



## Would Someone Please Listen to the Children?

Debbie Hay, Children and Family Pastor LifePoint Church

One warm sunny day last fall I remember as I strolled through the Queen Creek Mall, ok it was Wal-

Mart, I found myself behind a male and female adult couple, completely consumed in each other's dialogue.

Laughing and talking, arms around each other, they did not give attention to a 3 or 4 year-old who was struggling to keep pace three steps behind them. This young girl was happily attempting to share the great news of finding a treasure, a penny! The little girl who was visibly excited desperately wanted to share the good news, "Mom, look what I found, look what I found" was repeated five times (I counted). Still no attention was directed her way. Not even an acknowledgement that she was with them. I thought to myself, "It's a good thing this girl knows how to keep up, even if it doesn't appear to be that easy for her. I can hear the Wal-Mart loud speaker now, "We have a lost parent, please come to the customer service area right away; your child is waiting."

Ugh! Ignoring a child irritates me! Now, I can say that I am not perfect and have not always heard my children call my name ...in fact in public both my 20 and 16-year old holler, "Ms Debbie" when they want to be sure to gain my attention (they also know it makes me laugh) because "mom" doesn't cut it. You see, because I am with children every day, I regularly hear the name "mom" and typically it does not reference me!

In the past few years, I have become increasingly aware of the busy parents who fail to listen or notice their children.

## Alone in San Tan: The Search for Community

Mark Krenz, D.Min.

One year ago my pregnant wife Shannon and I along with our 10 month old daughter Miana pulled into the driveway of our new life in San Tan. We were 1600 miles from the close friendships we had forged for the past 10 years. Our closest family members were 1200 miles away. We knew no one, but hey, this is sunny Arizona. Life is perfect here. Then why, after several months, were we still lonely and feeling isolated?



In this past year virtually every person I talk to mentions how difficult it is to connect with people out here. The say things like, "the most we see of our neighbors is the taillights of their car as the garage door closes behind them." "We've been out here for two years and don't really know anyone." One of our neighbor couples down the street, having moved here for the healthier weather, sunshine, big house with a pool, and new opportunities, moved back to the deep freeze of the windy city because they were lonely and missed the support of family and close friends.

I was determined that my family and I would make a life out here and that we would experience great friendships and community life. Just one year later, I can say that we are well on our way. Experiencing great friendships, community and belonging, though, didn't just find us, we had to pursue it. Each of us has to find our own way to this. This is how we did it. Maybe some of these things will work for you. Leave the house. Turn off the TV. Venture out. Stop and talk to your neighbors. Go out of your way to say hi. Offer to help with yard work or lend out tools. We take family

When children feel they have something important to say and they are repeatedly ignored or tuned out by insensitive or "too busy" adults, they usually do one of two things (Pitzer, 2006):

- 1) The child may give up and quit trying. The result is a child who does not communicate well. This stifles the growth of mind, personality, and ability, and prevents the development of self-confidence; or
- 2) The child may misbehave (being noisy, fussy, or whiny) to get the attention he or she cannot get in any other way. This behavior will usually get the attention of the adult, but may cause the adult to punish the child as well.

Neither of these reactions is desirable.

It's time to give kids a safe place to be heard.

Are we listening or are we just talking? For practical steps on how to listen to your child check out this Website: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/specializations/youthdevelopment/components/6141-10.html>

~Debbie Hay

Church isn't boring anymore. Debbie Hay is the Children and Family Pastor of LifePoint Church. The children's program, KidzLife, is specifically designed for children Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade who learn the fundamentals of the Christian faith in the context of relationships. [Every volunteer is aggressively screened and monitored which includes fingerprinting, full background checks and ongoing surveillance.] KidzLife: The Best Hour of your Kid's Week! Check it out every Sunday at either 9:00am or 10:45am at Copper Basin School or for more information check out [www.lifepointpeople.com](http://www.lifepointpeople.com) click on KidzLife.

walks or bike rides almost every day. Go the local park and actually talk to the people there. Share names with each other and some of your story. We also go to the community pool at pretty consistent days and times. It's amazing how often others do the same thing. Once again, take the initiative to talk and say hi and have your kids play together. Over labor day, my wife and I hosted a BBQ at the park and invited some of the people we had met in the first several months of being here. It was awesome to have about 30 people hanging out together.

Get into the community. I avoid the bank drive-through. Instead, I go inside, meet the tellers, and talk to Brett, the manager. Frequent the same restaurants and shops, get to know your waiters and cashiers by name. Work out at the YMCA and make friends. I joined the San Tan Area Chamber of Commerce and meet many others like me who are trying to establish their business or services in the community. Regularly attend one of the several great churches we have out here and let them know who you are. Meet the people. Get connected. Serve on a team in the church. Get off the sidelines.

Get involved doing something you love. Volunteer. I decided one way to have fun and meet people is to coach a YMCA soccer team of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade kids. We have a blast at practice and games. I'm also getting to know many of the parents. We have team parties. It's awesome. I also started a simple pick-up soccer club in Johnson Ranch that plays every Sunday at 4pm. We're a very international bunch. Some great friendships are developing, not only between the players, but between the spouses and kids that come to watch and hang out with each other on the sidelines.

Participate in community events. We've meet many people at the first Saturday of the month Swap Meet at Skyline Ranch K-8, at the annual Winterfest, local block watch meetings, neighborhood events, school gatherings, church events, MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) gatherings (okay,

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that one's just for my wife), etc.

Now, one year later, we know many of my neighbors by name. This last week I lent Kelsey my ladder and Laura my saw. Yesterday, I borrowed Ray's leaf blower. Rich and Kelly are giving me some furniture. I look forward to talking to Marie who works at the pool. I had lunch at San Tan Flat with Bruce, who's retired and lives out here. Abby and Coty who work there always say hi to me by name. Peter and Tasha, who's daughter Lyndsy I coach, have become great friends and partners in starting our church. At the chamber of commerce I met Harry who is now our pest control guy and Tim who has become a good friend and our financial advisor. Others we live along side are people like Principles John and Kacy, Jody from the Johnson Ranch association, John at Anthem, neighbors Joe and Peggy, Mike and Lorraine, the crazy kids like Jasmine and Maraya and their parents from the Y soccer team, Adam and Zach from the swap meet, Jack and other leaders from the chamber, great guys from the soccer club like Rico, Oscar, Mario, Sam, Kent and others, and all those fun folks like Renee, Kim, Heath and Vali from ONE Community Church, etc.

What a difference a year makes. It took and will continue to take some effort and initiative, but we love experiencing living in community right here in San Tan. It's so worth it. I look forward to meeting you and your family around here some time. Maybe I'll see you at the pool, on the soccer field, at the bank, or at church. Make sure to stop and say, "Hey Mark!"

Dr. Mark Krenz is Lead Pastor at **ONE Community Church**, a new church for people who don't like church. You can hear Mark speak every week at ONE which meets in the outdoor courtyard at San Tan Flat restaurant/saloon on Sundays at 9:30a. Check out [www.discoverONE.net](http://www.discoverONE.net) for more info or email [mark@discoverONE.net](mailto:mark@discoverONE.net).