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# Family December 2014

## **FEATURES**

- 6 Keeping the happy in the holidays**  
Celebrating the season should be satisfying, not stressful  
BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN
- 8 This holiday, turn your child into a tradition tracker**  
BY SARA MARCHESSAULT
- 12 Treating dry winter skin**  
Tips for the whole family  
BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON
- 14 Parenting resolutions**  
Advice for the not-so-perfect parent  
BY GAYLA GRACE
- 16 Creating the new Cooper Hewitt**  
Pen helps kids to script their design experience at revamped museum  
BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON
- 18 Arts get a boost**  
A program with the goal of arts education for all  
BY ALLISON PLITT
- 20 Tiny babies, big love**  
Part 2: Two micro-preemie moms share their experiences  
BY TAMMY SCILEPPI
- 24 A baby lost, a couple's love and hope**  
After the pain of my miscarriage, my husband knew just what to say  
BY JUDY M. MILLER

## **COLUMNS**

- 10 Just Write Mom**  
BY DANIELLE SULLIVAN
- 26 Good Sense Eating**  
BY CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD
- 27 Downtown Mommy**  
BY NOTOYA GREEN
- 34 The Book Worm**  
BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

## **CALENDAR**

- 28 December Events**

## **SPECIAL SECTION**

- 32 Party Planners**



28



12

# Letter from the publisher

## Happy holidays and more

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
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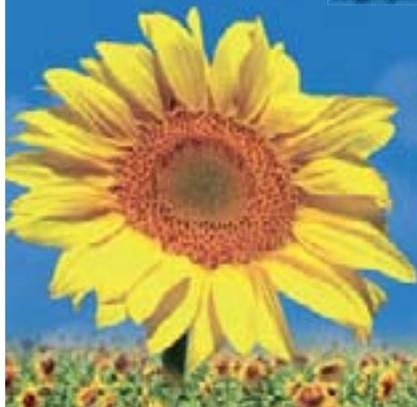
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# Keeping the happy in the holidays

Celebrating  
the season  
should be  
satisfying, not  
stressful

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-  
TIEMAN

**A**s parents we long to create magical holiday memories for our children. However, while their heads are filled with “visions of sugarplums,” we often feel overwhelmed by all we think we have to do and spend to make them happy. So how do we make this holiday season memorable and meaningful while minimizing the hassles and stress?

When planning your holiday celebrations, ask yourselves, “What do we want the holidays to mean to our children? What kind of memories do we want them to have? What feelings do we want them to associate with the holidays? Are we effectively communicating the meaning this holiday holds for us through our celebration?” Spend time revisiting your own childhoods and your favorite holiday memories. What kinds of things did your families do to make these memories possible?

My suspicion is that when you recall your favorite memories they have little or nothing to do with how many gifts there were or how much your parents spent on them. You may or may not even remember specific gifts. Most people’s memories have more to do with the atmosphere of the holidays that existed in their homes — the aromas, the music, the voices, the feelings. Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli remind us in their book, “Unplug the Christmas Machine,” that no matter what cultural or religious holiday you are celebrating, “What

children want and need is more time with their parents, an evenly paced holiday season, traditions they can count on, and realistic expectations about gifts ... Most people spend more time and emotional energy on gift-giving than anything else, and yet gift-giving is consistently rated as the least-valued aspect of the celebration.”

Here are a few suggestions for creating the meaningful holiday memories you desire:

**View the holidays through the eyes of your child.** Children experience the holidays differently at different ages. For example, the infant who rests calmly in Santa’s arms may become the toddler who shrieks in terror at this bearded stranger. The very young child for whom you carefully shopped may be more interested in the package’s wrapping than its contents. Pay attention to and respect your child’s reactions and avoid taking her preferences personally. By demonstrating respect toward your child, she will learn to respect you and others. Your responsiveness to her needs and feelings will leave a more lasting impression than any picture with Santa.

**Make time together as a family a priority.** Let decorating the house, making and wrapping gifts, and preparing meals be family activities. Delegate tasks according to age and ability. Everyone can do something. Having a special job to do makes everyone feel that they are making an important contribution to the family’s celebration.

**Put together a collection of holi-**

**day books and read to each other!** Listen to holiday music! Get out the art supplies and create! Take a walk in the neighborhood and enjoy the sights and sounds of the season. Limit television viewing to holiday specials that the family can watch together. Take advantage of this opportunity to discuss the portrayal of the holiday and whether or not it is in agreement with your values. Spend time exploring with your children the meaning of the holiday you are celebrating and its religious or cultural significance.

**Simplify your social calendar.** Attend only those functions that you believe to be absolutely necessary. Space events and maintain a flexible, realistic schedule as much as possible. When children will be accompanying you to events that may last past their bedtime, take along pajamas to change them into if there is a chance they will fall asleep. If you are attending an event that involves a meal with lots of unique or unusual dishes, take along food that you know your child will eat or feed her ahead of time. Take along a few quiet toys, books, or art supplies in case the entertainment is geared mostly toward adults. Your children will remember your efforts to make these experiences enjoyable for them, too.

**Schedule some quiet time for your family.** Listen to soothing music and use soft voices. Some families choose to institute a “whisper hour” during which everyone is asked to speak only in whispers. Individual family members are encouraged to spend this time in whatever



way they find most relaxing — reading, drawing, doing puzzles, resting, or writing letters.

**Limit your children's wish list.** Help your children learn to make choices by limiting their list to three items. They are more likely to identify what they really want this way. Encourage them to make choices that are within the family budget. Let making the list be part of the fun by having them write it themselves, draw pictures of the desired items, or cut them from catalogues and paste them on a piece of paper (you will want to save these).

**Try to give your children at least one thing from their list.** Remember that more is not always better. Knowing that someone cared enough to get what she really wanted tends to leave the recipient feeling very special.

**Avoid taking your children**

**shopping.** Arrange to let them stay with trusted relatives or friends. Set up a babysitting co-op for the holidays with these individuals or couples so that everyone gets a chance to get some uninterrupted shopping done. When taking your children along is unavoidable, plan several, short trips during the time of day when they are at their best — after meals or naps. Involve them in the shopping when possible. Let them hold or read the list and help look for the items.

**Involve your children in the joy of giving.** Ask them who they want to include on the family's gift list and for gift suggestions. Encourage them to make as many gifts as possible. This is best accomplished by starting early. Close friends and relatives will treasure simply framed original works of art, homemade calendars using your child's art-

work or photos, or treats your children helped bake and decorate. Never underestimate the value of a handmade gift, for these come from the heart.

**Include children in a holiday tradition of giving to those less fortunate.** Help them collect for food, clothing, coat, book, or toy drives in your area. Let them put some money in the Salvation Army bucket and explain what that money is used for. Prepare a meal for a lonely individual or needy family in your neighborhood. Teach your children the lesson that Scrooge's friend, Jacob Marley, discovered too late — that humankind is our business.

Whatever the holiday you are celebrating, keep the focus where it belongs. The common thread woven through all of these holidays and traditions seems to me to be reaf-

firming our commitments, strengthening our families, and dedicating ourselves to making this world we have been given a better place.

*Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Kentucky. She has degrees in Child Development, Family Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapy. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator. She has written extensively on the topic of parenting. After six years as Arts Facilitator for the School for the Creative and Performing Arts, she chose to return to her favorite place of employment — home. Her son, Douglas, 24, is now based in New York City when he is not on the road performing. He is an actor, singer, musician, dancer, writer, and visual artist. Joseph, 14, is a freshman theatre major at the School for the Creative and Performing Arts who also sings, dances, plays piano, and creates visual art.*



# This holiday, turn your child into a tradition tracker

**BY SARA MARCHESSAULT**

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

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

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

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

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

My great-grandmother is long

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

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

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

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

## Questions to get your interviews started

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

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

you absolutely have to have around the holidays?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once the tools and method of

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

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

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

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

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

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## JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

# Searching for Santa

## Memories of tracking the sled in real time

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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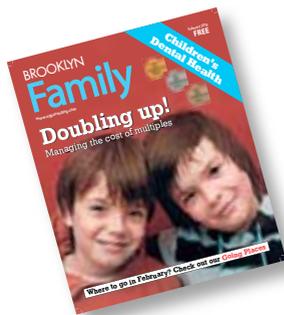
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# Treating dry winter skin

Tips for the  
whole family

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

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

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

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

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

I spoke to Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SJ:** How should parents treat these winter skin problems?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Shnieka Johnson is an education consultant and freelance writer. She is based in Manhattan where she resides with her husband and son. Contact her via her website, [www.shniekajohnson.com](http://www.shniekajohnson.com).*

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# Parenting resolutions for the not-so-perfect parent

BY GAYLA GRACE

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

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

So, this year I commit to...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

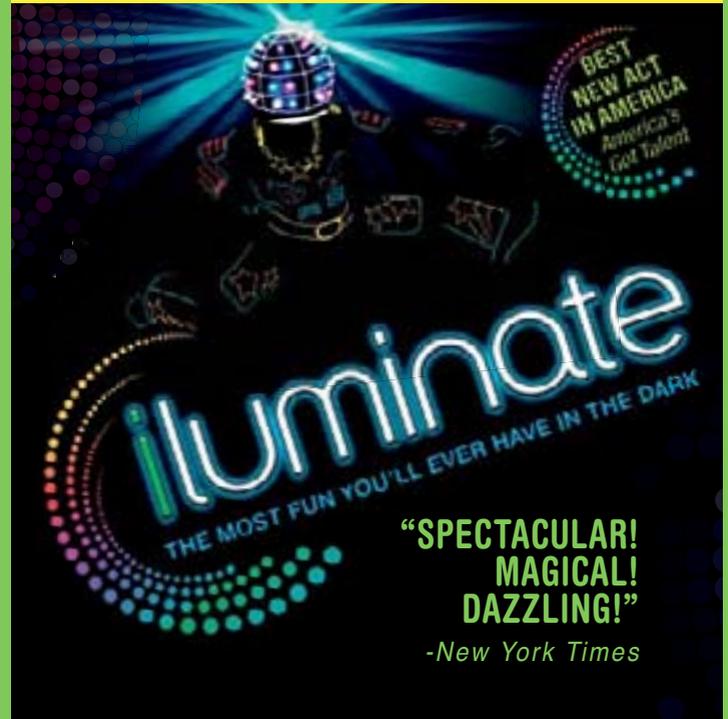
*As a freelance journalist, Gayla Grace loves sharing experiences to encourage other parents. She is thankful for her five children, who love her despite her not-so-perfect parenting.*

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# Creating the new Cooper Hewitt

Pen helps  
kids to script  
their design  
experience  
at revamped  
museum

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

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

States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design.

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

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

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

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

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

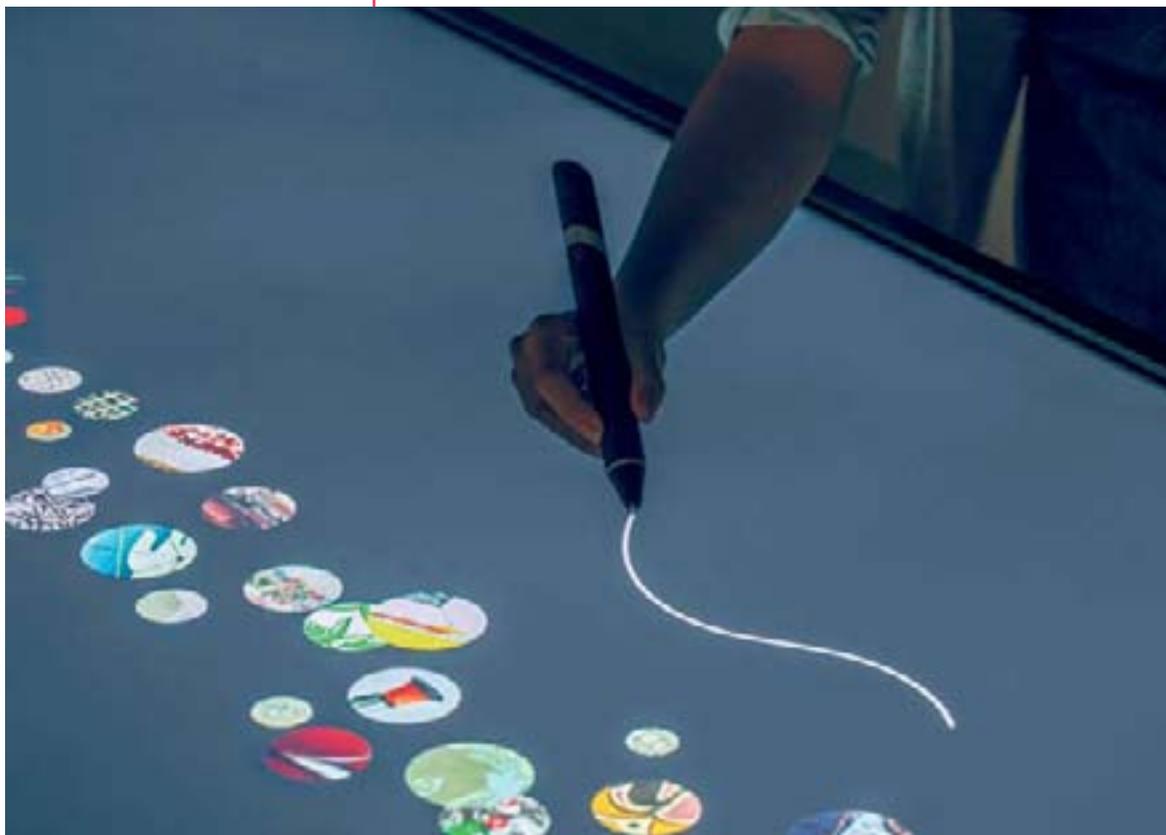
**Sebastian Chan:** When the museum reopens, it will have four floors dedicated to exhibitions and public programs, all connected by a new public staircase and elevator. These facilities include a versatile, new 6,000-square-foot gallery on the third floor, which has never been used for public exhibitions;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

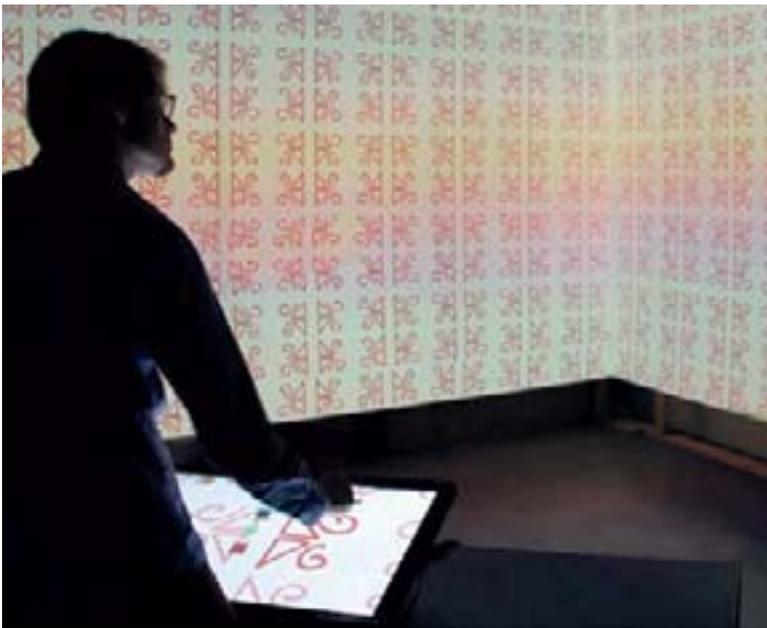
**SJ:** Why did the museum go in this direction?

