

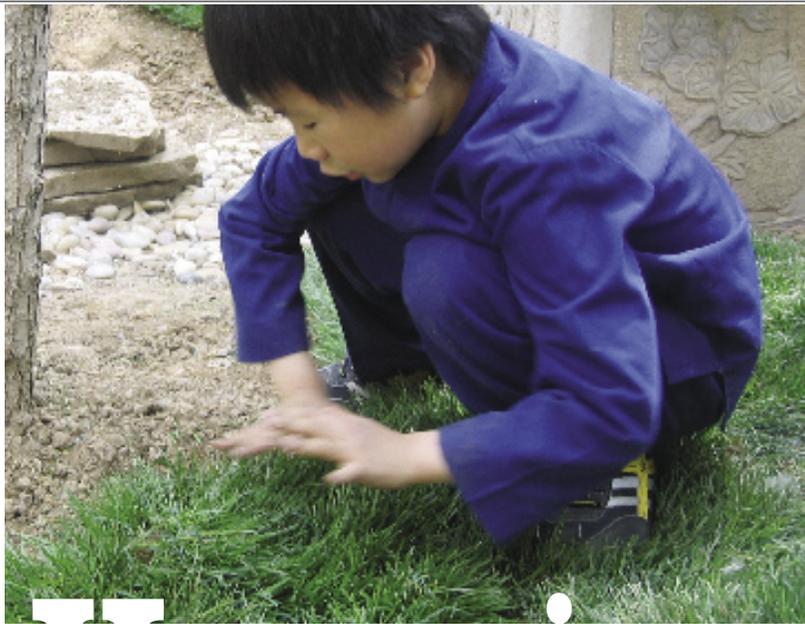
**W**ith every generation of children, we are given the opportunity to support the moral advancement of humanity. Children are born with a sense of wonder, exploring and learning all they can about their time, culture and place. As adults we have the opportunity to guide our children in this construction of themselves – assisting them to be the noblest people they can be. By recognizing all of the qualities of good moral character in each child, parents can prepare themselves for the task of refining these virtues.

Parents guide children in many ways: sharing their knowledge, wisdom, skills and stories. Allowing children to participate in meaningful activities and gently guiding them to master their own skills takes time and patience.

Allowing your child to help in the preparation of a meal, or giving them a task to complete in your workshop is a way of recognizing the child's ability to contribute to your family life. The language of the virtues can be woven throughout these experiences by acknowledging your child for their perseverance, courage and determination as they practice and refine these new skills. In giving your children the freedom to explore their talents and abilities, you are honoring their spirit – their creativity, purposefulness and excellence.

The sharing of stories about your family and yourself awakens a child's sense of meaning. Knowing the virtues that are special about your family – Uncle Pete's sense of humor or grandmother's courage – brings a sense of family honor to life. You can also deeply listen to your children as they tell stories or dreams of their own, recognizing their growing understanding of how the virtues are at work in their life. Dinner together is an excellent time to have each family member share the story of their day; uncovering the virtues involved and how each event had its own unique teachable moments.

Another way to honor the child is to spend time with them in nature. Sharing time observing animals, insects and plants are great ways to get in touch with nature and deepen your relationship with your children. Go hiking, start a herb garden



## Honoring the Child

“A child, at birth, is a candidate for humanity; it cannot become human in isolation.” – Henri Piereon.

or simply take time to watch the clouds. Allow this to be a time of silent reflection inspiring creativity and excellence and respecting the orderliness of the natural world. Keep a nature journal of observations you make during your nature excursions and use the journal as inspiration for other creative activities.

Involve children in the arts. Creativity is an aspect of our children's lives that often gets abbreviated by a parental ambition for academic success. Allowing children to attend art exhibitions, theatre performances, or music and dance events inspires their sense of creativity. Arranging for time in our children's schedule to express their artistic skills and talents by painting, dancing or acting is an excellent way to honor their spirit.

The child's sense of wonder is an enormous part of their spiritual experience in the early years. Looking at the world through a child's perspective is a wonderful way to develop your own sense of reverence and appreciation for your child. Following an ant as it navigates its way back to its colony, admiring the detail of a dew soaked spider's web or

collecting fallen leaves to make a bouquet are all ways that children explore their world. As adults we can try to have these experiences as if it is our first time as well, taking the time to share in the excitement of the child.

As educators and parents, as communities and nations, we must ensure that material education is complemented with character education, so that the child's human qualities such as love, justice, responsibility and service also find an opportunity to develop and flourish. These human virtues are the most important elements for our children's success in their academic endeavors, future career and family life. They are also the surest foundation for building a better world. Take the time to guide your children, helping them to unlock their true nobility.

**By Terrence Millie, Vice Principal of The Family Learning House. More information about honoring the spirit of childhood can be found in "The Family Virtues Guide" by Linda Kavelin Popov.**