

Raising Amazing Kids – A Conversation with Monica Swanson[†]

Transcript of Podcast Episode 361

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, “IEW.” My name is Julie Walker, and I’m honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Julie Walker: Andrew, I know that you are often tickled when we have certain guests on our podcast. Well, that’s me today. I am so thrilled to welcome back to our podcast Monica Swanson, who we had on a couple years ago when she was launching her newest book, *Boy Mom*. Which of course, you know why that resonates with me – because I’m a boy mom. But today she’s going to talk to us about her new book, which I just love. Monica, welcome to our podcast.

Monica Swanson: Thank you so much. It’s great to be back.

Julie Walker: Well, I love the title of your book, but I think I love better the subtitle: *Raising Amazing*. I mean, I’ve got to love that, right? *Bringing Up Kids Who Love God, Like Their Family, and Do the Dishes WITHOUT BEING ASKED*. I mean, what else do you want? That reminds me of what I used to say to my boys when they asked me, “Mom, what do you want for Christmas?” They’re saying it right now if they’re listening to this podcast.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, okay. And you would always say ...

Julie Walker: A clean house and well-behaved kids. Isn’t that all you want, right?

Andrew Pudewa: They would’ve emptied their bank account buying you something other than having to look at the specter of cleaning house and perfect behavior. But part of what Monica has got in this book is ... I like the part where you said “imperfectly perfect” or “perfectly imperfect,” one or the other. Because everybody in the whole world – if you have children, you feel like you’re not the perfect parent. Of course, your kids don’t know that, which is part of the advantage. Oh, I heard a really interesting comment that I thought resonated, and I remembered it again, looking at your book here. It’s that when we are growing up, we don’t realize that our parents are still growing up.

You know, at fifty or sixty you look back, and you think, wow, I was very young and quite immature when I became a parent in so many ways. But you are trying to help parents bridge that gap between not knowing what to do and growing up into parenting happily, healthfully, successfully.

[†]Contains distinctly Christian content

Julie Walker: So this is the owner's manual that we've been looking for all these years, Monica.

Andrew Pudewa: We will give this to our children for Christmas. Well, great. So you were the boy mom. And you've kind of shifted over now into a broader area. What motivated you to kind of adjust your persona in that way?

Monica Swanson: Yes. Well, once a hashtag boy mom, always a boy mom. So I will always ... Right, Julie? That's going to be a part of me. But, yes, I found that so many people were messaging me and saying, you know, I read *Boy Mom*, and I have daughters. Or I have one son and a couple daughters. And most of that book really applied to girls as well as boys.

And as I got more and more questions in response to *Boy Mom*, and I felt kind of that nudge that I was going to write one more book and really focus on a few areas, I thought, you know, this really isn't just for boys. And also it's not just for moms because I got to bring my husband's voice into this one. And so we decided to just broaden it. I'm still going to understand those boys the best. But you know, I'm a girl. I have lots of friends with daughters. So I get the girls too. And so I'm hoping this book will encourage moms and dads of boys and girls.

Julie Walker: You've written a lot of books, Monica. Well, I don't know what ... You've written a lot compared to, oh, a lot of people.

Andrew Pudewa: The rest of the people in the world, yeah.

Julie Walker: But you've even written one on healthy eating. And you and I have had conversations about that because you know; I've been on this weight loss journey. And it was fun to see you today and have you say, oh, you look great. I love that when people say that. So what's your story? How do you get these ideas to write books, and what's this book about?

Monica Swanson: Well, I wish I could share some master plan that I orchestrated early on. But really as God's done things in my life, really what I'm doing is just turning around and sharing the wisdom I've learned, the research I've done, and all of that with anyone else who might be just walking a few steps behind me in the journey.

And that's what I've found, is the people who help me the most are those who have walked through things. And I can just say, "Tell me how you did it?" You know, "Give me your wisdom." So that's been my heart's desire, is to just pass on God's goodness in my life. And so, yeah, I kind of went through some challenges.

