

# *From the Heart. . .*

## *. . . Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



## **Celebration-Adults Kids back at home**

Did you ever imagine that your adult children would be back home for who knows how long? Well, according to Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends, *Home for the Holidays...and Every Other Day* (Nov 24, 2009), many grown sons and daughters not only came home for Thanksgiving dinner to stay in their old bedroom down the hall, but their old bedroom also “. . .now doubles as their recession-era refuge.”

Nearly half of all adults (46%) have children ages 18 or older. Thirteen percent of parents with grown children has reported their children have moved back home in the past year. Pew reports that “Social scientists call them "boomerangers" -- young adults who move in with parents after living away from home. This recession has produced a bumper crop.” The proportion of “boomeranged parents” has increased to 19% among ages 45 to 54.

Census Bureau data shows a decline in single adults living alone from 2007 to 2009. This decline also happened after the 1982 and 2001 recessions. Although the recession has impacted Americans of all ages, young adults have been hit significantly harder. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “a smaller share of 16- to 24-year-olds are currently employed, 46.1%, than at any time since the government began collecting this type of data in 1948.

One in ten adults, ages 18 to 34, reported the poor economy has compelled them to move back in with Mom and Dad. Additional 12% acquired a roommate. Hard times for young adults have even postponed marriage and/or having a baby.

Now that you know the latest stats, what are your adult kids up to while at home with Mom and Dad? For some, they come home to indefinitely lounge, saying "There just aren't any jobs out there! What do you expect me to do?" Well, here's one idea that a number of back-home adult kids are trying out.

Greg Williams of the New York Guardian says back-home kids are scrambling to create an at-home job or business via online. "For Scott Richardson, this is not a new story - a job loss, and financial despair. But this person didn't give up. From his own words: 'I was not interested in some fly by night get rich quick business opportunity, pyramid scheme or anything to do with network marketing. You know the ones that want you to try to sell stuff to your friends and family members. I just wanted a legitimate honest way for me to earn extra income from home. I am here to spread this word. Hopefully my story can inspire you to try what I discovered.'"

<http://www.nyguardian.com/home-business/online-careers-booming.php?t202id=21529&t202kw=VCP>

It's called "Google Home Income." My first question for Scott was "hype or for real?" If you read the comments for the article, it makes you believe it's for real. I officially do not endorse this direction. However, in tough times, it's always nice to have a little extra cash on hand. If any of my readers have signed up, send me your story on your outcome. For the rest of us parents, we undoubtedly will encourage our adult kids to brush up their resume; do job searches locally, regionally, then nationally; take a DISC personality survey that includes career matches; and ask friends and colleagues

for job tips and references. Also, keep in mind, your kid just might not be in the job industry that suits his personality style.

While on this journey with them, be patient and supportive. For both parents and their adult children, take time to celebrate being together again. Take time for long walks and talks together. You will be amazed at what you (re)discover about you both. Take advantage of this period in your child's life to take a trip together, work on projects together. Choose three things you would like to experience with your adult children while you still have the chance. Then ask them what three things they would like to experience while being back at home...that is besides looking for work 24/7. Whatever you do, celebrate that you both have each other and show it in special ways. No matter what...believe for your kids back at home that just the right job is waiting for them. They need your hope and confidence to discover their new path.

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Sharon L. Benedict, MS, ACC, is a certified life wellness coach-consultant, specializing in life skills, wellness, and creative arts development for individuals, businesses and organizations ([www.harvestenterprises-sra.com](http://www.harvestenterprises-sra.com)). She welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at [seekreachachieve@gvtc.com](mailto:seekreachachieve@gvtc.com).

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## **Celebration-When your kids aren't home for Christmas**

With Christmas and seasonal holidays upon us, our first desire and expectation is for our kids to be with us during this season. Yet, for many parents with adult children that won't happen this Christmas. Their adult kids are either across the ocean in the military or they have to divide their holiday attention between in-laws and you; and the in-laws get priority. For some, the adult kids just don't celebrate the season or there is some tension between parent and child that cause them to avoid coming home for the holidays. The reasons can be varied and many, including the tough economic times for most families.

Are you experiencing this separation during the holidays? If so, you may be already accustomed to not seeing them during this season. You may say, "It really doesn't matter. We'll see them in a couple months anyway." Yet, I bet deep down you still want your kids home for the holidays. And when you get the phone call that your son or daughter won't be there this time, does a bit of loneliness rise up? Every year since their birth they have been there. Why not now? Are we not important to them anymore? Did you ever imagine that they wouldn't be home for Christmas?

Well, I'm one of those parents who won't see our youngest daughter nor grandson this Christmas. I am weighing all the emotions right now...trying to understand

the reasons and accept the situation. It's not an easy task since both my daughters have been home for Christmas forever. Yes, I will have one daughter to share Christmas, but it just won't be the same. I've always expected and looked forward to this season with them both. But with the tough economy and other complications, we all knew that changes were coming for this year and beyond. So, for this Christmas holiday, I have made a commitment to find ways to enjoy the fact that "distance makes the heart grow fonder" will be wrapped up with happy thoughts for my far away daughter and grandson; and happy moments with my other daughter and her fiancée's family who live only a few hours away.

I know one thing—there are many parents who just won't miss one Christmas with their kids but each one in the years ahead. These parents are ones who had children in the military and have lost them in battle. Whether their tragedy happened across the oceans or right in their own backyard, my heart goes out to them. They are truly the courageous ones, not I. If you know of a family experiencing this loss this year or at any time, find a way to do something special for them. I hope to do the same.

