

# SAA FAMILIES

A Quarterly Publication of the Stepfamily Association of America

Volume 19, Number 4

Winter 2000

## Stepmothers' Countdown to the Holiday Season

By PERDITA KIRKNESS NORWOOD

**J**oy to the World! Happy Holidays! That's the way it should be at this time of year. But for many stepfamilies, in particular stepmothers, it can be a season of apprehension and stress.

It doesn't have to be that way. Just as we think "location, location, location" when buying a house or condo, we need to think "plan, plan, plan" as we prepare for the holidays.

Here are some tips to help stepmothers achieve a trouble-free holiday season, heard from experienced stepmoms while researching my book.

First, to help you cope at this busy time, it's vital you feel good about yourself. Plan in advance what you will wear for various events, buying something new if necessary. Make advance hair appointments, manicures, facials, whatever will give your confidence a boost. Consider dieting before the feasts begin – being overweight may affect how you look and feel and can be very depressing.

Don't expect everything to go perfectly – it won't; it never does. It's inevitable there will be glitches. Resolve to "go with the flow," accepting that these are normal in your circumstances.

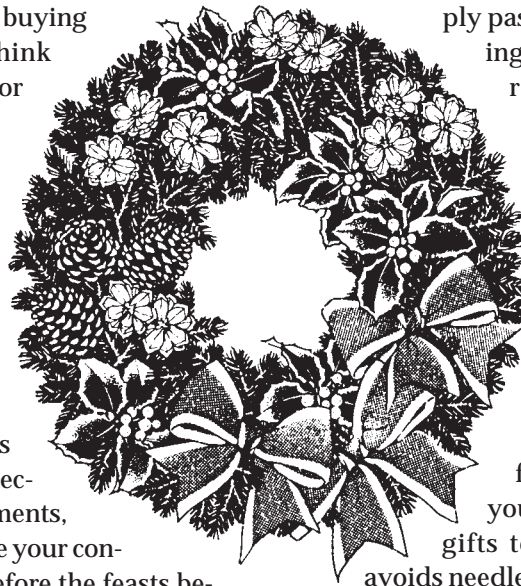
Try approaching difficult family members with "For your dad's sake, let's put our differences aside during the holidays." It helps to say "for dad's sake" (or some

other appropriate person) so it doesn't seem you are doing it for yourself.

Assume your role immediately when you join a stepfamily – merging into the scenery is no place for a stepmother. Until you know people better, simply pass out some compliments when visiting others; "I love the way you've arranged those candles;" "I've never tasted sweet potatoes this good." In your own home, your territory, a warm welcome and a smile are far more important than an immaculate house and gourmet food.

Take the initiative and discuss with your mate, well in advance, how you'd like to spend the holidays. Try to involve him in everything, since you're planning for his family as well as your own. Work out your budget and consider giving joint gifts to members of both families. This avoids needless worry for both of you and making mistakes when you're unsure of people's tastes or needs.

Once the two of you have agreement, involve all the children, yours and his. This is where your flexibility and generosity kick in. It's foolish to have exhausted children rushing between the homes of a divorced mom and dad. Discuss holding your own Thanksgiving or Christmas feast on another day, if folks are committed elsewhere. You will then be free, if asked, to join their celebrations.



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## FROM THE EDITOR

By JEAN MCBRIDE, M.S., LMFT

**T**he holiday season is upon us, with the year 2001 right around the corner. This issue of SAA Families is devoted to helping stepfamilies successfully navigate the sometimes-rough waters called "the holidays." Our cover article is by Perdita Norwood, who offers up a stepmother's countdown for, you guessed it, the holidays. In their column *Stepping Up*, Jim Hibbard and Mary Siebe discuss the evolution of holidays in their stepfamily. President Margorie Engel gives us a peek at the start of her stepfamily along with some excellent suggestions for surviving and even better, thriving through the holidays. In *Stepfamilies and the Law*, Laura Morgan discusses changing life insurance policies to reflect marital changes. If you haven't already taken care of this, it could be first on your list of New Year's resolutions. And if you're looking for a last-minute gift for someone in a stepfamily, how about one of the two books reviewed by Pat Estess, *Stepfamilies: Making it Work* and *Stepmother & Stepdaughter: Relationships of Chance, Friendships for a Lifetime*.