My background is sports medicine. My husband's a doctor, and so a lot of my story was being really, you know, active in ... an athlete and loving fitness but still really struggled with some of the body image and diet and understanding just how to have your head on straight these days. It's so hard with so many voices out there trying to give you, you know, their plan and their formula, which most of the time is about I'm giving them your money.

But kind of coming to a place of peace with all of that. And really, you know, it was God that set me free. And so I wanted to share that before anything because that was a huge life transformation for me. And it's been a long time since it happened. But it stuck, and it worked.

And so, yeah, that was my little self-published book that is still available on Amazon. And then, really though my heart was for parenting ... And once I kind of dealt with my own stuff, it was like, yay, now I have the freedom to really dive in and be who I feel God's called me to be. And that's a great wife and mom.

And so as I started homeschooling my boys and bringing them up and focusing on their character, I just saw that some of the things I had learned along the way were working. And I was like, maybe some other people need this too. So I started blogging. And then a few of those blog posts went *viral* as they call it. And when a few million people were reading them, and publishers started saying, you know, maybe this should be a book ...

I've just really walked through those open doors that God's given me. And it's been so much fun seeing a community built and encouraging people. And you know, so much today out there is just such gloom and doom for parents. It's just bad news, scary warnings, just not a lot of hope out there for parenting in the crazy world we're raising our kids in.

And so I just love that I feel like I get this chance to be a voice of hope and of good news that so far my four sons are all truly great kids. None of us are perfect. But they do love God. They do have great character. They are making great choices in life, and I just want to really tell people that it can be done. There's no guarantees, but there's a lot we can do as parents to really foster that and help make it come true. So that's kind of been my story, is just really enjoying the journey God's given me and then passing it along.

Andrew Pudewa: So some listeners may be interested to know: how old are your sons at this time?

Monica Swanson: Yes, yes. So I have three legal adults somehow. It just happened overnight. They were just born, like, last week, you know. But anyway, my oldest is twenty-three. He graduated from Westmont College in Santa Barbara with a data analytics major, and he got a real job. And he's adulting. Like he's paying rent and somehow financially independent.

So I'm so proud of him, and he loves God and loves his church. And so he's in Santa Barbara. And then the next is twenty-one. My Jonah is a junior at Westmont College, studying engineering, and he is an RA for his dorm and just making a lot of great choices too. Doing well. And then my eighteen-year-old graduated from high school, homeschool high school last year, but he is pursuing a professional surf career. And he's doing some online college slowly but surely.

And so our home is his home base, but he travels the world much of the year. And that's been really fun for us to get to cheer him on. And then I have a twelve-year-old who's doing homeschool with me, and he has chosen the golf path. So that's brand new to us. And now we've got ... You know, we're caddies and learning how to cheer on our little golfer.

Andrew Pudewa: Wow. That sounds great. I am curious because I would guess that sending sons to California, in particular, for college, you must have had a little bit of concern about that, given the fact that, you know, even Christian colleges have a progressive side to them that really has ... I mean, I personally know many kids whose faith has been seriously undermined even at a Christian college.

Monica Swanson: Correct.

Andrew Pudewa: So was that a concern for you? How did you help prepare them? Were there any dangerous spots along the way that they navigate? Or what was your whole experience with that?

Monica Swanson: Totally. Such a good question and really a message that I try to bring up often as I'm talking to the younger parents or parents with younger kids, and that is that you absolutely want to be sure your kids are prepared before they go to any college. But, yes, maybe even—especially Christian colleges—my sons would say, you know, it might be safer to send your kid to a big secular school where they're going to have to find their people, find their little, you know, tribe, than to a Christian college where everyone kind of assumes everyone else are believers.

And then there's just so many danger zones there and certainly a liberal tone. With a lot of professors, there's the whole deconstruction of faith. But I will say the best thing you can do is just have the conversations with your kids while they're growing up. Make sure they understand the biblical worldview. If you aren't comfortable with where they're at, make good choices about where you're sending them. For us, our boys were really well grounded.

