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Continental Drift

The word that best describes the past two weeks is: adventure. No surprise there, for our family, I suppose. It all started with a late night dash from home toward Canada to try and beat a storm that still closed the road and caused us to have to drive an additional three hundred miles, all the way around Lake Ontario, to fly out of Syracuse, NY. The children were unceremoniously dumped off at the ferry dock to Wolfe Island with not so much as a hug goodbye for fear of missing the 11:30 a.m. boat as we hurtled ourselves around the far east end of the lake in an attempt to miss the seven feet of snow falling between us and the airport. They were thrilled to get the extra half day with their grandparents and didn't miss the hugs as much as we did.

We breathed a huge sigh of relief as the plane lifted off for the southern most tip of the Baja Peninsula, Mexico. Our long awaited dose of sunshine had arrived. It was all we had hoped for... temperatures in the eighties, the ocean right outside our window, blue crabs to be chased on the beach and a pool with a swim up bar where a tired Mama could munch fish tacos and sip a Coke without so much as the inconvenience of drying off. For four days we rested, watched hump back and grey whales breach with their babies, ate chilaquilles for breakfast, and I mowed my way through two completely frivolous books. It was great. The highlight, by far, was scuba diving with sea lions.

I have two things to say about sea lions. 1. They stink. Somehow this aspect of their existence had not been fully transferred to me through the National Geographic specials that I've enjoyed about their lives over the years. I can't emphasize enough how truly foul they are. Puke over the

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side of the boat foul. As a young friend of ours in fact did. They stink. 2. They are unbelievably beautiful and graceful under water. Just as I had imagined that they would, the female sea lions dove and slithered between us as we hung at a shallow 20 feet and enjoyed them. More than one came up just short of whacking me in the mask to cock her head sideways as if to ask, "Who are you and WHAT are you doing down here?" I could have touched one on the nose if I'd been braver, but they do have teeth. In between the sea lions swam cormorants. You know, those snakey looking black birds that fish for a living? We had the fun of watching them "fly" around under water fishing for their lunch. The sea lions don't seem to mind them. While the females were inquisitive, almost playful, the males are regal and impart a healthy dose of intimidation... at least to me. I rolled on my back on the bottom of the ocean to lie upside down and watch the biggest male hang in the water over my head, sunning himself at the surface. He was fully twice the size, at least, of my big husband, he could swim fast, if he wanted to, and the effects of his jaws and teeth were evident in the scarring on the smaller male we'd seen on the rock. He is the undisputed king of that domain. We appreciated his benevolence in stamping our passports and allowing us to swim within his borders for that lovely hour. It is time I will not quickly forget.

By the time we left I was fully tanked up on sunshine and salt air, as well as sleep and fish tacos. Truthfully, I was more than ready to get back to my babies, who were tucked safely away between the snow drifts on Wolfe Island, eating gummy bears for breakfast with Grammy and learning to sharpen knives with Gramps. In six short hours we'd be there. Or not. Enter the Big Snow. When we landed in Chicago we knew it was all over. We weren't even off the first plane before our second flight had been cancelled. Two in a row were cancelled, actually. So, instead of our homey Valentine's Day party with the red velvet cake Hannah had made and handmade sticker cards piled in heaps on our plates we got an overnight in the windy city and about seven hours sitting on a hotel lobby sofa with our bags piled around us, refugee camp style while we waited out the weather. We were so blessed to have only two flights canceled and to make it out the next day on the only flight that left Chicago for Syracuse. It could have been worse. Well, it did get a little worse.

Arriving in Syracuse, after dark, we found our van drifted in up to the windows. Tony had to climb in through a back door and blast through the three foot mound that had fallen over our car while we were baking on the beach. We drove through New York State with the nine feet of snow on either side of the road only to arrive on the island to be greeted by an arctic wind. Gramps and Gabe had snowshoed out to the road to dig us out a place to park and bring us sleds to haul our gear in. So, we hiked, more than a quarter of a mile, in snow up to our knees. Me,

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wearing the same summer weight dress I'd been in through three days of flight delays and a pair of cracked rubber boots (I forgot my good ones) By the time we got to the house I could feel the skin on my thighs freezing. Another quarter mile and I'd have had mild frost bite. The only thing that made it worthwhile was the screaming, laughing pile of boys that buried me when I finally made it through the door. It is good to be home.