In *Stepfamilies for Professionals*, Barbara Perlmutter concludes her 4-part series on building a successful stepfamily practice by sharing her final reflections. Clinical chair, Scott Browning, Ph.D. offers important questions for clients to consider when choosing a therapist. Kay Pasley, Ed.D. Chair of the research committee reviews a study concerning stepmothers' expectations of their role in the family.

Please make note of the National Stepfamily Conference to be held in New Orleans, February 22 - 24. That's the week of Mardi Gras. It's going to be a wonderful conference one you won't want to miss. In fact, tell your friends too!

We at SAA Families of the 21st Century send you our very best wishes for a bright and shining New Year. Enjoy your families.

# SAA FAMILIES

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## SAA FAMILIES

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Editor: Jean McBride, MS, LMFT

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# Stepmothers' Countdown to the Holidays

*continued from page 1*

Better to be respected as a creative stepmom willing to compromise graciously than to insist on getting your way. How about a night-before-Thanksgiving party, a Sunday-after-Christmas one, or even one on Twelfth Night (January 6th) to keep the peace? Make certain all extended family members are included; nobody should be isolated at this time of year, not even Uncle Fred who does nothing but complain.

With the possible exception of religious calendars, nothing should be allowed to dictate the way a stepfamily celebrates. Whatever works and pleases the majority is fine! Discuss with step and biological children how both sets of traditions can be incorporated. Ask for their assistance in making sure everyone enjoys themselves.

Accept all offers of help for an event in your home – even if the favorite recipes neither mix nor match, and your stepdaughter ruins the gravy. If there are no offers, approach the group with “I need the best potato masher in the house, and someone to set the table.” Hard to refuse this overture. Relax, smile, and make a mental note to do things differently next year.

Make absolutely sure, especially if you don't have biological children, that you have someone with you at your home who knows you well and can offer support if needed. You cannot allow yourself to feel an outsider. But recognize that celebrations for stepfamilies are frequently tinged with sadness and memories of what may seem like the good old days. Everyone shares these feelings: getting used to new traditions, different food, being with strangers instead of loved ones, in different homes. It will bring out the best in some, and the worst in others. As stepmom you can help determine the emotional tone of your household by being calm and cheerful.

When it's all over, review with your mate what caused the glitches, and what made the brilliant moments so good. Learn from this so next year can be even better. Happy Holidays!

## SAA FAMILIES: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As you have likely already noticed, we have changed our name to **SAA Families of the 21st Century** with the nickname of SAA Families. This change was adopted by the SAA Board of Directors at its Oct. 8, 2000 meeting. Although our legal and registered name continues to be the Stepfamily Association of America, Inc., the change to SAA Families more accurately reflects the status of stepfamilies within our society. You can now locate our website at [saafamilies.org](http://saafamilies.org) and [saafamilies.com](http://saafamilies.com) as well as the current [stepfam.org](http://stepfam.org). While our name has changed, we remain committed to our mission of support, advocacy, and acceptance of stepfamilies.



**CONTACT US**  
on the web at:

[www.stepfam.org](http://www.stepfam.org)

[www.saafamilies.org](http://www.saafamilies.org)

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS COUNCIL

*Helping Parents Help Kids*

300 "I" Street, N.E., Suite 401

Washington, D.C. 20002-4362

The Children's Rights Council is a nonprofit, tax exempt organization strengthening families and assisting children of separation and divorce.

## Holiday Evolution

Welcome to **Stepping Up!** This article is part of a series that will hopefully provide a practical and lighthearted look at stepparenting. As stepparents ourselves, we have lived (sometimes barely) through an accumulation of twenty-nine years of “trial and error” stepparenting and various stepfamily relationships. We did it right, we did it wrong and we learned from both. Our purpose in this column is to bring a real world perspective to stepparenting, offering our insights and experiences related to specific topics and readers’ questions.