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

**SJ:** Can you explain the "Immersion Room?"

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





2014 Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

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

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

**SJ:** What is the interactive “Pen?”

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

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

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

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

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

**SJ:** What age is appropriate for this component?

**KR:** Primary-school ages and up.

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

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

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

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

*Shnieka Johnson is an education consultant and freelance writer. She is based in Manhattan, where she resides with her husband and son. Contact her via her website, [www.shniekajohnson.com](http://www.shniekajohnson.com).*

# Arts get a boost

A program with  
the goal of arts  
education for all

BY ALLISON PLITT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ostroff explained the reason for the change.

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

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

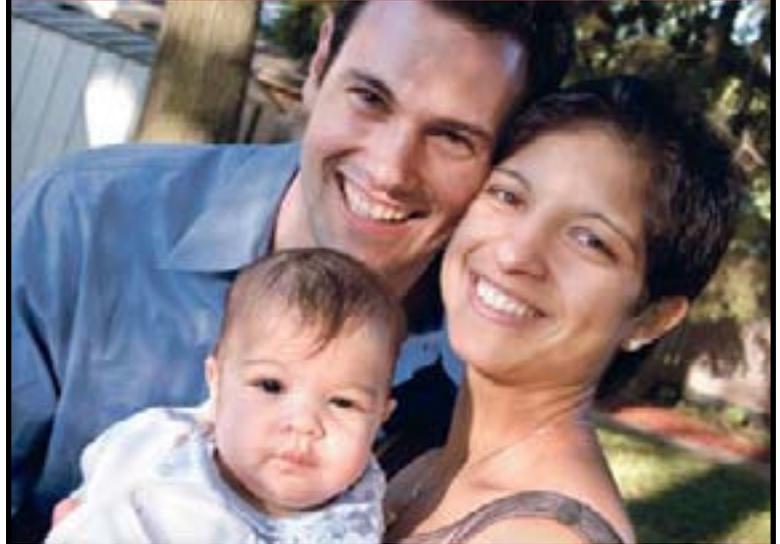
As for the mayor's current support of arts education in public schools, Ostroff says everyone in her field is "very excited" to see an increase in funding, although she thinks there is still more work to be done.

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

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

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

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# Tiny babies, big love

## Part 2: Two micro-preemie moms share their experiences

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

**J**ennifer Degl's straight-from-the-heart memoir, "From Hope to Joy: A Mother's Determination and Her Micro-preemie's Struggle to Beat the Odds" chronicles her harrowing journey. It's a touching and riveting story, filled with love, determination, strength, hope — and finally, Joy.

Degl, her husband John, and their three boys live only 40 minutes north of the city in Westchester. The family remembers all too well the grueling ordeal that became their daily existence, and the emotional roller coaster they endured after their miracle micro-preemie Joy (now 2) burst unexpectedly into the world. The author details her troubled pregnancy,

the scary delivery, and Joy's struggle to survive. For a long time, it was one step forward and four steps back.

**Tammy Scileppi:** It's been two years since your child left the NICU. Please tell our readers how your daughter is doing, and what she's like.

**Jennifer Degl:** Joy is doing very well! She is an energetic little lady who is determined to keep up with her three big brothers. Joy wakes up each morning calling, 'Mommy, Mommy!' and if I don't answer her within a few minutes she switches to 'Daddy, Daddy!' She just started pointing her index finger in the air while saying, 'be right back,' before she runs away, laughing.

Joy asks for her hair to be done each morning, after she is dressed. She loves to point to pictures of babies and puppies because she can say those words, as well.

Developmentally, Joy is closer to her due date and not her birthday, which is what doctors expect of such an early preemie. Joy was born four months before her due date, at the brink of viability, and this is where her brain development seems to be at. She rolled about five months after most full-term babies roll, and she walked a few months after most other full-term babies walk. The same applies to talking. That being said, Joy sees a speech therapist twice a week, as well as an educational expert twice a week, and both of these women work to catch her up.

We are very lucky that Joy does not have any physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy. Disabilities like CP are very common in micro-preemies (babies born before 27 weeks gestation). Micro-preemies typically have issues with their eyes, and as far as we can tell, Joy has normal vision.

**TS:** Tell us about your boys. Are they protective of their little sister?

**JD:** The boys each have their own special relationship with Joy. Sean

(9) carries her around the house after she asks him to pick her up. Jack (7) enjoys tickling her. And Shane (5) and Joy seem to share an unspoken language, where they play for hours making silly sounds at each other. But overall, they all include Joy in their playtime and also help us encourage her speech by trying to get her to pronounce words correctly.

**TS:** Please discuss the following topics from your personal experience:

Maintaining normalcy at home with a baby in the NICU

**JD:** This is difficult for the most organized parent, but it is possible. I would suggest one or two days a week that you do "normal" things with your other children and just visit the NICU in the evenings on those days. Maybe even take a day off of visiting. You will feel wonderful after spending time with your family, and your children will feel like life is normal.

**TS:** Involving siblings in the life of a baby in the NICU

**JD:** This can be hard if the siblings are very young because they cannot tolerate long visits to the NICU and they can also be loud and full of germs. We brought the boys to the NICU only a handful of times, but showed them pictures and videos of Joy almost daily.

Another fun thing we did was buy preemie undershirts and onesies and allowed the boys to decorate them with fabric markers and paint. We would then take pictures of Joy wearing the shirts and show them, or we ask the nurses to put her in one of the shirts if we were bringing the boys to visit.

**TS:** High-risk pregnancies and living with a high-risk pregnancy

**JD:** [Degl's doctors told her that having a fourth child would be risky, but she yearned for another baby.] A pregnancy is considered high-risk when there are potential complications that could affect the mother, the baby, or both. These are always stressful! I would love to say I handled it well, but hindsight begs to differ! Looking back, I would suggest that both partners communicate their hopes and fears as they arise and that will help maintain sanity. Also, there are many different online communities and support groups in which you can find friends and confidants.

**TS:** Neonatal intensive care units

**JD:** Most people (luckily) do not really know what a NICU is. My advice to new NICU parents is: introduce yourself to the NICU social



From left, Sean (9), Shane (5), mom Jennifer, and Joy (2), and Jack (7) Degl on Mother's Day 2014.



Ayla in the neonatal intensive care unit.

worker (unless they find you first), and they can inform you about the available support services. Then, I would talk to the other NICU parents who are going through something very similar and will most likely welcome your company. I made two very close friends in the NICU when our babies were there together.

**TS:** The life of a micro-preemie in the neonatal intensive care unit.

**JD:** Micro-preemies have a rough go of it. Most of their first few months are full of pain and stress. They are subjected to breathing tubes, IVs, numerous heel pricks and blood draws a day, daily X-rays, medications, and feeding problems. They should be listening to the muffled sounds of their mother's voice for months to come yet they are exposed to pain, alarms, and bright lights. Only the toughest will go home.

Micro-preemies are not done with medical interventions once they go home. Many are sent home on oxygen, with trach tubes, and almost all will have daily doctor or nurse appointments for the first few months of being released from the NICU. The majority of micro-preemies will have interventions for a few years. Joy now has physical therapy once a week, speech therapy twice a week, and a teacher that comes to work with her twice a week. Many other

micro-preemies have more services than Joy.

**TS:** How did you and your husband cope with everything, emotionally, psychologically, financially?

**JD:** Honestly, we are still dealing with it. At first, we fought a lot during my time on bed rest. Then things calmed down while Joy was in the NICU, because neither of us could focus on anything else, other than her health and taking care of our other children. After Joy's first birthday, we really had time to reflect on all that we went through and we are still trying to move past it, both as a couple and individuals.

