



**Working Hard,
Working Together**

Living in a small country town has its advantages, but one disadvantage is the mud in the spring. In an attempt to keep the mud outside the house, I planned to spread gravel on my dirt driveway. I had 60 tons of gravel brought in and left in two piles, which looked even bigger when I stood in front of them. In our town, people commonly have big trucks, trailers, tractors, front loaders, and backhoes. Me? I'm the guy with a shovel and a wheelbarrow.

I asked Rory, my 15-year-old son, if he would come out and help. He wasn't the picture of enthusiasm, but he agreed. Soon after he and I started working, I was surprised when my nine-year-old daughter wanted to help too. She took the rake and spread the gravel enthusiastically. She seemed to enjoy being with her big brother and me. I didn't know how long she would last, but I would let her help while she was willing.

Then my five-year-old son came running out to help. He grabbed a plastic toy shovel and tried to take individual scoops to the driveway. He eventually found his toy dump truck and began a cycle of filling the truck, pushing it to the driveway, and dumping it. Finally he found a shovel with a broken handle and helped Rory and me fill the wheelbarrow. He was more in the way than he was helpful, but his energy was inspiring. I was impressed.

Rory was the real surprise that day. He was a teenager whose world was getting larger than the one his dad used to fill. I had never had any real problems with him, but he was no longer the little boy who would hold my hand and chatter as we walked. His world now included many activities and friends that took him outside the home. We still enjoyed each other's company but found it harder to spend time together. I wouldn't have guessed that moving gravel would facilitate openness between us, but on that day it did just that.

As we shoveled, each to our own rhythm, Rory started talking. At first we discussed the job at hand, but then the talk turned to other things that were on his mind. We discussed music that he was interested

in. He was active in certain forums on the Internet and described the posted conversations. In school he had a psychology class, and we discussed some of the ideas. Then there was the topic of his friends, and several funny stories followed.

As we talked we filled the wheelbarrow, and then I would lift the load, wheel it to a bare spot, and dump it. I was pleasantly surprised when Rory followed me during these short intervals in order to keep up the conversation. I am pretty sure he didn't know how much his willingness to talk meant to me. I tried not to let on. His talking so

freely to me didn't happen every day.

As we worked, blisters formed on my hands, but they were just a reminder of the sweet time I spent with my children, especially my oldest son.

Across the street a young construction contractor was building his house. While I was working, he was using a front loader to push the earth around the foundation of his home. It would have taken 20 minutes to get our job done with his powerful machine, but I was afraid he was going to come over and offer to help. I would have looked foolish turning

down his help, but accepting it would have robbed me of the unexpected experience I was having with my children. Toward the end of the job, when I was exhausted, I wasn't sorry. My children were still there and were still talking to me. Manually moving that gravel was the sweetest hard work I had ever done. ■

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WE ALL HAVE WORK TO DO

"We have to work together to make a family succeed. But it's not something we can do by assignment. It's a matter of the heart. Children and parents have to have in their hearts a desire to make each other happy."

Elder D. Lee Tobler (served as a member of the Seventy from 1998 to 2003), "Homegrown Happiness," *New Era*, Feb. 2004, 12.