

PARENTS TALK BACK

# Raising religious children

In America, there are plenty of families who embrace the cultural side of religion. Even if they aren’t convinced of the God part. Some children will participate in Easter egg hunts but have never attended a church service. Others will grow up to describe themselves as secular Jews, lapsed Catholics or non-practicing Muslims.

The Pew Research Center finds that one of the most well-documented shifts over the past decade has been the rising share of people who are religiously unaffiliated: from 16 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2014. There are more children growing up as “nones” — with no particular religion — than ever before.

Of course, a parent can raise moral, empathetic children without religious beliefs. But the majority of Americans still identify with a religious faith.

For a child in such a household, there are significant spiritual milestones, such as a confirmation, a bar mitzvah — or my own children’s recent Ameen, which marked the completion of their recitation of the Quran in Arabic.

This milestone moment made me reconsider the reasons my husband and I chose to raise our children in a religious tradition, and what we hope they will take from it. It’s especially challenging when one’s religion is as vilified and misunderstood as Islam currently is in America.

Across faiths, people turn to their belief systems for guidance, hope, comfort, ritual, a sense of community and acceptance, and salvation. Religion feeds the desire to be better. It’s a way to acknowledge that there are unknowns. Science can’t explain certain mysteries of the universe and human existence. From the beginning of time, humans have told stories to fill in the gaps.

When they become parents, the faithful offer their children a foundation of religious beliefs, which we hope will teach them moral responsibility and discipline that comes from adhering to a system of values.

In our home, our faith has a particular emphasis on justice and one’s own actions. A key focus is on empathy. The major rituals in Islam, such as fasting and giving to charity, are explained around this idea of empathizing with your fellow human. The practice of daily prayers increases mindfulness and gratitude. Research shows daily meditation or prayer lowers stress and improves mood. It gives the worshipper an opportunity to reflect on her thankfulness, which is a key to happiness.

Simultaneously, this daily conversation with a higher power gives us a chance to humble ourselves, to ask for forgiveness and give voice to our struggles and pain.

Prayer, in fact, can be healing.

If life is a search for meaning, a religious tradition offers a guidebook. I don’t want my children to turn to their faith for easy answers, but to struggle with questions about the nature of good and evil, fate and free will, reason and faith. I studied the world’s great religions in college and have attended services of several other religious traditions. We are not threatened by the religious beliefs of others, nor would we raise our children to be. The bedrock separation of church and state in our country allows both to flourish.

I’ve found most Americans are curious and willing to ask frank questions. I’ve been asked any number of questions about Islam by adults: Why would a woman who is a feminist subscribe to a faith that seems oppressive to women? What do Muslims think about Jews? What would you say about this video (insert link to Islamophobic propaganda)?

Raised and educated in the faith, I can answer for my own experience and theological interpretation — but obviously not for a billion others.

Parents should be aware that you cannot force an individual to believe in something as unseen or unknowable as the divine. But you can try to instill a feeling in a child: the sense that there is something greater in the universe they carry inside of them. It is the force of love and good and beauty and hope in the world, and it comes with responsibilities and duties.

We can look to our religious traditions to see examples of what it means to live a life of kindness, compassion, honesty and generosity, with a commitment to justice.

Seeing people do good can inspire us to do the same.

This doesn’t mean that we should whitewash the role of religion in history or current events. Ideologies can be used for violent or political aims. Wars and crimes have been committed in the name of various gods. Religious institutions have used dogma to control people’s lives and women’s bodies.

But there are countless moments of grace inspired by the same belief in a divine creator. I’m reminded of that when my son tells me that he’s given a classmate a prize he earned at school because his friend didn’t have the same gadget as everyone else. I think about when my daughter makes a point to ask for a second pack of gum or another piece of candy at the store, so that she has one to give her brother.

Those everyday moments are just as important as the milestones.

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AISHA SULTAN  
Parents talk back

# Drone racing’s thrills, spills draw pilots of all ages

By CHADD CRIPE  
*Idaho Statesman*

BOISE, Idaho — It was just another morning in the park for Chris and Cadence Haskins. Chris arranged his 11-year-old daughter’s flying station — lawn chair, video goggles, controller and antenna.

Cadence began piloting a drone across Boise’s Sycamore Park and through a row of trees like a slalom course. The goggles showed her the view captured by a camera on the front of the drone (called first-person view, or FPV).

And little kids wandered over from the playground to inquire about her new sport — drone racing — as they always do.

“To me, it feels like I am in the drone,” said Cadence, whose pilot name is KrazyK. “... I’m inside, flying it.”

Drone racing has become a worldwide phenomenon — a race in Dubai featured \$1 million in prize money — with a growing niche in the Treasure Valley.

