

A young girl with long blonde hair in two braids, wearing a blue dress, is kneeling in a forest. She is holding a glowing, golden, heart-shaped object in her hands, which she is offering to a cow. The cow, which has large black horns and a white body, is looking down at the glowing object with its mouth slightly open. The scene is illuminated by a soft, golden light, creating a magical atmosphere. The background is a dense forest with trees and foliage.

JEFFREY D. HALL

FEED
the
COW

FEED *the* COW

BY

JEFFREY D. HALL

To my children, Rachel and Jason,

Rachel, your journey through life has been the heart of "Feed The Cow." Together, we learned that facing adversity with kindness, friendship, and hard work, leads to rewards far greater than expected. Your resilience and the lessons that we learned together, have shaped this story and inspired me to cherish the value of giving to others.

Jason, you've shown me that learning has no age limit. Your passion for technology and creative energy has opened new doors for me, proving that a father can also be a student, growing and evolving with the guidance of his family.

Both of you inspire me each day to try to be better. Thank you for being my greatest teachers and for showing me that life's most profound lessons come from love, perseverance, and special connections.

*Continue to grow and learn and be the best versions of yourselves.
Most of all never forget to "Feed The Cow."*

Love you both,

Dad

"In life, some of the most far-reaching lessons come from unexpected moments in our lives. They sneak up on us, catching us off guard and forever changing the way we see the world. My journey to understanding one of these life-altering lessons began in an unlikely place—a bustling pressroom of a major New Jersey newspaper.

This story is about a concept so simple yet so meaningful and essential. It has become a basic underlying principle in me and my family's daily life. It's a lesson that my daughter Rachel and I learned together, a lesson we affectionately call "FEED THE COW."

So, to start off I will need to give you a look into the inspiration for this story and ultimately the motivating factor leading me to writing a book about it. In my 65 years, my family, friends, and teammates have given me a unique perspective on life and I have been fortunate to have learned many life lessons. Hopefully all of us have. Writing a book and sharing those lessons, for me, is a way of trying to give back. I am hoping that by sharing some of my experiences I can help someone in the future to understand or overcome some challenges that they may come across. Or, that through these life lessons they can learn to become the best version of themselves by helping themselves as well as others.

The insights and understanding that led to me writing the book came from my daughter Rachel. Isn't it ironic that this all started with a father learning from his 14-year-old daughter?!

For over three decades, I've been a traveling salesman, selling ink to newspapers and publications across the

country. It's a world filled with deadlines, non-stop 24/7 print sites, and the daily grind of printing and delivering your daily newspaper. A lot of what goes into that paper you hold in your hand is taken for granted. Little did I know that one ordinary day, in one of those newspaper pressrooms, I would have a conversation that would change my life but also the life of my teenage daughter, Rachel.

The story starts in a pressroom at NJ Newspaper the Newark Star Ledger; a conversation between myself and a press foreman on the day shift. That seemingly simple conversation ultimately led and inspired me to name my coming book, *Feed the Cow and Other Life Lessons*.

I will get to the "Feed the Cow" part shortly but the other life lessons I am referring to are lessons I have learned from my father, my family, my friends, my teammates, and my co-workers. Sports have been a huge part of my life. I truly believe sports represent a microcosm of life. There are so many situations in sports that align with real life challenges we come across.

So, let's get back to the story of "Feed the Cow."

To put this story in perspective you have to have a little background on my daughter Rachel. About ten years ago, at the time my daughter was 14, and like all teenagers, she was kind of a little selfish and self-centered. The world revolves around them: *it's all about me, me, me ... what can you do for me...I want this ... I need this ... can you buy me this?* Most things she did with me were somewhat transactional. We had lost some of the closeness from the days of Daddy's Little Girl. I missed that.

On top of those difficult teenage years, she was also going through a very difficult time health-wise. She had a severe case of scoliosis (curvature of the spine). We were trying everything we could to avoid serious back surgery. We even tried having her wear a torso brace for 20 hours a day for almost a year. Unfortunately, it did not work. The scoliosis only got worse.

