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Letter from the publisher

Happy holidays and more

It's hard to believe that a whole year has passed. It seems like I was just writing this column a few months ago, not an entire year. The speed of things passing is truly awesome and I don't think I'm the only one who's experiencing



it. So here it is again and I'll soon be going to various performances of "The Nutcracker" and celebrating the holiday season with the special art events that New York offers in abundance. Lucky me!

On the other hand, recently we had to say a difficult good-bye to my right arm and soul mate Sharon Noble. For the last nine years Sharon and I have partnered together in harmonious ways to create these magazines, website and digital plat-

forms. We grew and the business grew with us and our children who also were integral to the process grew too. It was a match that anyone could see was a perfect union until quite recently when Sharon expressed her desire to move on and try some-

thing new in her life. It wasn't easy to let her go and I did my best to hold on, but as the months passed we came to an understanding and now after a wonderful party send-off by our company to this extremely well liked and popular staff member, her office is vacant.

We all wish her well. We will miss her laugh, her insight, her intelligence, her vision. Lucky me, I still get to see her because we are a lot more than mere colleagues. We are family.

That said and speaking of family, I want to extend a big thank you to all the members of our team and wish all of them a wonderful holiday season and a great New Year. Notably I want to thank Tina for all she does to make my work easier and for being funny too! A big shout out of thanks to our sales team, those still with us as well as the few who have moved on. Lori Falco, Sharon Leverett, Shanika Stewart, Alexis Benson and our newest member Erin Brof. Welcome!

Thanks to Vinny, Leah, On Man, Arthur, Cheryl, Yvonne, Raymond, Earl, Mauro, Courtney, Sylvan, Shavana and to all our columnists. Thank you to Tammy, Shneika, Allison, Risa, and Jamie, who are our go-to's for articles, interviews and profiles. Thanks to Joanna and Danielle for their calendar skills and for being super to work with. An additional

thanks to Danielle for her expertise and for helping us to understand and utilize social media. Thanks to Pat, Paul and Charlie for their distribution skills. Thanks to Lisa and to Jessica and most definitely thanks to Cliff, Les and Jennifer.

Finally all of us wish to thank you our readers, for reading our magazines, visiting our website and for logging on to our Guides. We wish each and every one of you a happy season and a new year filled with health and prosperity. Thanks for making a successful 2014 for New York Parenting.

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This holiday, turn your child into a tradition tracker

BY SARA MARCHESSAULT

Every year, my dad looks forward to Christmas, because he knows he will get one specific treat — homemade, chocolate-covered peanut butter balls. We've never called them buckeyes, and we aren't from a place that is famous for making them, but they mean "Christmas" to my dad and without them, the holidays just aren't the same.

Every family has traditions like this. Special foods, putting out the old decorations, favorite carols, and even rituals like going to midnight

mass or sharing what we're thankful for are all ground in tradition.

There are things that we do that make the holidays feel like the holidays. Each one of those acts in which we participate is special and unique. But where do they come from? Why are they special?

My dad looks forward to the peanut butter balls, because they were a treat that appeared at Christmas Eve when he was a kid. They remind him of a grandmother who was reported to be an excellent cook, and she delivered favorite sweets every holiday.

My great-grandmother is long

gone, but my dad still speaks of her fondly, usually when his memory is prompted by food, and the stories rise to the surface.

These stories are important. Traditions can become more meaningful when we know the history behind them. Tracking holiday traditions is about recording the stories of the rituals that make the holidays special for you and your family.

And the best part? Tracking traditions is a great project to give your kids over winter break.

If you have a kid who's into writing or storytelling, let him take the lead on collecting stories from fam-

Questions to get your interviews started

When your child sits down with your grandmother or great uncle to talk about what holidays were like when they were kids, it's smart to have a few questions handy. Thoughtful questions can help keep the conversation going and help to elicit memories. Here are a few to start with:

- What was (Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's, etc.) like for you as a child?
- Describe to me how you celebrated this holiday when you were a kid.
- Do you have a favorite Thanksgiving?
- What is the one food that

you absolutely have to have around the holidays?

- What was your role in the family around the holidays? Did you prepare food? Help with the dishes?
- What relatives did you most look forward to seeing?
- What relatives did you least look forward to seeing?
- Were the holidays busy and crowded or pretty quiet and low-key?
- Do you enjoy the holidays more, less, or the same now as you did when you were a child?
- What was my mom or dad like around the holidays when she or he was a kid?

ily members about their holiday memories. How about the sleuth in your family? Let her dig up facts and details from the days of yore and turn her results into a news broadcast.

There are three basic ways to accomplish the goal of tradition tracking: audio, video, or good, old-fashioned writing. Let your youngster choose his tools of the trade.

For audio recordings, he'll need a handheld voice recorder or a voice recording application or software on a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. Tapes and tape recorders may be outdated, but they still work.

To conduct video interviews, you'll ideally want a camera with a good, built-in microphone, or you may want to use a lapel microphone. In addition to the camera, a tripod is a good idea, too. That way, if you have a long-winded great aunt, your videographer won't get tired arms trying to hold the camera up.

Finally, if your tradition tracker prefers to write, maybe a new journal or blank book would be an enticing tool to take notes and capture stories. And of course, if you use video or audio, you can transcribe any interview into a text format for future use. This is a nice option because then you have a recording with the voice of the interviewee (and maybe what they look like too).

Once the tools and method of

tracking are selected, the real fun begins. You can work with your son or daughter to create a list of potential questions for tradition tracking, or let them give it a shot on their own. A list of questions is good to help people get started talking.

The next step is to make a list of the people your child would most like to interview. A list will help keep him focused on getting the job done and give him the satisfaction of crossing off one name at a time.

Once your youngster has a collection of holiday traditions, let him decide what to do with them. Will they become files that are stored in a special place on the shared family hard drive? The topic or content of a family home movie? Or perhaps put into a book that can be shared with family members?

Not only will you have a record of family traditions and stories that you can treasure, but you'll also get to watch your child connect with other family members, learn about family history, and maybe even gain a new appreciation for the circumstances of his own life.

Sara Marchessault is an author, professor, and coach. She has maintained personal journal writing for 25 years. Many of the journals from her childhood include stories she has collected from family members that she has been able to share with her own children.

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Parenting resolutions

for the not-so-perfect parent

BY GAYLA GRACE

Considering the innumerable parenting books I've read and parenting workshops I've attended, I should be a perfect parent. I'm not. I've been a parent long enough, however, to realize that if I keep pressing forward and do the best job I can with a loving and sincere heart, my kids won't be eternally scarred by my imperfections.

This year, instead of making resolutions about being a better parent, I decided to ponder a few resolutions on how to move past my imperfections and keep going on days I want to quit as a not-so-perfect parent.

So, this year I commit to...

Let go of the mommy guilt. We all experience it from time to time. We do too much for our kids one day, and the next day, we do too little. One day, we give them too much slack, and the next day, we nag them incessantly. Our parenting choices never seem right. Or maybe our thinking isn't right. Mommy guilt comes from the expectation that we need to be perfect. But a perfect mom doesn't exist. We can choose to let go of unrealistic expectations that keep us bound to guilt when we don't measure up.

Forgive myself when I fail. A defeated parent doesn't parent effectively. When we barrage ourselves

with negative self-talk over a poor parenting choice, we continue down a negative path. Forgiving ourselves for less-than-stellar parenting moments allows us to begin again with a renewed mind and fresh perspective for our parenting challenges.

Seek out support from other moms on hard days. My neighbor is a single parent with two school-aged children. She recognizes her need for help in juggling her responsibilities and seeks out other moms to assist with car pool or after-school care when the demands of her work schedule become overwhelming. Fellow moms understand the struggles of busy moms and are usually happy to help when asked.

Listen to my heart on how to parent my child, instead of others' opinions. It's easy to run to the phone and ask our best friend what to do when we're facing a difficult parenting moment, but if we step back and listen to our heart while considering our options, we make better decisions. Considering our child's personality (which we know better than anyone) as part of the parenting equation allows us to tailor our parenting in a healthier light.

Take time to run, or quilt, or whatever activity works for me to re-group when the parenting strain takes over. It's important to re-group and make time for self-care when we're about to go off the parenting cliff. Balancing parenting demands with activities we can look forward to and enjoy alone or with others creates a well-rounded parent who can more effectively handle the strains of parenting.

Remember that my kids love me, even on days I'm a not-so-perfect parent. Our kids don't expect us to be perfect parents. If they know we are doing our best to care for them, emotionally and physically, they love us on our good days and our days that aren't so good. I heard the reply of a young child recently when asked what he thought about his mom's significant weight loss. "I don't see her any different — I love her either way 'cuz she's my mom."

As you start a new year, do you have resolutions to consider as a not-so-perfect parent? Do you need a mindset do-over that includes room for imperfection and second chances as a parent? Perhaps that's the ticket to success this year on your not-so-perfect parenting journey.

As a freelance journalist, Gayla Grace loves sharing experiences to encourage other parents. She is thankful for her five children, who love her despite her not-so-perfect parenting.



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Arts get a boost



A program with
the goal of arts
education for all

BY ALLISON PLITT

After years of seeing funding for arts education slashed from their budgets, New York City public schools got a big surprise this past summer when Mayor DeBlasio promised \$23 million dollars would be spent on arts education for the 2014-2015 school year. Besides stating that the money would be used to hire 120 new, certified art teachers, DeBlasio also said the financial support would also be ap-

propriated to improve art facilities in schools as well as create “new partnerships with cultural institutions.”

The city’s public schools aren’t the only recipients of this much-needed funding. Non-profit organizations that bring arts education into public schools have also received additional money from the city for this school year. One such organization, Arts For All, has been bringing free arts programming into public schools and youth organizations for nearly a decade. Seventy percent of

the clients that Arts For All serves are public schools that lack access to an arts curriculum.

The services Arts For All provides are free of charge to its clients, so the organization has to focus a lot of effort on fund-raising.

“We’re always working really hard to get funding wherever we can,” admits Executive Director Anna Roberts Ostroff. “We have a number of wonderful private donors. We’ve also now secured city and state funding, which has been really helpful, and also corporate sponsors, and family foundations. We’re always out there looking for fund-raising opportunities to offer more quality art programs to the children we serve.”

