

## **New Ideas for Sharing History with Your Children**

### **Back-to-School 2011-12:**

From America Comes Alive!

- **Create a family time capsule. (No burying required!)**

The purpose of a time capsule is to put away something from “now” to look at later. Some families may want to write letters about their lives today; other families may want to have each person select an object and write a note about why this item was chosen. Was the item a popular fad of the day? Was it a souvenir from a trip taken this summer? The process of deciding what to write about or what object to choose is an education in itself.

If you’re collecting letters, the pages can be stored in an envelope or a file. If you’re collecting objects, select an appropriately-sized box, label it well, and place it in the basement or garage where it can be stored for a time.

After deciding on the type of item to be collected, discuss with family members when you want to look at the time capsule again. (You probably need to let at least one year go by, or the project will lose its impact.) Opening the box or envelope on a holiday when everyone is together and has time to relax will give you an opportunity to look at your own family history; the process also shows kids the pleasure of looking back over time.

- **There is nothing more compelling than when kids can identify with children of another era.**

Lewis Hine (1874-1940) documented the plight of children at labor. His work with a camera was so persuasive that it eventually led to changes in child labor laws.

If you visit <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/> with your children, you can give them a good idea of what their fate might have been if they had lived seventy-five or one hundred years ago.

- **Help your child follow his or her passion.**

Most kids become fascinated with something from the past. For some it is dinosaurs, for others it may be fire trucks or the Titanic. In addition to web resources, there are many ways to advance his or her love of the subject.

A natural history museum usually offers incredible displays and information about dinosaurs (not to mention the great books for all ages they will have in the gift shop). There are many fire history museums throughout the country, and the guides tend to be retired firemen who offer wonderful stories. If there isn't near you, check with your fire department. In all likelihood, they will have a family day where kids can see the equipment and hear stories.

A story like the Titanic has been told in many forms. The topic will sometimes pop up in today's news, so if you keep your eye peeled for information, there may be many ways to help your child learn more.

- **The words “when I was little...” are magic.**

Children of all ages, even very young ones, love hearing stories of how things used to be. Tell them about your own first day of school or share with them the favorite games you liked to play, or what type of vacations your family took. Those stories never grow old.

Remind your kids to ask their grandparents about what it was like for them, too. Grandparents will love it, and your kids will hear wonderful family stories of how things used to be.