

By the time you read this, you have likely opened the gifts, made the appropriate remarks to those present, gathered the papers and boxes for recycling, and found a moment of quiet somewhere to open the paper. The comet we call Christmas has come and gone.

This is the time of year when we look back to remember and forward to plan. Take a few minutes to think about the great moments of the past year. For instance, the first time your child remembered all the soccer stuff when it was time to go to practice (or home from practice). Or how about the moment your child re-bounded after making a mistake on the field. We should all remember the time our kids independently offered to help the coach carry the equipment to or from the car. Most of all, we should remember those really important times when our children talked about their experience and ideas and we were respectful enough to listen. Those are the sort of great moments all parents can recognize as great moments.

To look forward, remember your child needs companionship, exercise, and mental stimuli to aid in reaching maximum potential. In the face of leaner financial times, be creative in planning for their continued participation in sports. The tradeoff of specialty coffees, lunches out, or high priced beverages for a soccer registration is quickly achieved and offers your child a continued experience. A \$65 registration fee amounts to a week of restaurant lunches at inexpensive places, less than a month of lattes, or a couple of hockey (or concert) tickets. Making the personal sacrifice to keep kids in soccer is really a no-brainer. The results are good for our kids and better for us.

If you aren't trying to protect your child's experience from the evils of Wall Street, you can preserve another child's experience by donating to Rapid City Youth Soccer League's scholarship program or Rushmore Soccer Club's support. Consider it an investment yielding a stronger community. Busy kids, connected to positive activities, and learning good values keep our community on a more even keel. We all win.