

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



Family Comes First First Lady on raising two young daughters

(AP) — Michelle Obama is pushing back against the notion that she and President Barack Obama don't socialize enough in Washington.

The first lady says in an interview in the April issue of Vogue magazine that she and the president were straightforward when they said — before moving from Chicago to Washington in 2009 — that their family, including two young daughters, would be their priority.

She said "the stresses and the pressures" of the White House are so real that they prefer to spend free time with their daughters, now 14 and 11.

"Our job is, first and foremost, to make sure our family is whole. You know, we have small kids; they're growing every day. But I think we were both pretty straightforward when we said, 'Our No. 1 priority is making sure that our family is whole,'" Mrs. Obama said in the interview.

The first lady, who makes her second appearance on Vogue's cover, this time wearing a blue, sleeveless Reed Krakoff dress, noted that most of the couple's friends are parents, too, and said that when she and the

president go on vacation, usually with longtime friends or relatives, they are surrounded by children.

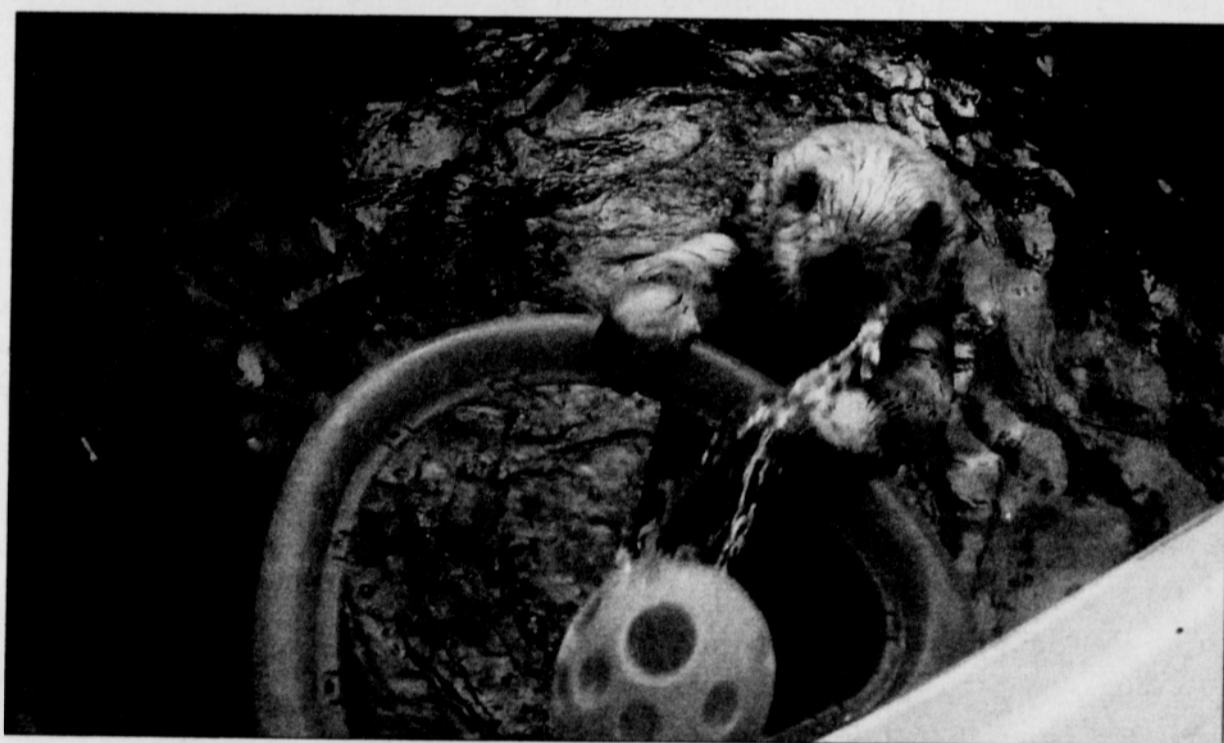
"The stresses and the pressures of this job are so real that when you get a minute, you want to give that extra energy to your 14- and 11-year-old," the first lady said.

She added that "90 percent" of what she and the president talk about has to do with the girls: what they're up to, who has practice, which one of their friends is having a birthday party and did they get that person a gift — conversation she described as "endless" and "pretty exhausting."

She suggested that neither one of them wants to miss any of it. Obama grew up without his father and has talked publicly about his desire to be there for his kids.

"He's doing it while still dealing with Syria and health care. He's as up on every friend, every party, every relationship," the first lady said. "And if you're out to dinner every night, you miss those moments where you can check in and just figure them out when they're ready to share with you."

A video of Eddie, the Oregon Zoo's elderly slam-dunking otter, has surpassed a million views on YouTube. The ball and hoop is used to exercise his arthritic elbows.



Slam-Dunk Hit on YouTube

Zoo's sea otter highlights animal health

Ellen's people got in touch. Oprah's did too. So did CNN, "Good Morning America," the London Times and the BBC. Eddie the Oregon Zoo sea otter has been trending so hard over the past month that NBC's Brian Williams even nominated him for a Medal of Otter.

On March 21, a video of Eddie slam-dunking a toy basketball to exercise his arthritic elbows surpassed a million views on the zoo's YouTube channel — and that

doesn't count the many unofficial videos online. (To see the video, visit bit.ly/otterdunk.)

Jenny DeGroot, the zoo's lead sea otter keeper, is a bit bemused by all the attention that's been coming Eddie's way, but says she's grateful for the chance to highlight sea otters and their importance to the Pacific Coast ecosystem.

DeGroot began training Eddie to put a ball through a plastic basketball hoop last year after zoo veterinarians discovered arthritis in his elbows. The vets prescribed regular exercise as a way to improve Eddie's joint function, but that recommendation presented a challenge for keepers.

"We had to get creative," DeGroot explained. "There aren't many natural opportunities for Eddie to work those arthritic elbow joints, because sea otters don't use their front limbs to swim — they swim by moving their back legs and flippers. So training him with the basketball hoop was a way to get Eddie using those front limbs more regularly."

Although a newcomer to basketball, Eddie is 15 years old, which is considered geriatric for a sea otter. Still, keepers say age hasn't slowed him down much and he seems to enjoy the exercise — as well as the fishy treats he gets whenever he scores.

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