So, my daughter was going through what she was going through and her mother and I were very nervous and worried about her future. So as a family, we were all going through a difficult time.

That being said, we continued our daily routines and moved forward. As I mentioned before, I'm a traveling sales guy on the road four days a week. I work with newspapers and I'm in press rooms, sometimes daytime, sometimes nighttime and I am dealing with pressroom managers, with union workers, as well as high level C-suite people.

One thing I have learned in life is that you should treat the CFO and the person that sweeps the floors with the same amount of respect because you never know when one or the other could help you or hurt you. Treat them all well, as each one serves an important role in shaping the success of the company. Each one does their part.

So, I have always tried to treat everybody the way I would want to be treated, and I try to acknowledge them all. The person at the reception area who's sometimes the gatekeeper, can help get you in the door when prospecting, or cold calling ... you never know who can help. I always try to

leave a smile behind so that the next time I come by, I'd be welcomed in.

Lets' go back to this one day; I'm at one of my big accounts, the Newark Star-Ledger. It's 2013. And the newspaper industry is going through some tough times. There are pay cuts, downsizing leading to layoffs and tough union negotiations. The newspaper industry was quickly shrinking. So, I'm in the press room and I see one of the supervisors and I asked, "how are you guys doing ... I know it's been a tough time for everyone. I know, you've had to take some pay cuts. How's morale?" And the foreman paused briefly and looked me in the eye, and he said, "Jeff, it's been a tough going...but we're going to be okay. You know, it's time. We've got to *feed the cow*." And I said, "feed the cow?" And he said, "Yeah, have you ever heard the old story of 'feeding the cow?'" And I said, "No, please tell me."

And so, he explained, "Well, the story as it was told to me takes place in medieval times. There was a small village, and it had a cow in the middle of the square. It was an enchanted cow that supplied unlimited milk. Every day all the villagers would come and milk the cow. It would feed the whole village. That cow was the centerpiece of the community ... it fed and nourished the village.

He continued, "There was a young girl who would feed the cow and gently groom her early each morning. She would sing to her and took very good care of her. Everything was fine. Then one day, the little girl heard that her grandmother was sick, and she had to leave to go help her. So, she left suddenly and went away to take care of her grandmother.

When she came back about a week later, she found the cow laying down withered and frail. Her utter was shriveled and dry. The little girl yelled, 'What happened? What happened to our cow? Didn't anybody feed and care for her while I was gone?' They all looked at each other with embarrassment and they said, 'Oh my gosh we forgot to feed the cow.' And so, the young girl carefully nurtured the cow back to life. Slowly the cow regained her strength.

They all learned a lesson from that. They would never take the cow for granted. They all made sure the cow was fed and groomed and appreciated."

So that was the story and at that point the pressroom supervisor said, "We all now understand. We need to FEED THE COW. We've been milking the cow for years here at the Star Ledger, it's time to feed it."

I pondered on that story as I drove home, understanding the metaphor and lesson to be learned. The story had hit home, and I knew my friends in the pressroom would be ok and the paper would survive.

What a great life lesson.

It was a simple but powerful story. I kept thinking about it and I knew Rachel needed to hear that story. I made sure she heard the whole story as it was fresh in my mind. I remember the look on her face to this day as she shouted out, "I get it, I understand."

"You and mom and the family are the cow. And all I do is milk the cow. I never feed the cow. I need to feed the cow, or it will fade away and get weak."

She and I laughed as the true meaning of their story started to settle in ... she realized that she needed to start *"feeding the cow."*

Such a simple story but so powerful. It was the right message at just the right time. We had a breakthrough; she truly understood the underlying message. It was easy to understand, and the timing for our family was perfect.

I explained that "feeding the cow" for her meant helping out around the house, getting good grades, being a good person, being a good friend, adding value and helping others in our community. Further, it meant being kind to others, being fully engaged on the teams that you're on, you know, being a good team player, being a leader. That's what "feeding the cow" is all about and that's how you FEED THE COW. She said emphatically, "Dad, I got it, I got it."

Rachel's behavior and attitude changed. She started to help around the house and focus more on school. She seemed to be more aware of giving to others and being thankful.

