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December 2013

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Keeping meaning in the holidays

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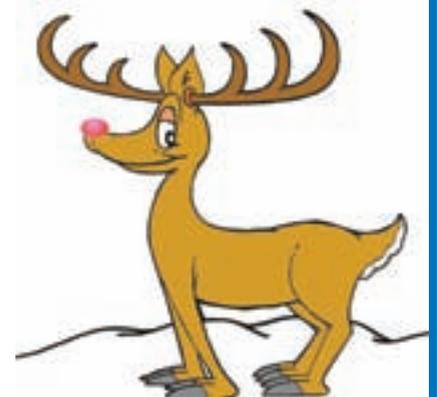
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# Family December 2013



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# Letter from the publisher

## Happy Holidays!

**T**ime is a crazy thing. It seems like a few short years ago that I was a new mom with the tiniest human being I'd ever seen or held laying on my belly. I can recall it as clearly as if it were yesterday; how exhausted I was and yet how elated



and aware I was of the responsibility of being someone's parent.

Parenting is the most exciting thing I've ever done and the most rewarding. I have worked most of my life at one thing or another, and I have always enjoyed both my studies and my work, but being a Mom is the best. It also happily led me to this wonderful work.

Parenting also brought me to the great partners I have in this work ad-

venture. Sharon Noble, who has become more than a partner is definitely family. It was parenting her oldest son eight years ago that led her here to us, as she was reading *Queens Family* and called with a question. That question led to a much longer conversation, and here we are.

Cliff Luster, who as the head of our larger company and the father of little ones at the time, gave me the opportunity to put this thing in motion and so we began in 1999 to publish what would go on to become the first of the guides, *Brooklyn Family*.

We have a super staff of mostly Moms and some Dads, and I appreciate all of them. They are bright, dedicated and lots of fun to be around.

I want to thank them all and specifically mention the name of my personal assistant Tina Felicetti. She has a wonderful sense of humor and is fabulous to work with. I appreciate her more than I can say.

A few names I want to mention out loud are the sales team of Lori Falco (Brooklyn), Sharon Leverett (Brooklyn), Shanika Stewart (Riverdale) and Alexis Benson (Manhattan). They keep me on my toes and are a formidable group of sales professionals.

Vinny DiMiceli (Staten Island), Lisa, Courtney, Joanna, Jessecia and Shavana make up the editorial gang we rely on for great headlines, copyediting, social media, and more. Leah Mitch (the art director), On Man, Arthur, Earl, Charlotte, Mauro, Mariel, Raymond and Cheryl make up our design and production teams,

and Sylvan is our web guru, and I mean guru.

We have a great group of staff and contributing writers at New York Parenting and I thank them all as well. And thank you for the success you have given us. We now have guides in all five boroughs which makes perfect sense, because our team actually lives in all five boroughs!

It's been a great year and I have little doubt that 2014 will be the same. Wishing all of you a Happy Season and a good beginning to the New Year.

Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
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# Simplifying your gift giving with **APPS**

BY SUSAN FRENCH

**W**ith the holiday season in full swing, the pressure's on to find that perfect gift. Gift-giving is a skill, especially when finding presents for kids.

There are traditional gifts like toys and clothes, which can be costly, and not always what children are wishing for. Practical items like sweaters, gloves, and scarves are not fun for the youngest recipients to open. When children are the target audience, keep in mind a few essential gift-giving goals: find items that are entertaining, educational, interactive, and cost-effective.

This may sound like a tall order, but it's a cinch with apps!

Children's mobile apps fulfill all the key elements of perfect gift giving. Apps turn learning into a game. Apps turn learning into a game. Children's apps use fun, colorful graphics to engage short attention spans. Task- and level-based apps help young children develop important skills, such as vocabulary, math, reading, and organization. Great children's apps allow the child to interact not only with the app itself, but also with the parent or teacher.

For instance, if we want to teach children organizational and time-management skills, voice-activated calendar apps are great gifts (es-

pecially for a new calendar year). They allow kids to hone organizational skills through play with colorful sticker graphics as they learn the days of the week and schedule their activities. Look for interactive features that encourage self-awareness and build self-confidence, such as recording reminder audio memos and sharing activities through social networking.

Not sure how to find the perfect app? Lucky for you, there are entire websites devoted to reviewing educational apps that can help guide you through the process in just minutes.

For a quick review, check out [fun-educationalapps.com](http://fun-educationalapps.com) and [bestapps-for-kids.org](http://bestapps-for-kids.org). It is the goal of these sites to provide our kids with enticing, educational apps, and they provide a place for parents and caregivers to see the app in action.

And the great thing about apps is that you can give in bulk. They make great presents for teachers to give their students, and they are a one-stop shop for grandparents' gift-giving needs. To top it all off, apps only cost a few dollars, as compared to expensive toys and planners. They also cut-down on clutter and help the environment! Plus, app-giving allows you to shop from home and avoid the holiday season's long, stressful lines.

So do yourself and your little ones a favor this holiday season — give the gift of an app!

*Susan French is a kindergarten teacher, mentor, and math coach, working for the city's Department of Education for more than 20 years. She is the co-creator of the 4KidCal brand of mobile calendar apps designed specifically for children. For more information on 4KidCal, visit [4KidCal.com](http://4KidCal.com) or write to [4kidcal@gmail.com](mailto:4kidcal@gmail.com).*



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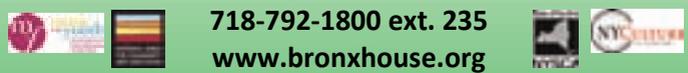
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# 12 ways to keep the meaning in your holiday season

BY DENISE YEARIAN

In the midst of holiday hooplas, children often lose sight of the significance of the season. Taking a spin off the “Twelve Days of Christmas” song, the following is a list of a dozen ways to create a more meaningful holiday celebration.

**1. Grassroots giving.** One of the best ways to make your holiday more meaningful is to adopt a family from a local charity. When you call, ask for a family with children your own kids’ ages. Then, if you normally give your child five gifts, suggest giving three and let him pick out two for each needy child.

**2. Aspiring ornaments.** Have

each family member secretly write one non-monetary thing they want to work for, wish for, and pray for in the coming year. Then, put it in a decorative envelope or ornament and attach it to the tree. On Christmas morning share it with the other family members and discuss ways everyone can help that person fulfill his goal.

**3. Go green.** Reuse holiday wrapping paper to cover another gift, line a drawer, or draw on the reverse side. Christmas cards can be recycled, too. Cut them in half and use the blank side to jot down reminder notes or let your kids cut them up and make new cards for next year. Christmas trees can be

recycled as well. Take them to state parks rather than sending them to the curb for trash pick up.

**4. Multicultural merriment.** Every year, pick one country and find out how it celebrates the holiday season. Make mock passports that can be used year after year. Find out what the culture and traditions are like, learn a few words, and try their foods. If you have extended family members from other parts of the country, have them share insights and tell stories about their holiday celebrations.

**5. Advent virtues.** Make an advent calendar with character traits you want to instill in your family. Pick one virtue each day, discuss what it means, and talk about someone in history who displayed that character. Then, decide how you and your children can put that virtue into action. For example, extend kindness by raking an elderly neighbor’s leaves or shoveling snow from her driveway.

**6. Family photo tree.** Decorate your tree with individual photos of family members taken throughout the year. Mount images on construction paper, felt, or foam, write the date on the back, attach a ribbon, and hang it on the tree. Keep photos year after year and add more as you go to remind kids of how blessed they have been throughout their childhood. When your children are grown, pass along the pictures so they can carry on the tradition.

**7. Inter-generational experiences.** If grandparents have personal items they want to pass along to their grandchildren, the holidays are an opportune time. Suggest they give something that is special to them, along with the story behind it. It could be one of grandma’s old dolls, a piece of jewelry, a book, or even a photograph. If the kids are old enough, they can video record the story

## More ways to a meaningful holiday

Looking for more ways to make the holiday season more meaningful?

- Befriend an elderly person at a nursing home and create a comfort care package with tissues, sox, stuffed animal, potpourri, etc.
- Visit a local children’s hospital and take balloons, gifts, or other goodwill cheer to the patients.
- Donate time and resources to a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, or food bank.
- Give staples to an animal shelter. Call and ask what they need first.
- Write a note of appreciation to someone who has helped you or your family this year.
- Give the gift of experience. Wrap up an i.o.u. or tickets to a live theater presentation, aquarium, zoo, or other venue, along with the date you plan go in the next few months.

• Make homemade gifts that cost little or nothing for family, friends, and pets.

• Create homemade ornaments using everyday household materials.

• Create a coupon book with certificates that can be redeemed at a later time — help with housework, an hour of quality time, etc.

• Discuss the meanings and symbols of the holiday season.

• Create a flag that represents what the holidays mean to you and your family.

• Interview grandparents about what Christmas was like when they were a child. Video record the session and make it a keepsake.

• Create your own family version of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” or write your own holiday poem.

• Have a pajama holiday where everyone gets a new pair and stays in their pjs all day.

• Teach a new skill to someone, such as computers for the elderly or knitting for a child.

• Spend one-on-one time with each child creating a special holiday tradition.

• Create a time capsule to represent events that have happened throughout the year. Seal and bury it for 20 or more years.

• Create an annual paper quilt that links 12 pieces (3-by-4) of construction paper with scenes depicting each month of the year. Punch holes around the sides that connect and sew it together with yarn.

• Invent a new holiday recipe.

• Donate new children’s coats to an organization such as Operation Warm ([www.operationwarm.org](http://www.operationwarm.org)).

• Read one holiday classic (or a chapter of one) every night leading up to Christmas.

• Have a family Christmas program where each person presents a song, poem, reading or artistic presentation. Video record and view in years to come.

Top Tips



for keepsake.

**8. Mindful of military.** Have your child write a letter of appreciation to someone in the military. Include a picture of your child and an e-mail address, and ask the service person to send a reply e-mail along with pictures if he has them. There are several websites that provide officers' names and care package suggestions. If your children love animals, check out Operation Military Pride's Kindness for K9's link ([www.operationmilitarypride.org](http://www.operationmilitarypride.org)), where you can send dog biscuits, chew toys, and other pet items to service dogs.