They knew God's Word. We talked about what they were going to face ahead, how they needed to bring anything they heard packed through God's Word. And know that Dad and I are here. Give us a call; talk through things. But they were really, really prepared. And certainly they've had a mix of amazing professors who are theologically sound and then others who they weren't on the same page with. But they knew what to do with that. So, yes, parents listening, prepare your kids well because you don't want to mess around with sending them away, especially to California, if they are not grounded.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. And that's really what your book is helping people to, you know, think in that direction and the idea of being grounded and anchored so that you're not pushed around during the, you know, storms of higher education. And it's so easy today, I think, for parents to hear kind of horror stories of things that are happening on campuses and just have a fear about that.

And you know, one of the things I get from you is that you know how to combat fear, and you've taught your kids how to combat fear. What are some of the specifics you could mention in terms of directions or experiences that were particularly helpful in that way? Obviously living in Hawaii, there's sharks; there's really big waves. I'm sure there's other things that could create fear: hurricanes maybe. I don't know. But I know you talk a lot in the book about character first, which is easy for people to say but hard to do.

Julie Walker: Well, insert plug here for Monica's course. She actually has a course on character training.

Monica Swanson: I do. I do. And that came after *Boy Mom* because I talk about character in *Boy Mom* and had so many people say we want to understand more. Because I talk about something I did with one of my boys when he was a young teenager – related to “character training,” I called it. And so, yeah, I created an online course. And you can maybe include a link to that because I only open the doors a few times a year.

But certainly, I mean, I'm just such a believer in opening up honest conversations with our kids. And one of the final chapters of the book is really about talking about everything. We can't assume that kids know what we think or what is right and wrong. Like we need to have conversations. We need to listen to what they're thinking, but we also want to, again, continue to point them to a biblical worldview. And what does God's Word say? Because it's not about my opinion or what seems right to me, but it's really about the authority of God's Word. So that's what we keep bringing them back to. And when it comes to things that are scary or dangerous or all the rest, you know, having an eternal perspective is huge.

And I think that the best way for parents to pass that on to their kids is to just model it, to live each day knowing that, you know, what you do for God is what's going to last. Relationships with people and investing in His kingdom is really what matters most. So I don't think that's something you can fake. You can't even talk about it and make it happen.

You have to live it. And I think that's probably the most challenging thing is for us as parents to live with character and live with a faith that plays out in everyday life. And then, I really do believe that there's no guarantees. But most of the times kids catch that, and then they start to walk that out in their own life as well. So modeling is number one, talking about it and just keeping those doors of communication open as they face new things.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, I think one of the things that teenagers are perhaps the most allergic to ... the thing that has the potential to undermine their faith the most is hypocrisy in the adults around them. And it's tough because, you know, you always realize two things at once: I'm doing my best, but I'm totally failing to be perfect. And in that way I'm a hypocrite.

I can't live the gospel perfectly. I can't be a hundred percent charitable and kind and loving all the time. And so I'm curious how you would deal with times, and I'm assuming there were some times where your kids would, you know, they would kind of point out your hypocrisy.

Monica Swanson: Sure. Well, I think that's just your greatest opportunity to point to the Gospel and to make sure you're, you know, very honest, and you own your mistakes, and you're humble. And that's probably the most important modeling of all is to just say, this is an area; you know, I blew it. Or I talk to a lot of parents who maybe are halfway through; their kids are already teenagers. And they're just realizing that there's areas that they've over time just not been on their game.

And I say the best thing you can do is just own that and say, I am not perfect. I mean, they already have figured out you're not perfect. So like you said, hypocrisy is the worst thing you can do if you try to act like you are. So own your mistakes. Tell them that you're seeking God's forgiveness, that you're going to work on making whatever change it is needs to be made. I think that's going to inspire a kid more than anything. And they're going to, then, also see what it looks like because they're going to need to do the same thing in their own life when they make mistakes. So what does it look like? How do we handle that? How do we turn it around? And I think that's the best thing we can do.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, I have a very good friend who says the answer to every problem is repentance.