So having had that revelation really helped her. She started to change her behavior and was, you know, not the perfect daughter, but had a much-improved attitude. Her approach to life in general and the way she treated other people had evolved.

Several months later we met with her back doctor and realized she would have to have surgery. It was a difficult decision, but we knew it had to be done.

Rachel was a softball player at high school. She had played every year since she was eight and was always a good

player, not a great player, but good. She really enjoyed it and always had fun with her friends. She had always been very active and involved. We were now thinking, *what's going to happen after the surgery. Will she still be able to play??*

We did not have a choice, so we moved forward and had the surgery. It was done at HSS The Hospital for Special Surgery in NY. During the 5 hours of back surgery, they fused 12 of her vertebrae and they also put in implants and two 12-inch-long metal rods.

The five hours of waiting and worrying seemed like forever, finally the surgery was done. The Doctor was very pleased. The operation was a total success. Overnight she grew an inch taller because of the straightening of her spine. It was such an emotional time for her mother and me. Your back is such an important part of your body that if anything goes wrong, I mean, your whole life could change.

The rehab was tough, but she worked hard and it paid off. She missed a season of softball. She came back to play as a junior and she was an outfielder.

She was also a solid hitter. She was also a very active leader on the team. She was and is very outgoing and friendly. Everybody on the team liked her. Her junior year she played J.V. because she had missed the one year.

So, she was playing J.V. and playing outfield. She was doing well and we were just happy that she could play again with no pain or real side effects. The season was moving along and there was an injury to the starting catcher. Then the second-string catcher went down and was out.

The coach was beside himself as he has no one that can catch. He then said, "hey, is there anybody here that is willing to put on the catcher's gear and get behind the plate? You know, we really need help! The team needs someone to step up because we can't play without a catcher." This was about ten weeks after her surgery and my daughter raised her hand and said, "I'll try it, but I don't know. I think I should get my doctor's permission. We went see the doctor and he said, "you know, she's doing fine. She's doing great. I don't see any reason that she can't do that." So, she put on the catcher's gear for the first time ever and she did a very good job. The team's pitcher was good and threw very hard, so it was not an easy job to put the catcher's gear on and just jump behind the plate and catch.

The season was halfway through, and she finished out the year as the starting catcher. I worked with her at home, and she put in the extra time and practice. I was proud of the way she stepped up for the team.

So fast forward to her senior year of varsity softball, Rachel was back in the outfield and batting fifth. She was one of three captains of the team.

It was Deja-Vu all over again. The first-string catcher got injured, and the second-string catcher went down too. Coincidence?

The head coach said, "hey, Rachel, can you get behind the plate and help the team?" Yes," she said. "I'll get behind the plate. I'll do the best I can." So, she once again, she went behind the plate and she did a solid job at the varsity level. She built on the experience she had had from the year before.

If they didn't have a solid catcher, the team would not have done very well. The season was a success, and they ended up with a winning record.

At the end of each season, there was always an awards banquet. The coaches would up and speak and give out awards. The co-captains also got a chance to address the parents, coaches, and the other players. It can get very emotional, especially with young women.

Now I need to add a little more background information to set things up for the rest of the story.

Let me introduce a man named Dave Carver: he organized and ran the town recreational softball program. It became a very successful feeder program for the high school teams. He had worked with each and every girl on the varsity team as they came up the ranks.

The reason I tell you this is because he had a tragic accident. Several years before this banquet he became wheelchair bound due to a spinal cord injury. He continued on to be heavily involved in the all of the girls' softball programs. Even though was confined to a wheelchair, that did not stop him. We all admired his determination to continue to be a community leader and to be involved. It was amazing the way he fought through his physical challenges with such a positive attitude.

He was there at the team dinner that night. The previous year, the team and coaches had come up with an award called the Guts Award – the Dave Carver Guts Award. This was to honor his guts and courage that he had shown everyone daily. His hard work and determination to stay

involved with the softball program was so impressive. Even more inspiring was his commitment to making the best of his difficult situation and being there for the young women.