**9. Warm fuzzies.** Families so often forget to share positive and encouraging words with one another. Have your family sit in a circle and pass a fuzzy teddy bear around. As you do so, have the person holding the bear say something he appreciates about one sitting to his right or left. This will set the tone for an uplifting celebration and teach your kids how to give strokes of encouragement to others.

**10. Critter Christmas.** Decorate an outdoor tree with pinecones rolled in peanut butter and birdseed, popcorn and cranberry garland, and orange and apple slices that have been attached to pipe cleaners or opened paperclips and hung on the tree's boughs. This is a way to take care of neighboring wildlife and wish them a happy holiday.

**11. Family fitness.** Incorporate the "Twelve Days" theme into a family fitness routine. Decide on one activity you can do together each day to stay fit — walk around the neighborhood and look at lights, jump rope to a favorite holiday song, or play a round of basketball while the pie is baking. Then make it a family New Year's resolution.

**12. Family video newsletter.** Each child can take turns being the anchorperson while you record, but make it more than just reading off news. Take footage from the kids' bedrooms where they are showing a favorite stuffed animal or in the yard performing a newly acquired skill. Send copies of the DVD with your holiday cards, or attach it to a holiday greeting e-mail and donate the money you save on stamps to charity.

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



## ASK AN ATTORNEY

ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER,  
ESQ.

# Till death do us part

## Safeguard your children's future with a will

*All of my assets are held in joint accounts with my spouse. Do I still need a will? Also, my spouse refuses to go to an estate-planning attorney or to even discuss doing his will. I am really concerned about naming a guardian for my kids and don't want to leave them unprotected. Do I have to wait for him or can I do my documents on my own?*

**T**here are two types of assets when it comes to administering an estate, in other words, transferring title to assets. There are “probate” and “non-probate” assets.

Probate assets are transferred by a person appointed by the court as the representative of the estate, who then marshals the assets and distributes them either pursuant to a Last Will and Testament, or, if there is no will, by the law of descent.

Non-probate assets are those that are transferred by operation of law, by presentation of a death certificate. Joint bank accounts, most retirement accounts, and life insurance are non-probate assets if a beneficiary is properly named.

A will is still recommended even if you think that all of your assets are non-probate. First, for parents of children under the age of 18, a will is necessary to nominate a guardian for your children and a trustee to oversee funds left to a child. Absent a will, any assets left to a minor child must be held jointly by any guardian (appointed by the court) and the Clerk of the Court, requiring permission to take any money out. The child also has legal title to the property when he becomes 18, which is not always advisable or desired.

Second, there is almost always an asset that materializes that requires some form of proceeding, either a Social Security check or paycheck issued just prior to death, a car, or just personal property. Third, your



joint or non-probate assets might not be distributed as you intended. Say you have three joint or “In Trust For” accounts, one for each of your children. You fund them with equal amounts, but as time goes on, you draw on those accounts for your living expenses, not always proportionately. At your death, one child might have a balance that is higher than the other. The inequality can spur disputes that can cost more than the proceeds in the accounts.

Clients often avoid executing a will, because it forces them to make difficult decisions they would rather not, while considering their own mortality. However, the failure to make a decision is in itself a decision to defer to the state laws dictating who gets your assets when you die. You might not want your spouse to inherit 50 percent of your assets outright, with your minor children getting the other half.

A will allows you to put certain protections in place, like a testamentary trust, that would protect your assets if your spouse remarries and

ensure that the assets pass to your children. This is especially critical in a second marriage. A will allows you to specify who will inherit and in what proportion.

As for the second question, you are not obligated to wait for your spouse to make a will. There are certain laws about a minimum amount you must leave to a spouse — called a “right of election” — but you can make a will without your spouse's consent or knowledge. If you have a pre-nuptial agreement that gives certain parameters about what you are promising to leave in a will, you should be mindful of that, but it still does not impact your ability to execute a will on your own.

*Alison Arden Besunder is the founding attorney of the law firm of Arden Besunder P.C., where she assists new and not-so-new parents with their estate-planning needs. Her firm assists clients in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. You can find Besunder on Twitter @estatetrustplan and on her website at [www.besunder-law.com](http://www.besunder-law.com).*

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## JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

# 10 holiday refusals

**A**re you the kind of person who looks forward to the holidays all year long, but sometimes secretly wishes they were already over? I admit I have both opposing feelings swishing about inside of me every single holiday season. Most of the angst comes from doing a lot of things we don't want to do or worse, don't have any time to do. (Why is it still so hard for so many of us to simply say "no"?)

In an effort to retain my sanity, and actually enjoy the holiday as opposed to just get through it, I've compiled a list of a few things I just will not do this holiday season:

- Attend holiday parties that I don't want to attend. We all have obligations, but shouldn't our own happiness fall somewhere into our priorities? There are often too many parties and too little time. As parents, we have trouble just getting to all the holiday shows, Christmas tree lightings, and plays that our own kids star in. Adding in the many party invites and long shopping list might require pulling all nighters just to keep up, because the house, homework, kids, grocery shopping, cooking, work projects, etc. just do not go away in December — as much as we might wish they did.

- Go overboard on presents. More

does not equate with a better holiday, because material things never equal happiness — ever.

- Buy any overpriced piece of junk, because it's this year's biggest fad. When I've done this in the past, I have always regretted it.

- Do last-minute shopping. This makes the holiday annoying and stressful — the polar opposite of fun.

- Stress. In any capacity. I plan to start not stressing ASAP. "Whatever happens, happens, and I will find a way to go with the flow." That will be my mantra.

- Buy anything just because it's on sale. Deals can, unfortunately, be synonymous with junk. I will do my

homework way before I buy anything and know exactly what I want to buy and why.

- Rush. I want to take in each moment, because that is the only way to enjoy anything. (If I can accomplish this, then that will be a gift to myself this holiday season.)

- Spend more time in the kitchen, cooking, cleaning, or decorating, than time with my family.

- Miss watching "Charlie Brown's Christmas," "Frosty The Snowman," or "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." Homework be damned (or at least finished earlier). When those movies are on, we're watching them together as a family.

- NOT enjoy the season. Life's too short and the holidays are too precious to not savor. Kids grow up, family members pass on. The time to enjoy each other is right now!

Wishing you and yours a very healthy, happy, and memorable holiday season!

*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 Danielle on her blog, Some Puppy To Love.*



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# Families who survived Hurricane Sandy

A year after  
the storm,  
three families  
share their  
firsthand  
accounts

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

**“H**ell hath no fury like a woman scorned” took on a whole new meaning on Oct. 29 last year — her wrath and “Don’t mess with me” fury sparking fear in the hearts of otherwise brave New Yorkers.

Many were bystanders and watched with utter disbelief images of homeless victims struggling to carry on, despite their horrible circumstances — thousands of them in our very own backyards. Parents across the city wondered how to protect and provide for their families and children — some of them without access to food, heat, transportation, or power.

Each survivor has his personal story to tell.

As they still struggle getting their lives back on track, three families from New York City share their firsthand accounts with NY Parenting readers.

## Moore family

Many New Yorkers seem to forget that Manhattan is surrounded by water.

When the storm hit, the normally placid Hudson turned strangely dark and menacing, with high ocean-like waves. Nobody could have imagined that the river would breach its banks and overflow into Battery Park and beyond — flooding streets, buildings, and the tunnel — like something out of a doomsday scenario.

Battery Park City resident Ron Moore and his family lived in one of those posh riverfront buildings. The vibrant community and scenic views drew them to this area a couple of years ago, until a raging river and flood waters forced them to evacuate after the storm.

“When the water came into our lobby, I knew it was time to pack up the SUV and get the heck out of Dodge,” recalled the father of three. “Suddenly, nothing mattered — only that my fam-

ily was safe and warm, and out of harm’s way.”

Luckily, they had a place to go — their home in Connecticut. But once there, they were shocked to discover they’d have to make do with a similar situation. After a month or so they returned to their city dwelling, but never felt safe there again. Now they’re back in Connecticut for good.

## Brookins family

Rockaway Beach is home to the city’s only legal surfing. Sandy ravaged the area, destroying its boardwalk and covering its streets with sand.

Film director and surfer Thomas Brookins, 41, was fighting another battle — the scariest one of his life — as the storm hit his community.

“We had just purchased our home in July, at the same time I was in an ongoing battle with cancer, so moving in was very hard. We had a 1-year-old son,” he recalled.

In his condition everything was a chore, and between his film work, raising the child, and working on the new house, life was tedious and exhausting for him and his wife Jess.

When he and his wife bought the house, Thomas said they were assured their block would never flood — neighbors told them they never had any problems. So, the couple turned down flood insurance, opting instead to invest their money in renovations.

Little did they know that the ocean they loved so much would suddenly turn on them, fueled by an angry superstorm — and that they’d lose everything.

“I saw water rushing in from the Bay and we decided, for [my son] Takoda’s safety, to leave and go live in Brooklyn,” Thomas recalled. So, they stayed in a tiny apartment with a friend, his wife, two babies, and two dogs.

Thomas said a guest had been staying with them in their Rockaway Beach house, and decided to remain in the home, since he had work in the morning.

“A few hours later, we got texts from him saying the street was rushing like

rapids over the tops of cars. He heard a noise downstairs in the extra bedroom and my office and editing bay. He observed what he called, ocean waves spewing out of the floor and hitting the ceiling. From there the basement flooded in three minutes to the top of the stairs. As it reached the front door, he texted, ‘I just saw what looked like someone’s house float down the street; your basement so far is a total loss.’”

Thomas and his wife were horrified. He recalled rushing home the next morning to find something from a movie scene.

“I walked through debris and filth to the house, ran inside and stood at the top of the cold dark staircase looking at swirling water about head high, as everything was banging around. It finally went down to about a foot high that night. I stayed overnight, put on boots, and started shoveling almost three feet of sand out of the basement. Everything we had raised up off the floor was now gone — every memory, every keepsake; my office, gone. The walls were smashed and it smelled like raw sewage. It became an obsession to clean this mess.

“After that, the world slowed to a halt,” Thomas recalled.

There was no heat, and winter was destroying the house almost instantly.

