opened Inspired Minds Center for Dyslexia and Literacy in Bismarck. She and her team of five tutors have helped more than 150 families since then. And the nonprofit is growing.

Liz Jones's daughter is one of the kids getting help.

"Toward the end of her kindergarten year we started to notice changes in her behavior at home," Liz explains. "Whenever we practiced reading she would shut down and get frustrated. If we encouraged her to keep trying, it often ended in tears. She loved reading books before."

Liz never imagined her daughter fit the profile for dyslexia. But she took her to see Alysia, who screened the five-year-old, identified the dyslexia, and started tutoring.

"Our students often come in very sad and defeated," Alysia shares. "Even once children are identified, it takes a long time for them to realize there is nothing wrong with them. They are very smart, very capable, and have many gifted areas."

### IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK

Alysia says dyslexia is misunderstood. She says it's a learning difference and that 35 years of research has shown the dyslexic brain is structured differently and processes information differently. Alysia says dyslexia is fairly common. One in five people are born with a dyslexic brain. She says people generally believe a person with dyslexia sees things backward, can't read at all, or that one will just 'grow out of it.' She says it's all untrue.

"The 'wait and see' approach doesn't work for individuals with dyslexia," Alysia explains. "They are born with this brain. The research has shown and proved that. It is genetic; [researchers] say it is linked to

four genes, possibly six."

Alysia says early intervention is best but it is never too late to get help. Her youngest son, Michael, also has dyslexia.

"I am so thankful to have been able to identify it early with Michael. He started Orton-Gillingham based tutoring when he was in preschool, when the symptoms of dyslexia began manifesting themselves. He is now ready for kindergarten, and as a mom, that feels really great!"

Liz is also a happy mom. She says her

### LEARN MORE

- [inspiringmindscenter.org](http://inspiringmindscenter.org)
- 701-204-7100
- [inspiredwomanonline.com](http://inspiredwomanonline.com): Alysia shares more about research on the dyslexic brain
- The Misunderstood World of Dyslexia: a mother shares her gratitude after getting help for her son at Inspiring Minds Center for Dyslexia and Literacy

daughter likes reading again.

"We did all of her sight words that she has to know and she whipped through all of them, and was giggling at the ones she got wrong," Liz smiles. "Before, she would have completely shut down. It's fun to see that she's confident again."

"The success is the best part, Alysia adds. "You see such a turnaround in the kids and in their abilities. My own boys are thriving. They're back to their very energetic, happy selves. And that's the



Stacy Bohl, ily Studios



(RIGHT)  
Maggie Barth

(BELOW LEFT)  
Sawyer Barth

(BELOW RIGHT)  
Wyatt Barth



best part. That's why we are doing this."

## MAGGIE BARTH: THE INNOVATION SCHOOL

As a young girl, Maggie Barth always imagined she would spend her life being a teacher. She loved school and was a successful student. Now she's the mother of two young boys, nine-year-old Wyatt and seven-year-old Sawyer. They are both successful academically but their schoolwork isn't meaningful to them; they become bored and disinterested.

"I have one who fought the system from the beginning and now is just kind of apathetic about it. Now I have another that is so controlled at school and then he comes home and he's bouncing off the walls. We need to find some balance so you can still be who you really are in school without having to be afraid of making a mistake or getting into trouble."

Maggie says she was compelled to ask questions.

"Why does it have to be this way? Why can't there be some flexibility? My boys are fitting into a traditional [school] model but why should they have to if that's not really who they are?"

As she probed, Maggie discovered that many teachers had similar questions; that it's a system issue rather than a teacher or school issue.

"For years the traditional education system has been to open up a student's head and dump information in," Maggie says. "The world is different now and the role of a teacher looks different in modern education. 'They're able to help kids research [content] and help connect them with experts. They become a researcher of the content and also of the student—who they are, what they are good at, and how to spark their interest and keep them challenged and engaged.'"

## IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Maggie began doing her own research and set out to find a new approach to educating kids in Bismarck.

"I went on field trips. I realized we really could be doing things differently. There are all kinds of different things and

we just didn't have that. There are a lot of teachers who see that and want that, but in the rigidity of the structure it's just hard to do."

