

Bragging Rights

A proud parent finally unloads about how great her kids really are



By Kelli Wheeler
Momservations

Do you know how difficult it is to be given carte blanche to write a parenting column and not use 830 words to flat-out gush about how wonderful and amazing your kids are?

Trust me, it's hard. I've conscientiously tried not to use my column as a platform to shamelessly brag about my kids.

To ward off temptation, I've got a fuchsia sticky note on my computer screen that reads: "Nobody Likes a Braggart."

Just for good measure, I've got one below it in bright blue that says: "That Means You, Kelli."

But you know what? I just can't contain myself any longer. I am Lake Pontchartrain and my levees of humility can't contain my parental pride any longer. Hang on because we're about to have a structural collapse of good manners in polite society.

Did you know my son, Logan, math genius, straight-A student, Geography Bee finalist and athletic behemoth, made his baseball all-star team for the second consecutive year in a row

(first year as a 9-year-old!) and scored the tournament winning goal in his soccer game? He also walked at 9 months old, spoke his first sentence at 16 months and rode a bike with no training wheels at 3 1/2 years.

And you know my 9-year-old daughter, Whitney? The one who's in GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) and is a talented and prolific writer with the reading level of an eighth-grader and vocabulary of President Barack Obama? When she's not excelling at any sort of water sport or scoring goals as a star on the Mudhoneys, she is starring on stage at her annual school talent show, bringing the house down with her charismatic singing and dancing. Following in her brother's footsteps, she walked at 10 months, was singing songs at 16 months, and also rode a two-wheeler at 3 1/2 years.

Whew! I feel much better! Usually, I only unleash like that in front of the kids' grandparents. Thank goodness for Mom and Dad, who can't hear enough about how fabulous their grandkids are. Otherwise, I'd be tackling perfect strangers so I could pin them down and make them listen to my children's latest accomplishments.

With friends, you just can't do that without it seeming like you're comparing your kids to theirs. Even though we know it's considered boorish to openly brag about our kids, can we help it that it's all we really want to do? In reality, as proud parents we'd just love to open conversations with our kids' achievements or plow through

conversations with one-upmanship highlights.

Instead, we find subtle ways to sneak the information out there like it's just a passing lane marker on the Highway of No Big Deal.

"Nobody Likes a Braggart."

"Billy's getting too big for his clothes? Logan, too! He barely fits in last year's all-star baseball uniform. We had to get him adult small for this year's all-star team jersey. Have you tried those pants with adjustable elastic for Billy?"

"Suzy's doing Buzzardball camp? So is Whitney! Don't you just love the talent show and all the cute acts? I was so surprised when Whitney decided to perform an original song she wrote to win last year's show. Is Suzy having fun at camp?"

Of course, we know we're not fooling anyone with the slipping in of latest kid stats like Perez Hilton name-drops. But we let it slide and don't call anyone out because it's what we all do. We hit-and-run brag before someone has a chance to report the crime.

And if we're lucky, like a good Neighborhood Watch, word will spread without having to brag crash every conversation.

"Did you hear David hit a home run over the fence at Valley Oak?"

"I heard Katie got up on a wakeboard first try at Englebright Lake."

"Did you know Molly is a really good softball pitcher?"

"I heard Aiden's baseball team got third place in the tournament of champions."

"Isn't it amazing that Hannah's 25-meter butterfly is as fast as her 25-meter freestyle?"

From the moment our infant first smiles, our baby says her first word, our toddler takes his first step, our preschoolers first write their name, we as parents want to shout it from the rooftops that our children are amazing, brilliant and absolutely awe-inspiring.

And why shouldn't we? It is one of the great joys of parenting to witness our children's achievements and then burst with absolute pride over it. It makes all the hard work in between seem inconsequential. Good news is meant to be shared. So don't be ashamed to share it.

You might want to watch the delivery, though. Jumping up and down, screaming at the top of your lungs in the bleachers, "That's my kid! That's my kid who just hit a grand slam! Woo-hoo, Logan!" might be just a bit uncouth.

Do me a favor: Pretend like you never saw me and spread the word, OK?

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