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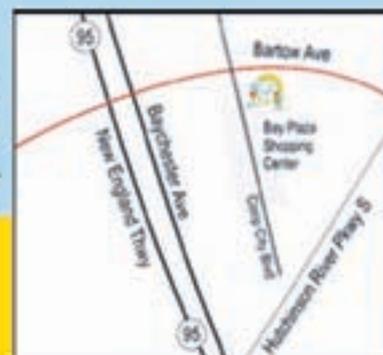
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Letter from the publisher

The question of homework

Kids are now settled in their classes and the homework reality has begun again in earnest.

When my daughter entered elementary school I soon realized that times had drastically changed from my days in school. I never

had homework in the lower grades of elementary school, and I mean never! Kindergarten wasn't a time for rigorous work; it was a time for socialization and communal fun. We played, we ate, we finger-painted, we read books aloud, we had music and movement, recess and even a nap.

Now this is the typical behavior of a preschooler not a school child. Everything has been moved up and we have accelerated education, study, awareness and production through-



out the life experience. It seems there is little time left to be innocent and without responsibilities.

Nowadays the tone is entirely different and nowhere outside of politics is the divide clearer than witnessing the opposing attitudes of parents on the subject of homework.

Many parents want lots of homework, starting as early as Kindergarten. Those with this priority also seem to be largely in favor of discipline, structure and possibly even uniforms, even in a public school setting.

These academically focused parents are mindful that in this highly competitive global reality children need to have rigorous academic instruction and achievement as early as possible, and are expecting continuous assignments of homework

as a routine. They are advocating for nightly work and aren't satisfied that education is quality or complete without it.

Parents on the other side of this question want their kids to be free after school and on weekends. Free to participate in outside activities of all kinds, whether they are structured such as classes in art, music, gymnastics, or the like, or just free to "hang out" and be kids. Many of these parents state that visiting museums, watching public television, seeing live shows, are high priorities for them in the education process of their children and don't want their children's free time to be consistently mandated to homework assigned from classroom teachers.

These contrasting opinions are not always compatible and many parent association meetings are often spent in debate over the tone of the dialogue

and the outcome of the curriculum as a result. The good news is the strong participation of the parents and their concern and interest over what happens in and out of their children's classrooms. Better to have opposing opinions than none.

I'm wondering where you stand? What do you expect in terms of homework? How much is too much? How little is too little? We will print your letters in upcoming issues. Send your responses or thoughts to family@cnglocal.com.

Have a great Thanksgiving! Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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LETTERS

From our readers

Hello Susan,

What a terrific issue to see on the newsstand! I only just picked *Manhattan Family* up, but am thrilled to see you're covering teens. There is a dearth of information out there for parents of teens and it's such a challenging time in parenting.

I'll be sure to pass it along to a few parents I know.

Best,

Faye Rogaski



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HOMework

A conversation with parents & experts

What is its value, and how much is too much?

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

Parents throughout the five boroughs are debating the value of homework and whether their children should have more or less of it. Many parents think their children are burdened by excessive take-home assignments, while others believe the homework reinforces important concepts and flags comprehension issues for the teacher.

“The consciousness around homework has definitely changed. Once you start to name a problem, people think about it differently,” Sara Bennett, Brooklyn co-author of “The Case Against Homework,” recently shared with me.

Both Bennett’s work and Alfie Kohn’s book, “The Homework Myth,” cite statistics indicating that there is no correlation between increased homework and academic achievement. Bennett tells me that convincing parents of this can be difficult, since many have believed otherwise for so long.

Kohn also claims that there is a connection between excessive homework and a loss of interest in learning, and that nothing more than “folk wisdom” supports the belief that homework teaches self-discipline, good study habits, or responsibility.

Reports from the homework front

Chevon Weeks, whose children attend a lottery school in Queens, tells me that she likes her children to be challenged, as “homework will give them a better future.” She is “so pro-homework” because she believes that homework helped her do well academically and is “a necessary evil which will help children compete globally.” Weeks also believes that the teachers need to give homework, so they can get through the new core curriculum and that kids will naturally “veg out” without it.

“Practice makes perfect,” she tells

me, although she won’t condone “busywork.”

Lyss, a Manhattan mom, agrees that it is important that her children do their homework and also believes in its value.

Last year, Diane Butler’s third grader had almost two hours of homework per night at her charter school in the Bronx. Her daughter sometimes gets frustrated and is fearful that she will get detention if it is not completed.

Tracy from Staten Island says, “If the teachers are doing a good job, they shouldn’t be giving [the kids] a ton of work.”

Tamara, a Manhattan mom, notes a disconnect between a parent and teacher, or between a teacher and child, when the homework is overwhelming and the issue is not being addressed. She is one of many parents who understand that the solution can only come from a partnership with the teacher.

Ban homework?

Author Bennett indicates that good teachers should be able to reinforce important material during the school day, conceding that homework may occasionally provide a bit of reinforcement, despite the statistics disassociating it from direct academic success.

In her book, Bennett stresses, “Teachers receive little training in devising truly educational and meaningful assignments,” focusing attention not just on the excessiveness of assignments, but on their substance.

“I never saw a decent, worthwhile homework assignment, and I don’t know if there is better homework [than what is now being assigned],” she says.

Parents are frustrated, too, when teachers only spot-check homework or fail to provide feedback after a long night’s struggle to complete an assignment.

Still, moms like Tamara, who re-

members her homework as “drudgery,” views her first grader’s homework as “appropriate, inventive, and creative.”

Without hesitation, Bennett indicates that she would support a homework ban. Her colleague Kohn agrees, especially with respect to elementary school. At a minimum, he tells me he would advocate for “a no homework default policy,” where the norm would be homework-free evenings with families deciding how to spend the time, and where a rare assignment is only permitted if it is absolutely necessary and fosters students’ interest in learning.

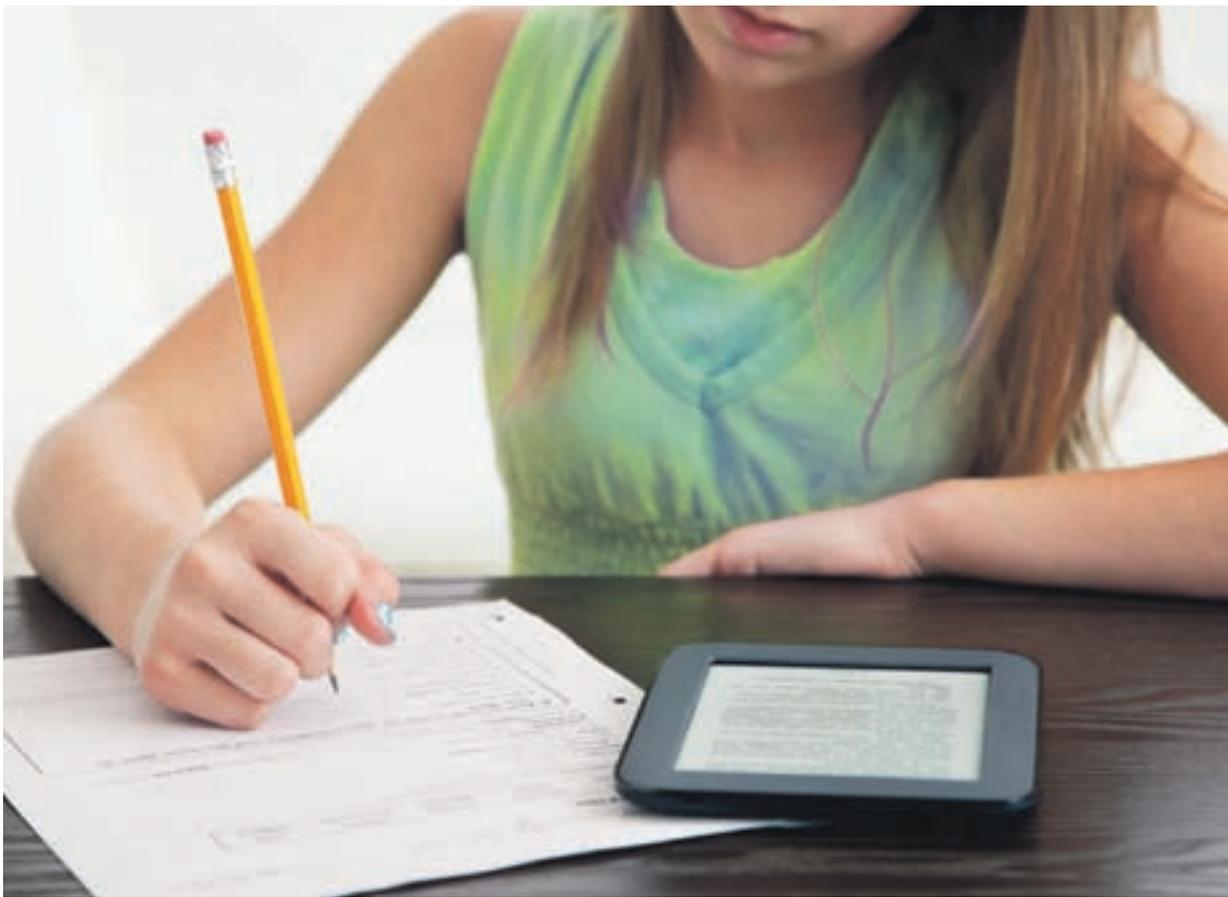
Vicki Abeles, director of the groundbreaking film “A Race to Nowhere” would favor a ban, as well, telling me, “We haven’t sounded the alarm loud enough when it comes to the long-term health consequences of the ‘busy-trap’ lives of our children” and that “we are depriving them of the growth that comes from having a job, making dinner with their families, reading for pleasure, and pursuing their own interests.”