The story of how this non-profit was created is an inspiring story in itself. According to Ostroff, Arts For All started as a small club at New York University and taught at a couple of organizations at the time. When Ostroff and the club’s other founder graduated in 2003, they realized no one was going to take over the club, but they really believed in the work they were doing and decided to try to continue to sustain the club.

For four years Arts For All worked with two established non-profit organizations that helped it expand its programming and grow.

“Back when we were first getting started, there was certainly a lot of us introducing ourselves to youth organizations,” recounted Ostroff. “It really did take a while for people to realize what we were doing. We weren’t trying to sell anything. We were trying to offer accessible programming to organizations that may not have had the opportunity to offer that to their students. We now have a waiting list of clients.”



(Above) PS 69 students with their flowers. (Top) A student works on a mural.

By 2007, Ostroff said, “We realized we were ready to branch off on our own and became our own non-profit. As a non-profit standing on our own, we’re still pretty young, but we do have a history with some of our clients, our schools, and our programs that go back beyond 2007.”

In addition to increasing in size, Arts For All increased its clientele. Through an application process, a public school or youth organization can apply to have Arts For All come teach arts education in the classrooms. The board of directors reviews the applications to get a sense of what the organizations specifically need, who their students are, and why these organizations need arts programming to be accessible to children.

When Arts For All approves the organization that it knows will fit its mission, the staff works one-on-one with the individual school or youth organization.

“We basically will discuss with each of these organizations what age group is most in need of our programming and specifically what art forms the students would most respond to,” says Ostroff.

Arts For All offers a wide range of art programs from visual arts to dance and music to drama and film. The organization hires teaching artists who are not only talented in the artistic discipline, but who are also comfortable teaching their art form in challenging learning environments.

“We work really hard to then pair the right teaching artist with each school,” explains Ostroff. “We do work really closely with the schools and youth organizations to create unique programs that work for them whether in terms of the artistic disciplines, the lengths of the residency, and the specifics about what that teacher might want to focus on to enhance what they’re already learning in the classroom.”

Arts For All also does academic-based art programming. For instance, its Literacy through the Arts Program, which is one of its strongest programs, works with kindergarten through second-graders to help improve their reading, writing, and verbal expression. Literacy through the Arts Program also has a teaching artist tie the lesson plans in with the Common Core Standards and what the teachers are doing in the classrooms.

Giving an example of another academic-based program, Ostroff offers,

“We’ve also recently created a haiku program that blends haiku poetry of the late Sydell Rosenberg, with either visual arts or music. This program is made possible because of a very generous donor, Amy Losak.”

Arts For All changed its mission statement two years ago to one that is now more specific about arts education helping children mature through the arts. The mission statement reads, “Arts For All offers accessible artistic opportunities to children in the New York City area who face socioeconomic, physical, or emotional barriers to exploring the arts. Through Arts For All, professional artists work with youth organizations to build self-confidence, self-expression, teamwork, resilience, and creativity in children.”

Ostroff explained the reason for the change.

“What was really important to the organization and to the board of directors was to put out our core values in our mission statement, so people had a really strong understanding of what we were doing through the arts,” she says. “We believe very much in art for art’s sake. However, our staff is doing a little bit more than that in teaching life skills through the arts.”

She adds, “We may or may not have someone in one of our classes that one day becomes a Broadway star or a famous painter, but that’s really not the goal of the work we are doing. We want all children to have access to the arts and feel all students, even if they don’t necessarily do this as a career going forward, can gain so much from having accessible arts programming.”

As for the mayor’s current support of arts education in public schools, Ostroff says everyone in her field is “very excited” to see an increase in funding, although she thinks there is still more work to be done.

“The biggest hope is that it can sustain and we can really start to see those results,” Ostroff observed. “As New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer recently stated in his State of the Arts report, last year, 419 schools in New York City still lacked one full-time, certified arts teacher, so we still have a long way to go.”

For more information about Arts For All, visit www.arts-for-all.org or call (212) 591-6108.

Allison Plitt is a freelance writer who lives in Queens with her husband and young daughter. She is a frequent contributor to *New York Parenting*.

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Treating dry winter skin

External factors are the most common cause of dry skin — and the cold and dry air of the winter season can worsen the level of dehydration in the skin. Exposure to cold air outside can especially be a problem for children who get dry skin. Combining the effects of cold air outside with low humidity inside our heated homes adds to the problem. Winter's freezing temperatures and heat-induced dry air can leave skin dry, flaky, and itchy, which makes it difficult to keep your children's skin from getting too dry.

Babies and young children are prone to winter dryness that can cause irritation to the skin of the cheeks, lips, and hands. Children most commonly exhibit peeling and itching, and areas may appear red with a rough texture. Although tempted to scratch itchy skin, it will only make your child's irritation worse. So, how do we prevent winter itch and flakiness?

I spoke to Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley,

Tips for the whole family

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

Dry skin is a very common condition, typically characterized by a lack of moisture in the epidermis, which is the superficial layer of skin. The epi-

dermis is composed of lipid (fatty oils) and protein. When fatty oils are removed from the skin, the skin loses moisture more easily. As skin becomes dry, it also becomes more prone to rashes and skin breakdown.

Winter's freezing temperatures and heat-induced dry air can leave skin dry, flaky, and itchy, which makes it difficult to keep your children's skin from getting too dry.

a board-certified dermatologist in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. A member of a private practice, she's seen irritations from mild to severe. Here's her take on what parents can do:

Shnieka Johnson: Is sunscreen a "must" even in winter?

Jennifer Hensley: Sunscreen is still important in the winter months, especially on the face. We are still exposed to UV light. In most cold-weather areas, people spend more time inside, and cover up when heading out. Our faces are always exposed and wearing a moisturizer with sunscreen is recommended.

SJ: What other products are important to use in winter months?

JH: Moisturizers are VERY important this time of year. Our skin is protecting the rest of our body, so it is imperative to keep its barrier intact. Dry air and cold temperatures can lead to dry skin and itching, or exacerbate skin conditions, such as eczema. Many people forego moisturizers, but in winter months, I recommend taking the extra step.

SJ: Are dry hands, chapped lips, and red cheeks worth a doctor visit?

JH: Not necessarily. If this occurs after being in the cold for a period of time, moisturizers and an emollient lip balm should lead to resolution. However, if other symptoms are involved or this persists, a trip to the doctor is warranted.

SJ: What will happen if dry skin is ignored or worsens?

JH: Ignored conditions such as this will often lead to extremely dry skin and a weakened skin barrier. This can lead to fissures or open areas, which could be po-

tential access for bacteria and viruses to enter the skin and cause infection.

SJ: How should parents treat these winter skin problems?

JH: Start with gentle skincare practices to prevent problems. Use a gentle moisturizing soap and bathe with warm, not hot, water. Moisturize immediately after bathing. It is important not to over-bathe, especially with infants. Ceramide-containing moisturizers are good year round. In the winter, cream formulations of moisturizers are more beneficial for dry skin. Applications twice a day may be needed.

Ointment forms of moisturizers, while slightly greasy, are good at keeping moisture in the skin.

Patches of itchy dry skin may be treated with an over-the-counter cortisone cream.

If persistent, I recommend following up with a doctor as further treatment may be necessary.

SJ: Are there ingredients to avoid using on young skin?

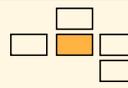
JH: I recommend avoiding products with significant amounts of fragrance, which could potentially cause further irritation.

SJ: What tips do you have for parents to prevent winter skin problems?

JH: Again, gentle, daily skincare is key. Consider a humidifier if the air is dry in the home. Protecting skin from the elements when outside and immediately caring for any chapped areas is key.

Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley received her dermatology training at Georgetown University-Washington Hospital Center Department of Dermatology in Washington, DC. Dr. Hensley completed a Clinical Research Fellowship at Northwestern University Department of Dermatology in Chicago, as well as a Melanoma Fellowship at Washington Hospital Center Department of Dermatology in Washington, DC. Dr. Hensley completed her medical studies and Internal Medicine Internship at the University of Louisville. She is on staff and sees patients (both adults and children) at Shady Grove Dermatology, Laser & Vein Institute with locations in Maryland and Northern Virginia. For more, visit www.northernvirginia dermatology.com.

Shnieka Johnson is an education consultant and freelance writer. She is based in Manhattan where she resides with her husband and son. Contact her via her website, www.shniekajohnson.com.

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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Teens and holidays

So, your teen has decided to ditch the family and spend time with so-and-so. Really? No more chestnuts roasting on the open fire? No more cozy family traditions? Did you pitch a fit and tell your teen if he doesn't spend time with the family this holiday season you're cutting him out of the will?

When our kids were young, holidays were easy. The anticipation of rich chocolate desserts and time off from school to go sledding was all it took to keep them grounded. Once adolescence strikes, they suddenly get a severe case of ants in their pants. If there is a boyfriend or girlfriend in the picture, the inclination to spend the holidays somewhere else is probably more intense. One friend regaled me with a tale about a ruined holiday. When her family headed out-of-town to Grandma's, her teenage daughter remained miserable for the entire 10 days, and then some.

Is this a case when parents should abide by the adage of picking your battles? Or should parents insist their teens spend the holidays with family?

Despite her preoccupation with friends and crushes, holiday traditions and family rituals are more important to your teen than you might think. You'll realize this when your teen announces that she can't find the ornament from Great Uncle Jack on the tree, or she notices that Grandma's sweet potato pie is not on the Thanksgiving table.

"The teenage years are a time when children are struggling to differentiate themselves from their family. They are also wishing to strike out on their own and test boundaries. At this age, kids are highly influenced by their peers, but studies tell us that they still look up to their parents, and wish to please," explains Dr. Scott Haltzman, a clinical assistant professor at Brown University's Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior and author of "The Secrets of Happy Families: Eight Keys to Building a Lifetime of Connection and Contentment" (Jossey-Bass, 2009).

It might help to ask for your teen's assistance with the holiday planning.