Chris Haskins (pilot name: Hazak) finished sixth in the Drone Racing League’s December race at the Miami Dolphins’ stadium. Conrad Miller of Boise (pilot name: Furadi) finished fifth.

Miller began racing in 2014 and started a Facebook group (Boise FPV) that provides a community for pilots to share videos, tips and organize races. His 12-year-old son, Sorell (pilot name: Zero), races too.

“Probably the first real drone race was drone nationals last (summer),” said E.J. Duarte (pilot name: AmpedOut), who designs racing drones for the company he founded, Boise-based Thrust-UAV. “That’s really when drone racing exploded. There was racing before that, but not at that scale. Less than a year later, and drone racing is on an enormous scale, and it’s only growing exponentially.”

Miller traveled to Dubai to compete in the recent World Drone Prix. Thrust-UAV entered one of its drones, too.

Drones are a natural fit for kids who grow up playing video games — in fact, a 15-year-old pilot from Great Britain won the Dubai event. They also appeal to people like Haskins and Miller, who transferred their interest in radio control airplanes and helicopters to drones.

Duarte has sold drones to customers ranging from 7 years old to 63.

“There are no boundaries,” Duarte said.

Thrust-UAV, which recently was acquired by STEM-education company PCS Edventures, is about to release a new drone model (the Riot 250R Pro). The “ready to fly” package — everything you need to get started — will be in the \$1,200 to \$1,300 range.

The price is softened a bit by the fact that racing drones are resilient. Damage can be fixed relatively cheaply — sometimes for a couple bucks.

“They’re built to crash,” Duarte said. “It’s not like a typical toy where you crash it and it’s broken. We build these things to be able to take impacts.”

Still, you don’t want to learn with a brand-new drone.

The best way to get the feel for flying



Chadd Cripe/Idaho Statesman via AP

In this March 11, 2016 photo, E.J. Duarte is the founder and director of research and development for Boise’s Thrust-UAV, which produces racing drones, in Boise, Ore. “About three years ago, (drones) got small, and the smaller drones is what really opened the door to the high-performance stuff,” he said.

is through a computer simulator. Cadence spent about two weeks playing Liftoff (lifth-off-game.com), using the computer screen as the goggles. Drone controllers plug into the computer via USB.

Flying requires mastering two joysticks that each control two inputs — throttle (speed) and yaw (left/right spin) on the left and pitch (forward/backward tilt) and roll (left/right tilt) on the right.

Cadence became interested in drones by watching her dad, who works for Thrust-UAV.

“(The simulator) helped me a lot,” Cadence said. “It feels exactly the same to me but I’m not breaking all of the parts. ... I crashed a lot.”

Her first day flying for real, though, she only crashed once. “It just felt like I was flying the simulator,” she said.

Robert Grover, executive vice president of PCS Edventures, says drones are a terrific vehicle to teach students science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Boise-based PCS Edventures, a public company founded in 1988, installs engineering and robotics programs in schools worldwide.

Duarte built drones for the education program before PCS Edventures acquired Thrust-UAV.

“Drone racing is a perfect fit for STEM education,” Grover said. “I call it STEM education at 100 miles an hour because it really grabs kids’ attention.”

In races, the drones zip through gates (think hurdles that you go under) and around flags (like slalom skiing). Pilots watch the live video feed from their drone, as if they’re in the cockpit, to help them navigate the obstacles at speeds that can exceed 100 miles an hour. It’s like being in an amusement-park ride where you feel like you’re turning and spinning even though you’re sitting still.

Races usually last a few minutes because the battery life on racing drones isn’t long.

Duarte used to race trucks on dirt tracks and off-road. Miller used to own motorcycles.

“The adrenaline is insane,” Duarte said. “... When you get done, your body feels like you have run a marathon and you haven’t even gotten up.”

Added Miller, who flies a Hovership Zuul Racehound: “Your body runs through the same range of emotions as it would if you were flying or racing or going high speed through a forest. It’s totally exhilarating.”

### Getting started with drones

- Equipment you’ll need:** A racing drone, video goggles, controller, extra batteries, battery charger, extra props and some hand tools (screwdrivers, pliers, etc.). Thrust-UAV soon will release its “ready to fly” package — everything you need to fly for \$1,200-\$1,300. Racing drones typically are 250 millimeters diagonally with power-to-weight ratios from 5:1 to 8:1. Camera drones, in contrast, have power-weight ratios of about 2.5:1.
- Try a simulator first:** A game like Liftoff (lifthoff-game.com) can train you to fly a drone and work through many of the rookie mistakes without damaging any equipment. You’ll want to use your drone controller so you get used to the controls. It connects to the computer via USB.
- Add a GoPro:** An HD video recorder, like a GoPro, is an important drone add-on because you can review your flight and gauge progress.
- Reach out to Boise FPV:** The Facebook group is a community of local drone pilots. “That’s the best way to get started,” pilot E.J. Duarte said. “You have so much support. Everybody likes helping each other. It will really make you better faster.”
- Start slow:** Some people “fly well beyond their means” when they’re learning, Duarte said, and frequently break their drones. “They get discouraged and quit.”

