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HAPPY FATHER'S WEEK...BE A HERO!

Alright Guys, it is your turn. To all the fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, foster fathers and those helping others as "fathers"... A very Happy Father's Day! It was last Sunday. Today's Thursday. A little late, Commish, wouldn't you say? Well, I celebrate that day all week.

Why all week? Maybe it is my age... no, let's call that maturity. Maybe it is the fact that some of my Father's Day good wishes come from relatives out of state such as my son and grandchildren—all of whom I expect to visit this coming weekend. The father of one staff member within the Office of the Commissioner passed away last week, a few others within the last several months. Memories are important. So, maybe, I just want to have the memories and good feelings last for awhile.

For those of you who are one day celebration people, fine. I am not.

My father passed away many years ago. Despite barely a ninth grade education, he created a decent career for himself as an "accountant" of sorts with a major corporation for whom he worked nearly 40 years. My mother predeceased him by about 15 years, yet they had a good life together for 44 years. Their lives were driven by what was best for the family—immediate and extended. My father's compensation by any standard was modest yet my three sisters and I had the chance for a decent education and other life opportunities. He had a dozen siblings. In such an extended family, there was always someone in need. He and his brothers looked out for their own and the larger family.

Barely 5'2," he was a force. One of my brother's in law called him "Chief." He was simply a presence, but in a quiet way...most of the time. If you asked one of my sisters, I am not sure they would say he was "quiet." In their words, I got away with a lot in the early years being the only son. In my family, as my daughter tells me, I don't holler. She says: You just give me one of those looks.

So what was my Dad's strength? It was his values. Despite not always getting along with him as he was so strong willed, I knew he was always there for me. It was how he acted day in and day out. It was his coaching of us as to how to live, what to appreciate and how to respect others.

What's that have to do with each of you as fathers of one sort or another? You have a critically important role in the lives of your children. You are a teacher, a coach, a motivator, a healer. What you do today will have a lasting effect on your kids...and their kids. Be there for them. Give them all that you have to give. Give them what they need to grow to be healthy, happy and successful in life. Do it for them. Do it for yourself. They are our precious future.

As a friend said to me earlier this week, with a lump in his throat, "My seven year old hand wrote a Father's Day card to me that said 'Dad, you are my hero.'" What a great sentiment!

Be a hero! And thanks for being a hero within the DMHAS family!

Comments are welcome at Thomas.kirk@po.state.ct.us.