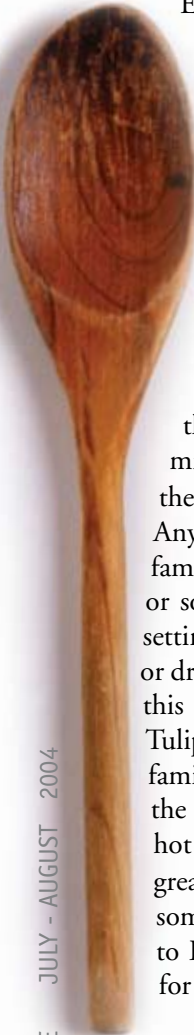


FAMILY COMMUNICATION AND BONDING IS FUN

By Dick Knight
PRO Sports Club President

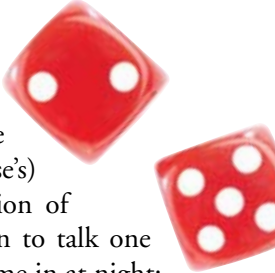
The PRO Sports Club recently solicited ideas pertaining to fun ways for parents and children to spend quality time together, and create special memories and a family atmosphere that fosters positive communication and support. Here are some of the results:



Experts agree that **good communication** takes some effort and planning, usually by parents. When the kids are young, establishing a tradition that one night a week (minimum) is “**family night**”, which every family member attends, can provide a setting to foster communication. Everyone clears their schedule, and, as time goes on, assignments for choosing activities are rotated among family members. The best activities are those that create a setting that leads to conversation. Sometimes this might be family dinner or breakfast. When the kids are old enough, they can even **cook!** Any activity or hobby that puts the whole family in one car for thirty minutes to an hour or so to reach the destination can be a great setting. Night skiing at Stevens or Snoqualmie or driving to a day-hike destination has created this setting for many families. Driving to the Tulip Festival, or even the Zoo, can be great family bonding times with a fun activity as the goal. If you can afford a boat, or even a hot tub, many families find these settings a great way to “**capture**” the entire family for some great conversation. Or, you can drive to Edmonds and rent a small outboard boat for a day excursion and cookout on a beach.

Other group activities closer to home were mentioned by many families. At the PRO Club, swimming, tennis, racquetball, and squash can all be enjoyed together by families. When the kids are younger, parents might

consider taking a lesson from one of the pros to learn how to help their child learn one of the racquet sports. In the fall, find a blackberry patch and pick berries together. Then learn how to make jam or pies together. Attend other family members’ sporting events. Choose a community service project to do **together** once per month or make it a tradition on holidays, maybe including some other families each year. Worship together.



Inside the home, many small acts or activities can foster bonding and support. Turn off the television, turn on some music and dance together. Put notes in your kids (or spouse’s) lunches with an inspiring thought or expression of appreciation. Use bedtime with young children to talk one on one about their day. Wait up for teens to come in at night; Some of the best conversation happens in the wee hours after a date. Collect some **board games** and play them as a family. When the family is young, start a tradition of having the kids sleep in one room on special holidays, and help them make a “fort” out of blankets. Have a family ritual at dinner: each person discusses the “high” and “low” of their day—it’s better than asking, “How was your day?” Play the self esteem game at **dinner**. Each person at the table draws a name and mentions a positive attribute about that person. Emphasize **QUALITY** time rather than just quantity. Cut back on the number of planned activities and choose the most important to avoid over scheduling. Prepare ahead for hectic days; pre-pack the car, make lunch the night before and lay out the needed clothes.

