

# SANTA FE BOYS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION ABOUT THE SITUATION OF BOYS IN SANTA FE

ISSUE NO. 1

FALL 2003

## Why A Newsletter on Boys?

By Paul Golding,  
SFB Editor

On one level, this newsletter had its origins in the work of a small group of men and women who organized a public workshop, *Rescuing Our Boys*, in April 2003. Subsequent discussions among those drawn to the subject of the current situation of boys in Santa Fe led to the formation of the Santa Fe Boys Community Action Network (Boys C.A.N.) and have resulted in efforts aimed at increasing community awareness of the state of boys here, identifying what boys need and studying how to meet those needs. Our newsletter is one of those efforts.

On a more personal level, as a former boy who underwent many of the challenges of boyhood, I identify with those boys who do not experience the full



richness of their feelings because of the socialization process many males undergo. Like many men, I have spent much of adulthood trying to regain that wholeness of feeling.

Many think of the world as a man's world. But it does not seem to be a boy's world. Some

might say that it does not seem to be much of a girl's world either. While those of us involved in this endeavor support more attention and services for boys, we in no way are trying to detract from a similar need for girls. Indeed, we feel strongly that resources and attention for **both boys and girls** in our community are inadequate. We also feel that a fresh look at the situation for boys is long overdue.

We are so used to seeing men at the top of the job, income and power pyramid, we

probably do not fully realize how vulnerable and low on the pyramid boys currently are. In Santa Fe, for example, boys are two times more likely to be in special ed classes, three times more likely to be entangled in the juvenile justice system, and, in New Mexico, four times more likely to commit suicide. Boys drop out of Santa Fe schools more, suffer more from obesity in New Mexico and tend more to engage in risk taking behaviors, so that the number of deaths from firearms for boys in

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By Lynn Hathaway,  
SFB Editorial Board

Why focus on the needs of boys? I care deeply about the well-being of all children. But because of my personal experience, I have a special concern for boys. As the sister of a brother who was ten years younger, I watched my beloved "baby brother" grow up under the rules of the "Boy Code" which insists that boys suppress their emotions and assume a mask of stoic masculinity. I lost my brother to suicide on his 24th birthday, in 1979. At that time I was in graduate school and this experience changed the direc-

tion of my future work.

As a mother, I watched my son struggle every day to learn what was taught in school. He did just fine at La Casita Preschool, which offered many choices of hands-on activities and appreciated different learning styles. But from first grade



to the third year in college his efforts in school were undermined by the existence of a visual-processing learning disorder. We never fully grasped

how difficult school was for him. It took a lot of courage for him to keep going to school when it was so hard to learn.

Fortunately, after an assessment at UNM, he learned strate-

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# Santa Fe School Tests Show Gender Gap in English Language Skills

An analysis of the 2003 results of the standardized tests administered by the Santa Fe Public Schools shows that males are significantly behind in the Language Arts area.<sup>1</sup> Language Arts examines a student's ability to recognize appropriate sentence structure, implement writing strategies, and edit. In short, it tests some of the fundamental skills needed to probe and understand ideas and information.

Generally speaking, the results become worse as males move on to the later years of testing. In the 9th grade TerraNova test, males performed at 44% compared to 58% for females. The national median is 50%. This poorer performance is also reflected in the Language Arts category of the NM High School Competency exam for Santa Fe, usually administered in the tenth grade, where 75% of males passed, compared to 88% of females. Given the school district's priority on increasing literacy, these results may point to the need for a more focused approach on the difficulties boys are having in this area as a way of raising the overall level of English language skills for the district.

By the ninth and tenth grades, Language Arts is the only area where there are significant gender differences in the Santa Fe tests results. This same pattern, however, can also be observed statewide, indicating that the problem of male writing ability is widespread. The Spring 2002 Executive Summary Report of the New

Mexico State Board of Education with regard to the High School Competency Examination shows minor differences between male and female scores in all content areas except for the Language Arts test, in which approximately 76.2% of male students passed, compared to 88.4% of the female students, almost identical to the results of local high schools.<sup>2</sup>

The gender differences in Language Arts, though significant, are not as striking as those observed between Hispanic and White/Non-Hispanic students in the 2003 SFPS testing program. The latter show Hispanic students to be trailing in all fields tested. These ethnic performance differences received most of the attention at the Santa Fe School Board's August 7 public study session on "Closing the Achievement Gap". It is possible that many of the remedies discussed there to close the ethnic gap in test performance could also help to close the gender gap. The measures which seemed to resonate most with School Board members addressed student aspirations, teacher and parent expectations, and parental involvement.

