

## Keeping dad in the loop

### *Father-daughter relationship is crucial for adolescent girls*

by Amy Lynch  
Editor of *Daughters* newsletter

There's an old adage that goes this way: "A girl needs her mother during adolescence." And it's true; she does. A mother's loving support makes a critical difference to girls at this stage of development. But too often dads who are uncomfortable with their daughters' adolescent development use this conventional wisdom as an excuse. "I never went through this," a dad decides. "And so I can't help."

#### The disappearing dad

Research confirms that many fathers retreat emotionally and physically when their daughters enter puberty. Around the time a girl buys her first bra and indulges in her first full-scale adolescent sulk, her father tends to withdraw from her. Studies show that fathers generally spend less time with their daughters after they

enter puberty. They talk with girls less and criticize them more. Yet girls need their fathers more than ever during adolescence. It is during these years that the culture tends to teach a girl that her appearance is her most useful attribute, that her ideas and opinions are less interesting than her jean size. A father or stepfather who stays close and supportive can help a girl fend off those harmful messages. He can affirm his daughter's femininity and her individuality by complimenting the color of her eyes, listening when she talks, and reminding her that he has high expectations for her algebra grades.

The adolescent girl who is loved by her father in a non-seductive and respectful way has a real advantage. She knows that she is appreciated by the most important man in her life. This helps her accept her changing body and gives her confidence with boys her own age. Studies show that girls who have a close relationship

with their fathers tend to develop a positive sense of personal identity as young women. Girls with involved, supportive fathers tend to grow up to be more autonomous; they have more successful male-female relationships as adults.

But staying connected is not easy. Will Glennon, the author of *Fathering: Strengthening Connection With Your Children No Matter Where You Are*, spent years studying the experiences of fathers. He concluded that men don't back away from their adolescent daughters because they want to. Rather, they don't know how to support a girl who is buffeted by powerful emotions. When fathers feel helpless, Glennon says, they withdraw. What fathers have to do, he argues, is develop a kind of "emotional courage" in these relationships. They must learn to say, "Could you tell me more about that? I'll try to listen," instead of turning away or turn-

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## Advice for parents of daughters wins growing readership

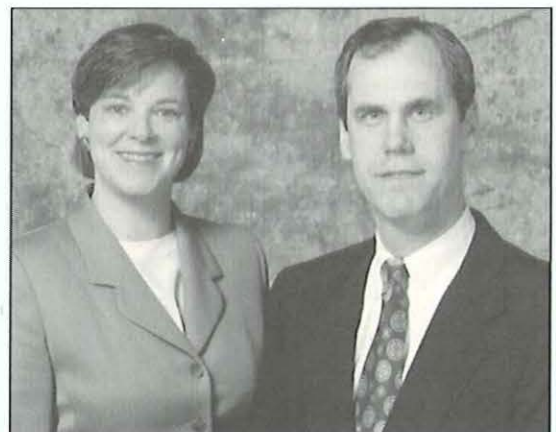
For Amy Lynch and Jack Hoos, the editor and publisher of *Daughters* newsletter, an interest in the special concerns of raising girls came naturally — each has two daughters.

Lynch and Hoos met when their older daughters were toddlers in day-care together. The little girls became friends and as they grew up, their parents got together "over the dining table" to talk about their hopes and fears for their daughters' futures.

Hoos (A&S '78), who had worked in market research and banking, began to investigate the available resources for parents of girls. Realizing that many parents were not getting the information they needed, he decided to start a newsletter — and tapped Lynch, an experienced writer and editor, to implement his "fabulous idea."

Starting in January 1996 with a small, regional base of read-

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Amy Lynch and Jack Hoos

ing on the TV. Otherwise, a dad can spend years grieving for the relationship he lost with his daughter when she entered adolescence.

### Parenting as a team

And where is Mom in all of this? If the father stays close to his daughter, then the mother has a partner in the parenting process.

If, on the other hand, a dad withdraws from his daughter, he often leaves the mother overworked and overwhelmed by

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the task of parenting. Studies reveal that conflicts tend to increase between mothers and daughters soon after a girl has her first period. The daughter, so closely identified with her mother in many ways, often feels developmentally compelled to renegotiate her relationship with her mother by pushing the limits and by objecting to her mother's guidance. A mother and a father who understand the importance of the father-daughter dynamic and these simultaneous mother-daughter negotiations are better able to share the work, support each other, and parent as a team. They're better able to care for their daughter and for themselves as they guide her toward adulthood.

This is an idea supported by Joan K. Peters in *When Mothers Work: Loving Our Children Without Sacrificing*

*Our Selves*. Peters reminds us that the standard family model is no longer one parent working outside the home (the dad) and one parent working inside the home (the mom). Today, in many cases, both parents hold jobs. Therefore, both parents should work as equally as possible inside the home, though that may require unfamiliar

adjustments on everyone's part. The model of the involved, nurturing father is not just an ideal or a fantasy, she argues, but a real-

ity and a necessity as more women enter demanding (and rewarding) jobs outside the home.