...

For parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends of preemie parents, "From Hope to Joy" is a truly inspirational and in-depth look into the author's journey. Here's an excerpt from chapter 23, Waking Up to New Challenges, [www.fromhope-tojoy.com](http://www.fromhope-tojoy.com).

*The longer I was denied access to my daughter, the more depressed I became. Later that evening, John tried to show me pictures of our baby girl — I refused to look at them, and I refused to name her. She's going to die. My positivity had flown out the window. I feared that naming her would somehow make me more attached to her, and I didn't want to be attached to her*

*in case she died before I saw her.*

*That night after everyone left, I couldn't sleep. At 3 am, I was still wide awake — and crying. A few hours later, my doctor was back in the hospital and came to see me. I begged her to let me see my daughter.*

*"No. You don't seem to understand that you're in critical condition," she admonished. She told me my job was to get better — and then I could see my daughter.*

*Sunday was Mother's Day, and I didn't even get to see my kids. John came and spent the afternoon and evening with me. We watched the finale of "Desperate Housewives" on TV and when John left, he promised to bring the boys on Monday.*

*When I was alone, Susan — the one nurse with whom I had bonded — came to my room. Susan was a surgical nurse, around my age, and a mom. "It's Mother's Day. I need to see my daughter," I pleaded with her.*

*To my astonishment, Susan agreed. Somehow she got me in a wheelchair, pain pump, blood transfusion, and all. She wrapped me up, and down the hall we went, to the NICU. Susan told me I had five minutes, and then introduced me to Helen, a NICU nurse with an Irish brogue. Helen reminded me of my paternal grandmother, and I liked her instantly.*

*Our daughter was way back in the*

*corner, in one of the two rooms in the front of the NICU, where the sickest babies are. There were tubes everywhere. I burst into tears that wouldn't stop. She was so tiny: She weighed one pound, four ounces at birth, and was a tad over eleven inches long.*

*Helen carefully explained each of the bags and tubes. She wheeled me to a sink so I could wash my hands and then put my wheelchair right next to my daughter's isolette.*

*I stuck my finger through the opening in the isolette, and my tiny daughter grabbed my finger.*

*After Susan wheeled me back to my room, I called John, and woke him out of a sound sleep. "We have to name her," I said.*

...

Another New Yorker, Jaime Hamm, shares her daughter Ayla's micro-preemie baby story:

*When I found out I was pregnant with a second daughter, I thought of the tea parties she could have with her sister. I thought of all the experiences I could share with them and what I could teach them, and what they could learn together. However, at 27 weeks and three days, I went into labor at a hospital I'd never heard of, with a doctor I'd never met, and delivered via C-section a one-pound, 14-ounce, 13-inch baby girl, Ayla Evelyn, who had less than a*

*Continued on next page*

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10 percent chance of survival. A bacterial infection that began in my placenta and spread to my uterus forced Ayla to find a way out of what should've been the safest place in the world for her.

The next three-and-a-half months would require a strength that our family didn't know we were capable of, as we navigated through our new life in the NICU. Small victories, such as when Ayla would gain 30 grams or when one of her many IVs were removed, were short-lived. It was a two-steps-forward and 10-steps-back kind of world. One minute I'm breast feeding her for the first time, the very next minute, her lung collapsed. There was no relief ... only hopeful sadness that would occasionally make way for a bit of good news. The possible outcomes of having such a premature baby were severe. If she did survive, Ayla could suffer from cerebral palsy, brain damage ... just pick your worst case scenario; according to statistics, it was a likelihood.

When their daughter Mila was 6 months old, Jaime and her husband Eric moved from their Upper West Side apartment to a home in Edgewater, NJ, a waterfront town right under the George Washington Bridge, less than three miles away. Hamm said it gave them a bit more space without leaving all the creature comforts of Manhattan, including her obstetrician and gynecologist, which she would need a mere two months later, when she found out she was pregnant again. She continued to see her doctor at her Upper West Side office and planned on delivering at St. Luke's Roosevelt in Manhattan, where Mila was born.

*My pregnancy with Ayla was [otherwise] unremarkable: all my blood work was fine; I was eating well; and [I was] getting exercise through long walks in Central Park with Mila. Since I was 34, I wasn't high-risk, so there wasn't any need for an amniocentesis — the only thing that would've detected the infection!*

On the evening of March 13, 2012, I started having what felt like contractions. Surely, at six months I wasn't going into labor — or so my husband and I told ourselves — so I took a warm bath and tried to relax. A couple hours later, the "contractions" had not subsided. We called my ob-gyn, Dr. Shulina, and she advised that we go to the local hospital and have them rule out contractions, just to be on the safe side. An hour later, it was confirmed. They were contractions, and I was in pre-term labor.

The emergency room advised that its hospital wasn't equipped for a pre-

mie of that size, and I would need to be transferred to another hospital that had a level III or level IV NICU. Dr. Shulina, who was in constant contact with the hospital in Edgewater, requested that I be brought to St. Luke's Roosevelt immediately for treatment.

Anyone that has spent any time in New York City knows that with the bridges and tunnels, [traffic flow is unpredictable]. Either you fly on through, or you're stuck in soul-crushing traffic. The physicians in Edgewater knew this, too, and refused to transfer me with the risk that I could go into labor while stuck in the Lincoln Tunnel. The decision was made to take me to Jersey City Medical Center. It was the closest hospital with a level IV NICU. I was frightened. I had no idea where I was going, who would be helping me, and I certainly didn't know if my child would survive this — I was only 27 weeks!

Seventeen hours later, after a painful emergency C-section, and horrified gasps from an attending nurse upon seeing the condition of my uterus, Ayla was born. I saw her for only a moment before CPR was initiated and she was whisked away in a plastic box.

A doctor from the NICU met me in recovery to explain the situation. Ayla was sick, really sick, and her chances were less than 10 percent of surviving the night. In the words of the neonatologist, "we need her to fight." And fight she did!

Ayla had lost three quarters of her blood supply fighting the infection my body had failed to protect her from. She survived six blood transfusions, three collapsed lungs, a grade-2 brain bleed, retinopathy, dangerously high bilirubin counts (jaundice), a slight opening in her kidney, and a heart murmur.

Ayla suffered through countless infections and infinite needle pricks to her tiny hands and feet. The suffering a mother goes through, watching helplessly as their baby fights with every labored breath in their small body to survive, is immeasurable. All I could do was use my hospital-grade breast pump, dutifully, every three hours, so that Ayla would always have fresh breast milk; read countless books and studies on prematurity; sit next to her incubator for hours at a time; and pray to God for a miracle — even if my lack of attendance in church didn't quite warrant one, I prayed for one anyway.

On June 4, after Ayla's brain bleed had begun to resolve, and it was safe enough to move her, Ayla was transferred to New York Presbyterian Hospital to have sight-saving eye surgery by renowned pediatric ophthalmologist Dr. Chan. The increase in oxygen delivered to Ayla after the collapse of



New Yorkers Jaime and Eric Hamm with their daughters Mila and Ayla.

her right lung, then her left, and then her right again, caused her right eye to hemorrhage. However, upon closer inspection, Dr. Chan told us that she wouldn't need the surgery after all.

After months of setbacks and heartbreak, Ayla was out of the woods. In three more weeks, at a whopping five pounds, nine ounces, Ayla came home!

Today, Ayla is a happy, playful, walking, running 2-year-old, who loves Fisher Price Little People, her Pinkie Pie doll, and adores her big sister Mila. There are no more neonatologists, urologists, cardiologists, or ophthalmologists. She finished physical therapy and after four months of speech therapy, she is starting to talk!