That award was to go to the person on the team that showed the most guts and determination ... to be the best they could be; the one player who captured the essence of being a team player. Inspiring and helping others to be their best.

At this point in the ceremony, Dave Carver went to the microphone and said, "I am so proud of this year's winner. She has been a part of Madison softball for eight years and I have seen her grow into a beautiful young lady as well as a tough competitor on the field. She has faced some difficult physical challenges and overcame them. This year's winner of the Guts Award goes to Rachel Hall!"

So, you know, I'm so proud of her. She then headed up to the podium to accept her award. She got there and grabbed the microphone, then said, "I want to dedicate this award to my parents. They took me to every practice, every game, every year. My dad coached me and taught me. He pushed me to be better. He made me get off the couch and go outside and play catch when I didn't really want to. He did all these things, not for himself, but for me. I want to take this opportunity to thank him and my mother because without them, I wouldn't be here, and I would not have been part of the softball team or won this award. Winning this award is so special for me. I am so honored ..."

She was in tears. I was in tears. The room was quiet as everyone was moved by Rachel's heartfelt speech. They all knew her journey.

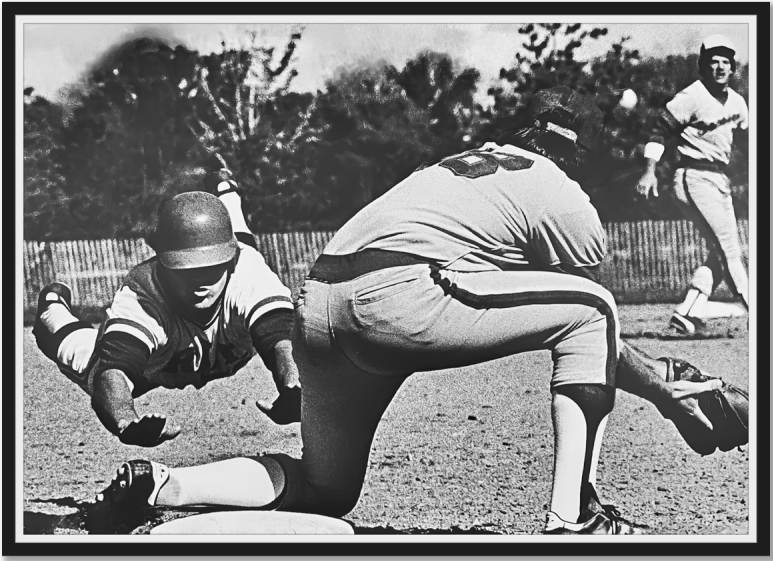
After a pause and a few moments of silence. Rachel looked over at me and said loudly and proudly, "HOW'S THAT FOR FEEDING THE COW?"

I knew immediately that this was a special moment ... she had touched me in a very special way. She'd created an incredible memory that would last with me for a lifetime.

I hope you can see now how that has inspired me and motivated me to share *our* story. I knew then she and I had learned and truly understood the meaning of "Feeding the Cow."

Boy did she feed the cow that day, and she continues to try and feed the cow each day. It's not just food and water that is "Feeding the Cow," it's your approach to life ... it's food for the soul ... it's praise, its teamwork, it's helping others, it's being a leader by example, and it's about being the best you can be, not only for your own benefit, but for the benefit of those around you. And whether the people around are your family, or members of a sports team, or co-workers, or a community group, or religious group, it always pays off to "Feed the Cow."

JEFFREY D. HALL



As a former professional baseball player, coach, stock broker, salesman, and father of two, Jeff Hall brings many years of life experience with him.

He is a storyteller who weaves life lessons learned from his family, friends, coworkers, and teammates into inspiring narratives. He believes kindness is contagious and should be shared freely, and he sees sports as a microcosm of life—teaching teamwork, leadership, perseverance, and the value of hard work. Drawing from his family's values of giving back, Jeff hopes to create inspiring tales that teach the importance of compassion and random acts of kindness.

Jeff lives in Central New Jersey with his wife, Lisa, and cherishes time spent with his children, Jason and Rachel, and his sisters, Lisa and Lesley.