**MARY:** When I was a single parent, holidays for me and my daughter, Jamie, were not a huge problem. Jamie’s father had a large family, as did I. Soon after our divorce, it was decided that Jamie spend the Thanksgiving holiday with me because although celebrated by both families, it was not considered a religious holiday and there was less resistance for her spending it with me. It was my intent to spend every Thanksgiving together rather than alternating. Over the years of having a holiday to ourselves, Jamie and I were able to create our own special traditions around celebrating Thanksgiving and many wonderful holiday memories.

**JIM:** And then we came along!

**MARY:** No, not yet. Changes in how we celebrated Thanksgiving began with my second marriage. While there were no additional children to consider, Jamie and I found that when we began adding a stepfather and his family to our celebrations, we had to alter our expectations of how we were going to celebrate Thanksgiving. We had to make room for different foods, different table arrangements, and football in our holiday planning. It was never a case of it not being wonderful; it was accepting that it was just going to be different.

**JIM:** And then we came along?

**MARY:** Yes dear. Because we were now a stepfamily with your children, Craig and Jacy, living with us, and Jamie was creating her own life in California, other changes in how we celebrated Thanksgiving began to occur.

**JIM:** My ex-wife and I didn’t communicate about holidays but we didn’t fight over them either. I adopted a

“whatever works out best” attitude. There were two problems with this approach. First, to some extent, it put the children in the middle as “peace keepers” trying to appease both parents. Second, I often did not know what plans the children and their mother had made until the last minute. That made it hard for Mary and me to make firm plans.

**MARY:** No kidding! One holiday dinner was clocked at less than twelve minutes from the time they sat down to when they got up from the table to leave for their mom’s.

**JIM:** (Ahem) Yes. For the most part, however, we just kept a flexible attitude and were able to accommodate whatever came our way. Looking back, I believe a more direct communication about holidays with my ex-wife would have been beneficial.

**MARY:** Now that we are essentially “empty nesters” we are discovering the need to celebrate holidays differently and create new traditions for ourselves.

**JIM:** Last year, for instance, we went to Mexico the week before Christmas to relax and avoid the often-chaotic Christmas season. It was great to be on a beach with a book instead of being bombarded by the commercial media.

**MARY:** As Jim and I anticipate the arrival of our first grandchild, we find ourselves traveling to see our children instead of them coming to visit us. This year we will fly to Jamie and her husband Dean’s for Thanksgiving so that they may begin developing their own family traditions. Instead of coming home from college, Jacy will fly with us to Jamie’s. (Craig won’t be joining us because he is in Japan for the year.) This Thanksgiving promises to be a vacation for the entire family as well as an opportunity to create new traditions for celebrating this cherished holiday.

**MARY:** As Jacy and Craig begin lives of their own with more extended families and friends, we are considering the selection of random days for celebrating the holidays with them that will help us all build new traditions and not interfere with all of the demands of the holiday season. We might consider celebrating at

Continued on page 5

# CHAPTER NEWS

By GLORIA CLARK  
Chapter Development Chair

## END OF YEAR CHAPTER REPORTS

End of Year Chapter Reports are going to be coming out soon so Chapter Leaders need to be on the lookout for them and get them back as soon as possible after the first of the year.

These reports are important for two reasons:

1. We need to know if your chapter is still going, who the current contact person is, and their phone number/address so that we can have the right information to give a correct referral to those who call our 800 number for information.

2. For tax purposes, because you have a 501C3 non-profit status, we need to know about any money taken in or expenses you have had during the year 2000.

Some chapter leaders find themselves starting a chapter and then becoming swamped by children/stepchildren, jobs, school and other responsibilities and can no longer keep up the chapter as they had hoped. We understand completely but need to know if you are no longer meeting so that we do not refer people to your group or keep on sending you materials by mail. We want to refer people to active groups only.