A Trip of Extremes...



Perfection



On the playa, Los Cabos, Baja, Mexico



Sunset on Wolfe Island, ON, Canada



Daddy winning at hockey, Wolfe Island, Canada

A Day On The Farm... The Weasel Farm

One of the many hats that I wear in our family is that of U.N. translator. I translate street signs in downtown Montreal at 100 km an hour. I order breakfast at the “service en volant”. I speak to the Mexican border guards and assure him that, in spite of my murky gene pool, we are not smuggling anything in, or out, of the country. This is my job. This week I charged extra as all three of my languages were in use within a three day window. Above and beyond the call of duty.

I’m training the children to be U.N. translators as well. French lessons over lunch, Spanish lessons over rushing out the door to music lessons. Nothing fancy, common, every day language woven into our common, every day language. Just like I learned Spanish from my U.N. translator mother. It’s easy. They speak enough to order their own rail tickets in Mexico City, and to thank the restaurant servers in Quebec. However, I realized, last Thursday morning, that I still have some work to do.

We left home in a whirlwind and drove fast and hard to Montreal through the dark night. I’m not sure the kids even knew we were in Canada when we stopped. We passed a restless night in a cheap hotel before waking bleary eyed in search of caffeinated beverages. It is in this state of affairs that Hannah decides to try her translator skills out on the family:

There is a chain of convenience stores in Quebec called “Couche-Tard.” Their symbol is an owl with one eye open. Literally, this is translated sleep late. What it really means is that they are open all night. Hannah sees this sign next to the universally recognized “Dunkin Donuts” that I’m focused on, and pipes up, “Mom, is a Couch-tard kind of like a RE-tard?” Hysterics erupt from the boys. Daddy sputters through his mouthful of coffee and I almost spill my tea. “NO, Hannah, not quite...” She accepts the explanation gracefully and files it into her translator services directory. The boys on the other hand, are not quite finished with their sister’s error.

Needless to say, the next twenty miles were filled with much laughter and suggestions from the boys as to all sorts of other “tards” that could fit. It took Daddy and I quite a while more to regain order in the back seat and effectively communicate that we don’t call people any sort of word that ends with “tard.” Not even a couch-tard. No, not even if they are sitting on the couch doing something REALLY dumb. It’s not nice. It’s not politically correct (because we are SO PC around here!) and because it is mean spirited. Would Jesus call someone a couch-tard? I think not! Well... maybe, he called the pharisees vipers... that’s right up there with couch-tard I guess...

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The Wilds of Creation

Casey's Miracle

by Judy Daley

It was February 2001 when I got the news from the veterinarian that Casey's blood test results were showing signs of liver disease. This came as a complete shock to me because Casey had always been a pillar of health!

My sweet Pomeranian boy was only 8 years old when diagnosed with "idiopathic chronic hepatitis". Casey symptoms were: Sores on elbows, low tolerance to his brushings, and he walked a lot slower than normal.

One month later (March) I noticed Casey's ears had sores inside of them. While cleaning the sores I noticed a thin black line on the outer edge of the ears. While parting the fur to examine the blackened skin, his fur began falling out into my hand. I had never seen anything like it before. At this point, Casey had become lethargic, and ran a temperature of 104.2*. Quite perplexed, the veterinarian suggested I simply continued treating the symptoms as they arose.

I decided to document and photograph everything Casey had to go through. If the information was not going to be helpful in saving Casey's life, then perhaps someone else could benefit from the experience. I kept a daily journal on Casey's activity level, and his

healing progress as well as all medications administered. If for nothing else, it kept me focused and extremely busy.

A few weeks later, necrosis began to spread onto his foot pads. These patches became open sores that would not heal. It was quite painful for Casey to walk, especially out doors. I bought special dog boots for him to wear, especially for when he was outside to do his business. This helped keep his feet clean plus added padding for comfort.

By May his stools were white and his toenails appear metallic in color. I was sick with worry but continued to tend to him 24/7. He really needed constant care because he was at a point where he could not get up easily anymore.

