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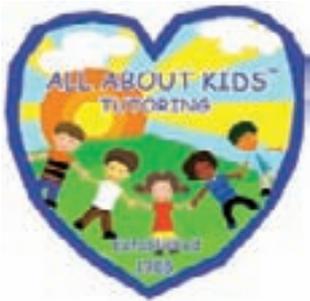
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September 2010



Letter from the publisher

Summer is just about over and the kids are going back to school. How quickly it all goes. Everyone I talk with feels that the film of our lives has been put on a fast-speed cycle. Did time used to move more slowly



or was it only our imagination? Now the rush is on to buy supplies and clothes and to begin another year of juggling school, and after-school for most parents. This issue presents a special section to help you see many of the possibilities that are available in your communities. Dance, sports, music, martial arts, and supplementary learning programs or tutoring are just some of the offerings. Make sure you sign your kids up for something, because the benefits are priceless. Whether it's learning to operate on a team or an individual discipline, they are sure to build self-esteem and to expand in ways that will enhance their overall development.

This issue is loaded with helpful columns and articles, and we are proud of our contributing writers and their fine efforts. In particular this month, we focus on the serious and tragic reality of driveway deaths in our suburbs and in our city communities where driveways are prevalent. This is both a local and national issue and deserves the involvement of every caring person to see that laws are changed and that cars are equipped with the necessary hardware to make these accidents come to an end. You, too, can get involved, and organizations are mentioned that could use your input and assistance.

September is usually quite a glorious month. We typically have what they still call "Indian Summer" days, and it's a terrific time to use weekends to see surrounding scenery, or to visit our parks, preserves, beaches, playgrounds, or to be a sideline parent watching your kids on the soccer fields, ball fields, or swimming laps. Have fun with your kids and have a great month. We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did while putting it together.

Thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher



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STAFF

PUBLISHER: Clifford Luster
PUBLISHER/MANAGING EDITOR: Susan Weiss
EDITOR: Vince DiMiceli
CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Leah Mitch
ART DIRECTOR: On Man Tse
ADVERTISING SALES: Sharon Noble, Nancy Swiezy, Richard Kramer, Linda Smith
SPECIAL ASSISTANT: Tina Felicetti

CONTACT INFORMATION

ADVERTISING SALES
718 260-2587
Family@cnglocal.com or
SWeiss@cnglocal.com

CIRCULATION
718 260-8336
TFelicetti@cnglocal.com

EDITORIAL
718 260-4551
Editorial@cnglocal.com

ADDRESS
Family Publications New York/CNG
1 MetroTech Center North
10th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
www.webfamilyny.com



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NEWBIE DAD

BRIAN KANTZ

Strange bedfellows

Two boys in the same bedroom equals mayhem

We own a three-bedroom house. Therefore, simple mathematics (and believe me, that's all the math I can handle) dictates that our two boys should have their own rooms. Lucky dudes, I know. And that's the way it was — until recently. We just couldn't leave well enough alone.

You see, one day, some friends began extolling the virtues of having younger children share a bedroom. Their kids loved the set up, they said. Sharing a bedroom allowed

his cell — whoops, I mean bedroom — and one of us take the 3-year-old to his. Once they were each in bed, that was it. Nighty-night, sleep-tight, don't let the bedbugs bite, and my wife and I had the rest of the night off.

But was this routine denying our boys essential bonding time? Were they missing out on vital life lessons? Would it be our fault if our two boys grew up as perfect strangers?

How could we be so cruel, forcing them to have their own bedrooms!

We also began thinking of the space benefits that such a move would provide. We could use the third bedroom as a nice guest room. Or outfit it as a home office. It could be a very utilitarian space.

So, after mulling the idea around a bit — and envisioning our boys bonding blissfully over their shared estate — my wife and I decided that we should give it a try. They would share a bedroom.

“Boys, your mom and I think it would be a great idea if you...,” I couldn't even get the sentence out of my mouth before pandemonium erupted.

The kids began jumping up and down and, get this, hugging. They absolutely loved the idea. Little did I realize at that moment what was to come. I should have seen it in their scheming eyes.

The next day, we moved the older boy's bed into the younger one's room. Despite our strict, no jumping on the bed — except in a hotel — rule, Thing 1 and Thing 2 immediately hopped onto their respective mattresses, bounced straight up and down a few times, and then started jumping from bed to bed. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth... and back and forth.

Next, the pair sprinted into the momentarily spare bedroom and quickly put dibs on the space as their new playroom. They started hauling their stuff in like a couple of squatters. Pretty soon, an infrastructure had

been established (toy train tracks ran from one end of the room to the other) and a full-court Fisher Price basketball court was seeing some furious “little boys can't jump” action.

The brothers' teamwork didn't stop there. Their first night together — and pretty much every night since — they collaborated on some world-class bedtime stall tactics. Gotta read one more story. Gotta go to the bathroom again. Gotta get a drink of water. Then the other one starts — he's gotta read one more story, go to the bathroom again and get a drink of water.

Once the lights go out and my wife and I go downstairs, the late-night comedy routine begins. I must admit, it's better than Conan. Knock-knock jokes are a favorite, even though 99 percent of them make no sense whatsoever. Knock-knock. Who's there? Pillow. Pillow who? Pillow who drinks orange juice. (Wild laughter ensues.) Knock-knock. Who's there? Blanket. Blanket who? Blanket who drinks orange juice. (More laughter.)

Once the boys finally do fall asleep, even stranger things happen. When we check on them in the middle of the night, we'll find that they've switched beds, or one is in bed and the other is on the floor, or they are in bed together stacked up like firewood, or they are in bed together with one sleeping with his head on the pillow and the other one turned around with his dirty feet on the same pillow. When I see this, I just shake my head and go back to bed.

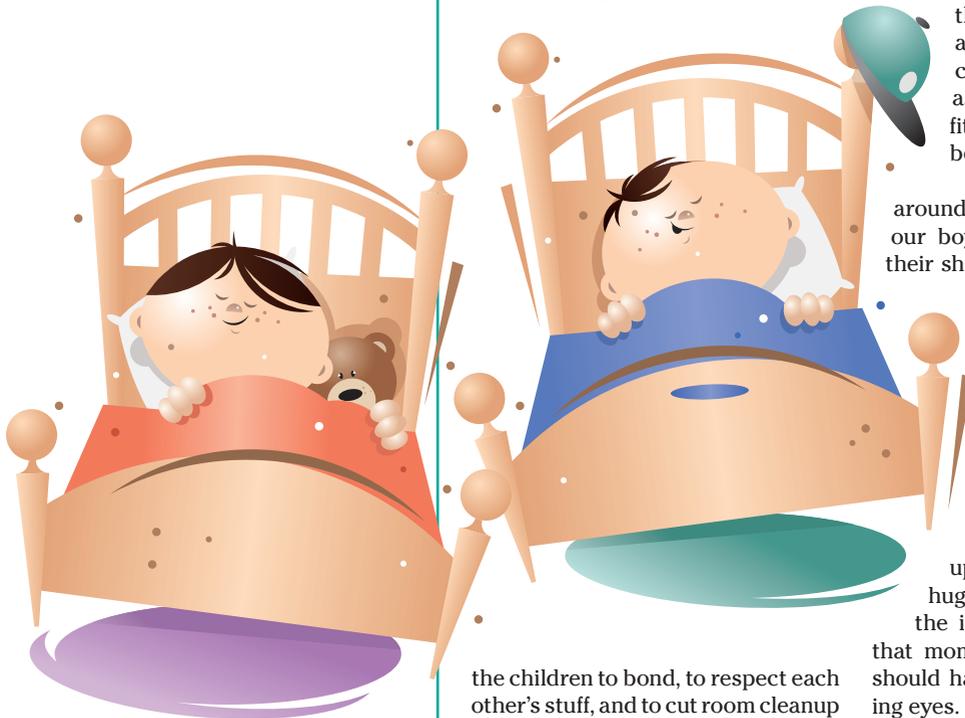
My dad used to have a saying about me and my three brothers:

“You're good boys when you're sleeping, but when you're awake, you're rascals.”

Well, I suppose I need to revise that one for my own kids:

“You're good boys when you're awake, but when you're sleeping, you're rascals.”

Brian Kantz has to admit it: using a spare bedroom for full-court mini-basketball is way better than using it for a home office. Visit Brian online at www.briankantz.com or drop him a note at thenewbiedad@yahoo.com.



the children to bond, to respect each other's stuff, and to cut room cleanup time in half. The arrangement had wonderful benefits for the parents, too, our friends claimed. In sharing a bedroom, the kids practically put themselves to sleep each night and the siblings comforted each other — instead of automatically hightailing it into mom and dad's bedroom when they heard a bump in the night.

Although our “state penitentiary” approach to the bedtime routine had been working like a charm, my wife and I let a tiny little shadow of parental doubt creep in. We had successfully negated any opportunity for nighttime mischief by having one of us take our 5-year-old boy directly to

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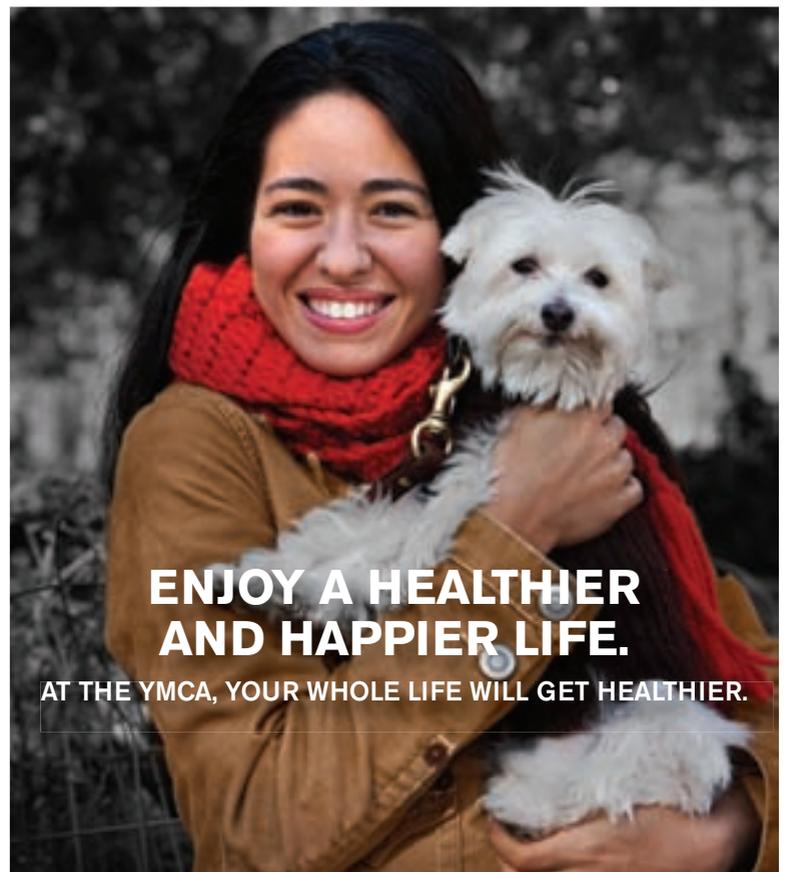
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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Post-grad minefield

Get a handle on your teen's college search

My son is now a junior in high school. You know what that means — it's time to start thinking about college. I'm overwhelmed, plain and simple. My son even knows what he is going into, and I'm still frazzled. It's a daunting task and one I'd love to find reason to avoid, but my son needs my assistance and support with his search.