Takoda and Jess stayed in Brooklyn, while for two weeks Thomas shoveled sand and carried belongings out of the house. He said their living room was soiled with dripping filth and boot prints.

Not one organization, including the Red Cross, came to his community’s aid, he says.

“No info ever came from the city, the government, or any media outlets. We kept Googling or using social media to find info on what to do.

“Gas shortages forced me to leave my wife and little guy in Brooklyn, so we could preserve gas. It was harder and harder and getting colder.”

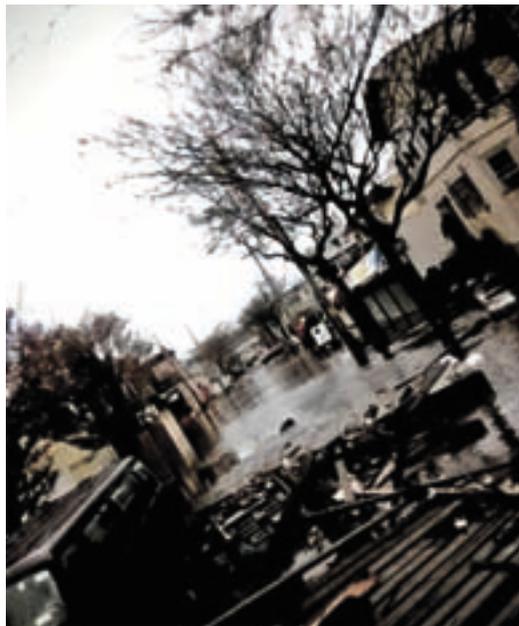
Maybe a month or so later, food and cleaning products from church groups, the Red Cross, and citizens started flowing in, Thomas recalls.



Caroline Enz and her two sons’ basement apartment in her parents’ house was hit hard by Sandy.



(Above) Far Rockaway residents and surfers Thomas Brookins with wife Jessica and son Takoda. (Right) Thomas took this shot a day after Sandy, when his block was flooded.



“We had my good friends with the FDNY come and rewire my boiler and heater; we were excited to be warm while working, but it was a race against mold now.”

Then they learned about the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Thomas said the agency came in with six workers, looked at the heating, and told him he couldn’t keep the repaired heater because it was unsafe, since unlicensed work was done on it. So, workers yanked it out and said they’d replace it. It took months.

Thomas and his wife couldn’t stay with their friends any longer, so they headed to a local airport hotel.

“Takoda was sent away to my sister’s house in Maryland; it was so hard to be apart from him, but it was just too cold and unsafe.”

Eventually, with help from friends, neighbors, and folks from all over New York and beyond, Thomas and Jess finally cleaned out everything “to a raw shell.” Finally, clothing was being donated and they had heat, nearly four months later. “It’s passed the one-year anniversary of Sandy and we’re still rebuilding,” said Thomas. “All of my friends and neighbors had the exact same things happen. The neighborhood is still not rebuilt; roads are temporary blobs of black tar, curbs are still chunky, and there’s no sign of the boardwalk in site. I still don’t think people understand how bad it was.”

Looking back, Thomas said he found out how “humbling” Mother Nature’s power really was.

And he and his wife discovered something else: it turned out the traumatic circumstances, coupled with Sandy’s impact, had affected their son, a sweet, bright child. In fact, Thomas said he believes his

neighbors’ kids were impacted in similar ways.

Thomas says sometimes his son has nightmares and has some issues in school, since he was so isolated during the last couple of years. He tends to play independently rather than with groups.

“Takoda is now 3; he was a trooper through it all. We’re just now hearing him say things he couldn’t say before like, ‘The big storm came and trashed the street.’ Quite often we hear him playing and using the ‘big scary storm’ as the distress, which his ‘heroes’ have to remedy. His language skills are amazing; with a vocabulary that shocks us daily.”

“He’ll be fine, but we hope he pulls through it all, and the storm fades into a little corner somewhere in his memory,” Thomas adds.

### Enz family

As Sandy continued its campaign of destruction — unleashing fierce winds and dislodging homes, shops, cars and boats as if they were toys — a single mom with two boys living in the basement of her parents’ home in Howard Beach was praying that the entire house wouldn’t be totaled.

Flood waters turned Caroline Enz’s backyard into a small lake and entered her apartment, rising to eight feet. She recalls how she and her sons, Justin and Matthew, scrambled to find their valuables and salvage whatever they could.

“On the night Sandy came, my oldest son Justin and I were in our rooms when we heard the water start coming in through the AC unit in his room, and then through the windows. We moved as fast as we could to get as much stuff out of the rooms, before

the water would consume the place we once called home.”

They went without heat, hot water, and electricity for more than three weeks.

The day after Sandy, Caroline said it looked like a bomb exploded in the neighborhood.

“There were boats and cars everywhere. People’s homes were gone and their stuff lined up on the street to be thrown away; whole lives gone in one night,” she remembered. “At that time neighbors became family and we all banded together to make sure no one went without a meal, or a warm blanket and coat, clothes and shoes, or just a simple hug to say, ‘Together, we are all gonna get through this!’ There wasn’t one person in my neighborhood that wasn’t affected by this storm. People drowned that night in basement apartments or trapped on rooftops — it was so unreal!”

But they helped each other get through.

Caroline said their lives were really tough that following year.

“Not easy when you’re used to having your own and have to impose, and live with other people.”

They received some money from FEMA, but not much.

“Enough to start to fix but not enough to finish, which makes building back harder,” she said, frustrated. “As for my neighbors, they’re no longer my neighbors — they’re now my family; adopted during a very hard time in all our lives. A family that bonded together.”

She added, “There are some who are still fixing and some that are not even back yet, but each day, more people are back and we get closer to

having a normal way of living.”

The family just recently moved back and has to start over, but Caroline says she’s grateful that at least they have their own beds, blankets, and pillows, and aren’t sleeping apart, on other people’s couches.

### Local volunteers

The Howard Beach and Breezy Point communities struggled to make it after Sandy’s devastation, and a Middle Village, Queens, songwriter and filmmaker was sitting in front of her TV, like millions of fellow New Yorkers, watching the unbelievable images before her. Lori Martini felt lucky to have heat, power, and a bit of food in her fridge, but she also had an overwhelming sense of guilt: so many people were suddenly homeless, cold, and hungry. Compelled to give back and help those in need, she decided to get out there and take action.

As luck would have it, her friend, Forest Hills resident Frank Kenna — the chief deputy at the Queens County Clerk’s Office — reached out to Lori during the relief efforts, and they teamed up to volunteer.

“After Sandy struck, I noticed Lori kept posting about it on Facebook, and could tell that she wanted to help. So I informed her about one particular volunteer effort being headed up by the Woodhaven Residents’ Block Association, whose president is my friend, Ed Wendell. I picked her up in my minivan, along with items we both donated, and then drove to Woodhaven, where we packed the car as much as we could.

“We then drove to Howard Beach and delivered everything to state Sen. Joseph Addabbo’s office, where he had set up a distribution center,” Frank recalls.

• • •

Life will never be the same for these families, but thanks to the help of big-hearted volunteers and neighbors banding together, communities are coming back. They say every cloud has a silver lining. Well, a year after Sandy wreaked havoc on Thomas Brookins’s beloved Rockaway Beach community, it seems that new businesses, eateries, and shops have been popping up here and there. Thomas reports that surprisingly, the area has been gradually transforming into a popular vacation spot for city folk and even some celebs, who are buying waterfront homes.

Apparently they fell in love with it when they came to volunteer after Sandy.



**DOWNTOWN  
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NOTOYA GREEN

# A new perspective on being a parent

**A** few weeks back, I had lunch with some of my fabulous college girlfriends for a much-needed mom's day out. At one point, though, between the laughs and reminiscing about our college days, one of my friends started to complain about the family sitting at the table behind us. She said the

couple's kids were completely "out of control" and wanted us to move to a different table. Within minutes, all of my friends joined in criticizing the family, but I kept quiet. I stayed quiet because unlike them, I am a mother (and of toddlers no less), and knew that those "out of control" kids could have easily been mine.

A few years back I probably would have reacted the same way as my friends did. But, now that I am the mother of 3-year-old triplets, I see things way differently. From a single, childless, New York City gal, to a married, full-time mom of three, I

have been on both sides of the proverbial fence and know that there's one thing that most non-parents and even some new parents have in common — they are judgmental of other people's parenting skills. I know this because I used to be one of those people.

Not long ago I was one of those people shaking my head whenever I saw a parent become impatient with her kids. I recall also being equally appalled by parents who "let" their kids be out of control. I now know that there isn't a parent alive who hasn't become exasperated with her kids and sometimes kids are simply "out of control" because the behavior can't be helped. I recall also having lots to say about parents who let their kids watch television in any form. Ironically, once I became a mom, the same dreaded TV soon became my savior.

When my kids were 15 months they were impossible to feed. Not only would they refuse to eat — they wouldn't even get in their high chairs! One night before dinner it occurred to me to turn on the iPad and I bribed my kids with an episode of "Yo Gabba Gabba" and it worked! My kids ran to their high chairs in excitement and practically ate everything on their plates. It was a miracle! And I kept using this miracle for nearly a year.

Thankfully, I don't need the iPad anymore to get my kids to eat. The old (childless) me would have been very critical of that decision that day, and of me as a parent. The new me — the older, wiser, more experienced me — knows that sometimes you have to make adjustments to meet your kids where they are. I also think it's time that we all give parents a break, because the job is much harder than it looks.

Happy holidays and a happy New Year!

*Notoya Green is a parenting expert and former family law attorney. You can read her blog at [www.tripletsintribeca.com](http://www.tripletsintribeca.com). You can also follow her on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/tripletsintribeca](http://www.facebook.com/tripletsintribeca) and on Twitter @NotoyaG.*



# Education

## DIRECTORY

### The Riverdale Presbyterian Church Nursery School

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718-548-8260 or [www.rpcns.com](http://www.rpcns.com)

The Riverdale Presbyterian Church Nursery School (RPCNS), founded in 1954, is a non-sectarian, fully licensed school that offers both half-day and full-day programs for 2, 3 and 4 year old children. Early drop off and a lunch program are also available. The 4 year old program features a two and a half hour afternoon Universal Pre-Kindergarten program fully funded by the NYC Department of Education. RPCNS also offers a Parent/Toddler program for families with younger children. It is conducted by an early childhood specialist and is an excellent way to introduce a preschool environment to both parents and the little ones! RPCNS also offer enrichment programs including children's yoga, music, organic gardening. A licensed child psychologist is on staff and available to RPCNS families. Our curriculum in all programs offers a wide variety preschool learning experiences aimed at stimulating their imagination and intellectual

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# Home alone

## How to know if your child is ready

BY JAMIE LOBER

**W**hen it comes to staying home alone, parents are often unsure about how to judge whether their child is ready. It is important that you do not rush into things, even if your child appears confident in his ability to take care of himself while you are away.

