

Opinion: Dads need to be engaged on a global level

By John Friedrich

I became a father eight years ago on the eve of Father's Day. The love that filled me when I first gazed into my daughter's eyes was immense. I thought then of how universal that experience is, and how the depth of love of our children is surely greater than all that divides us.

If we joined forces for the good of our kids, I imagined what we could do. As Jimi Hendrix once said, "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

We fathers often express the love for our children by doing our best to provide for them, and to protect them from harm. We'd jump in front of a speeding train or wrestle a grizzly in a heartbeat to save our kids.



Rosie and John Friedrich

Yet there is a present and growing danger to our kids that we have failed to confront – the denigration of the life support systems of the planet caused by our disruption of the climate. Unless we're OK with the prospect of leaving our kids an inheritance of increasingly violent storms, severe droughts, extreme heat, terrorizing wildfires and rising oceans, we need

to put the love of our children into action to turn the tide on climate change.

If 97 out of 100 doctors told you your child is in critical condition, and that you must take immediate action to save her life, and the other three said “don’t worry about it,” what would you do? The answer is obvious, yet we together have ignored the warning of the 97 percent of credentialed scientists who tell us in no uncertain terms that burning fossil fuels is altering our climate and damaging the health and well-being of our kids; and that it’s going to get a whole lot worse if we don’t change our collective ways.

The good news is that a wave of parents is waking up to the stakes for our kids. Much of this is being led by moms groups, but dads are increasingly stepping up to the plate. Fathers like author Mark Hertsgaard who together with mom Lisa Hoyos co-founded Climate Parents to mobilize parents and grandparents to take action on climate change and clean energy. Dads like Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, who says, “Our kids will grow up in a world where clean energy is cheaper than dirty fuels. A 100 percent clean energy society is within our grasp.”

As Iowa state senator and father of Rob Hogg puts it, “because we care about our children, we must care about climate change. It’s the defining issue of our generation.”

So fellow dads – enjoy that barbecue today and the time with your families. Take a moment to look your kids in the eye and commit to joining together with other parents to create a world that is worthy of all of our children.

John Friedrich works with Climate Parents, lives in Meyers and is the proud father of Rosie.