Both the National Education Association and the National Parent Teacher Association recommend up to 10 minutes of homework from Kindergarten to second grade, and the National PTA recommends an additional 10 minutes more per grade thereafter. These guidelines seem to be echoed on many of the school’s individual websites, which often include nightly reading. Unfortunately, most of the parents I contacted were unaware of their school’s guidelines.

In the meantime, absent a ban, Kohn, Bennett and Abeles have helped to draft a petition for Healthy Homework Guidelines they hope the National PTA will adopt. For more information, go to www.change.org/healthyhomework.

Parents speak up

Unlike years ago, when parents pressured their children to finish



all of their homework, no questions asked, schools today expect more parental supervision and are looking for more open communication with parents. Several schools' homework guidelines even encourage parents to write a note if their children are unable to complete an assignment within a reasonable time and speak with the teacher if it becomes a persistent problem. Some of the parents I spoke with did just that.

One parent went even further and persuaded the teacher that certain regularly assigned homework was not necessary for her child, and as a result, he was no longer required to do it. Still, Kohn would prefer that all families be given the ability to "opt in" to receive homework, as opposed to opting out.

"We're asking them to go back to work at the end of the workday, and I fundamentally disagree with that," Suzanne, a Manhattan mom remarks. She not only resents the need to reserve weeknights for homework, effectively eliminating after school community building and family socialization, but also the need to squeeze enrichment activities into weekends, thereby curtailing traditional family outings.

"Parents need to speak up if the workload is excessive, and they need a vision for what they want as a fam-

ily and need to be brave enough to do it," she advises.

Suzanne noted that the problem is not just in her school, but is systemic and fear-based, telling me, "if we can't meet the [New York State core educational] standards without so much homework, then we need to change the standards."

She says she would support a change to do away with homework before second or third grade, introducing it in a reasonable amount, at an age when the children can work more independently.

Moreover, this mom, so aggravated that the homework required her attention deficit hyperactivity disorder-diagnosed child to take twice the suggested time, successfully advocated for the inclusion of a modification clause for children with Individualized Education Programs as part of her school's guidelines. Hopefully, other schools will follow suit, allowing for down time and family time after a long day.

Who's really completing the assignments?

Lori Hiller, a school social worker from Brooklyn, recognizes that sleep-deprived, anxious kids burn out as the evening wears on. If parents then complete the homework,

the benefit of the assignment is lost. Parents admitted to me that they do more than just assist with the assignment, either because they believe that the younger children do not possess the fine motor skills for elaborate projects or because they "want to get it out of the way."

When my third grader's groupings of taped pennies on plain cardboard was presented alongside another student's ski slope diorama perfectly engineered out of 100 toothpicks, I thought I was the only parent who was not doing my child's project for him. One Queens mother excused parents' over-participation, saying the child still needs to understand the concepts to present the project in class. A Brooklyn mom explains the overreaching as an attempt to avoid an evening of conflict and guarantee an A grade.

Many parents fear that their children will be penalized for incomplete or incorrect homework, so they make sure it is handed in corrected. Unfortunately, the teacher can't then tell if the child has mastered the material or the parent has taught the child that he must come home with top grades, no matter the cost. This mentality can have serious repercussions later, as Bennett references the recent cheating scandals at Harvard University and Stuyve-

sant High School as an outgrowth of this.

Defend family time

Kohn tells parents that their role is "to support their child's emotional, intellectual, social and moral development, not to be the school's enforcer." One Brooklyn mom echoed that sentiment, telling me of her distaste over acting "as the homework police," noting the stress that even appropriate parental supervision can cause in a household, and aware that constant conflict over homework, coupled with some teachers' fear tactics, can result in children hating school.

Hiller notes that families with two working parents often lose their after-work family time to homework and miss the natural interaction they should be having regularly with their children. One working mom from Forest Hills told me she makes the effort to go over all the

homework the daughter completed in her after school program, no matter how exhausted she is from her day.

Still, Hiller says, "There is a place in the world for homework and learning how to organize things," but recommends it be coupled with family-imposed structure, in the form of chores and dinner together, as well as informal outings and leisure activities, which can prompt learning, as well. She is aware of the statistics Kohn and Bennett rely upon, but believes that homework has served to provide her own children with good study habits.

"Homework is not like the weather, something to which we just have to reconcile ourselves," says Kohn. He challenges parents to go beyond the logistical questions related to an assignment and inquire as to the value of the assignment itself. He would even encourage parents to band together to convince educators that the value of homework is truly a myth.

Ultimately, we all want the same thing: our children to succeed. In order for that to happen, parents and teachers need to adopt Bennett's approach and recognize that we are "all in this thing together."

Risa C. Doherty is an award-winning freelance writer, attorney and mother of two, who survived years of homework hassles.

Weighty issues

How to respond to your child's questions about being overweight

BY KIKI BOCHI

Your child comes home from school, devastated that other kids are teasing her about being fat. You've noticed that she's getting a bit pudgy, but you're not sure how to broach the subject.

Talking to children about weight can be touchy. Many parents struggle with what to say and how to say it. In fact, one survey by WebMD found that many parents feel that talking about weight is more uncomfortable than talking about sex and drugs.

It's no wonder why. Ask adults who have struggled with their weight most their lives, and most have horror stories about insensitive comments they endured as children that were intended to "help" them. Understandably, today's parents are worried about saying the wrong thing, hurting their child's self-esteem, or worse, triggering an eating disorder.

With the ever-growing proportion of children who are overweight or obese, however, parents need to develop smart strategies about how to address the issue of weight. Unfortunately, there isn't that much practical advice out there.

"When parents search online or ask a medical professional for help in talking with their children about tough topics like sex or drinking, they can find a host of useful tools," says Scott Kahan, the director of STOP Obesity Alliance, a collaboration of nearly 70 consumer, government, labor, business, and health organizations. "Yet, if they search for information on how to field questions on weight, they won't find much beyond the simplistic 'eat less, move more' proclamation we've heard for years.

And that's just not sufficient to help the millions of families facing this serious and emotional health issue."

To help, STOP and the Alliance for



a Healthier Generation have developed a free conversation guide that covers "real-world" situations regarding weight, including understanding body mass index, body image, bullying, weight bias, and family obesity. It offers various scripts on how parents can respond to their child's questions and concerns, keeping the focus on healthy choices.

"Weight is a tough issue — perhaps the toughest today's parents face, given all the complexities," says

Ginny Ehrlich, CEO of Alliance for a Healthier Generation. "But that doesn't mean we can avoid it. In fact, it only intensifies the need to weigh in."

The free guide, aimed at the parents of children ages 7 to 11, is available online at www.WeighInOnObesity.org.

Kiki Bochi is an award-winning journalist who brings readers the best advice and latest developments in family health and child development.

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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Can't sleep?

Melatonin can help your child

When my daughter was diagnosed with not one, but two autoimmune disorders, it impacted everything in her life. From daily headaches and stomach pains to extreme fatigue and foggy brain, Kate grew accustomed to dealing with not feeling well. She always had trouble sleeping since being diagnosed, but in the last year in particular, things became worse. During the summer, she couldn't sleep at all. The more she tried, the more anxious she got and the less chance she had to sleep. Her days and nights became confused and her quality of life went downhill fast. When school reopened, it became apparent the first week that something had to be done.

I called her endocrinologist to discuss any possible sleeping aids that might help her. I had never before wanted to put her on any more medications than she was already on — especially sleeping pills — but her lack of sleep had become unbearable, I began to consider it.

Her doctor suggested melatonin. Melatonin? I had heard a lot about it in the past couple of years but didn't know much about it.

I thanked him, hung up, and

embarked on a three-hour Google search. And then I went across the street and bought her a bottle in the pharmacy. Hands-down, it was the best thing I've done to help improve her overall health.

With melatonin, the first mistake that people make is thinking that is a sleeping pill. It is not. It is a natural hormone produced by the body, which helps regulate the sleep and wake cycles. In my daughter's case, she didn't have enough to sustain her and her sleeping cycles were thrown out of whack. Once she started taking it, it immediately began helping her body do what it was naturally supposed to at night — calm down and sleep.

We all know how vital sleep is for all of us. Adequate amounts of sleep are essential for children (and in particular for children with health issues) because sleep affects us in every way, from eating and thinking to repairing cells and fighting off infection.

Dr. Lawrence Rosen, a pediatrician, nationally recognized expert in pediatric integrative medicine, and co-author of "Treatment Alternatives for Children," explains how melatonin helps.

"There are receptors in the brain

for melatonin that regulate brain chemicals related to anxiety and calming," he explains. Dr. Rosen, who is also the founder of the Whole Child Center in Oradell, NJ, recommends melatonin to his pediatric patients. "Melatonin can be a useful sleep or anxiety aid for children (typically 3 years old or older). I encourage an integrative approach to sleep and anxiety issues, including relaxation strategies like yoga or guided imagery. But if those strategies are not successful, a small dose of melatonin may be helpful."