It is interesting to consider whether the means used to improve female achievement in science and math in the last twenty years might provide a model for closing these gaps, including improving the performance of boys in language arts. Many will say in this regard that the first step was to change the

cultural mindset, that is, the low expectations on the part of teachers and parents that girls and young women could be competent in science and math. This change in attitude occurred in a cultural setting where gender roles were formally defined: when girls studied home economics and boys spent their time in shop, for example. More generally, one might say of this period that the atmosphere of math and science was not "girl" friendly twenty years ago. Today few would claim that there is anything inherent in the mental capacity of girls to keep them back in these or other academic disciplines.

Could this be the case for boys today in the Language Arts? How much do these weaknesses in the basic skills of writing lead to later problems at school such as dropping out before graduation? Are the materials and techniques of teaching English language skills suited for the learning styles of boys? These are questions we hope to explore more fully in future issues of *Santa Fe Boys*.

<sup>1</sup> SFPS Office of Research, Data, Accountability and Testing, "TerraNova, The Second Edition (CAT): Achievement Gaps by Gender," and "NM HS Competency Examination, Administrative Summary for Santa Fe District," February 2003.

<sup>2</sup> New Mexico State Board of Education, "Executive Summary Report for the New Mexico Articulated Assessment Program," Spring 2002.

## SANTA FE BOYS

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

PO Box 273

Santa Fe, NM 87504-0273

Phone: 505-988-9582

Email: santafeboys@comcast.net

### EDITORIAL BOARD:

Paul Golding, PhD, Editor

Lynn Hathaway, PhD,  
City of Santa Fe, Children and  
Youth Planner

Melynn Schuyler Campbell, MA LPC  
Executive Director, YouthWorks

Design, Bill Sandoval,  
Buffalo Graphics

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Program Director,  
SF Community Foundation

*Santa Fe Boys* is published quarterly and is made possible by a grant from the Boys Fund, a donor advised fund at the Santa Fe Community Foundation. Appreciation is expressed to the Santa Fe Community Foundation and Partners in Education for their help with this first issue. A special thanks also to Dr. Bonnie Ellinger for extensive editorial help, and to Faith Garfield for helpful comments.

The editorial policy of *Santa Fe Boys* is to consider any article for publication. If you would like to contribute an article or a comment on the subjects raised here or other subjects related to boys in our community, please contact us at the addresses above.

If you would like to receive *Santa Fe Boys* in the future, please contact us at the addresses above.

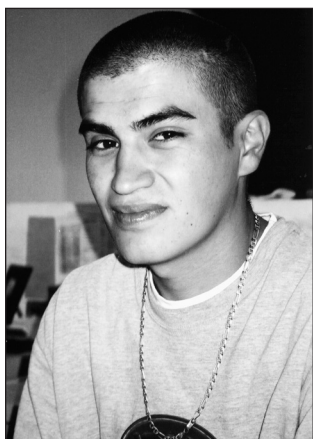
# Portrait of a Santa Fe Boy...

## Vince Tapia: A Leader, not a Stereotype

Melynn Schuyler Cambell  
SFB Editorial Board

**Vincent Tapia** is a legend in certain Santa Fe circles. If you haven't met him yet, you will. He is a local Santa Fe boy, now an adult, who has turned his life around from the world of gangs, street violence and drug use to become an inspiring, respected, outspoken youth leader and advocate.

Vince has made a conscious choice to lead by example. Presented with the dilemma of lifestyle choice, it would have been simple to remain in the mold he fit as an adolescent: a



trouble-maker in school, a tough kid labeled "bad" because of his rough façade. Fulfilling his teachers' negative expectations, he became involved in early drug use and petty crimes in middle school along with his "street" friends.

Vince ended up in detention, then jail at the age of 13. Ultimately, he was sent to treatment, where many just ride out their time, choosing to ignore the help and counseling available. Not Vincent Tapia. He went deep inside himself to examine the path he had chosen and decided to re-enter society with a new will to survive. Many of

his friends did not follow Vince's example and many have not survived.