Remember, your teen probably has some creative talents you can utilize. Give him things he can be responsible for, such as creating the family newsletter or choosing items for the holiday menu. This gives your teen an opportunity to make a contribution. If he feels like he is an integral part of the holiday experience, instead of a mere spectator, he might buy into your need to have him around.

However, despite your best intentions and efforts, your teen might still want to spend time elsewhere. Dr. Haltzman says, "While it's important to inject routine and tradition into your family life, it's also important to know that some traditions can change slightly, and it won't kill anyone. Children, including teens, should be with their families whenever possible, but there should also be room for compromise. Perhaps your child can go to a friend's house before or after a holiday dinner, or perhaps you can change the time you open presents so that he or she can still go to work at the restaurant up the street."

Sometimes the idea of "family coming first" is foreign to teens because they tend to be egocentric. Consider the age of your child, her relationship with this friend or friends, and her attitude toward the family. It doesn't have to be an "either or" situation if you don't want

it to be. Discuss a compromise with your teen that will work for both of you. If there is a religious service or annual family tradition that can't be missed, explore the idea of inviting the friend, or allowing your teen time with him or her afterward.

Do your best to avoid a nasty battle with your teen, and you'll find you can keep the "happy" in the "holidays."

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist and author of, "Lions And Tigers And Teens: Expert Advice and Support for the Conscientious Parent Just Like You" (Unlimited Publishing LLC, 2012). For details, visit www.myrna-haskell.com.

Tips and tales

"My 18-year-old son wanted to be with his girlfriend in California one Thanksgiving. I realized that if I didn't let him go, he might be miserable and resentful. Give them freedom to make choices to be with their peers. They will come back and hang out with the family in no time."

Lisa Zarowitz, Woodstock, NY

"Share the holidays and special events. If your son has dinner at the girlfriend's house, then he can have dessert at home. The next holiday he should switch. This may sound a little complicated, but it works. *everyone is happy.*"

Corinne Clerkin, Hyde Park, NY



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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Searching for Santa

Memories of tracking the sled in real time

When my oldest daughter Amanda was 3, we were at my brother-in-law's house one freezing-cold Christmas Eve. My husband has seven siblings and many of them had kids at the time, so the house was filled with Christmas spirit. As they waited for their presents, they ate, played, danced, and asked the big question over and over, "When will Santa come?"

At regular intervals, one of the adults would take all the kids out onto the stoop, and we would stare into the sky looking for Rudolph's shiny red nose.

"Be quiet," my daughter said. "I think I hear his bells."

"I think I see something. Look over there," another would say pointing to the dark sky.

Amanda swears she heard those bells and listened each year after that for them to ring again or see the lights move along the heavens.

At home, we would track Santa on North American Aerospace De-

fense Command's (Norad) website (there is a science to tracking the big guy!), but once we got to the Christmas Eve celebration, we lost track of the Command's path since my brother-in-law's computer was not downstairs (and this was before everyone had a smartphone). By the time we got back home, the kids would be exhausted, and if they hadn't already fallen asleep in the car, they would conk out the minute their heads hit the pillow.

Tracking Santa in real-time is probably the most fun there is for a child on Christmas Eve. I remember searching for Santa about 20 years ago with my nephew, Michael, who is now grown. Santa's in Africa, now he's in Europe: Ireland, England, Scotland. With each new country or continent, a glimmer of light would shine in his eyes. The ultimate was when Santa got to Canada because that meant we were next.

Over the years, the thrill of it all, and the delight of seeing the kids' faces brighten up was

so much fun that I almost forgot that Santa wasn't really on his sled high above. Part of the real fun of Christmas is seeing just how happy our children get and enjoying those special moments with family and friends.

This year, the Christmas Eve celebration will be closer to home. In fact, it has been at my home the past few years. The party starts when Santa is overseas and ends when he gets to Canada. Somewhere in between, there will be trips to the stoop, some lights in the sky, and hopefully, lots of life-long memories.

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.



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A LETTER FROM COLLEGE

AGLAIA HO

A 'Love Note'

New musical explains the power of parental support for bullying victims

Looking back at our childhood, all of us can remember a time when we were picked on, teased, or just made to feel inadequate. Most of our experiences probably occurred in school behind the teacher's back. Maybe it was a shove in the schoolyard, a taunt hurled across the lunchroom, or another student spreading rumors. Children and teens can be ruthless and petty. However, they can also be sensitive, especially to harsh words from their peers or so-called friends.

In order to overcome bullying, children and teens need support, especially from those they trust the most: their parents. A new family musical at the Actor's Temple Theater in Manhattan captures just how meaningful parental support and encouragement can be to a child facing bullying at school.

"The Love Note Musical" is a high-energy journey that follows Jessie, a warm-hearted fourth grader, as she navigates the social hierarchy of both friends and foes at her new school. Along the way, she encounters a group of mean girls who are determined to make her first few days in town a living hell. Even as Jessie copes with loneliness, broken promises, and lack of self-esteem, her day is instantly brightened by the kind words in a little pink note that her mother packs in her lunch.

The musical is the brainchild of Gail Phaneuf, a Boston-based playwright, director, and strong advocate against bullying.

"I believe that bullying is prevalent in our society at every age, social status, job, school, and even within families themselves," says Phaneuf. "We have basically created a society that is ruled by fear and that is the

main objective for the bully."

The inspiration for this musical came after Phaneuf heard heartwarming childhood anecdotes from friends about having received "love notes" from their parents in their lunches.

The impact of these small acts of kindness and support truly moved Phaneuf.

"Many people that I have spoken to about this say that they treasured the notes that were put in their lunches by their mothers," says Phaneuf. "They were also a little embarrassed by them at the same time, but they *loved* being *loved*."

Watching this show brought back memories of my own experiences being bullied in school. Like Jessie, I have a mother who used to leave me Post-it notes in my book bag reminding me to have confidence in myself and have a great day at school. My mother also left me corny jokes and puzzles, too.

As a theatrical experience, "The Love Note" is definitely a nod to other successful family musicals such as Disney's "High School Musical" or Jason Robert Brown's "13." The show features a well-balanced score of lyrical ballads and powerhouse show-stoppers that reflect different aspects of school life.

While each musical number does not necessarily move the plot ahead, they do provide immense entertainment value for impatient young ones who might be in the audience. The set is colorful and versatile, reflecting a child's innocent imagination. Best of all, the young cast does a tremendous job developing their characters and emulating restless 10 year olds. They manage to convey even minute nuances characteristic of young children (that is, sitting cross-legged or fidgeting).

Phaneuf creates a world that resonates with audience members from across the age spectrum. In this fictional school, the quirky nerds appeal to a younger elementary school crowd, while the snobbish mean girls are more representative of high

school cliques. The protagonist, Jessie, sits somewhere in between and is relatable to all. As a sophomore in college, I see reflections of myself in Jessie such as her shy, sweet demeanor and her wild imagination. Even parents will find a connection with the lunch lady who witnesses the bullying and is reminded of her own experience being picked on.

However, the most commendable aspect of "The Love Note" is the strong and relatable message that emerges as the show progresses. There is an emphasis on a parent's role in mediating conflicts and helping their children overcome bullying. At the same time, "The Love Note" reminds parents that their children need to be the ones to stand up to the bullies.

"The Love Note" is different in that it allows the kids to work the problems out for themselves," Phaneuf explains.

Although Jessie's mother never makes an onstage appearance, her presence is clearly felt throughout the show. Parents can play an integral part in strengthening their children's confidence.

According to Phaneuf, "The small gesture of putting a love note in a child's lunch is a huge way of reminding that child, during their hectic time at school, that they are loved and safe."

"The Love Note" convinces us to think more critically regarding our efforts to eradicate bullying. It is clear that dealing with this issue is a collective effort that involves the actions of the victims, the perpetrators, and the bystanders.

"My dream for this project is to help spread the word," Phaneuf shares. "Once this show spreads, it will allow for the conversation about bullying to be discussed in these different forums."

"The Love Note" is a great experience for families and schools. The portrayal of the issue strikes a chord in a wide audience and promotes important discussion on how we can best deal with bullying in our community.

"The Love Note - A Musical" at Actor's Temple Theater (339 W. 47th St. between Eighth and Ninth avenues in Hell's Kitchen, www.thelovenote.com), \$39.50.

Aglaia Ho is a sophomore at Williams College and a native New Yorker. She also writes for her own blog at www.aglaiaho.weebly.com.

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Creating the new Cooper Hewitt

Pen helps
kids to script
their design
experience
at revamped
museum

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

There are elaborate plans for the re-opening of the newly renovated and restored mansion that houses the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, not the least of which are the 10 exhibitions that will make the most of the revamped and expanded exhibition space which includes four floors of exhibition galleries. The Cooper Hewitt, which will re-open on Friday, Dec. 12, was founded in 1897 and is the only museum in the United

States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design.

Families will love the digitization of the museum's collections, which are now more interactive and engaging. For example, a hands-on "Process Lab" will emphasize how design is a way of thinking, planning, and problem solving, and will provide a foundation for the rest of the design concepts.

Families can also explore the museum's collections and exhibitions using groundbreaking, interactive technology called "Pen," which is a

key part of the visitor experience. With it, visitors will be able to record their visit, which they can view and share online with the option to save and supplement during future visits.

I spoke to Sebastian Chan, director of digital and emerging enterprises, and Kim Robledo-Diga, deputy director of education, about the renovation, digitization, and family-friendliness of the Cooper Hewitt.

Shnieka Johnson: What are some of the noticeable changes to the museum?