Dr. Rosen recommends starting at 0.5 mg. and says even a very small dose can be effective. My daughter takes 1 mg. each night.

Robin Gorman Newman, founder of MotherhoodLater.com finds melatonin very useful in her son's sleeping schedule.

"My 9-year-old son has always been an active kid, and it's hard for him to wind down. He fights going to sleep, so melatonin was suggested to us. He takes 2 mg. of the GNC brand dissolvable pills a half hour before bedtime. He initially took 1 mg., but as he's grown, the doctor upped the dose."

There is some debate about the possible side effects, such as drowsiness, headaches, abdominal pain, dizziness, and strange dreams. If a child experiences any of these symptoms, melatonin might not be right for him. Bear in mind, however, that those side effects usually occur when people take too much or aren't under a doctor's care.

For my daughter, melatonin has been a lifesaver. Ever since the day she started taking it, she has been able to sleep, which is incredible given her history. If your child has been affected by a sustained lack of sleep or inability to get to sleep, a complete check-up is necessary. Then, once health conditions have been ruled out or identified — and if your child is still struggling to get the sleep he needs to feel healthy — you might want to discuss melatonin with your pediatrician.

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 her on Facebook and Twitter @DanniSullWriter, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.

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Finding a hobby

The value of hobbies for special-needs children

BY REBECCA MCKEE

In the cold months of winter, discovering novel adventures and activities can pose a challenge. It is during these moments when many of us spend time shaking off the chill indoors by working on projects, co-zying up with a good book, and seeking out other forms of fun.

People with autism spectrum disorder, or other unique personalities, meet with difficulties managing their leisure in a productive manner. Their free time is not something naturally filled with hobbies. Unstructured minutes and hours lead to practicing undesirable behaviors. How to partake in recreation skills is something that needs to be taught, scheduled, and reinforced. Winter is a perfect season to teach the skill of hobby development and maintenance, as it is the natural time of year for family and friends to spend more time close to home.

Since hobbies take place for most people outside of work and school, families and residential support teams should tackle the task of developing hobbies for a person with autism. All people involved, including the individual with special needs, family and support circles, should articulate and develop hobbies that are preferred and teachable. Keep in mind, as is the case for us all, that hobbies must fit within our daily schedules. As you create on behalf of those who may not enjoy change and combustion, select hobbies that will last throughout the years.

Hobbies that have longevity meet these criteria:

- It is a socially acceptable activity for children, teens and adults.
- It is something that one gravitates towards naturally.



- It is something that is simple to schedule.

- It is something that can be started, enjoyed, and completed alone.

Some socially acceptable activities that will grow throughout childhood to adulthood may include collections, such as sports memorabilia, coins, or stamps. A regularly scheduled physical hobby can consist of an exercise activity, as in Wii, bike riding, yoga, and meditation, or simply taking a daily walk. Pet care and dog walking would be beneficial for those who have a keen interest in animals.

Those who enjoy the arts may be attracted to hobbies that comprise of pottery, musical instrument les-

sons, music appreciation via an iPod, scrapbooking, painting, photography, or keeping a journal. Food lovers may enjoy gardening and planting, and taking that hobby further to cooking and preparing food.

Bringing your family member on board with his hobby development will increase the chances that he will enjoy leisure skills independently. It also heightens the chances that he will grow with this hobby, expand on it, and bring it to new levels throughout his life. Hobbies should not cause internal anxiety to himself or external disruption to others. Hobbies fill free time and are to be enjoyed. They bring structure and a sense of accomplishment. Enjoy!



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Don't label my child!

Accepting the diagnosis and services for your child with special needs

BY DANA CONNELLY

To observe your child lag behind his peers is a pressure-filled, insecurity-fueling experience. Every parent needs to be aware of the appropriate developmental milestones of children, for which there is a plethora of information.

Any child-care program worth its accreditation and its tuition should be monitoring your child's progress through these milestones, noting any red flags in development and behavior, and reporting them to you, as the parent or caregiver, in a timely and professional manner.

Fear of labels

Rather than balk at the suggestion of having your child evaluated, though, understand that these professionals want not only what is best for their program, but also what is best for your child. So why do so many families hold off on having their child evaluated for fear that the child will be "labeled?"

The reality is that everyone is labeled something everywhere they go. Maybe you're the so-called "funny" member of your family or the "tough one" at work. Of course, there is so much more to you than that. It is the same when your child is given a diagnosis.

If your child is displaying symptoms of autism, for example, but we called it "Puzzle-Head Syndrome," does it change what your child's struggles are? It's so important to focus more on the goals that the evaluations outline versus the label. These goals will bring your child closer to age-appropriate levels.

Without accepting the diagno-

sis and services, your child will continue to struggle and will be labeled something regardless. Is it better for your child to be known as "the one who doesn't talk," "the kid who cries a lot," or "the bully," rather than get the help he needs?

Parents in denial

In speaking with a parent, a registered nurse who struggled with accepting her son's diagnosis of mild-moderate autism, she confessed the following:

"I would have felt less scared and hopeless had they told me my child had leukemia."

This sounded insane and awful to me at first, but then she explained.

Leukemia has a course of treatment that she could understand. And he could potentially be cured. I could see her point.

It's interesting how, if a child has a cold, asthma, or allergies, we as parents are on top of it, making the doctor's appointments, contacting every specialist, and filling the prescriptions.

So why is it that when our children display troubling behaviors, learning disabilities, or developmental delays, we hold off on having them evaluated and



Without accepting the diagnosis, your child will continue to struggle and will be labeled something regardless. Is it better for your child to be known as “the one who doesn’t talk,” or “the bully,” rather than get the help he needs?

reject the services that are offered (for free, through the Board of Education)?

Many parents feel that it is a reflection of their parenting skills. Perhaps they feel a sense of insecurity about the time or opportunities that they can provide for their child. Maybe they blame themselves for an incident the child has endured.

Denial is what grows from such insecurity and is a common reaction to learning that a child will need special educational services, but the inaction of the parent far outshines the difficulties that the child is displaying. While it seems harsh, it is the denial that will have you judged as a parent.

Another concern of parents during the evaluation and diagnosis process is that they do not want their child to be part of the system.

The reality, though, is that if your child has a Social Security number, then he is already part of the system, a system that is designed and regulated to help your child achieve developmental milestones, age-appropriate skills, and future academic success.

The evaluation process is confidential and every report, consent form, and Individual Educational Plan is accessible by only the appointed parties involved in your child’s case.

Even if your child requires services throughout his educational career, goals such as college, future employment, and living independently are not unattainable simply because he has been evaluated at some point in his life.

Neglecting needs

An important consideration is that, prior to first grade, educational services are not mandatory, but if your child requires services after first grade and, as a parent or caregiver, you do not follow through, it could be considered educational neglect.

Section 1012 (f) of the Family Court Act identifies a neglected child as a child less than 18 years of age whose physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as a result of the failure of his parent or other person legally responsible for his care to exercise a minimum degree of care; in supplying the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or education in accordance with the provisions of part one of article 65 of the education law, or medical, dental, optometric, or surgical care, though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so.

As an evaluation representative for a New York-based agency, I come into frequent contact with families who are in denial of their children’s developmental delays. At times, meetings have ended in threats, insults, and even tears. It is OK to feel discouraged, and it is tempting to feel like in some way you have failed as a parent, but it’s essential to shelve those impulses and take a more proactive approach to helping your child grow and develop.

The evaluation process is comprised of multiple standardized tests that determine the functioning level of your child. According to the New York City Board Of Education, a child must present with a 33 percent delay in one developmental area, or a 25 percent delay in two developmental areas to qualify for services.

By initiating a proper evaluation for your child, the worst thing that can happen is that your child will get the help that he needs.

For more information, visit www.nysed.gov.

Dana Connelly holds dual Master’s Degrees in Education and Special Education, working as an educational evaluator for a New York-based agency. She specializes in Applied Behavior Analysis and is the proud single mother of a 5-year-old boy.

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Fun Thanksgiving crafts for kids



BY DENISE YEARIAN

You're busy this month planning and preparing your Thanksgiving feast, so give your children a few holiday activities they can sink their teeth into. When completed, these items can be used as decorations for your table and home.

Turkey taters

Items needed: thin cardboard or card stock; white construction paper; pencil; markers; scissors; straight pins; potato.

Lay your hand down on a piece of cardboard. Spread your fingers apart. Use a pencil to draw around each finger and thumb, making the hand outline a little larger than your hand is. This will be the feathers.

On white construction paper, draw two round eyes, a triangular beak, and a teardrop-shaped wattle.

Before cutting anything out, color the feathers and facial features. The feathers can be a blend of hues. The eyes should have a black center for the pupils, the beak yellow, and the wattle red.

Now, cut out all of the turkey features. Take the potato and slice off a small section of the bottom so it will stand without falling. Carefully attach the eyes, beak, wattle, and feathers with straight pins.

Notable natives

Items needed: two empty toilet paper rolls; orange, pink, black, and yellow construction paper; scissors; glue; pencil; black marker; ruler.