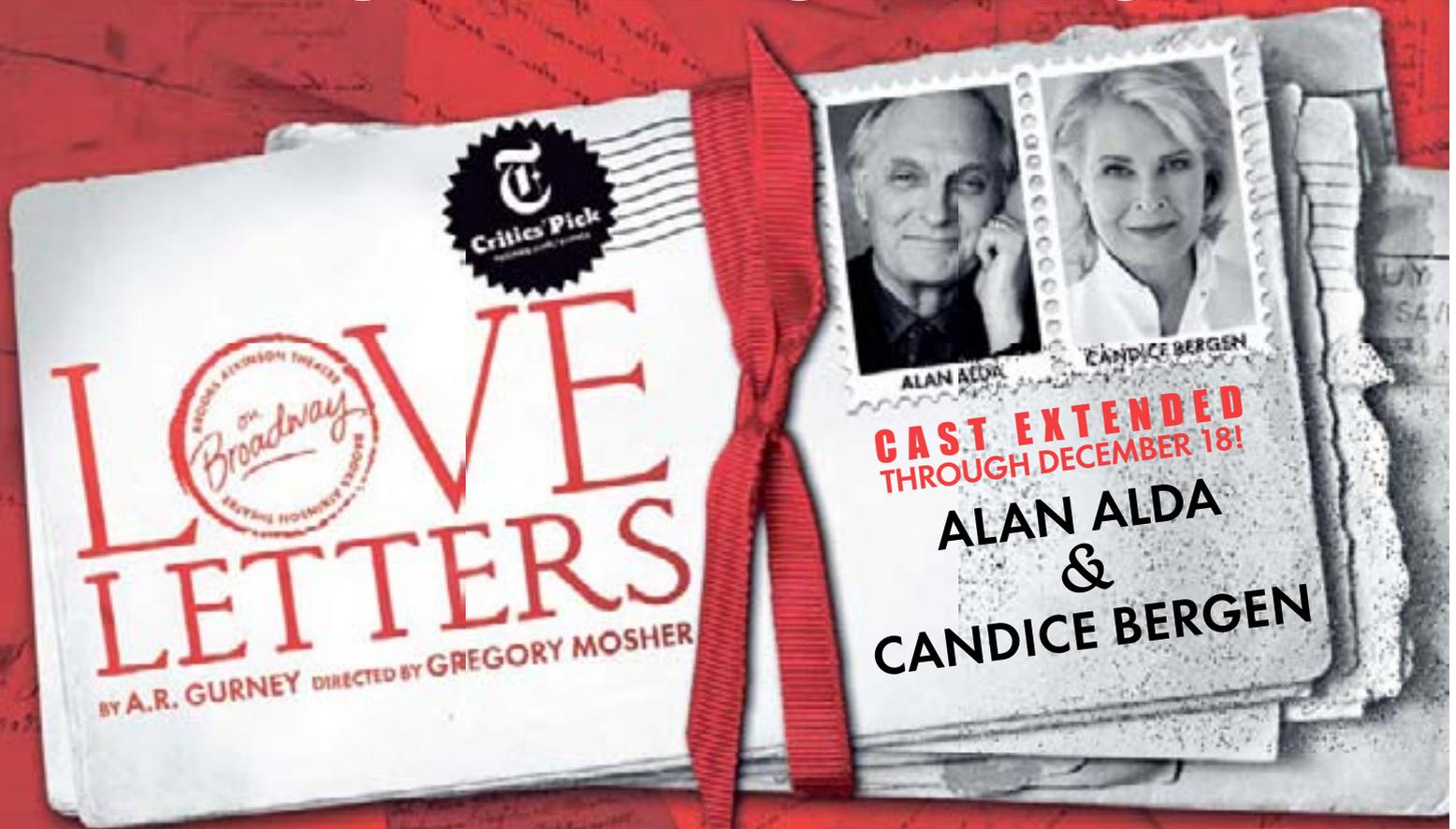
My experience changed me forever. I learned so many things, namely, patience. I had to learn that it would take hours, days, weeks, months, sometimes YEARS to get answers to questions I had (and still have) about what her life would be like. I learned to trust the neonatologists, nurses, specialists, X-ray technicians, even the ambulance driver that transferred her to New York Presbyterian. I had to relinquish my

most basic right as a mom to protect and care for my baby to strangers who had the medical expertise to help her. I'm glad I did; they saved her life.

I learned that I was stronger than I gave myself credit for, that you can never cry enough, and that a mother's love for her child trumps all. I learned that miracles can and do happen, and I've learned to be thankful. I'm thankful for the incredible doctors at both Jersey City Medical Center and New York Presbyterian. I'm thankful for the nurses who held Ayla when I wasn't there and thankful for the friends and family who rallied behind us. I'm thankful for the advances in modern science that in only the last few years have helped give these tiny angels a better chance at life.

Finally, I'm thankful that instead of holding Ayla's hand through a small opening in an incubator, I get to hold it when we cross the street to go to the playground. In the end, it was Ayla who was the teacher, and I was the student. Through her, I learned how to be the best mom I can be — to two wonderful little ladies, who like to have tea parties.

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# A baby lost, a couple's love and hope

After the  
pain of my  
miscarriage,  
my husband  
knew just  
what to say

BY JUDY M. MILLER

**M**y mom used to remind me that every cloud has a silver lining. Yes, I heard her. This saying lodged somewhere in my subconscious, along with the many, many other colloquialisms and Yiddish expressions she so lovingly imparted to me.

• • •

I knew before I was told. A woman always knows; this innate knowledge is part of who she is.

My worst fears were confirmed on a Friday, with an exclamation point. I laid on the exam table, expectant, yet apprehensive as the technician prepped me for the ultrasound. Cool jelly was smeared onto my skin, warming to my own body heat as she moved the wand over my abdomen. My breathing quieted as I waited to hear confirmation.

"There's no heartbeat."

A black chasm exploded open, and my dreams went rocketing into a bottomless void. Herculean de-

nial raged forth.

Hyperventilating and shaking, I fought back to calm myself, to slow my breathing, to challenge what I thought I had imagined. I told myself she was mistaken or inept, perhaps just freshly certified. I corrected her in fury, "There is a heartbeat. You just need to look around."

"I'm going to get your doctor. Why don't you sit up?" and she vanished.

My fear grew into torrential panic as the door closed solidly behind her happy pink scrubs and silent white shoes. Pink and white; my baby girl.

My husband held my hand as silent tears rolled down my cheeks and dripped onto the pale blue paper covering the exam table. His large warm hand softly rubbed my back. I looked at him with difficulty. Hazel eyes held my brown ones, pleading with me to remain calm and present, patient for an explanation. Concern etched in his forehead. We were still.

Baby-blue walls held watercolors of smiling mothers with soft, delicious-smelling newborns, mocking and closing in on me. I unquenchably ached to again experience the awe and magic of a newborn, to nurture another child, to add to my small family; it seemed my son had become a 4-year-old all too quickly.

There was a knock on the door. My doctor entered, followed by a nurse. I had been forced to open my soul to this man in order to find some help in conceiving again. I had struggled to trust him. His gentle eyes and quiet voice registered worry.

"Let's have a look."

I lay back down on the tear-dampened exam-papered surface. He re-coated my abdomen with ultrasound jelly. Its coolness reminded me that what was happening was real, not something I could escape.

"You took a pregnancy test?"

"I did; several. They were all positive." I willed myself into believing that my doctor would find what the technician had missed.

He moved the wand over my abdomen slowly, pausing every now and then.

"I believe you," he said, pulling the stirrups out. He went on, "I want to do a quick exam."

He was exceedingly gentle as he palpated my abdomen. I winced as he went over to the left side.

"You're tender," he commented. "Any pain, vomiting, or bleeding?"