I've learned that a good place to start is with other parents and students who have already gone through the process. There is a plethora of information on the Internet, so one can easily get more confused. Find out the sources others deemed most beneficial.

Put it in perspective

Your teen's search should be an exciting and gratifying experience, so don't put too much pressure on him.

"When parents cannot control their anxiety, the college search process becomes miserable for everyone," says Bruce G. Hammond, coauthor of "Fiske Guide to Getting into the Right College" and "Fiske What to Do When for College" (Sourcebooks, Inc. 2007). "Parents must remember that attending a particular college will not make or break a young person's future. A young person's life trajectory will have much more to do with what happens after they get to college than with which one they attend."

Narrow it down

Many believe that narrowing down your choices by location is a necessary first step. Does your teen want to be close to home or does he want to experience life someplace else? Will he want to be part of a large school community or a small one? Does he prefer a serene, rural environment or an urban lifestyle? You'd be surprised how much you can narrow your choices just on location alone.

Next, find the right academic fit. Many websites provide you with various search options, such as specific majors. If your teen is unsure of his



course of study, look at schools with a variety of choices in majors, rather than colleges that specialize in a few areas. Don't get stuck in cyberspace, either. Consult a variety of sources — counselors, teachers, alumni, and guides.

Financial restrictions

Don't automatically disregard colleges which you deem "unaffordable" at first glance. For instance, you might consider a community college for the first two years. Successful community college graduates are often offered scholarships for their next two years at some universities.

As you look into financial aid, don't forget to pursue merit scholarships.

"The vast majority of money for college comes via the institution where the student chooses to enroll," Hammond explains. "Colleges use scholarships to offer discounts to students they are particularly in-

terested in. Students should keep in mind their odds of getting a scholarship are best when they are at or near the top of the applicant pool."

Make the most visits

Try to narrow down the list to about seven to 10 colleges. Be sure to include colleges where acceptance seems certain. Campus visits are the next step. You might find that your teen just doesn't like the vibe at a particular school, but this is what the college visit is all about! Talk to students on campus and ask them what they like most (and least) about the school.

"Students should take a comparative approach to college visits," advises Hammond. "Identify a few important criteria, and look for the same things at each place. Record your impressions soon after you leave."

The college search can be tough, but following these steps can make it a lot easier.

Tips and tales

"Students should close their eyes and picture an ideal college campus. Is it a large or small campus? Is it near a big city or in a small college town? If they know what they want to study, are there special opportunities offered?"

Marisa Merlino, Director of Guidance, Hyde Park Central District

"Search for information on high school websites under 'Guidance' — not just your local school's website! Check out video tours on websites — try youuniversitytv.com."

Patty Johnson, Salt Point, NY

Share your ideas

Upcoming topic:

What to do if your teen doesn't want to be seen with you in public.

Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to: myrnahaskell@gmail.com or visit: <http://home.roadrunner.com/~haskellfamily/myrna/>

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer and columnist specializing in parenting issues and children's development. She is the mother of two teenagers.



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Heading back!

Get smarter
about back
to school
this year

BY CAROLINE A. SHEARER

The first day of school brings with it big changes from the carefree times of summer. Days that were filled with swimsuits, picnics in the park and cartoons now will be stacked with classroom routines, after-school activities, and homework. With all the upcoming energy and excitement that are sure to be part of a brand new school year, we've laid out a few tips to help kids and parents prepare.

Day in, day out

Transition kids to the new school year by starting a new bedtime at least two weeks before school. It also can be helpful to practice the morning routine, particularly if kids will have trouble eating a healthy breakfast.

"A lot of children don't feel like having breakfast in the morning because they are not used to getting

up that early," explains kindergarten teacher Cathy Kietlinski, who knows a few things about the first day of school — she has brought in a new school year for her students 26 times.

On the first day of school, it's very important that parents notify their children's new teachers how they will be getting home the first day and all subsequent days.

"As long as we know where they are supposed to be, we will get them to the right place," says Kietlinski.

For home preparation, she says it is beneficial for parents to create a space strictly for children's school items — like backpacks and lunch boxes — so kids can get everything ready to go the night before, including the next day's clothing.

"It will save a lot of stress on the parents if they have everything prepared."

Having a set location for school items helps you in the long run.

"Have one spot where your child puts their papers for you to see or their agenda for you to sign, and then you'll always know to look for it. Little things like that can really help out," says Patricia Detrich, an 11-year teaching veteran.

The third grade teacher says parents need to help kids learn organization skills.

"Students need a lot of help at the beginning of the year to stay on top of this. Once school starts, kids have materials and folders and books and papers that need to be signed. The kids who are the most successful with that have parents who check their backpack every day or ask them for papers that need to be signed," she explains.

In addition to organizational concerns, Detrich thinks it is important to prepare kids for some of the social issues they may face.

"One of the most important messages parents can convey is to help your child learn personal responsibility. It is very important for students to learn that they can make decisions for themselves, to do the right thing, to not get involved in certain behaviors they might see, and to not prolong conflicts. I have found that, for some students, it is difficult to take responsibility for their own actions. They want to blame other kids; they try to point fingers."

Another way to keep kids prepared for school through the summer is to ensure they continue to read.

"Reading needs to be all summer long," says Detrich. "Kids who don't read during the summer don't keep up with certain reading skills — they might be starting out the next grade level a little bit behind their peers. Some parents think it's time to take a break from reading in the summer, but research shows that kids who read a lot tend to be the best readers," and, in turn, tend to be the most successful at performance tests. She says kids should read a variety of texts — fiction and non-fiction books and also children's magazines.

Focusing on safety

Whether kids are walking to the bus stop or to school or riding a bicycle, one of the most basic safety rules is never to travel alone. There is strength in numbers, even in small kids. Predators look for the lone sheep, the most vulnerable person. Lots of times they will bypass a group of kids to get to one that is walking alone.

While "Stranger Danger" is often used as a catch phrase, it can be better to teach about situations. Try to show kids to be aware of the situations and actions that are out of the ordinary. Is it normal for an adult to ask a child for help? No, it's not. If kids are approached by someone asking for directions, for example, they should go back the opposite way.

It's also important to teach children to follow their instincts. If

something feels uncomfortable or not right, kids should be taught to distance themselves, even if potential danger doesn't seem physically close. If your child is waiting for the bus and there is a guy waiting on the other side of the street and your child feels uncomfortable, that is enough. That is when the child needs to go home or go somewhere and tell an adult. There is no set distance — the distance is when the child feels uncomfortable. He needs to learn to listen to his inner voice.

Parents, in response, must listen to children's concerns. If they've got a fear about a person, it's usually legitimate. The instinct is to have natural fear or a natural inclination that something is not

right. So many times we don't pay attention to that or downplay it. We need to cultivate that instinct trust in our children.

With children who stay home alone after school, it is important they be taught to lock the door immediately upon arrival and that it is never okay to open the door or window. Children also should be taught how to use 911 and should know to call from a home phone, rather than a mobile phone. This is because home phones are more likely to automatically show a location when 911 is called.

When kids get sick, a parent or a designated adult will need to pick them up from school. Make sure there are several contacts listed for students, and be sure to keep work, home, and mobile phone numbers updated at the school office.

Top
Tips



Young ones

Kietlinski says there are certain preparations younger kids — like her kindergarteners — need to make.

“Children should practice dressing themselves so they can learn to manage snaps, buttons and zippers,” she says. “Also, they should be able to take care of all their own toileting needs, including washing their hands with soap after they go to the restroom.”

To make things smoother in the cafeteria, children should practice opening the containers or baggies they plan to use in their school lunches.

And Kietlinski says it is good to prepare kids to leave at home any sentimental items they may be used to carrying.

“They may have a cuddly or stuffed animal they like to carry, but the child needs to learn to leave their special toys or cuddlies at home. That can be a really difficult hurdle for some children.” Kietlinski also suggests parents label personal items that will be brought or worn to school, such as lunch kits, backpacks, jackets, and sweaters.

Parents should let the teacher take care of the child’s needs at this point.

“There will occasionally be a few tears at the beginning of a new school year,” she says of young kids. “Parents should give their child a reassuring hug and a kiss, and then

they need to leave. Otherwise, the parents’ body language is saying they are worried and unsure about leaving the child in the classroom.”

“Any good teacher is going to contact you immediately if there is a major problem.”

A fresh start

The end of summer is the perfect opportunity for kids to transition themselves to a better year.

“Summer break, I like a clean slate so you can start fresh in the new school year and leave behind the stuff that didn’t really work well for you in the last year. August is always a really cool transition time, when they are gearing up to think about school in a new way and just getting out of the relaxation frame of mind,” says Annie Drake, a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Once kids reach about fourth grade, Drake suggests taking them on an out of town trip in August and asking them, “If there was a rumor about you this year at school, what would you like the rumor to be?”

Keeping in mind rumors can be positive, their answers may range from, “She is really sweet” to “He’s not as geeky as last year” to “She’s so smart or getting such good grades.” Parents then can talk with their kids about how they might achieve this. It can be shedding the glasses, working out a study plan, finding ways to make new friends, or trying a new style of haircut or clothing.

“By taking them out of town, they

are able to dream a little bit more, especially if they’ve had a rough year the year before — with kids picking on them or if they had a rough time with grades. They can overcome those limitations when they get that break. Kids can transition to thinking, ‘I can have a new mindset about me.’” She says many times, kids will live up to their expectations.

Extracurriculars

A question many parents and kids face with a new school year is how many sports and extracurricular activities to juggle.

Parents should let kids participate in as many as they can handle — to a certain extent.

“You want them to participate in as many different things as possible. That way they can find out what their interests are and what they are good at — you never know until you try,” suggests Middle School Athletic Coordinator Josh Brevard.

Brevard does feel, however, that kids should be involved in only one activity at a time.