At *Daughters* newsletter, we receive calls from subscribers around the country. Nearly one-quarter of them come from dads who want to know more about how to parent their growing daughters. Many of these fathers are raising girls alone; others parent with a partner. In every case, however, these fathers are attempting to learn new patterns of relating — they're trying to remain connected and supportive, even when that is a hard and confusing task.

Their calls reassure me, and all of us, that change is possible. We can create new, more equitable parenting models which free us all — moms and dads and daughters alike — to become more fully ourselves. ■■

### PARENTING ADVICE

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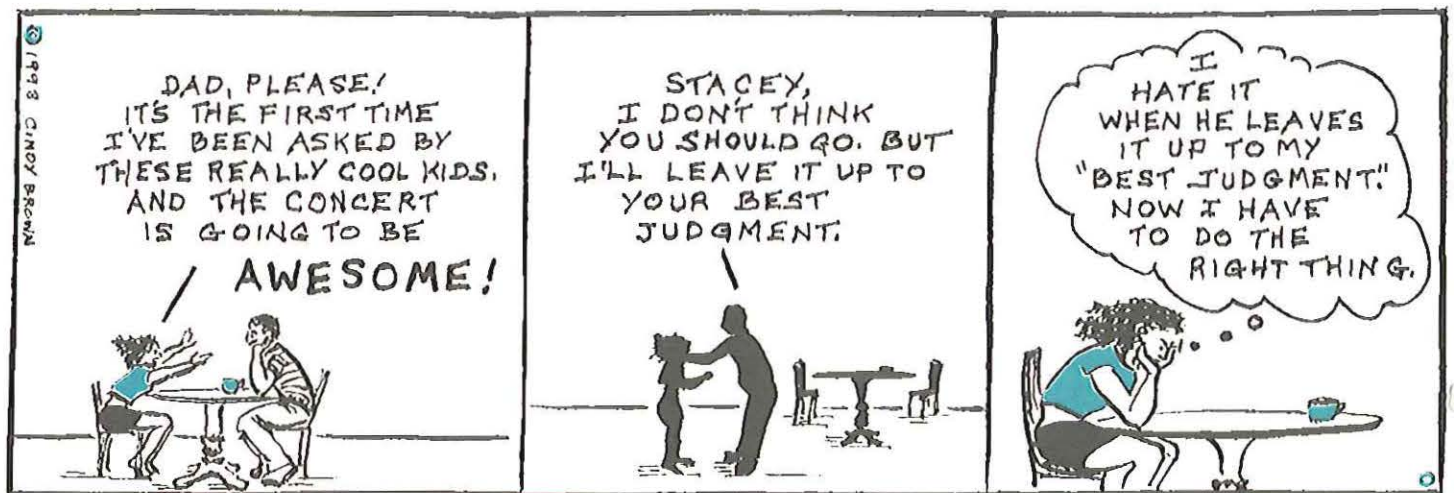
ers, *Daughters* now has about 10,000 subscribers from all 50 states and several foreign countries. It has won praise from the Ms. Foundation and the Girl Scouts and was nominated last year as best new publication in the *UTNE Reader* awards.

Lynch says the editorial mission of the newsletter is "to work our way into that very delicate relationship between girls and parents and give parents tools to improve that relationship."

Published eight times a year, the newsletter focuses on the key ages from eight to eighteen and tackles such topics as dating, social cruelty, boy obsession and self-esteem. Although recent research is included, Lynch says her priority is to help parents communicate with their daughters. An upcoming article on smoking, for example, will give not only facts and figures about teen smoking, but ideas for parents to use in talking to girls about the risks involved.

As a result of *Daughters'* success, Hoos and Lynch have plans to launch another newsletter, called (not surprisingly) *Sons*.

For subscription information, call 1-800-829-1088 or view sample articles on the web site at: [www.daughtersnewsletter.com](http://www.daughtersnewsletter.com).



# New gatekeepers

## *Nurse practitioners take larger role in providing primary care*

by Janie Daddario

Assistant Professor of the Practice of Nursing

In today's evolving health care system, nurse practitioners have assumed a major role in the delivery of basic patient services. These nurses, who have specialized training in diagnosing and treating illnesses, are now the gatekeepers to the medical establishment for many patients.

The first programs to train nurse practitioners began just over 30 years ago and have since blossomed in popularity due to changes in medical practice. Nurse practitioners now work in all 50 states, independently in their own health care settings or in collaboration with physicians.

