

A field of one's own

Frank was born to run. My mom swears it's because I was so active when I was pregnant with him. I believe it's his athletic build and innate obsession with sports.

Either way, the boy likes to move. He's always in a hurry. There's always something to investigate.

This winter was particularly challenging for Frank, who is contained to one quarter of the house by a series of gates and obstacles, all of which he attempts to surmount, occasionally to his success. He craves a bigger world. Now that spring has finally arrived, the boys have been spending more time in our modest fenced-in yard, the bulk of which is consumed by a ground-level deck and detached garage. But Frank is starting to get a little bored at the same hiding places. The same blades of grass.

It's a bit like swimming in one of those kidney-shaped hotel pools or being a fish in an aquarium tank. There's just enough room to stretch out, but not enough to explore.

Last Saturday, Patrick had an idea. He had to water the fields at one of the soccer parks he maintains and told me to bring the boys along. Collin and Leo had fallen asleep, wiped out from a kite festival we'd attended earlier in the day. (One which Frank primarily enjoyed from the comfort of my double stroller to protect him from the web of kite strings covering the ground.)

When we got to the soccer park, I carried Frank to the middle of a field the size of a grocery store and set him down. In an instant, he took off like a racehorse, stopping periodically to choose a new direction to pursue. I followed, a little further behind that usual, catching up on his more explosive sprints. I quickly found myself out of breath. (We estimate that he runs at about 4.5 miles per hour). But as I ran after Frank, I tried to keep my head low and take in everything he saw.



First was the John Deere Gator belonging to the maintenance crew. When Frank tried to climb it, I explained to him that it wasn't his grandparents' Gator. One of the maintenance men laughed as the other scowled. Of course, Frank didn't understand. I held him until the tears subsided, then redirected him up a hill.

Along the trail at the top of the hill was a black chain link fence. Frank ran parallel to the fence with tremendous intent. Finally I saw what he was after: a swing set.

He kept pointing, saying "unh? Unh?" I had to explain again that it wasn't ours and again encouraged him to keep moving. This time, he understood, largely in part because of the fence separating us from the neighboring yard.

Down the hill Frank spotted Patrick and his truck and rushed toward them. He dashed around the freshly watered field several times, as though he were running

the final laps on a track. I could tell his batteries were beginning to drain, so I scooped him up and loaded him back into his car seat. After a brief fit of tears, shouts, wriggles, and sobs, he sighed and smiled. Even though he can't talk yet, I knew he was telling me thanks.

As adults, so many of us live in small worlds, self-created or imposed upon us by the limits of time, space, and money. Inside all of us is a desire to move beyond our boundaries and experience more of the good people, places, and things in life. To smell not only the roses, but the entire garden — moving on to the aromas of the bakery as we pedal our bikes through the courtyard. It's okay to move fast. God made us a beautiful world. There's so much to see. Start with your own back yard.