“Where I see kids get in to trouble is if they are involved in three different things at a time.” When they have a full day of school, then football from four to six, followed by a bite to eat, and then soccer from seven to nine, that may be too much, he says.

Instead, activities should be at a level “where the kids do not get burned out on sports and so it doesn’t

get too competitive for them.”

“Be careful about pushing your kid too hard. I see a lot of kids who get pushed too hard in junior high and high school so they can get a scholarship, but by the time senior year comes around, they are burned out and no longer want to play,” he cautions.

And sports do more for kids than just get them physically active.

“It’s always my belief that an active kid gets many benefits academically and socially. They’ve shown that sports actually help stimulate the brain, and the kids who are more active tend to make better grades,” the football, basketball, track and tennis coach says.

“Their social interaction with the other kids is huge. A lot of them get discipline, and they learn responsibility. They also learn teamwork, and they learn leadership. That is the main benefit of sports — we try to get them healthy and fit, but also our goal is to mold them to be young men and women who are beneficial to society. If they are active and involved, then they are being healthy, instead of being somewhere and doing something they shouldn’t be.”



GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Panic at the table

Food allergies less common than thought

The alarm over food allergies has changed day care and schools enormously. “No peanut zones” are commonplace in the lunchroom, while snack ingredient lists are subject to scrutiny by wary parents and teachers.

Yet, the number of children with food allergies may not be as large as we think.

According to a federally commissioned study published in the May 10 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the true incidence of food allergies is only about eight percent in children. It’s even less in adults — less than five percent. Yet, about 30 percent of people believe they have food allergies.

Researchers from VA Palo Alto Healthcare System and Stanford University pored over more than 12,000 allergy research studies, published between January 1988 and September 2009. Surprisingly, they concluded that only 72 studies were properly conducted to yield accurate conclusions.

Other findings in the study:

- Despite popular belief, breastfed infants do not suffer fewer allergies.
- Using probiotics along with breast milk, hypoallergenic formula, or both, may help prevent food allergies. But their effects on their own are not clear.
- Withholding eggs during the first year of life is not necessary.
- Food challenges, skin prick testing and blood tests for IgE antibodies all have a role to play in making



Q: Just how many kids are affected by peanut allergies?

A: The percentage of children with peanut allergies more than tripled — from 0.4 percent to 1.4 percent — since 1997, according to a new survey of 5,300 households published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

allergic reactions. Luckily, many children outgrow allergies to milk and eggs. But severe allergies to foods like peanuts, some fish, and shrimp can last all their lives.

Please note that I am not stating that parents are making up the symptoms and severity of their children’s food allergies. I

am simply reporting on a surprising peer-reviewed study published in a respected medical journal.

Raising a child with food allergies adds even more expense and effort to your role as parents. Very soon, an expert panel of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases will provide guidelines defining food allergies and giving criteria for diagnosis and management.

Hopefully, this will make your life just a little easier.

The information provided in this article is not intended to substitute for the advice of a medical doctor.

Helpful websites

Kids with Food Allergies: kidswithfoodallergies.org

Food Allergy Initiative: faiusa.org

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network: foodallergy.org

Christine M. Palumbo is a registered dietitian in suburban Chicago. She is a mother of three, only one of whom suffers from food allergies. Send your questions and column ideas to her at Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com or call (630) 369-8495.

a diagnosis. But no one test is sensitive or specific enough to be recommended over the other tests.

• While elimination diets are the mainstay of treatment, researchers could only find one randomized controlled trial — one of the most reliable study types — of an elimination diet. Part of the problem is that a randomized, controlled trial for serious life-threatening food allergy reactions is not only unnecessary, but unethical.

• It’s not clear whether or not food allergies are increasing.

Why is there so much confusion?

Food allergy and food intolerance often get mixed up. Only allergies involve the immune system. Food intolerance is more common than food allergy and occurs when the digestive tract cannot properly break down food. For example, the inability to digest the milk sugar, lactose, is an intolerance.

The most common food allergies are to proteins in cow’s milk, eggs, peanuts, wheat, soy, fish, shellfish and tree nuts. Peanuts and tree nuts are the leading cause of severe food

Watermelon-Blueberry Ice Pops

Makes about 10 three ounce pops.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 ¾ cups chopped seedless watermelon
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1-2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup fresh blueberries

INSTRUCTIONS: Puree watermelon, lime juice and sugar in a food processor or blender until smooth. Divide

blueberries among small paper cups or freezer-pop molds. Top with the watermelon mixture. Insert sticks and freeze until completely firm, about 6 hours. Dip the molds briefly in hot water before unmolding.

NUTRITION FACTS: 30 calories, 0 grams fat and cholesterol, 8 grams carbohydrate, 0 grams protein, 1 gram fiber, 1 milligram sodium

Recipe from eatingwell.com



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OUR RELATIONSHIPS

JOAN EMERSON

Baby makes stress

How does a child affect you and your spouse?

A new baby plus a new marriage equals major stress for both partners — and yet there's no guide available for first-time parents to help deal with this joyous and difficult time.

Until now.

From watching and hearing about these situations with family, friends, and clients — while remembering my own experience — I have seen that, along with the love, joy and wonder of watching a new life begin, stresses on the relationships between new mom and new dad are typical.

Yet, I also get the sense that it takes everyone by surprise.

It will be the goal of this column to discuss the conflicts that typically emerge during this time, and provide some of the tools needed to keep couples' connection intact and help new parents:

- Create a safe, loving place to reveal themselves and learn about their partner.
- Build a solid, reliable, loving relationship.
- Maturely work through the throes of the inevitable periods of disappointment and anger.

The July 12 edition of New York Magazine cover story "I Love My Children. I Hate My Life," described study upon study showing the stress of raising kids and the effect those children have on the relationships of the married individuals. Indeed, studies show that children reduce marital satisfaction and adversely affect relationships, with the hardest period being the baby-toddler stage. A walk to a nearby Barnes and Noble helped explain why that is the case.

In the "Relationships" section, there are shelves of books by theorists whose names we all know about how to work on creating suc-

cessful marriages. But there is nothing dedicated to the difficulties of new parenthood.

In the "Raising Your Children" section, there are the "What to Expect..." books along with topics like "how to talk to your child," and "advice to dad to let mom sleep and learn how to change diapers." But there is nothing directed at safeguarding a marriage after a child is born.

We all know that along with the warmth and pleasure associated with the new baby, there's a 'hold on for dear life' experience for at least the first six months: a period plagued with worry, lack of sleep, total unpredictability of the baby's behaviors and needs, insecurities, postpartum emotionality, differences in parenting approach, changes in roles, surprises and sometimes disappointments with the other parent's coping style.

It isn't until the child reaches the 6- to 12-year-old stage that marriages begin to bounce back to mom and dad remembering that they are also husband and wife.

So what can we do about the mar-

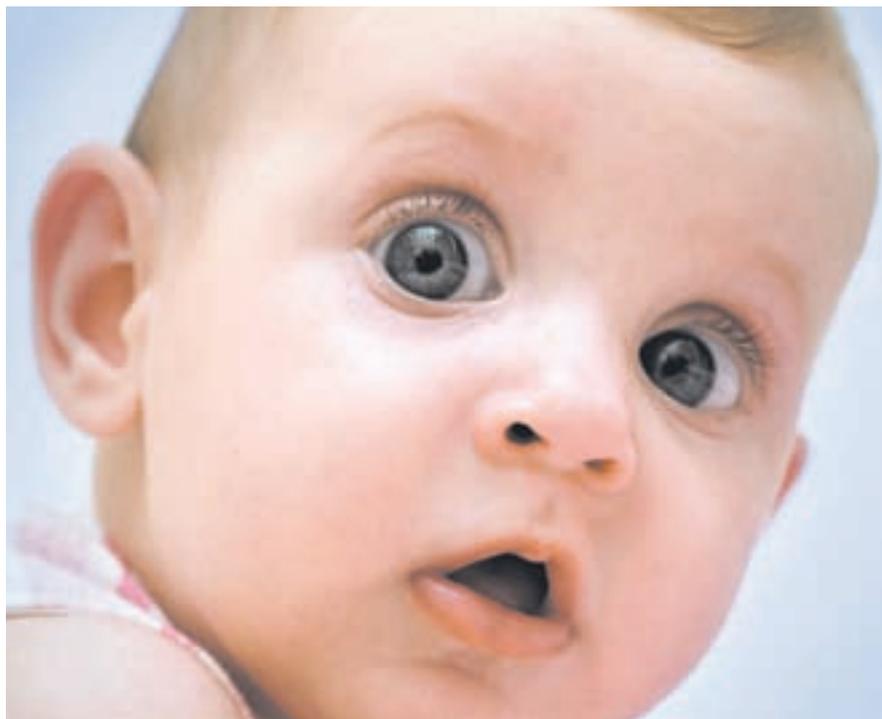
riage in the meanwhile?

One of the upsides that can evolve during this young-family phase of marriage is that partners will, for better and worse, really get to know new each other, as that time of euphoria during which we saw each other through the rosiest of colored glasses has passed. Instead, we can use this time to create a safe environment in which to reveal our hopes, fears, difficulties, secrets, disappointments, and wishes.

Sharing these most private vulnerabilities with each other and receiving empathy and reassurance are the building blocks of a strong bond between partners and lead into a stage of mature, safe and dependable love.

Next time we'll discuss one of the most basic rules for successful communication: being effective in expressing one's feelings, while giving your partner the feeling that they've really been heard and understood.

Joan Emerson is a New York psychologist who specializes in couples therapy. You can learn more about her by visiting her Web site at www.JoanEmerson.com



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1984-2010

Message in the music

City kids seek to empower their peers through song

BY HELEN KLEIN

A Bronx-based group of inspirational young people from around New York City spent their summer vacation bringing music, dance, and poetry to kids and adults in the five boroughs through a new performance program that aims to change the world “one song at a time.”

The 18 youths, who range in age from 8 to 22, put on close to 60 performances at camps, senior centers and the like as part of Music With a Message’s goal of providing positive environments for both participants

and their audience. But, the trip is worth it, he said.

“I didn’t know what path to take. Music With a Message made me a better person and made me a man at the same time,” Harris added.

For some, though, Music With a Message’s headquarters is right around the corner.

Eight-year-old Lauren Bryant, who lives in Parkchester in the Bronx and goes to PS 106 and is the youngest

them scrupulously — intended. The youngsters, he said, “Learned music not just as an industry but as a ministry,” during far-ranging outings that took them to Madison Square Garden, the U.S. Open and other venues, performing in front of both small groups and huge crowds.

“They had an opportunity to change how people feel,” Harris stressed. “Through entertainment, they were able to socially develop the community and social develop themselves.”

