

# The Chore Solution

Local couple pens book to help families work together



Photos by JENNA BERTAPELLE

Ann and Jason Cowan penned *The Chore Solution: Making Families Better by Working Together* to motivate their sons to help around the house.

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**METAMORA** — Ann and Jason Cowan had a problem, well more like three problems — their three boys, who were getting a lot without doing a lot.

Torn between feeling like nagging parents, overindulgent parents and neglectful parents, the couple realized they had to do something.

“It was a necessity,” said Jason.

That something became known in the Cowan household as *The Chore Solution*.

The couple, who were married last year, said before *The Chore Solution* they were doling out money for video games, movies, toys and more to their three sons — Bryan Jones, 15, Andrew Jones, 10 and Gavin Cowan, 6. (The couple also has a son together, Ares Cowan, but at six months old he’s not too into material goods just yet.)

In return they found themselves with three

boys who lacked motivation and, often times, a messy house, too much dirty laundry and a yard in need of attention.

Although they sometimes complained to the boys about the lack of work they were doing, Jason said his light bulb moment of knowing something had to change was when Gavin asked him what exactly he did around the house.

It was clear that household duties needed to be divided and the fun stuff in life needed to be earned.

So, Ann and Jason got to work. Creating charts, spreadsheets, “work orders,” a pay scale and using a dry eraser board, they created *The Chore Solution*.

Household jobs are listed on a spreadsheet. Next to them is how

often the specific job needs to get done (mowing the lawn, for example, is a once-a-week gig), how much the job pays and who is eligible to complete the job (Bryan, the oldest, for example, is the only one qualified to run the lawn mower at this point).

After one of the kids completes a job he fills out a work order and places it in the chore box. Throughout the week a running tally of money earned by each person is written on a dry erase board. Any job that slips through the cracks and is done by Ann or Jason is also added up and placed in the “look at how much money you missed out on this week” category.

Money can be deducted from the running tally each time one of the

boys leaves his shoes out, for example. Ann and Jason are held to the same standard, of course. Free passes to get out of deductions are handed out each time one of the parents leaves a mess behind.

Pay day comes about once a week.

With a working solution in place, the Cowans realized they had to share what they discovered and at the encouragement of Jason’s mother, the couple penned a book *The Chore Solution: Making Families Better by Working Together*.

Self-published, the book is now available for purchase. *The Chore Solution: Making Families Better by Working Together* is packed with tables, charts and activities. The no-nonsense

SEE CHORES, PAGE 3B

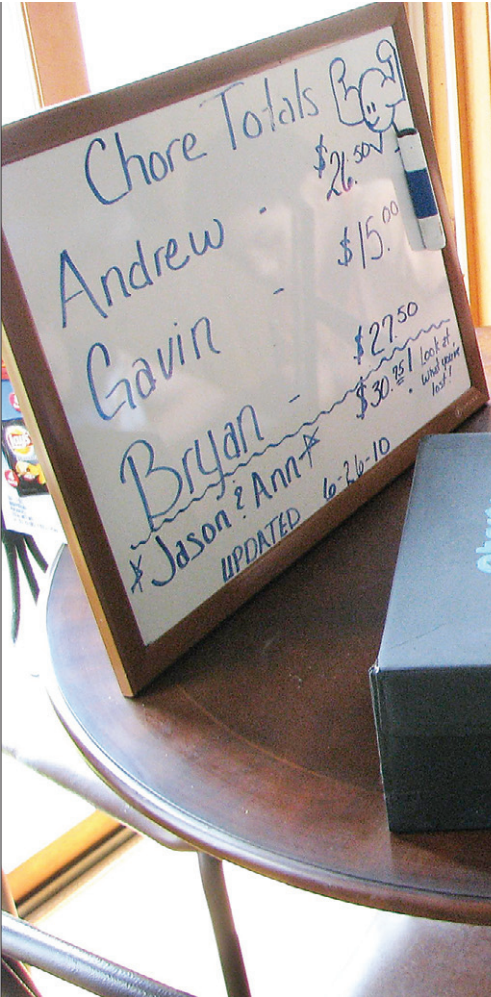


Photo by EMILY CASWELL

Andrew Jones, 10, and Gavin Cowan, 6, (above and at right) fill out “work orders” to fill their chore box. The work order is completed after a job has been done.

A running tally of money earned throughout a pay period is kept on a dry erase board in the Cowan house. The last category is what parents Jason and Ann have done and reminds the boys what they’ve missed out on — money wise — in a given week.

At far right is a list of the chores that needs to be done, who is eligible to complete the job, how often the job needs to be done and what it pays. The Cowans said this list, which stays near the white board in their house, will be forever changing and can be easily adapted for any household.



Chores			
Chore	Duration	Who's Responsible	Amount
Mow Front Lawn	Weekly	Bryan	\$5.00
Mow Back Lawn	Weekly	Bryan	\$5.00
Sweep and mop Living Room	Weekly	Andrew	\$2.00
Sweep and mop Kitchen and Nook	Weekly	Andrew	\$2.00
Load Dishwasher	Daily	All	\$0.25
Unload Dishwasher	Daily	All	\$0.25
Take boxes downstairs	Monthly	Gavin	\$5.00
Dust	Weekly	Gavin	\$1.00
Take trash out	Weekly	Andrew & Bryan	\$1.00
Bring cans in	Weekly	Andrew & Bryan	\$1.00
Fill juice in refrigerator	As req'd	Gavin	\$1.00
Babysitting	Hourly	All	\$5.00
Laundry (Hangers, put away)	Weekly	All	\$1.00
Clean Bedrooms	Weekly	All	\$2.00
Make Dinner	Daily	All	\$0.50
*Extras			
Leaving anything out (toys, movies, games, etc.)	Each Occurrence	All	(\$0.50)
Leaving trash out	Each Occurrence	All	(\$0.50)

\*Extras include extra work. For example, if you help clean the garage, wash cars, pick up the yard, clean the bathrooms, etc., you will get extra money. Everything will be checked upon completion. Jason and Ann have the right to refuse payment if the work is not done well. We also expect not to have to remind you to do things. If we do them you will not get paid. We all need to work together, if you help someone you will not be paid for their chore, but they may help you in return.

Please fill out the chore slip and put it into the box for credit.

