

Let freedom ring, set the fireflies free this Fourth of July

Earlier this week I realized Daniel was still awake, and the fireflies were starting to appear in our yard. We ran outside.

At first Daniel couldn't spot the fireflies. Quickly enough, though, he started seeing them against the darkening sky. And then, quite naturally, he wanted to catch one.

He ran to get his insect cage, hoping to catch a firefly inside. I didn't discourage him, though I was fairly sure it wouldn't work. I've been trying to help him fill that cage for weeks.

Moments later Daniel proved me wrong, and he stood proudly, talking to a firefly in the cage. He was so happy to be close to the firefly. Our 4-year-old loves little creatures.



He ran into the house, holding the cage carefully so the firefly wouldn't escape before he showed it to his father and brother. Leo looked closely at the firefly and then he stepped into his big brother role.

"You need to let the firefly go," he told Daniel. "If you keep him, he will die. He wants to be free."

We talked about the robin that Little Bear's mother catches in Else Holmelund Minarik's book, and how his mother has to let the robin go. But the robin comes back to see her, and then her children do, and then her children's children.

Daniel listened, and he didn't argue at all. He has a huge heart and adores little animals. He carried the cage outside with his father. They said goodbye to the firefly and let it fly off into the night.

As we look forward to celebrating the Fourth of July, our sons are noticing all the flags, of course-and the fireworks stands. They know soldiers fight in wars to protect our country, and they know a little of the history we find at Fort McHenry.

Years will pass, though, before they understand what freedom and independence really mean. It will take even longer for them to realize how different the United States is from so many other countries in the world in the independence it promises its citizens.

But even at 4 and 6 years old, our sons can appreciate that a firefly doesn't want to stay in a cage. And they can recognize that a firefly can do so much more when he can take flight and enjoy a beautiful world of trees and starlight and sky.



How blessed we are to live in a country where our children have the freedom to find their wings and learn to shine. God bless America.