All the songs the group performs are original, with subjects ranging from local pride to asthma to the low-slung pants worn by many urban young men. Their common goal is empowering people not only to do the right thing, but be comfortable in their own skins and their own communities.

“Music opens up all these doors,” Harris added. “When we perform ‘Pull Your Pants Up,’ everyone in the audience is pulling their pants up.”

One particularly poignant song, “I Remember You,” takes on the grim subject of death, and was written, said Harris, because so many youngsters expressed a need for it, having known another young person who died violently at an early age.

“Kids are murdered at 12, 14, 16 years old, and no one was processing the deaths of these young people,” Harris said. Whenever Music With a Message performs this song, he went on, “We tell people to think about someone they lost, and remember a touch, remember a hug, remember loving. People laugh and cry.”

Music With A Message is an offshoot of Renaissance E.M.S., a Bronx-based non-profit organization that Harris founded with Darren Quinlan, to fill the gap in musical education for public school students whose schools don’t have music programs, and which also provides athletic programs for urban youngsters.

Further information on Music With a Message, and a calendar of the group’s September performances, can be found at www.musicwam.org, or call (718) 450-3466. For more information on Renaissance E.M.S. can be found at www.renaissance-ems.org.



Arthur De Gaeta

One of the troupe’s most popular numbers is “Keep Your Pants Up,” a message members clearly take to heart.

and their audience.

Being a part of the troupe has made her feel as if she can make a difference, said 18-year-old Ariel Miles, who lives in East New York and attends New York University. To explain exactly what participating has meant to her, she quoted Gandhi: “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

“I love performing and I love spreading the message,” Miles added, noting that she thrives in the close-knit atmosphere. “We have come to form a family and we are all committed. I think there should be more programs like this for youth.”

Some kids travel from outside the city to be part of the action.

Ronald Harris, 17, comes from Or-

member of the troupe.

“It’s really fun,” she said. “I like seeing people smile. I like seeing people having fun.”

But, being part of Music With a Message is more than that.

The songs, said her mom, Elaine, “Send a message. Look at things differently. Think outside the box, not with the crowd. If you teach just one person, you’re really doing your job.”

The kids benefit as much as anyone else, Bryant added.

“I have seen the kids really grow, musically, mentally, socially.”

That’s exactly what Bervine Harris — who the professional musician who developed the group, auditioned all participants, and trains

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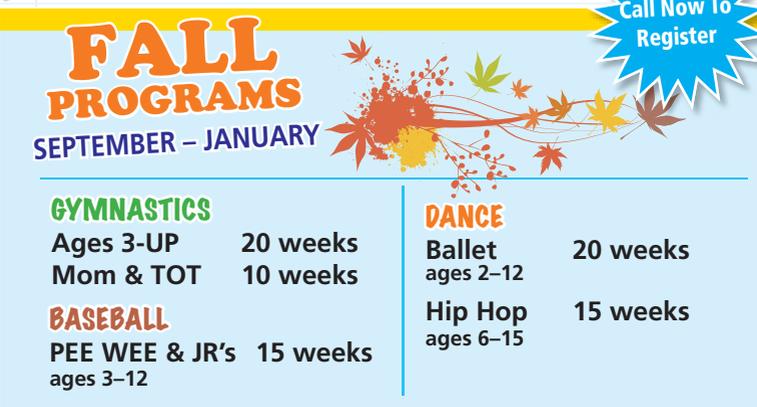
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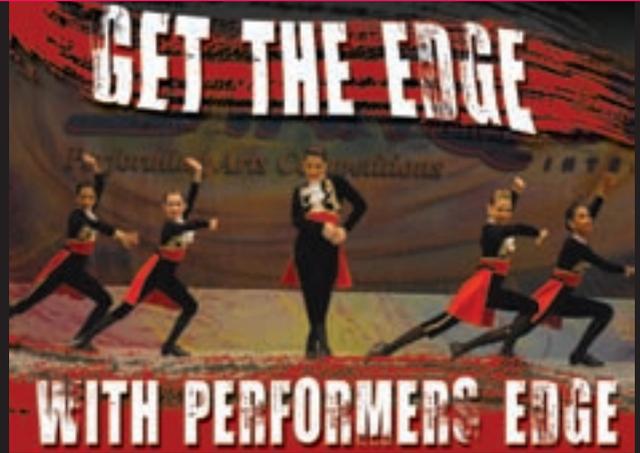
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JACQUELINE AND
KERRY DONELLI

Brat attack!

What to do when your best friends' kids misbehave

Dear Twins,

My husband and I have been best friends with another couple since high school, and now they have two children and we have three. They quite often invite our entire family over for dinner, and of course, we reciprocate. The difference is that we have taught our children to have table manners, and you'd think their kids were raised in a barn. They scream and yell at the table, fight, reach across other people's plates for food, spit, and even throw food! And their parents barely say a word! We're such close friends with the parents that I don't want to make waves. How do I handle this?

— *Boiling Mad*

Kerry says: I would suggest one of three things. Option one: tell your friend that because the kids (it is not necessary to point out it's only hers) get rambunctious, why don't the adults have dinner alone from now on; thus whosever's turn it is to bring the kids, will instead hire a babysitter, and whoever is serving will feed the kids in advance. Option two: go out to dinner; after all, you are adults and can't possibly always want to have adult conversations in front of your children (and I bet the children don't much care for it either). Option three: tell your friend you think it's a better idea for the kids to eat together at a separate table in a different room so you can enjoy each other's company in peace.

Jacqueline says: The truth is, there is not much you can do when



your friends raise brats, and maintaining your friendship can often be hindered by them. The "Who raised these kids?" syndrome will invariably continue to the end of time. If you tell your friends that they are not raising their kids properly, it will invariably end up in a fight and could end your friendship. So it's just not worth it. I would take some of Kerry's suggestions, especially the last. Have the food-throwing youngsters sit at another table in another room even. Make general announcements to all the kids like, "OK troop, food stays on the table tonight," to open up the eyes of the kids — and the parents — that it is not OK to have a food fight in your home.

Dear Twins,

My husband and I invited three couples over for a sit-down dinner

on a Saturday night. We knew two of the couples very well, and the third couple had just moved into our neighborhood, and we wanted to get acquainted. When I called the third couple, I invited the wife and husband, saying it would be a late dinner, and to arrive at 9 pm for cocktails before dinner. Well, everyone arrived at 9, but to my astonishment, the third couple brought their two boys, ages 7 and 9! I didn't know what to say, and I wasn't prepared for children! My OWN children were in bed, and these two go rushing into their bedrooms trying to wake them. It became a madhouse, and the dinner was a fiasco. What should I have done?

— *Angry Neighbor*

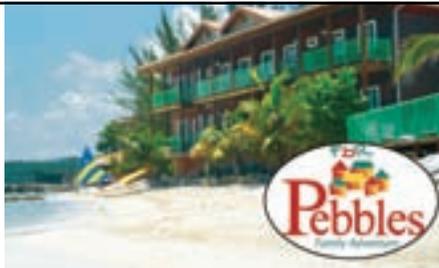
Jacqueline says: Why people would bring kids to an invite-only dinner is beyond me. Perhaps they assumed that, since you have kids, theirs were welcome. Whatever the case, when they showed up at the door with them, there wasn't much you could do. The polite thing would be to allow the boys to join you after letting the parents know you weren't expecting kids. But making a scene at that point — or asking them to leave — is far worse. Don't be a doormat, either. Let their children know your kids' bedrooms are off limits. Enjoy the evening and go with the flow. What's the point of being uptight? They

may even become good friends if you don't throw them out. However, for the next invite — if there is another — let them know it's adults-only.

Kerry says: I agree with Jacqueline. It's petty to still be spewing over the couple that brought their kids over for dinner. Aren't there more serious things to be worried about? Yes, they are complete morons for not realizing that this was not a function for kids and that their children were clearly not invited; nonetheless, couldn't you just go with the flow and order a pizza and let the kids play upstairs? Out of a variety of disasters that would horrify me, this one's at the bottom of the list. If you ever decide to invite this couple again, which I doubt you will, let them know it's a dinner for adults only. Now stop sweating the small stuff.

Jacqueline and Kerry Donelli, twin sisters, are multi-award winning filmmakers. They are currently getting their *Masters in Mental Health* and have a radio show on WBCR-AM also called, "Twice the Advice" — where one twin gives advice and, often, the other completely disagrees! Please email them at TwiceTheAdvice2@gmail.com.

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Hidden danger in the suburbs

Preventing the tragedy of driveway backovers

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

Each time a child is run over and killed in a driveway, it is a tragedy. Whenever I read about it, like most people, my heart breaks, I cringe, and wonder how the family members of the precious child manage to move on with their lives.

Driveway backovers are all too common in suburban America, and New York is no exception. Yes, it happens here. And it keeps happening here, as well as throughout the country.

Fifty children are backed over each week in the United States, according to KidsandCars.org, a national Kansas-based organization dedicated to preventing injuries and death to children in and around motor vehicles.

“A young child does not possess the cognitive ability to know daddy can’t see him,” says Janette Fennell, the group’s founder and president. “People need to grab onto [the fact] that they literally can’t avoid hitting something [they] can’t see.”

With sport utility vehicles and mini vans seemingly getting bigger and bigger — statistics show that the bigger they are, the larger the blind zone.

With most big cars, the average blind zone is 7- to 8-feet wide and 20- to 30-feet long. Good Morning America tested the span of the blind zone and found that 24 toddlers could be behind a car at the same time, completely undetected. Fennell finds it paradoxical that most people would not buy a car if they could not see 20- or 30-feet in front, but would drive a vehicle with such a large rear blind zone.



Case studies

In 2002, 2-year-old Cameron Gulbransen was killed when his father accidentally ran him over as he backed out of his driveway in Syosset in Long Island. Dr. Greg Gulbransen, a pediatrician, checked his mirrors and turned to look over his shoulder, but still could not see his son, who Gulbransen thought was

sleeping, but had left the house unbeknownst to his parents.

In 2004, Bill Nelson and Adriann Rashdorf-Nelson, of Dix Hills, Long Island, lost their son, Alex, when he was backed over by a relative.

“It is every parent’s nightmare to see their child die,” says Nelson. When asked how he deals with people who blame the parents and-or the driver for the child’s death, he



A rear camera can help you see anyone who may be in your blind zone.

calmly indicates "it is human nature to place blame on someone because [of the fear] that it will happen to you." He tries not to second guess the choices that were made that day.

"We are not calling these accidents anymore," says Rashdorf-Nelson. "Children are impulsive."

The Nelsons created their own website, alecsrunli.com, and hold an annual run in their son's memory, which attracts almost one thousand participants and spectators each year. The Nelsons also used money they raised to build the Alec William Nelson Memorial Playground in Huntington Station.

