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A GOOD FATHER IS THERE WHEN YOU NEED HIM

By Suzanne Wilson

Peter Jordan, President of Knowledge Matters an educational software company, says that sometimes the best moments he has with his daughters are those when none of them is really doing much of anything. Nothing, say, but sitting around for a bit at home, or sharing a snack, or hanging out in the yard.

Though he says it in a not-so-serious way, Jordan, 43, has a serious point.

Everything gets so scheduled these days, he said one evening earlier this week as he watched daughters Adele, 3, and Stephanie, 8, playing on their backyard swings. With swim meets, soccer games and so much else, Jordan said, "I try to leave some time for doing nothing."

Jordan, founder of a Northampton-based company that writes educational software, said he remembers reading once that many fathers average only about 15 minutes a day with their children – and he didn't want that to happen to him.

The ability to create family time was part of the reason Jordan and his wife, Susan, a radiologist, moved to this area in 1997 from Framingham.

Living in a smaller community where work, home, schools and recreation are all relatively close by has made it easier to participate in his children's lives, Jordan said. And when he's dropped in for school events or other activities, he's found he's not alone. "An amazing number of dads around here do that, too," he said. "I'm impressed with that."

Though running his company, Knowledge Matters, is a full-time occupation, Jordan tries to give Stephanie, Adele, and their brother, William, 6, more than those 15 minutes.

Stephanie says he's doing pretty well.

"We like to do math together. And at night he sits with me and we read in bed," she said. They are regulars at the Hampshire Regional YMCA in Northampton, where she swims, but most of all, she added, "He's kind and loving." A good father is someone "who helps you and he's there when you need him." Her father, she said, knows what to do "when my feelings get hurt."

Jordan said he likens his role to being a coach, and someone who's here to help with whatever comes up – like the time Stephanie got stung by a bee or the day she got whomped on the head with a golf club. He's savored the moments of what he calls the

“sheer beauty” of watching a child sleep. And all in all, he says, being a dad “is much more fun than anyone could ever imagine.”