Monica Swanson: Wow. That's huge.

Andrew Pudewa: And you know, obviously you don't solve every problem completely, but it's the start.

Monica Swanson: Yeah. The heart, yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: It's just the hardest thing. And I think probably all of us think, well, I learned that too late. I wish I had had a spirit of repentance earlier in life. And everything would be better as a result. So I think your book really helps build that, not with that word being repeated too much but by examples. I think I read ... One of the things I so liked about this book, and I know you've pretty much finished, and it's published yesterday or tomorrow or something. But the one thing I wish there had actually been more of was comments by your kids.

Julie Walker: Well, and I want to ask Monica because I've seen your emails, your super friendly emails that I just love to get. You a few weeks ago had an offer to all of us, saying that if we preordered, which, okay, you can't preorder now because the book came out yesterday. We actually timed this podcast, but you included as a special bonus some interviews with your boys.

Can we include that to our listeners? Can we put in our show notes some links to those recordings so that we can just, you know, share a little love with our listeners about how cool Monica is, and ...

Monica Swanson: Well, you know what?

Julie Walker: ... also what great kids you had?

Andrew Pudewa: Nothing speaks louder than the example of a teenager.

Monica Swanson: Yeah, I couldn't agree more.

Andrew Pudewa: When I'm at a homeschool conference and talking to people, and they're asking questions about what we do, and then there's a sixteen-year-old kid there who pipes in

and says, well, I did this and that and that and that, man, you can't even for any price buy advertising that would be as effective. And so I felt that way, reading ...

Monica Swanson: Thank you.

Andrew Pudewa: ... the things your boys ... I especially loved the one where you were talking about the marriage and date nights. And one of your sons loved it so much. He said it was like, you know, brothers' night ...

Monica Swanson: Yeah, bro night.

Andrew Pudewa: ... bro night and the fact that you would leave them and grow your own relationship for their benefit. And then they were growing in their relationship kind of in a night of more freedom than they were perhaps used to. So I just love those little things in there. Yeah.

Monica Swanson: Thank you. Yes, each chapter has a note from one of my boys, the twelve-year-old included. And probably the most fun, I'll say this, is one book. I'm a big paper book person. Like I really like to get a book in my hands. But we did record the audio version of the book over the holidays while all the boys were home.

And so I'm going to encourage people to listen to the audio because to hear my twelve-year-old read his parts was like worth it in itself. So the audio version is super fun. And, yes, I'll say I'd love to give access to your listeners to those four interviews with my boys, which were really fun, some real casual but honest.

And they each covered different topics. I really asked them questions that people had sent in via social media and through my email list. And people asked a lot of questions, and a lot of questions were repeated. So my boys are talking about how their faith became their own. They're talking about, you know, sibling relationships when they used to fight more when they were young, and how now they've grown up to be best friends, which is a big part of this book as well.

So the interviews are really fun, and I'd love to share them with the listeners. And then also the audio version of the book is so cool. They just hear them read their own parts that they wrote themselves, which was so special.

Julie Walker: So the book is available, then, also on Audible. Is that what you're saying, Monica?

Monica Swanson: Yes, it is. Yes. Hopefully by the time this comes out—I'm not sure the date. But it will be very close to when the book launches.

Julie Walker: Oh, that's so awesome. I love it.

Andrew Pudewa: And I'm just going to say this: I really like it when an author is able to read their own book. There's just that feeling of connection that's so much more, I don't know,

energizing, illuminating than when there's some, you know, professional actor or reader or whatever. And you would have all the different voices. So you know, that would be even more delightful.

Julie Walker: Does your husband read his sections of the book?

Monica Swanson: He does.

Julie Walker: Oh, that's awesome.

Monica Swanson: Yeah. You know, he's a doctor. And he's not super animated. So I was like, come on, bring it out. Bring it out. But he did great. He did so good.

