

# Jason Pederson

## A Heart for Helping Kids

By Mary Carol Pederson (Jason's wife)

**W**hen you are the KATV Seven-On-Your-Side reporter, helping others is part of the job description. And it's a big reason why Jason Pederson loves his job. But, helping others is not just a profession for Pederson. It's a passion ... especially when it comes to kids.

Pederson grew up in a small town in western Wisconsin. "I was blessed to grow up in a home where my mom and dad loved each other," he said. After graduating with a degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Wisconsin at River Falls, Pederson's first job offer came from El Dorado, Arkansas, as a TV reporter with KTVE, and he took it.

One thing that Pederson did not have when he left Wisconsin was a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. "As a youth, I went to Sunday school," he said. "As a teen, I went to confirmation classes. But only a little of the teaching sunk into my brain and nothing stuck in my heart. I was a good person, I knew this world had a creator, and I knew all about Jesus, but had I died

in a car wreck would I have been saved? No." At least not until a friend of his invited him to a Baptist basketball tournament.

"I remember sitting on the gym floor in between games and listening to a guest speaker encourage those who didn't know Jesus to invite Him into their hearts. It was a still and memorable moment. I did it, and I felt different. However, there was no follow-up, and no evidence of any change. The 'soil' was rocky, but a seed had been planted," Pederson said.

When Pederson took the job with KATV 10 years ago, he and his wife, Mary Carol, began attending Fellowship Bible Church. "Everything was so different," he said. "No pews. No hymnals. No reciting the Apostles Creed or listening to dry sermons. There was humor! And a band! It was all very exciting and helped light a fuse I didn't even know I had."

Soon, Pederson was leading a coaching group of young men, building on a past of being a t-ball coach and enjoying working with kids. God blessed his efforts there. He became involved in Men's Fraternity, a men's

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group that explores what it means to be a man who pleases God. And the Lord began calling Pederson to do some things he wasn't sure he wanted to do.

"The first involved my grandfather. He was dying of cancer, and I wasn't sure if he was a believer. I was terrified about initiating that conversation, but finally bought a plane ticket and went to make sure Grandpa understood that living a good life wasn't going to get him into Heaven. No amount of good deeds or spiritless prayers were going to do it. Only a sincere belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior would do the trick," Pederson explained.

Another calling involved a young man accused of a serious crime. As a reporter, Pederson covered the story, but as a Christian, he felt God putting it on his heart to mentor the young man. For more than two years, Pederson met with this young man, who was only 13 at the time of his offense. Every other Sunday afternoon the pair met in a maximum security unit. Pederson bought him Cokes, brought him baseball cards, remembered his birthdays, and took an interest in his life.



KATV, Channel 7 reporter Jason Pederson is shown with his wife, Mary Carol, and their two children: Spencer Everett, 6; and Shelby Faith, 4.

Biblical truth and the principles of salvation were also discussed. The boy became a Christian and began to study the bible. Through a series of events that could only be God-ordained, the young man came to live with Jason and Mary Carol and their two small children. The family saw how a Christ-centered, loving and disciplined environment caused him to flourish. He stayed for 15 months

before earning his high school diploma and leaving for college.

That involvement led to another opportunity to help kids. Pederson is excited to currently be a part of the board of directors for Soaring Wings Ranch. "I have seen firsthand how showing the love of Christ to a kid within a structured, positive environment causes these young people to thrive," he said.

Soaring Wings Ranch will be a Christ-centered home for kids ages 6-18 who have been abused, neglected and abandoned. It will be located near Greenbrier in Faulkner County and will serve the entire state of Arkansas. Soaring Wings Ranch will be mod-



eled after Big Oak Ranch in Gadsen, Ala. Site development is currently underway with the intent of welcoming the first children to the ranch in 12 to 18 months.

Pederson says all believers need to be open to what God puts on their hearts, even if it seems crazy, because you will be amazed at the doors that will open. "If I hadn't moved to Arkansas, I wouldn't have met my wife, who played a major role in my



Pictured above are Jason Pederson with his 6-year-old son, Spencer.

spiritual awakening," he said. "A new job and new faith put me in a position to help a young man in need. That obedience opened the door to Soaring Wings Ranch, which will soon help many more kids. Romans 8:28 teaches, 'And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.' The ranch's first home for boys will be named for Del Strain after his widow decided to make a major donation to the ranch in his memory. Even things that seem bad can create good. It is so cool when you can connect the dots and see this verse in action."

Having a love for football as well as a love for kids, Jason is anxious to announce an upcoming event on Thursday, Nov. 3. John Croyle, a former All-American defensive end for Alabama and father of current Crimson Tide quarterback Brodie Croyle, is coming to Little Rock. More than 30 years ago, Croyle turned down a professional football career and instead started Big Oak Ranch.

**Pederson wants to personally invite all readers of *The Spirit Magazine* to come hear the impact Christian ranches have on kids and a community.**

The event will be held at the IMAX Aerospace Education Center. Tickets for the dinner are \$10. Call SWR Executive Director Andrew Watson at 501-328-7992 for tickets or visit [www.soaringwingsranch.com](http://www.soaringwingsranch.com) for more information. "I will be there and would love to meet you – just come up and introduce yourself!" Pederson says with a smile. ■

## Jason Pederson at a glance

Jason Pederson is KATV's consumer affairs reporter, helping Arkansans understand their rights as consumers so they do not fall victim to dishonest business schemes.

Recent awards for Jason include a 2005 Arkansas AP award for Enterprise/ Investigative journalism. Jason helped educate Arkansas seniors about a charge on their phone bill that many had been unknowingly paying for decades.

Other awards include a 2002 Edward R. Murrow award for Continuing Coverage. Jason spotlighted the problems experienced by single parents who were not receiving their child support checks from the state in a timely manner. Pederson also won a 2002 Regional Society of Professional Journalists Award for the assistance given to an elderly woman trying to reclaim her home.

Jason was named the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association's Citizen of the Year for 2002.

Jason also serves on the board of directors of Soaring Wings Ranch, which will soon be a Christian home for kids who need a chance. Visit [www.soaringwingsranch.com](http://www.soaringwingsranch.com) to learn more. ■