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Locals teens laud parenting program

By Roy Bernard
Journal writer

Laura Gauld has traveled all over the country providing parenting workshops, but she thinks the Kankakee area has some aspects that make it special.

"I see a real sense of family. It's great to see all of the dads here," she said. Laura and her husband, Malcolm, were recently at the Larson Fine Arts Center in Olivet Nazarene University to present their workshop called, "The Biggest Job We'll Ever Have."

Laura also added that every time she and her husband have the workshop, the majority of those in attendance are women.

This is the second time the Gaulds have come to the Kankakee area.

"There seems to be an ethical core here," she said. "There is a grounding here in principles, family and working hard."

One of the fathers who was impressed with the workshop was local certified public accountant Daniel Borschnack of Bourbonnais.

"It's very interesting," he said. "I think right now we (the family) want to build on some of these things. I definitely think we will use some of these things in our family."

At the end of the workshop, two teenagers gave testimonials on how the program had changed their relationships with their parents. Dave Baron, 16, explained that his parents, Debra and Dennis Baron, took part in the program because that's the type of thing his family would do. Debra is the director for the Pledge for Life partnership.

By following the guidelines

of the Gaulds' program, Dave said he saw another side of his father: one that could be vulnerable and emotional, especially when it had to do with the successes and failures of life.

"I found out he was still a great person. I want to be just like my dad," he said, then hugged his father as the audience applauded.

Another teen, Melissa Hoffman, daughter of Pam and Matt Hoffman, said she resisted being in the program, which consisted of a small group of families with students attending Bishop McNamara High School.

As she took part in the pioneer group, she learned that many of the other parents were saying the same things as her mom and dad. Since being in the program, Melissa said she has gained more respect for her parents.

Debra said the program is expanding now to include possibly as many as 40 families. She credited the work of Janus Azzarelli in making the parenting program into a success.

'Parenting: The Biggest Job'

Parents should look at maintaining established values and principles rather than focusing on tangible achievements and notable outcomes, according to "Parenting—The Biggest Job We'll Ever Have" a recent workshop attended by about 90 people at Olivet Nazarene University.

Malcolm and Laura Gauld, husband-and-wife faculty members for the nationally acclaimed Hyde School of Bath, Maine, presented the program.

Through a series of examples, many including their

own family, the Gaulds talked about ways for the family to reach a common goal, and for everyone to strive together:

- A person's character is created by forces that are sometimes fragmented in today's culture: family, school and teachers, church, community, Scouts programs, sports leagues and the neighborhood.

- Parents must let children develop their own real self-esteem, Laura said, because that can't be taken away.

In the Gaulds' workshop, they state that, "Either you believe that attitude is more important than aptitude; effort is more important than ability; character is more important than talent—or you do not."

- Rather than worrying about achievements, possessions and degrees, the attention should be on character, vision, strengths and obstacles.

- Families should establish principles rather than merely rules. Kids find their way around rules.

A principle is something that a family stands for and holds sacred. Each family should have its own principles, he said.

- Weekly family meetings are a way to let everyone be honest with each other about other family members who upset them during the week.

- Don't be a hypocrite. The Gaulds suggest that parents follow the principles of honesty, responsibility and integrity so that those ideals have meaning for the children.

- Support attitude over aptitude in education.

"There's a yearning where kids want to be somebody," Laura said. This is how status, cliques and pecking orders are

formed, and can result in some children being ridiculed. Those children could become despondent or violent, and she cited the massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., as a dramatic example.

- Let go of outcomes. Nevertheless, Malcolm said parents should aim high with discipline rather than settling for less.

- Daily chores: Each member of the family should commit to doing one particular thing each day, and sticking to it.

- Value failure. "The aptitude culture squeezes out the value of failure," Malcolm explained. He said a lot can be learned from failure, but often children are encouraged to avoid any circumstance that can lead to it.

Children need to have their own opportunities to learn from their dilemmas. We are in this life for the long run and need to be able to work through tough issues to fulfill our own potential.

- Keep your focus. Laura reminded the audience that each parent must reexamine what the family's focus should be and to keep the vision of what is important to the family.

- Create a character culture. Laura said each family member is required to have a job and must complete it.

- Have fun together. "Mandatory fun" means that each week, a member of the family gets to pick one activity to do, and everyone in the family must participate in it. If a child wants to see the "Pokemon" movie, then the rest of the family must go, too.

Those are the "rules."