

Family Building provides answers for 'empty nesters'

Part one in a three part series about
The Family Building Institute

BY RACHEL ALEXANDER

Many parents are not prepared for the change in family dynamics that comes when the children grow up and leave home for college, travel or careers. "Empty Nest Syndrome" tends to strike parents shortly after their youngest child heads out the door to start his or her life as an adult.

Dr. Ronald Law, a Denver cardiologist and founder of the Family Building Institute, has a complex question for these parents, "What plans do you have with your adult children?"

He said, usually parents give no answer, showing merely a grimace or annoyance.

"Between parenting and grandparenting lies family building," said Law. "Family building begins when parenting ends. You nurture an infant. You teach a child. You parent a teenager. But what do you do when your young adult becomes stronger and smarter than you?"

The Family Building Institute offers the "Family Building 7-Step Guide," a program to help parents become family builders.

Law describes five major life investments: the development of self, the choice of a lifelong partner, growing a family, career, and management of assets.

"Except for children, all the

other major investments are subject to change," Law said in the first part of his book on family building. "Self-development is surely a dynamic process. Marriages end not infrequently. There are often second and third careers. And financial investment is even less reliable than marriage. Although children change, they remain always your children. With few exceptions children survive marriages, careers and investing. And the strongest testament that children are the biggest investment of your life is the fact that they are almost always the principal beneficiaries of your life's work, financial and otherwise."

Why would anyone let the biggest investment in his or her life languish? Would you let your business or rose garden languish the way of neglect?

Law points out that traditional parenting does not begin to address the issues and challenges of family wealth, the dark side of wealth, business succession, philanthropy, trusts and other manners of wealth transfer. Therefore, he believes that family building is essential for families with moderate to substantial wealth.

The wealth of a family, he said, is the sum of its financial wealth and its non-financial wealth – the human aspect.

The family-building process seeks to continue to develop the



DR. RONALD LAW, founder of the Family Building Institute

Photo Courtesy of Ronald Law

non-financial wealth of a family into the adulthood of the children. It provides a framework for parents to have dialogues with their adult children and ensure that meaningful conversations on subjects such as family values, wills, investments, family business, philanthropy, careers, trusts and politics occur, while having fun.

In the coming months, articles about the seven-step family building process and these meaningful conversations will be available in *The Villager*. For more information about the Family Building Institute visit www.familybuildinginstitute.com.

The Answer for Empty Nesters!

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