

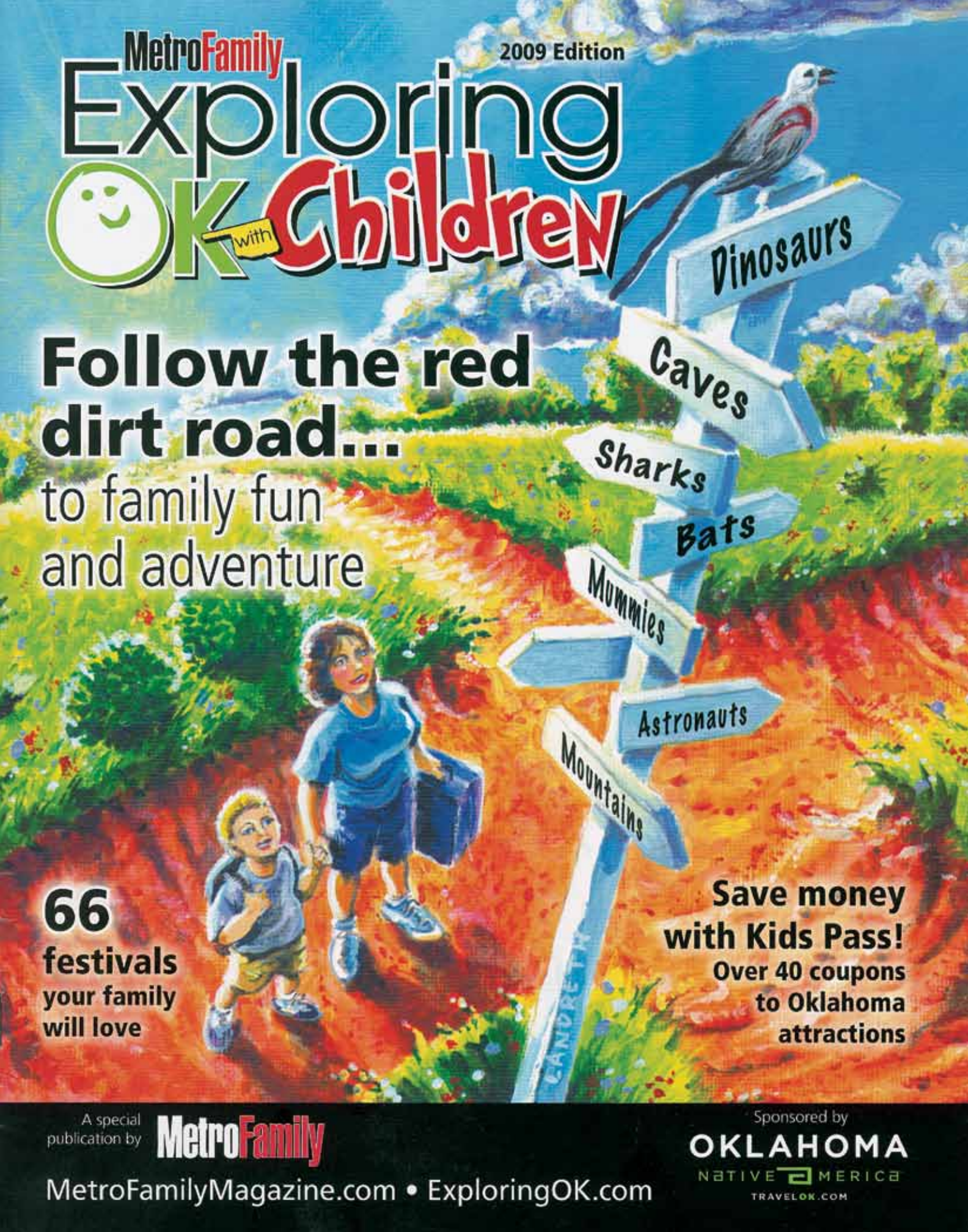
2009 Edition

MetroFamily
Exploring
OK with **Children**

Follow the red dirt road...
to family fun
and adventure

66
festivals
your family
will love

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Problem-Solving Products

Problem:

Dinner out with the kids is not so fun.