In 2005, Susan Auriemma put her car in reverse and started to back out of her driveway, in Manhasset, Long Island, but stopped when she heard her daughter, Kate, screaming. Kate, who miraculously survived, had gotten out of the house and away from the babysitter and placed herself right in the blind zone in the split second after Auriemma had gotten out of the car just to check that no one was behind her.

Now Auriemma, co-chair of the Coalition for a Safer Manhasset, wants people to know that if it can happen to her, it could happen to anyone.

She believes that redundant layers of safety will keep children safer. She recommends keeping vigilant, utilizing available technology, and educating parents and children alike about the dangers of moving vehicles. She believes people need to understand that it is not just about supervision, but about the issue of rear visibility.

New legislation

After looking at the list of driveway backovers, I noticed the seemingly higher rate of occurrences on Long Island. Auriemma agreed that

it is a serious problem.

Several significant laws have come out of these tragedies. Alec's Law, first passed in Suffolk County in 2006 and then in Nassau County shortly thereafter, requires that the county government have a website on which it posts child safety information in relation to SUVs, and requires car dealers to distribute pamphlets with such information.

The Nassau County website is not currently running. According to Legislator Wayne Wink's office, there have been technical difficulties and he will continue to follow up.

In February of 2008, after a little more than three years of work by dedicated safety advocates, President Bush signed the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act of 2007, which will require safety technology that expands the driver's field of view be standard in all cars. The Act will also require the Secretary of Transportation to provide the public with information about the danger to children in regards to cars even in a non-crash, non-traffic situation. But, until the Department of Transportation has completed its work in this area, there are no new rearview safety requirements.

Protect yourself

There are quite a few ways in which you can protect your and other people's children.

Backup cameras come standard in many high-end model cars. For those who do not already have one, a backup camera, costing less than \$100 or a "rear view safety lens" costing about \$20, are available online. But safety specialists stress that this technology does not take the place of getting out and walking around your vehicle.

Teach your child that a parked car might move and the driver might not be able to see him, to never play near vehicles and keep the toys and sports equipment off of the driveway.

Many people feel so terrible when hearing about the loss of these children, but can do something very simple to help others: they can talk about this with friends and neighbors to raise their awareness. People need reminding. And people like Fennell, the Nelsons, and Auriemma are making great efforts to save lives and by sharing their information with others.

You can join their ranks.

For more information, visit www.KidsandCars.org.



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FAMILY HEALTH

BY IVAN HAND, MD, FAAP,
Director of Neonatology,
Queens Hospital Center

Get to school safely

As the new school year begins, one of the most important things to focus on is how your child will get to and from school. Sadly, motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for children over 3-years of age — whether they walk, cycle or ride to school. Children are at high risk because of their size, their easy distractibility and their lack of judgment in traffic situations. Here are some safety tips to help minimize the risk to your child.

Walking to school

- Make sure your child takes a safe route to school, preferably with

well-trained adult crossing guards at every intersection.

- Be realistic about your child's pedestrian skills. Because small children are impulsive and less cautious around traffic, carefully consider whether your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.

- If your children are young or are walking to a new school, walk with them the first week to make sure they know the route and can do it safely.

- Bright-colored clothing will make your child more visible to drivers.

- In neighborhoods with higher levels of traffic, consider starting a “walking school bus,” in which an

adult accompanies a group of neighborhood children walking to school.

Riding a bike

- Always wear a bicycle helmet, no matter how short or long the ride.

- Ride on the right side of the street, in the same direction as auto traffic.

- Use appropriate hand signals.

- Respect traffic lights and stop signs.

- Wear bright-color clothing to increase visibility.

- Know the “rules of the road.” You can find them at www.aap.org/family/bicycle.htm

On the school bus

- If your child's school bus has seat belts, make sure your child uses them.

- If your child's school bus does not have seat belts, encourage the school to buy or lease buses with that do.

- Wait for the bus to stop before approaching it from the curb.

- Do not walk around on the bus while it is in motion.

- After getting off the bus, check to see that no traffic is coming before crossing the street.

- Always remain in clear view of the bus driver.

- Children should always

board and exit the bus at locations that provide safe access to the bus or to the school building.

In the car

- All passengers should wear a seat belt or use an age- and size-appropriate car safety seat.

- Your child should ride in a car safety seat with a harness as long as possible and then ride in a belt-positioning booster seat. Your child is ready for a booster seat when she has reached the top weight or height allowed for her seat, his shoulders are above the top harness slots, or her ears have reached the top of the seat.

- Your child should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle's seat belt fits properly (usually when the child reaches about 4' 9" in height and is between 8- to 12-years of age). This means that the child is tall enough to sit against the vehicle seat back with his legs bent at the knees and feet hanging down and the shoulder belt lies across the middle of the chest and shoulder, not the neck or throat; the lap belt is low and snug across the thighs, and not the stomach.
- All children under 13-years of age should ride in the rear seat of vehicles. If you must drive more children than can fit in the rear seat (when carpooling, for example), move the front-seat passenger's seat as far back as possible and have the child ride in a booster seat if the seat belts do not fit properly without it.

- Remember that many crashes occur while teen drivers are going to and from school. You should require seat belt use, limit the number of teen passengers, do not allow eating, drinking, cellphone conversations or texting to prevent driver distraction; and limit nighttime driving and driving in inclement weather. Familiarize yourself with your state's graduated driver license law and consider the use of a parent-teen driver agreement to facilitate the early driving learning process. For a sample parent-teen driver agreement, see the last two pages of the AAP Policy Statement, “The Teen Driver.”

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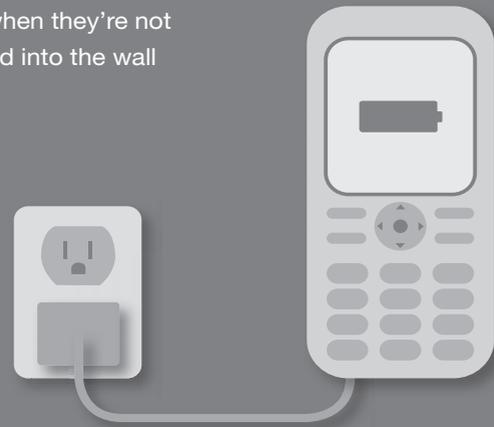
ANSWER: D



Chargers for cell phones, MP3 players and PDAs use energy:

- A. only when charging
- B. even when the devices are not connected to the chargers
- C. even when they're not plugged into the wall

ANSWER: B



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- B. they last five times as long and use 60% less energy
- C. they last ten times as long and use 75% less energy

ANSWER: C



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- B. do not use electrical devices, including flashlights
- C. all of the above

ANSWER: C



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Can book bags cause scoliosis?

What to watch for in the new school year

BY DR. DIANA D'ANGELO

Those years of puberty we fondly (or not-so fondly!) recall can have a huge impact on a child's spine, where changes in hormones cause ligaments and tissues to become more relaxed in preparation for growth. Add to this an overweight backpack — like many kids will be strapping on this school year — and the spine can become compressed.

And that could lead to scoliosis.

As school —

and homework — starts, it's important to look for signs of scoliosis in our children, as it's now known that early detection is the key to treating this condition.

Scoliosis is a condition which affects a person's nerves, muscles and skeleton. Symptoms can include lower back pain, neck pain, headaches, fatigue, digestive issues, and much more.

Usually, the first sign of scoliosis is abnormal posture. For a child with normal posture, the ears, shoulders, hips, and knees should be even when looking at the individual from the front. From the side, the ears, shoulders, middle of pelvis, knees and ankles should follow one straight line down. Any deviation from this could indicate scoliosis. Current research shows that the prevalence of scoliosis in our country is anywhere from 4.5 to 15 percent of the population.

These days, children often wear backpacks that weigh up to half of their weight. When this extra weight is placed on the shoulders, the weight's force pulls the child backward. The body will try to compensate for the added pressure — causing the child to bend forward at the hips, arch the bag and jet his neck forward — placing abnormal stress and force on the developing spine. Some children don't even use both straps of the bag, and instead sling one strap over a shoulder. Others wear their bags so low that, as they walk, the bag bounces off of their tailbone with every step they take. Repetitive stress like this can adversely affect the spine. For children who have had previous spinal injuries that have gone unnoticed or untreated, abnormal backpack use and abuse can cause their spinal condition or scoliosis to worsen.

Here are five simple guidelines to

help decrease stress on your child's spine:

- Make sure your child wears both straps of the backpack at all times.

- A backpack should weigh no more than 10 to 15 percent of his body weight. If the child has scoliosis, the bag should weigh no more than five percent of his body weight. For example, if a child weighs 80 pounds and does not have scoliosis, then the bag should weigh between eight and 12 pounds.

- If the child needs to carry a large number of books in the bag, try to limit as many extra items as possible. Have the child carry a book or two underneath his arm. Some children are using new bags with wheels, which are ideal because they place no stress on the spine.

- If the backpack has a strap around the lower half of it, then have the child buckle the strap. This will cause more stability of the bag.

- Teach the child how to bend at the knees so to use her legs for lifting.

Unfortunately, scoliosis cannot be treated by merely avoiding backpack abuse. However, proper use can significantly reduce unnecessary pressure and stress on the spine. Scoliosis is a progressive disease that, without proper detection and treatment, can worsen. Advancements in non-invasive scoliosis treatment performed by specialized chiropractors have had promising results.

Start the school year off right by getting your child checked for scoliosis today!

Dr. Diana D'Angelo is a chiropractor at Buckley Family Chiropractic in Greenlawn, NY. Buckley Family Chiropractic specializes in advanced scoliosis treatment. You can reach Dr. Diana at (631) 754-4333 or at info@buckleyfamilychiropractic.com.



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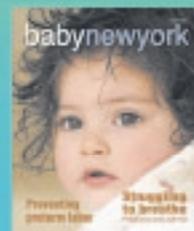


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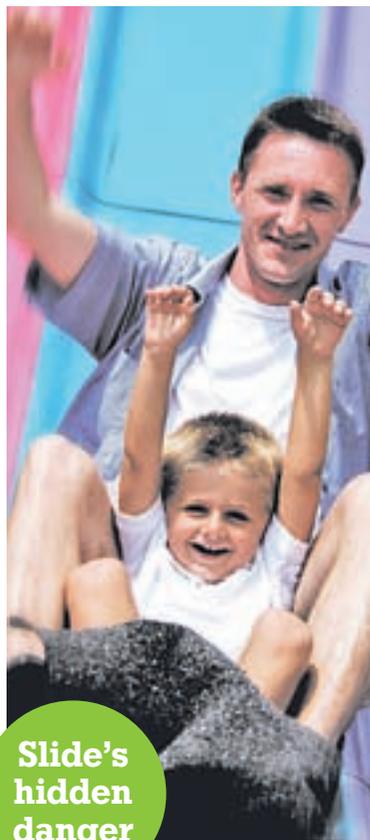
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graders'
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Surprising health facts

According to a new study, nearly seven percent of sixth-graders across the U.S. are severely obese.