Andrew Pudewa: One of the chapters that grabbed my attention is about adversity. I think it's called "Remember Adversity Grows Character." And an idea that I've been working a lot with in my own mind and teaching a little bit on is challenging people's concept of stress because most people when they hear the word *stress*, they immediately go to, well, I want to avoid stress. I want to mitigate stress; I want to manage stress.

But on the other hand, if you look at people who've had a greater impact in the world, they actually have a lot more stress than people who have a lesser impact in certain ways. So the idea of rather than mitigating stress, building resilience to stress ... And you know, part of that is physiological; part of it is mental; a lot of it is spiritual. But I think it all does kind of come together in that word *character*. So what are some of the ways in which adversity can have kind of a positive, hormetic effect? In other words, if it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger. What are some of the things that you use as examples?

Monica Swanson: Yes. Well, this is one of my very favorite chapters because I do. I look around us, and I look at my own home, and I'm like, there's no doubt. Kids today have a really easy life. Like you don't have to look far back in history to consider just how much, you know, kids don't have to do today that they had to do just for simple survival of families throughout time.

And we love our kids, and we want them to have a good life. I want my kids to be comfortable and well fed. And you know, they get three meals a day plus snacks, and they sleep on a bed. I mean, even that alone is huge. But our kids aren't facing a whole lot of natural challenges. Now some kids might have, you know, something; they might live with a disability or have some challenge. And God bless them.

And I encourage parents if that's your story, to really tap into that and help kids see how that can grow them into greatness. But for those who are more typical, we need to create some challenges for our kids. Otherwise they're going to launch into the world and just get squashed because out there in the real world, they're not going to go easy on our kids.

And so we're not doing them any favors by raising them in a bubble or making sure that they never face consequences if they don't do their schoolwork, or if they don't show up to work on

time. Or when they have a conflict, if we swoop in and micromanage, we are not doing them any favors. So, yes, I'm a big believer in making kids work.

I think they need jobs in and outside of the home. I mean, my two oldest sons got a job at a local restaurant that was pretty intense. And they learned quickly what it looks like to work hard and not talk back and be on time and go the extra mile. That was one of the best things for them, even though it was painful for me to see my sweet, little, homeschooled sixteen-year-old working with this interesting restaurant bunch.

But I think work is huge. I think sports and other extracurriculars, where they're sitting under maybe the authority of somebody other than mom and dad and, you know, having to follow some rules and maybe have a coach or a referee that makes a call they don't agree with ... But there's so many things we can do to give our kids opportunities to grow that grit that may not happen if we let them be too comfortable or sit in front of screens all day or whatever else.

So I think being intentional, just looking at your child ... as parents talking, praying, and saying, "What can we do to give this kid some challenges?" Even if it makes me uncomfortable, I know it's best for them in the long run.

Andrew Pudewa: Are there any other specific examples of challenges that you were able to find or contrive that you think the kids would look back on and say, yeah, that was really significant, or that was a turning point in my life?

Monica Swanson: Yeah, I think the two things ... Probably sports are one of my favorite ways to do this just because even if a kid isn't, you know, super coordinated, they can all run a 5K. They can all hike up a hill. I mean as long as they're, you know, healthy enough to do that. So I think physical challenges have been huge for our family when, you know, some of our kids haven't really wanted to try something. But we push them out, and our surfer son has had to face some really big waves. And through tears we said, we trust your coach knows what he's doing. And he wants you to go out there.

And so I go home and try to put it out of my mind that he's out there on those big waves that ... Yeah, having them face physical challenges. And then the other thing is really probably a time when I remember my husband taking the video game console and hiding it and saying, I'm going to challenge you to read more books.

And you know, they had to really unplug from screens and instead read some good, thicker, harder books. And that particular son I'm thinking of grew to love literature and love big, big books. And it wasn't easy because he didn't want to at first, but what that developed in him was really special.

Julie Walker: Monica, I'm thinking about the story: You talk about Luke and facing the big waves. I was at one of his competitions where there was a shark in the water. And they were saying, oh, it's up to the parents if you want to let the kids continue to surf or not. And I don't remember, Monica, what you did with Luke. Maybe he, his, it ...