Vince lives with a passion and makes a difference for youth in Santa Fe every day. He stands tall and is proud to speak of his changed ways, glad to be rid of his old life. However, he still struggles to resist the attraction of his former existence. He works to help others who are susceptible to the thrill and danger of gang life. He is more than willing to sit and talk with anyone who will listen.

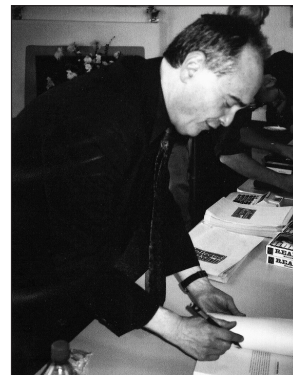
Active politically, Vince was a founding member of the City of Santa Fe's Mayor's Youth Advisory Board, joined the local AmeriCorp to serve the community at the New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution, and worked with youth conducting mediation, gang intervention, counseling, peer mentoring and advocacy.

Vincent is currently employed at ¡YouthWorks!, a Santa Fe nonprofit providing prevention education, counseling and paid job-training services to high-risk youth. He is the Youth Development Coordinator there and oversees the employment program, managing a crew of 20 on community-improvement and environmental restoration projects. Many of his team members are emerging from similarly difficult backgrounds and histories, and Vince is there to challenge and support them. You may have seen them this summer helping to restore the Santa Fe River or even putting out the Bosque Fire in Albuquerque.

Vincent Tapia is a dynamic leader and walking example of a Santa Fe Boy who has risen above negative expectations to become a positive role model in our community.

# 15 Step Program to Help Boys

**William Pollack**, the author of *Real Boys*, spoke in Santa Fe in April and later sent along some materials to be shared with people who are concerned with understanding and helping boys. He emphasized that all of us—no matter what our age, our gender, or the particular relationship we have to boys—can become their mentors and guides. By joining forces against the Boy Code, we can help provide boys with the tools they need to attain the self-confidence and peace of mind all human beings naturally desire and deserve. Below are fifteen steps Dr. Pollack suggests we can implement to help make boys' lives much more happy, meaningful and safe:



Dr. William Pollack, speaker at the April 30, 2003 workshop on *Rescuing Our Boys*, organized by the Santa Fe Community Foundation, signs copies of his book, *Real Boys*.  
(Photo by Katharine Kimball)

1. Create many highly accessible safe, "shame-free" zones.
2. Identify at least one reliable mentor with whom a boy can connect and upon whom he can rely for consistent guidance, love and support.
3. Learn to recognize boys' unique communication styles.
4. Talk candidly about the Boy Code and how it restricts what boys feel they can do and say.
5. Teach boys that there are many different ways to become a real man.
6. Make it clear that boys can trust you and will not "get in trouble" for being candid about their true inner feelings and experiences.
7. Get active—try to connect with boys through actions as well as words.
8. Empower boys: train them to be mentors too.
9. No matter your age and no matter the boy's age, play and become active with him every day.
10. Encourage a wide range of creative expression.
11. Educate boys about homophobia.
12. Bully-proof your neighborhood and schools.
13. Seek appropriate chances to share your own feelings and experiences.
14. Encourage spiritual connections.
15. Validate authenticity—"a boy being himself"—instead of stressing traditional masculine "success."

For more information on these subjects, we include a partial bibliography on boys:

- Bassoff, E.S., *Between Mothers and Sons: The Making of Vital and Loving Men*. Paperback ed. Plume. 1994, New York, N.Y. Penguin Books. 275 pp.
- Biddulph, S., *Raising Boys, Why Boys are Different-and How to Help Them Become Happy and Well-Balanced Men*. 1997, Berkeley, California: Celestial Arts. 216 pp.
- Pollack, W., *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*. 1998, New York, N.Y. Henry Holt and Co. 447 pp.



