

What's News

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You Don't Know for 20 Years

Two weeks ago we were sitting in a car outside of the gleaming green glass offices of DreamWorks Animation in Redwood City California. Later the same week we were sitting outside Nickelodeon Offices in Burbank. Approximately 12 years earlier Adam (our youngest son) had said he wanted to own his own comic book company. Charlie at 14 had said he wanted to make movies for a living. Knowing Charles as we do I'm sure he had been thinking about it for years prior to that pronouncement.

On May 18 Adam will graduate from Columbia College in Chicago with a degree in Film Animation. As some of you know Charlie was an Associate Producer on "Hell's Kitchen" for this season that just premiered and is now on to another producer gig doing features on fighters for UFC pay per view events.

This journey of raising two gifted, artistic sons has been an enlightening rollercoaster. We knew both boys were talented very yearly. Charlie drew an unbelievably complex car/ machine when he was 6 or 7 that garnered him an invitation from Lee Iacocca to visit the Chrysler Skunk Works. Adam spoke (and sometimes swore) like a 30 year old by age 5.

Susan being the brilliant person she is knew to get behind these talents the boys possessed and push. By "push" I don't mean force them into things or applying more pressure to "make something happen." There was plenty happening with these kids already. I do mean support them, provide exposure and opportunities when ever possible. I want you to know I was not raised to think of my sons going into the arts as a profession. This was not my natural bent. But I get ahead of myself.

Here is a partial list of the ways we supported the boy's talents and interests:

-Provided private art lessons to supplement what was not provided in school. Including lying to the Joe Kubert Cartooning School in NJ that Adam was 14 when he was 11 so he could take a correspondence course in comic book art.

-Took them to any plays we thought would hold their interest. Charlie saw Sondheim's "Into the Woods" at age 10 which he loved. We should have known then what Charles preferred level of complexity would be from that alone. He really loved Cats too.

-Fought viciously with every school the boys attended whether public or private any time their self-esteem was attacked by the school or an individual teacher. This was done on multiple occasions.

-We took Adam on the tour of Marvel Comics headquarters in NYC (Spiderman lead the tour). He was 12.

-Had both boys tested by Dr. Linda Silverman at the Gifted Development Center and followed her recommendation that they needed to be in a school for gifted kids especially in there younger years so they didn't feel weird. Found out Adam & Charlie were both gifted and learning disabled (dyslexic & auditory processing problem respectively).

-Found out that "artistically gifted" is one of the seven areas of giftedness separate from academically gifted and the boys had both.

-Found out that gifted kids end up in prison and abusing drugs far more than average kids. So we stopped drinking alcohol for 18 years to be clear role models.

-Learned all about comic books (though I thought they were totally stupid growing up.) We learned about Spawn and Image Comics and Todd McFarland to meet the boys where they already had interest.

-Took Adam to Second City in Chicago between his freshman and sophomore year of High School. Where at the end of a very funny performance during which he neither laughed nor spoke he finally turned to me and said, "This is what I want to do with my life."

-Subsequently in the summer after his junior year of High School he and a friend drove out to Chicago stayed in a hotel and spent 2 weeks in the high school program for Improv and Sketch Comedy writing at Second City.

-Flew Adam and Charlie back to Chicago 4 weeks later so Adam could audition for "Mean Girls" and so Charlie could see what a formal audition looked like and what his brother went through.

-Researched and found that Columbia College aside from having the largest film school in the world catered to the needs of the learning disabled.

-Made sure they knew how to give and accept acknowledgement in public and private. Had them both attend Productive Relationships so they knew how to listen and confront.

This is only a partial list designed to give you a flavor not a blow by blow of what it took.

My point is you do what you *believe* is right regardless of opposition from conventional wisdom, the schools, the odds, your own up bringing, family, your budget etc. NEVER KNOWING IF ANY OF IT IS GOING TO WORK OUT, TILL 20 YEARS LATER. What an act of faith and trust.

Listen to what your children's dreams and aspirations are from a very young age. They may know more about their future than you do. Beware of raising your children to fit into the world you have lived in rather than the world they will live in.

A few things we learned while on the journey:

Gifted kids need to be treated differently so they will make it or it is likely very bad things will befall them.

You will have to study what gifted means and all that comes with the package like: very high level of emotional expression, a love of arguing, a high level of sensitivity to themselves and others, morally bothered by the injustices of the world, more likely to fail at simple tasks than hard ones, they hate the tags in the back of their shirts, their obsession with wanting to know "why?" and "what's that smell?" and on and on. Just like with your gifted employees. They need special care and feeding or they fail and may damage themselves and take others down with them.

Little did we know that 25 years later it would lead to courses like **Smart People: Managing and Retaining Gifted Employees©. (see attached)** We just wanted to raise our kids appropriately to who they were and are, not according to a pre-prescribed notion of child rearing from the '50's. If you want to get a leg up on the world your kids are headed into read Richard Florida's groundbreaking book "The Rise of the Creative Class". It just happens to be the pre-work for **Smart People** as well.

Let us know what you think and what you have done to accommodate the giftedness around you at home and at work and/or what you have done to accommodate your own giftedness.

Congratulations are in Order

To Adam Van Vleet on his graduation from Columbia College and on winning one of the 2008 political cartoon awards from his college.

To Ivette Johnson & family on the birth of her son Sebastian Bali Cabrera on April 10. Sebastian was 8 lbs. 2.5 ozs. !

To Ernie Vazquez on his acceptance into the MIT Sloan Fellows Program Innovation and Global Leadership. Ernie is now in Boston.

To Liz Navas a WMF® graduate formally of P&G Venezuela on her retirement and new business: FIRST (First In Relocation Services and Tracking). Liz will be supporting transfers from any country to Spain. You can reach her at her new business via E-mail:
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Woman Moving Forward® Workshops for 2008

July 29-31 workshop has 6 spaces remaining and the **October 15-17** workshop has 7 spaces remaining. These workshops are filling up a head of schedule and there is limited space so please have all of your referrals in soon.

Training for Change Agents© June 3-6

This workshop is 4 days long and John and Susan lead it together. You will learn how to be effective change agents in side your company without burning out! There is limited space available so if you would like to attend call our office or E-mail us.

Smart People: Managing and Retaining Gifted Employees© July 22-24

This is our newest workshop. John and Susan co-lead this workshop that deals with one of the most difficult issue in hiring today: How do I hire the best and the brightest and then have them contribute to the company long term?

Many of you know the difficulty in attracting talent to your company. This course actually deals with how you best attract them and then retain them.

This workshop also helps parents who are dealing with gifted children.

The July workshop is 50% full.

Men Relationships and Work© September 23-25

For those of you who want a workshop for men like Women Moving Forward® is for women this is the workshop for you!

Many men are suffering needlessly with their own issues and this course assists them in relieving that suffering and in moving on more effectively in their lives.

John leads this workshop so if you would a man in your life to register have him call or e-mail John at our office.

NOTE: If you are interested in bringing any of our workshops to your company we would be happy to speak with you about that.

Or if your company wants to purchase a group of spaces in our public workshops and enjoy a larger discount contact us for more information. There is a corporate discount for companies that buy 10 or more spaces at a time. These spaces can be used for the same workshops or different workshops over a period of 1 year from the time of purchase.

****Also we offer spouse or partner discounts. If you have taken a course you would like your spouse or partner to take they can attend for half price. The only courses not included in this policy are the Women's Leadership Retreat and the Advanced Men's Course.**