

INDIE PODCAST ON MODERN FATHERHOOD NAMED 2026 SIGNAL AWARDS FINALIST

Sophia Media's MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER earns early recognition for powerful exploration of fatherhood, love and loss featuring acclaimed author Thomas Greene.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Sophia Media's](#) newly launched podcast MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER has been named a finalist in the 2026 Signal Awards.

The Signal Awards honor excellence and innovation in podcasting by recognizing the podcasts that define culture. The [MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER/THOMAS GREENE episode](#) was selected as a finalist in the Family & Child-Raising category, and is also eligible for the [Signal Listener's Choice Award](#), with public voting open through October 15, 2026.



MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER is available on SophiaMedia.co, YouTube and major podcast platforms.

Launched this fall, MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER holds space for fathers to speak with unusual candor and depth about fatherhood, manhood and the experiences that shaped them long before they became parents.

The Signal-finalist episode features Thomas Christopher Greene, acclaimed novelist, essayist, founder of Vermont College of Fine Arts and popular restaurateur, in a conversation about becoming a father to his daughters Sarah and Jane — and about the profound ways love, responsibility and loss reshaped his life.

In the episode, Greene recalls that when his first daughter, Sarah, was born, he initially leaned

into the traditional role of provider while continuing an extraordinarily demanding professional life. Three years later, everything changed when his wife was hospitalized during her pregnancy with their second daughter, Jane, leaving Greene suddenly responsible for caring for three-year-old Sarah on his own.

One night, as Sarah struggled with her mother's absence, Greene — a lifelong storyteller — began inventing a story to comfort her. The experience became a turning point in his understanding of fatherhood.

"What I didn't realize was that stories could make a father become a dad," Greene said. "And that's really what happened in that moment in that room that night for me, and everything was different after that."

Jane was born at 28 weeks, and spent her entire six-month life in neonatal intensive care. Greene

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speaks openly about the relentless uncertainty of those months, balancing the needs of both daughters, the loss of Jane, the effect of that grief on his marriage and his evolving relationship with Sarah, who is now a young woman.

His reflections move beyond loss to something more universal: the extraordinary resilience people discover in crisis, the strange coexistence of grief and joy, and the enduring nature of a parent's love. Greene says the experience made him stronger, deepened his relationship with Sarah and ultimately taught him the distinction

between simply being a father and becoming a dad.

Greene is the author of six novels, including the international bestseller *The Headmaster's Wife*, and the nonfiction collection *Notes from the Porch: Tiny True Stories to Make You Feel Better about the World*. He founded Vermont College of Fine Arts and served as its president for



Signal Awards recognize the podcasts that define culture

thirteen years.

Six Fathers, Six Very Different Journeys

Greene's story is one of six fatherhood conversations published to date, and together they reveal the unusually broad emotional territory MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER sets out to explore.

Andrew Serman, a concert musician, author, teacher and practitioner of Chinese medicine, describes becoming a hands-on caregiver and rejecting the notion that nurturing is inherently feminine. He talks about cooking, changing diapers, walking the floors with his babies and eventually turning down a substantial professional opportunity so he could remain home with his wife and young children — a decision he still considers one of the best he ever made. Andrew shares a version of modern fatherhood that is nurturing, present and selfless - one where the father does all the cooking, serves as the steward of his children in their explorations and development, while embodying a kind of love he describes as cellular love.

Bruce Chambliss Jr., a father of six who followed his father and grandfather into military service, shares a fatherhood journey marked by devotion, growth and second chances. Throughout his life, Chambliss has aspired to become the kind of man he sees in his father — giving, accepting and capable of unconditional love. Bruce has had extraordinary highs and painful stumbles along the way, experiences he has mined to become a more intentional father, mentor and community leader. Today, his commitment to family extends into his San Antonio community, where he founded and leads men's and women's circles that create space for people to share their struggles and support one another. His story is ultimately one of family, community, redemption and a father's enduring influence.

Ben Krejci, a first-time father to daughter Violet, brings the series directly into the realities facing a new generation of fathers. Raised by a gentle, thoughtful adoptive father whom he simply considers his dad, Krejci talks about IVF, genetic disease, a difficult birth, parental leave and the sometimes overwhelming transition from pregnancy to suddenly having a real human being to care for. His story examines what fatherhood looks like when men expect from the beginning to be active participants in both the emotional and practical work of raising a child.



The Finalist Episode - Thomas Greene on Fatherhood, Storytelling, and Grief After Losing a Child

Judah Andrews describes fatherhood as “dying unto yourself” — gradually exchanging ego and individual wants for commitment to his partner and child. After earlier losses left him fearful of attachment and commitment, becoming a husband and father required a series of choices toward love. Most powerfully, caring for his son Jasper changed how he understood his own late father. The daily responsibility of keeping his child safe brought what Andrews calls a “great wave of compassion” for the man he once believed had not been there for him — and the realization: “My dad was there for me.”

Jeff Pearlman, acclaimed sportswriter and author, speaks about growing up idolizing his own father while nevertheless deciding that he wanted to father differently. Pearlman wanted to change diapers, be the “class mom,” take his children to the park and participate in the everyday minutiae traditionally left to mothers. His conversation explores masculinity without rigidity, the humility required to listen, and his belief that despite achieving his childhood dream of becoming a sportswriter, the greatest gift his career gave him was the ability to be present for his children.

Taken together, the six conversations trace fatherhood across generations and circumstances — from inherited ideas about masculinity and discipline to caregiving, work, marriage, grief, sacrifice, vulnerability and redemption. Again and again, the fathers return to the parents who raised them, the parts of those fathers and mothers they carry forward, the wounds or assumptions they hope to leave behind, and the ways loving their own children has changed how they understand themselves.

“We are deeply grateful for this recognition, and we are fully aligned with Signal Awards’ stated mission of ‘uplifting the podcast medium by recognizing the most potent, meaningful and unprecedented audio projects being made today,’” said Joyce Sophia Xu, founder of Sophia Media and executive producer and cohost of the podcast. “We are so passionate about this project because we believe in the importance of sharing these fathers’ voices. And Tom, with his understated elegance, shared his story with extraordinary honesty and humanity. Knowing that his story resonated strongly with the Signal Awards judges is very meaningful to all of us at Sophia Media.”

MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER is part of Sophia Media’s growing MY FIRST YEAR collection, which explores defining periods of human transformation through intimate, guest-led conversations. Current series explore becoming mothers and fathers, beginning college, immigrating to America, building relationships with dogs and other profound first-year experiences. The MY FIRST YEAR production team comprises award-winning creatives who have honed their craft at places such as NPR, iHeartRadio, The Atlantic and Wondery.

The series reflects Sophia Media’s broader mission: ENHANCING HUMAN CONNECTIONS ONE EPISODE AT A TIME.

MY FIRST YEAR AS A FATHER and the complete MY FIRST YEAR collection are available on

SophiaMedia.co/MyFirstYear, all major podcast platforms and YouTube.

About Sophia Media

Sophia Media is a Rhode Island-based independent media company founded by Joyce Sophia Xu, a former Big Law partner and Wall Street derivatives lawyer who left New York City during the pandemic and ultimately built both her own law practice and media company. Sophia Media creates intimate, human-centered programming built around authentic conversation, emotional honesty and the complexity of lived experience.

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