

A Whole New World

During our community theater's run of *The Nerd*, they designated one of the nights "80's Night" since the play was set in 1985. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit the local thrift stores with a mission – looking for components to complete my 80's look. 2 thrift stores are within walking distance so I just packed up the little ones in the double stroller and off we went. I found things with ease – a gaudy Mickey Mouse sweatshirt that I cut up to make it off-the-shoulder, a black lacy Madonna-like skirt, jelly shoes, hoop earrings, leggings, ankle socks... I was ready to go!

And of course, what 80's look is complete without makeup and lots of it? I read a hint on a website about dressing for 80's parties – "In the 80's, we didn't accessorize – we "excessorized" and LOVED it!" So I braided my wet hair in the morning, and by evening when I took out the braids, I achieved the "crimped" hair look I was going for. I pulled out the electric blue nail polish (though I ended up regretting that later since I forgot to buy nail polish remover and I was stuck with electric blue nail polish for a few days until I had the time to get to Walmart – OOPS), and I piled on the purple and blue eye shadow. It was lots of fun to get dressed up like a goofball – I may consider being an 80's time machine traveler for Halloween. But anyway, while I was getting ready for 80's night, I had a flock of admirers. My 3 little girls aren't used to me putting on makeup, dressing up, painting my nails, or spending lots of time on my hair (note to self – next time I dress 80's, I need some Aquanet!) – I'm just not the kind of gal who does – or has the time to do, for that matter – these things regularly. It was like a whole new world for them, and they gawked in awe as they watched me get ready. My oldest kept running up to her room to look for jewelry to use – everyone wanted to help, which was like a whole new world for *me*.

80's night was a few weeks ago, and the girls are still asking to have their nails painted and for us to do each other's makeup, much to my husband's dismay. He's never liked makeup and says he wants our girls to be at least 18 before they can wear it. I've tried explaining to him that there is something innate in little girls that make them like dressing up and putting makeup on – it's just how little girls are made. Being a male, he doesn't get it of course, and so I imagine we'll have many a debate in this house once the girls get to the teenage years and want to wear makeup regularly. For now, I don't have a problem using it as a "toy" once in a while, as long as it's supervised and I can guide my girls to having the right opinions about makeup, especially when it comes to self-esteem issues – makeup does not make you prettier, you do not NEED makeup, it can be harmful to your face if you use it incorrectly, etc. So until they become teenagers, this is a way we can have fun together, and I also view it as an important bonding experience. One of the things I remember doing with my sister the most while we were growing up is her doing my hair and makeup, and I don't remember ever fighting while we were doing that. Anyone who knows my girls realizes how much we need an activity that Taylor and Sammie can do together without fighting! So if you see me walking around with a hideous makeup job someday, just remember that my face was probably painted by an 8, 4, or 2 year old!

****YOU ASKED FOR IT!!!****



Why I Loathe School Fundraisers

It's that time of year again – back to school already! For the most part, this means good news for me as it clears out half of the foot traffic around here during the day. And since my oldest 2 are school-age and also the ones who are constantly misbehaving lately – Whoo Hoo for back to school time!

But back to school season also means it's time for school fundraisers, and my oldest daughter brought one home on the *second* day of school! They really couldn't wait until the second week of school at least? Because of how busy we've been around here between the new baby, my husband being in a play and his health scare, I set the fundraiser order form aside until the night before it was due when I reluctantly sent out an email seeking fundraiser participants. We actually did pretty well; better than I thought, actually, so

I have to thank those of you who ordered stuff. But I have to come clean and say I did not order anything from my own daughter's school fundraiser. I just could not find anything I needed or even wanted for quadruple what it *should* cost.

My nephew sent me an email about a week later seeking participants for his first school fundraiser, so for him I was a little more motivated to order something. Since the kids get credit for the number of items they get people to order versus how much is spent, I started looking for something inexpensive I could order. I began by trying to think of any gifts we might need for people sometime soon. No luck – we have a basement full of stuff my husband got from overstocked wholesalers that is just waiting to be gifted away. Next I tried looking for a small kitchen gadget I could use, even if it was only once in a blue moon. I found a can strainer – a plastic disk with holes in it you put over cans to drain the water out. It was \$5 – outrageously expensive, of course, but I could justify it for my nephew's first attempts at fundraising for his school. This wasn't so hard, I thought as I clicked on the shopping cart to check out. Except that all of a sudden, I was spending \$11 instead of \$5. And there was a text box on the webpage that told me that \$2.20 of my order goes directly to his school. They were trying to make it sound like a good thing, but \$2.20 out of \$11? And I'm spending \$11 on a 4 inch piece of plastic with holes in it? It really is easy enough to just use the can lid to strain whatever is in the can – and now I couldn't even justify buying an over-priced item “for a good cause” since the school was only getting \$2 of my money! Ugh, back to shopping on the fundraiser's site...

