FROM THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dear Parents, Carers and Community Members,

Fathers’ Day 2014

This coming weekend we celebrate Fathers’ Day and in this week’s newsletter we share some interesting and insightful articles on Fatherhood in contemporary Australian society. I am mindful of the diverse experiences we have in family make-up and experiences of fathers and being a Dad. My own being that we lost our Dad at a young age to heart disease when I was 13. I was blessed with a brother-in-law at that time who provided the love and father type guidance and support through to my adult years. Our close bond has remained strong between us as life progresses. The two articles (see Attachment) give a modern perspective to fatherhood. One is from Michael Grose – Parenting Ideas and the other is authored by the son of one of our long serving staff members, Mrs Kay Zivkovic and is shared with permission and acknowledgment to the Australian Multiples Births Associations. They are both a great read and I hope you find time to do so in the coming week and share with others.

This coming Friday morning we have our traditional Father’s Day Liturgy organised by our Mini Vinnies Team. It will be lovely to have Father Paul there to lead us. The liturgy commences at 7.45am and will be followed with a BBQ breakfast. Don’t’ forget to send in your photos for the reflection – these really make it all the more special - entertaining and heart-warming! Photos to be sent to stritasfathersdayphotos@hotmail.com by tomorrow afternoon (Wednesday 3 Sept).

BABI Appeal – Cupcake Sale

One of the local support groups that does great work in our community is BABI (Bayside Adolescent Boarding Incorporated – Youth and Family Support). Our Mini-Vinnies team have targeted BABI for our local community fund raising this term and will have a Cupcake Sale on Tuesday 16 September. Donations of cupcakes are required for this day and further detail is within this week and next week’s newsletter.

Staff News – Assistant Principal

Our APRE, Mr Billion has been offered an extension to his contract as Acting Principal at St Joseph’s Bardon and will be there for the remainder of this school year. We are pleased to announce that Ms Lagi Aukusitino will continue as a member of our School Leadership Team as APRE for this time. We congratulate both Kevin and Lagi for these senior leadership opportunities and acknowledge the significant contribution they are making to both communities.

May God’s peace and blessings be with you and your family in the coming week.

Anne

An excerpt from a national Australia newspaper last week, ‘Homework has almost no academic benefits for primary school students, a parliamentary inquiry has found.

And while it can benefit older kids, the time could have equal or greater long-term benefits if used for other activities and interests. The Victorian Parliament’s Education and Training Committee, in a report released today, has recommended a review of
homework guidelines in the wake of the findings. The committee found “strong evidence” and general agreement among experts that homework at the primary-level had little impact on academic performance, finding only that it could play an important role in preparing students for secondary school and beyond. There were some academic benefits for high school students however and it assisted in developing life skills.’

Mr Fernando’s and Mr Brammer’s year 7 students were pretty excited when we read this article today and were extremely keen to put this recommendation into practice effective immediately! I may be a bit old fashioned and perhaps a little out of touch with current trends and studies however I still feel that homework has an important place in our children’s education. It nurtures organisational and time management skills, can reinforce concepts taught at school and provides another opportunity for our students to know more, do more and be more.

Homework can be an issue for many parents of boys and girls. Homes have become difficult places for students to study with the advent of television, parents working, family fragmentation and general noise and confusion. Recent research indicates that students need to work more in class and less at home. However, when homework is set it needs to be done well and marked or assessed by the teacher.

Boys in particular (when reading) need to look for information and fact to direct their reading. You can assist them in doing their reading by asking them questions to find out prior to their reading a chapter or book. When writing an essay or assignment, get the boy to verbalize to you what he is going to write prior to writing it. This greatly aids the fluency, content and volume of his writing.

It is a good idea to spend two minutes each night with your child to help them organise their homework before they start. Help them order the sequence of subjects etc and then send them to their room for a set amount of time to complete it. Our children should not spend wasted hours in their room each night presumably doing homework as they begin to get a negative attitude to it as a result. Ian Lillico, a boys in education advisor, asks teachers throughout Australia to put a time limit on each piece of homework set to give boys and their parents an indication as to how much time should be spent (on average) on the particular piece of work. This also gives parents an idea of appropriate time that should be allocated.