## LOSS OF CHAPTER STATUS

Due to the problem of making referrals to people only to learn that the chapter we referred to is no longer meeting, we are having a cut-off date of February 1, 2001. This is a new policy that we are starting in 2001. If we have not received your Year-End Report by that date, we will no longer consider your group to be operating and you will lose your chapter status. If your situation changes later on, you can always reapply.

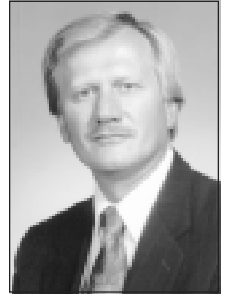
If you are no longer meeting as a chapter simply call Claudia Dougherty at 1-800-735-0329.

Many thanks to all of you for your efforts.

# FROM LARRY KALLEMEYN

**T**he holidays can be a magical time for children where they learn and participate in family traditions and customs. Among almost all family traditions is the giving and exchanging of gifts.

As you consider your gifts to your children this year let me start your list with a universal wish list for children.



- To know they are loved and can love in return
- The sense of joy and wonder about the world
- A passion for learning and doing
- Acceptance and respect for themselves and others
- Physical and spiritual well-being
- The experience of belonging
- An appreciation of community and family
- Stewardship where they receive, cultivate & give back



Wishing you and yours a happy and joyous holiday season.

## *Holiday Evolution*

Continued from page 4

different locations that our family could enjoy together.

**JIM:** We see ourselves in a state of "holiday evolution." We are hopeful about what we may create and anticipating opportunities to celebrate the holidays in wonderful new ways that haven't presented themselves yet.

As you can see from our experience, we have found that it is best to expect changes in the way holidays are celebrated because they continue to change throughout life: from holidays celebrated as a child to how they are celebrated when you are single, first married, have children, divorce, have stepchildren and families, have kids leave for college, or become empty nesters. How we initially celebrated holidays has changed and evolved and our expectations have had to change and evolve as well. We look forward to the future evolution of our holiday traditions incorporating much of what they have been and anticipating the potential of what they will evolve into each year.

## CHANGING LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES TO INCORPORATE MARITAL CHANGES

**W**hen a husband and wife divorce, and one or both parties have a life insurance policy, the general rule is that divorce does not, per se, affect or defeat a spouse's rights as a designated beneficiary in a policy on the other spouse's life, absent a change in beneficiary designation, a provision in the contract of insurance itself which makes the beneficiary ineligible if the status of spouse does not exist at the time of death, or a specific statute revoking beneficiary status on divorce. This rule, however, is not universal. Some states have divestiture statutes whereby the status of a spouse as named beneficiary is terminated by the entry of the divorce decree, without regard to the fact that the spouse remains the named beneficiary.

A court can, however, order one spouse to maintain a life insurance policy naming the other spouse or a child as beneficiary. The power, however, cannot be exercised willy-nilly. Instead, the court's order that one spouse maintain life insurance for the benefit of the other spouse must be predicated on both an alimony award to the former spouse, the ill health of the payor spouse, and the ability of the payor spouse to obtain life insurance.

Quite often, spouses fail to comply with court orders or agreements concerning the maintenance of life insurance. The failure can take a number of forms: (1) cancelling the life insurance in existence at the time of divorce and substituting another policy; (2) changing beneficiaries on an existing policy. When the policies in existence at the time of death differ from those in existence at the time of the decree, provided nothing in the decree or support agreement provides to the contrary, most courts have concluded that the spouse or child who was designated the beneficiary in the decree or agreement is entitled to recover the proceeds in a replacement policy.