Have you ever had to shop for something you didn't want? It's actually quite difficult. We had a similar experience after our new baby was born. Someone got him some clothes that were the wrong size, so we ended up with a bunch of Kohl's store credit. My husband and I spent almost 2 hours in the Kohl's

trying to figure out what we wanted; it was really difficult for us. Kohl's is not our type of store – we love bargain shopping, and even though it was “free” store credit we were spending, it was hard to justify their expensive prices on things we barely needed. We ended up with 2 candle warmers and an electric razor for my husband. He can grow a beard in a matter of days, and this razor cut his shaving time drastically. The candle warmers are pretty cool too – you put candles on them and still get the scent, but without the ‘something’s burning’ smell or the danger of the open flame – a must-have if you like candles and have 4 little kids running around. So anyway, where was I before the Kohl's tangent?

Oh, yes, trying to shop for things you don't need... Like I said, I could justify the \$5 for the can strainer, but when it climbed to \$11 (especially because only \$2 went to my nephew's school), I had to explore other options. I considered a ‘dip kit’ for \$6, figuring I could use it at one of the many game nights we host – then it would double as a conversation piece as well – but shipping on every item was \$6. Since the dip instructions read, ‘just add mayonnaise and sour cream’, I couldn't justify \$12 on a packet of powder, again with the school only getting a measly \$2. So anyway, over an hour later, I finally found a good solution – a magazine subscription. Sure, I was now spending \$15 instead of \$12, but there were no shipping fees which meant the school got \$8 of my money. With 4 kids I barely ever have enough time to read the daily newspaper, so I don't really know what I'm going to do with all the *US News and World Report* magazines that will soon be piling up around here. But hey, my kids already have a subscription to *Highlights* and my husband's not really into magazines, so what else was I supposed to do? The subscription to *Parents* magazine was actually cheaper, but as I've said many times before to people who try to borrow me books about parenting – at the end of a long day full of changing diapers, cleaning spills, refereeing fights, and serving meals for people to reject, the last thing I want to

do to unwind is read about kids! So I figured I could maybe save time – instead of surfing the ‘net at night reading news stories, I could bring my *US News and World Report* up to bed and start my reading time a little earlier so I don’t stay up too late.

But the point of this long rambling blog is this: I hate school fundraisers. I hate asking people to spend their hard-earned money on them, I hate ordering from them, and I hate the way they’re set up. Don’t get me wrong – I was more than happy to order from my nephew, especially because it’s his first one; I find that kind of cute. Nevermind that little voice in my head that says, “but he’s only in *Kindergarten* and they’re already making him sell things!” But lucky for me, my sister only has 2 kids. Can’t say the same for us -our family’s fundraiser victims will get hit up a whopping 4 times a year! Not only that, but when the kids are in different clubs and activities, those are also prime targets for fundraising opportunities. My daughter brought home a newsletter just today that said her Girl Scouts fundraiser will be starting in a few weeks... ugh, here we go again. So even if we don’t have any more kids and say each of our kids is in only 1 club or activity that does a fundraiser (girl scouts does 2 if you include selling cookies) – that’s now a minimum of 8 times per year I have to hit up my family and friends. And that 8 times a year will probably all be overlapping in the autumn months! It is my hope to someday be able to put aside enough time to attend the PTO meetings and urge the implementation of a new fundraising system – one where not so much money is wasted on the company that is hired to actually do the fundraiser. Until then, maybe I will just buy stock in one of these fundraising companies that are preying on our children’s schools... in a struggling economy, something tells me that is one type of business that isn’t hurting!