I shook my head. What was he getting at?

My doctor turned to the nurse, "Draw a beta. Stat."

Well, I knew what "stat" meant. Stat meant "immediately," as soon as the lab could turn the result around. Why did he want the result as soon

## Miscarriage statistics

The chances of an ectopic pregnancy (tubal pregnancy) occurring are one out of every 50 pregnancies. An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg implants outside of the uterine lining, usually in one of the fallopian tubes. On rare occasions, the fertilized egg can implant in the abdominal wall, an ovary, or the cervix. The fertilized egg cannot continue to progress. An ectopic pregnancy can be life threatening; it is the leading cause of death during the first trimester.

Planned Parenthood states that miscarriages happen for a number of reasons, among them chromosomal abnormalities, maternal age, maternal trauma, maternal exposure to toxic substances, a history of miscarriages, fibroid tumors, unsuccessful implantation of the egg into the uterine lining, and maternal lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol, and drug use.

According to the American Pregnancy Center, 10 to 25 percent of women experience miscarriages (defined as within the first

20 weeks of gestation). The majority of miscarriages happen before the 13th week of gestation.

Chemical pregnancies account for 50 to 75 percent of all miscarriages. Chemical pregnancies are early pregnancy, typically before five weeks of gestation. They are diagnosed by a missed period or biochemical test or (home pregnancy test, which check the level of hCG in urine, or a hCG blood test), before an ultrasound would have been able to show evidence of a gestational sac. The test results are the only proof that the pregnancy existed.



as possible? The chasm reappeared, opening wider, beckoning. I fought the pull of falling, fainting. I began to sob and shake.

"Talk to me," my doctor said, as he came over to my side and stood next to my husband. He reached down and took my hand, pulling me into a sitting position.

I began slowly, barely getting the words out between hiccupping sobs. I grew calmer as I shared the joy of discovering I was pregnant, how I

had felt at peace, grounded by the life that grew inside of me. Then I told my doctor something I had never said, not even to my husband, out of fear it would come true — how I had felt a change in my body several days prior. I had sensed a lack of progression, but ignored it, chalking it up to fear related to all of what I had been through to get pregnant — batteries of tests, fertility drugs, and invasive procedures.

"Do you think I'm crazy?"

"No. I always listen to women. They know things I can't. Let's wait for the test."

"What do you think?" I asked quietly.

He still held my hand and he continued to watch me as he spoke, "I think you might have an ectopic pregnancy." And he went on to explain that he suspected the baby was lodged in my fallopian tube. He would have to surgically remove the fetus.

My husband and I wanted to go home, to spend time to come to terms with the news, to hold our son, however, that was not to be. I was immediately prepped for surgery, because I was at critical risk for hemorrhaging. The IV went in on the fifth try. I drifted off, with my husband by my side fighting his tears back and the anxious expression of my physician.

Afterwards, groggy, I avoided waking up, irritating one of the nurses. I drifted in and out for some time — emerging from sedation, and then understanding I had lost my child and quickly retreating back into the deep.

It was my husband's voice that eventually pulled me to the surface and kept me there, "Babe, wake up. I need you. We need you." Finally alert, I opened my eyes and looked at the man I had vowed to love through anything and everything.

He looked spent. My sorrow for him piled up on top of the baby — loss and grief that threatened to suffocate me. I felt as though I had committed the worst imaginable act, because I had lost our baby. I had let him down. Us down.

I apologized to him. He smiled tenderly. Kissing me, he said, "I have you. I thought I was going to lose you."

"But, the baby ..."

"We'll have another child. How can we not?"

• • •

I sometimes reflect on the loss of our baby and the acute grief I experienced. Years later there is no remaining anger, only fleeting sadness and the occasional pain of loss, and of not raising and knowing this child, particularly around her due date.

The passing years have provided wisdom and perspective. I am humbled by the knowledge that there was a bigger plan. My baby was a very special cloud and her loss was one of the greatest silver linings, ushering forth three extraordinary sacred gifts over the next five years — our three children though adoption.

*Judy M. Miller is a freelance writer living in the Midwest with her husband and four children. She is a certified Gottman Educator and the author of "What To Expect From Your Adopted Tween and Writing to Heal Adoption Grief: Making Connections & Moving Forward." and the author of What To Expect From Your Adopted Tween and Writing to Heal Adoption Grief: Making Connections & Moving Forward.*



## GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

# The health benefits of fermented foods

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

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

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

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

treat diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome.

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

### The real deal

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Homemade sauerkraut

### INGREDIENTS:

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

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

Wash cabbage head and remove outer leaves, saving one of them. Quarter cabbage, cut out core, and cut into 1/2-inch (or thinner) slices.

Place cut cabbage into metal bowl and sprinkle with salt. Crunch up cabbage with your hands and allow it to sit for 5 minutes so the texture softens.

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

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

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

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

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

Skim off any foam.

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

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

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

Image used with permission by LizOnFood.com.



## DOWNTOWN MOMMY

NOTOYA GREEN

# A secret ingredient

## How I got my picky kids to eat everything

**W**hen my kids began eating solid food, they gave new meaning to the term “picky eaters.” They hated everything, and most of our meals ended with more food on our walls than in their mouths.

As you can imagine, family mealtime was not a lot of fun. It was stressful both physically and mentally. I would make two or three different meals each sitting, just to get my kids to eat something. Some days I'd cook nine meals for them, only to watch most of the food go right into the trash.

There was a bigger problem, though. The kids weren't eating enough and were having trouble gaining weight. That's when I pressed the panic button.

So we needed help — and got it. To deal with our weight issues, I consulted a nutritionist who put them on a high-calorie diet, which consisted mostly of adding butter or cheese to everything. The theory was that even if the little guys ate only a couple of bites per meal, there would be enough calories in those bites to give them sustenance.

The new diet worked, and the lit-

tle guys gained weight, but they still weren't eating much of the food I made. Eventually I cut back on the butter and cheese, and gave them food that I knew they would eat — processed food like chicken nuggets and hot dogs. It lasted about a year and wasn't my proudest mommy moment, but, hey, sometimes you have to meet kids where they are.

Then I discovered the best condiment known to man: ketchup. With the help of that wonderful red sauce, I got my kids to eat foods like salmon, chicken, and ground beef. Once my kids started eating, over time it got easier to get them to try new things, like vegetables.

It's been two years, and I don't worry much about my kids weight anymore. They're eating everything I prepare, even vegetables like broccoli, spinach, carrots, and beets. Yes, beets! Last Sunday I made salmon, rice, and broccoli for dinner and they ate everything. I looked at their plates and almost cried.

Getting to this point wasn't easy. It took a lot of time, patience, and our progress came in stages. Now, instead of being anxious at mealtime, I actually look forward to our meals together.

Here are four tips for dealing with extremely picky eaters:

**Consult with a nutritionist if weight gain (or growth) becomes an issue.** Most insurance plans will cover the cost of a nutritionist.

**Don't be afraid to give your children “less healthy,” processed foods.** Do this especially if they're barely eating. After all, processed food is better than no food at all, right?

**Condiments are your friend.** If adding a little ketchup or salt will get your kids to eat healthy foods like eggs or vegetables, it's worth it. A little extra flavor can make the difference between a failed meal and a successful meal.

**Be patient and keep reintroducing healthy foods like vegetables.** Don't assume that because your child doesn't like a food now, that he won't like it six months from now. When my kids were 3, they wouldn't eat carrots. Now, they can't get enough of them. So be patient, be persistent, and stay positive. Happy eating!

*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.*



# Calendar

DECEMBER



Photo by Marco Ricca

## A Storybook Christmas

What better way to celebrate the season than a trip to Bartow-Pell Mansion on Dec. 6 and visit with Santa.