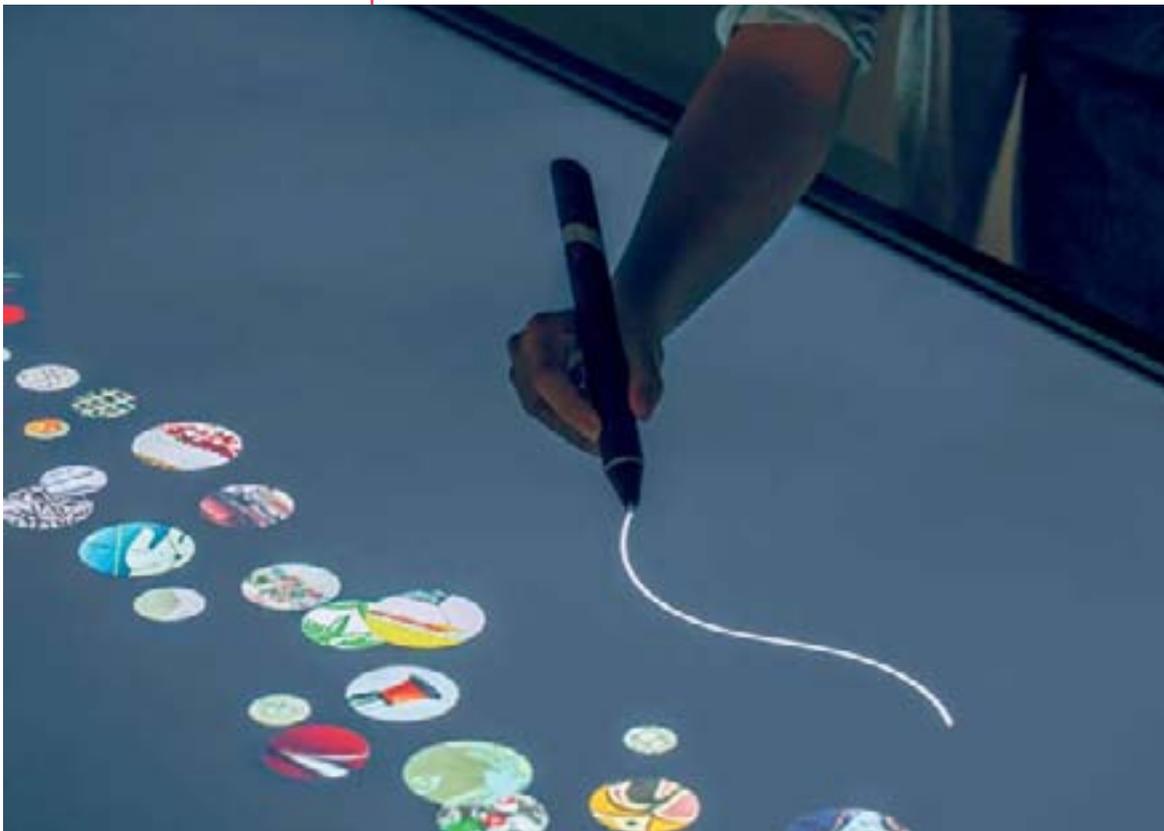
Sebastian Chan: When the museum reopens, it will have four floors dedicated to exhibitions and public programs, all connected by a new public staircase and elevator. These facilities include a versatile, new 6,000-square-foot gallery on the third floor, which has never been used for public exhibitions; expanded gallery space on the second floor; and restored first-floor galleries; as well as a revolutionary interactive visitor experience.

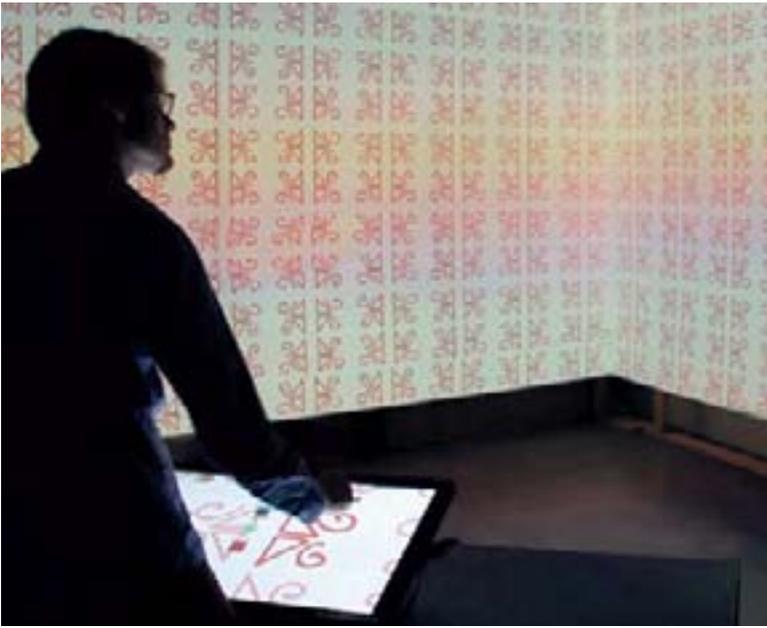
SJ: Why did the museum go in this direction?

SC: We wanted to make design relevant and exciting to today's audiences, invite people to join in the design process in order to understand design from every perspective, while maintaining the integrity of the historic Carnegie mansion that we call home.

SJ: Can you explain the "Immersion Room?"

SC: The Immersion Room features Cooper Hewitt's extraordinary collection of wall coverings. Visitors can select from over 200 digital images of wallpapers or sketch their own on interactive tables, and then





2014 Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

(Clockwise from top left) The Immersion Room of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum was designed by Diller, Scofidio + Renfro, and Local Projects LLC. The Pen in use on the interactive tables and the “digital river” of collection objects. A rendering of the new Process Lab. The museum’s Gesture Match activity.

project them onto the walls at full scale to see their impact. The Immersion Room will give visitors the opportunity to see how the wall coverings were intended to be installed, as well as provide a high-tech design experience.

SJ: What is the interactive “Pen?”

SC: Symbolizing and embodying human creativity, the Pen is a key part of every visitor’s experience. Given at admission, it enables every visitor to collect objects from around the galleries and create their own designs on interactive tables. At the end of a visit, the Pen is returned and all the objects collected or designed by the visi-

tor are accessible online through a unique web address printed on every ticket. These can be shared online and stored for later use in subsequent visits.

Shnieka Johnson: How will the Pen aid visitors with children?

Kim Robledo-Diga: Exploring, playing, and collecting are part of how children and family units learn and build meaningful experiences. The Cooper Hewitt Pen empowers children to design their own museum experience and make choices like they never have been able to do before in a museum environment. The intuitive nature of touching a screen is present at the time of a child learning how to walk and

can be experienced as a family in our galleries. At the primary school ages, the Pen encourages children to script their own visit and deliver a more meaningful purpose to their exploration of the exhibitions and design interactives. After their visit, children can continue their Cooper Hewitt experience when they go online to view and share their story.

SJ: What age is appropriate for this component?

KR: Primary-school ages and up.

SJ: Do you anticipate new family programming incorporating the Pen?

KR: The Cooper Hewitt Education team is working on prototyping best ways to incorporate the Pen in

family programming, which will be introduced in mid-2015.

Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum inside Andrew Carnegie Mansion [2 E. 91st Street at Fifth Avenue in Carnegie Hill, (212) 849-8400, www.cooperhewitt.org. Opens Dec. 12. Open Sunday through Friday, 10 am–6 pm; Saturday, 10 am–9 pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. General admission, \$18; seniors and college students, \$12. Members and children under 18 are admitted free of charge.

Shnieka Johnson is an education consultant and freelance writer. She is based in Manhattan, where she resides with her husband and son. Contact her via her website, www.shniekajohnson.com.



DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Mediation & people that just won't budge

Anyone familiar with this column knows that I am a big proponent of mediation. But not every case can be mediated.

When “Darlene” called me, she said that she and her partner “Jeremy” were ending their relationship. Darlene wanted to talk out all of the issues with Jeremy, and to work together with him to reach the best agreements possible, to allow each to move on, and to insure that their children would be well cared for.

Darlene called me, and we briefly discussed how mediation works. She liked hearing that she and her husband would have a chance to communicate; they hadn't really talked in months. Darlene seemed happy that she and Jeremy would be the ones making the decisions that would so greatly affect their family (as opposed to a judge deciding matters for them). She understood that by talking over the issues between them, and by staying out of court, tensions could be reduced.

Our short conversation ended with Darlene saying that she would

speak to her husband and get back to me.

Within a few days, Darlene called again saying that Jeremy had agreed to come in for a consultation. We scheduled a time for the three of us to meet together.

At the consultation, I soon learned from Jeremy that he (perhaps with the help of a lawyer) had already written up what he considered an agreement for him and Darlene. He wanted this so-called “agreement,” which the wife had not helped to create, to be the final agreement. For Jeremy, the purpose of mediation was to begin and end with what he had prepared, perhaps allowing for minor changes.

I explained that we could discuss his proposals during mediation. Jeremy would be welcome to share his ideas and concerns that were reflected in his document. However, his agreement would not be the basis for all discussion (just as it wouldn't have been had Darlene prepared one and demanded that the outcome adhere to it).

Not surprisingly, Jeremy, who perhaps tellingly had arrived to our appointment 30 minutes late, wasn't happy with what I had to say. Darlene was clearly saddened at this breakdown before we had even had a first session. But she understood, and seemed to appreciate that proceeding as Jeremy had been demanding wouldn't have been mediation at all.

We didn't meet again.

A discussion along the lines that Jeremy was insisting on would probably have been very limiting. Most or all questions would have dealt with his — and only his — plan. The conversation would have been stunted, the freedom to express and consider different views and ideas (often critical in reaching agreements) strongly discouraged.

In mediation — even during a consultation — parties who have up until then been rigid and uncompromising often demonstrate a shift in their thinking and a willingness to be open-minded; not to give in, but rather to be open to the possibility that there may be other ways of having their needs met. Such people can let go of their ultimatums, and engage in a constructive dialogue.

For other people, it is “my way or the highway.” They won't consider any plan other than the one they walked in with. Parties like this are poor candidates for mediation; they won't get anywhere in the process, because they are unwilling or unable to engage in it. Often, they wind up in court, expecting a judge to decide in their favor.

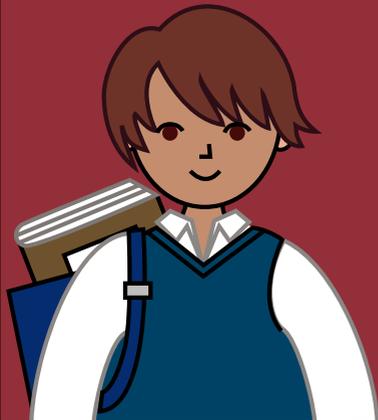
Quite frequently, they are disappointed with the outcome.