Cut two of each of the following from construction paper: 4- by 6-inch orange paper (Native American body); 2- by 6-inch pink paper (face); 3- by 4-inch black paper (hair); 1- by 6-inch orange paper (headband); small feather shapes from yellow paper.

Wrap an empty toilet paper roll with the orange paper and glue in place.

Draw a face on the pink paper. Wrap the pink paper around the top edge of the toilet paper roll to form the face and head. Glue in place. Cut the black construction paper in long, narrow strips, so it makes fringe for the hair.

Glue hair around the sides and back of the head. For headband, draw zigzag lines or another design across the long orange strip. Glue two or three feathers on the backside of the headband. When dry, wrap the headband around the Native American's head and face making sure not to cover the eyes. Glue in place.

Repeat instructions for the second Native American. Add more feathers for the boy, and draw a beaded necklace on the girl.

Brim and buckle napkin rings

Items needed: empty toilet paper roll; black and yellow construction paper; scissors; glue; ruler; large jar or cup 3 1/2- to 4-inches in diameter.

Cut each of the following from construction paper: 3- by 6-inch black paper; black circle measuring 3 1/2- to 4-inches in diameter (use the mouth of the jar or cup as a guide); 2-inch square yellow construction paper.

Measure 3 inches on the toilet paper roll, and cut it down to

Seasonal books

To enjoy a Thanksgiving-themed story time with your child, check out these books at your library:

“Albert’s Thanksgiving” by Leslie Tryon

“The Candy Corn Contest” by Patricia Reilly Giff (sound recording)

“The First Thanksgiving” by Lois Lensky

“Squanto and the Miracle of Thanksgiving” by Eric Metaxas

“Thank You, Sarah: The Woman Who Saved Thanksgiving” by Laurie Halse Anderson

“A Turkey for Thanksgiving” by Eve Bunting (book and sound recording)

“Turkeys, Pilgrims, and Indian Corn: The Story of the Thanksgiving Symbols” by Edna Barth

“Turkey Pox” by Laurie Halse Anderson

cut a smaller yellow square on the inside so it is hollow in the center. This is the buckle of the hat. Glue it onto the hat, close to the brim. The napkin fits into the top of the hat. Repeat directions until you have enough for all of your guests.

Thankful tree

Items needed: red, green, brown, yellow, and purple construction paper; large brown paper bag or roll of brown paper; scissors; tape; pen.

Cut apart a large brown paper bag and use it to make the trunk and branches of a tree. Hang this on the refrigerator door or another door in your home. As family and friends arrive at your house on Thanksgiving Day, ask if you can trace their hands on a piece of construction paper. Have them write something they are thankful for on each handprint. When they are finished, cut out the hands and attach them to the tree, so they look like leaves.

Cornucopia of candy

Items needed: large waffle cones; candy corn and pumpkins; other small candies.

Lay cones on their side and fill with candy corn and pumpkin mix, or other small candies.

This can be a small table centerpiece, or a favor at each person’s place setting.

Denise Yearian is the former editor of two parenting magazines and the mother of three children.



that size. Roll black paper around the toilet paper roll and glue in place. This is the body of the hat. On one end, cut six small tabs around the bottom.

Take the black circle and stand the toilet paper roll on one end in the center.

Trace around the roll to form an inner circle. Cut out this inner circle to make a donut shape. Slip the donut shape down over the toilet paper roll to form the brim of the hat. Fold the tabs on the bottom of the roll so they are underneath the brim. Put a dab of glue on each tab and secure to the brim.

Take the yellow square and

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Time to play!

Playworks helps kids reap the benefits of recess

BY CANDI SPARKS

When I was a kid, recess was a time to talk with my friends about boys, run, scream, and let off some excess steam before returning the humdrum of reading, writing, and arithmetic. These days, recess is not just a “break” between the morning and afternoon sessions at school, it is also where all the action takes place. Bullying, fights, teasing, exclusion — they all play out during recess.

Unfortunately, these happenings have an effect on what children learn at school because problems at recess often spill into the classroom. Teachers can lose valuable teaching time if they have to stop a lesson to resolve behavioral problems that spawned in the schoolyard every day. During the course of a year, that time can really add up.

“Recess and the transitions to and from lunch are the toughest part of the day,” said a teacher at PS 20

in Brooklyn who asked to remain anonymous. “The students become disorganized, hyper, and difficult to manage. Going from a free-for-all to focused learning is tough on them, and on me.”

This teacher’s comment reminded me of the day when my own child came home with a chipped tooth from playing football in the schoolyard. Another parent reported that their child was being bullied at school, so the staff changed the children’s seats so they’d be further apart. When that didn’t work, the children were put in different reading groups. Ultimately, when the classroom issue couldn’t be resolved, one child transferred out of the school. No parent wants her child coming home from school injured, but, as shown, it is difficult for schools to deal with problems that fall in the gray area between a school problem and a social one.

Emter Playworks, a national nonprofit based in California that en-

gages elementary school students in playgrounds. The organization provides a structure to help the children have fun, learn inclusion through teamwork, and engage in constructive conflict safely.

The games include everyone and focus on teamwork rather than on competition. Playworks levels the play to an appropriate amount of physical activity and combines thinking and self-control with fun games. Many of the Playworks games and instructions can be downloaded from the company’s website. For games like tag (but not called tag), where touching is required, it is to be “as light as the wings of a butterfly.” There is never pushing or shoving. It is a great way to teach children self-control and help them burn off excess energy.

These improvements better the school community, the individual child, and their academic success. The organization is currently engaging students at recess in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, and the list is growing.

“Children do need to play, but many of them do not know how to play,” says Adeola “Ola” Whitney, a Brooklyn mother of two and executive director of Playworks Greater Newark and New York area. “Many kids are not privy to go to a safe park after school. Neighborhoods and schools may not have expansive resources to give kids the healthy recreation that children need.”

Most parents know what she means. Sitting around pushing buttons on an electronic box (AKA a video game console) is not “really” playing.

Roberta Davenport, the principal of PS 307 in Brooklyn, brought the Playworks program to her school to help children develop social skills that have been forgotten in modern academia such as empathy, sharing, respect, and inclusion. The result was improved grades. According to Whitney, the principal wanted a program that would help with the transitions from schoolyard play to schoolwork.





Photos by Roger Tully

“It is a great inclusion program,” says Taina, a parent at PS 3 in Brooklyn, where the Playworks program has organized recess play to include children who were being left out. “It was tough for my child, who has experienced pushing, hitting, and name-calling by a classmate in the yard, and then to come back to class and be forced to sit right next to the person.” The problem not only affects the student who is being bullied and their bully. The tension and frustration of a recess incident can negatively affect an entire class.

Which means that sometimes teachers need an adequate break during the long school day, too. And the Playworks program is flexible. It can either dispatch its own “coaches,” or train staff at schools, to organize the playtime.

But does it matter who runs the Playworks recess?

“Absolutely! A great teacher is a great teacher in the classroom. When those skills don’t translate to outdoor play, we help with crowd control, leadership, and managing the playtime in a safe way,” says Whitney.

The program strives to improve the overall tone of the play and of the school. There is no yelling or “punishment” for rule breakers. The coaches model respectful behavior and want to offer opportunities for everyone to participate in the games safely. No yelling at lunchtime? I am already impressed!

Gallup poll research shows that a positive school climate improves social, emotional, and academic outcomes for youth. Rather than cutting out recess, let’s improve it for the sake of children’s health and happiness.

Playworks is available nationwide and is currently in 23 major cities, including schools in our area: Voice Charter School in Long Island City, The Anderson School on the Upper West Side, and Children’s Storefront School in Harlem. It’s also in several schools in Brooklyn: PS 59, PS 12, PS 11, PS 309, PS 307, PS 11, PS 3, and PS 20. For more, visit www.playworks.org.

Candi Sparks is the author of “Can I Have Some Money?” a children’s money book series which includes “Max Gets It!,” “Nacho Money,” and other titles. She is the Brooklyn mother of two. Find “CandiSparks’s Blog” on Wordpress, and follow her on Facebook (Candi Sparks, author) and Twitter (Candi Sparks, author), or on www.candisparks.com.

Good grief

Five tips to help your child cope with the loss of a pet

BY GAYLA GRACE

Tears filled my eyes as I watched the veterinarian end the life of our 18-year-old cat, Callie. Insisting on being present, my youngest son, Nathan, clung to my neck. One of my older daughters had already retreated to the car, unable to watch.

Callie had been part of our lives for as long as I could remember, and my heart was breaking for our children, who would dearly miss her.

Discuss death honestly

The loss of a family pet may be the first experience a child has in dealing with death. It's an emotional event that almost all families encounter and warrants special attention when it happens.

A child's age determines what level of detail to discuss when a pet dies. A preschool child can't understand that death happens to everyone as a permanent event.

The best approach with young children includes a brief explanation with the opportunity for them to ask questions. Refrain from using the words "put to sleep" or "resting in peace." These words are taken literally by children and will cause further confusion. A young child might begin to worry that he, too, will die when he goes to sleep at night or rests at naptime.

Prepare for the end

School-aged children understand more about death and may want to be actively involved in the last days of their pet's life. Our son, Nathan, was 8 years old when Callie was euthanized, and wanted to be there for the duration, but it can be trauma-



There will still be difficult emotions to combat, but if the child begins the grieving process while the pet is alive, the death feels less traumatic.



tizing for a child to watch the final procedure.