And when Christmas day arrives I will consider myself truly blessed that I have my daughter and grandson to share our love together whether nearby or far away. May your Christmas and holiday season be exceptionally surrounded by those who love and care for you. May the music of laughter and love shine throughout this season for your family, friends, and neighbors.

In the next article, I would like to hear from you. Send me your holiday celebration ideas to share with the readers. Whether they are the traditional gathering, just a little different, or off the charts for creativity, send them my way.

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## **Celebration - Holiday traditions new and old**

Holiday traditions are very special for most families. Children grow up and remember those special, even whimsical things done at Christmas time. One tradition my family has is to put a coconut, shell and all, in each person's stocking. This tradition was begun by my mother-in-law when my husband was just a little kid. Each year when our kids were young, we would also be an orange in each stocking. And sometime along the way as they hit the teen years, we would slip in a Snickers bar.

We also started a gift treasure hunt with at least a couple present. Notes with hints were placed in strategic places around the house and outside. There were some Christmases where they needed a little help with the hints. My husband would make up riddles as hints to see if they could figure them out and find their treasure. And yes, even if they didn't get the riddle, they would get their gift anyway! It was so much fun just watching them trying to figure out the clues.

Have you ever made fig bread pudding? Well, that has been a food tradition forever throughout the Benedict generations. It's a great recipe if you like figs. The fig bread comes out hot and steaming, a smooth custard sauce is poured over it, with a drop of hard sweet sauce on the top. It just wouldn't be Christmas without it. I must admit our kids liked it when they were young but when they hit the teens, it was Yuck-time for them! Yet, now that my daughters are adults and one has a son, I am seeing

some of these traditions being resurrected by them for their own families. It's a nice feeling to know that our children have many pleasant memories at Christmas time and want to pass those traditions on.

Think about what particular tradition in your family that your adult children remember fondly. Ask them about their memories connected to that tradition. You just may be surprised at their response. No matter what the age of your children, ask them what family holiday tradition they would like to pass along with their own family now or in the future?

By the way, another one of our traditions (that is, my husband's) is to continually play the Chipmunk Christmas song over and over and over! I can't even get away from it in the car when he's driving! I am amazed at how my grown daughters always remind Dad to play it for them. And no matter how many times it is played, I always see a smile on their face. So, Mom won't be a Bah-Humbug with this tradition, I promise!

Next article is actually on Christmas day and will be centered on holiday songs you love to hear. So, tell me what your favorite one is that you will be hearing on Christmas day, and I'll share it with my readers. And for those of you who may not celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah, what song of cheer do you love anyway that brings a smile to your face and a dance to your step?

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## **Celebrating Music of the Heart**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, December 25, 2009)

“My heart, which is so full to overflowing, has often been solaced and refreshed by music when sick and weary.” I felt during this holiday season that Martin Luther’s (1483 - 1546) words surely ring true for us all. Music is the harmony and healer of the heart. I bet certain songs bring back special childhood memories. During this time of year, the radio waves are filled with tunes reflecting a thankful heart, Christmas love, and New Year’s hope. Just go online to WebRadio for a listing of all the dedicated Christmas radio stations, <http://www.web-radio.com/christmas/> to get a glimpse of the merry music that comes to us each year.

Family becomes the central heartbeat of every melody. For some, this is a wonderful time of the year that kind hearted and hopeful music is heard more than another other time. For others, it might be accompanied by bittersweet memories of broken marriages, a long ago argument with one’s best friend that was never healed, or run away or lost child.

Music can prompt the deepest thoughts and feelings both sweet and sour. Yet, music has a way of bringing to mind and heart our desire for peace and harmony no matter what our circumstances. Whether music comes in the form of country, rock, hip/hop, classic, or contemporary, the message offers us a chance to convey peace and harmony to those we love and care about, even to that stranger that crosses your path.

Oliver Wendell Homes (1890-1894) shared a whimsical phrase on behalf of music for our lives with, "Take a music bath once or twice a week for a few seasons, and you will find that it is to the soul what the water bath is to the body." What is your music bath you take once or twice a week? Think about two melodies you like the most. What thoughts and feelings rise up? What do they say to you personally?

For me, my music bath I take every few days runs the gamut from classic, traditional, country, to jazz. One of my Christmas jazz favorites is from the Blue Street Jazz Band, *That's How I Know*. Another favorite of mine for any season is the Mills Brothers *He Gives Me Love*. I also really like one song by Asleep at the Wheel, *Boogie Back to Texas*. Why you ask? A number of years ago, after my husband retired from Texas A&M, we traveled and went back to California to see family and university friends. We ended up staying over four years. And although family and friends wanted us to settle in, we really couldn't afford California and missed Texas. Our youngest daughter gave us *Asleep's* CD with this song on it to hear all our boogie way back to Texas. This song is all wrapped up in the tearful goodbyes to my daughter living in California to the excitement of coming back to Texas, particularly our beautiful Texas Hill Country.

May the music you listen to bring you more sweet memories than sad throughout the coming New Year. I leave you with a Christmas blessing from George Eliot (1819-1880) . . . "I think I should have no other mortal wants, if I could always have plenty of music. It seems to infuse strength into my limbs and ideas into my brain. Life seems to go on without effort, when I am filled with music."

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