

Father's Day feature: He's not Mr. Mom – just Dad

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

When Larry Hasty was a kid, he certainly never dreamed of being a stay-at-home dad, but today he's perfectly happy taking care of the house and being the main care provider for his five-year-old daughter, Mackenzie. After previously working in the banking and finance world, he now spends his days making lunches and overseeing homeschooling.

Larry and his wife, Sashka, moved to Eastern Oregon for graduate school at EOU. They were both attending the university as undergrads when she became pregnant with their first baby. Larry's plan had been to enter a graduate program right away, and they took care of Mackenzie as a team, since they had no family in the area to help out. But soon his wife was offered a job at Interpath Laboratory in Pendleton, which included payment for graduate school. So, together they decided that rather than putting Mackenzie in day care, he would just stay home with her.

After meeting Larry it's pretty clear that his masculinity was never in question after his decision – it's not something that really concerned him. Yes, he's been given some ribbing about how nice it must be to be able to hang out all day and not have to answer to a boss, but he uses those opportunities to share with other men what being at home is really like. He's certainly not embarrassed by



it; there was never a doubt that he couldn't provide for his family. While he was working, he made a very comfortable living, so the decision wasn't a financial one. He remains very supportive and proud of his wife. When the opportunity came up for Sashka to further her career, he readily agreed. He looked at staying home and teaching Mackenzie as a challenge, one he was certainly up for. For now, it's working just fine.

Larry spends his days like any other stay-at-home parent. He cooks, cleans, does the laundry, and takes care of his child. One might assume his life is just like most women who stay at home – but there is one difference that isn't im-

mediately obvious.

You see, moms network. We're there for each other. We recognize that we need other moms in our lives. We meet up throughout the day for outings, playdates, and coffee get-togethers. Conversations range anywhere from the pros and cons of binkies and nursing, to potty training, family drama, and puberty. Not all of those conversations are appropriate for mixed company and might make Larry and other men uncomfortable. Out of respect for his wife and his marriage, he doesn't go over to other people's houses for playdates, instead meeting at the Children's Museum or parks so that his daughter can play with other kids. Still, there

are times when the conversation drifts and he admits the chit-chat doesn't always hold his attention.

As a stay-at-home dad, Larry is in good company. According to a 2014 study, the percentage of stay-at-home parents in Oregon is about 21 percent. That's a pretty significant change from a study in the early 1970s in which only six men in the *entire country* admitted to staying home.

Larry says that the best thing about staying home, besides spending time with his daughter, is that his stress level has been significantly reduced. He still stresses, as do all parents, that he's doing the right thing by Mackenzie, but

it's different than 9-to-5 job stress. The toughest thing is missing adult conversation and the lack of other dads in the same situation to talk with.

Are you a stay-at-home dad or do you know someone who is? Have them check out the National At-Home Dad Network online (athomedad.org) or the more casual site, daddymindtricks.com. And feel free to shoot Larry an email at hastyl@eou.edu. Dads need buddies, too.

Suzanne Kennedy is a former middle school teacher who lives in Pendleton with her husband and four children.