By June he was weak and not moving much at all. Casey had no appetite, nor interest in food of any kind. His muscle mass was breaking down from lack of use. He still lacked energy, plus the necrosis had crept onto his knees, forelegs, back and sides. He was an ugly mess to look at. His joints cracked and popped when I would lift him up, and at times it felt as though he would crumble into dust in my hands.

In July of 2001, the whites of his eyes had turned grey. Casey was close to the end of his life. There was no doubt my precious boy was dying. The vet told me that it was only a matter of time, given his blood test results, and that I should consider euthanasia. To me that was not an option. I knew all of the clinical signs were stacked against him, but something inside me just would not give up.

By August I had become physically and mentally exhausted. The veterinarian recommended that I enjoy each day that I had left with Casey. I can still remember the depth of heartsick I felt that day. The dog I had come to love was deemed hopeless by the animal hospital! It would seem that I had exhausted all of my available avenues for help and support. And so, there was only one thing left for me to do. I got down on my knees and thanked God for the best dog I'd ever had!

I thanked Him for all the wonderful years we had spent together and all of the laughter that Casey had brought me and others. That dog was quite the comedian. I sat on the floor that night next to Casey and reminisced about many things. I could

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not hold back a smile when I recalled some of his antics through the years.

Casey seemed to enjoy dressing up. It allowed him to be in the spotlight, plus he was well rewarded after the photographs were taken.

He loved a challenge and began carrying the mail in each day, no matter how heavy the load.

It was customary for Casey to ring a bell when he needed to go outside.

But he learned to use it when the cat wanted to come in, or if he wanted to go out to chase squirrels. And, if I did not come running quickly enough for him, Casey would continuously ring the bell until I did.

Casey's favorite time of year was Christmas. He loved presents! He would sniff out his own gifts, carry them to me for permission to open them, and then he would tear into the wrapping paper making confetti of it! What fun!

He was extremely creative when it came to interacting with strangers. When someone would visit, Casey would greet them at the door with all of his heart. He would bounce and bark as if to be saying; "Hi there, good to see you, come on in and have a seat. Put your bag on the floor, would you like a cup of tea?". In his mind though, he was working on a plan. Yes, a plan.

That little brain of his figured out that if he could sneak something out of the bag that was left on the floor, without anyone seeing him, he could then proudly walk around the room carrying it as if to say; "Does this belong to anyone?" He would stop in front of the person he stole it from and offer it back to them in exchange for a dog cookie. Surely that would be worthy of a treat. If that did not work, he would find a book, or a box of tissues left within reach, then carry it over as an offering to anyone he thought was a softy for a cute face. He never stopped making things up, until he got what he wanted. He was a nut, and I simply could not bear to lose him.

I wrestled with what I should do for Casey's in his last days with me, I decided to stop all medications, but kept him on his special diet.

What happened next was nothing short of a miracle. Casey began to show signs of getting better. Although it was a very slow recovery, Casey was not giving up his fight to live. By July 2002, he still had good days and bad days but was progressing none the less. His fur began to grow back.

In the summer of 2003 his fur was thick and beautiful again, and he had plenty of energy. Casey returned to the veterinarian for his annual check up. The vet was stunned at the sight of him! Blood was

drawn to confirm what the vets eyes could not believe. The results showed the liver was nearly normal! Casey was healed! It was a miracle! There was no other way to describe it!

Today, Casey is nearly 15 years old and still going strong. When the day comes for Casey to leave me, the one thing that I will always remember will be his persistence. He never gave up!

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A Place for Everything and Everything in MY space!

by Stephanie Payton

I was recently lamenting the cluttered condition of my house, and despairing of my daughter ever learning to be a competent housekeeper. Yes, I realized there were more important things in life to be pondering. But on that particular day I was feeling more discouraged by the moment. It was my own fault, really. I could have chosen to not let it get me down. In fact, I tried really hard to make that choice! My flesh won out, though, and I decided to spend an afternoon wallowing in the muck of my self-pity. Calling upon the aid of my friends, I have summed up some conclusions regarding this, including some of their thoughts as well.