Monica Swanson: I feel like he might have just come out of the water when they figured it out.

Julie Walker: It was a shark. Oh, my.

Andrew Pudewa: Or we need a little more information. How big of a shark?

Julie Walker: Right, exactly.

Monica Swanson: Yes. That was scary.

Andrew Pudewa: You in your dedication to your parents and to your husband's parents – you really note that they had a huge influence on you and your thinking, and that's beautiful. I'm wondering if there's any particular memories from your childhood where there was either a conveniently accidental adversity or some contrived adversity that you would look back and say, well, that really changed my thinking or put me on a path.

Monica Swanson: Oh, great question. I don't think anyone's ever asked me that. Well, the first thing that pops into my head is just the example my parents set. Like I've never known harder-working people. And as we record, they're here in Hawaii; they spend part of their year here. But they are in their eighties, and they still are constantly tackling projects.

And I'm pretty convinced that's what's kept them healthy as they've aged. They are always doing something; they're never sitting around. So I think they're example. And my mom was a stay-at-home mom, but I've never known anyone that worked harder. I mean, she really took her job seriously. And I went to a public school, but she was there all the times I needed her.

She was home, making things lovely and cooking healthy meals. And so I think their example was probably the greatest. They also just always pushed us to compete to do extracurriculars, you know, whether it was sports or other things.

And they showed up and cheered us on, and they were always there. You know, even as I got older, and I ran some marathons, my dad would fly to wherever I was to be there to cheer me in. And so I think just that competitive kind of spirit, that joy over challenges. And he would just say, you know, you're in the game. Doesn't matter if you win or lose; just get in the game. And so I think that attitude was really contagious growing up.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I'm going to ask you probably the question that almost every person doesn't like being asked. I certainly don't because it's a hard one, but I think it's worth you giving, attempting to answer. I want to know: Other than the books you've written, what have been the most influential books in three of them?

Number one: on you personally, you know, as a Christian mom. Number two: the most important book that you wanted to be sure that your children read or before they leave, I guess. And number three: what was the best read-aloud that you had as a family? I know this is a surprise, a hard, mean question.

Monica Swanson: So mean.

Andrew Pudewa: It doesn't have to be the best because it's always impossible. But in those three categories what would you say to, you know, younger moms and listeners who are, you know, in this myriad of a million books to choose from? I think that's one of the hardest things right now is for people to figure out: what, then, shall I read?

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly. And Monica, to be fair, I did not know Andrew was going to ask you these questions. So when you texted me ...

Monica Swanson: Seriously. I even asked, "What should I be prepared for?"

Andrew Pudewa: But what comes to mind is usually the right answer.

Monica Swanson: Well, first I'll tell you one of my, like, deep fears in life is that somebody would put me on a game show and ask me a question that I know, and my mind would go blank. So that's kind of how I'm feeling right now. No, I wish I could just say the Bible for all three because if I'm honest, you know, that's pretty much the true answer to all three.

Okay, so first question is for me as a mom. Wow. I'd have to go back. I mean, I have such a full bookshelf next to me. Let me pause on that one. Certainly the Bible, yes. I've kind of camped out in James recently, actually, the Book of James – just wisdom and understanding, just the importance of wisdom and just growing.

There was a book called *Growing Slowly Wise*. And it's been a long time since I read it, so I should revisit and see. But that really shaped me in my early marriage and parenting years: *Growing Slowly Wise*. I'll find the author of that, but it was on James. It was a book that covered James and just really talked about what it looks like to grow slowly wise. So that was really impactful in my early years.

For read-alouds, we did a lot of missionary stories. My boys loved missionary stories. For some reason, I think of Gladys Aylward, which is one you never really hear about, but a woman who was missionary to China. Oh, incredible story. But all the missionary stories were great. My boys really loved Nathaniel Bowditch And I think they've got that math and science mind. So they really enjoyed that. I had fun with a book, too, reading aloud called *Red Sails to Capri*. Have you heard that one?

