



OFF TRACK! A Family Sabbatical

At a time when the economy is in the tank and fear has taken hold, people are hunkering down, battening the hatches and making no sudden moves. The Ezgur Family has decided this is the perfect time for movement... wide, sweeping movement, across the entire country as a matter of fact. They are taking their life and family on the go to learn, discover and explore. Their reasoning is simple: The moment it looks as though all is lost, is the precise moment you have nothing to lose.

Reconnecting by Disconnecting

Michael and Wendi Ezgur, parents of Aidan (11), Charlie (8) and Rosie (6), are going "Off Track" April through August, 2009; fitting that which is most important into an RV to live, love and learn their way across the country. The choice to disconnect from the everyday track poses one of a kind opportunities to reconnect to family, life and learning in ways that would otherwise never have been possible.

Economy

Why now with a failing economy? Proving to themselves and their children that with change, good or bad, comes opportunity, the Ezgurs, took a hard look at their household budget to see how to make this journey a reality. Part of being off track means eliminating many household expenses, in addition to eliminating organized sports, summer camp, nights out, baby sitters, etc. which all total significant savings and can subsidize the RV cost. But, the true test is the budget on the road. Living sparsely, setting a budget and keeping to it will be a big part of the journey. Charlie Ezgur, eight years old, loves numbers and will be taking charge of the family budget. As a family the Ezgurs will be taking a hard look at the finances and setting specific daily and weekly budgets for food, activities, gas (learning about what affects its pricing) philanthropy and savings. Charlie will take the lead on learning computer household budget software and enter in daily expenditures. He will report back to the family so they can all decide what to do about being over or under budget each day.

Road Scholars

What about school? Instead of calling it "home schooling", the Ezgurs prefer to call it "road schooling". They will be armed with the core curriculum concepts for each of their children's school grade, but the major learning will be driven by the children themselves. Each child will take on the research of different states. Whatever inspires them about that state is what will determine what and how the family explores that state. "You have to get out of the tourist mindset of 'what do we have to see' and get into the curious mindset of 'what do we want to know more about'", says Wendi. It is based on the simple KWL method which is what do we **K**now, what do we **W**ant to know and what did we **L**earn.

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Road Scholars (continued)

Michael Ezgur, who has built a real estate development company (www.terrapingroup.com) and many notable buildings and developments in Chicago and other parts of the country, says, "To succeed as a team is to hold all of the members accountable for their expertise". Looking at his own family as the team, they will count on six year old Rosie, for her artistic vision and teach her power point in order to compose a picture journal slide show of their experiences. Eight year old Charlie is in charge of household budget and finance. Eleven year old Aidan had one teacher coin him "vocab man". As master of the written word, he will be the narrator of the adventure with his creative writing and will also be video journaling and utilizing computer software to put music to the videos.

Wendi Ezgur, who is the founder of Leadhead Inc. (www.leadhead.com), an ideation company that has helped many Fortune 500 companies generate new product concepts and speaks on topics such as creativity and innovation, says "it's very much about taking enough time to achieve a quiet rhythm of exploration not drowned out by break neck schedules. We're hoping that together, with our children, we can learn to first of all hear, then listen and trust ourselves to lead us to that which we find inspiring. Then comes another true test of learning as a group how to go along with and support the inspirations of one another... yikes, we'll have to see how we do!"

Hijacking Your Family's Health

In addition to taking leadership roles in the discovery and learning, each family member will also do their share to contribute to healthy eating on the road. Rosie is the breakfast smoothie chef, Charlie is the panini chef, and Aidan has just mastered the art of the stir fry thanks to 6th grade cooking class. "It's a chance for the kids to take charge of their own eating" said both parents. "There won't be a huge pantry on the RV" said Aidan, "so we need to limit the food to healthy choices". In addition, it is the perfect time to incorporate physical activity into each day. Hiking and biking will be the top two choices.

It's Not Easy Being Green

While an RV generally connotes gas guzzling, the Ezgur Family has opted for an RV that also utilizes solar and electric to help mitigate the impact they are having on the environment. They will also research alternative energy initiatives across the country to get a sense of what possibilities lay ahead. Buying food from local growers while learning about the sustaining crops in different states will have positive impact as well.

Technology

Part of reconnecting by disconnecting means finding new ways to connect. A family blog will be available so that others may follow the journey at www.familyofftrack.com. The children's classmates at home can keep up with them, ask questions and learn simultaneously. The RV is completely WiFi enabled and laptop computers will help each child keep up with research and journaling. As business owners, both Wendi and Michael can keep in touch from the road. "We'll have to decide on a specific time to talk on cell phones, otherwise we won't really be off track" said Wendi. GPS type navigation will be a welcome addition on board, but will not usurp the teaching of geography. Michael pointed out that they have "installed a giant map complete with push pins and string to detail our exact route".

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The Essence

The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his information and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both. - James A. Michener

The vision must be followed by the venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps – we must step up the stairs. - Vance Havner

Lead your life... don't let it lead you. - Wendi Ezgur

Fear creates danger, courage dispels it . – Michael Ezgur

Together is a great place to be.

At 42 and 41 respectively, Michael and Wendi Ezgur met 25 years ago at University of Illinois. They scuba dive, zip along the rain forest canopy in Cost Rica, lead two thriving companies, ride bicycles from winery to winery in California, compose and write restaurant jingles, ski the Rockies, perform in a rock band, swing off ropes into waterfalls in the jungle, and are raising 3 beautiful children to have the same thirst for adventure.

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