Our 16-year-old daughter wanted to accompany us to the veterinarian's office and say her ending good-byes there, but didn't want to watch Callie's last moments of life. As a parent, you can help your children decide the appropriate way for them to part for the last time. It often works best to explain what will happen and then allow your children time to cuddle the animal and say goodbye at home before you leave alone with the pet for the veterinarian's office.

When a pet begins to move toward the end of life, we can prepare our children for the inevitable event. There will still be difficult emotions to combat, but if the child begins the grieving process while the pet is alive, the death feels less traumatic.

Callie was sick for several months before she died, and we began preparing our children for what would happen. The finality was still emotional, but our children knew what to expect. Afterward, we talked frequently of our memories and let our kids know it was OK to be sad about her dying.

Allow time to say goodbye

"Pets are members of our families and when our pet dies, our daily family life is changed," says Kris Palazzo, veterinary hospital manager. "Every circumstance is different, but it's important to allow a child the chance to say goodbye to their pet, if possible." Palazzo also said if pets are cremated, the ashes can be returned to the owner as a keepsake, if the family desires.

Pet owner and mom of two, Bridgette McNabb, agrees.

"We had gotten our dog, Suzie, at 6 weeks of age and she had been in our family for 13 years," says Bridgette. "My husband, Mike, and I knew her days were short, so we started talking to the kids about Suzie not being with us much longer. The day Suzie

was to be euthanized, we brought her in, told the kids what would be happening, loved on her, took pictures with her, and said our goodbyes through lots of tears. Then, Mike took her to the vet. Our last memories at home — with Suzie licking on the kids — were the best."

Allowing the children special time with their dog on her last day of life was a beautiful gift the McNabbs gave to their children.

Allow emotions to process

The loss of a pet that occurs because of a sudden accident or illness is harder on a child (and you as a parent), emotionally.

You will spend more time consoling your child and working through your own feelings about the loss.

Children can't process their feelings like adults do and may resort to acting out or withdrawing as a result of the loss. Encourage your children to express their feelings and be sensitive when they're feeling sad or angry. Spend extra time nurturing them when possible. And refrain from replacing the pet immediately. It's important to grieve your loss before attempting to move forward with a new pet to love.

...

Losing a family pet is never easy. As parents, we struggle with our own feelings surrounding the loss, in addition to helping our children cope.

But the loss of a pet offers a great opportunity to begin talking to your child about death, an inevitable part of life. When we explain the process of what's happening and offer our children a sensitive spirit and a willing heart to help them process their feelings, they will adjust to life without their pet and be prepared to love another pet at an appropriate time.

Gayla Grace is a wife and mom of five children in her blended family. She ministers to stepfamilies through her website, www.stepparentingwithgrace.com.

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A PLAY ABOUT HOW TOYS BECOME REAL

Daryl Roth & theatreworksUSA present
THE VELVETEEN RABBIT
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY KEVIN DEL AGUILA
BASED ON THE BOOK BY MARGERY WILLIAMS

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DEAR
DR. KARYN
DR. KARYN GORDON

Strategies to inspire your teens at school

Dear Dr. Karyn,

While my daughter tries a little at school, my son seems completely disengaged and uninspired. I have tried everything to motivate my kids, and I'm feeling really anxious. Since you work so much with teens, what have you learned that helps to inspire teens (especially boys)?

Dear Parent,

Strategy one: be the inspiration

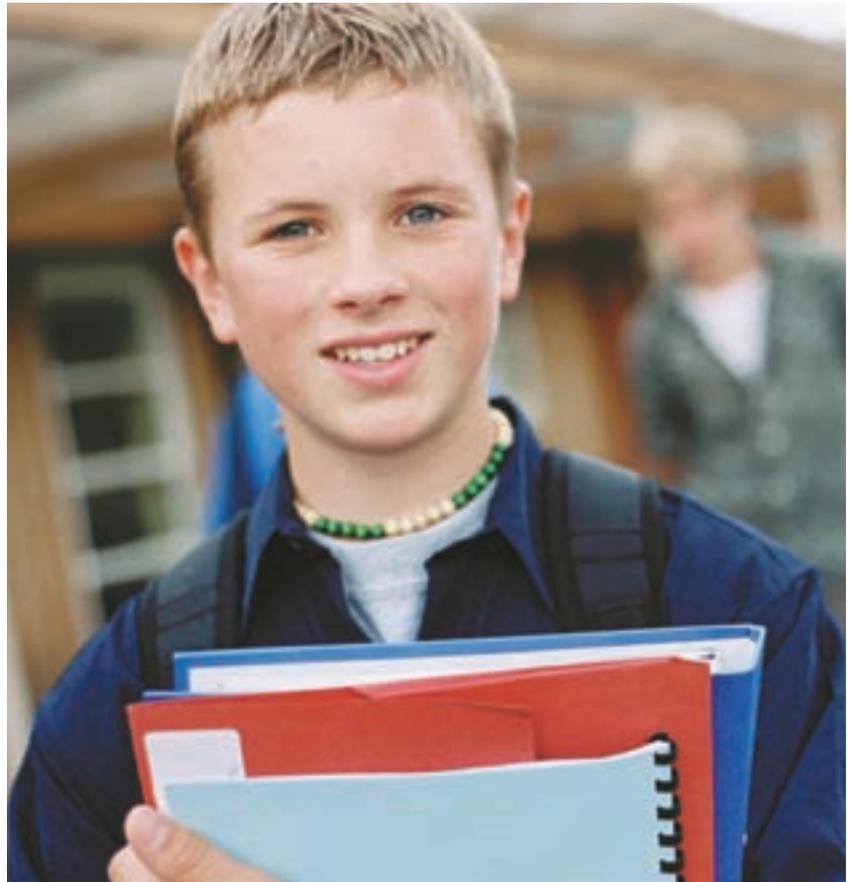
Try to be honest with yourself. Are you an inspiring person? Do you love your life? Do you love who you are? Are you happy with how you are using your gifts? Inspiration is powerful and contagious. Spend time with an “inspiring” person and most of us just feel better, energized, and more alive. The key to inspiring our kids is that we ourselves need to work on inspiring ourselves first. We can preach about being inspirational, but without living it our words are flat, and our teens will tune us out.

So how can we tap into our own inspiration? Be clear about what it is you want to do this year and what character traits you want to work on in yourself. Just last Monday, I decided to dedicate a full day for my dreams and goals for the remaining part of 2012 (I don't do that nearly enough). By the end of the day, I was fully energized, focused, and excited for this fall! It helped clarify what I need to say “yes” to and, more importantly, what I need to say “no” to so I can protect those goals.

Remember that kids and teens love to see their parents love their lives. Your inspiration will be contagious for them!

Strategy two: talk about dreams (not goals)

Most teens (especially boys) do not like the word “goals” (it reminds



them too much of school). This is one of the key reasons why my popular leadership event for teens is called “Dare to Dream” (and not “Dare to Set Goals”). Many people have dreams — it's the big picture — the snap shot for how they want their lives to turn out. Goals are more specific and too often teens associate goals with a specific subject in school. So try asking your teen about his dreams, such as: “What are some of the dreams you have in your life?”

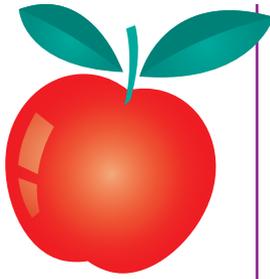
Ask him about his dreams related to traveling, volunteer work, family, or money. Try to bring up school and career dreams at the end. And while many teens have dreams, some may not (they may be afraid to allow themselves to dream). If so, simply be patient and bring it up again with

them in a few weeks.

Strategy three: surround him with inspirational people

One of my favorite books is called “The Power of Focus.” In this book, the author talks about the importance of surrounding yourselves with inspirational people, movies, biographies, and books.

So tune into what your teen is interested in. What movies does he like to watch? Who are his role models? Can you get the biographies (TV or video) of one of his role models sharing about their lives' journey? Or do you have aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, or other people in your life that your teen would find inspiring? If so, try to facilitate them spending time together. Something this simple could be all it takes to ignite his inspiration.



DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND
MARGE EBERTS

A grade for effort?

Dear teacher,

My son receives a grade for both achievement and effort in every one of his subjects. I am not sure which grade I should be most concerned with? Is it important to receive both grades for each subject?

Dear parents,

The grades measure different things. The achievement grade reflects how well your son has mastered the subject material. The effort grade is less precise. It shows how hard your child is working, including doing classwork, participating in class discussion, and completing homework assignments.

You should be most concerned about the relationship between the two grades. A good grade in effort should ideally be linked to a good grade in achievement. On the other hand, a poor grade in effort can often explain a low achievement grade. And a high achievement grade coupled with a low effort grade may indicate that a child needs more challenging work. Whenever there is a significant difference between the two grades, a discussion with a teacher should be arranged.

Research has shown that students' beliefs about effort are very important. If students believe that the effort they put into learning an academic subject will lead to achieving a better academic grade, the students are more likely to put forth the necessary effort to obtain the results they want to achieve.

Ways to improve a fourth grader's spelling

Dear teacher,

My fourth grader will ace the weekly spelling test; however, he misspells a lot of words when doing other work. How can he improve his spelling?