Andrew Pudewa: I don't know that one.

Monica Swanson: Interesting, yeah, that was a really interesting book. Again, I'd have to find the author.

Julie Walker: Link in the show notes.

Monica Swanson: Yeah, yeah. There we go. Link in show notes. And then, yeah, for me I could probably come up with better answers. But certainly I've read a lot of books when my boys were

young and relied on a lot of people who went before me to teach me what they had learned through their journey as well. So I'm circling second one: books, oh, that I would want my boys to read. They read a lot of C.S. Lewis. I think that shaped their imaginations and their faith both. So I don't know if there's one in particular, but C.S. Lewis ...

Andrew Pudewa: Well you know, if you need another guest blog post from one of your sons, you could always say, "What book do you remember reading, you know, probably as a teenager, that had the greatest impact and why?" That's always good content. So the word *amazing* is a good word. And it makes you think of stopping, being astounded, looking at something and saying, wow, that is so incredible.

That is different. And so I love the title that way, and I haven't ... I don't think I've met your children personally in person at all. But I do know I've had experiences of interacting with certain kids and thinking that thought: wow, that is an amazing kid. And I would say, that more than anything else that can happen in my life these days gives me hope for the future. And I would just guess that your kids are becoming missionaries for hope.

Monica Swanson: I love that.

Andrew Pudewa: And what a great cause. And I know this is going to just bless many, many people. And I do have one last question. Do I have time for one more question?

Julie Walker: Of course we do.

Andrew Pudewa: It's like so important. But I want to know: what are the tropical fruits that you grow at your family home on the north shore of Oahu?

Monica Swanson: Yes, we grow a lot. And thanks to 2020, that multiplied because my husband went on a mission to find everything he could possibly grow. And so we have a lot of papaya and banana and avocado and mango. And then he, like, brought all these new fruits in, some that I probably can't even pronounce, but Brazilian fruits. We have now figs; we're growing some cacao.

So a lot that are still young and haven't started to produce. But we got a whole lot, and it's kind of fun because every season we do have a lot of citrus. So in the winter we have great fresh-squeezed orange juice. In the summer we get mangoes, so it's always changing throughout the year. But yeah, tropical fruit is so much fun.

Andrew Pudewa: Do you sell these and get a little income on the side? Or do you just eat a lot of fruit?

Monica Swanson: You know, it's interesting how that happens because we're on two acres. And there's quite a few fruit trees. But it seems to come just enough that we can eat some, share some, freeze some, and that's about it. We have had seasons where we sold bananas to some smoothie bars locally because we just had so many bananas. But most of the time it's just enough to share with friends and use.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, right there is enough to motivate me to come visit you.

Monica Swanson: Yes, visit!

Andrew Pudewa: We can barely eke out one round of blueberries here in this desolate wasteland of Oklahoma.

Monica Swanson: Well, blueberries are my husband's favorite fruit, and so he's trying to grow them here. And I think we've had like two good ...

Julie Walker: I don't think it gets cold enough there, Monica, sorry to say.

Monica Swanson: I know. I know. He's trying though. He won't give up.

Julie Walker: Well, our time always goes so quickly when we have interesting, exciting, inspiring people on our podcast, Andrew. And I love, Monica, that we are basically members of the mutual admiration society. You have been a fan of IEW for years. You know, we've had conversations about, okay, what do I do with Levi this year?

Monica Swanson: You've been so helpful.

Julie Walker: *Structure and Style for Students*, I think, is what he's working on right now and seeing Andrew as his teacher.

Monica Swanson: And *Fix It! Grammar*.

Julie Walker: And *Fix It! Grammar*, yeah. So we're just happy to be able to promote you as you promote us and overall make this world a better place. That's what we hope. Thank you, Monica.

Monica Swanson: Oh, thank you so much. It's been great talking to you guys.

Andrew Pudewa: God bless you.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Google podcasts, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.