# Looking behind the statistics

## Obesity Rates of Santa Fe and New Mexico High School Students, 2001: Boys more likely to be obese by a factor of three

Catagories for at risk obesity	Santa Fe High Schools		New Mexico High Schools	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>Obese</b> --95 percentile or greater of Body Mass Index for Age.	8.6%	2.8%	16.2%	5.0%
<b>At Risk of Obesity</b> --85 percentile to 94 percentile of Body Mass Index for age	13.1%	7.4%	12.8%	13.9%
<b>Not at Risk</b> --Below 85 percentile of Body mass index for age.	78.3%	89.8%	71.0%	81.1%

Source: Data collected in connection with the 2001 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, a survey of high school students from most New Mexico High Schools, provided by the NM Department of Health.

Obesity rates for children around the country are soaring and the statistics for Santa Fe and New Mexico show that the same is occurring here. In addition, the numbers show that in our area, as has been observed elsewhere, boys are more likely to be obese than girls. As a predictor of future health problems these statistics do not bode well for the children of our community since it has been reported that childhood obesity is associated with increased risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, colon cancer and other health problems later in life.

In general, the increase in obesity is thought to be caused by a sedentary life style and the easy availability of inexpensive high fat and sugar-laden foods. More specifically, the long observed tendency for boys to show a higher rate of obesity is often attributed to the social pressure placed on girls to maintain an appealing appearance, a pressure assumed to be reduced or absent for boys. However, a recent study suggests that more may be at work here. It found that there is a link in the relationship between depression in boys and chronic obesity, providing another possible reason for male predominance in this area.<sup>1</sup> This empirical study, based on almost 1000 male and female children in rural North Carolina, was not able to find the direction of causality, that is, whether depression leads to obesity or vice versa, but did conclude that depression is more strongly associated with obesity in boys than such factors as single parenting, harsh discipline, and whether a parent has a history of drug problems. Family income and parents' education were, however, found to be significant related factors. The study did not address the question of why the association of obesity and depression might be more present for males than females.

This causality or "chicken and egg" problem in obesity runs through the research on the subject. For example, in the North Carolina study, the authors speculate whether obesity and depression do not have a common physiological cause. Perhaps what is happening, the authors wonder, is that the hormonal pathway known as the HPA axis is out of equilibrium, releasing a stress hormone

that causes the human body to deposit fat around the abdomen, at the same time causing stress which leads to depression. But again the question of why boys more than girls is left unaddressed.

In addition, it has widely been observed that the quality of life of obese children is very much diminished. According to one study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, obese children are 5.5 times more likely to have an impaired quality of life than non-obese children. The study concludes that their life experience is equivalent to that of children undergoing chemotherapy treatment for cancer. Another study concludes that obese children miss an average of four days of school per month compared to less than one for healthy children. For boys especially, it might be hypothesized that the teasing and bullying that obese children undergo causes considerable missed school in addition to the illness that may also lead to absences.

In a recent *New York Times* article on obesity in New York public schools (7/9/03), 24% of K-5th grade students were found to be obese. The rate was highest for Hispanic students, with boys at 36% and girls at 26%. According to the article, "Public health experts attribute the higher incidence among Hispanics to a variety of factors, including eating habits, physiology and, perhaps, a view imported from countries with high childhood mortality rates that a fatter child is a healthier child."

Because of the seriousness of the question of cause, and the health of so many that is at stake, it seems that it is time to take a deeper look at cause and effect. To say simply that watching TV and eating fast food are causes does not seem to allow us to differentiate why some children are obese and others are not. Clearly also, the research needs to focus more on why this problem seems to affect boys more than girls.

<sup>1</sup> Mustillo et al, "Obesity and Psychiatric Disorder, Developmental Trajectories," *Pediatrics*, April 2003, 111:4, p. 851.

# “Farm to School,” “Cooking with Kids” Programs Set Examples of Healthy Eating

Though the problem of student obesity most likely originates beyond schools’ borders, the Santa Fe Public School system has supported several attempts to increase the nutritional awareness of its students, starting in kindergarten. Judi Jaquez, director of the **Student Nutrition Office** and the person responsible for the more than 8,500 breakfasts and lunches prepared for students each day, is concerned that nutritional education become part of the school day. In spite of nutrition education not being part of her formal job description, she supports efforts like “5 a day” which promotes a greater consumption of fruits and vegetables by providing handouts to teachers and she also has plans for a website with school menus and links to nutritional information. Judi confronts daily the competition from chips, sodas and other junk food available from vending machines and cafeteria food carts. As if obesity is not enough to worry about, an additional concern of hers, as a nutritionist, is that the phosphorous in heavily consumed sodas is leaching out calcium from kids’ bones. As a result, problems with osteoporosis, normally associated with ageing, will be much greater in younger people, she fears.

