

East Valley Life

FAMILY • RELATIONSHIPS • ENTERTAINMENT

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which might not resemble are brought together. But members of blended families need each other. The children will never be close in the way that siblings can be, because they aren't siblings. But they can form new and different relationships. They can become solid friends and depend on one another.

The children's ability to get along will depend on where they are in their adjustment to their parents' divorce. They may be feeling conflicted, caught between feelings of loyalty to both parents. This will be easier for them to handle if the new marriage is solid.

It's important for the parent and stepparent to present a unified front at times of conflict. If each parent backs up the other, the children will eventually model their behavior on the solidarity they see.

It's equally important for ex-spouses to move past their own anger and support each other. This is asking a lot of parents who are mourning the loss of their earlier relationship and may be anxious about the future. But it is the best way to help a child feel secure in two families.

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The pen is mightier

Mesa teacher wants to raise an army of tutors

BY GERI KOEPEL
TRIBUNE

Gene Fazio wants you to join his army.

Instead of toting a weapon and practicing at artillery ranges, though, he wants you to brandish a pen or pencil and invade local schools and libraries.

Fazio, an English instructor at Mesa Community College, aims to create an "army" of tutors by 2010 to provide individualized instruction.

"My goal is to level the academic playing ground between the haves and have-nots by providing an alternative path of literacy for those who aren't performing," he said.

Last fall, about 26 percent of the students taking the English placement test and about 31 percent of the students taking the reading placement test at Mesa Community College tested into

developmental English and developmental reading courses. This means a lot of students aren't adequately prepared for academic success when they begin college.

To help them, Fazio has developed a writing tutorial that teaches students to

write through practice, not by lecturing. He'll demonstrate the tutorial at a free workshop 9 a.m. to noon Saturday in the Kiva Room of the Kirk Student Center at Mesa Community College.

Parents, educators and anyone looking to volunteer as a tutor at a local school or college can learn how to teach by attending the workshop. The materials can be applied to ninth-grade through college-level learners. Attendees will get handouts to take home, and any individual or school has permission to make more copies if they wish.

"We're not in this to make

money," Fazio said, "we're in this to make a difference."

In addition to learning by doing, students get constant oversight. "In a class," he said, "you have to present the information the best you can and hope it sticks."

Fazio likes to draw an analogy to the movie "The Karate Kid," in which a karate master teaches his pupil by having him practice rudimentary moves that are easily mastered — waxing a car, painting a fence, and so on.

Similarly, Fazio asks writing students to put together complex sentences by starting with simple ones. For instance, one of the first exercises is to add two adjectives to a sentence. Taking the example, "The woman screamed," for instance, the student might create, "The tall, thin woman screamed." The work sheets build on these principles quickly to create complex sentences, paragraphs and then essays.

It sounds too easy to be true, but Michael Huard of Mesa is proof that it works. Huard, 32, was a high school dropout who got his GED in



Gene Fazio

Writing tutor workshop

When: 9 a.m. to noon Saturday

Where: Kiva Room of the Kirk Student Center at Mesa Community College, 1833 West Southern Ave.

Cost: Free

Information: Reservations required; e-mail wren@mail.mc.maricopa.edu to reserve or call Gene Fazio at (480) 461-7614 for more information.

the military. He placed into Fazio's remedial English course three years ago when he started at Mesa Community College. He now holds a 3.8 grade point average at Arizona State University, working toward a major in secondary education in English.

"In every course I've experienced so far, with the exception of mathematics, writing is the key," he said.

Huard helps other students as well. At the end of his semester in Fazio's writing course, he became a peer tutor for other students, and continues to work one-on-one with students at ASU.

"You can start to see the progress almost immediately," he said.

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5401 N. Hayden Road, Scottsdale, S1. (480) 312-2361.

Cooking basics: "Cooking Basics for Kids," a hands-on class for ages 6 to 12, will be 10:30 a.m. to noon at Kiwanis Park Recreation Center, 6111 S. All-America Way, Tempe. \$20. (480) 350-5201.

CRIB NOTES

Is it abuse?

If you see a parent handling a child too roughly in a public place, you might be torn between wanting to help and not wanting to interfere. Try one of these tactics suggested by Sid Johnson, president of Prevent Child Abuse America:

- Start a conversation with the adult to direct attention away from the child. Try, "My son also gets upset like that."

- If the child is misbehaving, divert his attention. You might ask him, "That's a great baseball cap; are you a Red Sox fan?"

- Avoid negative remarks or looks. This may only increase the parent's anger and could make matters worse for the child.

- For more information, call (800) 244-5373, or visit www.preventchildabuse.org.

Knight Ridder Newspapers