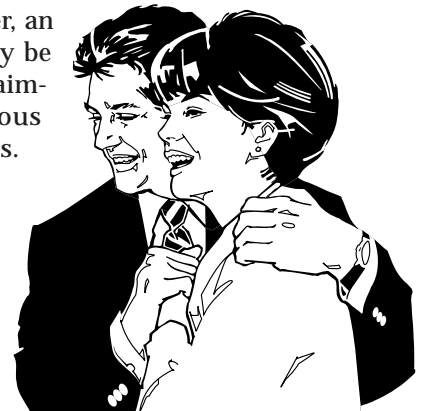
Usually, a former spouse learns of the insured's failure

to comply with a court order or agreement to maintain life insurance only after the insured's death. If knowledge of a violation is acquired prior to death, the former spouse may seek compliance by use of the court's contempt powers. Once the insured has died, however, the usual remedy available to the former spouse or children is to seek to impose a constructive trust on the proceeds. The extent of the interest on which a trust may be imposed will depend on the extent of the obligation of the insured spouse.

When knowledge of the insured's failure to comply comes after death, the usual remedy requested is the imposition of a constructive trust. Complications may arise in imposing a constructive trust depending on the party holding the proceeds at the time of the equitable action. When the proceeds are still in the hands of the insurer, an interpleader action may be filed in which both claimants assert their various claims to the proceeds. More troubling is when the proceeds have already been tendered to the designated beneficiary and the former spouse or child of the insured attempts to recoup the funds.

This is where second wives and new children can be hurt. A constructive trust can be placed on proceeds of an insurance policy that name them as beneficiaries, because the husband violated a court order to maintain a life insurance policy for the first wife and/or previous children. Thus, in stepfamilies, it is of utmost importance to check whether a court order or marital separation agreement provides for beneficiary status on a life insurance policy.

Even when there is no court order or agreement, the issue of life insurance is still important. As noted in the first paragraph, divorce may or may not act to revoke the beneficiary status of a prior spouse. It is therefore important to make sure in a new marriage that the beneficiary of a life insurance policy be changed to the current spouse to reflect the new marriage.



# STEP-CAREFULLY! FOR STEPPARENTS!

By Bobby Collins



**W**hat is it about the end of the year holidays – Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years – that cause so much insanity in so many people? Even well-adjusted, normal, middle of the road folks (good luck finding any in your neighborhood!) seem to shut down their reasoning skills at these times.

People who, throughout the rest of the year are perfectly sensible, toss that common sense in the trunk and go nuts. Shopping frenzies, panic attacks, decorations for the front yard, sincere cards to people they can't remember, irrational beliefs in the ability to actually have a perfect, "Norman Rockwell" scene at every gathering, drive them over the edge.

That's the normal minority of families who aren't dealing with the added bonuses we stepdads enjoy. Stepdads seem to fall into an uncomfortable crack in the floor when holidays roll around. We aren't quite outsiders, yet we certainly aren't like regular family, either.

Many of the fondest traditions mom shares with her kids are foreign to stepdad. They are the links to that "other" life, with another man. We usually wind up feeling stuck between two impossibilities. If I try to go along with the tree trimming ceremony, for example, I invariably get in the way of something that is someone else's job. But if I stay back and let mom and the kids do it alone, I'm thought of as being sulky or jealous.

As a stepfamily, our troubles seem to grow exponentially. We get to sweat over the logistics and timetables of not one, but two or three households' holiday schedules. Just as we are frantically trying to coordinate everyone's schedule in our family, my ex informs us that she'll have to have the kids that same day for her time with them.

Now you find that dynamite can indeed come in small packages. Such seemingly insignificant matters as ...when to open presents – who to buy presents for – immediate family or in-laws or ex-grandparents, what to fix for a traditional Thanksgiving family dinner - every family has its own special traditions that are most important, or even

which ornaments from which family get hung where on the family Christmas tree...can have families at each other's throats.

So how can a man maintain his place in his home without pushing out his new family members...or feeling like a neighbor who has stayed too long? Throughout the panic and confusion of this holiday season, remember where you are in your life. This is a starting point to a whole future. Statistics show over and over that it takes an average of four to seven years for families to feel like family. Accept that next year will be better and deal with it. Stepdads who can look beyond the immediate discomfort they may feel have a chance to be real heroes to their families. Focus on being a calming influence to your wife when the chaos hits. Wear thicker skin when around your stepkids and your ex.

