



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition
Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



December 31, 2008 -- A Present of Presence

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We did Christmas different this year. Our family gave less stuff and spent more time together. In other words we focused on *presence* rather than *presents*. In fact we did “together” in an extreme way. The six of us spent about thirty hours on a trip to Myanmar (that included a 10 hour layover in Paris, just enough time to see the Eiffel Tower and grab some great French hot chocolate) where we spent six days – including Christmas day – serving and playing with hundreds of children at an orphanage that our church supports.

I can't think of a better gift than spending 10 days with my family on a service adventure like this. Not only does it give our family a tangible way to make a difference in the world, but it also gives us a great opportunity to grow together. It's all about *presence* over *presents*. If you stop and ponder, it won't take more than a moment to discover – or simply re-discover – that *presence* is what our hearts desire. I don't remember the gifts my parents gave me for Christmas, but I do remember their *presence* at every high school and college football game I played. I don't remember the books my parents bought me, but I do remember the book my mother read to me while I had the chicken pox – Pilgrim's Progress was the only thing that took my mind off the itching! Our kids will remember far more the games we played with them, than the games we bought for them.

Even the Christmas story – whether it's your story or not – is all about *presence*. The presence of God, born in a stable, come to save the world.

As a part of a local team of non-profits who care about kids in our community, Communities that Care studies risk factors and protective factors. It's amazing how many of those protective factors have to do with *presence*, the presence of parents, positive neighborhood relationships, connection to a faith community. So let me encourage you in this new year to make a commitment to *presence*. Make your presence a gift to the youth of our community. Whether it's your own children – start there – or a child from the neighborhood, a connection point with Big Brother Big Sister, tutoring through a school, volunteering with your local youth group or another way.

We did Christmas different this year, less stuff, more presence. As you read this, we have probably just gotten back from our Myanmar service adventure – hopefully not too tired of each other's presence – and we are opening up our new Wii – our one family gift this year. I didn't say we gave *no stuff*, just less stuff, besides we can play the Wii together! Hope your Christmas was blessed and your New Year will be filled with presence.

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*
Serving State College Area School District

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