



When Kids are Champions: Noticing Moments of Courage, Caring and Character

By Stephanie Meegan for Tri-Town Council

These days I feel like Harry Potter trying-on his Cloak of Invisibility. As I become older, it seems I, too, am becoming less visible, especially to young people.

Fortunately, as I embrace semi-retirement and this Cloak of Invisibility, the less frenetic pace has enabled magic to flow and opportunities to notice and appreciate more.

The magic comes from savoring small things ... things I might have overlooked, like examining up-close the delicate translucence of a spring flower, or the simple pleasure of chatting with a shopkeeper in the off-season, or diving deeply into a compelling new interest.

But for me, the most exquisite magic is sparked when noticing children and teens in the process of becoming. As my dad got older he often said with a touch of awe in his voice, "Look how beautiful young people are." I realize now that he wasn't alluding to their wrinkle-free faces or youthful vigor, but rather he was bearing witness to their potential energy, the essence emerging from each child, teen or young adult he encountered.

We don't have to be an octogenarian to appreciate kids in the process of becoming. Each of us can press "pause" long enough to notice when a young person: shows compassion; sticks with something that is hard, dares to be different, contributes to a team effort, seeks justice, welcomes another, tries something new, takes a principle-grounded stand, owns a mistake, works through a tough problem, overcomes disappointment, shares credit, plays fairly, or respects differences.

TTC programs this year provided lots of opportunities to explore how we can make time for what matters most. We considered many specific strategies for handling stress in healthy, life affirming ways. These themes resonated in the screenings and discussions of the documentary *Race to Nowhere*, and the readings we explored together in the *Path of the Courageous Parent* series.

Bottom Line: Being stressed-out and frenetically busy is not the same as being effective. We all need reminders to shift attention away from time-, energy-, resource-wasting activities. It is not easy and it takes discipline and mindfulness. But committing to doing **just one thing** each week to simplify and maintain focus on your "first things" will improve the quality of your life. It will give you and your family room to breathe. Summer might be a good time to test this out.

Whenever we slow down, breathe and notice a young person in his/her struggles or small victories of courage, caring and character we are saying: "I see you. You matter." If we bear witness to these moments that are so essential to growth we are building the resilient champion within each child.

For now, I'm OK with creeping invisibility, because in my old age I'm becoming more like my dad. And in those luminous moments when I really see a kid, the cloak slips just a bit and I, too, am seen.

Stephanie Meegan has provided educational services for teachers, administrators, parents, and law enforcement and healthcare professionals for thirty years. She has offered numerous Tri-Town Council programs which support developmental assets and build the resiliency of Tri-Town youth. For more about Stephanie, go to www.stephaniemeegan.com.

For more about Tri-Town Council, go to www.tritowncouncil.org or check out [TTC's Facebook page](#) for great parenting resources.

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