One of the more long-standing initiatives of the school system to educate children about healthy eating is the **Cooking with Kids** program started by Lynn Walters 7 years ago. Ms Walters and her 7 staff members arrange tasting classes, cooking classes and new cafeteria meals to expand kids’ range of desirable food and also to educate them about preparing food, geography, cultural diversity, and how to work together, throwing in a little math, science and language arts along the way. Lynn, a real public school project pioneer in this effort, has developed this program from two schools in 1996 to 9 elementary schools and 3700 children today. The theory behind the CWK program is that children prefer foods that they know, and so CWK familiarizes them with a variety of foods and provides hands-on exploration in a way that children find very entertaining. Lynn finds that both boys and girls get excited about the experience of cooking and tasting new foods, but boys especially love the action and movement involved in cooking.

Another example of how SFPS has addressed food education is the **Farm to School** program. Betsy Torres, the nutritionist who runs the program, has set up a salad bar and taught nutrition to the children at Alvord Elementary School and will be setting up a second salad bar at Carlos Gilbert this fall. As much as possible the ingredients in the salad bar come from local farmers. This program, like CWK, is supported by a grant from the US Department of Agriculture. Ms Torres teaches “salad bar etiquette” where the children at Alvord get to practice on the real thing and learn how to serve themselves and how to avoid spreading germs. Ms. Torres says that her students enjoy this part of the course very much, as evidenced by children eating vegetables at 8:30 in the morning. She also teaches the more conventional nutrition subjects about the food pyramid and

what different groups of food do for us.

Ms Torres notes that in her experience the most important thing a parent can do for children with regard to nutrition is to be a good role model when it comes to eating fruits and vegetables, consuming food in moderation, and minimizing such foods as sodas and chips. And parents, as part of their involvement in their children’s lives, need to see what their children are actually eating at school with the lunch money they provide.

Reflecting the growing concern with the nutrition of school children, the Santa Fe School Board at its August 19 meeting heard a presentation from a California-based group that proposed evaluating all students for their nutritional and general health status.

## Santa Fe Boys Community Action Network (Boys C.A.N.) Gets Off to Energetic Start

Building on the enthusiasm of those who attended the SF Community Foundation workshop, *Rescuing Our Boys*, in April, the Santa Fe Boys Community Action Network (Boys C.A.N.) held its first meeting on May 22. The group suggested three main goals and several actions for each goal. The goals are to increase community awareness of the situation of boys in Santa Fe, to identify what boys need, and to provide opportunities and tools to meet those needs.

Actions to achieve these goals were developed further in subsequent meetings. At the meeting on June 26, the newsletter was the main object of discussion and at the meeting on July 24, as part of the effort to understand what boys need, Boys CAN organized a focus group with 6 young men from Santa Fe. Among the feelings and experiences shared by the young men were what was referred to as “stereotyping” and the impact it had in school on self-esteem and school performance, the need for more male role models in schools, the importance of realizing that everyone has a talent, and how important it is for future success to find out what that talent is. Lastly, the panel discussed how important it is to find out what motivates individual boys and young men.

Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month in the BF Young Building, 1300 Camino Sierra Vista, 4 PM to 6 PM. For further information call 690-6619 or e-mail [ChildrenFirst@crnm.org](mailto:ChildrenFirst@crnm.org).

# Films to Watch and Discuss with Boys

## At the Movies...

### My Bodyguard

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This film about high school bullying and friendship among boys is a little dated (1980) but raises lots of good questions about families, friendships, and the necessary, but not always pleasant, things boys have to do on the way to growing up. Here are some sample questions that might bear fruit with a son or friend after seeing this film:

- What are the similarities shared by Rick Lindeman and Clifford Peache and what are their differences?
- What do they find in common and what makes that process so difficult?
- What kind of families do they have?
- Which members of their families are positive and why?
- What do you think Clifford learns as a result of his experience in the new school?
- Is it necessary for the boys to fight at the end?
- Could Clifford let Rick take on Moody for him?
- What is similar in the role of Rick's father and that of the bodyguard?
- What kind of family do you think Moody has?
- Do you like the ending?