Send him to his room for the sum of all the times suggested and have him return to you to see how he is gone. Give him positive feedback and praise him for good work completed. It is important to show an interest in his work as it makes him feel less isolated from the rest of the family. Boys are very social creatures and often don’t want to make the sacrifice of isolation doing homework away from the family. Try to ensure his room has no fluorescent lights, as these are disastrous to boys’ learning. An incandescent light and preferably the low voltage 12V Quartz Halogen down lights are the best for giving atmosphere. The décor, lighting and general ambience of the area where your son does his homework is critical in giving him the incentive to spend time there. The same suggestions are very effective for daughters, but with boys we often have to try much harder to get him to make the sacrifice that homework demands.

All the best
Shane

Last Thursday Miss Walker and the students in 2T invited me to join their ‘Teaspoon’ - TSP lesson. I was very happy to be invited, and also very curious to find out exactly what the TSP lesson was all about. Turns out the teaspoon prayer is for TSP, “Thank you, Sorry, Please”, and it is a simple and quick way to write prayers. The spoons are a nice visual when they are tied together. The children in 2T wrote their own thoughtful prayers, many thanking God for their families. The prayers are now hanging in their classroom. Thank you Miss Walker and the children in 2T. It was a lovely way to connect with you all.

Thank for...
I am Sorry for...
Please help me with...
Many of our classes engage in morning meditation and prayer in preparation for a busy day of learning. Prayer and Worship is part of the Religious Life of the School, and helps us be religious in a particular way. Miss Walker shares how she partakes in prayer and stillness with her Year 2 class:

“We meditate each morning as our way to start the day. We talk about “growing our brains” because mindfulness improves cognitive function and it also calms anxieties and stress. It takes a lot of self-control to sit still and focus on your breathing! It has been helpful for students if they are feeling anxious during the day or if they can’t get to sleep at night. We learnt that you can do meditation anytime and anywhere if you say the chant in your mind and practice the finger movement like we do in class.”

There are many practices of meditative prayer drawn from the Christian tradition including:

- Centering prayer using breathing/using a mantra
- Guided meditation and visualisation
- Christian Meditation
- Guided meditation using images and/or music
- Benedictine Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)
- Augustinian Scripture Meditation
- Reflective Journaling/sketching
- The Rosary
- Labyrinths
- Mandalas and many more.

Meditative prayer combines the benefits of meditation and the gift of prayer to nurture our body, mind and spirit. It can assist by:

- slowing down busy minds and bodies
- improving concentration and attentiveness
- helping students to cope with stress and anxiety
- leading students to the art of mindfulness and being present to the moment
- developing a sense of inner peace and calm
- creating an awareness of a deeper sense of God’s presence in silence and stillness
- opening hearts to experience the gift of contemplation, a total praising of God and a sense of oneness with the whole of creation.

Have a peaceful week everyone.

Lagi

**SCHOOL FEES**

Fees are now overdue and prompt payment would be appreciated. If you have any concerns please contact the school finance office immediately.

Please also ensure your email and contact details are current.

**ST RITA’S RANGERS**

Last Wednesday we picked the crop of sweetcorn from our Ranger’s garden bed that we have been growing since last term. We picked 38 cobs of corn and on Thursday had a corn day and sold cobette’s through the tuck shop. Thank you to those of you who supported this event by buying and enjoying the hot sweet buttered corn. We made $38 and this will be used to replant the Rangers gardens. This term the Ranger’s organic produce has supplied the tuckshop with salad items such as Kos lettuce, tomatoes and capsicum.
FATHERS’ DAY LITURGY

The St Rita’s Mini Vinnies and School Parent Network invite all grandfathers, fathers, uncles, family members and students to attend the Fathers’ Day Liturgy on Friday 5th September at 7:45am in the Unitas Centre. The liturgy will be followed by a morning tea for the adults.

During the liturgy, a slide show of photos will be shown. The Mini Vinnies are seeking digital photos of our St Rita’s students with their fathers/ stepfathers/ grandfathers/ uncles to use for a reflection. If you have a suitable digital photo that you would like to share with our community, please email it to: stritasfathersdayphotos@hotmail.com. The photos will only be used for this purpose, and then deleted by the school.

FATHER’S DAY

In last week’s Newsletter, there was a funny children’s poem written by Kenn Nesbitt about a father who was a spy. As Father’s Day is approaching, we thought about what makes our Dad’s special. Here’s what a few of our Year 5 students had to say:

- My Dad always tells me to keep calm and keep rolling. (Holly)
- What I love most about my Dad is that he encourages me to do anything. (Grace)
- My favourite memory with my Dad is when we went down a waterslide and he did a face plant into the pool! (Tarryn)
- My Dad always tells me that he will do anything for me and my brother. (Eamon)
- My favourite memory with my Dad is when he helped me catch my first fish. (Jack)

If you enjoyed last week’s poem, head to the website http://www.poetry4kids.com/m/ for more funny poems.