BY KATHY SENA

Sixth grade obesity

Severe obesity becoming more common in sixth graders — and many parents don't recognize it.

Nearly seven percent of sixth-graders across the U.S. are severely obese, according to a new study appearing online in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, which tested 6,365 middle-school children during health screenings at 42 middle schools in across the country.

The increasing rate of severe obesity in children requires particular attention “because it is associated with high rates of risk for diabetes and cardiovascular disease as children get older,” says Marsha Marcus, PhD, lead study author and head of the Eating Disorders Program at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Doctors define severe obesity differently in children than they do in

adults. In children, the measurement used is a percentile of body mass index (BMI) for age and sex. For this study, researchers considered children with a BMI in the 99th percentile to be severely obese — and 6.9 percent of students fell into this category.

“The findings of this study are alarming because it shows there are even more children than we realized at medical risk due to excess weight,” says Marlene Schwartz, PhD, deputy director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University.

“In both situations, I have been surprised that some children who are severely obese according to their BMIs do not always look heavy. As a culture, we have become used to seeing heavier children so the visual norm has shifted. Because of this, many children are at risk of not receiving help since their parents do not see them as obese,” adds Schwartz, who

has worked with children in both clinical and research settings.

While no simple answer exists, “Parents need to talk to their children's doctors and seek treatment for children with severe obesity,” Marcus says.

Insulin sensitivity and high blood sugar during pregnancy

Children of mothers whose blood glucose level was high during pregnancy are more likely to have low insulin sensitivity — a risk factor for type-two diabetes — even after taking into consideration the children's body weight, a new study shows. The results were presented recently at the Endocrine Society's 92nd Annual Meeting.

“We know that children born to women with type-two diabetes or gestational diabetes, or who have high blood sugar during pregnancy, are at risk of becoming diabetic

themselves,” says study co-author Paula Chandler-Laney, PhD, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. “This study suggests that the children’s increased risk appears to be due, at least in part, to their prenatal exposure to relatively high maternal blood glucose.”

Chandler-Laney and her colleagues studied children ages 5–10 and measured the children’s sensitivity to insulin, the hormone that regulates sugar in the blood. They also evaluated the pregnancy medical records of the children’s mothers to determine maternal blood-sugar concentration during the oral glucose-tolerance test.

The researchers found that the higher the mother’s blood sugar levels during pregnancy, the lower her child’s insulin sensitivity. Low insulin sensitivity is a major risk factor for type-two diabetes.

Obesity lowers insulin sensitivity, but the children’s reduced insulin sensitivity was independent of their amount of body fat, the authors reported.

None of the children had high blood sugar, but puberty would further lower their insulin sensitivity, she notes.

“High maternal blood glucose during pregnancy may have lasting effects on children’s insulin sensitivity and secretion, potentially raising the risk for type-two diabetes,” Chandler-Laney says. “Obstetricians, pediatricians and pregnant women should all be aware of the potential far-reaching consequences that elevated blood sugar during pregnancy can have on children’s health.”

Unforeseen playground dangers

I’m betting most of us have done it: gone down a playground slide with our child on our lap. What’s the harm, right?

But according to a new study published in the *Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics*, 13.8 percent of tibia (shin) fractures in U.S. kids were the result of the child going down a slide on an adult’s lap. The injury occurs when the child’s leg gets stuck in one place while the adult and child continue to move down the slide.

Cavities and body fat

Preschool children with tooth decay may be more likely to be overweight or obese than the gen-

eral population and, regardless of weight, are more likely to consume too many calories, a new study indicates.

“Poor eating habits may play a role in both tooth decay and obesity in preschoolers,” the study’s lead author, Kathleen Bethin, MD, PhD, says.

“Dental decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, and obesity in youth is a growing problem. To prevent these problems, the dentist’s office may be an important place to educate families about nutrition,” says Bethin, a pediatrician at Women and Children’s Hospital of Buffalo and an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Buffalo in New York.

With funding from the New York State Department of Health, the doctors at the Women and Children’s Hospital of Buffalo and University of Buffalo studied the relationship between poor dental health and excess weight in 65 children ages 2 to 5 years. All children needed dental work due to decay and had their dental procedure and blood work performed while they were under anesthesia.

Each child’s height and weight were measured before the procedure to calculate the BMI. Also, the child’s parent or guardian completed a questionnaire about the child’s recent average daily food consumption.

Almost 28 percent of the children were overweight or obese, compared with an estimated 21.2 percent in the general U.S. population. Those children, who’s BMI was high for their age (at the 85th percentile or above), already had much higher total cholesterol levels than their healthy-weight counterparts, Bethin reports.

The questionnaire showed that both the normal-weight and overweight children consumed more calories per day than recommended for their age (1,440 and 1,570 calories respectively). Seventy-one percent of the children consumed more than 1,200 calories per day, although the daily recommended caloric intake ranges from 1,000 to 1,400 calories depending on age and gender of the child.

Kathy Sena is a freelance journalist specializing in health and parenting issues and is the mother of a 14-year-old son. Visit her blog at www.parenttalktoday.com.

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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

Keep kids focused

Concentration is the ability to focus your own attention, and everyone agrees it's crucial to success at school and work. Now educators are worried that the ability to concentrate is eroding under the relentless barrage of random messages from cellphones and social media. They are right to be concerned. Brain research shows that the hippocampus, the part of the brain devoted to storing and recalling information, isn't engaged when a person is distracted.

Smart parents won't necessarily try to discourage a child's enthusiasm for interactive media. Instead, the beginning of the school year is a great time to establish routines that promote concentration — even

— will begin to understand that attention, like money, is a finite resource. You can squander it on shiny doodads that don't mean much, or you can save it to spend on something that really matters. Often, our culture sends kids the message that distraction is fun and concentration is drudgery. Parents have to counter that with the idea that concentration puts a person in control of what his brain is doing while distraction turns that control over to others. Here are other ways to get that message across:

Budget tech time

Obviously, video games, social networking and other interactive pastimes have an important place in the lives of kids. They just shouldn't be available 24/7.

- Establish tech-free times when kids do homework and engage in other activities that require concentration.

- Encourage older children to post an away message that says they won't be available. Make a humorous sign — “Student at work. Quiet Please!!” — to minimize interruptions from other family members.

- Find your own off-line tasks so you can work side-by-side with your child.

- Make a point of turning off your own cell-phone so you can write a thank you note, balance the checkbook or read a report.

- Design a tech free work space. Be sure your child has access to a workspace where the tools needed for schoolwork (paper, dictionaries) are close at hand and distractions (video games, snacks) aren't visible.

- Provide good lighting and a chair that's the right size for your child. Many children will protest that they need the Internet for every assignment, but that's not usually the full story. Some work — math problems, reading — will actually go faster if the child is away from the screen.

Find 'prime time'

Most adults know when they are sharpest during the day. Encourage your child to experiment with different study times. Some children will be most able to focus right after

school when the lessons of the day are still fresh while others will do better after a snack or a sports practice or even a session of social networking. Still others will get homework done in half the time if they get up early and do it first thing in the morning. Help your child identify — and protect — the time when he or she is most able to concentrate.

Chunk the work

Although it may be obvious to parents, students often don't know how to divide homework into manageable portions. The idea of writing an entire report may be paralyzing. It's easier to focus if you limit your attention to a paragraph about a specific topic. Older students may do better with a timetable that includes incentives — 30 minutes of homework earns 10 minutes of social networking. Just be sure to set a timer, so homework resumes again after 10 minutes!

Make a game of it

Many classic, offline games require focused attention. Remember Memory, the matching game that requires players to remember where to find pairs of cards? Or, try the old party game of assembling a tray full of random objects. Have everyone look at the tray, then cover it and write down as many things as you can remember. Scrabble and card games are also enjoyable family activities that reward concentration.

Technology isn't the only reason children have trouble concentrating. Health problems, lack of sleep, too little exercise, stressful relationships and even poor nutrition can also make it hard for kids — and adults — to pay attention. Still, encouraging your children to make deliberate decisions about how to allocate brain power is one of the best ways to you can assure their success during the school year — and beyond.

Carolyn Jabs, M.A., has been writing about families and the Internet for over 15 years. She is the mother of three computer-savvy kids. Other Growing Up Online columns appear on her website, www.growing-up-online.com.

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for kids who love the distraction of media in all its many forms. One of the best ways to help children grasp the value of attention is to give them yours. When you're doing something with your child, don't allow yourself to be distracted by your cell-phone or computer. Focus full attention on what your child is saying or what you are doing together. Make deliberate decisions about when you're available for phone calls, when the television is on and how long you'll spend on social media.

Children who grow up with the benefits of parental attention — and limits on attention-draining activities

It figures

BY CYNTHIA WASHAM

DIGITAL DATA



34 Percent of video-game players who are adult women.

18 Percent who are boys ages 12-17



8.5 Percent of children believed to be addicted to video games to the degree that it disrupts their ability to function socially, academically and in other ways.



1,956 Average number of text messages sent or received each month by an American teen

63 Percent of parents with a gaming console who consider video-game playing a positive activity for their children

SCHOOL STATS



26 Percent of U.S. school children who consider physical education their favorite subject.

3 Percent who feel the same way about a foreign language.

19 Percent of higher students who've had four or more years of a foreign language score on the reading, writing and math sections of the SAT, compared to students with a half year or less.

44 Percent of American high-school students who study any foreign language.

More than 90

Percent of European high-school students who study at least one foreign language.



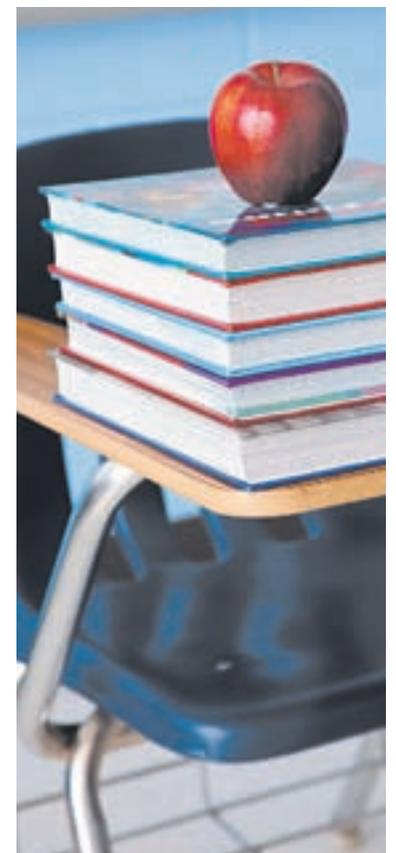
33 Percent of American children, ages 6-11, who take after-school lessons in such disciplines as dance, art, computers and religion.