Maggie wanted to give her boys that 'something different' and she knew other parents wanted it for their children, too. Her research and work led her to opening the only private, nonprofit school of its kind in North Dakota, which Maggie describes as a place of "learning by doing." The Innovation School in Bismarck employs three highly-qualified educators to teach grades K-5. The first semester of classes start September 6. Enrollment will be capped at 36 students.

"We always want to keep our class size 12 to one. But if we need to add another teacher we will," Maggie explains. "We will have combined classrooms, even if we continue to grow. We talk about the 'real world' or 'real life' to these kids. This is their real world and real life, so why separate them just by their age?"

"There's a continuum of development for each child but it stops when they start [traditional] school. All students are taught the same curriculum. But here, we teach on a continuum, so we may have a second grader who is reading at a fourth grade level but might be at a first grade level in math. It doesn't matter. We are able to help them right where they are and grow from there."

Kayla Meisel of Bismarck says she and her husband wanted something more meaningful for their children than the 'one-size-fits-all' approach of the traditional school model. Their five-year-old daughter, Evelyn, will attend kindergarten at The Innovation School.

"We are thrilled at the idea of Evelyn receiving a creative, hands-on education that will allow her to discover her own genuine strengths and interests while encouraging her to think differently, develop a passion for learning, push herself, and have fun doing so," Kayla shares.

Maggie says one of the biggest challenges in helping the public understand the concept of The Innovation School is that society has long been

entrenched in traditional education. She says a shift in thinking will take time.

"Some people will say, 'public school teachers do that too.' But that's not my fight. I'm actually not fighting against that and saying 'that's bad and we're the best.' I'm just trying to create an environment that I don't see anywhere else."

Maggie did not become a teacher as she imagined, although she does consider herself an organic educator for her boys. Wyatt and Sawyer are also her

“

"People complain about 'these kids' coming out of school today. We have to change something."

—Maggie Barth

Maggie shares her ideas about seeing teachers and students as resources in exclusive video at [inspiredwomanonline.com](http://inspiredwomanonline.com)

**LEARN MORE:**

[theinnovationschool.us](http://theinnovationschool.us) or 701-354-1100

inspiration for founding The Innovation School and she believes the new learning environment will be a positive change for their education.

"I want to be hopeful that we're starting to see some changes being made; where it's okay to try something and fail. And I think kids in this environment are going to know more about who they are and what they need. So maybe they're the ones who will help drive change too." *M*



# COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTOR

**BISMARCK DOULA COMMUNITY**  
Submitted Photos



## **TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE BISMARCK DOULA COMMUNITY (BDC).**

In January 2014, Amy Gilliland Ph.D., CD (DONA), taught a three-day doula training in Bismarck, where there had previously been very few doulas. From that class, a group of six newly-trained doulas decided to collaborate their efforts to educate Bismarck and the surrounding areas on exactly what a doula is and does. Since then, the group has officially formed a nonprofit organization and attended over 50 local events, talking to the public about childbirth and how doulas support women.

## **WHAT DO PEOPLE NOT KNOW ABOUT DOULAS?**

The most common misconceptions are that doulas deliver babies and that we only attend home births. These are not true. A doula's training focuses on the emotions and physical exertion of labor, and does not include any medical training. We attend all births, including those at hospitals! A doula's role is to educate her clients on pregnancy and labor options by meeting multiple times during the pregnancy. When labor starts, the doula joins her client and stays until the baby is born. The doula is the familiar face with the gentle touch and calming words her client knows she can count on throughout all of labor, fast or slow. Most of the doulas in the Bismarck Doula Community are also Certified Lactation Counselors who can help establish a great breastfeeding relationship after baby is born too.

## **WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT?**

We are all individual business owners, but since the concept of doulas is so new to Bismarck, we've chosen to partner together with the same goal in mind: to help our community understand how doulas benefit *all* types of birth as well as to educate families about their options and choices for birth in our community.

## **HOW CAN PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?**

Anyone who is interested in becoming a doula can contact us through our Facebook page or email to learn more. There are a lot of different doula trainings available, but we recommend a high quality, in-person training with someone credentialed through a reputable organization like DONA International. We also host monthly 'Coffee with the Doulas' events where people can drop in and learn more about doula work.