Dear parents,

Part of the answer lies in how he learns the spelling test words. He may not be working with them enough to really learn them. He needs to write the words on a home spelling pre-test as soon as he gets them, self-correct the misspelled words, and write them correctly and then be tested on the missed words



following the same steps until he can write them correctly. If he misses too many words, limit the number of words (five to seven) that he works with in one evening. The night before the test, re-test him on all the words and follow the same correction steps for any missed words.

There is a good possibility that the spelling test words are not the ones that he is misspelling in his everyday work. A good way to deal with this is to look over his work and make a list of the words that he frequently misspells. Then you can follow the steps above and teach him five of these words along with the weekly spelling list. Review these words frequently in separate spelling tests until you see that he really can spell them. It could take a month for him to learn as many as 10 words.

To reinforce the learning of the misspelled words, play Hangman with your son using the words that he frequently misspells. If he can word process, he could type some of his homework. By using spell check, he'll immediately see spelling errors and be able to correct them.

No phonics a problem for fifth grader

Dear teacher,

My daughter was never taught many phonics. Now, when she meets a new word, she can't sound it out.

She's in fifth grade, and this is becoming quite a problem in her social studies and science classes. Where do we get help for her?

Dear parents,

When children get to your daughter's age, they really aren't using many phonics beyond the sound of the first syllable. After this, they are decoding words by dividing them into syllables and identifying familiar prefixes and suffixes, as well as using the context.

Admittedly, new words in social studies and science can be difficult to decode. You can help your child by working with her on each chapter's new vocabulary. In most social studies and science

books, these words are usually displayed prominently at the beginning or end of a chapter. If you can't work with your child, consider a tutor.

Don't expect her to learn all the new vocabulary in one session. Start with the ones in the current reading assignment. Introduce these words over several days, and review them frequently. Work on only a few words at a time. First, spend time on the definitions of each word until your daughter can easily define them. Then, take a word and show her how to divide the word into syllables. If she is having trouble with initial consonants, find simple words that she knows using that consonant. For example, if the word is "society," relate it to the word "so." Be sure to identify and teach the common prefixes and suffixes used in the social studies and science words.

It could also be helpful if you and your daughter were to read sections of the textbook aloud together using the new words. If your or a tutor's work with the child is not enough, ask the school to investigate your daughter's reading difficulties and to provide the help that she needs.

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com.

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Holiday staycation

There's no place like home when New York City celebrates this season

BY STACEY ZABLE

Visitors know that December is one of the best times of year to come to New York City, when shops and attractions dress up and show off with special activities, events, and retail wonders. Luckily for us, it's all just a ferry, train or bus ride away. This holiday season, use your days off to take in some of the festive fun listed below — and maybe even top it off with an overnight stay in Manhattan.

Sights and activities

Window shopping: The inside of the stores may be a treasure trove of great gifts, but the first stop for anyone exploring New York City this season is to see the famed holiday windows of Manhattan's iconic shops. Favorites include Bloomingdale's on

59th Street and Lexington Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman on 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, Saks Fifth Avenue on 49th Street, Lord & Taylor on 38th Street and Fifth Avenue, and Macy's on 34th Street at Sixth Avenue.

Rockefeller Center: Is there really any other Christmas tree when compared to Rockefeller Center's soaring spruce? The beautifully decorated, massive tree is lit up in all its glory and surrounded by other holiday decor starting Nov. 28. Get in the true spirit and take a spin on the ice at the skating rink, or get tickets for Radio City Music Hall's "Christmas Spectacular," celebrating its 85th anniversary of the Rockettes performing in New York City. The show runs Nov. 9-Dec. 30.

Rockefeller Center (Rockefeller Plaza between W. 49th and W. 50th streets in Manhattan, rockefellercenter.com);

Radio City Music Hall [1260 Sixth Ave. between W. 50th and W. 51st streets in Manhattan, (212) 247-4777, radiocitychristmas.com]

Holiday Train Show: This New York Botanical Garden annual event features model trains that ride through more than 100 replicas of city landmarks, including the Brooklyn Bridge, Yankee Stadium, and the George Washington Bridge. Takes place from Nov. 17 through Jan. 13, 2013.

New York Botanical Garden [2900 Southern Blvd. in Belmont, Bronx, (718) 817-8700, www.nybg.org]

Bryant Park: Combine skating and shopping at Bryant Park. The City Pond at Bryant Park rink features free ice skating, rental skates, skating shows, and special events and activities. The Holiday Shops at Bryant Park, individual booths boasting unique gift items, surround the skat-



(Above) The first stop for any one exploring New York City this season is to see the famed holiday windows of Manhattan's iconic shops, including Macy's on 34th Street. (At left) There's plenty to do in Rockefeller Center — there's the beautifully decorated, massive tree is lit up in all its glory and surrounded by other holiday decor; ice skating; or Radio City Hall's "Christmas Spectacular."

ing rink through Jan. 6, 2013.

Bryant Park [41 W. 40th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues in Manhattan, (212) 768-4242, CitiPondatBryantPark.com; TheHolidayShopsatBryantPark.com]

Gingerbread time: Going beyond gingerbread men and gingerbread houses, local pastry chefs create large-scale confectionary creations highlighting monuments from around the world at Le Parker Meridien hotel during its annual Gingerbread Extravaganza. They are on display from Dec. 1 to Jan. 3, 2013.

Le Parker Meridien [119 W. 56th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues in Manhattan, (212) 245-5000, parkermeridien.com]

Hotel packages

Make your holiday shopping time something special with an overnight stay in Manhattan. Below are just a few of the hotels offering special packages; it's up to you if you want to bring the kids or spend some alone time with your significant other. Access the websites or call the hotels directly for rates.

Affinia Manhattan: The Miracle on 31st Street package includes accommodations for one night; VIP Ice Skating package at Bryant Park (two skate rentals, VIP access to bypass the line, hot cocoa, bag check, and 10 percent off your final bill at Celsius at Bryant Park); two complimentary holiday cocktails and 20 percent off holiday dinner at Niles NYC Restaurant & Bar; Macy's 10 percent savings pass; in-room

holiday cookies and hot chocolate; in-room DVD of "Miracle on 34th Street" upon request.

Affinia Manhattan [371 Seventh Ave. between 30th and 31st streets in Manhattan, (212) 563-1800, affinia.com]

Hyatt 48 Lex: Bloomie's Holiday Shopping package includes a \$50 gift card and an appointment with a Bloomingdale's personal shopping consultant. Guests also receive a leather VIP wallet from Bloomingdale's and a 15 percent off coupon for all Bloomingdale's purchases during their stay, plus free delivery of Bloomingdale's packages to the hotel.

Hyatt 48 Lex [517 Lexington Ave. between E. 48th and E. 49th streets in Manhattan, (212) 838-1234, 48lex.hyatt.com]

414 Hotel: The Magic in the City package for two guests per room (queen room only) includes two gift certificates for \$20 each for ice skating at the Rink at Rockefeller Center. Two-night minimum; mention Magic in the City when booking.

414 Hotel [414 W. 46th Street between Ninth and 10th avenues in Manhattan, (212) 399-0006, 414hotel.com]

Stacey Zable is an award-winning veteran travel writer and family travel expert who has written about destinations, resorts, and cruise lines around the world. Her favorite trips are those that she shares with her husband and two daughters. Send travel questions and comments to Stacey at info@familytraveltrails.com.

WINNER! 5 TONY AWARDS



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1. Entertainment Weekly says it's "ABSURDLY FUNNY!"

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Calendar

NOVEMBER



A hoot of a time at the Owl Prowl

“Whoo” goes there? It’s the Owl Prowl at Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum on Nov. 17!

Naturalist, photographer, and writer Deborah Allen leads an owl talk with an indoor half-hour presentation, then brings everyone outside to look for long-eared and

Saw-whet owls. The event is fun for all ages. Registration is required.

Nov. 17 from 2:30 to 4 pm. Admission is \$10; \$5 for seniors, students, and members.

Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum [895 Shore Rd. in Baychester, (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.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!

Send your listing request to bronxcalendar@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!

FRI, NOV. 2

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

Enjoy the acoustic sounds of Mary and The Boys and light refreshments. The trolley makes a continuous loop from the 6 train Pelham Bay Parkway subway to the museum and City Island. Registration requested.

SAT, NOV. 3

Fox and Branch: Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am; \$13-20.

Dave Fox and Will Branch play a timeless kind of music for families as part of the Just Kidding Saturday series.

Poetry workshop: Poe Visitor Center, Grand Concourse and E. Kingsbridge Road; (718) 365-5516; www.nycgovparks.org; 2–3 pm; Free.

Poet John Maney offers tips to teens on how to create their own works.

SUN, NOV. 4

ING NYC Marathon: Starts at Verrazano Bridge, Staten Island Side; www.nyrr.org; 9 am–5 pm; Free.

Come and watch the 43rd running of the world-wide event through the five boroughs of New York City, when more than 47,000 runners will compete. The course begins in Staten Island, and goes through Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx before ending at Central Park.

Bubble Do Beats: 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

Bubble performs faithful adaptations of Beatles records to audiences ranging from 6 months to 64 years old, covering everything from "A Hard Day's Night" to "Abbey Road."

