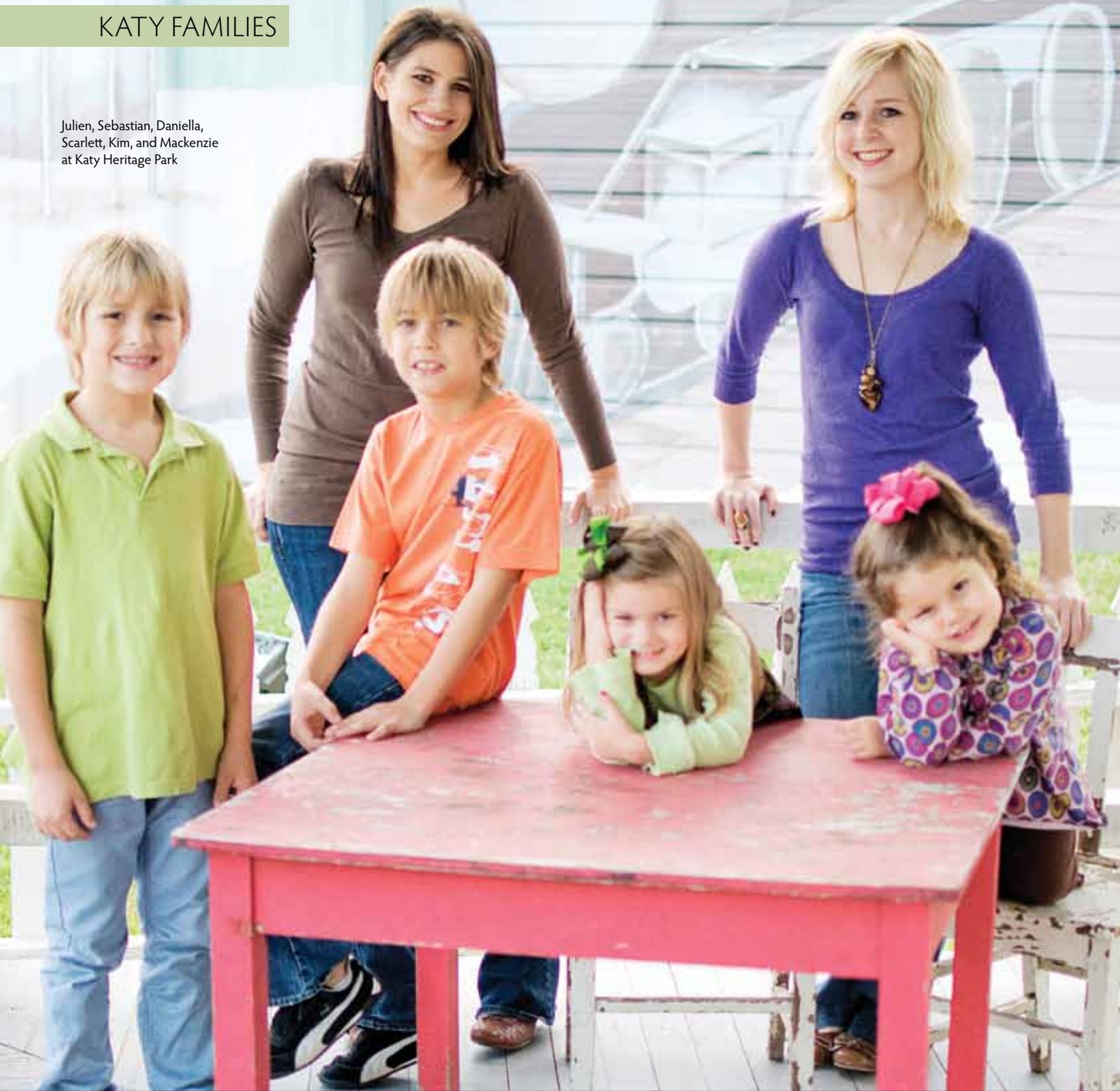
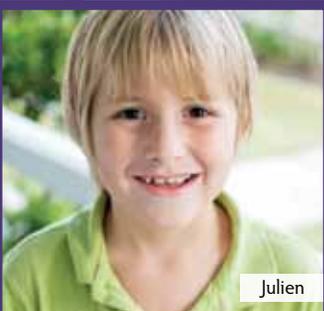


KATY FAMILIES

Julien, Sebastian, Daniella, Scarlett, Kim, and Mackenzie at Katy Heritage Park



Mackenzie



Julien



Lee



Sebastian



Scarlett

Thriving as a *Single Parent*

Written by Noreen Stavinoha
Photography by Marisa Hugonnett

Single Katy Moms Share Success Stories, Ideas, and Resources

Between busy work and school schedules and the normal demands of everyday life, single mom Luchy Batista works hard to provide for her daughter, while creating a nurturing environment for her to grow up in. Like other single moms in Katy, although time is in short supply, she focuses on the well-being of her family above everything else. “The toaster and microwave are my best friends,” Batista says. “We’ve lived in our apartment for two months, and I haven’t turned the stove on once.” It’s no wonder, with the hectic schedule she and daughter, Lee, 12, follow.