New York City and Long Island-based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without going to court. Contact him at lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com, (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/>. Follow him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lchabin.

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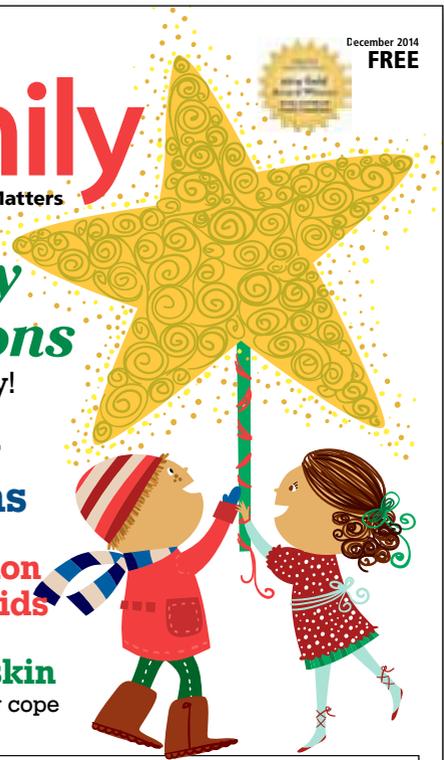
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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Stress & the heart

What stresses you out most during the holidays? Hosting family get-togethers? Buying gifts? All that wrapping? Or all that pressure from family and friends (not to mention yourself!) to plan the perfect memory? It's been well documented that social ties can improve heart health, but the worry often caused by family and friends can hurt you.

I recently came across a study from the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, performed by Dr. Rikke Lund at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, which says that family stress can increase angina. Moreover, the closer you are to the person, the more damage they can do.

With the pressure of shopping, finances, and family get-togethers, nervous tension is especially on the rise during the holiday season. As most parents are running around trying to plan the perfect holiday, it's

a recipe for tension.

Interestingly, according to the study, the more you care about the person, the more your health is affected. This makes two key categories prime to induce stress: spouses and kids. But which stresses you out more?

“When the source of these worries/demands was a spouse or partner, the angina risk was increased more than threefold, while for children it was more than twofold. Other family members nearly doubled angina risk. By contrast, excessive demands or worries caused by more distant family relations or from friends and neighbors were associated with little or no risk.”

Since angina may be a risk for future heart disease, it makes sense to let things slide over the holidays, rather than allowing yourself to become stressed.

Does this study beckon the questions, who are parents closer to:

their spouse or their children? Maybe. But perhaps moms and dads just don't get as stressed out by their own kids, because they are just that: kids. After all, when a spouse does something inconsiderate or ill-mannered, as an adult, he is held responsible. Kids, however, to a certain extent, are released of that culpability.

On the contrary, the good news is that the less you care about someone, the smaller chance they have of risking your health. So eat, drink, and be merry this holiday season, and when the snide remarks surface from in-laws or acquaintances, just let them roll right off your shoulder — and away from your heart.

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.

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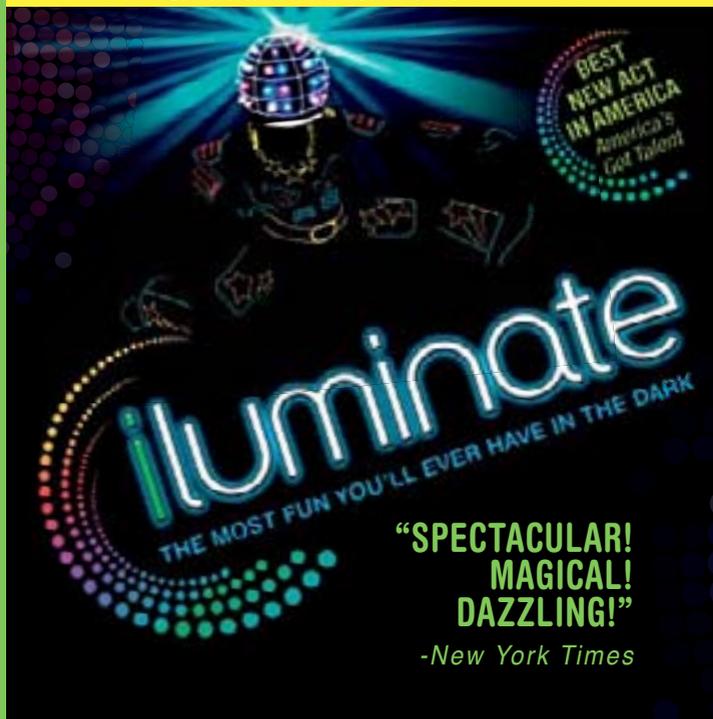
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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

The health benefits of fermented foods

As the temperatures plunge and sick days loom, did you know fermented foods can boost your family's immune system?

Fermented foods contain the beneficial bacteria *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. This friendly organism consumes the natural starches and sugars in foods. At the same time, it creates several byproducts, including lactic acid, the agent responsible for preserving those foods.

As the bacteria do their work, they enhance the nutritional value of the food by increasing its digestibility, enzyme level, and vitamin content. Fermentation can decrease the gas-producing compounds in legumes, increase the availability of certain nutrients like the vitamin B group, preserve levels of nutrients like vitamin C, and decrease the level of compounds that may interfere with nutrient availability.

If you or your child has taken antibiotics, try fermented foods before trying probiotic supplementation. Fermented foods can reintroduce beneficial bacteria to rebalance the intestinal flora. They may also help

treat diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome.

You may already be enjoying fermented foods. Natural pickles, sauerkraut, miso, tofu, tempeh, kimchi, kombucha tea, and fermented cheeses all fall under the fermented banner.

The real deal

What are the basics of fermentation? Adding salt to fresh produce kills the harmful bacteria present while allowing the good *Lactobacillus* bacteria to thrive. This preserves the food while also developing a distinctive tangy flavor.

But many commercially available pickled products are high in salt and lack beneficial bacterial cultures. Most jarred pickles on supermarket shelves are simply cucumbers in a vinegar solution and are not fermented.

When buying fermented foods, look for "live cultured" pickles or sauerkraut. To be sure, call the manufacturer to ask if the product has live cultures. Shopping at a health food, ethnic,

or "fresh" store may be your best bet to find old-fashioned barrels of pickles or sauerkraut near the deli counter. Or look in the refrigerated section of your usual supermarket.

Making your own at home can be a fun kitchen experiment with the kids this winter. Any vegetable can be fermented, including carrots, radishes, green beans, eggplant, and cabbage. A terrific resource is the National Center for Home Food Preservation, as well as several books written by Sandor Katz.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who is a new Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. While growing up, she loved sauerkraut and is inspired to make her own after researching this column. Find her at Christine Palumbo Nutrition on Facebook, @PalumboRD on Twitter, and Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.



Homemade sauerkraut

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 small cabbage head (one-and-a-half to two pounds)
- 1 tbsp. salt
- 1/2 cup filtered water

DIRECTIONS: Sterilize a one-quart sized wide-mouth Mason jar and all tools (knife, canning funnel, metal mixing bowl) by dipping into boiling water for one minute. Air dry.

Wash cabbage head and remove outer leaves, saving one of them. Quarter cabbage, cut out core, and cut into 1/2-inch (or thinner) slices. Place cut cabbage into metal bowl and sprinkle with salt. Crunch up cabbage with your hands and allow it to sit for 5 minutes so the texture softens.

Using the funnel, stuff cabbage and any liquid that appears into the Mason jar, tapping it periodically to make it fit. Pour filtered water into metal bowl to get out any extra salt, then pour over cabbage. Top cabbage with reserved cabbage leaf. Keep the funnel in your jar to help press down the cabbage.

Take a quart sized freezer bag and fill it with water part way. Place this bag in the funnel. This will act as a weight to keep the cabbage leaves pressed down under the liquid.

Store cabbage in a cool, dark place inside a bowl to catch liquid in case it bubbles over.

Daily for the next couple weeks: Press down leaves to ensure cabbage

leaves are under water. If not, take 1/2 cup water and 1 tsp. salt and heat until salt dissolves. Cool liquid then add the water to the cabbage as needed.

Skim off any foam.