Let me begin by saying that I've decided that organization is highly overrated. Being organized is often touted as THE KEY to inner peace. "Everything goes more smoothly," people say, "if you can just get organized." Now hear me—I'm not denying that organization is a very helpful tool. I can attest to the fact that my days seem to go more smoothly when the house is clean, and clutter organized. However, I firmly believe that the Lord is trying to teach me to find my peace in HIM, even when the house seems to be falling apart around me. "Keep things in perspective"—I tell this to myself regularly. With all that in mind, two friends of mine, Ginger and Sami, were very helpful in sharing a wealth of ideas. It was obvious that they have struggled with these very same things. My recommendation, in light of this,

is to find friends in the same boat as you. I found it to be very therapeutic☺.

So here is the 6-point rebuttal from Ginger. Ginger has four children, with number 5 on the way, and she is my hero in so many ways. We so often balance each other's ideas, which is nice for both of us, I think.

“1. When 6 people try to live together, there is going to be “stuff” everywhere. They have stuff, you have stuff, your kitchen needs stuff, your yard, etc. . . .

2. Your oldest is not even 10. What did you do at ten??? Although I harp on my kids a lot, I sometimes have to sit back and remember they are 10, 8, 6, and 4. Honestly, I had never cleaned anything (except straightening my room when threatened) until I got married. I had no idea you had to get on your hands and knees and clean behind (gasp!) the toilet! I am not a great housekeeper, but you would not gross out when you walked in my house (most days). You may have trouble finding me—through the pillow forts or around the dishes that are waiting to be loaded into the dishwasher. Thank goodness for our mechanical helpers (dishwasher, washing machines, lawn mowers. . . .)

3. Aren't you glad you remember relationship building as your main childhood memory?? What if your main memory was of all the cleaning and cooking you had to do?? How sad that would be.

4. I am always impressed with Audra when at your house. Did she not make lunch for 8 kids all by herself that day I was there???? Yes!!!

5. The reason your house will never run like a job is that there are CHILDREN there. It is not made up of all responsible adults. If you choose to run your house that way then you might as well run a boot camp.

6. The image that you have of people's homes that are completely organized is either:

*wrong

*in houses where the kids go to school and the mom has 6 hours every day to do nothing but.clean

*in houses where they have one or two kids—and therefore ½ the stuff!

*homes of psycho women who have no other life

Now, I say all of this with your understanding that this is an issue I struggle with daily. Today, however, the piles and boots and coats and hats and forts and toys and papers and books and dishes are not bothering me—check back in ½ an hour! I wish I were a neat freak. But reality is, I NEVER WILL BE. So, as long as my house is somewhat clean and can be tidied fairly quickly should the need arise, I am OK with it. And when we look back on it, I really believe no one will care how organized our house was!”

She sounds so reasonable and sane, doesn't she? I loved her perspective on this.

Sami had some great things to say, as well. I found myself totally relating that sometimes “getting organized” is, quite simply, finan-

cially daunting. Now, I do understand that there are probably some very economical ways to organize. And if any of you have any ideas, send them my way! It seems that every time I come up with a brilliant plan, it calls for a budget nearing the thousand dollar mark. My husband and I are not particularly handy people, if you know what I mean. Our handiness about matches our cash flow, so we are often frustrated when we think about these tasks. Also, having moved from a house about one-third larger than this home, I am finding myself challenged by the lack of storage space. I had three large closets, ample attic space, and a large basement where I could stash things in a pinch!

So, here are Sami's thoughts:

“The less income you have as a family, the harder it can be to be/stay organized. Generally you have a smaller house to begin with and you don't have ALL the IDEAL furniture you would like/want/need (always a fine line). For example, two kids sharing one room, not to mention one bed, have more stuff in that room. And the one child who does have a room to herself is forced to share her room with every child that enters the house, because it is also the official playroom. Every room in the house must function as a multi-purpose room. The kitchen is also the craft room. The “study” is actually the library, school room, music room, and guest room. The kids' bathroom is also the guest bathroom. Every tiny closet must be perfectly organized to utilize every single inch. We are forced to be purgers and constantly

keep up on the mess. Which is a good thing. I think it is definitely good for my character development. God has me in this spot for many reasons. And until I figure all of those out and learn from them all, it is here that I shall remain, I am sure.”