Fall drawing workshop: Van Cor-



Photo by Joshua Bright

Autumn happenings at Wave Hill

The fun never stops at Wave Hill.

The air might be chilly, but children can still meander through the gardens and create fun art projects each weekend from Nov. 10 through 29.

The weekend of Nov. 10 and 11 finds children making vibrant collage prints with all the colors of autumn.

Then, visitors celebrate corn

and Native Americans on the weekend of Nov. 17 and 18 by listening to folk tales and making a doll out of corn husks.

Visit Wave Hill on Thanksgiving weekend, Nov. 24 and 25, and create a wall hanging with found items from a walk through the grounds.

Family members have a chance to do some early holiday shopping on Nov. 29 from 5 to 8 pm when Wave Hill opens its doors for a

very special market of hand-made goods and an evening of music (free admission).

Family Art Projects are scheduled from 10 am to 1 pm each weekend from Nov. 10 through Nov. 29.

Admission is free with admission to the grounds.

Wave Hill [W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue in Riverdale, (718) 549-3200, www.wavehill.org].

tlandt Nature Center, W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 11 am; Free.

Explore your creative side and paint, draw, and write poetry all to the glory of fall.

Rebecca Stead Reading: Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 1 pm; \$15 (\$12 members).

The Newbery Medal-winning author of "When You Reach Me" discusses her new novel about the challenges of seventh grade.

National Circus of the People's

Republic of China: Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; www.LehmanCenter.org; 4 pm; \$45, \$40, \$25 (\$10 children under 12).

Cirque Chinois, direct from Beijing.

TUES, NOV. 6

"Rockin' Ever After": Nassau Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Turnpike; (800) 745-3000; www.nassaucoliseum.com; 7 pm; \$18-\$168.

Disney On Ice presents this holiday spectacular featuring Ariel, Rapunzel, Belle, and Merida from Disney-Pixar's "Brave" in her ice debut.

WED, NOV. 7

"Rockin' Ever After": 7 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Tuesday, Nov. 6.

THURS, NOV. 8

"Rockin' Ever After": 10:30 am

Continued on page 30

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Continued from page 29

and 7 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Tuesday, Nov. 6.

FRI, NOV. 9

"Rockin' Ever After": 7 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Tuesday, Nov. 6.

SAT, NOV. 10

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Ave. (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Make vibrant collage prints.

Treasured Stories by Eric Carle: Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am and 2 pm; \$15-\$25.

The award-winning Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia presents a colorful glow-in-the-dark production as part of the Just Kidding Saturday series.

"Rockin' Ever After": 11 am, 3 and 7 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Tuesday, Nov. 6.

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

Park rangers teach how to survive any emergency, whether in the woods or in an urban setting. Recommended for children older than 8 years old.

Poetry workshop: Poe Visitor Center, Grand Concourse and E. Kingsbridge Road; (718) 365-5516; www.nycgovparks.org; 2-3 pm; Free.

Poet John Maney offers tips to teens on how to create their own works.

SUN, NOV. 11

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Nov. 10.

Brady Rymer and His Little Band That Could: 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

It's "Bring Your Own Kid" and Brady Rymer brings his all-American rock with a feel-good R&B foundation to the 92Y.

"Rockin' Ever After": 11 am, 3 and 7 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Tuesday, Nov. 6.

SAT, NOV. 17

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Ave. (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Celebrate corn and harvest time! Listen to Native American tales, and hear



Hot air America

Turkey day would be ho-hum without the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and its adoring flotilla of prancing inflatables.

Mom, dad, and the kids can par-

ticipate in an 85-year-old tradition by watching the dazzling dirigibles slowly brought to life in the streets around the American Museum of Natural History during a pre-parade balloon inflation revel that's

sure to get the festive juices — and the "oohs" and "aahs" — flowing!

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloon inflation [79th Street and Columbus Avenue on the upper west side]. Nov. 21, 3-10 pm

the story of the first cornhusk doll and then make a corny family of your own.

The Gustafer Yellowgold Show: Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am; \$15-\$25.

This annual blockbuster show returns to Symphony Space.

Owl Prowl: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd. (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 2:30-4 pm; \$10 (\$5 seniors, students, and members).

Naturalist, photographer, and writer Deborah Allen leads an owl prowl around the mansion. Start off indoors with a half-hour talk and presentation, then head outside to look for long-eared and saw-whet owls. Registration requested.

SUN, NOV. 18

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Nov. 17.

The Suzi Shelton Band: 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

Everyone's favorite children's band combines catchy tunes and hip musical sensibilities to "Bring Your Own Kid."

Scavenger hunt: Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 1 pm; Free.

Children have fun collecting clues and solving nature quests.

THURS, NOV. 22

86th-Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Parade: Kicks off at 77th Street and Central Park West; www.macys.com/parade; 9 am; Free.

The annual family tradition ushers in the holiday season with floats, balloons, performances, and of course, Santa!

SAT, NOV. 24

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Create a wall hanging using natural materials.

SUN, NOV. 25

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Nov. 24.

THURS, NOV. 29

Family night: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 5-8 pm;

Calendar

Free with museum admission.

Members have the chance to do some early shopping, then enjoying an evening of music.

FRI, NOV. 30

"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out": The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza; (212) 465-6741; www.thegarden.com; 5 pm; Tickets start at \$45.

DJ Lance Rock and everyone's favorite cast of colorful characters invites fans to get ready to jump, shake, and shimmy on the new tour.

SAT, DEC. 1

"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out": 11 am, 2 and 5 pm. The Theater at Madison Square Garden. See Friday, Nov. 30.

SUN, DEC. 2

Music for Aardvarks: 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

David Weinstone entertains with the electro-funk of Big Boom Whacker and the whimsical blues of the "Belly Button Song" performed live.

"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out": 11 am, 2 and 5 pm. The Theater at Madison Square Garden. See Friday, Nov. 30.

LONG-RUNNING

Fair: Soho, 100 Varick St. (914) 295-4794; varicksflea@gmail.com; www.meetup.com/varicks; Daily, 10 am-4 pm; Now - Sat, Dec. 29; \$55/Space.

Enjoy shopping and schmoozing in the all day market.

Winged Tapestries Moths at Large:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; \$24(\$14 children, \$18 seniors and students).

This exhibition features 34 striking and dramatic images of moths, displaying the arresting beauty and surprising diversity of moths from Ottawa-based photographer Jim des Rivieres. Runs through September 2013.

Creatures of Light: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; awang@amnh.org; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; Now - Sun, Jan. 6, 2013; \$24, \$14 children, \$18 seniors and students.

This interactive exhibit explores organisms that produce light, from the flickering fireflies to alien deep-sea fishes.



Photo by Mike Peters

Adventure for a 'princess'

"The Little Princess" is a feel-good play about a princess and a mean headmistress, with a happy riches-to-rags-to-riches ending. The best part? It arrives just in time for the holidays at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center on Nov. 11, courtesy

of the ArtsPower National Touring Theatre production.

Children ages 3 to 9 will enjoy the story of spirited Sara Crewe who goes from having it all to losing it all when her doting father disappears and leaves her in the clutches of the evil Miss Minchin.

But all's well that ends well, and Sara's father's friend returns and provides for her once again.

"The Little Princess" at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center [199 Chambers St. between Greenwich and West streets in Tribeca, (212) 220-1460; www.tribecapac.org]. Nov. 11, 3 pm. \$25.

The Butterfly Conservatory:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; awang@amnh.org; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; \$24, \$14 children, \$18 seniors and students.

The annual exhibition "Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter" returns and celebrates its 15th year.

Shade and Shadow:

Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd. (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansion-museum.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, Noon-4 pm, Now - Sun, Nov. 18; \$5 (\$3 seniors and students; free for children under 6).

Before photographs, silhouettes were very popular. The exhibit features the works of 19th-century British and American silhouettes from the museum's private collection.

Teen Hip Hop: Bronx House, 990 Pelham Pkwy. S.; (718) 792-1800; www.

bronxhouse.org; Mondays, 4-4:45 pm, Now - Mon, Dec. 3; \$100 (per 10 sessions; \$25 insurance fee), free for members.

Young adults ages 13 and older burn calories while listening to the latest tunes.

Total body conditioning: Bronx House, 990 Pelham Pkwy. S.; (718) 792-1800; www.bronxhouse.org; Mondays, 4-4:45 pm, Now - Tues, Dec. 4; \$100 (per 10 sessions; \$25 insurance fee), free for members.

Teens 13 years and older get toned in this fun, high-energy class using a variety of cardio and strength exercises.

Greenmarket: New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Boulevard; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Wednesdays, 9 am-3 pm, Now - Wed, Nov. 21; Free.

Fresh produce, baked goods, and food demonstrations.

Farmers Market: Padre Plaza-Success Garden, St. Anns Avenue at E. 139th Street; (718) 877-7113; Wednesdays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Wed, Nov. 14; Free.

Fresh fruits, herbs, and veggies along with tea tasting, cooking demos, and lots of fun.

Zumba: Bronx House, 990 Pelham Pkwy. S.; (718) 792-1800; www.bronxhouse.org; Wednesdays, 4-4:45 pm, Now - Wed, Dec. 5; \$100 (per 10 sessions; \$25 insurance fee), free for members.