Pedal To The Metal

Yes, a fun day indeed, if you read Jamiahsh's blog, then you know what I'm talking about. To get our minds off of certain medical dramas (not like House or Grey's Anatomy or anything like that – our real-life medical dramas taking place right now are much worse than some crappy tv), we decided to have a day of fun. It began with go-carting, which is always fun but even more so if you can fill up the track and drive with people you know – which we were able to do. I like the place we went to because they don't charge any extra if you take a kid along with you, and seeing as how we had a few nice adults who didn't mind chauffeuring some little kids, all 3 of our daughters got to go around the track a bunch of times. But I'm the dummy who forgot my camera, so I didn't get a picture of my little almost 2-year-old in a go-cart like I wanted. It's funny because I had the camera with me, just forgot to use it, which should signal how scatter-brained I've been lately because of the worry and lack of sleep resulting from my husband's as-yet-unidentified medical condition. And while we're on that subject, we won't know anything until next week now, because they've ordered further tests for Thursday, and they won't get the results back until next week. But they've eliminated gallstones, so at least we know that much. He blogged a little update here.

But anyway, enough *tangents*, back to the fun day. After go-carting, we decided to practice in the batting cages for our upcoming annual theater softball game. The batting cages reminded me how hilarious last year's game was – I mean, theater people playing softball? It was a riot!

After that, we went to a nice little restaurant we like on the river. If you sit outside, you get to enjoy the beautiful

weather, the view, and a game of cornhole while you wait for your food. I like cornhole; if anyone has a set, we should bring it to the theater family fun day and play that along with softball... Why is it called cornhole? Is that a NW Ohio term for it? They have that where I come from in Illinois too, but I don't think they call it cornhole. In case you aren't from NW Ohio and you don't know what I'm talking about, I'm referring to the game with the wooden ramps with holes in them... you have 2 of these and station them about 15-20 feet apart with half of the team at each end; then you throw bean bags into the holes – hopefully.

After dinner, the kids fell apart (what else is new? They've been acting HORRIBLY lately!), so we had to leave, but I hear the rest of the group went mini-golfing. I was actually tempted to mini-golf earlier in the day but I knew the kids would drive me nuts because they get bored of it after about 6 holes. So we left, thinking maybe the kids would fall asleep in the car, giving me and hubby a much-deserved and needed night alone together to watch a movie. Didn't happen. And starting with the kids spazzing out at the restaurant about bees (and there weren't that many – our almost 9-year-old is a wimp about certain things and her craziness got her sisters going – don't you love how they chain-react to one another? Hence the name of my blog), things went from bad to worse.

I'm going to blame Carol and Megan for this one, since they brought it up earlier in the day, but what a coincidence – we got pulled over on the way home. So thanks Carol and Megan for jinxing us!! Just kidding, of course it's not your fault... I guess poor Chris really got used to putting the pedal to the metal on those darn go-carts. The state highway patrol officer who pulled us over had the personality of a housefly, and she wasn't going to act like a human being and be thankful we weren't drunk driving or even think about giving us a break on labor day, so our fun day ended up being pretty expensive when you include the \$100 speeding ticket.

Our luck SUCKS lately, but if we can get the all-clear on my husband's health, then I will stop complaining.

Oh yeah, so anyway, when we got home, our almost-2-year-old was the last one awake, and since she had only napped for about 10 minutes during the day, we thought we were almost home-free for a nice evening together – WRONG! About 30 minutes into the movie, our oldest came down, asking for a snack. No biggie, but “Did you wake your sister?” we asked her, panicked beyond belief because our 4-year-old has been a little hellian again lately. She said she didn't think she woke her up, but 5 minutes later, guess what happens? Sammie comes down the stairs, and now we're in the middle of an R rated movie with all 3 kids awake and downstairs. So much for our peaceful early night, sigh. We sent the oldest 2 upstairs, and that's actually the last we heard from Sammie, believe it or not. Disney, the youngest besides the baby (and he's not old enough to cause any trouble yet, thank goodness!), got so OVER-tired that she started crying for about 45 minutes straight until she finally fell asleep. But then Taylor, the oldest, must have come down the stairs at least 3 more times because she was worried about various bugs that were in her room and in the house, according to her anyway. If this were still the age of the VCR, our movie would have been eaten by the VCR by now because of all the pausing and unpausing we were doing... but ultimately, we just gave up anyway because I was falling asleep during the first part of the movie, and we could tell Taylor was going to be “bugging” us all night... So we missed the end of [No Escape](#) – some crappy [Ray Liotta](#) action film from the 90's. I think it was crappy anyway, I really didn't see much of it – let me know if it's any good and maybe we'll go back to it.

But for what it was worth, the day provided a nice distraction from the worries that have been plaguing us lately, so thanks to all who participated. Now we just have to wait *another* week to find out more medical test results... ugh, I hate the

waiting!

Kids Write the Darndest Email Forwards