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COMMUNITY



Coach Michael Sharer encourages Jayce Bevins, 5, during a T-ball game in Bristol Township.

KIM WEIMER / PHOTOJOURNALIST

Modern dads

Meet four fathers who have become positive role models to their families and communities.

By **DEBRA WALLACE**
CORRESPONDENT

Fathers today are fighting a battle that dads in the past didn't even envision — social media.

Heck, most families didn't even have a computer in the house in 1990. The Department of Labor Statistics shows that between 1990 and 1997, the percentage of households owning computers increased from 15 percent to 35 percent.

Times have changed. Most of the

kids born in the '90s not only have a computer in their home, but also one in their cellphone. A 2013 Pew Research study found that 93 percent of teens had a computer or access to one at home, and 78 percent had a cellphone. Half of them have a phone with internet access, and, therefore, access to social media.

"Today's fathers are a different breed than the ones who came before them," said Steven Rosenberg, a

certified behavioral therapist in Elkins Park. "When they look at what's happening around them — social media, cyberbullying and so much negativity — they have to take a step up to help their children thrive, grow and feel good about themselves."

Rosenberg, 70, who has 35 years of experience as a therapist and has a doctorate degree, said that the current climate is filled with myriad anxieties.

"In today's world you need someone to respect, look up to and want to follow in his footsteps," he said. "So, that's where the dads of today have emerged."

We talked to some fathers whose kids look up to them with admiration for not only steering them away from the negative by spending time with them, but also by showing compassion to others and giving of themselves to the community.

Homeless shelter volunteer and T-ball dad: Michael Sharer

Michael Sharer, 35, watched his grandmother Joan and mother, Kathryn, volunteer for many community causes when he was a young boy, and while they never specifically told him to follow their lead, somehow he says that it just felt right.



KIM WEIMER/
PHOTOJOURNALIST

Sharer, of Levittown, whose own father, Robert, died before his ninth birthday, is the father of Julianna, 13, Lily, 7, and Michael Jr., 4. "Being a father truly fills my life with joy. My kids keep me young and active," he said.

"I am reliving the best part of my childhood. I love coaching them, teaching them, and guiding them through life," he said. "I love my children for

their strengths and for their weaknesses; all of it is certainly a pleasure."

As the T-ball coach for his youngest child's team, Sharer is teaching by example. He is also going to school to become an emergency medical technician.

In February, Sharer began volunteering two days a week at the Bucks County Emergency Homeless Shelter in Levittown, four hours each day, willing to do whatever is needed.

"Helping people makes me a happier man," he said. "I do my best to guide my children to what are the right life choices, and to me there is nothing better than leading by example."

Those who work with him at the shelter applaud his sentiment. "Michael is kind and understanding, and he always has something positive to say to the residents at the shelter," said Luz Rivera, the shelter's resident life supervisor. "He brings a smile to their faces."



Keith Grimes answers questions about an upcoming Boy Scouts excursion.

PHOTO BY
WILLIAM
THOMAS CAIN

Lead assistant Troop 3 Scoutmaster: Keith Grimes

Keith Grimes, a mechanical engineer for the U.S. Navy for 28 years, works on compressed air systems on submarines. In a nutshell, he enjoys fixing things, and sharing his interests with his children.

The 50-year-old from Hatboro and his wife, Kristine, have been married 21 years and have two children, Kayleigh, 20, and Kyler, 17. He also has two daughters from a previous marriage, Ashlie, 29, and Emily 25.

Since Grimes was a Scout when he was a boy, he signed up his youngest, son Kyler, for Cub Scouts when he was in the first grade. When Kyler was 11, he went to Boy Scout Troop 3, in Hatboro. After Grimes' wife insisted that her husband accompany his son for his first summer camp in Ontario, Canada, his love for Scouts was reignited.

Kyler received the rank of Eagle Scout in November 2016.

For five years, Grimes has been with Troop 3, currently as assistant scoutmaster. The Scouts were a great match for Grimes since he loves camping and backpacking.

Grimes believes fatherhood is similar to Scouting because it is about going all-in. "I want to be there and be supportive. Rather than stopping them from falling, I will always be there to help them up, dust them off, and encourage them to keep moving further."

Kyler proudly talks about his dad. "My dad is always there for me to talk to; he is caring and he is fun to be with. We have many shared interests. My dad is definitely a positive role model, so one day I'd like to be a dad just like him."

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