## **HOW CAN PEOPLE CONTACT YOU?**

There are several ways to contact us. Email us at [BismarckDoulaCommunity@gmail.com](mailto:BismarckDoulaCommunity@gmail.com). We also have a website, [BismarckDoulaCommunity.com](http://BismarckDoulaCommunity.com). And we are on Facebook—search Bismarck Doula Community and also Bismarck Baby Expo.

## **WHAT ARE YOU NEEDS RIGHT NOW IF SOMEONE WANTS TO HELP?**

We are busy planning our fall event, the third annual Bismarck Baby Expo, October 6-7. We would love new vendors, new activities, and new ideas. Please email if interested. *W*

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# BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL KIDS

## *A Backyard Possibility*

by Betty Mills

"For \$300 a year, a child can go to school and get three meals a day," a friend told me this morning while explaining the conditions her granddaughter, a nurse, found in a mission to Africa she recently completed.

That sounds like a bargain until you remember that millions of African children have no access to \$300. Or three meals a day. Or any form of medical care. Or safe drinking water.



Has life in my beloved state of North Dakota changed since those rustic days of my childhood? Yes, obviously and inevitably, and not always for the better. We have had menacing gangs roaring down the highways, children who come to school without breakfast or lunch money or even mittens in sometimes still frigid North Dakota.

The list is long.

An image of my seven-year-old great-granddaughter floated through my memory bank, remembering last weekend at our cabin on the lake when she and a friend raced in and out, sometimes with popsicles in hand, on other occasions in search of a favorite game, or a clean beach towel or...the list was always on the move as were they in their sturdy little well-fed bodies

enjoying the waning days of summer.

I'm sure if I added up the care that they have each been provided in the last year it would soar over the \$300 mark. The temptation is to shrug off that stark difference in life's expectations as the luck of the draw, not in my backyard, monstrously too big to handle from my poor aging perch.

Not that the backyard of my childhood was staked out in a lap of luxury. The first eight years of my life in a country grade school would qualify by today's North Dakota school standards as too inadequate, maybe dangerous, to remain open. There was no water, no telephone, no library, a stove that eventually caught fire, an outhouse, an occasional rattlesnake, and was only open eight months a year, minus blizzard time.

But I was always safe, well-fed, adequately clothed, in a happy family in a rural neighborhood that housed uncles and aunts and cousins who were also always safe. There were no murderous gangs roaring down the country roads which connected us to anything that really mattered, nobody was selling dope behind the local bars, we never locked our doors, and a family doctor tended to our minor woes and sent us to the big city of Bismarck for major concerns.

By today's standards, however, I would have been considered underprivileged—dangerous school conditions, no travel to the bigger world, no library, theater, concerts, the arts—a poor rustic rube. But compared to those children in Africa, living in the lap of luxury.

Has life in my beloved state of North Dakota changed since those rustic days of my childhood? Yes, obviously



and inevitably, and not always for the better. We have had menacing gangs roaring down the highways, children who come to school without breakfast or lunch money or even mittens in sometimes still frigid North Dakota. There's no shortage of illegal drugs if that's your goal in life, \$300 a year would not be nearly enough to cover the minimum yearly needs of a child, and there are still rattlesnakes west of the Missouri River.

But we have the internet and public television and the same electronic gadgets available in the big cities. We have their cars, too, and combines traversing our fields by remote control. Our children travel the world, sometimes with language skills our immigrating ancestors tried to shed, calling home from some foreign shore as clearly as if they were in the local supermarket.

When my son called to say they were moving to Wyoming from Portland, Oregon, I asked, "What about

your job?" and he replied, "I can work anywhere I can plug in my computer." That portable occupation facility is also open anywhere in North Dakota as long as you can plug in your computer.

Which then gets us back to the children of the world who cannot even go to school and who live in an abject poverty we would consider in the realm of the illegal in our society. If we can contemplate traveling to Mars and look up intricate hunks of knowledge on a small telephone, surely we can find a way to bring all the children of the world into a brighter future.

And if that sounds like an impossible dream, we perhaps should consider that given the changes in our world, they are technically in our backyard. *W*



Betty Mills is an avid reader and belongs to several book clubs. She is a longtime writer and co-author of "Mind if I Differ?" She also enjoys crossstitch.



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