A Storybook Christmas lifts one and all into the holiday spirit with storytelling, crafts, a meeting with Santa, and, of course, an opportunity to explore the beautifully decorated manse all dressed up in Victorian splendor.

A professional photographer (for an additional fee) will also be

on hand to snap those Kodak moments with Kris Kringle.

Space is limited and registration is requested.

A Storybook Christmas on Dec. 6 from 10 am to 1 pm. Admission is \$20 for children 1 year and older (\$15 for member children; free for adults).

*Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum [895 Shore Rd. in Pelham Bay, (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.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 [bronxriverdalecalendar@cnglocal.com](mailto:bronxriverdalecalendar@cnglocal.com) — and we'll take care of the rest. Please e-mail requests more than three weeks prior to the event to ensure we have enough time to get it in. And best of all, it's FREE!

## MON, DEC. 1

### IN THE BRONX

**"How the Grinch Stole Christmas":** Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com); 4 pm; Free.

He's a mean one, Mr. Grinch. A special storytime featuring the meanest of the mean with a coloring activity to follow.

## TUES, DEC. 2

### IN THE BRONX

**Hip-hop jewelry:** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3 pm; Free.

Get your bling on and make your own ice and get ready to be seen. All materials provided. For tweens 12 to 18 years old.

## WED, DEC. 3

### IN THE BRONX

**E-book discussion:** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Children 8 to 12 years old use iPads for book discussion group. Workshops are limited to 12 children. Pre-registration required.

**Children's film:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st Street; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Age-appropriate films for children 5 to 12 years old.

## THURS, DEC. 4

### IN THE BRONX

**"Honeyky Hanukkah" story-time:** Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com); 4 pm; Free.

Children delight in a special reading of the Woody Guthrie story. Celebrate the festival of lights with the story and accompanying CD.



Photo by Joshua Bright

## Crafts for the holidays

Come on down to Wave Hill on Dec. 6 and 7 and cure those winter blues.

The weekend's Family Art Project: Season's Greetings, affords children the opportunity to explore the signs of the season and the shifting of fall into winter on the grounds. Then they can draw their own cold-weather

tales and create pop-up holiday cards with a variety of materials that make the seasonal changes come alive.

Season's Greetings on Dec. 6 and 7 from 10 am to 1 pm. Free with admission to the grounds.

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

**Ornament workshop:** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

A hands-on project using a variety of skills to make a unique tree ornament. For children 7 to 12 years old.

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

Enjoy the museum and have fun exploring.

## FRI, DEC. 5

### IN THE BRONX

**Teen Advisory Group:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st Street; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Children 13 to 18 years old find out what is happening at the library, books, movies and programs.

**Holiday First Friday:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpell-mansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpell-mansionmuseum.org); 5:30 pm -8:30

pm; \$12 (\$10 seniors, students; Free for members).

Experience the mansion decked out for the holidays and enjoy live music, holiday shopping, and refreshments. The Bronx Trolley makes a continuous loop from the #6 Pelham Bay Park subway station to BPMM to City Island. Registration requested.

**"The Polar Express":** Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com); 7 pm; Free.

Hop aboard for a reading of the holiday classic. Children can wear their PJs and be ready for bed; along with activities.

## SAT, DEC. 6

### IN THE BRONX

**A storybook Christmas:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpell-mansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpell-mansionmuseum.org); 10 am-1 pm; \$20 children 1 year and older (\$15 member children; adults free).

Holiday spirit fills the air for children and parents with storytelling and crafts, meeting Santa and have a professional photograph taken (addi-

tional fee). Space limited, registration requested.

**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 admission to the grounds.

Children create and draw their own cold-weather tales and make pop-up holiday cards.

**Music for Saint Nicholas:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm and 3 pm; Free.

The Bronx Arts Ensemble tells the story of St. Nicholas in traditional song. Free tickets through [info@bronxartsensemble.org](mailto:info@bronxartsensemble.org).

**Read Aloud:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st Street; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 1 pm; Free.

Presented by the Rotary Club of Riverdale. For children ages 5 to 12.

**Magnet magic:** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 2 pm; Free.

Children 5 years and older learn about the power of the magnet and electromagnetic fields — then build their own floating magnet to take home.

**Santa Claus's PJ story time:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, (VCNC), W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 543-3344; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 6 pm, 6:45 pm and 7:15 pm; Free.

Hear the traditional story "Twas the Night Before Christmas" followed by a visit from Santa Claus. Bring kids in pajamas and a camera! Reservations required.

**Viennese Christmas:** Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; [www.LehmanCenter.org](http://www.LehmanCenter.org); 8 pm; \$25, \$20, \$15 (\$10 children under 12 any seat).

The Hollywood Concert Orchestra performs a program of great holiday tunes and Viennese music.

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

*Continued on page 30*

# Calendar

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

Continued from page 29

## SUN, DEC. 7

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

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

MetLife presents this musical story of the classic tale.

## TUES, DEC. 9

### IN THE BRONX

**Magic the Gathering:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st Street; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old learn the basics of the card game and discover the differences between Standard play and Modern play.

## WED, DEC. 10

### IN THE BRONX

**E-book discussion:** 4 pm. Bronx Library Center. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

**Children's film:** 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

## THURS, DEC. 11

### IN THE BRONX

**"Tacky the Penguin":** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st Street; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

A multi-cultural program of folktales and stories celebrating winter and animals that live in cold climates. Recommended for children 5 years and older.

**Computer lab:** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Pre-registration is required for the introduction to computers for children 7 to 12 years old.

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

## FRI, DEC. 12

### IN THE BRONX

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

**"The Elf on the Shelf":** Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com); 7 pm; Free.

The infamous elf jumps down and joins in for a special reading and Scavenger Hunt. Children have fun with crafts too!

### FURTHER AFIELD

**"Soul Nativity":** Harlem School of the Arts, 645 St. Nicholas Ave. and W. 141st Street, Manhattan; (212) 802-8200; [hsanyc.org/soul-nativity](http://hsanyc.org/soul-nativity); 7 pm; \$20 (\$25 at the door; \$15 students/seniors).

A holiday pageant for all ages. The story is told in an innovative way with music heavily charged with R&B and Soul.

## SAT, DEC. 13

### IN THE BRONX

**Family time:** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 11 am; Free.

Parents and children participate in reading aloud and crafts. Suitable for children 3 to 6 years old. Pre-registration required. Limited to 25 children.

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

The Bronx Arts Ensemble singers perform holiday favorites with music for St. Nicholas. Space is limited, tickets are required.

**Victorian carolers:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 6pm to 8 pm; \$12 (\$10 seniors, students & members).

Singers add to the festive occasion while visitors enjoy holiday snacks, and wassail and enjoy the beautiful decorations. Reservations requested.

**Geminids Meteor Shower:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, (VCNC), W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 7 pm; Free.

This stellar event produces up to 120 multicolored meteors per hour at its peak. Weather permitting.

**Parranda Navidena:** Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; [www.LehmanCenter.org](http://www.LehmanCenter.org); 8 pm; \$50, \$45, \$25 (\$10 children under 12 any seat).

Celebrate the traditional concert featuring Odilio Gonzalez, Lily Y Su Gran Trio and Felito Felix Y E Trio Los Antares.

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

**"Soul Nativity":** 3 pm and 7 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

## SUN, 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 admission to the grounds.

Participants take a simple candlestick and use clay-like wax, mix and mold an inventive image and decorate the candle up.

**Ornament workshop:** Sachkerah Woods Archway Van Cortlandt Park, Jerome Ave. and Gunhill Road; (718) 490-1890; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 1 pm; Free.

Children learn the Japanese art of paper folding and make take home christmas decorations.

**Shiny Ornaments:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm; Free.

Learn Japanese paperfolding to make ornaments for a tree — yours or the park's tree.