Under most public and private health care plans and health maintenance organizations, nurse practitioners are now approved as "primary care providers," able to treat common illnesses and injuries and refer patients to specialists when necessary. Under a federal law that took effect January 1, for example, Medicare now provides direct reimbursement to nurse practitioners for services previously provided only by physicians.

In Tennessee, the need for primary care providers increased with the advent of TennCare in 1994. TennCare is a state program that provides health care to former Medicaid recipients and underinsured or uninsured Tennesseans. Depending on their specialty, most nurse practitioners are recognized as primary care providers in the TennCare plan. They are responsible for gatekeeping, case management and delivery of direct care.

### What is a nurse practitioner?

A nurse practitioner is an advanced practice nurse — in most cases a registered nurse with a master's degree in nursing. The focus of a nurse practitioner's care is disease prevention and early detection of illness through patient education. Nurse practitioners take the time to assess how your lifestyle affects your health. They work with their patients to prevent illness and promote healthy lifestyle choices.

Vanderbilt University School of Nursing is one of the largest educators of nurse practitioners in the country. Our continuing goal as faculty has been to educate nurse practitioners who can best meet the needs of the emerging health care system. As reform continues, more

emphasis will be placed on helping people stay healthy instead of providing care only when they are sick.

Vanderbilt has been training nurse practitioners for more than 25 years, starting with the Primex program, a nondegree family nurse practitioner program in existence from 1972 to 1976. This early program was aimed at registered nurses who did not have baccalaureate degrees but wanted to be nurse practitioners and provide primary care to their patients. The certificate program existed along with the School of Nursing's family nurse clinician master's program, founded in 1970, the precursor to the current family nurse practitioner program.

The School of Nursing now has 10 specialty nurse practitioner tracks. They include: family nurse practitioners, adult acute care, women's health, nurse-midwifery, gerontology, occupational health, health systems management, pediatric nurse practitioners, neonatal nurse practitioners, and psychiatric/mental health.

In my own practice as a women's health nurse practitioner, I provide primary care to women throughout the life span. Much of my focus is on reproductive health, including health promotion and guidance during adolescence, childbearing years, menopause and beyond. As a nurse practitioner and as a teacher, I have experienced the challenges and rewards that have accompanied the new roles for nurses in our changing system of medical care. ■■■



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# Announcements

## Workshops

A 10-part workshop on **Writing A Woman's Life** will be offered at the Women's Center in the fall. The program is designed to identify and discuss the issues involved in writing about women's experiences, whether in journals, memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, or in fiction that presents female characters. The workshops will be led by Karen Essex, a biographer, journalist and fiction writer who is currently pursuing an M.F.A. in creative writing at Goddard College. The group will meet weekly on Tuesday nights from 7 to 9 p.m., for 10 weeks beginning Sept. 17. Cost is \$195. For information, contact Karen Essex at 269-8675.

## Call for nominations

The deadline to submit nominations for the **Mary Jane Werthan Award** is June 8. This award is given annually by the Women's Center to honor an individual for contributing to the advancement of women at Vanderbilt. It is named in honor of Mary Jane Werthan, the first woman member of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. Nominations, and any supporting materials, should be sent to the Women's Center.

## Programs

Noted author, actress and poet **Maya Angelou** will speak Tuesday, June 9 at 7 p.m. at the War Memorial Auditorium as part of the Nashville YWCA's 100th anniversary celebration. Tickets are \$25 and are available at Ticketmaster outlets. The presenting sponsor of the event is CABLE, a networking group of professional and business women. The YWCA's anniversary is being marked with events throughout the year, including a September appearance at Vanderbilt by Dr. Vivian Pinn, head of women's health research at the National Institutes of Health.

## Call for papers


Proposals for individual papers, panels and other presentation formats are invited for **Women and Power**, a women's studies conference to be held at MTSU February 18-20, 1999. Keynote speakers will be Elaine Brown, the first woman to lead the Black Panther Party, and Ninotchka Rosca, an acclaimed novelist and former political prisoner in the Philippines. Proposals for presentations must be sent by October 1. For more information, contact the conference program committee at 898-5098.

## State law creates Council on Women

Legislation now awaiting the governor's signature will establish a Tennessee Economic Council on Women to address the lagging economic status of women in the state. The bill passed both houses of the legislature unanimously in April after women's organizations from across Tennessee marshalled their forces to push the bill out of committee and on to the House and Senate for a vote.

Under terms of the law, the council will be launched Sept. 1 with 21 members and a full-time executive director. The council will investigate the needs and concerns of women in such areas as employment practices, educational opportunities, child care, health care, and domestic relations. Tennessee currently ranks 50th among the states in the number of women who own their own businesses and 39th in the percentage of women above the poverty level.

Suggestions for nominees to serve on the council should be sent as soon as possible to the League of Women Voters, 1701 21st Ave. S., Suite 425, Nashville, TN 37212.

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