

# Richmond Times-Dispatch

**In my shoes: Let your kids shine, don't hover**

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I did my duty and trucked out to yet another soccer field to take pictures of my 18-year-old daughter, [Nicole Fulk](#), as she received First Team, [All-District](#) honors in soccer. Then, I jumped into my midlife crisis mobile (a red convertible Mini Cooper) and took off with the windows wide open.

As I heard paper flapping in the back seat and saw her certificate about to fly out onto state Route 288, I could imagine Jeff Foxworthy's voice saying, "If your daughter finally wins an honor that she never dreamed of getting and you lose the award on the way home, you might be a bad mom."

OK, I'm not really a horrible mom. It's just that I'm the opposite of the so-called helicopter parents who constantly hover over their children making sure their homework is done just right and that they've written the perfect essay to submit with their college application.

I'm a single parent who works full time at an advertising agency and writes freelance stories on the side. I serve on boards for Virginia Press Women and the [VPW Foundation](#) and do volunteer work for [Easter Seals Virginia](#).

I'm training for a half marathon, and I have a lively social life. Who has time to check homework?

My [co-worker Tamara Neale](#) has her own "bad mom" stories. She told me about the time she missed her son's play (he forgot to tell her about it), and when she didn't know he was being honored at an awards ceremony because the note never got fished out of her son's backpack.

As working mothers, [Neale](#) and I feel pulled in different directions all the time.

"More is expected out of women in general," [Neale](#) said. "Most women work, but also manage the bulk of the household, including taking care of the kids. You just can't be there after school every day at 2:30." But there can be positive results from not always hovering over your children.

"I think your children become acclimated to [not having you there every minute] and become more responsible," [Neale](#) said.

[John Rosemond](#), [a psychologist and nationally syndicated columnist](#), is one of my child-raising heroes. He said, "It's human nature to pawn responsibility off on other people, so the more you do for a child that the child can do for himself, the greater chance you have that the child will act irresponsibly."

When I was a stay-at-home mom when the girls were little, I taught them to fend for themselves pretty much from the time they could read. If they told me about some new activity they wanted to try, I tossed the burden of responsibility right back to them.

My older daughter, [Brittany](#), once told me she wanted to take belly-dancing lessons. I told her to find a class. The next thing I knew, she and I were doing belly rolls and hip drops.

While I have not had the time to micromanage my children, I have had the time to get to know them. And I fully appreciate the amazingly accomplished and successful young women they have become.

[Nicole](#) is getting ready to go off to the [University of California](#) Berkeley, more than 3,000 miles away. My little bird who learned to fly at such a young age is going almost as far away from the nest as she can. I know she is fully equipped with important life skills that will see her through.

One of the things my father used to say about my sisters and me was, "I will not take credit for your successes, nor blame for your failures."

I always thought this was a wise [Mark Twain-kind](#) of thing to say. So you could have knocked me over when [Nicole](#) said in her high school graduation speech, "My last piece of advice must be credited to my mother, who taught me absolutely everything I know."

Doggone it all, I am going to take credit for these two.

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*Sande Snead is an award-winning [writer](#) who lives in [Richmond](#) with one of the two beautiful daughters she has raised to fend for themselves. The other is already on her own. She can be contacted at [sandesnead@hotmail.com](mailto:sandesnead@hotmail.com).*