Care for your loved ones. Care about how you are teaching them to be adults. Care about the reputation you are carrying through life.



## Are You Moving ??

If you've moved recently or are planning a move soon, please tell us of your change of address. Every mailing results in paying at least \$25-30 dollars in address correction charges to the Post Office, plus the additional remailing costs. Please complete and return the form below to SAA, 650 J St., Ste. 205, Lincoln, NE 68508 or you may FAX this to (402) 477-8317.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Old Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

NEW ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

NEW PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank You!*

## TWO QUICK READS FOR HOPE AND INSIGHTS

### ***Stepfamilies: Making It Work***

A Parent Handbook selection 888-224-9202  
(available at Target stores) \$9.99

### ***Stepmother & Stepdaughters: Relationships of Chance, Friendships for a Lifetime***

By Karen L. Annarino  
Wildcat Canyon Press, \$12.95

I know that when my husband and I were first married, we were too busy to read books on the subject of stepparenting. We were knee-deep in the thick of it – barely able to catch our breath. If you're at a similar stage in your remarriage, here I got a book for you. ***Stepfamilies: Making It Work***. In addition to being short (a must when your eyes have only about 4 1/2 minutes of viewing time before closing at night), it's full of smart ideas to make this new union work.

Like it deals in three large-type pages with how to stay close to your biological child while working to build relationships with your spouse and stepkids. Or a couple of pages on taking the pressure off the stepkids when it comes to finding a name for this new adult. Or a six-page quick read on forgetting about "instant love" and replacing it with "instant care."

I wish I had had this book almost 25 years ago. Even if I had read four pages a night (less than two weeks reading), I think it would have helped me through some treacherous waters more easily or more quickly.

There's another "shortie" I'd like to recommend for stepmothers who have doubts that anything will ever come of their relationship with their stepdaughters – ***Stepmothers & Stepdaughters: Relationships of Chance, Friendships for a Lifetime*** by Karen L. Annarino.

Annarino says that two women have most shaped her life. The first is her mother, Ann, who had the strength and insight to encourage her relationship with her stepmother. And then there is Linda, her stepmother, from whom she not only learned how to do needlepoint and prepare large holiday dinners, but, more importantly, how to hold out hope and be courageous, qualities she especially needed when she was severely injured in a hit-and-run accident.

But Annarino also shares the accounts of dozens of other young women who acknowledge the unexpected friendships that sprang from their relationships with their stepmothers. Though they acknowledge the difficulties (many – the relationship never goes uphill smoothly), the bottom line is that if, over time, both stepmother and stepdaughter are able to let go of the anger and resentment they may feel, they give themselves a gift – the opportunity to love each other and celebrate their relationship.

## FILM REVIEW FOR TEACHERS

### Different Is Normal

We, of all people, know that not all families look alike. More than half of Americans today have been, are, or will be in one or more step-situations. Grandparents are raising more than 1.3 million children. There are about a million adopted children in the U.S. And millions of children are raised by single parents, at least for part of their growing-up years. So why schools continue to act like there's only one type of family is beyond us.

Teachers who believe children need to understand that families are diverse entities have a wonderful new 30-minute video to serve as a guide – ***That's A Family***, produced by the Women's Educational Media in San Francisco. With blunt ("The hard part is when I'm with my dad I want to be with my mom, and when I'm with my mom I want to be with my dad") and sometimes hilarious candor ("They don't rent you...they keep you until you're really big and really old"), the children in the video open the doors to their homes and get right to the heart of what a family is. As Fernando says at the end of the film, "It doesn't matter who's in the family, but it matters that you love each other and take care of each other. That's a family."

For more information on ***That's A Family***, contact Women's Educational Media at 415-641-4616 or visit the Website at [www.womedia.org](http://www.womedia.org).

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MARGORIE ENGEL, MBA, Ph.D.

