



Well, it's Fall and time once again for Doc's annual golf tournament to raise money for kids' winter clothes. But the recent heavy rains have kinda wiped out his "golf course" on two adjoining farms and a patch of woods. But Doc is nothing if not creative.

"This year, boys," he said, sitting down and flipping his cup upright at the Mule Barn truck stop's philosophy counter, "we have to do something different to raise money for those coats."

He kinda twinkled at us.

"An archery tournament," he said.

"But Doc," Bert said, "I believe I'm the only shooter in town."

"True, Bert, true. That's why you're disqualified from winning any prize, and why we're borrowing your bow and arrows."

"You are?"

"Aren't we?" Doc said.

"Well ... I guess so."

"Then that's settled. See, we'll have a cash prize that'll be a portion of the entry fees. At least that's how I have it figured. Give everyone ... say ... five shots and the highest score wins the money. What do you fellas think? Half the entry money for the prize?"

"Seems like an awful lot, Doc," said Dud. "Maybe a tenth?"

"No ... don't think so, Dud. You see, I want a real incentive. I want everyone to enter. We have a number of kids without winter stuff and we need to fix that."

"Half is too much."

Doc twinkled again.

"Well ... not with my unique scoring system it isn't."

They looked at him.

"We'll be shooting at a paper cup at 75 yards, you see. And you have to hit it at least once to win."

"But nobody will hit that, Doc."

"Exactly!"

Teaching Kids to Trust their Own Instincts



(StatePoint) During the course of their day, kids hear the word "No" all the time. And while some of those "Nos" are a necessary part of keeping kids safe, the overall message can be one that stifles courage, creativity and trust in one's own instincts – effects that can last well into adulthood.

There are many ways that parents, teachers and caretakers can help kids overcome fears and achieve their dreams, while making good decisions on their own. And sometimes the world of children's books can be the best place to help deliver the message.

"Everyone, young and old, is blessed with un-

opened gifts, and of the most important is one's instincts" says Christopher Conroy author of the new young adult novel "Anzard," which explores this theme. "Children can be nurtured in a way that helps them find that inner voice. This story contains more than just Harry Potter-type magic, it is a tool to nurture the inner voice."

In the magical story of "Anzard," Conroy tells the story of a seemingly ordinary 10 year old boy named Justin who is visited by an enchanting fairy-like pixie named Poofy from galaxies far away, who helps him call on his own instincts and inner gifts to not only

find missing parents back on Earth, but to change his world forever.

Conroy, who wrote this children's book because of his own beliefs about the power of one's own inner strength and resourcefulness, is offering some insights to parents as a tool to empower the life's journey of their own precious children:

- Don't ignore your instincts: "I knew I shouldn't have done that," you hear those words of regret all the time. From peer pressure to second guesses, there are many things that prevent people from acting on their instincts. Talk to your children about listening to that inner voice. Sometimes, that moment when someone makes the decision to listen to it, is the moment his or her courage and confidence has a chance to blossom. Learning to rely on one's instincts can also be a useful skill where creativity is concerned.

- Listen and engage: Many households and classrooms still operate on the

antiquated "children should be seen, not heard," basis. But this can be a destructive mentality. While children have a lot to learn, they also have a lot of wisdom to impart. If their thoughts are invalidated consistently, they will learn not to recognize the value of their own minds. Listen when children speak.

- Offer encouragement: "Encouragement and praise to a child are like sunshine and water to a flower," says Conroy. "It's amazing what can grow out of that cultivation."

If your children show an interest in art, music, science or any other topic, foster that curiosity. Applaud their efforts. Acknowledge their growth.

More information about "Anzard," which has been lauded by critics for its writing and reader-friendliness, can be found at www.anzard.com.

With the right encouragement, all kids have it in them to be their best selves.

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