

Author Gauld Discusses “Parenting with Honesty”

BY BONNIE HOBBS

Not only has Laura Gauld written a book about raising children with character, but she’s sharing her knowledge, next week, with the Mothers of Youth (MOY) group.

She’ll speak on “Parenting with Honesty,” next Friday, April 2, at 10 a.m. at the Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. The \$10 cost includes a light breakfast; RSVP to Mothersofyouth@aol.com.

Composed of moms from Centreville, Chantilly, Herndon and Oakton, MOY presents experts to help parents of teens and pre-teens. Gauld is director of the Family Education department at the Hyde Schools in Maine and Connecticut (a boarding school stressing character-based education) and author of a parenting book, *The Biggest Job We’ll Ever Have*.

“She’s an enthusiastic speaker, and the things she says to parents really touch their hearts,” said MOY’s Mary Moore of Oak Hill. “What she’s learned at Hyde, and her life experiences with her own three kids, make her well-equipped to give this talk.”

More than 150 people attended MOY’s October event, and Moore hopes for a good turnout this time, too. “Not everybody can send their kids to Hyde, and every parent needs help,” she explained. “And that’s what MOY is trying to do — give them the tools to help them be better parents and to open up to other parents.”

Gauld’s husband Malcolm is president of Hyde Schools, and they co-authored their book. They have two daughters, 13 and 11, and a son, 9. “We’ve both been teachers and administrators at Hyde for a long time, and worked with a number of families, so we felt we had something to share about character education and parenting,” said Gauld.

When their son was 2, he had developmental delays—especially in talking—so Gauld took time off and did intensive work with him. “I realized how important it was to emphasize high priorities and turning obstacles into opportunities,” she explained. “And I realized that these priorities can help all of us.” Their son is catching up now and, said Gauld, “I know



Laura and Malcolm Gauld, co-authors of *The Biggest Job We’ll Ever Have*.

he wouldn’t be where he is today if we hadn’t demanded the best.”

The book relates 10 Priorities parents should have: “Truth over harmony, principles over rules, attitude over aptitude, set high expectations and let go of the outcome, value success and failure, allow obstacles to become opportunities, take hold and let go, create a character culture, humility to ask for and accept help; and inspiration: job 1.”

Moore says truth over harmony is especially important. “Parents have choices every day—to really say what they feel about something, or let it go and say nothing because it will disrupt the harmony,” she said. “So many of us are caught up in our own image, instead of speaking the truth, and it teaches our kids to be dishonest.”

Therefore, she said, in the interest of harmony, they’ll lie to their parents about, for example, drinking or studying, because “they’ve seen their parents [lie]. But if truth is a parent’s No. 1 priority, then kids will be more likely to tell them the truth.”

Now, Moore said she and her children speak truthfully to each other and really listen to what each other is saying. “Since it’s such a scary and dangerous world out there—with kids faced with things such as eating disorders, drugs, alcohol, and relationships with the opposite sex—[this] is more important than ever,” she said.

“Society promotes looking good and projecting an image of a perfect family,” said Moore. “But then, parents have no one to talk to [when troubles arise], and we’ve got to stop doing that. One of MOY’s goals is honest communication between parents about problems their kids

may be going through—and it’s working. I get calls from people, all the time, about issues they’re having.”

Gauld says we live in an achievement culture so focused on aptitude in school that people have a skewed view of achievement. “They believe that how you look, your image, what you have and what you achieve is important,” she said. “But that isn’t who you are.”

“What’s important is your effort, attitude, and character,” she continued. “And we believe, if you focus on these things, you’ll achieve plenty in your life. Who you are is more important than what you can do. Parents are the primary teachers, and the home is the primary classroom, so they need to model this way of growing and living by our principles, being as honest as we can and going after our best.”

At next week’s talk, said Gauld, “We hope to help parents realize this is the biggest job in their lives. Parenting is hard, but it’s do-able, it’s never too late, and we all need help. Parents, in our culture, are largely isolated, and a goal is to bring parents together so they realize they’re not alone—the things that are important to them are probably also important to other parents.”

She said parents have to have the honesty to share what’s really going on—the ups and the downs—“and not feel we have to pretend that everything is all right. Parenting is the big leagues; no matter how competent and capable you are in your public life, when it comes to parenting, everybody needs help.”

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