I loved that last statement. God has us all in a special and unique place in life, doesn't He? We each have areas that He desires to stretch us and grow us. It is by allowing Him to do this that we show forth Who He is to others. I will repeat what I've said many times before: For many of us, we are embarking on a path that we were not trained to walk down. I . . .

Parenting on Purpose

Toddlers Without Tears

Okay, so there is no such thing. How about toddlers with FEWER tears, on the part of the mother any way! When our youngest son was entering toddlerhood, I was reminded, once more, of the challenge that these months of “not quite baby and not quite big kid” can be. I remember well standing in amazement when my oldest child threw her first fit in a shoe store, thinking, “What's wrong with her? What happened to my sweet, compliant baby?!” And that was the beginning of her education, and MINE!

I'll admit, that first time through two (and most of three!) had its rough days! After the first few months of screaming in the doctor's waiting room, hollering at church, and yelling down every aisle of the grocery store and the stomping of feet with an assertive little “NO MOMMY!” I got a wake up call. Literally. My mentor mom called one day to see how things were going, and after listening to my laundry list of woes, she said the one thing that changed my outlook on toddlers forever: “Well, you know, you can't expect her to do in public what she isn't required to do at home!” That one sentence saved my sanity! She went on to explain the concept of “training” a child to right behavior, instead of just fighting fires all day long. So, for my own benefit, let me review her sage wisdom (and maybe it will help you too!)

First, it is important to grasp the concept of “training” as it relates to little people. Training is NOT “discipline” or “punishment”, rather it IS the replacement of one negative be-

DON'T . . . KNOW . . . how to “do” this, for I've not done it before. So, I must extend grace to myself and my family as we all journey forth together.

I also loved one thing that both of these women shared with me—humor. God has given us the gift of humor exactly for these times. He knew the troubles in life we would face. Isn't it wonderful that He gave us a gift to help ease those times? Sometimes a laugh is all that's needed to put the day into proper perspective, for the JOY of the Lord truly is our strength.

havior with the desired positive behavior. It is the proactive elevation of “good”, not merely the suppression of “evil.” Sounds simple doesn’t it? And it is, IF you combine these two important elements: prayer (for God’s will for your family and your toddler) and perseverance (a determination to be consistent in your efforts to train your child as you feel God has led you, in spite of emotion or circumstances on any given day.) No method, schedule, or “trick” can replace prayer in the life of a parent. If you are at your wits end with your child and don’t know what to do next, PRAY! Ask God his will for your child and your family. He will be faithful to answer that prayer.

There are no quick fixes in parenting. I have learned that. The kid did not come with a manual, and there is no twelve step program I can enroll him in. So what do I do with this rude, mouthy, kicking, screaming, demanding little urchin that I love so dearly? Here are a few ideas:

Set up training sessions. Decide what you want your child to do (such as folding his hands and waiting to eat until everyone is served instead of diving in head first as soon as the food hits his highchair tray) and make a plan to teach this behavior in a positive environment. Start small, be encouraging, and reward every little attempt. Start by using a consistent vocabulary “fold your hands and have self control”. Model the behavior, YOU fold your hands as you say the words. Practice not only at meal times, but while brushing his hair, before play-doh time, before his video time, or while you are driving in the car. What if he won’t? Take his hands and show him. What if he pitches a fit and still won’t? Then with your happiest face encourage him to obey, and don’t give in to the fit. If he wants the cup, he can fold his hands. You can develop training times to teach him to come when you call his name, to say please and thank you, to stop screaming, to be quiet and just about any other positive behavior you would like to develop in his life.

Teach self control. The main goal I have for my toddlers is to develop self control. They must learn to control their hands, mouths, arms and legs, and attitudes. This is a huge undertaking on the part of the parent! Babies come into the world completely self centered and self seeking. The concept of waiting, and controlling their lustful little hearts is completely foreign to them.