**Holiday concert:** 1 pm and 3 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 13.

**A Bronx Messiah:** The Hall of Fame Playhouse — Bronx Community College, 2155 University Ave. at W. 180th Street; [www.bronxopera.org](http://www.bronxopera.org); 3 pm; Suggested donation \$10.

The Bronx Opera Chorus and the Orchestra of the Bronx presents the unique production of Handel's "Messiah" under the direction of Michael Spierman.

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

Teens tour the historic bones of the house and view the many layers that were added, subtracted and changed

over the last 230 years. Reservations required; only 10 persons per tour.

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

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

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

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

**"Soul Nativity":** 3 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

## TUES, DEC. 16

### IN THE BRONX

**Winter gym:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st Street; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Teens exercise their minds in this fun writing workshop.

## WED, DEC. 17

### IN THE BRONX

**E-book discussion:** 4 pm. Bronx Library Center. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

## THURS, DEC. 18

### IN THE BRONX

**Pajama night:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st Street; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Children and families 5 to 12 years old read aloud, do a craft and enjoy light refreshments.

**Magnet crafts:** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Children 7 to 12 years old use a variety of skills to make a winter magnet.

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

## FRI, DEC. 19

### IN THE BRONX

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

**Holiday storytime:** Barnes &

# Calendar

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

Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com); 7 pm; Free.

Joining "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" is a reading of the "The Night Before Christmas." Kids come in PJs and have a hot cocoa with the story.

## FURTHER AFIELD

**"Soul Nativity":** 7 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

## SAT, DEC. 20

### 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 admission to the grounds.

Make a snow globe box with boughs of evergreen fronds and wonderful scents of dried herbs and spices.

**"A Christmas Carol":** Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (718) 579-4244; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 2:30 pm; Free.

Carolers dressed in period clothing sing seasonal sing-alongs in concert with a screening of the classic Dickens film to follow.

## FURTHER AFIELD

**"Soul Nativity":** 3 pm and 7 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

## SUN, DEC. 21

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 20.

**Winter solstice:** Van Cortlandt Golf Course, Bailey Ave. and Van Cortlandt Park South; (718) 490-1890; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 4:30pm; Free.

Enjoy hearth-side stories, hot cider and a candle light walk on the Putnam Trail with rangers. Suggested for older children.

## FURTHER AFIELD

**"Soul Nativity":** 3 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

## SAT, DEC. 27

### 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 admission to the grounds.

Create an interesting hanging calendar of the new year.



## Science of the season

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

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

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

secrets.

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

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

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

## FURTHER AFIELD

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

## SUN, DEC. 28

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 27.

## WED, DEC. 31

### FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

## LONG-RUNNING

### IN THE BRONX

**Story, arts and crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Tuesdays, 10 am-10:45 am.; Free.

Children 6 months to 4 years old enjoy a story followed by a craft and activity related to the reading.

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

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

**Crochet workshop:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Tuesdays, 2-3 pm, Now - Sat, Jan. 31, 2015; Free.

Novices and experienced crocheters will learn how to create a two-color, open mesh bag for the beach, or as a carry tote and learn to read a pattern. Materials required, 1 skein color A and 1 skein color b, (100 percent cotton); One size J hook, and one Tapestry needle. All levels.

**Paper Arts & Crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Wednesdays, 1-3 pm.; Free.

Children have fun creating collages

*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

using decoupage, origami, kirigami and more.

**Recycle to art:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Wednesdays, 2-3:30 pm, Now - Wed, Dec. 31; Free.

Have fun turning junk to treasure - children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult. Wear appropriate clothing.

**Story time:** Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com); Wednesdays, 6 pm, Now - Wed, Jan. 14, 2015; Free.

Join in for a weekly session of fun reading and activities.

**Learn to draw:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Thursdays, 2-3:30 pm.; Free.

Children 10 years and older learn the basics of still life pencil drawing, including volume, tone, value, and sketching.

**Christmas in the Colonies:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); Tuesdays - Fridays, 10 am-3 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am-4 pm, Fri, Dec. 5 - Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

Enjoy Van Cortlandt House decked out in its holiday finery for Saint Nicholas Day, New Year's Day and Twelfth Night.

**Seasonal crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org);

Fridays, 2-3:30 pm; Free.

Make holiday arts and crafts.

**Arts, crafts & games:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Saturday, Dec. 6, 10 am; Saturday, Jan. 3, 10 am; Saturday, Feb. 7, 10 am; Saturday, March 7, 10 am; Saturday, April 4, 10 am; Saturday, May 2, 10 am; Saturday, June 6, 10 am; Saturday, July 4, 10 am; Saturday, Aug. 1, 10 am; Saturday, Sept. 5, 10 am; Saturday, Oct. 3, 10 am; Saturday, Nov. 7, 10 am; Saturday, Dec. 5, 10 am; Saturday, Jan. 2, 10 am; Free.

Families are invited to participate in activities including sand art, paper crafts and more.

## Game day with Princess for

**Lifetime:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Saturday, Dec. 20, 10 am; Saturday, Jan. 17, 10 am; Saturday, Feb. 14, 10 am; Saturday, March 21, 10 am; Saturday, April 18, 10 am; Saturday, May 16, 10 am; Saturday, June 20, 10 am; Saturday, July 18, 10 am; Saturday, Aug. 15, 10 am; Saturday, Sept. 19, 10 am; Saturday, Oct. 17, 10 am; Saturday, Nov. 21, 10 am; Saturday, Dec. 19, 10 am; Saturday, Jan. 16, 10 am; Free.

Participants enjoy crafts, games and other activities using sand art and paper.

## FURTHER AFIELD

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

plus museum admission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Touch tank:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at

St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; [www.brooklynkids.org](http://www.brooklynkids.org); Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm, Now - Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

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

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

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

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

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

**Needlework and games:** Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (718) 789-2822; [www.prospectpark.org](http://www.prospectpark.org); Daily, 1-3 pm, Fri, Dec. 26 - Thurs, Jan. 1, 2015; \$3.

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

# Party Planners



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## THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER



## Sweet treat for little writers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

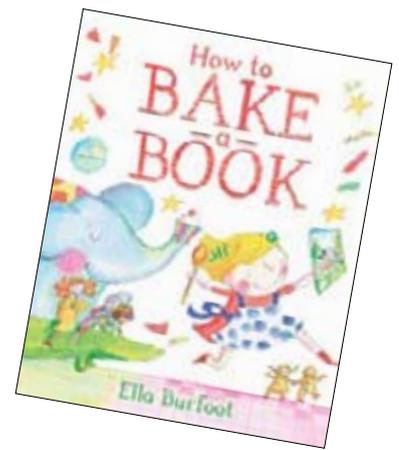
Now cover it all up and wait.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fascinating story, both for kids and for adults.

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

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

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

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

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

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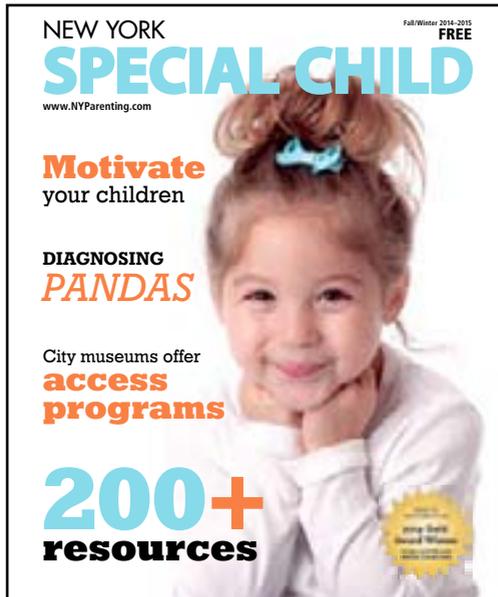
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