Acknowledgment (apology): Last week’s poem was written by Kenn Nesbitt, not Amy K-C.

My Dad is Rad!

My dad is not an undercover agent.
He’s not a detective, sleuth or spy.
He’s not that good at hiding and he hasn’t got an eagle eye.

He’s actually an astronaut!

No, my Dad is not an astronaut.

He can’t even do the moonwalk.
He hasn’t flown to Mars to find an alien for a talk.

He’s actually a pirate!

No, my Dad is not a pirate.
He’s not a captain or even a first mate.
He hasn’t even made me walk the plank or buy his pieces of eight.

He’s actually a cowboy!

No, my Dad is not a cowboy.
He’s never ridden a horse to town.
He doesn’t wear a hat or boots or used a gun in a show down.

My Dad is really none of these things but he is a fun loving Dad.
He’s as huggable as a teddy bear and I think he’s really rad!

SPORTS NEWS

Quote of the week
You can’t win unless you learn how to lose.  Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

HPE Lessons

For the remainder of this term Year 3-7 will be looking at Tennis and skills involved during lessons. If you own your own tennis racquet, please bring it along to lessons for the remainder of this term.

St Rita’s Touch Football
U/8’s and U/10’s are playing at 4.30pm
U/12’s are playing at 5.15pm

Game details will be communicated on a weekly basis through a messaging system to parents.

Training for U/12s will be from 3.10 – 4.10pm Monday afternoons, U/10’s will be Thursdays First Break and Fridays Second Break during school hours.

Bayside Athletics

Congratulations to all the students who represented St Rita’s at the Combined Catholic Schools Bayside Athletics Carnival on Monday. St Rita’s finished in overall 3rd Position in points amongst 6 other catholic schools from our region. St Rita’s dominated in the...
100m and 200m sprints claiming many top positions all-round from each age division. Well Done St Rita’s.

Mission Cup Netball
Training will be held on Tuesday afternoons from 3.15 to 4.30pm. Please let either Mr Kenyon, Mrs Rossi or Mrs Manderson if unable to attend.

BABI APPEAL
Who: Mini Vinnies & Student Council supported by Mrs J Hill, Mrs T Hill and Mrs A Davidson.
When: Tuesday 16 September (week 10 Term 3) First Break & Second Break
What: Students and staff to donate cupcakes, either homemade or shop bought, which will then be available for sale via the Tuckshop during both breaks $1 per cake. We will ensure dietary requirements are catered for where possible

ASSEMBLY AWARDS

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<tr>
<td>Zane J</td>
<td>Zane, with your dancing feet and your happy smile, you are a great role model for all of us. You always try your best. We are so lucky to have you in our class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah W</td>
<td>With your bubbly personality and your happy smile, Hannah, you are a joyous presence in our class. We are glad that you are in 1T.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isaac B</td>
<td>For the fantastic improvement that you have made in your attitude to your work, and for the great writing that you have been doing. Keep it up, Isaac!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grace J</td>
<td>For always trying your best at all tasks, you have shown such a great improvement in your work. Well done Grace!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adam L</td>
<td>For Inspiring Learning by contributing to class activities with enthusiasm and always ready to have a go. Congratulations Adam on your oral presentation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luca F</td>
<td>For Inspired Learning by being so positive about increasing his work output and making sure it is the best work he is able to do.</td>
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<td>Tarryn J</td>
<td>For Inspiring Learning by always participating in class tasks to the best of her ability. She is always willing to help those around her learn and understand new concepts. Well done, Tarryn!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matisse R</td>
<td>For Inspiring Learning by sharing your thoughts and ideas with the class openly and willingly. Your opinions are valued and inspire us all to think deeply. Congratulations Matisse!</td>
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<td>Riley L</td>
<td>For inspiring learning by presenting your opinions about the novel ‘Matilda’ to the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordan S</td>
<td>For inspiring learning by presenting your opinions about the novel ‘Matilda’ to the class.</td>
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EARLY LEARNING

Early Learning Redlands are offering a free workshop to parents, caregivers and educators supporting children’s social and emotional well-being. An opportunity to come and hear about ways you can help your child develop their social and emotional skills. Talk with professionals including occupational therapists, psychologists, early childhood educators and more.