"A lot of states do not have a legal age limit or cut-off point for when children can stay home alone, so it is about making sure that you know if your child is comfortable," said Dr. Kirsten Cullen Sharma, clinical assistant professor in the department of child and adolescent psychiatry, child study center at New York University Langone.

According to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services website, "Some children are responsible, intelligent, and independent enough to be left alone at 12 or 13 years of age. Likewise, there are some teenagers who are too irresponsible or have special needs that limit their ability to be safe if they are left alone.

Parents and guardians need to make intelligent, reasoned decisions regarding these matters, asking, 'What has the child done in the past to show you he is able to take on this kind of responsibility?'"

Sharma says that one of the ways to help your child feel com-

fortable is by "progressively letting him stay home for longer and longer periods of time."

Each child has different emotions regarding the potential responsibility.

"I work with a mom who is going through this with her 13-year-old daughter who is nervous to stay home, and the mom is working a plan with her where the first day she went to the gym in her apartment building for 15 minutes, the next day to the store across the street for 20 minutes," said Sharma.

Every couple of days, you can attempt to do something and let your child stay home alone to build up his belief that he can do it. Knowing how to respond in various situations can help get him to that point.

"A big part is planning ahead, so you need to have a safety or emergency plan and make sure you know a neighbor who is home next door," said Sharma. Be sure your child knows how to contact you, even if it just sending a text message every half hour, so they have a check-in plan.

Practice can make all the difference. Your child may feel better prepared if he has a chance to roleplay an emergency situation or plan before he is allowed to stay home for a short period of time.

"Practice calling an emergency contact person if the child gets injured or a fire starts in the house," said Sharma. You should also practice the scenario of someone knocking at the door.

"Let your child know to never open the door to strangers and always check before opening the door to anyone by looking through a peephole or window first," said Melanie Pipkin Kozel, media relations lead at the American Red



Practice can make all the difference. Your child may feel better prepared if he has a chance to role-play an emergency situation or plan before he is allowed to stay home for a short period of time.



Cross. He should inform you or an emergency contact person if someone comes to the door.

"Make sure he knows not to go outside to check an unusual noise," said Kozel. Knowing how to turn the security alarm on and off can be helpful as well.

Some kids are able to cope with situations easier than others.

"Talk about whether your child is mature enough and whether he is nervous or scared, since that is a huge part of the picture — even if he is mature," said Sharma. Discussing fear and anxieties is beneficial.

"Have your child keep a journal of thoughts or feelings that he had while you were away and then at night, sit down and review what came up," said Sharma.

Some kids are more expressive than others.

"Some write down nothing and they are fine, and others say they were scared, because it was starting to get dark outside," said Sharma.

Depending on age, your child may be reassured knowing that you have a first aid kit that is accessible should he need it.

"He should know where to find working flashlights, a battery-operated radio, and extra batteries," said Kozel.

Set expectations. Some children are excited to stay home alone, because it builds confidence and self-esteem while others take advantage and have parties at their house or call people that they are not supposed to call.

"Your child should know exactly what he is allowed to do and that if he does something he is not supposed to do, that there is a consequence," said Sharma. "Most kids are okay, but some will push the limits, so parents have to be ready for that and have a plan in place in case that happens."

Keep safety in mind and consider child-proofing your home

before you leave.

"Knives, hand tools, power tools, razor blades, scissors, guns, ammunition and other objects that can cause injury should be stored in locked cabinets or locked storage areas," said Kozel. Potential poisons like detergents, pesticides, car-care fluids and polishes should also be out of reach. The same applies to medicines.

Give your child a run-down of what you will be doing. Let him know if he can have friends over or watch certain movies.

"He wants to know where you will be, how long you will be gone, and what time you are coming home," said Sharma.

It is hard to give a recommended age of when a child is ready to stay home alone, and mental health professionals set some loose boundaries.

"Most guidelines say that you should not leave a child who is younger than 12 home alone, but there are a couple of states that allow a child to stay home alone even at the age of 8," said Sharma. For kids who are babysitting or staying home with a younger sibling, the recommended age tends to be higher, around 15.

Offer feedback.

"Parents can review the night with their child, not just by asking how it went and saying the child did a great job, but actually sitting down and talking about what went really well, when they felt uncomfortable, and giving the child an opportunity to express any worries they have," said Sharma.

Try not to compare your child to his friends or neighbors' children. Accept him for who he is, and he will let you know when he is ready to stay home unsupervised.

*Jamie Lober, author of Pink Power (www.getpinkpower.com), is dedicated to providing information on women's and pediatric health topics. She can be reached at jamie@getpinkpower.com.*

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## GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

# Why you can't rush feeding milestones

**C**athy Derus's daughter is five months old and still nursing full time. But the first-time mother is keenly aware her baby will soon begin the transition to solid food.

A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics concluded that parents are often uneducated about important eating milestones. According to the study, 40 percent of parents give solid food to their babies before they reach the age of four months, and nine percent give solids to babies as early as four weeks.

### Readiness and pacing

Usually around six months of age, babies are interested in solids, especially when they are able to sit up.

"They should also be able to have good head control, reducing tongue thrust, and willingness to lean forward toward foods and sit back when done," according to certified

pediatric nutrition specialist Florence DiMarco.

Some mothers are proud their babies can handle the spoon earlier. But DiMarco disagrees.

"Solids initiation is exciting, but starting too soon — before six months — does not mean that babies are developing better."

Cup drinking can also be encouraged around the same time solids begin.

At one time, rice cereal was the first solid food, followed by other single-grain cereals, then fruit and

vegetables, and finally meat. Now, there is no strict sequence of which solids should be introduced first.

DiMarco recommends offering one new food a time, then waiting for a couple of days to see if baby shows signs of an allergic reaction.

"There is also concern for possible food allergy or intolerance if solids are started too soon," she adds. "Nevertheless, delaying solids initiation for more than eight months does not prove to prevent food allergy either."

What hasn't changed is the use of cow's milk or its alternatives in the dairy case. They are not recommended before the age 1.



### Pomegranate Relish

Makes two to four servings

Prep time: 20 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

##### For POM Molasses:

3 cups POM Wonderful 100% Pomegranate Juice

1/4 cup sugar

1 lemon, juiced

##### For Relish:

1/2 cup arils from POM Wonderful Pomegranates

1 tablespoon POM Molasses

3 tablespoons finely diced shallots

1 teaspoon lemon juice

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon sliced flat-leaf parsley  
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

#### DIRECTIONS:

**POM Molasses:** Combine pomegranate juice, sugar, and juice from



one lemon in a saucepan; bring to a simmer. Reduce until a very thick syrup forms that can thickly coat the back of a spoon, then cool to room temperature.

**Relish:** Prepare fresh arils. Place the shallots, lemon juice, and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a small bowl and let sit five minutes. Whisk in the POM Molasses and then the olive oil. Stir in the fresh arils and the parsley.

Taste for balance and seasoning.

Suggest serving on toasted crostini with brie.

**NUTRITION INFORMATION:** 30 calories (0 calories from fat), 1 g protein, 7 g carbohydrates, 1 g total fat (0 g saturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 95 mg sodium, 1 g dietary fiber, 2 g sugars, 36 mcg vitamin A, 4 mg vitamin C.

Suzanne Goin, Chef & Restaurateur, Lucques, A.O.C., and Tavern Restaurants, Los Angeles, Calif.

### The path to healthy eating

By eight or 10 months, most babies are able to sit up independently, grasp finger foods, and able to start to chew. By 12 months, their skills get more and more refined for grasping foods and chewing.

Of course, fresh, one-ingredient foods are preferable to prepackaged items with food coloring, preservatives, or nitrites and nitrates.

Derus is looking forward to her baby's next stage.

"While I was pregnant with Monica, we joked we had a foodie baby on our hands. Now that she's about to start eating solids, we can't wait for her to taste the foods she smelled during our cooking and eating."

*Christine Palumbo is a registered dietitian nutritionist in Naperville, Ill. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.*



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# Outwit your appetite

You *can* control  
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methods

BY SANDRA GORDON

**T**o control the urge to eat — and eat and eat — during the holidays and beyond, try these simple mealtime tricks, and see how easy it really is to lose the weight for good.

If you've ever polished off an entire bowl of potato chips while chitchating at a party, or ploughed through a basket of tortilla chips before your entrée arrives, you might think you have little control over your appetite. Yet, research shows that the drive to eat often doesn't have much to do with actual hunger.

"Your appetite can be influenced by the mere sight of food, the portion sizes, and what the people around you are eating or ordering," says Dr. Gerard J. Musante, author of "The Structure House Weight Loss Plan." Those are just a few of the factors that cue you to eat when you didn't plan to, or overindulge when you only wanted a taste. Awareness is key to controlling your appetite.

## Lighten up, literally

Studies show that dimmed lights at meals can also make you eat more. In restaurants with soft lighting, for example, consumers tend to stay longer and maybe enjoy an unplanned dessert or an extra drink.

Low lighting can also make



you feel less inhibited and self-conscious; you're more apt to eat more, especially when you're with others.

You can't control a restaurant's lighting level, but you can have a skim latte as dessert. At home, keep the lights bright at meals and reserve candlelight dinners for special occasions.

And our temptation-taming tactics can help.

**Temptation trigger:** Generous plates and serving spoons; wide drinking glasses.

The bigger the plate and serving utensil, the more you'll dish out. One study had people eat at an ice cream social, and those who were given a large bowl and a three-ounce scooper ate 53 percent more ice cream than those given a smaller bowl and a two-ounce scooper. With beverages, research shows that people pour 28 percent more in short, wide glasses than into tall, skinny ones, says Dr. Brian Wansink, director of the food and brand lab at Cornell University.

