

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVES: Bringing up children

By Stephen Somerville

We all know that raising children is not easy.

It is especially hard for a single mom or dad.

I saw the following article on-line recently on Yahoo news that I thought I would share as it is an example of real good parenting.

The title of the article: 'Mom's unique punishment for 13 year old son goes viral.'

I have edited the original story to fit in this space.

When Demetris Payne saw a missed call from her son's junior high school, she knew something was wrong.

With a sigh, the single mom of four from Shreveport, Louisiana, called back. A school official said her 13-year-old son Jadarien was suspended for three days for talking back to his teacher. She was told to pick him up right away.

'Three days seems kind of harsh -- why not do in-school suspension?' Payne asked.

But since Jadarien had been in trouble once before, they said he had to leave.

As soon as the pair got home, Payne took away her son's cellphone and video games. She left him with her 70-year-old father who lives with them.

'When I got home from work he's eating strawberries and having fun with my dad,' Payne told CBS News. 'I was like, 'Oh no.' It was like a vacation.'

Payne knew she needed to do more to discipline him.

So she handed him a rake and asked him to start cleaning up the yard. When he was finished, she told him he'd be volunteering his lawn care services free of charge for people in need during the remainder of his suspension.

'He didn't believe it,' Payne said. 'I can be soft on him and baby him sometimes.'

But Payne was serious. She posted a photo of Jadarien on Facebook with the heading, 'Yard service - FREE,' explaining that he got suspended from school and would mow lawns, pick up trash or wash cars for members of the community over the next three days.

Within hours, Payne got requests from several residents taking her up on the offer.

So she drove Jadarien from house to house. She stood by the car and watched him work. He mowed lawns, picked up pine needles and raked leaves.

'He didn't complain the whole time,' Payne said.

Jadarien spent about two hours cleaning up the yards. He ended up hitting at least eight different homes. When he was finished, Payne took him to the library, where he spent the rest of the day reading and completing homework assignments.

'We explained to him that these chores weren't to punish, punish, punish, but to teach him a lesson and teach him about discipline,' Payne said. 'No matter if the teacher is right or wrong -- always respect your teachers, respect adults.'

On Tuesday, Jadarien was happy to finally head back to school.

Payne sat down with Jadarien's teachers to help come up with a plan to keep him on track. However, she's confident Jadarien learned his lesson.

Hundreds of people have shared Payne's Facebook post over the past week, many praising her for her unique approach to discipline.

'Beautiful idea! Parenting done right,' one Facebook user commented.

'Raising your child to learn consequences for unacceptable behavior falls under good parenting 101,' another wrote.

Payne said she hopes her other kids -- ages 3, 8 and 17 -- also learned something from Jadarien's experience. But if she has to do it all over again, she will.

'Single parents, do not give up. Keep encouraging your child. When one avenue doesn't work try another avenue. Get to the root of the problem,' she advised.

On a different but more humorous note: Reading the above article made me harken back to that day 34 years ago when my dad wanted to ensure that his sons completed a chore.

I was 18 at the time, and my one brother was one 17, while the other was 12 years old.

It was a Saturday in December and it had been snowing all the previous night. My dad was going to work and he said that 'we had better get the snow shoveling done before he got home from work.'

My brothers and I were all in the living room watching television when my dad came home around 5 p.m. that Saturday.

We can see my dad get out of the car, walk up the drive way and stop to pick up something that is hanging from the mailbox. As dad is walking into the house he is reading the document that he retrieved from the mailbox.

We hear him beginning to swear out loud. He walks into the living room very angry. He then reads us the invoice from the town that stipulates that we have to pay a \$150 fine for the town shoveling our drive way today.

He is giving us hell, while we are trying to keep straight faces. We then slowly begin to laugh.

He intones: "What are you idiots laughing about? I told you three times before I left this morning that the shoveling needed to be done."

We then asked him if he had taken a good look at the invoice.

Earlier in the day, my two brothers had used a calligraphy set and made up the invoice while I had shoveled the snow. My brothers then put a bow on it to make it look "official".

If I recall, we even issued the invoice in the name of Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion "with her "real" signature on it!

My dad shook his head "You three are still idiots " but that was a good one!" as we all had a great laugh!

We still tease Dad about this to this today.

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