YEAR 5 - RECYCLING PRESCRIPTION GLASSES AND CASES

5K have been researching Fred Hollows and his wonderful life changing work restoring peoples sight. We decided the nearest way we could help people who are less fortunate than us is to collect and recycle prescription glasses and cases. Although we cannot donate them to the Fred Hollows Foundation, we can collect them on behalf of the Lions Club of Brisbane. They sort and grade the prescription glasses and give them to people who cannot access or afford the glasses they need.

So please can you look at home and donate any prescription glasses that you may have. A box is in the school Office ready for your donation.

LOYED PROPERTY

Ladies black leather jacket has been handed in to the parish office. Please call on 3207 9177 for more info.

YEAR 6 CAMP

Camp Goodenough 2014

Last week the students in Year Six attended their leadership camp in Bilambil, New South Wales.

“At camp I was really proud of myself achieving my goal on Leap of Faith which was 12m and for getting through challenging stuff that I thought I couldn’t do. One of my memories were going up and down the steep hill that made me completely exhausted. I also have a memory of trying to sleep on the first night, the next night I went to bed a bit earlier while everyone was watching the movie."

For camp I am really proud of myself because I didn’t think that I would be able to do the hard section of high ropes but I pushed myself to do it. I also didn't think I would be able to jump from 9 metre on the leap of faith but people encouraged me to do it. I really liked camp it was very fun.

It was the best camp ever, I think that’s where they got the name Camp Goodenough” from. Suli & Lawson 6K
Total Football Academy will be running a before School soccer program during Term 4 at St Rita's Primary School. The program is for Year 4 to Year 7 Pupils. Registration forms will be distributed during a free demonstration. During the 6 week program small sided games will be played inside an inflatable soccer field, which captures the imagination of students, giving them a great soccer experience. Development training will take place inside a skills square focusing on different skills each week, such as dribbling, turning and shooting. As part of the program players can also purchase a soccer kit (Top and Shorts). The program starts on Wednesday 22nd of October, 7.15am - 8.15am. To sign up online visit www.totalfootballacademy.com.au or call Andy Robinson on 0413 888 643.

UNIFORM SHOP

HOURS

Thursday 8.00 to 10.00am
Friday 8.00 to 10.00am

FROM THE PARISH

NEWS FROM THE PARISH...

Learning how to pray: Two simple habits

1. Sprinkle a few quick prayers into key parts of your day
2. Develop your awareness of the presence of God

It makes prayer a natural part of daily life. That's very important as you learn how to pray: if it's something foreign to your normal day, you'll be tempted to drop it as soon as you're pressed for time.

The need to start simply

Start very simply. Only take on a little. Build slowly. These habit gets you started so easily that you'll only notice the joy of suddenly having prayer in your day and you won't have to struggle to find the time. You'll form a wonderful habit of prayer that runs throughout your day. Everything else will be framed by your deep love for God, and your desire for union with Him.

A Stronger Prayer Life: The Presence of God

Does the presence of God animate your life? Do your thoughts turn to Him throughout the day, aware of His loving presence and deep concern for even the trivial aspects of your daily life? Awareness of the presence of God is one of the foundation stones of the spiritual life. Developing an awareness of the presence of God simply means recognizing this, keeping it in your thoughts, and living like we really mean it.

Imagine how different life would be if you were always aware of being in God's loving presence. Even the smallest tasks would be meaningful, you'd treat everyone with greater love, every word you'd say could be said in union with God. This kind of awareness is what St. Paul means when he says "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17). Being in the presence of God is simply living in union with Christ.

TUCKSHOP NEWS

Wednesday 3rd Sept
Felicity Shipton
Annie McHerron

Thursday 4th Sept
Tracey Knight
Tania Digby

Friday 5th Sept
Louise Lowcock
Maggie Helmn
Annie McHerron
HELP NEEDED??
2nd Break
HELP NEEDED??

Only students from Grade 3 to 7 can use money and purchase over the counter.
We do not encourage Students to purchase for friends.
If you have any questions at all please contact me anytime.
Renee 0411 523 969 email rsaleh@bne.catholic.edu.au
This is one of the major goals of the spiritual life. And it's something you can start to do now. God is present right now.

**How to develop this habit:** Try some of these suggestions to help you "trigger" your awareness of the presence of God.

