

Commentary

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Be an accomplice

The ball pit was a trap, and I walked right into it. It was a Christmas party filled with children and nannies. Before I had time to consider my professional dignity, I was buried to my waist in bright plastic spheres and engaging in a battle with three toddlers. I was not watching the fun. I was the target.

A few feet away, another nanny was running a different operation. She was patrolling the perimeter and issuing a steady rhythm of corrections to her charges. Be careful. Not too hard. Do not make a mess. Careful, careful, careful.

At one point she smiled toward one of the mothers and pointed a thumb in my direction. She said we had different caring styles.

She was right.

I have come to realize that children connect with me not because I am a flawless caregiver, but because I am completely present. I am not a satellite orbiting their world. I am a resident. While safety is obviously a priority, I reject the idea that care must be stiff or distant.

Child development theory tells us that play is how children practice risk and resilience. But you do not need a study to see it. When we laugh together and figure things out together, a child is not just being

entertained. Their nervous system is regulating. They are learning that the world can be safe and joyful with another person beside them.

Sometimes you have to be an accomplice to teach that lesson. I felt this recently on a snowy day with a boy I have known for three years. We had spent the afternoon folding paper cranes. We learned that in Japanese culture the crane symbolizes hope and healing and that when you fold one it holds onto a wish. Each one is a quiet promise that someone cared enough to sit still and create something meaningful.

He loved them so much he decided they belonged on the ceiling. But the ceiling was high. It was too high for him and too high for me.

A careful approach would have said no. Instead, we solved the problem together. I stood on his mattress to balance my weight while he climbed onto my shoulders. We wobbled. We laughed nervously. We debated the physics of wrapping the cranes around the light fixture versus taping them.

When he placed the last

crane, I could not even see what he was doing because he was perched above me. When it was finished, I fell back onto the bed and we burst out laughing. It felt like a shared victory.

We made three cranes that day. He wished for a dog. He wished for fish. Then he paused and wished to spend more time with me. Watching those paper birds hang from his ceiling felt like watching our time together become visible. It was proof that presence leaves something behind.

Afterward we had tea and read

Yertle the Turtle. It is a story that makes children laugh and adults reflect. It is a cautionary tale about a king who builds his throne by stacking turtles on top of one another. It describes the failure of standing above rather than standing with.

When his father came home, my little buddy asked if he would see me again tomorrow.

The book No Bad Kids argues that children are not problems to be managed. They are people learning how to be in the world. They do not need more control. They need connection. They need adults who see

them and stay close even in the messy moments.

This work is not about perfection. It is not about keeping everything neat or calm. It is about trust. It is about being someone a child feels safe laughing with and safe climbing onto.

Sometimes care means setting boundaries. But sometimes it means stepping into the mess. It means sitting on the floor and throwing the balls. It means holding steady while they climb a little higher.

Sometimes the best care looks like being an accomplice.



Gabriela La Greca
Snowmass Nannies

Gabriela La Greca is the founder of Snowmass Nannies (www.snowmassnannies.com), a boutique childcare agency serving Aspen, Colorado. Originally from Argentina, she brings over 10 years of hands-on experience in childcare and education, along with a thoughtful and playful approach to supporting families. She continually reads and learns about childcare, with a focus on mentoring her team of nannies and building collaborative partnerships with families. Her work is rooted in connection, creativity, and the belief that children thrive when caregivers step fully into their world.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Would you be our valley's hero?

One billionaire could win a heartfelt legacy of thousands if he/she purchased the land from Harvest development on Highway 82 between Carbondale and Glenwood. The proposed development will ruin so many things in our valley. Look for ads from Cattle Creek Coalition www.cattlecreekcc.com and visit the website. Imagine what this land could be for our valley with your purchase away from these out-of-state developers who have a questionable reputation due to issues at the Tree Farm in Basalt. There will be no place left for the elk if this project is approved.

Nature Park, elk habitation, beavers and heron and

eagles safe in their dwellings ... those are only a few of the benefits you could add to the valley. Once you purchase the land, you could donate it to Aspen Valley Land Trust for their supervision of further use. This will protect the Roaring Fork River and Cattle Creek whose banks are considered conserved via the Roaring Fork River Conservancy. Who would manage the usage once this horrendous development began? And the traffic it will cause is indescribable and would demand major reconstruction on Highway 82.

It would only take one billionaire to buy out this proposed development as they paid around \$33 million for it. It is our understanding that the Aspen Valley Land Trust made an offer, but

Harvest did not consider it large enough.

So, billionaires, if you don't want the property in your hands, you could donate enough money to Aspen Valley Land Trust under the conditions that it purchase Harvest (previously Sanders Ranch). They could name our new nature park after you!

What say you? Would you be our valley's hero? And save the elk and our creek and river, and more.

Wewer & Steve Keohane
Carbondale

Mourning the loss of Jim Markalunas

The board and staff of Aspen Historical Society

mourn the recent loss of Jim Markalunas, a third generation Aspenite and an ardent supporter of local stories. Through his leadership of the municipal water department and extensive civic engagement alongside his late wife Ramona, Jim's impact in Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley is vast. He and Ramona were longtime supporters of the Historical Society and we will miss his inquisitive calls, proud enthusiasm for the annual sweet pea seed giveaway in Ramona's honor and his excitement for all things history! Our thoughts are with the Markalunas family and all who were lucky enough to know Jim.

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