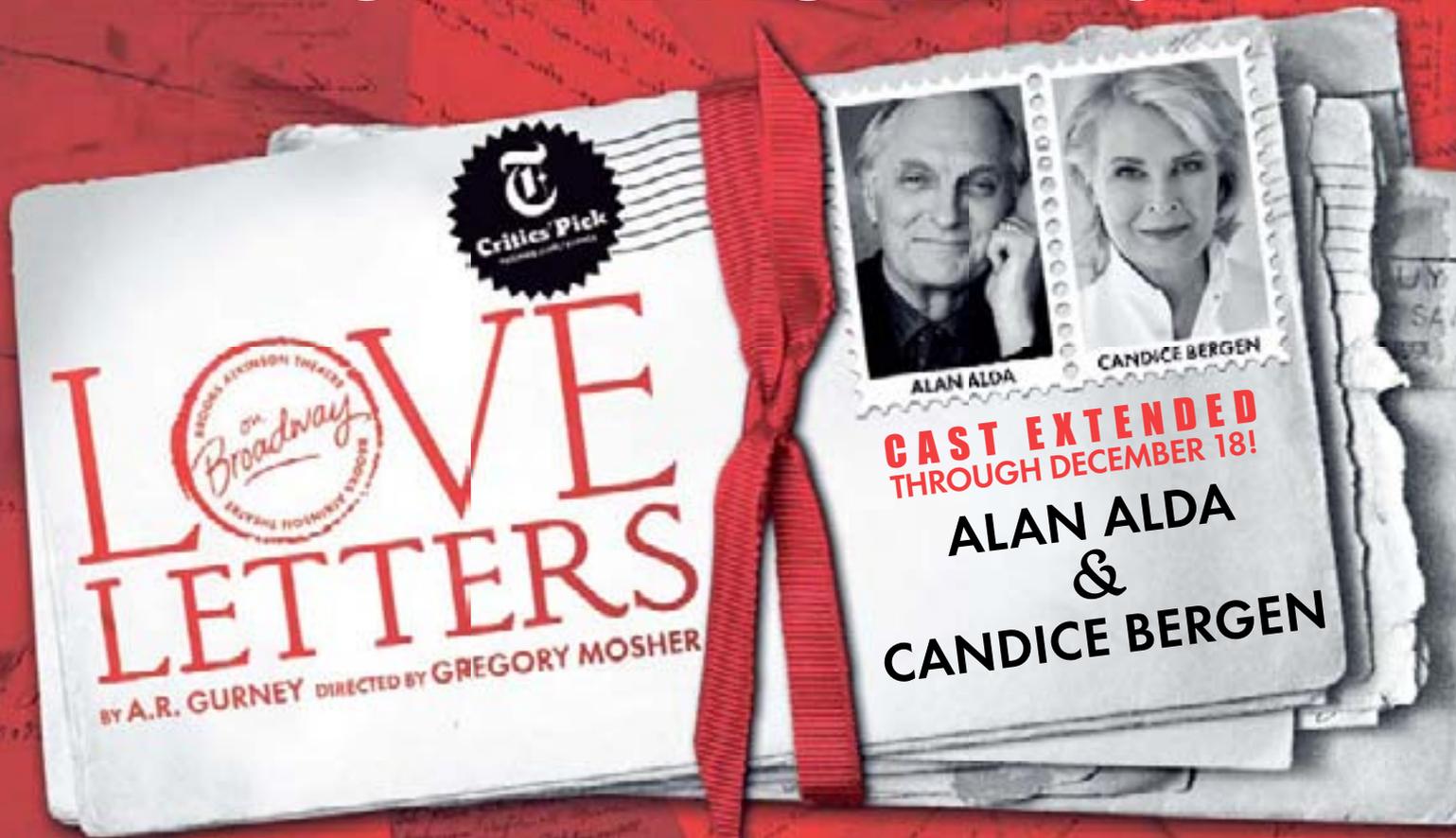
Every week taste your cabbage. After two to four weeks when it has the desired sourness, discard the top cabbage leaf. Screw on the jar lid and store sauerkraut in the refrigerator.

Used with permission by Wendy Jo Peterson, MS, RD, CSSD, culinary nutritionist

NUTRITION FACTS: 120 calories, 8 g carbohydrate, 0 g protein and fat, 4 g fiber, 880 mg sodium, 24% DV vitamin C.

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Calendar

DECEMBER



Little toys back on the big screen

As part of the See it Big program featuring animated pictures at the Museum of Moving Image, "Toy Story 2," the sequel to the 1995 hit, will be screened on Dec. 21.

Woody and friends are back in an action-packed film that finds the cowboy, voiced by Tom Hanks, kidnapped by an obses-

sive collector and the rest of the gang coming to the rescue. Great for children of all ages.

"Toy Story 2" on Dec. 21 at 1 pm. Free with museum admission.

Museum of the Moving Image [36-01 35th Ave. at 37th Street in Astoria, (718) 777-6888, www.movingimage.us].

Submit a listing

This calendar is dedicated to bringing our readers the most comprehensive list of events in your area. But to do so, we need your help!

Send your listing request to queenscalendar@cnglocal.com — and we'll take care of the rest. Please e-mail requests more than three weeks prior to the event to ensure we have enough time to get it in. And best of all, it's FREE!

MON, DEC. 1

IN QUEENS

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas": Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; 4 pm; Free.

Children enjoy a special reading and then have fun with a coloring activity.

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas": Barnes and Noble, 23-80 Bell Blvd.; (718) 224-1083; www.barnesandnoble.com; 4 pm; Free.

Children enjoy a special reading and then have fun with a coloring activity.

WED, DEC. 3

IN QUEENS

Jazz clinic: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Blvd.; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtownhall.org; 5 pm; Free.

High school students learn about jazz, and play alongside other musicians. Join the Queens Jazz Over-Ground for its monthly clinic.

THURS, DEC. 4

IN QUEENS

Holiday Tales: Kupferberg Center for the Arts Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd.; (718) 266-0202; www.artsonstageny.com; 10 am and 11:45 am; \$9.

The Pushcart Players present a musical collection of stories that celebrate Christmas, Kwanzaa and Hanukkah.

Sex ed workshop: Central Queens YM & YWHA, 67-09 108th St. at 67th Avenue; (718) 268-5011; www.centralqueensy.org; 7 pm; Free.

Dr. Jennifer Wider will lead a discussion for parents of teens and pre-teens on topics including sexting, substance abuse, and social media. Call for tickets.



Old-fashioned Xmas

Deck the halls for a special Hands-on-History day at the King Manor Museum on Dec. 13.

This month's Hands-on-History day, Deck the Halls, offers families an opportunity to celebrate the holidays with a special tour of the museum, learn how the King family celebrated the season, and then explore

their creative side and make a traditional winter and holiday decoration to take home.

Hands-on-History day Deck the Halls on Dec. 13 from noon to 3 pm. Free.

King Manor Museum [Rufus King Park, 150th Street and 89th Avenue in Jamaica, (718) 206-0545 X 13, www.nycgovparks.org].

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm to 5 pm; Free.

Enjoy the museum and have fun exploring.

FRI, DEC. 5

IN QUEENS

"The Polar Express" Holiday: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; 7 pm; Free.

Children enjoy a special reading and fun filled activities.

"The Polar Express" Holiday: Barnes and Noble, 23-80 Bell Blvd.; (718) 224-1083; www.barnesandnoble.com; 7 pm; Free.

Children enjoy a special reading and fun filled activities.

SAT, DEC. 6

IN QUEENS

Wreath-making workshop:

Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy.; (718) 347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; 10 am, noon and 2 pm; \$20 (per wreath).

Use evergreens to create a wreath for your door. All materials provided, but bring your own gardening shears. Recommended for teens. Registration required.

Holiday party: George Seuffert Bandshell - Forest Park, Woodhaven Blvd. and Forest Park Drive; (718) 235-4100; nycgovparks.org; Noon-3 pm; Free.

Celebrate with crafts, games, music, and a surprise visitor.

Drop-in workshop: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Young visitors engage in hands-on creative work, make projects ranging from flipbooks and hand-drawn optical toys to stop-motion and computer animations and video games. Children 7 to 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

"Pom Poko": Museum of the Mov-

ing Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

This animated film is shown as part of the See it Big Program, which features the movies on the big screen. This selection is suitable for children 7 years and older. With subtitles.

A Jazzy Christmas Concert: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 1:30-2:30 pm; Free.

Conductor and pianist Edward Kalendar performs holiday standards.

Cool Yule: Louis Armstrong House Museum, 34-56 107th St. and 90th Avenue; (718) 478-8274; 4 pm; \$10 (\$7 seniors/students/children; Free for members and children under 4).

Enjoy a tree lighting with a live jazz band featuring Ben Flocks Trio along with holiday treats.

FURTHER AFIELD

Jingle Bell Jog: Prospect Park Nethermead, Enter the park at Flatbush Ave. and Lincoln Road, Brooklyn; www.nyrr.org; 7:30 am; \$55 (entry free).

Festive event is family friendly and features post race hot chocolates, raffles and prizes. The four-mile race begins at Center Drive winds through the park and ends at the starting point. Proceeds benefit New York Road Runner's Youth Programs. Entrance fee includes jingle bells for your sneakers, a pair of knee-high tech socks and hot chocolate.

SUN, DEC. 7

IN QUEENS

Wreath-making workshop: 10 am, noon, and 2 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

Winter Solstice, tree lighting: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 886-3800; www.queensbotanical.org; 12:30 - 5 pm; Free.

Ring in the season to celebrate winter. Enjoy live musical performances, arts and crafts, photos with Santa, sales in the Holiday Marketplace, and a tree lighting ceremony.

Holiday house tour: Kingsland Homestead, 143-35 37th Ave. at Browne Street; (718) 939-0647; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 - 5 pm; \$25 (\$10 children under 12).

Visit seven historic sites and celebrate the season. Each location offers special activities, delicious refreshments, and a glimpse as to what it used to be. Visit one or all. A transportation van will be available. Stops include Kingsland Home-

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 29

stead, Voelker Orth Museum, Lewis H. Latimer House, The Friends Meeting House, Flushing Town Hall, the Browne House, and The Louis Armstrong House.

"My Neighbor Totoro": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 1 pm; \$12 (\$9 seniors/students, free for members).

Part of See It Big program offers animated flicks on the big screen. This selection is a Japanese animated fantasy flick starring the voices of Noriko Hidaka, Chika Sakamoto, and Hitoshi Takagi and tells the story of two young daughters and their interactions with friendly wood spirits. Ticket includes access to the Museum's galleries and other screenings on the same day.

Vienna Boys Choir: Colden Auditorium, Kupferberg Center for the Arts, Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd.; (718) 544-2996; www.kupferbergcenter.org; 3 pm; \$20-\$30.

The spirit of Christmas is celebrated by the angelic voices of the famed choir. The concert features traditional and popular carols, Gregorian chants and holiday favorites.

FURTHER AFIELD

Middle of Nowhere: BAM Cafe, 30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street, Brooklyn; www.bam.org/programs/bamcafe-live; 10:30 am; \$9.

Elska introduces the audience to the Arctic island home sound, a seamless blend of theater, storytelling and music. Great for children 2 to 6 years old.

The Lost Bird Project: Nassau County Museum of Art, One Museum Drive at Rt 25A, Long Island; (516) 484-9338; www.nassaumuseum.org; 1-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

View a special screening of a film that honors five extinct North American birds then create an origami Passenger Pigeon to take home. Registration requested.

"Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins": Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1 pm and 2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

MetLife presents this musical story of the classic tale.

TUES, DEC. 9

IN QUEENS

Hanukkah and Christmas Concert: Douglaston/Little Neck Public



Science of the season

Dr. Kaboom takes on Christmas and the Jolly Old Elf on Dec. 20 in the Science of Santa at the NYU Skirball Center.