**I**t all began on a New Year's weekend. I had just completed my first day (ever) on downhill skis and had the bleeding blisters and broken fingernails to prove it. Oh, I could stand up (periodically) on the skis but making turns were another matter as I struggled to master the bunny slope. Without the ability to adjust dead-reckoning, I found myself aimed straight toward an unsuspecting gentleman about two-thirds of the way down the hill. After quickly discarding non-viable options (that turning problem), I dropped my poles, wrapped my arms around his belly, slid my skis inside his skis-and this is the way we glided down to level ground some yards ahead.

At dinner that night, while Steve was choking with laughter as he described my snowy assault on a total stranger, I gazed down the length of the elongated table and wondered what in the world I was doing. Wondered not about my total lack of gracefulness (hey, I was labeled "Mis-Coordination" in my college yearbook so my history of absolutely no athletic skill is a longstanding one), but-what it would be like to call this man and our collective five daughters my new family.

Even though I could not know it at the time, that weekend turned out to be the last full calendar holiday the seven of us would share together for a number of years. The following summer, Steve and I did make the decision to marry and create a stepfamily. And we managed the holiday drill pretty well. Part of the reason was that we'd had the years between divorce and remarriage for holiday schedules to evolve into an acceptable routine.

The bigger competition for holiday time came from ordinary family transitions. The girls began moving away from home base for college and jobs so vacation time and transportation were significant factors. Then their subsequent marriages added yet another set of parents to vie for precious holiday hours. Once our grandchildren began to arrive, our daughters and their husbands wanted to celebrate the major holidays in their own homes. So, various combinations of our stepfamily members stayed put and others traveled-only occasionally did we all end up in the same place at the same time. The sisters' weddings turned out to be the biggest family draw. We could count on everyone showing up for the nuptials and party so official holidays were pushed lower on the radar screen.

I mention this scenario because it seems to me that instead of worrying about meeting trains, planes, and

busses on over-scheduled days, a lot of us are trying to figure out ways to beat the holiday blues when the children aren't with us at all. Norman Rockwell's depictions of family have created a major problem: the American dream about ideal holidays is way out of line with what is practical or reasonable to expect in first families or stepfamilies!



So, here's a suggestion. When you approach any holiday, make a conscious decision that this is your day as much as anyone else's and that the goal is to bring some joy to everyone, including yourself. You have choices. Give yourself ample time to think about and plan for them. Don't try to recreate visions of the past. Create new activities for this year and future years when the children will be away.

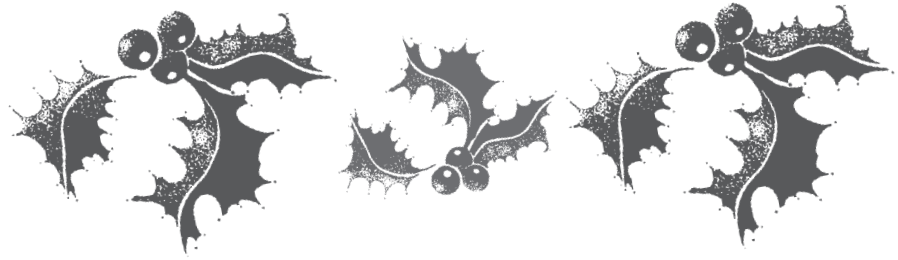
Do you and your partner want solitude or to be with other people? Solitude is a great period for a marathon project – building closet shelves or refinishing a piece of furniture – that requires a large block of time and is not easily done with children (even grown ones) underfoot. Treat yourself to your favorite "sinful" food such as out-of-season crab meat or a homemade cheesecake and curl up with the book that has collected dust on your night table.

If you're feeling more sociable, consider hosting a potluck holiday meal with other parents in your situation. Or, perhaps this is the time for a brief vacation or a change of scenery. The trip doesn't need to be expensive. Could you borrow an empty apartment or cabin, or visit friends or relatives whose children will also be away for the holiday?