**Slimming solution:** Downsize plates and utensils. If your dinner dishes are larger than the standard 10.5 inches, use a salad plate for your main dish. Try a tip from Asian cultures and artfully arrange what's on your plate. A small serving of sirloin, for example, will be less likely to leave you hungering for more when sliced and fanned on a pretty plate. Also, use smaller serving utensils, such as soup spoons for doling out portions. Replace any squat tumblers with tall, slender drinking glasses.

**Temptation trigger:** Too many choices.

If you always try to have something new for lunch and dinner, your meals are probably more of a calorie splurge than you realize.

"A varied diet stimulates your appetite," says Dr. Hollie A. Raynor, a registered nurse and adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry and human behavior research at Brown

Medical School in Providence, Rhode Island. The more flavors, textures, and color a particular meal offers and the less often you eat something, the more you'll be tempted to load up your plate, because the food looks good or you're curious about how it will taste.

**Slimming solution:** Downplay diversity. Come up with a standard repertoire of meals. It's easy to get into the habit of having the same healthy breakfast (whole-grain cereal, skim milk, and fruit) five days a week, so why not do the same with dinner? Raynor suggests rotating among five or six of your favorite healthy core entrees. You can branch out one night a week, if you feel you need to. To beat boredom and boost your diet's overall nutrient content, vary the fruit and veggies you use in the repeat meals. Dessert can be the same small dish of low-fat yogurt every night, jazzed up with almonds, walnuts, strawberries, kiwi, fresh pineapple, or whatever's in season.

At holiday parties and other events with an appetizer or buffet spread, "Follow the rule of two," suggests Wansink. That is, don't put more than two foods on your plate at any given time. By doing so, "you intuitively limit your choices, while focusing on your favorite foods, so you don't feel deprived," he says. In one study, Wansink conducted, participants who followed that guideline ended up eating 36 percent less than those who didn't over the course of an evening.

Another trick: When buying food that comes in flavors, such as yogurt and salad dressing, buy only one flavor at a time. One study found that



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At holiday parties with a buffet spread, follow the “rule of two.” That is, don’t put more than two foods on your plate at any given time.

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those who were offered three yogurt flavors ate 23 percent more than those who were offered only one.

**Temptation trigger:** Eating while doing anything else.

Most people are guilty of driving, watching TV, or reading while noshing on something.

“When we multitask with food, we consume more without realizing it and sacrifice a feeling of satisfaction,” says Dr. Susan Albers, a psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic Family Health Center in Wooster, Ohio, and author of “Eat Q: Unlock the Weight-loss Power of Emotional Intelligence.”

It’s an easy way to consume more without even realizing it and sacrificing a feeling of satisfaction. Albers relates the story of a client who had a habit of eating lunch while driving from one job to another.

“One day, she was so distracted

with driving and thinking about her job that she actually had to open her lunch bag at a stoplight to see if her sandwich was gone,” Albers says. (It was.) Sound familiar?

**Slimming solution:** Make meals important.

“No matter how busy you are, find a distraction-free spot to sit and eat,” suggests Albers. Make a habit of taking one mindful bite at the beginning of each meal and then putting your utensil down. This serves as a speed bump and slows the pace of the entire meal. For a similar effect, ditch your fork and knife for chopsticks, no matter what type of cuisine you’re having. And if you can’t avoid eating while doing something else, pre-portion your food and tell yourself, “No seconds.”

**Temptation trigger:** The food on the counter.

If you frequently cross paths with

the office candy bowl, you probably realize that the mere sight of food can cause unplanned eating. In a study in which office workers kept Hershey kisses in either see-through dishes or in opaque, lidded jars, those with the see-through dishes ate two more chocolates daily. That translates to 50 calories a day, which adds up to an extra five pounds per year.

**Slimming solution:** Stash food out of sight. At home, keep cereal, crackers, and holiday treats hidden in a top cabinet, and store extras in the basement or pantry. Research shows that people tend to store their inventory in visible areas consume it quickly until it’s depleted to manageable levels. Also, “wrap leftovers in aluminum foil, not plastic wrap,” adds Musante, so you won’t constantly be tempted when opening the refrigerator.

At work, place treats in dark con-

tainers, preferably in a distant office refrigerator, not in your desk drawer. You’ll eat even less if it takes effort, such as having to reach or take a walk to access food. If the communal goodie jar resides on the desk of someone who sits nearby, offer to fill it — and then do so with treats you don’t like.

**Temptation trigger:** Entrée envy.

“Research shows that you can be influenced by other people’s food decisions,” says Musante. When out to eat, if everyone orders cocktails, appetizers and dessert, you’re apt to go with the flow.

**Slimming solution:** Be the first to order. Speak up quickly and order a salad and grilled salmon.

“You’ll have a positive effect on what others choose — and will be less likely to see lots of tempting foods,” says Musante. If everyone wants dessert, order one and split it.



# Disappointment... the next time around

## Secondary infertility is on the rise

BY JENNY CHEN

**S**econdary infertility — the inability to conceive after already biologically giving birth to a child — is on the rise. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about four million couples in the United States experienced secondary infertility in 2010 — up from 3.3 million couples in 2006. Secondary infertility is a devastating shock for many couples who had planned to have multiple children in their family.

When treating secondary in-

fertility — as opposed to treating primary fertility, doctors look for things that have changed since the first pregnancy. Inevitably, the one thing that has changed for all couples is age.

“The woman’s age is the biggest factor to determining whether a woman’s pregnancy will be successful or not,” said Dr. Isaac Sasson, an expert in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at the Shady Grove Fertility Center in Maryland.

The quality of the female’s eggs are a large factor in determining whether or not the woman will get

pregnant, and as a woman ages, the quality of her eggs decline. By the time she is pushing 40, her chances of conceiving have drastically decreased. Similarly, the quality of the male’s sperm also declines around the age of 40, but more gradually.

Why has age become such an issue? Dr. Lisa Kolp, from Johns Hopkins Medical Center, and an expert in female infertility, says that because divorce rates are rising (around 40 percent according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and many women are trying to have kids with their sec-

and partner at an older age.

Furthermore, the fault may lie with the second partner — oftentimes when people switch partners, they find that they are unable to conceive.

### Clue to health problems

Aside from age, said Dr. Morgan Rau, a naturopathic doctor from Maine Family Natural Health who specializes in women's health and childbirth, infertility is often an indicator of deeper health issues.

"The body is not healthy enough to welcome a baby," Dr. Rau said.

Some of the most common reasons for female infertility include diabetes, thyroid dysfunction, endometriosis, and polycystic ovarian syndrome. Dr. Rau says that many of the female conditions are caused by an imbalance of the hormones (usually an excess of estrogen). Often, treating those issues first is extremely effective in raising chances of pregnancy.

"Lifestyle issues, thyroid dysfunction, and diabetes can be the first identifiable cause for infertility," Dr. Sasson said. His office, like many fertility centers across the country, employs a step-wise approach — first the doctor does a comprehensive check of both partners' health histories. This may include everything from excessive alcohol consumption to sexually transmitted diseases.

### Male infertility

However, contrary to popular opinion, infertility is not always due to the woman's infertility. Doctors estimate that 70 percent of the time, the infertility is due to a female cause, 50 percent of the time the infertility is due to a male cause, and 20 percent of the time, it is a combination of both male and female causes.

Dr. Pravin Rao, a specialist at Johns Hopkins specializing in male infertility, says that the most common cause for male infertility is a condition called varicocele. This condition is an enlargement of the veins in the scrotum, which may cause low sperm count or low sperm quality. Treatment for varicocele involves a micro-surgery called varicocele ligation, said Dr. Rao.

Other factors for male infertility may include hormone function, excessive consumption of alcohol, or chemotherapy. The

popularity of recent testosterone-enhancing supplements often hinders conception as well. A study conducted by the University of Alabama in May of this year, and presented to the American Urological Association, found that the testosterone-enhancing supplements turn off sperm production, and it generally takes six months for the man's sperm count to return to normal after he has gone off the supplement.

Sometimes though, the cause of male infertility may simply be a case of running the bath too hot, since the testes is usually 3 degrees cooler than the rest of the body, and overheating the area may cause sperm to die.

"It's often surprising how small adjustments can make a difference," Dr. Rao said.

However, Dr. Rao also indicated that, just like for women, male infertility may be a sign of underlying health issues, and thus it is important for the couples' well-being to be evaluated thoroughly.

### Reproductive technology

"Infertility often points to higher rates of testicular cancer and prostate cancer," he said. Doctors across the board agree that good health is the ultimate solution to infertility. Procedures such as in vitro fertilization, while faster and sometimes more effective, are extremely invasive and costly, said Dr. Sasson.

Other assisted reproductive technology includes surrogacy or artificial insemination. There are risks to these technologies however: a study completed by the American Society for Reproductive Medicine found that children conceived through in vitro fertilization were more likely to be born with birth defects.

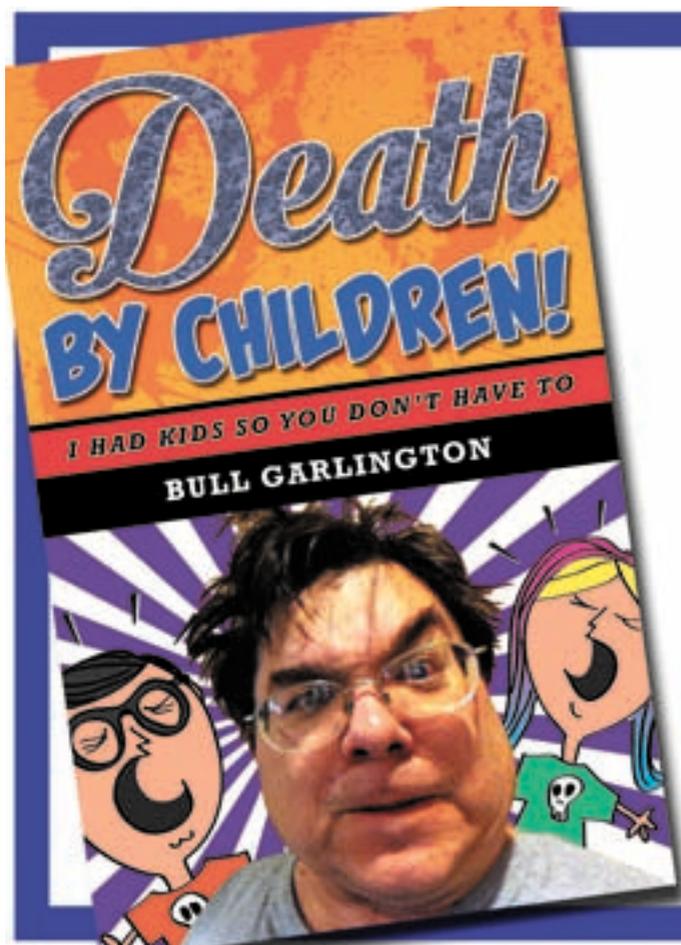
"There are risks, costs, and success," said Dr. Sasson. "As a medical professional, I make a recommendation based on these three factors. It's important to make an informed decision."

