

Uncensored

A Loveland mom exposes the messiness of motherhood.



With four young daughters, 36-year-old Heather Janssen has learned to think like a quarterback under pressure. “If I go work out and miss their swim practice, I have a girl or two who feels neglected in the process,” Janssen says. “If I desperately need some space but miss the girls’ impromptu karaoke show, I face their disappointment.”

So, in 2006, Janssen established a spot where she could call her own plays—or at least talk about the playbook. As founder and editor of the quarterly literary magazine *Get Born*, she created a forum to

discuss motherhood with unapologetic honesty. *Get Born* approaches parenting with humor, fewer expectations of perfectionism, and permission to take care of the woman inside the mother—something that readers crave. Despite a modest print run of 1,200, the magazine is making an impact. “Never did I imagine,” says Shea Slavens, a reader who lives in Greeley, “that I would wait for each issue like a drowning woman waiting for a life preserver.”

The magazine’s contributors are open about loving their children while simultaneously feeling disillusioned, trapped,

guilty—even angry. But reactions to the sometimes snarky content are mixed. This past fall, Janssen ran a column titled “Truths”—a list of confessionals from mothers that included one account of drinking wine regularly while pregnant—that drew both applause and criticism, and raised a question that resonates with every parent: How honest is *too* honest?

This tough-love approach fits Janssen’s hectic life. In addition to her parenting and editing responsibilities, Janssen has survived stage-four breast cancer (after a double mastectomy, chemotherapy, and other treatments, her cancer scans have been clean since October 2008). “I built the brand of *Get Born* upon the assumption that life is messy,” she says. “We don’t offer trite, pat solutions—only company on this crazy road trip.” *Get Born*’s growing following (the magazine is available at Tattered Cover Book Store and Boulder Book Store) is testimony to the appeal of her personal message. Since her first call out for stories, Janssen has received impassioned responses from mothers eager for a creative outlet. “I found I wasn’t alone,” Janssen says. “Indeed, there was a whole group of women breathing a gigantic, collective sigh of relief.”



GET REAL A local magazine talks motherhood—honestly.

—MARYJO MORGAN

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