BEING A FATHER

Real lessons from local dads
By Dave Ricci

From a professional athlete who travels much of the season to a stay-at-home dad who homeschools, local dads find diverse — and meaningful — ways to be actively involved in their kids' lives.

They’ve got to know that you are consistently there and that you’re involved. From there, everything else takes care of itself.”

— LaGuan Rogers

In North Buffalo, Peter DeLaPlante and his wife Suzanne said they didn’t want to their kids — Michael, 8, and Morgan, 5, — to be raised by babysitters. So early on they agreed one of them should stay home. Suzanne took a full-time job while Peter became “Mr. Mom” — a role he relishes.

“It helped me to homeschool Michael,” said Peter, 52. “He was reading by the age of two.”

For Buffalo Sabres forward Jason Pominville, 35, being a pro athlete means he doesn’t punch a standard 40-hour time clock like many dads. Away from home sometimes for long stretches, the magic of technology allows Pominville to stay in touch with his wife, Kim, and their kids Jayden and Kaylee.

“It’s so nice. FaceTime is the best thing you can have...although sometimes it’s frustrating because they set the phone down and don’t pay attention,” Pominville joked.

“But it works really well when they take the time to look at you.”

LaGuan "LG” Rogers is a 36-year-old divorced father of two to Violet, 6, and Landry, 5. Rodgers, like Pominville, may not see his kids every day, but has made it work with their mother, Sasha Rodgers, with whom he still has a strong friendship.

“We both agree that we want to raise two productive citizens that are God-fearing, who are adding to society more than taking away from it,” Rodgers said.

DeLaPlante, who’s always been mindful of teaching his kids the importance of giving back, agreed.

Delivering for Meals on Wheels three days a week, DeLaPlante frequently takes his kids along with him.

His son Michael has learned from this example; for the past two holiday seasons, he and his friends have organized charity sock drives at school.

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Left page. When he's away for long stretches of road games, Buffalo Sabre Jason Pominville says FaceTime helps him stay connected to his wife, Kim, and kids, Jayden and Kaylee. Kim will even FaceTime the kids' games and meets so Jason can watch with her in real time. Right. Stay-at-home dad Peter DeLaPlante regularly involves his kids, Morgan and Michael, with his Meals on Wheels deliveries.
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Secrets of their success

LaGuan Rodgers said that there is no one-size-fits-all method of parenting. An approach that can bring the best out in one child may not necessarily reach another. He said the greatest gift you can give a child is yourself.

“One of the biggest things that I’ve learned is you can tell somebody something, you can compliment them to death, but the most important commodity is your time,” Rodgers said. “They’ve got to know that you are consistently there and that you’re involved. From there, everything else takes care of itself.”

Rodgers also credits his second wife and his kids’ stepmom, Samantha, for the way she’s handled the balancing act of loving Landry and Violet like they are her own, while understanding when to take a step back and let he and Sasha make big decisions.

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Divorced dad LaGuan Rodgers’ best parenting strategy has been teaming up with his ex-wife to raise the kids with shared values.

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Q&A
with Jason Pominville

What’s the best thing about being a dad?
Just waking up to their smiling faces – and seeing
them grow in school, reading, activities and sports.

What do you like doing most with your kids?
It’s hard in the winter because I’m away. So for
me, it’s getting to go to all their activities, prac-
tices, games and meets. Jayden (8) plays hockey,
baseball and lacrosse, Kaylee Rose (6) is in
gymnastics and ballet.

At the end of the season, we surprised the kids at school – we showed up
wearing Mickey ears and left for Disney from there. It
was such a fun surprise.

What’s your dream Father’s Day?
Going out for breakfast as a family, then watch-
ing Jayden in a hockey game and Kaylee Rose
in a gymnastics meet.

Favorite places to eat in Buffalo?
Hutch’s, Sake Café for sushi, San Marco for
special occasions.

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One of DeLaPlante’s more
important parenting strategies
involves not comparing the kids.
“You try to treat the kids
equally. You try to apply the
same values,” DeLaPlante said.
“We just encourage them to do
what they like to do best.”

DeLaPlante added that find-
ing balance is key. His kids are
active in sports like baseball and
swimming; board games are the
norm while screen time is limited.

Becoming a stepdad

Andrew Kulyk, 60, never
imagined life as a father until
he met Tim Duffy. Friends for
years, Tim and Andrew entered
into a serious relationship last
October after Tim’s divorce.

Kulyk used to spend the bulk of
his days traveling to sports venues
around the world as a journalist. But
today, life also includes cooking mac
and cheese and telling bedtime stories
to Tim’s daughter, Charlotte, age 5.

“Injecting the love and warmth
and laughter of a child has made my
life that much fuller,” Kulyk said.
Quite frankly I had no idea what I
was missing all these years.

Although Kulyk is very involved
in Charlotte’s world, the discipline
and tough love still come from Tim
and his ex-wife...an arrangement
that works for all members of this
blended family.

Duffy, 33, marvels at
having Andrew in their lives,
citing his oversized heart and
sense of humor as another posi-
tive influence on his daughter.

“It’s truly special seeing the
interactions between my little girl
and the man I love,” Duffy said.

All grown up

The importance of a strong
male role model can never be
understated. Just ask Johnny
Alessandra.

Alessandra, 24, was a young boy
when his mother walked out of his
life. Although things could have fallen
apart, Alessandra said the love
and devotion of his father, John Sr.,
kept the world together for him and
his sister, Christina (now 26).

“I was nine years old and my
mom dropped me off at school,”
Alessandra recalled. “I came
down the stairs [after school]
and my father picked me up and
that was that. The last time I
saw my mother was that day.”

Alessandra said his dad cooked,
cleaned and cared for them fully
from that day on, and was always
in the stands with his trademark

“I love you” fist pump, supporting
both kids when they played high
school sports.

Alessandra said this instilled in
him how a real man cares for his k

“The biggest thing I learned from
my father is the importance of put-
ting your family first. Being selfish
he said. “My father, he sacrificed his entire life for me. He only care
about our lives and our future.”

Developing character is high
all the dads’ lists.

“Being a good person and
being polite, respectful and havin
good manners — those are things
that are all very important to us
as parents and as a family, and
those are the things that we try to
bring to them,” said Pominville.

“Just have a smile and enjoy life.

While some may still hold on
to the notion that family life shou
be a replica of a Norman Rockwe
painting, the reality is that in an
ever-changing, uncertain world
what really makes a family is lov

“I realize that standing on the
outside looking in our family may
seem different or even strange, a
I’m ok with that,” Duffy said. “Fr
my eyes I see smiles, with my ear
I hear laughter, in my mind I kne
peace, and in my heart I feel lov

[Image]