- If you work at a desk, keep a small object close at hand throughout the day. It can be a small cross, or a picture of Christ or Mary, or even something ordinary that is meaningful to you. Each time you see the object, touch it briefly and say a quick prayer.
- If you spend a lot of time on the phone, let each ring of the phone remind you of God. You can also remember that God is "calling" you with each ring. Take Samuel's words for your prayer: "Here I am. You called me." (1 Sam 3:8), or "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9).
- If you're a student, remember the Lord every time you open a book or start a fresh page of notes: "Lord, send your Spirit of wisdom to me" (see Wisdom 7:7).
- If you see many people during the day, each one can remind you of God's presence: "Lord, thank you for letting me serve you in the guise of this person."
- If your work is with children: "Lord, you came as a child so that I might become a child of God." (See John 1:9-14)

Start with one thing, something simple. Deliberately turn it into a habit. Practice it for a couple of days, and you'll come to rely on it.

**Mass Times in our Parish**

Morning Masses in the chapel 9am every day except Wednesday
Weekend Masses: Saturday 6pm, Sunday 7am, 9am, 6pm.
Reconciliation Times - Saturday’s 5pm to 5.30pm in the Church

**Opportunities for prayer at the Parish:**

*Christian meditation:* welcomes everyone in the chapel every Monday at 9.30am
*Rosary Group:* Monday at 11.00am in the chapel. You are most welcome to join us.
*Praise and Worship group:* Tuesday 7pm either in church or chapel and includes worship through song, scripture reading, small group discussion and personal prayer

**Mothers Prayers:** welcomes all Mothers, Grandmothers, and Spiritual Mothers every Wednesday mornings at 9.00am in the Chapel

**Pro-Life Rosary Crusade:** Thursday at 11.00am in the chapel to pray the rosary in the hope of preventing the legislation of abortion in Queensland.

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**SCHOOL BANKING**

This week’s banker of the week is Jay A, congratulations Jay we have deposited $2 into your bank account for you.

It’s never too late to open a School Bank account and it’s very easy to do. Pop into the Victoria Point branch (It’ll take about 15 to 20 minutes) and we’ll sit down with you to get you started. We’re even open on Saturday so come on in and have a chat, we’d love to meet you.

We’re open 9am Mon – Sat, Closing times Mon – Thur 4.30pm, Fri 5pm & Sat 12noon.
Pop in and see the friendly team, we’re always happy to have a chat and help with any of your banking needs.
BOQ Victoria Point, Shop 23 Victoria Point Shopping Centre
Ph 3207 6133

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**POINT LOOKOUT SLSC NIPPER SIGN ON**

Do you like the beach? Do you want to be active? Do you want to make new friends and get involved in a great Australian way of life? Are you aged between 5 and 13 years? Then join the Point Lookout SLSC Junior Activities (Nippers). Program is run on a Saturday, starting October 11 and runs throughout the summer.

Sign On and Pool Swim Assessments will be held at Ormiston College Pool on Wednesday 10th and 17th September from 6.30p.m. to 7.30 p.m. Bring your togs and speak with the Club Officers (birth certificate required). For more information about joining the Point Lookout Nippers, contact Ben on 0428 771 377 or email admin@pointlookoutslsc.com.au
There's no doubt that fathering has changed in recent years. Gone is the distant dad of the 1960's and 70's who saw his main job as keeping a roof over his family's head and bread on the table. An occasional game in the backyard and dishing out the heavy discipline that mums couldn’t deal with was the extent of his involvement with his kids.

Many dads tell me that they want a better relationship with their children, particularly their sons, than they had with their own fathers. Sadly, many men still don’t enjoy a close relationship with their fathers, but they are determined to change things with their own kids.

Here are seven ideas to help you form close relationships with your kids, and maximise your effectiveness as a parent and a partner:

1. **Find something in common with your kids**
   Dads need something in common with their children. They relate better when they have a shared interest or shared passion with their kids. Many men relate to their kids while being active, and teach many important lessons through games and play. But if sport is not your bag, find something else that you and your kids have in common. A common interest is a great help for fathers who live apart from their kids who are looking to maximise the time they have with them.

2. **Spend time with your sons**
   A dad can do little wrong in the eyes of a young boy. From around the age of five years a boy thinks his dad is like superman. Ironically, he may give his mum a hard time at this stage. Dads need to spend as much time with their sons in these impressionable years as possible. They just need to be careful not to push their sons too hard or turn every game into a lesson. That’s when boys turn off their dads.

