

Wives engage in mouse play, while truckers are away

New Web site offers solace and resources for spouses

By Ingrid Phaneuf

DON MILLS, Ont. – Truckers who want to know what their wives are up to while they're on the road should check out atruckerswife.com.

With its message boards, links and articles on everything from hours of service regulations to weather warnings and home repairs, the recently created Web site is a true gem for those who know all too well what it means to be home alone.

Creator Kelly Livingstone, 35, is a trucker's wife herself, and knows firsthand just how hard it is to keep the home fires burning.

"Basically, the Web site has all the things I really would have liked to have available online when my husband started driving long haul three years ago," says Livingstone, a stay-at-home mother of three young children, aged one-and-a-half, three and six.

"Single parent issues especially are hard to deal with," Kelly says. "You're not single, but you might as well be when it comes to taking the kids to the doctor or school or having to get a babysitter if you need to do something where you can't bring them along."

When her husband started driving, Kelly had already started another Web site on parenting, but soon discovered that truckers' wives have their own special needs.

"Basically, I started the site by just putting up a page with all the book marks I'd already started to collect and check regularly, links for traffic conditions or road maps or weather – things a trucker's wife would want to check regularly.

"Then I realized that what was missing was a place for truckers' wives to actually meet and chat as well, a place where they could go to support each other, so I started the message board."

What resulted and what stands today is an engaging home page, with articles, links and poetry offerings, as well as links to several message boards geared to specific subjects.

"We even have a message board for truckers' wives who are spiritually inclined, which they like, because they can speak freely without feeling judged or awkward about their faith," Kelly says.

Other message boards offer help on everything from parenting to home repairs, issues which truckers' wives must more often than not deal with alone.

Here's a sample:

(Posted question)

"Anyone ever had to remove mirrors

off of a wall? I have mirrors that run ceiling to floor. I don't really care if I break them, although I would rather not, but I want them off!! They are in our narrow dining room. Someone must have put them there to make it look wider, but I think it looks awful since all you see in them from the living room is the messy kitchen counter! The thing is I have no idea what they used to put them on, and they will not move to even see in behind them. They are stuck!

Just thought I would ask before I go to Home Hardware or something... blech! :)

Kelly

(Reply)

"Re: mirrors on my wall...

They might be attached to the wall with Liquid Nail. It's a caulk-like goo that is harder than a nail when dried. Your best bet would be to get a glasscutter (you can get them from a craft store or a stained glass supplier) and try to score the glass then break off small sections at a time.

A putty knife or pancake turner would help remove the glass. Use heavy-duty gloves and safety glasses with a drop cloth under your feet. Make sure the kids are gone when doing it. Pieces of glass fly well. If you are really having a hard time with it, call a local glass dealer and ask them if they have any suggestions for ya.

Shawn

Kelly says she's learned a lot from the various message boards that have sprung up since she created the site, but even more importantly, she's seen how the boards are providing much-needed emotional support for those left to fend for themselves.

"We have some people who really need the support. And the stronger ones can help the ones that need it more. I think we can help each other and that's really the point."

Amanda Gaylord, 22 and engaged to a truck driver, couldn't agree more. Her fiancé was working as a carpenter when they met, but decided to go back to his former occupation as a long haul driver, at Amanda's urging.

"He was struggling financially, so I encouraged him to go back to trucking," Amanda says.

Little did the registered nurse realize she would end up spending much of her free time alone.

"It was a lot harder to cope with than I thought it would be, mainly because I was so used to being with him all the time," she says. "So I started looking for support on the Internet. I found one site for wives

of truckers, but found the women there weren't very supportive. When I posted a message saying how lonely I felt they didn't seem to like the fact I was having such a hard time."

Amanda finally discovered Kelly's site thanks to her fiancé.

"He actually started looking for something for me and found atruckerswife.com. I posted a message about my experience on the other site and Kelly wrote me back saying this site wasn't like that at all, and that it's okay to feel the way I do."

The site has provided much-needed emotional support ever since, says Amanda, who feels especially isolated living in North Bay, Ont., miles away from family and friends.

"We met when I was going to school up here, but we're planning on moving south to be closer to my family after we get married," she says.

Amanda isn't alone in feeling physically isolated.

Many truckers' wives do in fact live in rural communities, says Kelly.

"Some of them don't even drive," she said. (Livingstone lives in Winnipeg.)

Indeed, the site's registered members (23 and counting) hail from far and wide – some live in the States, some in Canada and one as far away as Yorkshire, England.

"The woman from England actually contacted me through the Web site after her husband got a job in Manitoba hauling cattle," says Kelly.

"She'll be moving here next summer and she wanted to make contacts before she came."

Kelly has warned her new British friend about the Manitoba winters, and has promised to visit the new immigrant in Brandon when she and her husband arrive.

"I certainly can't drive as many hours as my husband, but I can handle a couple," Kelly jokes.

In the meantime, she and her new British friend will continue to use the site to trade jokes and recipes for toad in the hole and Yorkshire pudding, Kelly says.

To get in on the action, just visit www.atruckerswife.com.

Membership is free, but visitors who wish to post messages must sign up as members, says Kelly.

And spouses of female truckers are welcome to join too, she adds.

"As long as they don't mind the name of the site, they're fine with me." □