

In Praise of Indian Guides, Indian Princesses and Trailblazers

Syndicated Columnist Kathleen Parker is a frequent contributor to the Editorial Section of the Chicago Tribune. In the Wednesday, February 28, 2007 edition, Ms. Parker wrote an editorial entitled, "Calling all dads: Save the girls." [Chicago Tribune, pg. 23; 2-28-07]

Kathleen Parker reports that the American Psychological Association recently published findings that girls in today's American culture are being overwhelmed with inappropriate messages about their femininity, and worse yet, they are being objectified. This is of no surprise to anyone, says Parker, writing that our daughters are receiving damaging messages about their gender "...in nearly every medium and product from ads to video games to clothing, cosmetics and even dolls." Our culture sets impossible standards of thinness and glamour that lead to a host of problems heaped on the self-esteem of our daughters. Ms. Parker reports that the APA is contemplating a task force and further study to see what parents can do to help their young girls.

Forget any task forces or further studies, Kathleen Parker opines, "My instinctual guess is that getting fathers back into their daughter's lives . . . would do more than all the forums and task forces combined." She continues, "Fathers, after all, are the ones who tell their little girls that they're perfect just the way they are; that they don't need to be one bit thinner; and under no circumstances are they going out of the house dressed that way!"

Parker concludes that fathers play a unique role in protecting their daughters from the stereotypes of culture and in cultivating the well-being of a young girl's self esteem. "Ultimately," writes Kathleen Parker, "it's a daddy thing."

When I read Parker's column, I couldn't agree more! I was also filled with a deep sense of pride. Parker doesn't know it but we, the dads of YIGP-TB, have answered the call. In fact, we answered the call long before it was even issued. We've been cultivating healthy self-esteem in the daughters of our program for years.

The same can be said about our boys. There is far too much importance and attention placed on athletes and action heroes. Our sons are assaulted in every medium by tough guys with guns who blow away the bad guys, get the girl, and save the world with force and violence. The urgency for parental intervention easily applies to our young males as well: "Calling all dads: Save the boys." And we do. As dads we teach our sons that the true measure of a man is the extent of his benevolence, not his ability to punt, pass and kick; and that strength and kindness are not mutually exclusive but both are components of being a complete person.

I have seen, and continue to see, countless examples of the fathers of the Prairie Trail Federation nurturing healthy minded children. The time spent on campouts, at Federation Events, and at tribal meetings all foster child and father companionship which in turn builds self-esteem in our children. What is astonishing is that the role model of the supportive father is not a single rarity in our membership. I see it everywhere. The fathers of our Federation are loving men, living examples of supportive fathers whose behavior says to each and every child, "Hey kid! You're important to me!"

In the Prairie Trail Federation I have the pleasure of knowing some of life's finest men. I think if Kathleen Parker could see us with our kids, she would feel the same sense of hope and pride that I do.

How How for us all! Dads and kids alike!

Peace,
John C. Lorenzen (Federation Chief Keokuk)