

Go Parents Go!

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Years ago, "The Far Side" cartoonist Gary Larson had a particularly hilarious and insightful cartoon titled "Hopeful Parents."

In the drawing, a mom and dad gaze admiringly at their goofball son, who's planted on the floor in front of a TV while he plays video games. The parents are shown dreaming of a Help Wanted section that shows all the job possibilities that await their video-gamer:

- "Nintendo expert needed, \$50,000 salary + bonus."
- "Looking for good Mario Brothers Player, \$100,000 plus your own car."
- "If you have 50,000 hours of video game experience, we need you!"

We were reminded of this cartoon by a story reporter Gary Demuth and photographer Jeff Cooper produced for our Sunday Life section.

The story, "Joy of reading," was about the Turn a Page, Touch a Mind program that, through Kansas pediatricians, provides developmentally appropriate free books to parents with children from ages 6 months to 5 years of age.

To promote the program, doctors' offices give each child under their care a new developmentally appropriate book each wellness checkup. Those begin at 6 months and continue until the child is 5 and ready to enter kindergarten.

The program was begun in 2003 by the Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and was based on a national program called "Reach Out and Read." The program was brought to Salina in 2004 by Salina pediatricians Edgar Rosales and Shashi Sharma.

The idea is to encourage parents to consistently read to their children during the most crucial development years, from 6 months to 5 years.

"The program was created as much for the parents as it is for children," Rosales said. "It creates an interaction between parents and their children. Hopefully, it will encourage parents to go out and buy more books for their children."

Kids who are read to as children are more likely to develop larger vocabularies and read better as they get older.

The payoff becomes more substantial as the child progresses through their education. The ability to digest large amounts of material becomes particularly critical at the college level.

There is something almost magical about having your child sit next to you or on your lap as you read to them, whether it's "Go Dog Go!" "Sneetches," or maybe a Clifford or Curious George tale.

Even if you don't enjoy reading yourself, you can get closer to your children and help them appreciate reading by reading to them.

Or, you can hand your child the TV remote and the game controller and dream of the day that you'll see this ad in the Help Wanted section:

"Super Mario Brothers Expert, \$95,000 yr., four-day work week + Ferrari."

-- Ben Wearing, Executive Editor

member of the Editorial Board

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