*Jenny Chen is a freelance writer specializing in education and parenting. She has written for Washington Parent and Mothering Magazine. More work can be found at [www.jennychen.com](http://www.jennychen.com) and on Twitter @americanhaiku.*

### Resources:

Resolve: The National Infertility Association (with local chapters), <http://resolve.org>





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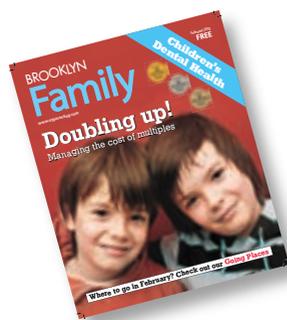
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# Calendar

DECEMBER



## Here comes the Sugar-Plum Fairy

**T**he Moscow Classical Ballet features more than 50 of Russia's finest dancers performing "The Nutcracker" on Dec. 15 at the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts.

The beautiful ballet is set in the "Land of Peace and Harmony," and is based on the Tchaikovsky opera, adapted from the ETA Hoffman story, "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King."

From the "Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy," to the "Waltz of the Flowers," this holiday classic is sure to please all ages.

The Nutcracker, Dec. 15 at 6 pm. Tickets range from \$25 to \$45; and \$10 for any seat for children 12 years old and younger.

*The Lehman Center for the Performing Arts [250 Bedford Park Blvd. West in Kingsbridge Heights, (718) 960-8833; [www.lehmancenter.org](http://www.lehmancenter.org)].*

## Submit a listing

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

Send your listing request to [bronxcalendar@cnglocal.com](mailto: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!

## SAT, NOV. 30

### IN THE BRONX

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

Gather fall leaves and weave them together with other materials to make a beautiful wall hanging.

**Art projects:** Hudson River Museum, 511 Warburton Ave.; (914) 963-4550; Noon-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Build a bridge, an arch, a truss or a suspension bridge.

**Medieval Artists:** The Cloisters, 99 Margaret Corbin; (718) 923-3700; 1-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Families learn all about the art of the Middle Ages. Registration is required.

## SUN, DEC. 1

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

**Art projects:** Noon-4 pm. Hudson River Museum. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

**Tell me a story:** The Cloisters, 99 Margaret Corbin; (718) 923-3700; 1-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children hear a story.

**Workshop:** Studio Museum of Harlem, 144 W. 125 St.; (212) 864-4500; [www.studiomuseum.org](http://www.studiomuseum.org); 2-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Crush-A-Lot event for children is a hands-on event.

## WED, DEC. 4

### IN THE BRONX

**Story time:** Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com); 6



Photo by Joshua Bright

## Find your inner elf

**T**here's lots to do at Wave Hill — even in the winter — during "Holiday Workshop Weekend" on Dec. 7 and 8.

Participants make a one-of-a-kind wreath, using fresh greens from the gardens, miniature arrangements, or handmade felted treasure boxes.

Price for the wreath-making and miniature arrangements class is \$20 for members and \$30 for non-members.

For the felted treasure box workshop, the fee is \$10 for members and \$20 for non-members.

Recommended for children ages 8 and older, with an adult.

"Holiday Workshop Weekend" on Dec. 7 and 8 from 11 am to 3 pm.

Wave Hill's Glyndor Gallery [W. 249th Street at Independence Avenue in Riverdale, (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org)].

pm; Free.

Children enjoy a new story each week and do a craft.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**Franken Science:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); 3:30-6 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children in grades three to four become mad scientists and learn all about science.

## THURS, DEC. 5

### IN THE BRONX

**Game on:** Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4-5 pm; Free.

Tweens 7 to 12 years old play board games and electronic games with friends.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**Weird Science:** Grades 1-2: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.,

at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); 3:30-6 pm; Free with museum admission.

Explore the weird and fascinating world of science with fun hands-on activities.

## FRI, DEC. 6

### IN THE BRONX

**Teen Advisory Group:** Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4-5 pm; Free.

Children 13 to 18 years old meet, play games, and discuss events at the library.

**First Fridays:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 5:30-8:30 pm; \$12 (\$10 seniors and students; Free for members).

Take the trolley to the mansion and enjoy the festive decorations and the

a cappella sound of the Metropolitan singing seasonal songs.

**Story time:** 7 pm. Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza. See Wednesday, Dec. 4.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**A Night at the Museum Sleepovers:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); 6 pm; \$145 per person, \$135 (members).

Break out your sleeping bags and experience the museum like never before. This unique after-hours program will thrill kids ages 6 to 13 and their caregivers.

## SAT, DEC. 7

### IN THE BRONX

**Storybook Christmas:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 10 am-1 pm; \$20 (\$15 members).

Holiday spirits soar in a fun-filled day of storytelling, crafts, photos with Santa, holiday shopping, and more. Space limited pre-registration required. Photos with Santa additional fee.

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

Seasons greetings, children are inspired by the signs that signal that winter is here. Draw cold-weather tales; pop-up holiday cards and more.

**Holiday Workshop weekend:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 11 am-3 pm; \$30 (\$20 members).

Children 8 years and older are invited to attend with a parent or guardian to create gifts and holiday decorations inspired by the gardens and galleries at the museum. Registration is suggested but not required.

**Holiday Workshop weekend:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 11 am-3 pm; \$20 (\$10 members).

Felted Treasure Boxes.

**Pajama story time:** Van Cortlandt House Museum, Broadway at W. 246th Street; (718) 543-3344; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 6-7:30 pm; Free.

Children enjoy a reading of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" along with a hot cocoa and the jolly old elf himself. Reservations suggested.

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# Calendar

Our online calendar is updated daily at [www.NYParenting.com/calendar](http://www.NYParenting.com/calendar)

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## SUN, DEC. 8

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 7.

**Holiday Workshop weekend:** 11 am–3 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 7.

**Holiday Workshop weekend:** 11 am–3 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 7.

**Workshop:** Studio Museum of Harlem, 144 W. 125 St.; (212) 864-4500; [www.studiomuseum.org](http://www.studiomuseum.org); 2–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

A look at the photos of Cyrus Kabiru's C-Stunners and children then use recycled materials, found objects and other fun art-making materials.

## WED, DEC. 11

### IN THE BRONX

**Lil-Instruments:** Studio Museum of Harlem, 144 W. 125 St.; (212) 864-4500; [www.studiomuseum.org](http://www.studiomuseum.org); 11 am–noon; Free with museum admission.

Children design instruments that make sound.

**Story time:** 6 pm. Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza. See Wednesday, Dec. 4.

## THURS, DEC. 12

### IN THE BRONX

**Game on:** 4–5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, Dec. 5.

## FRI, DEC. 13

### IN THE BRONX

**Teen Advisory Group:** 4–5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Friday, Dec. 6.

## SAT, DEC. 14

### IN THE BRONX

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

Children make ornaments from pine boughs with shiny foil, glittery beads and natural objects including pine cones, dried herbs and spices.

**Bronx Arts Ensemble Holiday concert:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 1 and 3 pm; Free.

Come and enjoy the music of the season. Reservations are required.



## A festival of fairy tales

**F**irebone Theatre presents “Long, Long, Ago,” a musical mash up of three popular fairy tales beginning on Dec. 5 at Space 38139.

This production combines Oscar Wilde’s “The Selfish Giant,” Charles Perrault’s “The Fairies,” and the Grimm Brothers’ “Hans

Dumm” into a unique holiday festival series of performances for all ages. Families will enjoy music, laughter, and the ever-comforting milk and cookies.

“Long, Long, Ago” Dec. 5 through Dec. 20, at 7 pm, with special performances on Dec. 7 at 2 pm, Dec. 10 at 11 am, Dec.

14 at 2 pm, and Dec. 17 at 11 am. Tickets are \$20 for adults, and \$15 for children 15 and under, which includes the cookies and milk.

*Space 38139 (38 W. 39th St. between Fifth and Sixth avenues in the Garment District, [www.firebonetheatre.com](http://www.firebonetheatre.com)).*

## SUN, DEC. 15

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 14.

**Nature crafts:** Pelham Bay Ranger Station, Bruckner Boulevard and Wilkinson Avenue; (718) 319-7258; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 1 pm; Free.

Children make holiday appropriate projects.

**Bronx Arts Ensemble Holiday concert:** 1 and 3 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 14.

**Postcard crafts:** Studio Museum of Harlem, 144 W. 125 St.; (212) 864-4500; [www.studiomuseum.org](http://www.studiomuseum.org); 2–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children create a table flower for holiday decorating using postcards from the museum’s postcards project.

**Candlelight tours:** Van Cortlandt House Museum, Broadway at W. 246th Street; (718) 543-3344; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 4–7 pm; \$10 (\$7 seniors and students; \$4 children 6 to 12 years old).

See Van Cortlandt House decorated for an 18th-century style Christmas. Reservations required.

**“The Nutcracker”:** Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; [www.LehmanCenter.org](http://www.LehmanCenter.org); 6 pm; \$25-\$45 (\$10 Children 12 and under any seat).

The Moscow Classical Ballet performs the holiday classic.

## WED, DEC. 18

### IN THE BRONX

**Movie time:** Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nysl.org](http://www.nysl.org); 4–6 pm; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old watch a great movie.