Rated PG, approx. 90 mins. Available at Video Library, Casablanca.

### Life As A House

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This is a somewhat melodramatic (and appropriately R-rated) film for older teens, with a lot of thoughtful material. The film is about a teenage boy who is forced, almost against his will, to reconnect with his dying father. In spite of all the fluff, there is a lot to talk about with a boy, especially one who has little contact with his father or knows boys in that situation. Some suggested questions to discuss:

- How would you compare the two fathers, George and Peter, in terms of financial success, how they relate to their sons, and how they relate to Robin?
- We know from the film what kind of father George had, but we do not know about Peter's father. What do you think Peter's father was like?
- In the scene where George and Robin dance, what do you think Sam is thinking/feeling?
- What kind of changes does Sam go through in the course of the movie?
- Why do you think Sam was angry at his father?

- What do you think causes Sam to love his father?
- Does it seem realistic that Sam could change so quickly? Or, to put it another way, do you think that what George says about how change can happen quickly is right?
- What kinds of things happened to Sam during the summer and how do they affect the person that Sam becomes at the end of the film?
- Do you think it is possible for good outcomes to come out of negative circumstances? Are there examples in the film?
- Why is the film called, *Life as a House*?
- How do these relationships change during the film:
  - George and Sam
  - Sam and Elisa
  - Robin and Peter
  - Robin and George
- Why does George say to Sam that he loved his father even though he hated him so much that he almost killed him?

Rated R, approx. 2 hrs., widely available

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Paul Golding, continued from page 1

New Mexico is five times higher than for girls. What is happening here is not unique to Santa Fe or New Mexico; male attendance at college and graduate schools around the country is falling, and men now constitute 43% of those earning BAs and 42% of those receiving MAs.

We believe that many boys in Santa Fe are suffering and that the roots of this suffering are complex and can be observed on several different levels. Our culture, which has stretched considerably in recent decades to accommodate different views of femininity, still has a lot of mixed feelings and rigidity about masculinity and how it is properly expressed. On the one hand we want boys who are sensitive, caring and nurturing but on the other hand the message is: boys should be self-sufficient and in charge, whatever they might really feel.

Reflecting the tougher side of this cultural ambivalence, many boys show us a mask of independence, stoicism and stability, but behind that facade there is a more real boy, one with a richness of feeling and emotion, with painful and sad sides that are seldom experienced even by the boy himself. Dr. William Pollack, author of *Real Boys*, who spoke here in April at the *Rescuing Our Boys* workshop, called the outward manifestation of this mask the Boy Code. As long as the Boy Code is in place—as long as boys experience their own emotional beings in a partial manner without perceiving an alternative way to be boys—parents, schools and society in general will see a more negative image of boyhood: machismo, high energy, and high risk behavior with alcohol, drugs and sex.

Many boys also suffer because of the shortage of male role models. Without a positive

relationship with a man, many boys are left to a mostly feminine world in which they can, at best, model themselves as different or opposed. This puts pressure on mothers, sisters and grandmothers to be what they cannot fully be and leaves them to carry the burden of raising boys alone. Margaret Mead said that we can measure the success of a culture by how fully it encourages men to be fathers. To the extent this is true, Santa Fe has to face an alarming statistic: 40% of all births at St. Vincent's Hospital are to single mothers. While men might be involved in their kids' lives along with these single mothers, it seems less likely. What is happening here? Are the fathers saying they do not want the responsibility of fatherhood or are the mothers saying that they do not want, or think it important, to have an active father for their child? Whatever the combination of answers, it is clear that fatherhood is suffering, both boys and girls are losing their fathers, and boys, especially, are losing the potential for a healthy same sex role model as they grow up to become men.

While many of these problems fester in pre-school years, they take full form in the Santa Fe Public Schools, which are already burdened with the difficulties of meeting the needs of an ethnically diverse and far from affluent student body. In the schools, boys are more likely to become discipline problems, be characterized with attention deficit disorders and directed to special education classes, lose interest in education and drop out emotionally, if not physically. Issues that seem especially to affect boys are the lack of physical education in Santa Fe elementary schools, the almost total absence of

male teachers, and a student ethic, growing out of the Boy Code described above, that engenders machismo and homophobic behavior leading to risk taking, violence and bullying.