Training in self control is a process (that is never fully complete!). A child who does not exhibit self control at home, WILL NOT in public. We have a hard and fast rule for toddlers: If you lose self control in public, you will not be taken back into a public place until you are consistently exhibiting self control at home. To some this may seem unreasonable and inconvenient for the parent. We do not believe it is unreasonable (being out in public is privilege, not a right, and because we view the people we come in con-

tact with outside our home as precious creations of God, whose needs we should put before our own, we are unwilling to subject them to the discomfort of a fit throwing two (or four!) year old) and yes, it IS inconvenient for the parent, but we believe that a sweet spirited, self controlled child is worth any inconvenience. It is absolutely impossible to train a child to self control when he has already lost it in public. So how do we do it at home?

Lots of sitting! Not as a consequence, but for “fun”! Book time, working from three or four minutes at a time to a half an hour or more every day on a chair with three or four books is an easy way to keep them in a chair at the doctor’s office or while waiting for Dad’s plane to land. The rules are simple: stay on the chair, no talking, read only the books you are given. This is a wonderful exercise for Mom to practice too! For happy restaurant training, try bringing your child to the table a few minutes before dinner is served to wait quietly with hands folded. Then when dinner is over, allow him to remain at the table sitting quietly while the adults visit and “enjoy family conversation”. By structuring opportunities for your little people to wait for a few minutes at a time at home, you will be making it much easier for them to accept the need to wait when you are out in public. Obviously this does not happen over night. It will take several weeks of consistent practice at home (or more!) before your child is waiting with a happy spirit. If you persevere, it will happen!

Verbal self control is another area that often needs work in toddler hood! It was a revelation to me to realize that speech is a freedom, not a right, for all of us! There are times when we are free to talk, and other times, when we are not free to talk, both as children and adults. It is much easier for little children to learn to control their tongues than it is to try to retrain a child who has had too much freedom in this area later on. It is perfectly okay to expect your child to be quiet at certain times, such as when you are on the phone, at church, in a doctor’s office, during a Bible Study or prayer meeting, through a portion of meal time, or while adults are having a conversation in his presence. Of course this can be taken to the extreme, “children should be seen and not heard“, when children are never allowed to express themselves.

What we are suggesting is that you consider when (and what) your child ought to have the freedom to talk, and to train him to some limits in this area. Children are not adults, and a two year old should not have the freedoms of speech that a thirty year old does. Ask yourself, “What is reasonable, and respectful?”

Contentment: Happy with what I have. This is a tough one at any age! We as adults struggle to be content with what God has given us in our present situations, and we of-

ten struggle with how to teach our children to be content with what they have. In a world that is so focused on possessions and acquiring more of everything learning (and training!) contentment can be a daunting task. Here are a few suggestions: Model contentment for verbalize your desire for things that you do not, or cannot have. Be grateful instead, for the many things that you do have. Limit your child's exposure to the media, which feeds human lust... if they don't know its there, they won't want it! Do not bribe your kid: "If you are good in the store you may have a toy!" This corrupts the child's morals (I won't do it unless I get something) and feeds the lust of his heart for things over the joy of obedience. Don't buy what he asks for in the store... at least not right then. If a child gets the sense that he can ask for anything he wants in the store and get it, you will soon have a whining, begging child every time you go out. Maybe you could buy that thing when he has NOT asked, just to bless him. Sometimes less is more, where contentment is concerned!

Obviously this is just the tip of the iceberg with toddlers. There are so many things that could be addressed on so many levels. And there are many people who have done an excellent job doing so. For more ideas on training toddlers, may I suggest Creative Family Times by Allen & Connie Hadidian and Shepherding a Child's Heart by Tedd Tripp. My encouragement to you is to pray, and start somewhere, even if the problems seem insurmountable, and to be consistent in training your little ones. In sowing seeds of diligent training, will reap a harvest of morally beautiful children in a few short years!

*Ezra loves
winter... every
last bite!
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from Fern Hill!*



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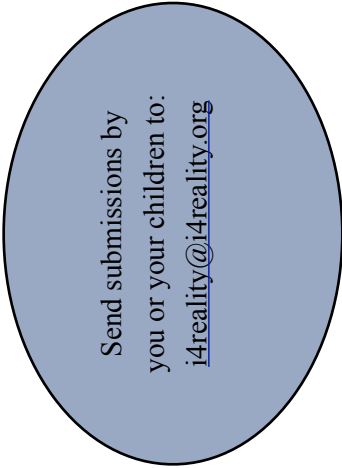
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