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June 2018

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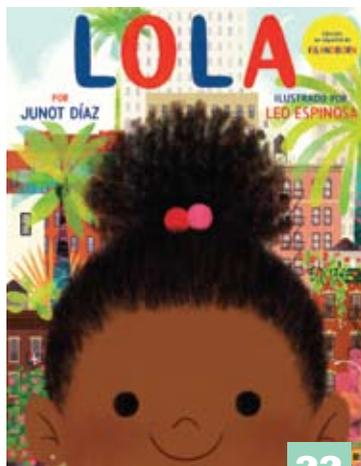
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Preschools for all

When I went back to work part time and needed childcare, my daughter was a year and a half. Until then her father and I had been juggling her care and she hadn't even had a baby-sitter. Besides some time spent with extended family, she had always been with one or both of us. This new job I had, however, was going to necessitate finding an outside alternative, and it turned out I got lucky. We needed to have odd hours in the middle of the day three days a week, and as my luck would have it, I found the perfect place. Run by two local women who had masters in early childhood education from Bank Street, they offered me the perfect plan.

I had brought Lili with me and she seemed to like it there, although she clung very tightly to me. One of the women who worked with the little ones asked me what



her name was, and when I told her she said "Lilianna, come to Tessie." My daughter put her arms out and she more or less sat on Tessie's lap for the remainder of the year. I felt so relieved and immediately made the decision to sign her up there for those beginning three half-days.

The first day I left her there I found myself overwhelmed with emotion and stood outside at the bus stop holding back tears. Lili was fine. I was a wreck. Both of us adjusted, and the problem of childcare was solved for us. Those years at her preschool were fantastic. She developed social skills, had sweet little friends from multi-cultural backgrounds, and was introduced to new learning materials that, combined with the exposure I was giving her at home, set her off nicely on her education path.

We have a special preschool focus in

this issue, and some of our communities' best programs are represented. This is a great time of year to be considering it for the fall or even the summer, and I hope everyone will take a look at the options we present here. Many of the programs are offering specialized immersion in things like other languages, music and art, early STEAM introduction, and of course Montessori.

We now know the importance of good educational early childcare, and it's rare to find a family that is not signed up for something. With the city's public system offering free Pre K FOR ALL, our city's children will all now be benefitting from programs that will stimulate their learning process and fine tune their social abilities. It's very exciting!

Thanks for reading!

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New York Parenting has been recognized for editorial and design excellence by PMA.

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Short Stuff

New app seeks to reduce infant mortality

Peter LaMont's second child was born in May, but the last time he put an infant to bed was 16 years ago. So, the father turned to a new app to catch up on safe sleep recommendations for babies.

The SIDS Info app, which provides information on sudden infant death syndrome, was launched this month by the SIDS Center of New Jersey.

"When my teenage daughter was a baby, she slept with blankets and crib bumpers," LaMont said. "Today, the rule is that nothing is placed in the crib. Even though I already have a child, things have changed a lot, and I want to be an informed parent. This app is convenient and allows me to access the most up-to-date guidelines."

The free app, which was developed by Barbara Ostfeld and Thomas Hegyi, the center's program and medical director, respectively, includes the American Academy of Pediatrics' safe sleep guidelines for infants from birth to 12 months. The app also includes links to educational websites, a question-and-answer on safe infant sleep and resources — such as contact information for smoking cessation and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 3,500 infants under the age of 1 die in the United States due to a sudden unexpected infant



Barbara Ostfeld and Thomas Hegyi of the SIDS Center of New Jersey.

death, a grouping consisting of sudden infant death syndrome, accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed, or unknown causes.

Although there are a few other apps that include safe infant sleep information, SIDS Info provides the most comprehensive educational material, Ostfeld said.

As parents scroll through the app, they see animations that feature a maternal voice combined with text, which educates the user on topics such as selecting a safe crib, how to dress an infant for sleep, and what not to place in a crib. Parents then can click on the "Baby Talk" component,

which provides additional information in a baby's voice. A Spanish-language, text-only mode is also available.

