

L.A. Parent™

FREE

31 Years and Still GROWING! | LAPARENT.COM | JUNE 2010

the
**DAD
SHIFT**
Why **STAYING
HOME** Makes
SENSE



NAPPA:
24 Gold-Winning
Parenting Products

+
GET OUT &
ABOUT
WITH OUR
**AWESOME
CALENDAR**



Jason Katims: Write On, Dad

When you write a show about Texas football (*Friday Night Lights*) or aliens (*Roswell*), your L.A. circle may think the characters are out of this world, but not in their back yards. “Even when I’ve literally robbed stories from people’s lives,” says Jason Katims, they don’t recognize themselves. But now, the writer/executive producer of the new TV series *Parenthood* finds it’s just the opposite. “So many stop me and claim, ‘Oh, that’s me!’”

Welcome to parenthood, Jason, where – as any visibly pregnant woman in a public setting can attest – everyone has a stake.

Based on the 1989 film of the same name, the show is rich in characters, namely, the gloriously imperfect Braverman family.

We chatted with Jason (the real-life father of Sawyer, 13, and Phoebe, 9) about *Parenthood*, his parents, and parenthood.

In the show, you introduced a character with Asperger’s Syndrome. Why?

It’s something that was hinted at in the movie. And my son has Asperger’s. Certainly, there’s a lot here that’s very personal to me, but it was also important to protect my son’s privacy. And I felt a big responsibility to make this depiction as accurate as possible. We brought in psychologists, teachers and parents to help make it real. Quite honestly, part of me wasn’t sure it would feel “relatable” enough to the audience. But people are really interested. After the second episode, Asperger’s was the most Googled item that night! It was a hard decision for me to tackle this subject matter, but I’m very happy I did.

What did your parents think of your career choice?

They were incredibly supportive. It was a gift. My father had been an actor, then a salesman, then came back to acting, so part of him really understood. And my mom allowed my room to be a complete and utter mess, a disaster area. Some wouldn’t look at this as exemplary parenting, but I had my creative space and a sense of freedom. (Her only rule? That I close the door.) My parents were always encouraging my creative side and I was able to find my passion.

Tell us about a memorable parenting moment.

My wife, Kathy, signed up our son for Little League. Sawyer was around 7, had shown *no* interest in sports and had motor-skills issues. I was *really* nervous. The first practice was everything I imagined it to be – and 10 times worse. Ground ball went through his legs, and he got really upset when his teammate *got* the ball. He didn’t understand. Soon, I’m in the dugout with my kid on my lap. He’s crying, “Unsign me up!” I replied, “It’s up to you. Why not just try?” Couple days later, to my amazement, he’s watching baseball on TV. “Hey you want to have a catch?” I asked. He said, “Sure.” Sawyer played baseball the next five years and still loves sports.

What do you find most surprising about being a dad?

The whole thing is surprising! Grappling with your children defying expectations. It’s what makes it such an interesting journey: the constant surprises and joys. As a result of caring so much for your children, you become a more compassionate person. I feel so moved watching people parent – especially when it isn’t easy, when those curve balls are thrown at you. Ultimately, it’s what made me want to write *Parenthood*.

So really, the show was born because your kids were born.

Yeah. Finally getting payback [laughs]. Joking!

See *Parenthood* on NBC Tuesdays at 10 p.m., or catch up on past episodes at www.nbc.com/parenthood. ♦

Chat Room columnist Vivien Santana Hughes is a former *L.A. Parent* editor and the mother of three – two sons in college and (surprise!) a 5-year-old daughter.

Who would you like to see profiled in Chat Room? Please email your suggestions to: Christina.Elston@parenthood.com.



Jason Katims, writer/executive producer of NBC dramedy *Parenthood*, on bringing his first child home from the hospital: “You don’t get the book that comes with it. I thought, ‘Are you really leaving us with this kid?’”