

MEET

Fathers Know Best

Hey, Dad: If you're searching for fresh ways to bond with your kids, a Livermore-based business has you covered.

BY LEEANNE JONES



A year ago, Kevin Madsen noticed that conversations with his friends had completely changed. "We were talking about allergies and car seats and what pacifiers work best," he says. "What was sort of surprising to all of us was that we weren't resentful of it."

Madsen, a 33-year-old Livermore resident and father of three, and his friends love being dads and strive to be great ones—unlike the ignorant, self-involved lugs, à la Homer Simpson and *Mad Men's* Don Draper, depicted in popular culture. "We still see commercials where the dad is a well-intentioned idiot, and the mom is kind of smirking," says Madsen. "That's

not the world I live in, and it's not the world I want to live in."

So, he started HeyDad, a company that aims to encourage and equip fathers. Its first product, an eponymous biweekly podcast, launched last November to rave reviews. On it, Madsen, his brothers Andy and Tyler, and family friend Derek Walker engage in lively discussions on topics ranging from the serious (friendship tension between dads and nondads) to the silly (Buzzfeed Parents headline trivia).

HeyDad's second product, a monthly subscription box, began shipping in May. Created by Madsen and his wife, Trisha, the



HeyDad's superhero-themed box includes costumes and crafty items for customizing them.

themed kits (see sidebar) offer fathers fresh ideas for playing with their kids, and include all the components needed to complete the activities, adventures, and games inside. They're gender-neutral, geared toward kids ages three to six, and designed to be as entertaining for adults as they are for children.

"The boxes are just fun for the sake of fun. There isn't a lesson embedded in there or a way to teach your kid about STEM," says Madsen. "At a foundational level, kids need to know that Dad enjoys them and wants to be with them—and from there, you can build anything." heydad.com.



What's in the Box?

The HeyDad subscription-box theme changes monthly. Here are some of the offerings included in the packages.

KIT THEME: CAMPING

Bring the outdoors in by building a blanket fort, creating a milk-jug lantern, roasting marshmallows over candles (or launching them), fishing for felt creatures, playing shadow puppets accompanied by an audio story, and singing camp songs.

KIT THEME: SUPERHERO

A Mad Libs-style activity sets up the plot for this imaginative play, which casts Dad as the villain. Kids don capes and masks, race through an obstacle course and a field of yarn, build a tape-web trap, and battle with pom-pom shooters.



The HeyDad podcast crew (from left): Derek Walker, Andy Madsen, Kevin Madsen, and Tyler Madsen.