More than 1,200

Number of state legislators nationwide who visit classrooms each year to discuss the legislative process with students.



10 Number of years since they've been doing so under the America's Legislators Back to School Program.



Source: 1UP, Marketingvox.com, The Oregonian, Scholastic, Early-advantage.com, Euractiv.com, Districtadministration.com, Infoplease.com, National Conference of State Legislatures

Going Places

LONG-RUNNING

Support Group: Single Parents Connection, PO Box 1203; (718) 796-1227.

Single Parents Connection is a non-profit organization that offers single parents an opportunity to meet for dinners, brunches, and local trips. Meets in the Riverdale and Yonkers area. For information, dates, times and location write to Single Parents Connection; PO Box 1203; Riverdale, NY; 10471; or call David.

Lizards and Snakes - Alive: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at W. 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org. \$24 adults; (\$14 children; \$18 for seniors/ students).

See a diversity of legged and legless lizards representing more than 20 species from all over the world.

Race to the End of the Earth:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5100; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Donations suggested.

The exhibit recounts the most stirring tales of Antarctic exploration: the contest to reach the South Pole in 1911-1912. Highlights include photographs, paintings, and rare historical artifacts as well as actual items of clothing and tools; life-sized models of portions of Amundsen's and Scott's base camps; and a diorama featuring the largest of all penguin species alive today, the emperor penguin. There are also interactive and hands-on activities for all ages.

Pickle Me: New York Botanical Gardens, Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Road; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Weekdays, 12–5:30 pm, Now – Fri, Sep. 3; Free with garden admission.

Dig, Plant, Grow, Parade throughout the Family Garden to learn about plants, familiar and unfamiliar, that can be pickled. Create a passport of those you find, and learn what it takes to pickle a plant. Make your very own batch of pickles to savor back at home.

Children's Club: Fort Independence Houses' Community Center, Bailey Avenue and West 234th Street; (646) 358-6096; Daily, 6:30 – 9 pm; Now – Tues, Dec. 14; Free.

Boys & Girls Club of Mosholu Montefiore Community Center offers after-school activities for children ages 12 and one-half to 16. Activities include basketball, indoor, soccer, boys to men



Little green thumbs

Beat the dog days of Summer.

Celebrate all that's green at the New York Botanical Gardens with "Dig, Plant, Grow," at the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden. Children, with the help of parents and volunteers, learn the ins and outs of weeding, composting, planting, tending and harvesting garden plots of vegetables and fruits.

Kids parade through the Family Garden and learn about plants that can be pickled in "Pickle Me!" Children then create a passport of what they find and then make their very own batch of pickles to take home.

"Farm-to-Table" is held in the Everett Children's Adventure Garden. Youngsters pretend to be farmers at play station Bendheim Global Greenhouse where they practice harvesting fruits and vegetables and then pretend cook delicious recipes at the cafe.

"Flowers-to-Fruits" allows children to explore the relationship between flowers and pollinators.

Last but not least children

learn about the first gardeners to tend plants in the Bronx, the Lenape. "Lenape Life" provides children an opportunity to visit the "Three Sisters," a garden with an authentic wigwam where they can shuck and grind corn kernels or create a traditional Lenape craft, a cornhusk doll.

"Dig, Plant, Grow!" now through Oct. 17, Tuesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5:30 pm; "Pickle Me!" now through Sept. 3, Mondays through Fridays, from 1:30 to 5:30 pm; "Farm-to-Table," now through Oct. 17, from 10 am to 6 pm; "Flowers-to-Fruits," now through Oct. 17, Tuesdays through Fridays from 1:30 to 5:30 pm Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 5:30 pm; and "Lenape Life," from Sept. 7 through Oct. 8 Tuesdays through Sundays, from Noon to 5:30 pm; all at the New York Botanical Garden [Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Road, (718) 817-8700], General admission is \$6 for adults, \$3 for seniors and students with valid ID, children 2–12 years old \$1 and children under 2 are free. For more information, visit www.nybg.org.

Submit a listing

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

All you have to do is send your listing request to calendar@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!

group, girl talk, keystone club, crafts, computer, theater group, help with homework, school projects, cooking and more. There is also a lounge and a game room. Potential participants do not have to live in the Fort Independence houses to join, but must live in the surrounding community. To register, students should bring school ID and proof of age. Monday through Friday at 6:30 p.m. or call Israel Rosario.

Family Art Project: Wave Hill, West 249th St. and Independence Ave. (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–1 pm, Now – Sun, Oct. 31; Free (admission to the grounds to noon is free).

Art workshops.

"Frog Prince": Galli's Fairytale Theater, 38 West 38th St. between Fifth and Sixth avenues; (212) 731-0668; www.gallitheaterny.com; Saturdays and Sundays, 3 pm, Sat, Sep. 4 – Sun, Sep. 26; \$20, (\$15, 2–17 years old \$15; \$20 after-show workshop; \$15 for siblings).

Modern take on Grimm Fairytale.

Training Group: The Animal Medical Center, 510 East 62nd St. (854)-230-6406; rsilverman@guidingeyes.org; www.volunteer.guidingeyes.org; Free.

Guiding Eyes for the Blind seeks volunteers to foster future guide dog puppies. All training, support and veterinary expenses are provided free of charge. Pre-placement classes are held at the Dog Spa in Chelsea at 32 West 25th Street. Required weekly raiser classes are held on Sunday evenings at the Center. Call for specific location & time.

Scrapbooking: Grand Concourse Library, 155 East 173rd St. (718) 583-

Going Places

6611; www.nypl.org; Mondays, 4 pm, Mon, Sep. 6 – Mon, Dec. 27; Free.

Create a unique scrapbook of your favorite memories and photos. Bring in some of your favorite pictures, other materials will be supplied. For teens 13 to 18.

THURS, SEP. 2

Reading Buddies: Grand Concourse Library, 155 East 173rd St. (718) 583-6611; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Librarian shares favorite books. For ages 5 to 12 years old.

FRI, SEP. 3

Teen book group: Baychester Library, 2049 Asch Loop North; (718) 379-6700; www.nypl.org; 3:15 pm; Free.

Good or bad, we want to know what you're reading! Come in and talk about what you've read and how it relates to you.

Concert: Bartow Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Road; (718) 885-1461; www.bpmm.org; 5:30–8:30 pm; \$8 (\$5 children and seniors).

A musical history of America.

SAT, SEP. 4

Corduroy Bear visits storytime: Barnes and Noble, 290 Baychester Avenue; (718) 862-3945; www.bn.com; 11 am; Free.

Appropriate for children ages 1 to 6.

Nature hike: Pelham Bay Park, Bruckner Boulevard and Wilkinson Avenue; (718) 885-3467; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 1 pm; Free.

Search for migrating monarchs before they depart for the southern journey to Mexico.

TUES, SEP. 7

Teen advisory group: Baychester Library, 2049 Asch Loop North; (718) 379-6700; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

What's happening in your world? What's the hottest book, movie, or CD right now? What programs does the library need? Let us know and you can earn community service credit for your school. Ages 12 to 18 years old.

THURS, SEP. 9

Reading Buddies: 4 pm. Grand Concourse Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

FRI, SEP. 10

Camping: Van Cortlandt Park, West 246th Street and Broadway; 311; www.gov/parks/rangers; Free.

Families BBQ, pitch a tent and enjoy nature on a night hike.



Rubin Museum for kids

Early Childhood and Family Learning Programs at the Rubin Museum of Art in Manhattan allow children and parents to experience art together.

Family Days at the museum are held twice a year. This year's International Day of Non-Violence celebrates the birthday of Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of nonviolence.

Word Play and Gallery Exploration, for children 1- to 6-years-old,

are offered throughout the year.

Children must be accompanied by at least one adult at all times.

Tickets are \$10 per child (\$5 for children of RMA members); Free for accompanying adults, children 1-year and younger, and Cool Culture members. Tickets include gallery admission; Gallery admission is free every Friday from 6-10 pm.

Gallery admission is free for seniors (65 and older) on the first Monday of every month.

Rubin Museum of Art, 150 West 17 Street, between 6th and 7th avenues; (212) 620-5000 X 344. For more information visit www.rmany.org;

Teen Advisory Group: Kingsbridge Library, 280 West 231 St. (718) 548-5656; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

If you are a 7th -12th grade student, you are eligible to join.

SAT, SEP. 11

Nature hike: Van Cortlandt Park, West 246th Street and Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 11 am; Free.

Visit the park and see the wildflow-

ers before Fall.

Storytime: Barnes and Noble, 290 Baychester Avenue; (718) 862-3945; www.bn.com; 11 am; Free.

Celebrate your grandparents with a special storytime and activity event.

SUN, SEP. 12

Canoe the Hutch: Pelham Pay Park, Bruckner Boulevard and Wilkinson Avenue; (718) 885-3467; www.nyc.gov/

www.nyc.gov/ parks/rangers; 1 pm; Free.

Adventure through the blue water and marsh grass of the Thomas Pell Sanctuary. Experienced canoeists only.

MON, SEP. 13

Teen Lounge: Eastchester Library, 1385 East Gun Hill Rd; (718) 653-3292; <http://www.nypl.org>; 4 pm; Free.

Use laptops to do your homework, watch videos, play games. For ages 12-18.

TUES, SEP. 14

"Fall Leaves Fall": Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay, 899 10th Ave. (212) 237-8005; www.jjay.cuny.edu/theater.php. 10:30 am; Free.

Story Time with Barnes and Noble at John Jay: Seasonal themes, treats and more.

Teen advisory group: 4 pm. Baychester Library. See Tuesday, Sep. 7.

THURS, SEP. 16

Reading Buddies: 4 pm. Grand Concourse Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

FRI, SEP. 17

Healthy living: Betances Community Center, 465 St. Anns Ave; (718) 9890-5750; www.ghlf.org; 10 am; Free.

The program is designed for adults who have limited or no prescription coverage between the ages of 18 and 64. Registration required.

Teen Card games: Baychester Library, 2049 Asch Loop North; (718) 379-6700; www.nypl.org; 3:15 pm; Free.

Bring in your decks for fun and low-key card playing. Whether you're battling the monsters, emptying your hand, or shooting for the moon, join your friends for a round of cards.

