



Family Focus

by Bill Barber

The Allens of Bend, Oregon will tell you they are just an ordinary family. In today's tumultuous times what the Allens refer to as ordinary may seem a bit more extraordinary to the rest of us.

Kurt and Sandy Allen have two boys, Chad (14) and Matthew (11). The Allens live about a mile outside of Bend. Kurt has been a surveyor, with a local construction company for several years. Sandy works at a convenient mart in Bend. If you were trying to find Chad, the best place to look for him is at a ballgame. It doesn't seem to matter what sport you're watching, Chad will probably be easy to find. He is the all-star. He is an all-star in Baseball, Basketball and Football. At this time, Matthew has taken a different route to make his mark. Matthew is raising and exhibiting a rare breed of steer. So rare in fact, that he is the first one to ever introduce it to the Pacific Northwest.

Most people who meet the Allen Family seem to come away with the same description. "They always refer to us as the Cleavers from the old 'Beaver' sit-com," said mother Sandy Allen with some embarrassed pride. When asked the main reason that people often title Chad and Matthew "good boys" she recounted the following explanation: "Until Chad was age 3, we had not settled in on a particular philosophy of child rearing. One day Chad was throwing a tantrum as we were preparing to leave for the Four Square Church in Bend." When Sandy discussed it with the pastor, she was introduced to something called 'Tough Love'. That was the beginning of change at the Allen household. Matthew had just been born and the timing seemed right.

Kurt and Sandy Allen agree that this 'Tough Love' discipline is probably the overriding factor in determining how the boys have remained on the right track. The kids aren't disciplined for everything, but there are some unique systematic guidelines that seem to work in families who employ the 'Tough Love' philosophy. For instance, if one of the boys does something they were not supposed to have done, Mom and Dad will discuss it with the boy. The object is to make sure the boy has no question in his mind about why the disciplinary steps will be taken. "Disciplinary steps" at the Allen household translates to Sandy's former sorority paddle, which has been whittled down to better fit the kids' Chad and Matthew "good boys" she recounted the following explanation: "Until Chad was age 3, we had not settled in on a particular philosophy of child rearing. One day Chad was throwing a tantrum as we were preparing to leave for the Four Square Church in Bend." When Sandy discussed it with the pastor, she was introduced to something called 'Tough Love'. That was the beginning of change at the Allen household. Matthew had just been born and the timing seemed right.

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may feel it only deserves three whacks. The punishment is three," Sandy confided. "Discipline is always administered the same consistent way: With the paddle - never a belt or any other instrument - absolutely never with the hand. "The hand is for loving," explains Sandy Allen. Kurt always administers the punishments, consistency again. One last note on discipline: "We always detach ourselves from anger when discipline is necessary. The boys have come to recognize that paddle is the appropriate result of an inappropriate action. It is not so much a punishment, as it is a consequence of their failure of the responsibility to do the right thing."

Responsibility is another one of those words that reoccurs in conversations with the Allens. Chores around the house, effort in schoolwork, working outside the home for extra spending money, are usually centered around the boys' responsibility. One of the main reasons the boys are rarely disciplined anymore is because they understand their responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that won't cause their parents any distress.

Sandy had some unique insight on what she does to become more involved in Chad and Matthew's education. "I like to meet with the boys' teachers within the first two weeks of school. I have found the larger portion of their teachers have a sincere interest in seeing their students excel. Teachers appreciate it when the parents show an interest in their efforts. Chad has a little easier time of it with his studies. Matthew has more of a struggle, but still does quite well. For this reason, the parents' expectations differ between the two boys.

Expectations is another one of those reoccurring words, when you talk with the Allens of Bend. Chad and Matthew know what they can consistently expect from Mom and Dad: loving, church going, drug and alcohol-free home with caring parents who provide all the things they need; even if it is not all the things they want. Kurt and Sandy know what they can expect from the boys; effort, most of the time 100% effort, in the things they do: schoolwork, sports, raising cattle, chores. "If you don't expect the effort, the kids will probably not respond," Sandy observed.

You probably know a family like the Allens. Why not tell us about them. Metro Motion's Family Focus would like to write about them next time. Write us at PO Box 4702, Portland, Oregon 97208

Dear Family Focus: Bill, My two children argue every time they have to split something. Who got the biggest piece?

Who has to do the most work on the job list around the house ect. It never seems to be Expectations is another one of those reoccurring words, when you talk with the Allens of Bend. Chad and Matthew know what they can consistently expect from Mom and Dad: loving, church going, drug and alcohol-free home with caring parents who provide all the things they need; even if it is not all the things they want. Kurt and Sandy know what they can expect from the boys; effort, most of the time 100% effort, in the things they do: schoolwork, sports, raising cattle, chores. "If you don't expect the effort, the kids will probably not respond," Sandy observed.

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Who has to do the most work on the job list around the house ect. It never seems to be divided evenly! BETTY

BETTY: Let one child divide and then let the other child have the first pick. That should work. BILL