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CHAT ROOM



DON MCLAUGHLIN

Popsy Bo Bopsy finds simple joys in life are best

Some things in life you can't put a price on - seeing a new life come into the world, watching children open presents, or just snuggling with a loved one.

I had such an experience just before Father's Day. My grandson, Austin, called his "Popsy-Bo-Bopsy" on an urgent matter.

The next morning, his kindergarten class was having a Father's Day celebration with handmade gifts, a class poem presentation, and refreshments. Austin's father could not get off work to attend, but grandfathers, brothers, uncles - mothers, too - were welcome if a dad could not attend.

Austin idolizes his father, and the two do many things together. They've built a playhouse, play basketball, catch, golf and even go roller blading together. Jim has the patience of Job when it comes to assembling Austin's zillion-piece Legos.

Jim was disappointed not being able to attend. Popsy-Bo-Bopsy would make a suitable substitute but in no way could he replace his father.

Austin lives in San Diego, and my wife, Bev, and I live in the Palm Springs area, a two-hour-15-minute drive. This being our only grandchild, how could we say no? He was overjoyed that he would have someone in his class room the next day.

The trek begins

Bev and I were off at 6 a.m. We arrived at 8:15, a full 35 minutes before Austin and I had to leave for his school. When it was time, a neighbor father and his two boys joined us for the walk. Austin proudly held my hand as we set out, however, he soon tired of this as he and his friends bounded ahead.

At school, his friends went to a different classroom. Austin once again, this time with authority, took my hand and proudly led me to his classroom.

The teacher greeted her students and guests.

Austin led me to his table and invited me to sit in one of the miniature chairs that can be comfortable only to a child, but not for a 245-pound adult. But sit I did.

On Austin's table lay a hand-crafted paper necktie, inscribed with a "Happy Father's Day" written only as a 6 year old can. He proudly said, "I made it for my father." I praised him for his effort and told him his uncle Michael made one something like it for me many years ago, and each year we hang it proudly on our Christmas tree as an ornament. Treasures such as that are meant to keep for a lifetime.

Austin also showed me another gift he made, carefully wrapped in white paper with a ribbon around it. Inside was a picture frame of Popsicle sticks. He cautioned me not to open it because it was for his father. I assured him that I wouldn't touch it.

The teacher invited all the children to the front of the room to recite their poem, with one line having them jump together in glee about our being there and the final line with arms outstretched for a hug to all - heart-warming enough to make a tear form in the corner of a father's eye, with the fathers, of course, hoping no one would notice.

Everyone lined up for doughnuts, orange juice or chocolate milk. The teacher greeted each parent as he reached the head of the line. I told her about Austin's emergency call and our trip to San Diego. She thanked me for coming.

When everyone had eaten, the children sat on the floor in preparation for a presentation by one of the fathers. He's a stockbroker by day but on weekends is a race car driver. He brought along a racing seat, seat belts and helmet for his demonstration. He kept his presentation directed towards safety and how the children should also practice safety in a car, bicycle, skateboard, scooter or anything else with wheels.

The big event in Austin's life - in an hour it was over, but he was happy.

The day was not over yet. My wife, daughter and I drove to nearby La

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Coming together

St. Alexander's parish family celebrates 40 years

BY MARY RODRIQUE
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The Servant Church of St. Alexander celebrated its 40th anniversary June 24, and parishioners old and new were there to mark the occasion.

St. Alexander's is part of a metropolitan Detroit congregation study sponsored by the Michigan State University Anthropology Department and paid for by a grant from the Lilly Foundation.

Two Baptist churches, two Lutheran congregations and a United Church of Christ are also in the study.

"Basically, they wanted to find out what made us tick," said Carol Hart Belloli, St. Alexander's church secretary. "The purpose was to build awareness of what we're all about."

What the MSU study found was a church family deeply committed to community outreach. About 600 families are registered in the parish, on Shiawassee near Inkster.

"One of the things we did a few years back, the parish bought a couple vans for the Detroit Refugee Coalition," Belloli said. "Then the usual things: (outreach at) nursing homes, prisons, the St. Vincent de Paul (Society), 5 percent off the top (collections) for people in emergency situations, food pantry. Many other churches do these things, but we smell and we do it, too."

The Rev. Jim Wright has been the pastor since 1975. He grew up in the parish, which was established in 1961.

The Rev. Joseph Ryder was its first pastor, serving from 1961-66. His predecessor was the Rev. Albert Kolch, who served from 1966 until his death in 1975.

"Father Jim was asked to come help



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BREKLER

Greeting: The sign of peace is no perfunctory handshake, but a greeting that continues for nearly 10 minutes.

in 1973," explained Belloli. "When Father Kolch passed away, Father Jim took over."

Many charter members attended the anniversary celebration.

There was a well-attended Mass at 10 a.m. co-celebrated by Ryder, now 80 years old, and Wright. The Mass featured liturgical dancing performed by church members. Sister Colette, assistant to Wright since 1975, shared the homily in a reminiscence of parish history.

A strawberry social immediately followed on the church grounds. Children played games on the lawn while the adults mingled.

"There was a strawberry social the first year St. Al's came to be," Belloli said. "That's kind of an earmark. We liked it. It's not pricey - something everyone can attend."

St. Alexander's is also part of the Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance. It's the only suburban parish in the consortium, which works with 10 Detroit parishes to support the work of the city.

Mentoring business people, improving race relations, educational development, substance abuse programs and helping financially strapped people get into their own homes is the work of the alliance.

The alliance has bought and renovated 65 houses to date. The failure rate has been minuscule, according to Belloli.

"It's non-denominational," she added. "Again, that shows our parish is eager to respond."



Communion: Father Jim offers the Host to Andre Foster.



Prayer: Lydia Dilorio leans on her dad Joe, while he meditates.



Praise: A group of liturgical dancers: Jessica Marinucci, Crystal Roxas and Arcel Roxas interpret the responsorial psalm "You Are Near."



Strawberry social: Michelle Campbell and son Niklas enjoy cold ice cream on a warm day.



Left: Ben and Ann Lindamood show photos of their first grandchild, Riley Ann Argonis, to Father Jim.



Yum: Colleen Nordstrom feeds ice cream to son Garrett, held by Matt Williams, former choir director.