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Office of University Relations • Missoula, Montana 59812 • (406) 243-2522

MEDIA RELEASE

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STUDENTS DISCOVER PARENTHOOD IS NOT ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE

Each quarter, in order to teach University of Montana students about the responsibilities of parenthood, Chris Isaacs conducts a parenting experiment. Each student is handed a raw egg and charged with caring for it as if it were his or her own baby.

According to the rules, the students must keep the eggs in constant contact with themselves for two days. Students who wish to go somewhere without their eggs are required to get an "eggsitter" to watch their eggs. If an egg gets broken, the students are told to scoop it up and carry it around in a plastic bag or container.

"After all," Isaacs said, "if you have a handicapped child it may be unpleasant but you have to care for it just the same."

The experiment, Isaacs said, gives the students some idea of what it's like to be responsible for something fragile that requires constant attention.

The first thing most students did was assign a name and gender to their eggs. About two-thirds decided their eggs were girls. Names included such original appellations as "Ova," "Eggbert," "Humpty," and "Whitey."

"She looks just like you," said one student to a new mother.

"I know," came the reply, "she's gonna be a real cute chick."

At the end of the two days, most of the students agreed the novelty had worn off. Some eggs were "eggnapped" and ransomed back to their parents, usually for a specified amount of beer. About a dozen were broken. Many were simply left somewhere and forgotten for long periods of time.

(over)

Students Discover--add one

"I took my egg out to dinner and got a baby chair for it," one student said.

Another took hers swimming. "They don't float," she said.

Most of the students said they felt the experience had been meaningful and had prompted serious discussions on child rearing and the responsibilities of parenthood.

As for Isaacs, who reported receiving numerous late-night phone calls from desperate parents who had just broken their eggs, the experiment always "cracks me up."

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