Teens 13 years and older burn off mega calories while shaking their bon bones.

Tabata: Bronx House, 990 Pelham Pkwy. S.; (718) 792-1800; www.bronxhouse.org; Thursdays, 4-4:45 pm, Now - Thurs, Dec. 6; \$100 (per 10 sessions; \$25 insurance fee), free for members.

Teens 13 years and older use the various equipment in the fitness room.



MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SERADOVA

Narrowing my focus

Multitasking mom needs quality time with child

I've really been trying to focus on giving Olivia my undivided attention. Parents, you know how it is; you're "playing" with your kids while trying to answer some e-mails, prepare dinner, or tackle whatever needs to get done at the moment. It's not that I don't enjoy spending time with my daughter, but, like most parents, I have a million things to do and very little time in which to do them.

This morning, when I walked into the office and overheard a co-

worker say that he had watched three movies the day before, I gasped and nearly fell off my chair. How is that possible? I can't remember the last time I had more than 20 minutes of downtime, and the last time I attempted to watch a movie, I didn't get past the opening credits before I fell asleep. (In case you're wondering, this co-worker is single with no kids.)

Watching movies, going to a movie, or even watching one hour of uninterrupted TV is definitely a luxury in our household. Whenever I do have a few minutes to spare, there's always something that needs to get done.

I've realized that in trying to be the best mom, employee, wife, friend, etc., I'm very rarely being present in what I'm doing. And I try to be in-the-now most when I'm spending time with Olivia. Sure, she can entertain herself with all her toys or with the dog and the cat (her favorite play dates), but I'm also aware of how important it is for us to just sit and play together.

My husband is great at this. When he cooks, he gets her involved. He plays with her, and you can tell that he really isn't thinking about anything else. In that moment, it's all about her.

I take for granted that she doesn't realize when I'm immersed in other things while still trying to play with her. But kids are a lot smarter than we think. There's a time and place for multi-tasking, right? While I play with my daughter, dinner is on the stove, I'm folding laundry, checking e-mails, and try-

ing to throw in some squats in there, too. I'm simultaneously planning the rest of the night: eat dinner, clean-up after dinner, clean-up toys, bath time, bedtime, pack Olivia's bag for daycare, prep food for tomorrow, spend quality time with husband, walk the dog (or should we go for a run?). The list goes on.

I think back to an Oprah show I saw recently (while I folded the laundry and cooked dinner). Guests of the show were stressed-out moms who made careless, and even fatal, mistakes. One mother, a respected assistant principal in an Ohio school, accidentally left her 2-year-old child in the backseat of her car while she went to work. When she got to the car it was too late, and her daughter had died. Recounting the 2007 event, she discussed how she was overwhelmed with work, raising two small children, and wasn't thinking clearly. Hearing her, I felt sympathy, not judgment, and thought how this really can happen to anyone. Part of her healing is being present, focusing on the now, and not letting things overwhelm her.

The mother's to-do list really never ends, or like my mom always says, "A woman's work is never done." Maybe I just have to realize that and remind myself more often that Olivia is growing up faster than I'd like to admit. Yes, she'll appreciate a clean and organized home, but she needs some quality mommy time, too.

Yesterday I dedicated my free day just to hanging out with Olivia. We made all of our meals together, went for a walk, and played with dolls. I even laid down with her at naptime and stared at her while she slept, one of my favorite parenting moments. My e-mails were answered at my leisure, and needless to say, the house didn't fall apart. As she gets older, I realize how important it is for her to feel a connection with me, a real, solid connection where she knows I'm there, not just physically, but supporting her in what she does. She really is my biggest priority. Next on my to-do list: get a mother's helper.



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THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

An inspiring read

Even though your child is young, you can bet she's listening to conversations she hears. Surely, she knows that healthcare is a big issue these days. If it's piqued her interest and she wants to learn more, she may enjoy a new book about a little girl who helps her family and village receive better healthcare.

"Mimi's Village" by Katie Smith Milway tells the story of Mimi Malaho, who worries about her pregnant mother after a baby in her village dies. Her family has been lucky — until Mimi's little sister, Nakkissi, drinks some dirty water from the river, and get sick that night.

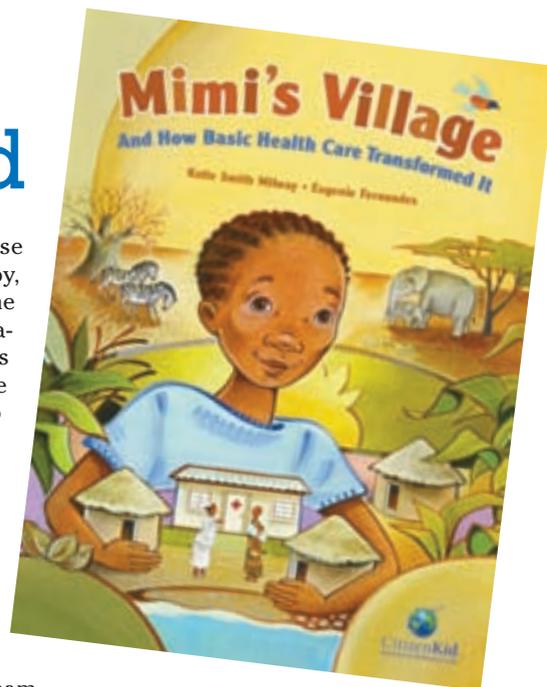
She moaned and couldn't keep anything in her tummy, so Ma and Pa wrapped her in a blanket and put her in their cart. The whole family walked an hour to the next village, where there was a clinic.

The next morning, Nurse Tela took care of Nakkissi and all the other babies lined up for help. As

Mimi watched Nurse Tela weigh each baby, she learned that the next day was vaccination day. The Malahos decided to spend the night at the clinic so they could get vaccinated.

When she got home, Mimi heard her father talking about malaria, which was making lots of the village's children sick. That night, Mimi had a dream that led to an idea, which led to a project that helped her whole village!

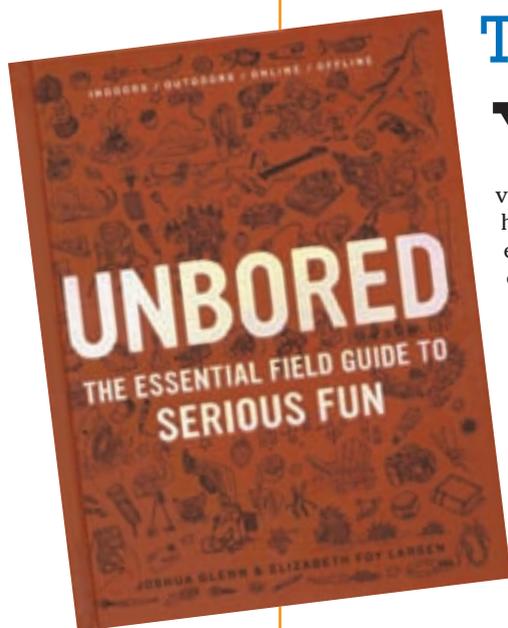
Inspired by real events and real people, the story explains a grown-up issue in a kid-friendly way, and children will definitely identify with a girl like Mimi. Smith gives kids information about Zambia healthcare workers and healthcare in general. Aided by Eugenie



Fernandes's illustrations, young readers learn that they can help make life better for other children around the world.

Recommended for 5- to 8 year olds who love making a difference, this is a book you'll feel good about your child reading.

"Mimi's Village," by Katie Smith Milway [32 pages, 2012, \$18.95].



Tips for banishing boredom

Your child has mastered every video game in the house, watched every movie, and clicked through every cable channel several dozen times. He's managed to tease his sister and torment his brother, then turns to you and says, "I'm bored."

Instead of channeling your father — by telling him you'll give him something to do! — give him an entertaining book that will make him forget the "B" word.

"Unbored: The Essential Field Guide to Serious Fun," by Joshua Glenn and Elizabeth Foy Larsen, might single-handedly save your

whole family from complete craziness.

If it's a holiday, a weekend, or just some sort of break from school and your child doesn't know what to do with his time, that's where this book comes in — it's filled with pages of excellent ideas.

There are a lot of games in this book, including ones that don't require a board or dice. He can learn, for instance, some farting games, or different kinds of games that use jacks. "Unbored" will help him learn how to get freaky-fit with friends and learn "parkour" (military obstacle course training), which can be done in the backyard — even in the snow!

The book will teach him how to rock out — from what he'll need to build a band, to a quiz to help figure out which instrument is best for him and a few good movies about music he can watch.

It'll teach your child how to turn the bathroom into a spa, redecorate his bedroom, or organize it.

He can find some new crafts, learn how to cook, read a food label, and conserve water.

With all kinds of activities for both indoors and out, "Unbored" keeps children busy with information, ideas, get-outside movement, and downtime that doesn't involve anything electronic. There are pages for quieter readers and an equal amount for kids with a streak of renegade in their blood and restlessness in their feet.

The nicest part about this book is that it's great for sharing — and you'll want your kids to do just that. Add these great activities to downtime, and 9- to 15 year olds will find "Unbored" to be crazy fun.

"Unbored: The Essential Field Guide to Serious Fun" by Joshua Glenn and Elizabeth Foy Larsen [352 pages, 2012, \$25].

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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