Teen Advisory Group: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library. See Friday, Sep. 10.

SAT, SEP. 18

Celebrate learning: Barnes and Noble, 290 Baychester Avenue; (718) 862-3945; www.bn.com; 10 am; Free.

One-stop shopping for educators and parents.

Hispanic Heritage storytime: Barnes and Noble, 290 Baychester Avenue; (718) 862-3945; www.bn.com; 11 am; Free.

Craft, storytime and music. Appropriate for school age children.

Fall Migration: Van Cortlandt Park, Enter at W. 246th Street and Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 1 pm; Free.

Continued on page 30

Going Places

Continued from page 29

Bring your own binoculars.

Salsa Concert: Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Blvd, campus of Lehman College; (718) 960-8833; www.lehmancenter.org; 8 pm; \$55, \$65, \$75, \$85.

Victor Manuelle.

MON, SEP. 20

Compost workshop: Bartow Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Road; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 10 am–2 pm; Free.

Learn all there is to know about composting. Registration required. Rain date Sept. 21.

Anime night: Kingsbridge Library, 280 West 231 St. (718) 548-5656; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Join in watching Ghost Hunt Volume 1. For ages 12 to 18.

Teen Lounge: 4 pm. Eastchester Library. See Monday, Sep. 13.

TUES, SEP. 21

Teen advisory group: 4 pm. Baychester Library. See Tuesday, Sep. 7.

WED, SEP. 22

Teen Book Cafe: Baychester Library, 2049 Asch Loop North; (718) 379-6700; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Good or bad, we want to know what you're reading! Come in and talk

about what you've read and how it relates to you.

THURS, SEP. 23

Reading Buddies: 4 pm. Grand Concourse Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

FRI, SEP. 24

Festival: Bartow Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Road; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; Noon–4 pm; Free.

Tour the mansion and carriage house. Tours begin at quarter past the hour.

Teen Advisory Group: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library. See Friday, Sep. 10.

SAT, SEP. 25

Nature Hike: Riverdale Park, 232 Street on South Bound of Henry Hudson Parkway; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 11 am; Free.

Stroll along the Hudson at Riverdale. Bring your own binoculars.

"Timbalooloo": Highline Ballroom, 431 West 16th Street; www.highlineballroom.com; www.oranetkin.com/wakeupclarinet.htm; Noon; \$10 advance (\$12 day of show, \$30 family of four pack).

Oran Etkin celebrates the release of "Wake Up, Clarinet".

Festival: Noon–4 pm. Bartow Pell Mansion Museum. See Friday, Sep. 24.

High time for tea: Bartow Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Road; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 3 pm; \$20 (\$15 members).

Enjoy a true Victorian low tea. Appropriate for ages 10 and up. Registration required.

Concert: Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay, 899 10th Ave. (212) 237-8005; www.jjay.cuny.edu/theater.php; 7:30 pm; Free.

Music for Humanity, in memory of Journalist Daniel Pearl.

Latin Jazz concert: Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Blvd, campus of Lehman College; (718) 960-8833; www.lehmancenter.org; 8 pm; \$50, \$45, \$40, \$35.

Paquito D'Rivera and Michel Camilo.

SUN, SEP. 26

Festival: Noon–4 pm. Bartow Pell Mansion Museum. See Friday, Sep. 24.

MON, SEP. 27

Teen Lounge: 4 pm. Eastchester Library. See Monday, Sep. 13.

TUES, SEP. 28

Teen advisory group: 4 pm. Baychester Library. See Tuesday, Sep. 7.

WED, SEP. 29

Gross Biology: Van Cortlandt Li-

brary, 3874 Sedgwick Ave. (718) 543-5150; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Ever wonder how your body fights germs? Recommended for ages 6 to 12.

THURS, SEP. 30

Reading Buddies: 4 pm. Grand Concourse Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

FRI, OCT. 1

First Friday: Bartow Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Road; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 5:30–8:30 pm; \$8 (\$5 seniors and children, members free).

Join in for an evening visit featuring live music, self-guided tours of the mansion, a stroll in the garden, and light refreshments. The free Bronx Seaside Trolley makes a continuous loop from the Pelham Bay subway station to BPMM to City Island. Registration requested.

SAT, OCT. 2

Family Days: Rubin Museum of Art, 150 West 17 Street, between 6th and 7th avenues; (212) 620-5000 X 344. www.rmany.org; 11 am; \$10 per child (\$5 member children; free for accompanying adult; children under 12 months and cool culture members).

Join in this all day International Day of Non-Violence by making a personal peace flag for display.

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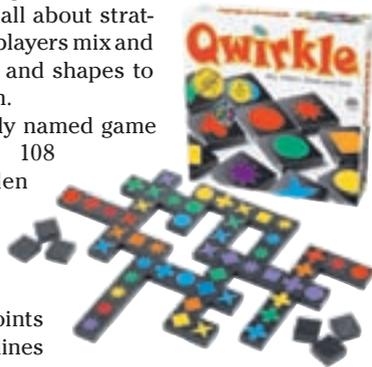
New & Noteworthy

For your next game night

Keep this one in mind for the next family game night.

Qwirkle is all about strategy, wherein players mix and match colors and shapes to score and win.

The quirkily named game consists of 108 thick wooden blocks with six shapes in six colors. Players score points by building lines that share a common attribute — either a color or a shape. The player with the highest score after all of the tiles are placed wins the game, and bragging rights



for the next week's game night.

Although the game is quickly learned, it soon becomes apparent that strategic thinking is crucial to scoring high. The challenge of Qwirkle is logical and clear enough to engage kids, but complex enough to keep adults in the game. And since the simple play requires no reading, the whole gang can play.

Qwirkle is for two-four players, ages 6 and up. For info, visit www.readerscatalog.com.

Building their ABCs

This toy is perfect for blockheads.

With the ABC Flyer, your little one can build while learning the letters of the alphabet.

The toys are not just great fun, but a great way to develop language, arithmetic, fine motor

skills and more. Keep them all together on the pull-toy wagon, which provides tidy storage

for all the pieces.

Each multicolored letter block is handcrafted and include a different animal picture. They're made from Michigan basswood and brightly colored with child-safe inks, and are the perfect size for small hands.

The sets come in eight different languages, including English, Russian, Hebrew, Greek, Italian, French, Spanish and Chinese, so no matter the language, you can likely find your alphabet.

For information on the ABC flyer, visit www.readerscatalog.com.



Art that sticks

Sometimes a wall just needs to be dressed up a bit, and LTL Prints have the perfect art for the job.

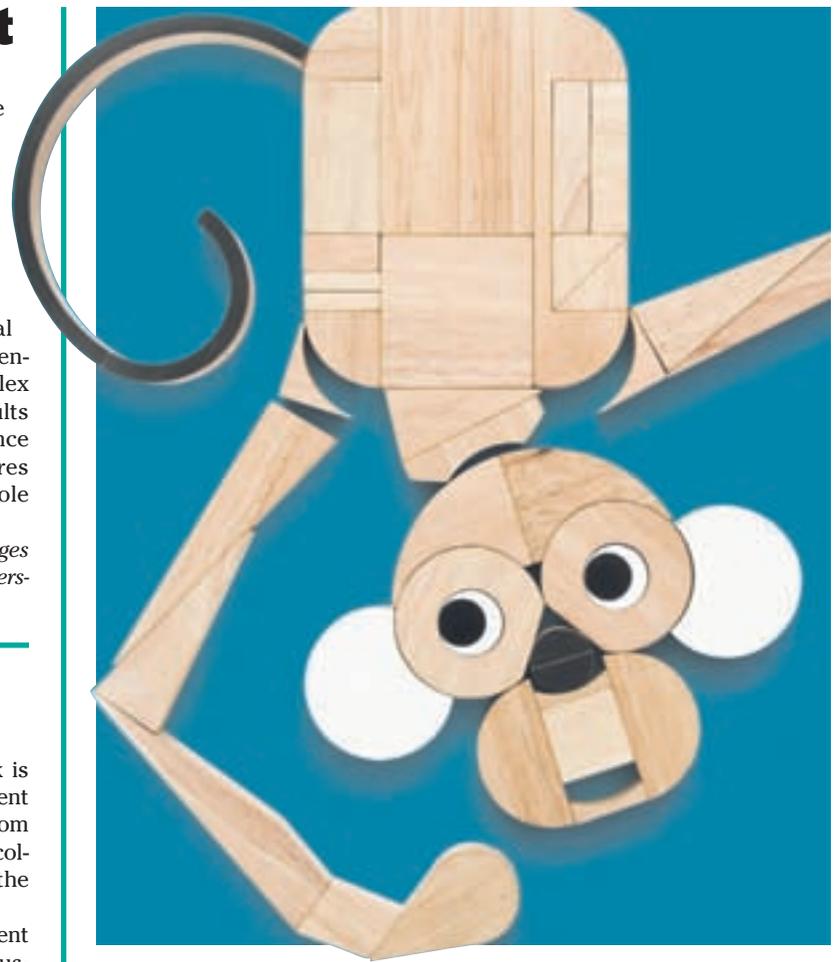
Yiyang Lu, whom Twitter fans may recognize as the illustrator of the site's famous "Fail Whale" icon, has crafted colorful, fanciful wall art that can be stuck to walls, windows and even ceilings.

The cartoon-ish designs range from whales spouting birds into a heart-shape formations to round elephants with jester-like prings to even a giant light bulb — a constant encouragement for your child to think big.



The sets are self-adhesive and can be removed and rehanging many times without damaging walls, so don't worry if your little one keeps changing his mind where to hang it.

For more information on Yiyang Lu's wall art, visit www.ltlprints.com/yiyang.



Things are shaping up

If your child can think it, he can probably make it with PlayShapes.

The geometric wooden shapes can be arranged or stacked to produce hundreds of 3D creations.

The simplicity of the product — made from rubberwood — and clarity of design enables children and adults alike to fully engage in the joy of the creative process. And, if you make a mistake,

you can easily start over again.

For those who need a little inspiration, each set of 74 blocks comes with a sheet of copying pre-made designs, from clowns to monkeys to genies. Whatever floats your boat (you can make that, too).

For more information on PlayShapes, e-mail info@neo-utility.com or visit www.millergoodman.com.

Chalk fun

Waiting for dinner has never been more fun.

With Chalk It To Me's chalkboard placemats, your child can doodle away as you prepare his meals. And they can be used every meal — just draw, wipe off and draw again. You too can get in on the fun by playing tic-tac-toe, or leaving message for



in the morning wishing good luck on a test or a happy birthday.

The items come in a set of four, perfect for parties or playdates, and come with 12 pieces of chalk and a sponge eraser.

For more information, visit www.uncommongoods.com.

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