While you are considering your options, remember that holidays include the spirit of giving. Is there a way for you to schedule volunteer opportunities to help those who are truly less fortunate this holiday season? And, perhaps most important of all, send your children off for the holiday with a smile and assurances that you will miss them but you have planned some special activities for yourselves while they are gone. Help your children avoid the loyalty bind by literally giving them permission to go and have a good time!

Those of us serving on the Board of Directors, Advisory Council, and Institute Faculty wish all of our SAA Families a wonderful holiday season.

# STEPFAMILIES IN THE NEWS



**BRIDE AGAIN:** The only magazine designed for en-core brides. (Winter 2000)

“The Family Wedding: Involving Your Children in the Ceremony,” by Dr. Roger Coleman, SAA Board Member.

“Tuition Terror for Stepfamilies” by Dr. Margorie Engel, SAA President.

“Attorney Talk,” by Laura Morgan, SAA Board Member

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**PARENTS:** America’s #1 Family Magazine, November 2000

“Expert answers to your discipline and development questions” by Ann Pleshette Murphy.

Dr. James Bray, SAA Advisory Council and Dr. Margorie Engel, SAA President responded to questions from a “Weekend Dad.”

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**NBC NEWS TRANSCRIPTS FOR SATURDAY TODAY** – October 7, 2000.

Dr. Margorie Engel, SAA President, discusses tips for better relationships in stepfamilies.

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**TODAY’S SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST** – October 6, 1999. Volume 4, No. 3.

Article about schools and stepfamilies by William Bainbridge, president of SchoolMatch and SAA Board Member.

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**STAR TRIBUNE** (Minneapolis, MN) – September 28, 2000.

“Family Feuds; a new book on the long-term effects of divorce stirs up divisions of its own,” by Peter Jensen. SAA comments.

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**CHICAGO DAILY HERALD** – September 17, 2000.

“The Tie That Binds,” by Eileen O. Daday with interviews with Robert Klopfer, SAA Board Member.

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**THE RECORD** (Bergen County, NJ) September 14, 2000.

“Stepfamily Day Will Be Saturday,” discussing stepfamily open house at Stepping Stones Counseling Center with Robert Klopfer, SAA Board Member, and Susan Brettschneider.

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**CHICAGO TRIBUNE** – September 10, 2000.

“Stepfamilies Have Their Day.” Interview with Christy Borgeld, SAA Board Member.

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**THE COLORADOAN NEWS** – September 4, 2000

“Today’s Father” by Randy Mergler & Roger Coughlan. In honor of Stepfamily Day, the authors write about stepfathers – the quiet strength and supremely important role that stepfathers play in many stepfamilies throughout the country.

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**THE SUNDAY REPUBLICAN** (Waterbury, CT) Sunday, September 3, 2000.

“Weddings: Second Time’s the Charm.” Discusses the planning process, ceremony, and resources including the book, *Weddings A Family Affair* written by Margorie Engel, SAA President.

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**THE BOSTON PARENT’S PAPER** – September 2000

“Information and Support Abound for Stepfamilies” (Letter to Editor) in which SAA president clarified the difference between family therapists and those therapists trained in stepfamily dynamics.

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**ASBURY PARK PRESS** (Neptune, NJ)

Wednesday, August 2, 2000

“Stepfamilies should demand equal treatment from schools” by William Bainbridge, SAA Board Member.

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**THE DETROIT NEWS** – July 10, 2000.

“Talk Finances Before Ringing Wedding Bells,” by Eileen Ambrose (quoting SAA information).

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# Steps to Stepfamily Success

**P**lan to have family meetings at least once a month or, if problems arise, more often. Establish guidelines to follow.

**E**ducate Yourself! Read! Participate in stepfamily workshops and SAA chapter support meetings.

**T**ime alone as a couple is valuable. Spend at least 20 minutes of relaxed time alone with each other every day.

**S**trengthen the couple relationship. Use good positive communication skills. Develop leadership as a couple. Fight fairly!

*And the smartest step to stepfamily success is to join SAA now! Complete the application form below.*

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