Everyone knows that Christmas-time is magical for kids of all ages. But did you ever care to know the actual science behind the magic that Santa brings each year?

The science is finally explained and families find out from Dr. Kaboom as he takes the audience on an interactive and thrilling scientific exploration into Santa's

secrets.

This hilarious show explains to the audience how Santa climbs down tight chimneys, makes reindeer fly and, most importantly, knows who has been bad or good.

The Science of Santa on Dec. 20 at 11 am. Tickets range from \$20 to \$28.

NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts [566 LaGuardia Pl. at W. Third Street in NoHo; (212) 992-8484; nyuskirball.org].

Library, 249-01 Northern Blvd. at 249th Street; (718) 225-8414; www.queenslibrary.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Irene Failenbogen shares the music of the season. Light refreshments served.

Jingle Bell swing: Poppenhusen Library, 121-23 14th Avenue; (718) 359-1102; 5-6 pm; Free.

Richard Lanham gets the whole family into the spirit with carols and songs including "Winter Wonderland" and "Silent Night."

THURS, DEC. 11

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: 3 pm to 5 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FRI, DEC. 12

IN QUEENS

"The Elf on the Shelf": Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; 7 pm; Free.

A special reading, scavenger hunt and crafts.

"The Elf on the Shelf": Barnes and Noble, 23-80 Bell Blvd.; (718) 224-1083; www.barnesandnoble.com; 7 pm; Free.

A special reading, scavenger hunt and crafts.

SAT, DEC. 13

IN QUEENS

Winter wildlife: Albert H. Mauro Playground, Park Drive East and 73rd Avenue Terrace; (718) 352-1769; 9 am; Free.

Join with rangers and learn about raptors, falcons, salamanders and deer. Bring binoculars and field guides or ask a Ranger to borrow a pair. Weather appropriate clothing. For older children.

Hanukkah storytime: Barnes and Noble, 23-80 Bell Blvd.; (718) 224-1083; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Jewish bedtime stories and songs and a special reading of Woody Guthrie's "Honeyky Hanukkah," followed by a coloring activity.

Deck the Halls: King Manor Museum - Rufus King Park, 150th Street and 89th Avenue; (718) 206-0545 X 13; www.nycgovparks.org; Noon-3 pm; Free.

Hands-on-History offers visitors an opportunity to celebrate the holidays with a special tour of the museum and learn how the King family celebrated the season. Create your own traditional winter and holiday decorations.

Drop-in workshop: Noon–5 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

"A Town Called Panic": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

This animated film is shown as part of the See it Big Program, which features the movies on the big screen. This selection is suitable for children 9 years and older.

Gingerbread Lane Workshop: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 1:30–3:30 pm; \$10 (\$8 members).

Marvel at creative culinary constructions of gumdrops, candy, icing and gingerbread. Participants receive a kit with pieces, icing and candy. Register on day of; space limited.

Solstice Star celebration: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd.; (718) 229-4000; 7–9 pm; \$12 (\$18 non-members; \$9 children 9–12).

Join with astronomer Mark Freilich for an evening of viewing the winter stars and a party in honor of the start of winter.

Handel's "Messiah": Colden Auditorium, Kupferberg Center for the Arts, Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd.; (718) 544-2996; www.kupferbergcenter.org; 7:30 pm; \$20.

The beloved choral work is performed by the Queens Choral Society.

SUN, DEC. 14

IN QUEENS

Birding: Ridgewood Reservoir, Vermont Place and Highland Blvd.; (718) 352-1769; www.nycgovparks.org; 9 am; Free.

Rangers guide you to the best viewing spots to explore nature and discover where all the feathered friends live. Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Wear weather-appropriate clothing. Older children.

Festival and workshop: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtownhall.org; 1 pm; Free.

Celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa with an art-making workshop and storytelling. Storyteller Robin Bady shares favorite stories of miracles, menorahs and dreidels; Timothy Bellavia leads a workshop to create Christmas wreaths using up-cycled fabrics and ribbons; and storyteller Tammy Hall shares tales from African traditions. RSVP required.

Hanukkah storytime: Barnes &



Fun at the museum

Come and spend a Sunday afternoon at the Nassau County Museum of Art on Dec. 14 and 28.

Families come together to create, collaborate, converse, and make fun projects. Tour the gallery, view the exhibits, and then explore new art materials — break out the construction

paper, glitter, and pipe cleaners to make a fun art project to take home.

Sundays at the Museum, Dec. 14 and 28 from 1 pm to 4 pm. Free with museum admission.

Nassau County Museum of Art [1 Museum Dr. at Route 25A in Roslyn, (516) 484-9338, www.nassaumuseum.org].

Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; 1 pm; Free.

Jewish bedtime stories and songs and a special reading of Woody Guthrie's "Honeyky Hanukkah," followed by a coloring activity.

Craft table: Shops at SkyView Center, 40-24 College Point Blvd. at Roosevelt Avenue; (718) 886-3800; www.nycgovparks.org; 2–4 pm; Free.

Hosted by the Queens Botanical Garden, come to Level B and make a winter-themed pendant for key chains or a necklace. Supplied are limited.

FURTHER AFIELD

House Tour: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Noon–1 pm; \$10.

Teens tour the historic bones of the house and view the many layers that were added, subtracted and changed over the last 230 years. Reservations required; only 10 persons per tour.

Sundays at the Museum: Nassau County Museum of Art, 1 Museum Dr. at Rt. 25A, Long Island; (516) 484-9337; www.nassaumuseum.org.

org; 1–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Create, collaborate, and converse each week and make a fun project.

Movie Matinees: BAM Kids, 30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place, Brooklyn; (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org; 2 pm; \$7 children 12 and younger (\$10 adults; \$9 for BAM members).

The BAM series offers the perfect opportunity for families to introduce their children to the classics on the big screen, featuring "The Muppet Christmas Carol."

Amelia Robinson of Mil's Trills: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Seh's back with an interactive concert of her original quirky songs on her famous ukulele. Great for children birth to 4 years old.

THURS, DEC. 18

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: 3 pm to 5 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See

Thursday, Dec. 4.

FRI, DEC. 19

IN QUEENS

"Persepolis": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 7 pm; Free with museum admission.

This animated film is shown as part of the See it Big Program which features the movies on the big screen. Teens older than 14 years will enjoy this selection.

Holiday stories: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; 7 pm; Free.

Special storytime featuring "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "The Night Before Christmas," come in PJs.

Holiday stories: Barnes and Noble, 23-80 Bell Blvd.; (718) 224-1083; www.barnesandnoble.com; 7 pm; Free.

Special storytime featuring "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "The Night Before Christmas," come in PJs.

SAT, DEC. 20

IN QUEENS

Drop-in workshop: Noon–5 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

Winter preparedness: Alley Pond Park Adventure Center, Alley Pond Park; (718) 217-6034; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 1 pm; Free.

Urban Rangers teach the techniques necessary to survive in the wilderness in extreme weather. For children 8 years and older.

"Coraline" in 3-D: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Part of See It Big program, which offers animated flicks on the big screen. This 2009 movie is presented in Dolby Digital 3-D and features the voices of Dakota Fanning, Teri Hatcher, John Hodgman, and Ian McShane. This coming-of-age tale is based on the children's novel by Neil Gaiman.

SUN, DEC. 21

IN QUEENS

"Toy Story 2": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Part of See It Big program, which

Continued on page 32

Calendar

Our online calendar is updated daily at www.NYParenting.com/calendar

Continued from page 31

offers animated flicks on the big screen. Woody is back along with the whole gang in this 1999 sequel and stars the voices of Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, and Joan Cusack.

Holiday Concert jam: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtowndhall.org; 2 pm; \$5 (Free for members and students).

Queens College alum Alex Schirling, Erick Urgiles and Classical Singer's Career Development Club perform a medley of seasonal songs.

Kwanzaa: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 2-3 pm; Free.

Celebrate the holiday with music, time-honored traditional West African percussion instruments and vocals.

FURTHER AFIELD

Winter Solstice: Nassau County Museum of Art, 1 Museum Dr. at Rt 25A, Long Island; (516) 484-9338; www.nassaumuseum.org; 1-4 pm; \$8 plus museum admission.

Celebrate light on the shortest day of the year and create a nature-inspired lantern, listen to a winter-themed story, and design a tea sampler using traditional Chinese chop stamps.

FRI, DEC. 26

IN QUEENS

Open House: Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy.; (718) 347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; Noon-4 pm; Free.

Enjoy the farm house decorated in all its holiday finery plus children's activities and mulled cider.

"Ratatouille": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 7 pm; Free with museum admission.

This animated film is shown as part of the See it Big Program, which features the movies on the big screen. Features the voices of Brad Garrett, Lou Romano, and Patton Oswalt. Recommended for children 6 and older.

SAT, DEC. 27

IN QUEENS

Open House: Noon-4 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Friday, Dec. 26.

Remake the holidays: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Noon-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children bend, twist, light, and sculpt a new version of the season.

The Haiyun Choir: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 1:30 - 3 pm; Free.

Celebrate Christmas and New Year's with traditional carols and Chinese folk songs.

Gingerbread Lane Workshop: 1:30-3:30 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Dec. 13.

"Ratatouille": 3:30 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Friday, Dec. 26.

Night sky: Passarella Ramp at David Dinkins Circle, Perimeter Rd. in Flushign Meadows Center; (718) 352-1769; www.nycgovparks.org; 6 pm; Free.

Urban rangers are the guides to the wonders of the universe and lead you on a stargaze and exploration of the night sky. Learn about the solar system, discuss the science, history and folklore of the universe. Call ahead if weather conditions are not clear.

SUN, DEC. 28

IN QUEENS

Open House: Noon-4 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Friday, Dec. 26.

Remake the holidays: Noon-4 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Dec. 27.

"Ratatouille": 3:30 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Friday, Dec. 26.

FURTHER AFIELD

Sundays at the Museum: 1-4 pm. Nassau County Museum of Art. See Sunday, Dec. 14.

MON, DEC. 29

IN QUEENS

Remake the holidays: Noon-4 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Dec. 27.

