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The Cluttered Desk

Volume 4 Issue 1

"Every child needs someone who is irrationally positive about them." Guy Doud, former U.S. teacher of the year.

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----- FEATURE ARTICLE

Who Needs a Man?

By Chris Slaughter

People often ask me what it is like being a male teacher in an elementary school. I tell them that it is a lot like being at home... if there is a mess, I am the one who made it, I am expected to be handy with tools, and though it may sometimes appear that I am in charge, every female on the premises knows different.

People somehow expect men to stand out in an elementary school, to contribute in ways that a woman can't. My main contribution so far has been the addition of the daily newspaper to the faculty bathroom. The other teachers countered with a can of air freshener.

The simple truth is... virtually every female teacher in my building is more capable than I am in just about everything. They teach circles around me, are far more consistent, far more organized, are genetically encoded to multi-task, and look better while doing it all. In fact, I would be considered almost useless if wasn't for... pest control.

That's right, I said it. The ladies in my school are scared of spiders, snakes, mice, roaches, and even some of the bigger grasshoppers. They can teach "Charlotte's Web", but come screaming to me anytime Charlotte or one of her kids comes dangling down from a light fixture. Ms. Dobson (who I have seen stare down a 250-pound biker-dad by simply raising one eyebrow) suddenly turns into Miss Muffet, hopping from foot to foot while on top of her tuffet (or this

case, her desk), yelling at the top of her lungs for me to come get rid of the giant tarantula that has invaded her room.

That's right, the ladies are afraid of all creatures that are not kittens, puppies, ponies, or dinner. The problem is... so am I! And being a man, I am not allowed to admit this out loud. Trust me, it's in the manual, sandwiched between "Never stop for directions" and "Underwear belongs on the floor".

And considering this is the one task that I am expected to do well, I HAVE TO DO IT! So, when Ms. Muffet calls, I calmly have her and her students leave the room, close the door, and then ever so carefully... I throw my shoes at the spider. I have gotten quite good at it. So far, I have only lost three pairs of shoes, and only rarely have to resort to stripping a library shelf for ammunition.

So, I found my purpose. At least I thought I had. Then, one day, a snake got loose in the Science lab. Being the man, I was called to come capture it. Knowing my duty, I called my wife, told her goodbye, and entered the lab telling myself the following...

"You're a man"

"You can do this"

"I'm gonna be sick"

"You're a MAN! You can do this"

"My arms won't work!"

"You're a MAN! YOU CAN DO THIS!"

"I want my mommy!"

Then I saw it. A 12-foot long Burmese python with venom dripping from its 6-inch fangs, its forked tongue flicking out to taste me, and its coiled body rearing up to strike!

Okay, it was a 10-inch grass snake, but perspective can be a tricky thing when your heart stops beating and you've just discovered you can climb a wall backwards.

Just then the door opened, and in walked little Juan Martinez, a smaller than average second-grade student with a shy smile and big brown eyes. First he looked at me, then the snake.

"Juan, no!", I cried as he started toward it. He didn't stop. *Poor Juan*, I thought. *He's bite-size.*

Calmy, Juan hunched over the snake, picked it up, and began stroking its scaly body. He looked at me and asked, "Do you want to pet it?"

"GAK!", I answered.

After a few more seconds of stroking the snake, Juan stood and walked to its habitat, opened the lid and dropped it in.

Juan is a clever and kind boy. He never told the other teachers about what really happened in the Science lab that day. So I am still the man, and still have a purpose in my school. In fact, I even have a new purpose. I get to do Juan's homework until he goes to Junior High.

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MARCH MATH LINKS

A Charming Graph – Use Lucky Charms cereal in this graphing activity.

http://www.themailboxbooks.com/Images_books/editorial/monthlybooks/p/mr/stpatrick/pdf/tec189p24.pdf

Graphing the Green

<http://www.teachingheart.net/graph.htm>

EdHelpers St.Patrick's Day Theme Unit

http://www.edhelper.com/st_patricks_day.htm

See samples of 1,2,3 Math Fonts at http://www.justusteachers.com/Math_Fonts.html

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RESEARCH LINKS – PREPARING FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

No Pain, High Gain - Standardized Test Preparation

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/assessment/nopain.htm>

Standardized Test Preparation and Tips for Success

http://www.ct4me.net/standardized_test_preparation.htm

A Developmental Approach to Preparing Students for Standardized or State Tests

http://www.eduplace.com/state/pdf/author/larson1_hmm05.pdf

Elementary Standardized Test Preparation

http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Assessments/Preparation/Elementary_Test_Preparation/elementary_test_preparation.html

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Just Us Teachers

justusteachers@justusteachers.com

www.justusteachers.com