Visit his website at www.feedthecow.org to learn more about his work.

FOOD *for* THOUGHT

THOUGHT INSPIRING QUOTES

1. *"Give a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish you feed him for his lifetime."* -Lao Tzu
2. *"The harder I work the luckier I get."* -Unknown
3. *"I truly believe in giving a helping hand up ... not a hand-out."* -Dave Bizzonette
4. *"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity, the optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty."*
-Winston Churchill
5. *"Every strike brings me closer to the next home run."*
-Babe Ruth
6. *"I had the blues because I had no shoes till upon the street, I saw a man with no feet."* -Unknown

7. *"Character is who you are when no one is looking."*
-Unknown
8. *"Shoot for the moon ... even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."* -Norman V. Peale
9. *"Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right."* -Henry Ford
10. *"The longest of journeys starts with but a single step."*
-Lao Tzu
11. *"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."*
-Wayne Gretzky
12. *"It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get back up."* -Vince Lombardi
13. *"He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."*
-Friedrich Nietzsche
14. *"Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising every time we fail."* -Confucius
15. *"The best way to predict the future is to create it."*
-Peter Drucker
16. *"Dream big and dare to fail."* -Norman Vaughn
17. *"What we fear doing most is usually what we most need to do."* -Tim Ferris

18. *"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."* -C. S. Lewis
19. *"Don't let the fear of losing be greater than the excitement of winning."* -Robert Kiyosaki
20. *"Don't let the what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."* -John Wooden
21. *"Opportunities don't happen. You create them."*
-Chris Grosser
22. *"Success is when hard work and preparation meets opportunity."* -Unknown
23. *"The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones."* -Confucious
24. *"A smooth sea never made a great sailor."*
-Franklin D. Roosevelt
25. *"The secret to getting ahead is getting started."*
-Mark Twain
26. *"If you want something you have never had, you must be willing to do something you have never done."*
-Thomas Jefferson
27. *"Winners never quit, and quitters never win."*
-Vince Lombardi

28. *"Don't practice till you get it right, practice till you can't get it wrong."* -Unknown
29. *"It's not the size of the dog in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the dog."* -Mark Twain
30. *"If you want to be the best you have to willing to do things that other people are not willing to do."*
-Michael Phelps
31. *"Play like you are in first, train like you are in second."*
-Unknown
32. *"I've failed over and over in my life and that is why I succeed."* -Michael Jordan
33. *"The man at the top of the mountain started at the bottom."*
-Unknown
34. *"Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen."* -Michael Jordan
35. *"Winning isn't everything, but wanting to win is."*
-Vince Lombardi
36. *"Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better."* -Pat Riley
37. *"It's hard to beat a person who never gives up."*
-Babe Ruth

38. *"Do not pray for an easy life, pray for the strength to endure a difficult one."* -Bruce Lee
39. *"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard."*
-Tim Notke
40. *"There is no glory in practice but without practice there is no glory."* -Unknown
41. *"Nobody who ever gave it their best regretted it."*
-George Halas

ABOUT *the* AUTHOR

Jeff Hall, is a storyteller who weaves life lessons learned from his family, friends, co-workers, and teammates into inspiring narratives. He believes kindness is contagious and should be shared freely. He sees sports as a microcosm of life, teaching teamwork, leadership, perseverance, and the value of hard work. Drawing from his family's values of giving back, Jeff hopes to create inspiring tales that teach the importance of compassion and random acts of kindness.

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A background image of a baseball game in progress. A batter in a dark uniform is swinging a bat, while a catcher in a light blue shirt and dark pants is crouched behind him. A umpire in a light blue shirt and dark pants is also visible. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky behind the players.

FEED *the* COW

Sometimes, the greatest life lessons come from the most unexpected places. A pressroom conversation, an ancient parable, and a father-daughter bond come together to teach a timeless truth: to truly thrive, we must nurture what sustains us.
Are you ready for Feed the Cow?

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FEED THE COW FOUNDATION
www.feedthecow.org

Your tax-deductible donation can be sent to: Hall Feed the Cow Foundation
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