

## **Healthwatch: Helicopter Parents** **Ann Pinning, Parish Nurse**

*Helicopter Parents* is a phrase coined by universities who noted that students' parents were "hovering" over their children—managing their class schedules, doing their homework for them, disputing grades and handling any number of issues on the child's behalf—all with the intent of providing the best education and most opportunity for their child. The helicopter parent has been said to be a Baby Boomer born between 1955-1965 with children born between 1990-1995. However, it is obvious that the next generation of parents (Gen X) are following suite and falling into this dangerous trap of over-managing their children's lives.

A helicopter parent is one who tends to choose their child's friends, steps into settle disputes that their child is involved in, assumes their child is never at fault, fixes their child's mistakes—you get the idea. Ultimately the helicopter parent works to prevent their child from experiencing any negative in their life. It is natural for parents to be protective, especially in this world that can be unkind, dangerous, and unjust. But what we as parents might forget, is that in an effort to protect our children from harm and injustices, we are causing them more hardship. We are preventing them from learning to handle conflict, to manage stress, and to problem solve. Instead, our children might find themselves poorly equipped to function independently in this world. Stacy Boyd, founder of the *Savvy Source for Parents*, said it well: "Our hardest responsibility as parents is to prepare our children for a world that is not always kind and gentle and accommodating. Oftentimes, we try to protect them from its ugliness. But the better the job we do of giving them tools to handle hardship, the better equipped our children will be to thrive in the world they inherit."

If you are one of those parents who feel it necessary to protect your children by "hovering", consider resolving to allow your child to experience some of life's pains, knowing that these pains are sometimes required for growth:

- Avoid rescuing your child from each mistake or uncomfortable occurrence and allow your child to pay consequences for poor decisions, irresponsibility, and disobedience.
- Don't be afraid to deny your child—whether it is something they want to buy or something they want to do. Children can learn valuable lessons from learning to sacrifice, or live without.
- Follow the principle of "less is more". Teach your child good stewardship of what she does have. This is especially important in these difficult economic times.

Finally, be faithful. Children learn best by modeling behavior. When you live a faith-filled life, then your children quickly learn that God is the first one to turn to when faced with trial. Daily prayer and regular attendance at church and Sunday school reinforces the development of this faith. What an advantage our children at Ramona Lutheran School have, for they see this faithful behavior modeled daily at school. It is so important for our church family to actively support the day school and children's ministry program at church for they play such an important role in our children's lives!

*"Impress (these commandments) on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up," Deuteronomy 6:7.*