## OUT OF THE VAULT

### Driving violation leads to melee with 300 residents of labor camp

Some days, whatever can go wrong, will go wrong. No one knows this better than police officers. And in June 1994, two Milton-Freewater police officers found themselves in a situation in which almost everything that could go wrong did — but quick thinking by a Mac-Hi student saved the day.

Officers Stuart Roberts and Francisco Martinez pulled over Antonio Flores just inside the gates of Orchard Homes Inc., a labor camp housing migrant workers, on June 25, 1994.

When they found he was driving with a suspended license and no insurance, they told him that his car would be towed. That’s when things started to get ugly.

Flores became upset when he found out he would lose his wheels, which led to his being arrested for obstructing police. He was handcuffed and placed



RENEE STRUTHERS  
Out of the vault

in the back of the patrol car. But the officers soon found themselves surrounded by about 300 residents of the camp — friends and neighbors of Flores — and about 15 of the men stepped forward and began to assault Roberts and Martinez. Their mace and police radios were taken, and some of the men struck the officers in the face. That’s when Matt Harrington stepped in.

Harrington, a 17-year-old McLoughlin High School student and a member of the Explorer Scouts, happened to be walking by when the altercation began. He slipped into the patrol car and was able to call for backup. “Fortunately, he’s ridden in police cars and he knew how to get into the car and operate the radio,” said Mike Brown, criminal investigator for the Milton-Freewater Police Department.

Law enforcement from all over Umatilla County, and as far away as Union County, showed up to get the crowd under control. But in the melee, someone opened the door of the patrol car and Flores fled into the night in handcuffs.

According to Roberts, now chief of police for the city of Pendleton, the officers were lucky to escape with their lives. Patrol cars had to be left behind, some of which were flipped over by the crowd.

Brown lauded Roberts and Martinez for handling the situation without using

their weapons. “When you get a weapon involved under those circumstances, innocent people can get hurt. There’s no justification for it,” he said. The officers were not seriously injured, and Brown said they would be part of discussions on handling such situations in the future.

Flores was sentenced to 20 days in jail and more than \$1,000 in fines following his re-arrest. Judge Sam Tucker told Flores that, while he did nothing to incite the crowd, he was responsible for what happened because “your friends were trying to protect you.”

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*Renee Struthers is the Community Records Editor for the East Oregonian. See the complete collection of Out of the Vault columns at eovault.blogspot.com*

## ODDS & ENDS

### Man answers ad posted by police to meet up for sex

PORTLAND (AP)— Police have cited a man who they say responded to an online ad and agreed to meet someone he thought was a 19-year-old woman for sex in front of the West Linn Police Department.

The *Oregonian* reports that the ad was posted by police as part of a sex trafficking training class at the department.

West Linn police Sgt. Mike Francis says the 40-year-old Woodburn man called who he thought was the 19-year-old and agreed to meet Tuesday. His conversations with the officer

were overheard by more than 30 law enforcement officers attending the training class.

Francis says the man was still on the phone with the officer who had directed him to the police department as police pulled up behind him.

He was cited for patronizing a prostitute.

### NH bill would allow adults to join children’s games

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — The odds don’t look good for the latest effort to authorize a casino in New Hampshire, yet a quirky bill would give adults another way to gamble: children’s bingo

games.

Under current law, hotels and campgrounds can host separate bingo games for adults and kids. Republican Rep. James Webb, of Derry, wants to allow adults to join the children’s games, with some restrictions.

Under a bill he presented to a state Senate committee Tuesday, anyone over age 18 would be allowed to play if they are supervising a child or children, but they would not be eligible to win prizes.

“It sounds worse than it is, but it’s really not,” said Webb, who was inspired by camping trips with his grandchildren. “I tried to write it as much as possible to make sure this is a children’s game.”

“Sometimes you’ll see that adults will drop their kids off and leave. This will take care of that problem,” he said. “I’d like to stay there and enjoy them having fun and enjoying bingo.”

Brian Pinard, of Goffstown, said his children no longer are interested in bingo, but he wanted to advocate for relatives with small children.

“It’s difficult to send a 6- or 7-year-old into a building to play bingo alone, unsupervised,” he said.

The bill also would increase the maximum value of prizes from \$2 to \$5. After hearing from Webb and Pinard, the Ways and Means committee, without debate, voted to recommend that the full Senate pass the bill.