Solution:

The Gather "Round Restaurant Game

(\$24.95) is for ages five and up and provides a wide variety of fast games to play before, during and after eating plus travel games for the car. (FamilyDinnerGames.com)



Problem:

Jewelry in your purse = tangled mess!

Solution:

Gemvelopes (\$24.99)

fabric envelopes for your jewelry will protect jewelry at home or on the go. Use it at the gym, in your suitcase or even on your dresser. (Gemvelopes.com)



Problem:

Don't forget the sunscreen!

Solution:

KINeSYS Sunscreen

(\$6.99) works on even the most sensitive skin. Oil-free, alcohol-free, PABA-free and preservative-free. Portable size makes it easy to stash. (KINeSYS.com)



Problem:

A rainy night is threatening to ruin your vacation.

Solution:

The Soccer Sport Bag Dice Game (\$8.99)

by Chalktalk Sports is a portable game of soccer using dice. A fun game for the whole family, regardless of athletic ability. (ChalkTalkSports.com)



Problem:

What kind of bug was that?

Solution:

The Bugs Fandex (\$10.95) makes looking for bugs fun, in the backyard and beyond. (Workman.com)



Pre-Roadtrip Tips for Families

"Prior to a road trip with the kids, I listen to the training montage on the Rocky IV Soundtrack."

— James, Oak Grove, Louisiana

The summer of 2009 may be the summer we rediscover the open road as the solution for the conflicting need of frugality versus the promise of rejuvenation. To help extend the initial promise of the nostalgic memories that dads everywhere dreamily envision as they herd the brood into the family sedan for a view of roadside Americana, we spoke to experts James and Angela from Oak Grove, Louisiana, a road-tripping couple with five sons ranging from ages 4-13.

For the preparation stage, they recommend the following:

- **Get your vehicle detailed.** Provide order and control before things become disorderly and out-of-control. This is one preparation they won't depart without.
- **Spend time together with your spouse over lunch** the day before. You'll need a little extra in the "love tank." This will make being together a bit more bearable.
- **Have plastic bags at the ready** for sudden bouts of motion-sickness.
- **Bring two disposable cameras per child**—one for each leg of the trip (write names on them with permanent marker). "Our children love taking pictures. Upon our return, we have the cameras developed and pictures printed."
- **Pack games for the car**, such as *Kids Travel, a Backseat Survival Kit* by Klutz that comes in a sturdy spiral notebook or *Cat's Cradle* which comes with a multicolor string and instructions for the cup and saucer, Jacob's Ladder and others.
- **Force the kids to bed an hour early** the night before. "While you'd think lack of rest would mean sleeping in the vehicle, it's not the proper kind of rest. You won't like the result when they wake up."

James separates each one-way leg of the trip into three stages—the Honeymoon, NASCAR, and Green Acres.

He suggests taking advantage of the **Honeymoon** stage by doing some specific planning. "It'll be the only time you can have meaningful conversation. Make the most of it."

During the **NASCAR** stage, "the decibel level increases, action figures begin maiming each other, games become louder and arguments emerge." At this point, he recommends frequent stops and seat changes. "Change the dynamics! The kids won't change their wants/needs so you must outmaneuver them," he continues.

At the first sign of backtalk, name calling, or a general poor attitude, "act swiftly." He adds, "And please, pull over to safely handle this." Before starting down the road again, he suggests showing your kids a united front by giving your spouse a kiss. "There should be no question about who's in control of this wagon!"

When everyone exhibits poor behavior, James recommends a nap time. "It'll buy you another 1-3 hours."

The **Green Acres** stage begins when "your behind is tired, legs stiff, and patience low. The newness of movies/games having faded, attitudes are seriously souring and even the adults are irritable." He recommends a rest stop. "Get everyone out and have the kids play tag or hide and seek." Upon the re-load, no movies or electronic games are allowed, at least not yet. "We prefer instead to interact utilizing the games of counting cars, identifying license plates, pointing out cows, horses, ducks, trucks, railroads—i.e., the 'green acres.'"

After this, the kids are settled enough for a movie or electronic games. "Sit back, put on some music, and coast into your destination listening to your favorite tunes."

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