



ERIN
HARREL

of Cape Coral has a Ph.D. in education and is the mother of three children.

Independence

Why is **letting go** so hard?

“**M**om, we’re going over to the ramps,” I heard as the door slammed behind the kids. I could hardly make it out of the house before they were around the corner. I hollered, in vain, in my most obnoxious “mom voice” in hopes that they would hear me and quickly return.

I needed to ask them a barrage of questions. What ramp? What corner? Whose parent will be there? What time are you returning? Do you have sunscreen on? Do you have water with you? Will I be able to see you? How many kids will be there? How old are they? What school do they go to? What kind of grades do they make? Do they get in trouble in school?

I knew they were going to be just fine and I knew the ramp was at the end of the street. It would only take me a minute to walk outside far enough to see them, yet I just couldn’t bear the thought of letting them out of my sight.

Jude, 11, and Riley, 10, often play together with the neighborhood kids. I love the fact that they have each other. It offers some solace that they will protect each other from bullying and injury and other worldly dangers. ➤



Photo Special to Southwest Parent & Child

The Harrel kids with their neighborhood friends.

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