**Story time:** 6 pm. Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza. See Wednesday, Dec. 4.

## THURS, DEC. 19

### IN THE BRONX

**Game on:** 4–5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, Dec. 5.

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## FRI, DEC. 20

### IN THE BRONX

**Teen Advisory Group:** 4–5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Friday, Dec. 6.

## SAT, DEC. 21

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Ave.; (718) 549–3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 10 am–1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children create a colorful, clay like wax candle.

**Medieval Entertainment:**

The Cloisters, 99 Margaret Corbin; (718) 923–3700; 1–2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Families learn all about the entertainment of the middle ages. Pre-registration required.

**Bird walk:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885–1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 2:30–4:30 pm; \$10 (\$8 seniors, students and members).

Birders start the season and search for the legendary owls that winter on the grounds, the Barred, Long-Eared, Saw, Whet and Great Horned varieties. Registration requested.

## SUN, DEC. 22

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 21.

**Paper workshop:** Studio Museum of Harlem, 144 W. 125 St.; (212) 864–4500; [www.studiomuseum.org](http://www.studiomuseum.org); 2–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children create, color, and decorate bobble heads using paper materials.

## WED, DEC. 25

### IN THE BRONX

**Story time:** 6 pm. Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza. See Wednesday, Dec. 4.

## THURS, DEC. 26

### IN THE BRONX

**Game on:** 4–5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, Dec. 5.

## FRI, DEC. 27

### IN THE BRONX

**Glorious Glass:** The Cloisters, 99 Margaret Corbin; (718) 923–3700; Noon–1 pm and 1–2 pm; Free with museum admission.



Photo by Carol Roseggi

## 'Story' for the ages

**W**ho can forget the story of Ralphie in the classic holiday movie "A Christmas Story?" The award-winning musical adaptation returns to the stage at the Theater at Madison Square Garden this month for a limited run from Dec. 11 through 29, just in time for Christmas.

With its catchy tunes and clever choreography, your entire family will surely be entertained. Plus, it's being co-produced by the film's original Ralphie, Peter Billingsley. We triple dog dare you not to have a great time.

"A Christmas Story: the Musical," Dec. 11 through Dec. 29, Wednesdays at 2 pm and 7:30 pm, Thursdays at 11 am and 7:30 pm, Fridays at 7:30 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 7:30 pm, and Sundays at 1 pm and 6:30 pm, with special performances on Dec. 23 at 2 pm and 7:30 pm, and Dec. 26 and Dec. 27 at 2 pm. Tickets range from \$49 and \$199.

*Theater at Madison Square Garden [Four Pennsylvania Plaza at W. 33rd Street and Eighth Avenue in the Garment District, (866) 858-0008 [www.achristmasstorythemusical.com](http://www.achristmasstorythemusical.com)].*

Workshop teaches the art of glass.

## SAT, DEC. 28

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Ave.; (718) 549–3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 10 am–1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Envision the year ahead and create your own hello 2014 hand-made calendar.

**Glorious Glass:** The Cloisters, 99 Margaret Corbin; (718) 923–3700; Noon–1 pm; 1–2 pm and 2–3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Workshop teaches the art of glass.

## SUN, DEC. 29

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 28.

**Kwanzaa celebration:** Studio Museum of Harlem, 144 W. 125 St.; (212) 864–4500; [www.studiomuseum.org](http://www.studiomuseum.org); 2–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Art-making activities based on an exhibit that celebrates Kwanzaa, and an interactive performance.

## LONG-RUNNING

### IN THE BRONX

**Holiday train show:** New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Ka-

zimiroff Blvd.; (718) 817–8700; [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org); Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 12, 2014; \$20 (\$8 children).

Large scale model trains cover a wide variety of ground and features favorites including The Statue of Liberty, Rockefeller Center, The Brooklyn Bridge, and many others.

**Ice skating:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548–0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); Mondays – Wednesdays, Noon–4 pm, Thursdays and Sundays, Noon–8 pm, Fridays and Saturdays, Noon–10 pm, Now – Fri, Jan. 31, 2014; \$5 weekday (\$8 weekend) plus skates.

Open skating season has begun so strap on your blades and get sliding.

**Paper arts and crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse at E. 192nd Street; (718) 365–5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Wednesdays, 3–4 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 26; Free.

Have fun creating paper crafts using multiple mediums.

**Seasonal crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse at E. 192nd Street; (718) 365–5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Fridays, 3–4 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 27; Free.

Make fun projects for all the seasons.

## FURTHER AFIELD

### The Butterfly Conservatory:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769–5200; [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; \$27, \$16 (children).

This annual favorite features up to 500 live, free-flying tropical butterflies from Central, South, and North America, Africa, and Asia.

### Origami Holiday Tree:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769–5200; [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Now – Sun, Jan. 12, 2014; Free with museum admission.

An annual museum tradition, the Origami Holiday Tree and two 19-foot Holiday Barosaurs welcome visitors to the museum throughout the holiday season, inspired by the new exhibition The Power of Poison.

**Gingerbread Lane:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699–0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Tuesdays – Fridays, 9:30 am–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am – 6 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 12; Free with museum admission.

It's a 300-square-foot village made entirely of edible gingerbread, royal

*Continued on page 32*

# Calendar

Our online calendar is updated daily at [www.NYParenting.com/calendar](http://www.NYParenting.com/calendar)

**Continued from page 31**

icing and candy, and is a contender for the Guinness World Record for the largest gingerbread exhibit.

**Playground:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Weekdays, 10 am–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 31; \$4 per person plus museum admission.

Children explore, discovery and have fun in this outdoor playground with slides, seesaws and pits as well as fog machines. Each session lasts 45 minutes; weather permitting.

**Space Junk 3D:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–5pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 31; \$6 (\$5 children) plus museum admission.

Children experience collisions, soar 22,000 miles above the earth and explore the challenges faced in protecting our planet, without ever leaving Queens.

**Rocket Park Mini Golf:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 31; \$6 (\$5 children, plus museum admission).

Putt your way through a nine-hole miniature course that teaches the science of spaceflight.

**Train show:** Grand Central Station, 87 E. 42nd St., Manhattan; (718) 694-1600; Mondays – Thursdays, 8 am–8 pm, Fridays, 8 am–8pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sun, Feb. 23, 2014; Free.

The annual show features Lionel's new limited edition model of Grand Central Terminal as well as illustrations from Next Stop Grand Central.

**Frogs — A Chorus of Colors:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; [awang@amnh.org](mailto:awang@amnh.org); [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Now – Sun, Jan. 5, 2014; Suggested admission \$19, \$10.50 children, \$14.50 seniors and students.

See more than 150 live frogs, in-

cluding 10 species of colorful dart-poison frogs. Learn about their importance to ecosystems and the threats they face in the wild.

**Flight of the Butterflies in 3D:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Tuesdays – Fridays, 11 am, Noon & 2 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, Noon, 1, 2 & 3 pm.; \$6 (adults,) \$5 (children, students & seniors,) plus NYSCI admission.

Join millions of real butterflies on an amazing journey to a remote and secret hideaway in this award-winning film.

**"Fancy Nancy The Musical":** McGinn/Cazale Theatre, 2162 Broadway, at 76th Street; (212) 579-0528; [vitaltheatre.org](http://vitaltheatre.org); Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am and 1 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 8; \$39.50–\$59.50.

This musical is based on the popular children's books. Suitable for children ages 3-10.

**"The Three Bears Holiday Bash":** Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater, 79th & West Dr; (212) 988-

9093; Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30 am & Noon, Wednesdays, 10:30 am, Noon, & 2:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 30; \$10, \$7 (children 12 and under).

"The Three Bears Holiday Bash" is a variety show that celebrates the holiday season in song, dance and puppetry.

**"A Christmas Story":** The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza; (212) 465-6741; [www.thegarden.com](http://www.thegarden.com); Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2 pm; Thursday, Dec. 12, 11 am; Friday, Dec. 13, 7:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 14, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 15, 1 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2 pm; Thursday, Dec. 19, 11 am; Friday, Dec. 20, 7:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 21, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 22, 1 pm; Monday, Dec. 23, 2 pm; Thursday, Dec. 26, 2 pm; Friday, Dec. 27, 2 pm; Saturday, Dec. 28, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 29, 1 pm; \$49-\$199.

Celebrate the holidays with this cherished story that will entertain the whole family.

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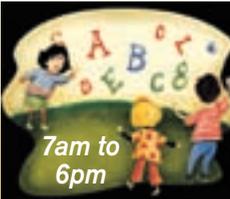
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# New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

## Puttin' on the ritz

Put the sparkling apple cider on ice and dress the whole family in these tuxedo-style pajamas from Chasing Fireflies for a New Year's Eve that's finally all about being comfortable and ringing in the new year with the ones we love most of all.

The kids version is available in snug-fitting black or pink cotton in sizes 12-month, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 14. The adult pink version is in sizes extra small to extra large, while the unisex adult black version ranges in size from small to extra-extra large. Both adult versions (\$59.50) have trouser legs, vs. the kids skinny leg. (Top hats and canes are not included.)

All that's left is making your resolutions, watching the ball drop in Times Square, and toasting the new year!

*Kids black tuxedo PJs, \$49.50, [www.chasing-fireflies.com](http://www.chasing-fireflies.com).*



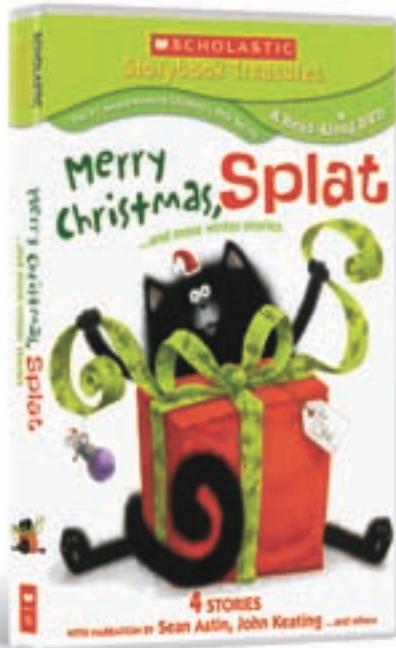
## Snow much fun

On the "Merry Christmas, Splat... And More Winter Stories" DVD, the Scholastic Storybook Treasures series brings Rob Scotton's eponymous book to life with a faithful adaptation and comic narration by John Keating. Recommended for kids ages 3 to 7, the whole family

found this DVD to be the perfect excuse to take a break from the whirlwind of holiday preparations and park it on the couch with a cup of cocoa. Our marshmallows bobbed with our marshmallows bobbed with our laughter as we watched Splat the cat's awkward attempts to help his mother, so he could rake in the gifts at Christmas.