Making Ends Meet

Along with going to school and doing homework, Lee plays soccer, takes piano lessons, and takes part in the youth group and religion classes at her church. Batista is active in her church community and holds three part-time jobs to make ends meet. She works for a preschool in the mornings, in the church office in the afternoons, and tutors in the evenings. The only time of day that isn’t totally planned is the hour between Lee’s bedtime and Luchy’s. That is her quiet time. “Once every other month, I take an evening to go to a friend’s house to chill for a while,” says Batista. “And sometimes on a Saturday, I take Lee to a friend’s house to hang out, but I’m always with her. I don’t like to leave her.”

Lee’s biological father has been out of the picture most of her life and never has contact with her. Batista married a second time, and although that marriage lasted just five years, the stepfather is more like a father to Lee. He keeps in touch with her with letters and occasional visits. He takes her on vacation with him. Batista counts that as a plus



Kim and her daughter Mackenzie

in her daughter’s life. Even though financial support from Lee’s father would make their lives easier, Batista has never sought it, because she fears she would have to share custody, and the friends of Lee’s dad are not people she wants her daughter to be around.

Small Sacrifices

Setting the right priorities in her daughter’s life comes foremost to Batista. They are not able to have many of the material things many of their friends have, but neither of them seem to mind much. There is no TV in their apartment, but they are seldom home to watch it, anyway. Education is emphasized at the Batista household. Lee does well in school, and dreams of someday being an archeologist. Batista encourages that dream, and hasn’t lost sight of her own. She hopes to finish college with a degree in early childhood development someday. Batista is proud of the fact that her daughter is learning to think for herself. Recently, one of her fellow students told Lee that no one in that particular class liked her because she made the rest of them look bad when she kept being the first one to answer the teacher’s questions. Lee’s answer was, “I can live with that.”

Simple Shortcuts

Even though being a single parent comes with its challenges, mom Daniella Tiller enjoys the quality time she gets to spend with her sons, Sebastian and Julien, and daughter, Scarlett. “It is harder [being a single parent], but I love it, because I get to spend a lot of quality, one-on-one time with all my kids,” she says.

Because saving time with daily routines can help free up more quality time, Tiller has created a few shortcuts along the way. For a quick

Luchy Batista and daughter
Lee Marie Jorge



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SINGLE PARENT SURVIVAL TIPS

The good news is you are not alone. There are 14 million single parents in the U.S. raising 21.6 million children. Here are some quick tips to help get through the day.

Time for You - Don't forget to schedule time for you. If you're frazzled, there will be nothing left to give to your child.

Prioritize Mealtimes - No matter what you serve for dinner, make it a priority to sit down at the table together and share the highs/lows of the day.

Use Shortcuts - After bath time, dress your preschooler in tomorrow's play clothes for bed. They rarely get dirty while sleeping and you'll save 15-30 minutes of dawdling and fussing in the morning.

Work Together - Do all you can to communicate and get along with the other parent. Your child will benefit from parents who are partners not enemies.

Accept Help - Don't be afraid to rely on your support systems - friends, neighbors, and relatives can provide relief. Join a single parent support group to meet others in the same situation.

Be Consistent - Follow through when it comes to time outs and discipline even when you're worn out. Your child will benefit from structure and from knowing what to expect.

Have Fun - Dress up in crazy outfits, sing a silly song, play games, or go on a picnic. These memories will outlast all the day to day schedules.

Focus on the Positive - Reward your child for helping with chores, getting good grades, going to bed on time, or getting ready for school using fun incentives. Stickers, charts, and stamps are a big hit.

-Katrina Katsarelis



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Single Parenting Class
St. Peters United Methodist Church
 Call 281-492-8031, extension 311
 Support for parents faced with child-rearing on their own.

Parents without Partners
Greater Houston Chapter 63
 Call 281-469-5646 or visit pwphouston.org

Single Parent Family Ministry
Lakewood Church, Houston
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and healthy snack, she keeps a snack bucket in the pantry stocked with nutritious choices like granola bars and peanuts. The kids know where to go after school for a quick bite and the kitchen is left spotless in the process. When the kids are with their dad, she catches up on chores like doing the laundry, so she can spend time during the rest of the week helping them with their homework, watching movies with them, and eating dinner with them as a family. Her sons and daughter are also delegated age-appropriate chores, like picking up after themselves, and given an allowance for doing their part.

Time Together

In January, when Tiller begins law school, she will continue spending that quality time during the evenings with her children – this time doing her homework at the same time they do theirs. To make the transition easier, though, she gathered extra activities they can do quietly, such as books and arts and crafts supplies. “When I’m studying and need some quiet time, they’re going to be reading and they started an art club,” she says, adding, “They’re excited – it’s going to be fun.” She knows the time spent in school now will pay off, though. “I want my kids to have everything,” she says.

Scheduling in family time is one of the most important things a parent can do for their children, she says. Not only does spending time together make children feel special and loved, it can also ease any anxieties or insecurities they may feel if their parents have separated. “The best thing for them is the one-on-one quality time, so they know that everything is okay,” Tiller says, adding, “It helps keep them stable and lets them know that whatever happens, we’re still okay.” KM

NOREEN STAVINOHA lives in Katy with her husband and miniature schnauzer and loves to tell the stories of interesting people.



Scarlett and Mackenzie

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