3. **Don’t whimper out on discipline**
   Dads are traditionally the kings of play, but they can go missing when it comes to discipline. They get their kids excited in a game before going to bed, then expect their partner to settle them down. It helps if both parents can take their share of managing children’s behaviour.

4. **Treat your daughters well**
   There are strong links between close fathering and the healthy development of girls. Dads teach their daughters strong lessons about how they should be treated by males. So dads need to treat their daughters respectfully so they learn to expect this treatment in their future relationships with men.

5. **Say goodbye Superman, hello Clarke Kent**
   Adolescent boys are programmed to challenge their fathers. It’s part of the growing up process. Australian author John Marsden refers to this phenomenon as the ‘old ram, young ram syndrome’. He’s right. It’s a type of rite of passage that plays out in many Australian homes. Verbal jousting matches are a popular father-son game where boys take great delight in proving their fathers are fallible. A dad at this stage needs a sense of humour as well as a willingness to stand back and allow other mentors in to his son’s life.

6. **Support your partner**
   Fathers may play an integral part in the lives of their children but they also have a profound effect on the quality of mothering that children receive. There is little doubt that a woman who can share the emotional and financial burdens of child-rearing with a supportive partner is more likely to be a loving, affirming mother. Supportive fathering is one of the keys to better mothering.

7. **Change as your child changes**
   Kids grow up at the speed of light and change before you know it. They’re kids one day and teenagers the next. They can catch many fathers unaware. The most effective dads are those who change their parenting to suit the needs of their kids at each stage of development, rather than stubbornly hold to outmoded ideas of how they think their kids should be.

Those fathers who are a little apprehensive or lack sufficient confidence should become involved in as many aspects of parenting as they can. The best way to learn about parenting is by doing it. Children are a terrific resource for fathers - men can learn about children from children themselves. By being alert, watchful and learning to listen to their children fathers can learn all they need to know about parenting.
fatherhood no monkey business

By Carissa Mason
Mum to Kira and Zoe, 5, and Caden, 1

Before he became a dad, Danilo Zivkovic was a zoo keeper, based in the primates enclosure and responsible for the care and wellbeing of 20 chimpanzees, 8 gorillas and a menagerie of other smaller monkey species.

"I spent all day monitoring behaviour, feeding, cleaning and making sure I didn’t get bitten”, Danilo says. “I was often covered in poo and wee and food. I don’t think it helped prepare me for the boys though”, he grins. “Animals are much more self-sufficient.” The boys he refers to are his three sons, identical twins Finnbar and Arlo, 2, and Luca, nine months.

Danilo is one of the rare breed of Aussie dads who stay at home caring for the kids while mum returns to work. The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that of the 2.37 million Aussie dads with dependent children in 2009/10, just 106,000, or 4.5 per cent, are stay-at-home dads.

Danilo never expected to be the primary caregiver, but he wouldn’t change it for the world. He and wife Lynette Arkadie were living in Sydney when their twins were born at 36 weeks. Danilo was working fulltime at Taronga Zoo and Lynette took time off from her counselling job to care for the babies. “Having never had kids, and then having twins – and twins that didn’t sleep and had medical issues… when we found out we were pregnant again with Luca, we thought we might need a bit of extra support”, he says.

Danilo gave up his dream job at the zoo and the family packed up their home and temporarily moved to Brisbane where they both have extended family. They arrived just in time for Luca’s birth in January this year and Lynette returned to work in May. “We made choices to do without other things so we could have one of us at home with the boys for their first few years”, Danilo says. “With limited job opportunities for me in Brisbane (the closest zoos at Dreamworld and Australia Zoo don’t have primates), it just made more sense for me to be the one at home.”

And he loves it. “I’m actually really glad it worked out this way”, Danilo says. “I get all these beautiful moments with the boys that I would completely miss otherwise.”
It's hard to explain how significant those small moments are. Like where they start to reflect back things that I do and I recognise how much of an influence I am on them. I look at them now and I want to be able to help shape their vision of the world as much as I can, while I can, before they go to school and have so many other influencers.”