TUES, DEC. 30

IN QUEENS

Remake the holidays: Noon-4 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Dec. 27.

WED, DEC. 31

FURTHER AFIELD

New Year's Eve Fireworks: Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West, Brooklyn; 11 pm; Free.

Start the celebration with entertainment, hot refreshments and the firework extravaganza at midnight. Ring out the old and bring in the new, but don't forget to bring blankets and chairs; come early to get the perfect spot.

LONG-RUNNING

IN QUEENS

Science Playground: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Wed, Dec. 31; \$4, plus museum admission.

Children are encouraged to explore science through slides, seesaws, climbing webs, a water play area, sand boxes, and more, weather permitting.

Rocket Park Mini Golf: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Wed, Dec. 31; \$6 (adults), \$5 (children and seniors), plus museum admission.

Golfers of all ages can learn about key science concepts such as propulsion, gravity, escape velocity, launch window, gravitational assist, and more!

Gingerbread Lane Exhibit: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Daily, 10 am-4 pm, Now - Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

Marvel at creative culinary constructions of gumdrops, candy, icing and gingerbread.

"Galapagos: Nature's Wonderland in 3D": New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 11 am & 2 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 & 3 pm, Now - Sun, Dec. 21; \$6 adults; \$5 children.

In this 3D movie, travel to the Galapagos archipelago to meet giant half-ton tortoises and marine iguanas that spit sea-salt from their noses, hunt fishes with the colorful blue-footed boobies, and swim with tiny penguins.

Youth Adaptive Swim: Roy Wilkins Family Center, Baisley Blvd and 177th St.; Fridays, 4 pm, Now - Sat, Feb. 7, 2015; Free with recreation center membership.

Children and teens with disabilities can practice swimming skills in this adaptive swim program.

Digital Media workshop: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Friday, Dec. 5, 4 pm; Friday, Jan. 9, 4 pm; Friday, Jan. 23, 4 pm; Friday, Feb. 6, 4 pm; Friday, Feb. 27, 4 pm; Friday, March 13, 4 pm; Friday, March 27, 4 pm; Friday, April 17, 4 pm; Friday, May 1, 4 pm; Free.

Teens hang out and experiment with different media making activities. For children 14 years and older only.

FURTHER AFIELD

More than meets the "I": Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays - Sundays, 10 am-5 pm, Now - Mon, Jan. 19, 2015; \$9 general admission (Children under one free).

The new exhibit at the museum provides young scientists the opportunity to explore innovations in biology, health, robotics, and technology.

Touch tank: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm, Now - Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages touch a starfish, a horseshoe crab, or a sea snail.

Holiday Train Show: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays - Saturdays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Mon, Jan. 19, 2015; \$20 (\$8 children, Free for children under 2).

The annual tradition is open again. Model trains are enlivened amid the glow of twinkling lights in Victorian style glasshouses featuring replicas of New York landmarks crafted of natural materials by designer Paul Busse's team. Closed Christmas Day.

Bug out!: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 pm, Now - Thurs, Dec. 18; Free with museum admission.

Feeling brave? Meet grasshoppers, worms, stick bugs and Madagascar hissing cockroaches.

Needlework and games: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1-3 pm, beginning Sat, Dec. 6; \$3.

Join in with staff and make a small sampler and play board games.

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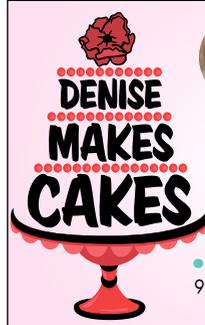
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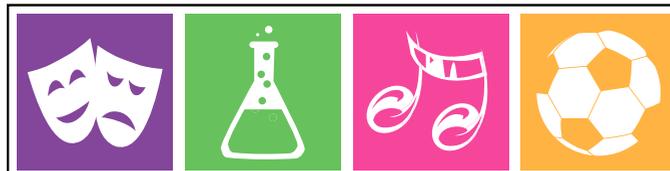
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THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER



Sweet treat for little writers

Grandma says you have a sweet tooth. You're not sure which one it is, but it might be the one that loves biting into cookies. It could be the tooth that chomps into cake or candy, or maybe it's the one that loves a lick of ice cream.

Those things are really yummy, so maybe Grandma was right. And when you read "How to Bake a Book" by Ella Burfoot, you'll find another thing you'll like to bite into.

When someone bakes cookies, she probably start by putting her favorite pans on the kitchen counter. She gathers mixing cups and bowls, spoons and sheets, eggs and sugar, flour and chocolate. Each thing she uses has a certain job.

There's a recipe to follow when you bake cookies — but when you're baking a book, it's quite a different thing.

The first ingredient you need is a cup full of ideas. Then you'll want to stir in words, but be careful! The big words will take some extra stirring.

You definitely want your book to be tasty, so you'll need plenty of flavorings. That means you'll want to

drop in reds and blues and greens, three spoonfuls of pink and one of purple. Add in zap! And oh! And wow! And zing! Sprinkle in a bit of silliness, a smile or two, commas and periods at the end of the sentences, some sad things and lots of happy ones, and add two or three pictures that you can only see when you close your eyes and think.

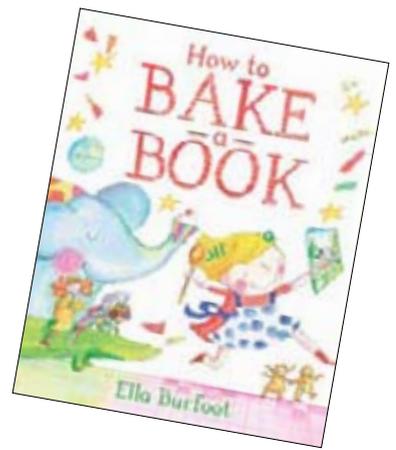
Now cover it all up and wait.

Like the little girl in this book, you won't know what your book is about until you roll it out on the counter, add your best filling to make it "thrilling," decorate it with your favorite things, and bake it well.

When it's done, you'll shake the pan, ease it onto the table, and take a look. Doesn't it smell good? Flip through the pages and take a nibble.

Congratulations, Chef! You've made a delicious, yummy book!

Could it be true that lifelong readers and lifelong foodies both need to start early in their passions? I'll bet it is — which is why "How to Bake a Book" could be a good addition to your (pretend) kitchen.



With a cute rhyme and colorful illustrations, author Ella Burfoot tells the story of a little girl who takes to the oven to create her own story. Just like cookies or pies, there are many steps to a tasty tale and ingredients that magically help "flavor" the recipe — both of which result in sprinkles of giggles, a slice of fun, and icing on your day.

I think this may be a perfect read-aloud for kids 18 months to 4 years old, especially if they have a fascination with the culinary arts and love to "help" in the kitchen. For them (and for the grown-up who gets to read this aloud), "How to Bake a Book" is the sweetest story.

"How to Bake a Book," by Ella Burfoot [32 pages, 2014, \$16.99].

A dark 'Red,' 'White,' and 'Blue' history

A move from California to Colorado is at the heart of the new book "Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky" by Sandra Dallas — but this move was not voluntary.

Twelve-year-old Tomi Itano hoped that her little brother, Hiro, wouldn't notice the hurtful word on the door of the grocery store. It made her cringe that he was 7 years old and was perfectly able to read the word "Japs."

It was 1942, and the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. America entered World War II soon after, which meant plenty of discrimination for Japanese-Americans like the Itanos. Tomi, Hiro, and their older brother, Roy, had been born in America, but that didn't seem to matter to many in their California town.

Mom said "Shikata ga nai" ("It cannot be helped"). Pop just kept working on the strawberry farm where they all lived — until the day the FBI showed up, arrested him, and took him away to prison camp. Shortly af-

terward, the rest of the Itanos packed a single suitcase and were forced to move to a relocation camp.

Ellis, Colorado, was nothing at all like California, and Tallgrass Camp was nothing like the strawberry farm. Tomi's family lived in a barracks surrounded by barbed wire, in an area that didn't seem like it would grow anything. There was a school and a community hall where mom taught other Japanese-American women to sew, but the Itanos didn't much like living there — especially without pop. Still, they made friends and started new projects, and things returned to a new kind of normal.

Then the one thing Tomi wanted more than anything finally happened — but it made her mad and bitter. The Itanos were as American as anybody, so why were they treated as if they weren't? She couldn't stop being angry, until her brother asked her to do something very important.

Based loosely on real history and internment camps in the U.S., "Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky" is a

fascinating story, both for kids and for adults.

In addition to explaining the history, author Sandra Dallas says in her afterword that, years ago, she met a couple of Japanese-American journalists who'd spent the war years in camps, and their stories were the basis for bits of this book.

My favorite part here is that Dallas's Tomi is EveryGirl circa 1946, despite what she and her family endures. That will resonate with young readers, who will very easily identify with her.

While boys can surely enjoy this book, it's meant more for girls ages 9 to 12, particularly those who love historically based chapter books. For them, "Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky" is golden.

"Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky," by Sandra Dallas [216 pages, 2014, \$15.95].

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was 3 years old, and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill with two dogs and 12,000 books.

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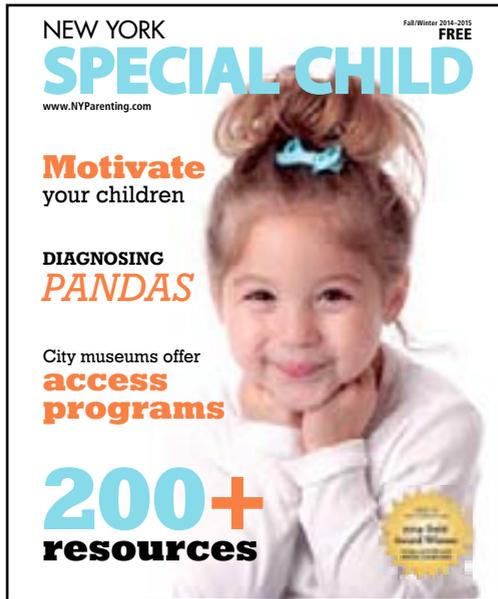
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