Many in Santa Fe are concerned with this state of affairs and work devotedly on one or another aspect of it, and there are countless success stories. There are, for example, many counselors in the schools as well as teachers who are sensitive to and work at addressing boys' needs. The New Mexico Young Fathers Project has helped fathers stay in their children's lives. In addition, mentors in school and out of school have profoundly affected the lives of thousands of boys.

In the coming issues of *Santa Fe Boys*, we hope to bring these and other programs to the attention of parents and other adults in our city. We also hope to clarify the needs of boys and examine what is happening to them in our community. Furthermore, we see this newsletter as a way to address some of the problems that parents and caretakers have with connecting with boys. Lastly, we hope this newsletter becomes a forum for others to share their concerns about sons, students, or friends who are boys by encouraging those with an interest in this subject—boys, fathers, mothers and others—to write about their concerns.

**For further information on this topic, you might like to read:**

•William Pollack, [Real Boys, Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood](#), 1998, New York, N.Y. Henry Holt and Co.

•[BusinessWeek, The New Gender Gap](#), May 26, 2003.

Lynn Hathaway, continued from page 1

gies to cope with this learning difference, including taping classroom lectures, because it was easier for him to learn by listening, rather than by looking. He is now a social worker with a master's degree who works with adults with mental illness in Denver.

I share these two experiences with you to illustrate what I have learned about the vulnerability of boys. A recent cover article in *BusinessWeek* presented disturbing information about how discouraged boys currently are on the national level. And we know this situation also exists in Santa Fe.

Anthropology shows us that people in traditional cultures pay special attention to the socialization of boys. Indeed, it is risky not to do so. Some encourage warlike behavior in their sons, others teach non-aggression. What do we teach our boys? Unfortunately, if they watch television, they learn that violence, consumerism and gratuitous sex are what it takes to be a "real man."

As we seek alternatives to these negative influences, a first step might be to look at what boys do in other cultures. Although it is hard to make a living these days from a hunting and gathering lifestyle, we can learn from others what healthy environments for boys look like.

In more traditional, relationship-based cultures, boys know they are useful members of society, as they work alongside their fathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers. Boys learn from direct experience what it looks like to be a "good" man. They are encouraged to use their muscles and exert strength, to practice hunting skills, to patrol their territories and defend their groups. They do meaningful work of all kinds. They learn to build dwellings

and boats, craft tools and utensils, herd large animals and make art and music. They participate in rituals that connect them to social groups and spiritual realms. Public ceremonies offer opportunities for boys to display physical skills and attract positive attention. There is no question that boys enjoy a secure sense of belonging in such societies.

So, to improve things for boys in our own communities, I suggest we take the next step and incorporate ideas from more traditional cultures into settings in our own community. When I taught college anthropology classes at the College of Santa Fe in the 1970's, it was clear that many boys needed information and concepts presented in a less abstract way. Those students learned best from direct experience. Having them collect life histories from their own families was a good way for them to learn about social structure.

Now, as a city planner, my work includes observing children in grant-funded programs. When I see boys who are uncomfortable and restless, I suggest more boy-friendly alternatives. These might include moving activities outdoors where energetic boys may feel more comfortable, providing tools and materials that can be handled and that appeal to all five senses. When boys are more fully engaged in learning they are less likely to be perceived as problems and get into trouble.

I believe we can create environments where boys are more comfortable with themselves and others. We can make positive changes that will promote the healthy development of boys in our community. This newsletter invites you to join us in this endeavor.



# SANTA FE BOYS

Quarterly Newsletter

PO Box 273

Santa Fe, NM 87504-0273

PRSR STD  
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Permit #217

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## We Welcome Your Input

The editorial policy of *Santa Fe Boys* is to consider any article for publication. If you would like to contribute an article or a comment on the subjects raised here or other subjects related to boys in our community, please contact us at PO Box 273, Santa Fe, NM 87504-0273 or e-mail us at: [santafeboys@comcast.net](mailto:santafeboys@comcast.net).