

# Discussions about violence can help parents get to know kids better

Kids can learn more from the recent shooting in schools than just "be wary of classmates with suspicious behavior."

"Parents should talk to their children about troublesome classmates, but also about their fears and the complex social situations that can lead to violence," said Dr. Ernest Fruge, a psychologist at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Cancer Center in Houston.

Summer vacation offers parents a chance to have thoughtful discussions with their kids and to get to know them better. Research has shown that the kids who are least likely to engage in

dangerous behavior, such as carrying guns, are those who feel loved and appreciated at home and school.

"Parents who listen to their children's thoughts, feelings, and concerns show that their kids are important to them," said Fruge, Baylor assistant professor of family and community medicine and pediatrics. "These discussions can help parents understand the way their children see the world and respond to social situations that might lead to frustration, anger, and violence."

For example, the high school students in Colorado who went on a shooting spree apparently had been

ridiculed for being different. Fruge recommends that parents ask their children not just whether any students have been making threats, but also how people treat one another at school. Ask whether any students are often made fun of, and how other students and teachers respond.

"If children admit they participated in the teasing, the natural reaction of many parents might be to immediately say, 'You shouldn't do that,'" Fruge said. "But this immediate reaction might send a message that you are not really interested in their world—you only want to correct them."

Asking the child to discuss the social pressure that led them to join into the verbal harassment can lead to a more meaningful conversation, Fruge said. "Your child might go on to tell you, 'Gee, if I don't go along with the crowd, they might have started making fun of me, too.'" You now have a better understanding of their world, and that's a major accomplishment for any parent."

Such deep discussions can serve as a springboard for kids to think through social situations, reflect on their values, and figure out other ways to respond, with parental guidance. Fruge suggests questions such as:

\*Why do people make fun of others? Is it fair?

\*How would you feel if you were the one being ridiculed?

\*How do you think the ridiculed person's life might change if no one made fun of him or her?

"Through ongoing frank conversations, parents can help their kids develop moral reasoning in line with the family's values. For example, they can lead kids to realize that ridiculing others is like picking a fight with someone smaller," Fruge said. "To encourage independent thinking, a parent might ask, 'How far would you go to be a part of a group? Would you beat someone up to join?'"

With thought-provoking questions, parents can guide their kids to think and act more maturely. In the process, parents are likely to get to know their children better and feel more secure about their kids' ability to make good decisions and reduce their safety risks, Fruge said.

## Reliant Energy merges HL&P, Entex

Reliant Energy has merged the operations of its HL&P and Entex units into a single division in the greater Houston metropolitan area only.

Apart from providing improvements in day-to-day customer service in the Houston area, the move will have no appreciable affect on Reliant Energy Entex natural gas service to customers in its other operating areas. Those include South Texas, East Texas, Beaumont, Louisiana and Mississippi Divisions.

The new Houston division, which

will be called Reliant Energy HL&P/Entex Metro, will provide both electric and gas utility services in the area where the two units have overlapping Houston area service territories.

Those parts of the Entex service territory outside the greater Houston area will function as a separate unit, which will continue to be known as Reliant Energy Entex.

As part of the changes, Dean Liollio has been named president of Reliant Energy Entex, replacing Robert Jones, who will assist in the transition

to the new organization through the date of his previously announced retirement.

Liollio was formerly Vice President and Division Manager of the Houston Division of Entex. Prior to that position, he was Vice President and Division Manager of the South Texas/Texas Coast Division, based in New Braunfels. He has been with the company for 16 years, and holds a degree in industrial engineering from Texas A&M University.

"We're striving to continuously enhance the service we provide in order to ensure our customers' satisfaction," said Liollio.

As part of the formation of the new Metro Division, the operations of Reliant Energy Entex's Coast divisional operating area will now be functionally a part of the new division for internal reporting purposes.

At the same time, Reliant Energy announced that Thomas R. Standish has been named President of the combined Metro Division. A 16-year employee of the company, Standish formerly served as Senior Vice President of Distribution Customer Service for HL&P. A native of Houston, he holds a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Texas.

"The goal is to improve the quality of service we provide our customers," said David M. McClanahan, President of the Reliant Energy Delivery Group, which oversees the operations of the company's electric and gas distribution units. "For example, one of our first steps will be to consolidate meter reading, immediately reducing the

number of meter readers entering our customers' yards.

"Over the coming year, more operational functions will be consolidated for increased customer convenience, including billing, customer service and credit. Once our customer service function is consolidated late next year, we'll be a one-call operation. Whether you need to discuss your natural gas or electric needs, or move or relocate service, one will do it all," McClanahan said.

Until those changes are implemented, customers can continue to reach customer service representatives for electricity and natural gas at the numbers listed in their phone books.

Other Reliant Energy Delivery Group changes announced include the naming of Wayne D. Stinnett Jr., as Senior Vice President of Support Services; Johnny L. Blua, Senior Vice President of Operations Services; and James S. Brian, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

The Reliant Energy Delivery Group also oversees the operation of Reliant Energy Arkla, which provides local natural gas delivery services in Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, and Reliant Energy Minnegasco, which provides local gas delivery in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, area.

Reliant Energy (NYSE:REI), based in Houston, is a diversified international energy company with \$11.5 billion in annual revenue and assets totaling more than \$19 billion.


Reliant Energy's three natural gas (See Reliant, Page 8)



Winners in the first grade relay were, from left, Alex Cardenas, Mercedes Ornelas, Dynasty Johnson and Javier Leal. Along with students is their teacher, Mrs. Janish.



Third grade relay winners were, from left, Rogelio Montiel, Jeffrey Keith, Jocelyn Stovall and Terrika Jackson. With them substituting for Mrs. Corman is substitute teacher Becky Lobpries. ELPS Photos



## Foot Facts


By Dr. Eric R. Tepper, Podiatrist

### BUNIONS


Bunions are one of the most common foot ailments. These red, swollen, sometimes painful bumps near the big toe are a result of hallux valgus, a condition where the big toe rotates toward the second toe. Genetics and shoes can play a role in the development of bunions. The inherited shape and mechanics of some feet make them prone to bunions. Wearing tight or ill-fitting shoes is a major cause of bunions. If a bunion causes persistent pain, a podiatrist may prescribe orthotics (special shoe inserts). Another option is surgical correction. There are more than 100 different surgical treatments of bunions, many of which require the foot and leg to be in a cast and immobilized, perhaps for weeks.

It is important that bunions be recognized early and evaluated by a podiatrist. He or she can then offer several suggestions on controlling the cause of the bone deformity so that symptoms do not arise or become more severe. Recommendations may include exercise, a change in footwear, orthotics, medication, and surgery. Let us do what we do best - diagnose and treat your particular foot problems with compassion, knowledge, and up-to-date equipment and techniques. Call 234-5571, at Rice Medical Center. I am there every Tuesday.

P.S. To relieve pain associated with bunions, wear shoes with wide toe boxes and good insoles, try an anti-inflammatory like aspirin, place cold compresses on the area, or soak the foot.



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Mrs. Bradley couldn't seem to get enough parents involved in the school even though she

really, really, really, really, really, really tried.

When adults run out of ideas, they can feel as frustrated as kids. Connect For Kids has thousands of resources for helping children in your community. For more information, call 1-888-544-KIDS.

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Guidance for Grown-Ups