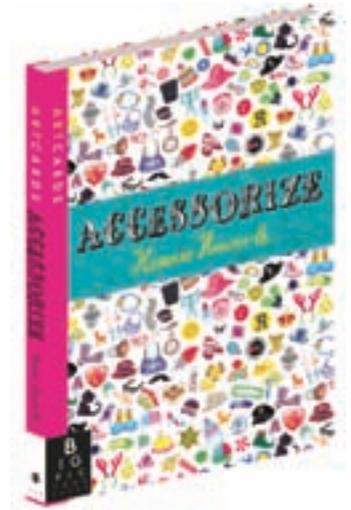
The DVD also includes "Fletcher and the Snowflake Christmas" and a behind-the-scenes bonus feature demonstrating how the animators brought Julia Rawlinson's picture book to life; Jacqueline Briggs Martin's "Snowflake Bentley," a story chock full of fascinating observations about nature's prettiest form of precipitation and the inspiring life of snowflake expert Willie Bentley; and "Owl Moon," Jane Yolen's classic tale about a child and his reserved father venturing out into the cold, snowy, moonlit woods, hoping to catch a glimpse of the great horned owl. These winter stories reminded us to enjoy the season's natural beauty, too.

*"Merry Christmas, Splat... And More Winter Stories" DVD, \$14.95, [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com).*



## Stick 'em up

After all of these years, little kids are still stuck on stickers. So it's a good bet that the creative kid on your gift list will enjoy Artcards: Accessorize. Recommended for children ages 6 to 9, the set includes 16 pull-out cards to be decorated with the 600 stickers. Each colorful sticker — whether boasting a sheriff's badge or a mouse riding a paper airplane — is a cool illustration by London-based artist Hennie Haworth. The "artcards" have black-and-white illustrations that beg to be embellished. Pair it with a package of felt-tip markers for a perfect gift. Decorating the cards is a pleasant diversion while at home on a snowy day, or traveling



for the holidays.

*Artcards: Accessorize by Big Picture Press, \$17.99, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).*

## 'Pom pom' of your hand

Looking for last-minute stocking stuffers that won't break the bank, create cavities, or stop working after five minutes of play? The Pom Pom Maker kit, from Eeboo, will fill their stocking and their free time with a crafty task that gives immediate satisfaction — creating the perfect pom pom!

Then you can sew, glue, or pin 'em to hats, lapels, the backs of mittens and socks, and hair elastics



(for ridiculously adorable pigtailed!) The kit contains detailed instructions; 6-feet of colorful, fluffy yarn; tie string; and the cardboard "maker" that a kid — ages 8 and older — needs to create 3-inch- and 2-inch-wide pom poms. (You supply the scissors and additional yarn to make even more pom poms with the reusable maker.)

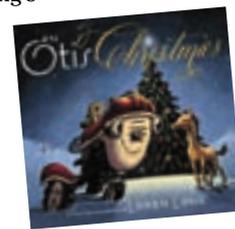
*Eeboo Pom Pom Maker, \$9.95, [www.geniusbaby.com](http://www.geniusbaby.com).*

## The gift of friendship

This year, make sure your little one — ideally between the ages of 3 and 7 — adds Loren Long's picture book, "An Otis Christmas" (Philomel), to their wish list. The fourth in the author-illustrator's beloved Otis-the-tractor series features the farm's residents anticipating the arrival of Christmas — and a new foal! But on Christmas Eve, the pregnant horse begins to suffer complications. The suspense builds as a farmhand jumps

into his truck to retrieve Doc Baker, but gets stuck in the snow. With powder "up to his chin," Otis, the heroic tractor, sets out to save the mother and her baby horse. A story brimming with heroism and the awe we feel in the presence of a new life, "An Otis Christmas" is a welcome reminder of the true gifts of the holiday season — family and friends.

*"An Otis Christmas" by Loren Long, \$17.99, [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com).*



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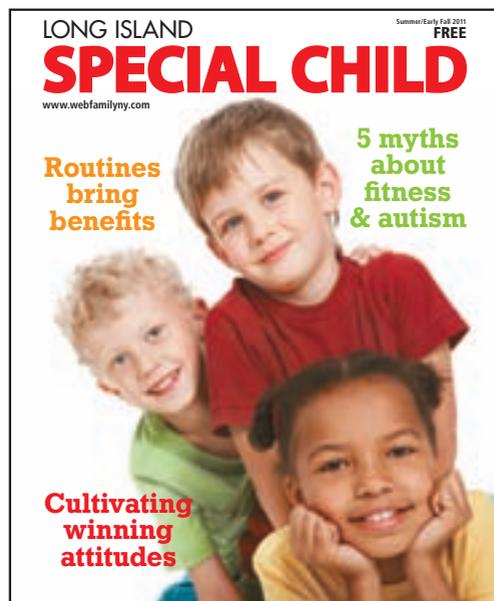
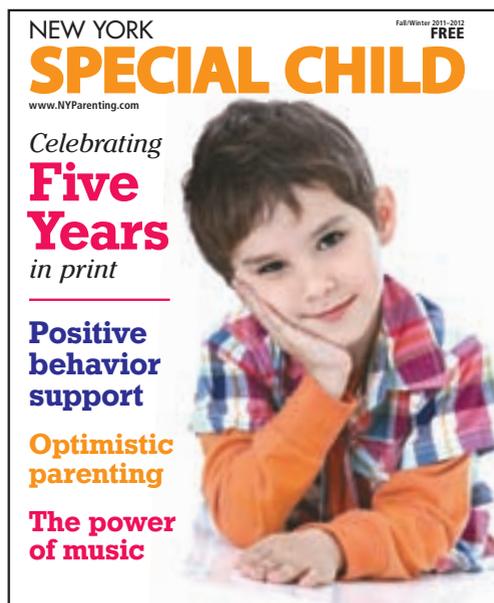
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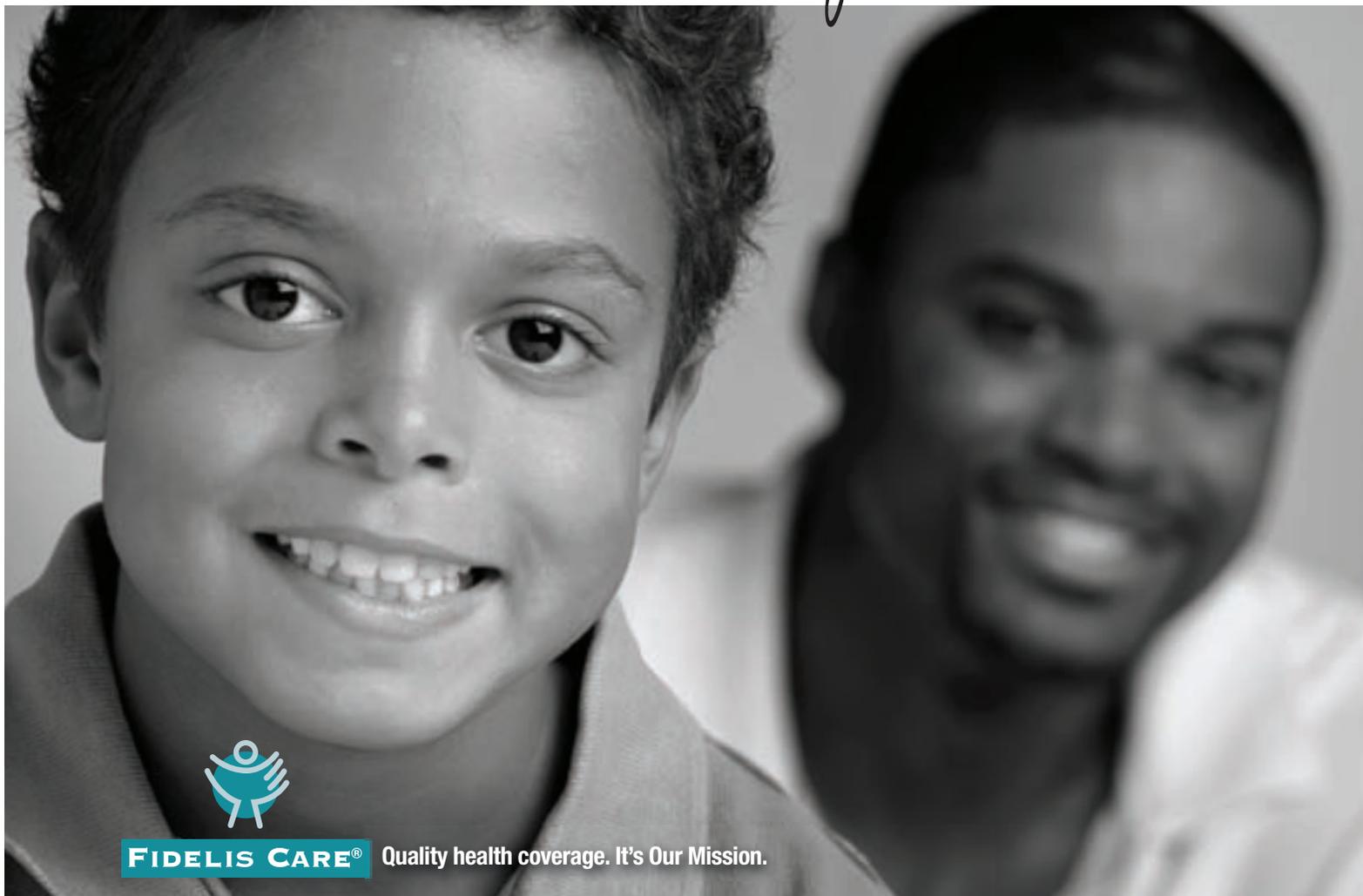


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