Danilo's own upbringing was heavily influenced by his late dad Misha, who stayed at home with Danilo and his older sister Alexa after falling at work and breaking most of the bones on one side of his body. "It was a big change for my dad, who had been a really physical person, but he used that time to teach us as much as he could. My love of the natural world and working with animals comes from my dad. Mum [Kay] worked as a librarian and passed on to us the importance of learning. She taught us about language and how to communicate, and would come home from work and help us with our homework. I think seeing both my parents interchange the carer/learner roles helped me feel comfortable with where I am now as a father”, Danilo says.

This second-generation stay-at-home dad has become an expert at changing nappies, feeding and settling. “[But] we've come up with a saying in our house that "dads do it differently”, Danilo says. “Play, for example, is more physical. Lynette will read to the boys, or sit with them to do an activity. I do that too, but I tend to be more physical and will tackle them or chase them or we'll ride bikes or go outside and throw leaves in the air. I let them go a bit more while Lynette nurtures their inner life more.”

Extensive research over the past 15 years shows there's value in the different ways dads approach parenting. Dr Richard Fletcher, who is a senior lecturer at the University of Newcastle's Family Action Centre, says most dads know they are an important part of their children's life, but they struggle to explain why. "Dads don't realise how important they are to a child's development from day one”, Dr Fletcher says.

"The old idea was that when the child was old enough to kick a football or go to gymnastics, that's when dad came into his role. Before then it was really up to mum. But in the last 15 years, the evidence has come out very clearly to say that's not the best way for the child. The best way for the child is to have the father interacting with them from the very beginning, in positive ways”, Dr Fletcher says.

"When you watch the way mums and dads interact with babies, it's very different. With a young baby, a mother's interactions tend to create a gentle wave of excitement for the baby. Fathers' interactions with babies don't tend to look the same. They tend to be sharper. There will be nothing happening, and then suddenly the father will be very exciting to the baby. He's doing it differently, and that's good for the baby's development.”

Dr Fletcher said dads of multiples were leaders in this area. "When you have twins or triplets, you don't have a choice
and the dad gets in and does a lot. They usually get a lot of experience in having a baby or young child by themselves because the mum is often with the other one."

He says studies show children who have positive interactions with their dads at a young age do better at school. "Their reading is better, their maths is better", he says. Research also shows that boys, at aged seven, whose dads are involved with them and take an interest in them, are less likely to be in trouble with police when they’re older. Likewise, girls who have positive interactions with their fathers are less likely to become depressed as young women, he says.

Dr Fletcher says a parent's negative interactions with their children can also have long-reaching effects. "Just like with a mother's postnatal depression, if the dad is depressed, the children are going to be affected." Dr Fletcher encourages dads to be brave and reach out to find other dads for support. "While people makes jokes, like "lucky you" about there being 10 women and one man [at playgroup, for example], the experience of most dads is that isn’t the most comfortable way", he says.

Danilo has a few favourite parks where he takes the boys to play, as well as venturing out to Gymboree, Rhyme Time at the State Library and to playgroup at his local AMBA club, Brisbane MBA Southside. "A good part of my day is spent figuring out how to challenge, entertain and generally wear them out – it's like I never left the zoo actually", he says.

He's never met another stay-at-home dad while out and about. "It is a bit isolating being the primary caregiver as a male – especially at parents' groups (ironically still called mothers' groups). It's like in the natural world, with a herd of elephants, for example. The family groups are run by the matriarchs, generally with no adult males. The males only appear in breeding season! At Gymboree I see a few dads, but that's only on the weekend or if they have time off work. I don't think that's because men don't want to have a go at it, but because, in many cases, the man is the breadwinner", he says.

"It's interesting to think about re-entering the workforce as a man, after caring for my kids. I'm taking time out of that career progression, and it probably doesn't help that I have chosen a career that's quite specialised – especially considering there are not that many zoos in Australia! I have no shame about taking time out of the workforce and giving the time to my boys. I actually feel like I've developed a whole new skill set I would have missed out on. It would be great to be able to have Lynette and me both able to work part-time and be home with the boys, but I don't think the flexibility is there yet for men. I've never heard of two guys sharing a job."

Danilo says before he was a dad he underestimated the commitment parenting demanded. "I have a whole new appreciation. I would have stayed home to care for my kids for a short time, maybe a few months, but now I'm this involved in their lives, I understand and really appreciate the investment of it long-term and that it should be shared where possible. At the end of my life, I'm not going to wish I'd spent more time working, I'm going to wish I'd spent more time with the ones I love."

*Thanks to Johanna Heybrook at Pure and Precious Photography in Brisbane for taking the photos illustrating this story.

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