"While handouts with crucial safe sleep guidelines can get lost or become outdated, the app places educational information literally at people's fingertips — right on their phones," said Ostfeld. "Our goal is to provide hospital nurses who educate new families at discharge with an efficient and standardized tool that parents can download to their phone for continued reference. It also allows practitioners who interact with parents after discharge to reinforce this information."

SIDS Info is available on iPhone and Android and was funded by the center through a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health. The app is being promoted to professionals who interact with families at organizations such as hospitals, the Maternal and Child Health Consortia, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency, and child care programs. The app also serves as a continuing education tool for healthcare providers, who can download courses on safe sleep for free.

Parents are encouraged to share the app with those caring for their infants — such as grandparents, siblings, and babysitters — which is crucial for infant safety, Ostfeld said.



Connect with local moms

Join our Facebook sisterhood to find moms in your neighborhood for advice, community, and commiseration at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nypmoms>

When do they get a credit card?

Using a credit card requires a great deal of responsibility. It's important to have a conversation with your child to determine if he or she is ready for a credit card. Keep in mind that your child's age isn't as important a factor as her maturity level and willingness to learn.

Here are three key reasons why you might want to get a credit card for your son or daughter:

Establish a credit history: If your child is heading to college in the next few years, establishing a credit history later can help him immensely. For example, private student loan companies typically require a credit check, and having some credit history can help.

Teach kids about smart credit card use: Teach your children about responsible credit card use and they'll be less likely to make mistakes. Talk to your child about

the card's annual percentage rate and how credit cards typically charge higher rates than other loans. Explain how it's important to avoid charging more to the credit card than they can afford to pay off each month.

Setting ground rules: It's wise to create some ground rules for your child's new spending power. Having him pay the bill may encourage more responsibility than if you were to foot the bill each month. If you aren't going to have your child pay off her credit card, agree on when it's appropriate to use the card and when it isn't. If you find that she's breaching these boundaries, follow up and remind her of your agreement.

Learn more about which issuers allow you to get a credit card for a child under 18 at <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/when-should-my-child-get-a-credit-card>.

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Toddler drinks

Reading between the lines

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

It is an exciting time when your baby begins to develop into a toddler. Crawling to cruising and then walking to running — you now have a busy little person on your hands! Your toddler is becoming more independent, and in some instances, more finicky. Welcome to the fussy eating stage! For the majority of parents, cow's milk is a toddler's main drink. There are great benefits to drinking milk, as it is a source of nutrients, like calcium and vitamins A and D. However, it is not a great source for iron, as it contains only trace amounts, and if your toddler won't eat iron-rich foods, you find yourself in a conundrum.

Many parents will purchase toddler drinks to boost intake of iron. But is this the best alternative for a child's diet that may be lacking in iron-rich foods? Unfortunately, misleading labels on products marketed as "toddler drinks" may confuse parents on whether these products are necessary or doing more harm than good. Often marketed for young children, ages 9 months to 3 years old, the product category of toddler drinks includes transition formulas and toddler milks.

Studies at New York University's College of Global Public Health and the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at the University of Connecticut have raised red flags about toddler drinks.

"Our study builds on previous research demonstrating that manufacturers' marketing practices may undermine the diets of very young children," said Jennifer L. Pomeranz, assistant professor of public health policy and management at NYU's College of Global Public Health, and the study's lead author.

The study, published in the journal "Preventive Medicine," examined policies and regulations on

the labeling of toddler drinks and proposed regulations to ensure the appropriate labeling of products. Health experts and pediatricians (both in the United States and internationally) do not recommend the products. According to the comprehensive study, most toddler drinks are composed of powdered milk, corn syrup or sweeteners, and vegetable oil. These products contain more sodium and less protein than cow's milk, but labeling implies that they are beneficial for children's nutrition and growth. As advertising for these products increases, so do the concerns regarding their misleading claims.

Many are calling for transparent and truthful labeling that is less confusing for the consumer. This will better enable parents and caregivers of toddlers to make a well-informed decision about the best product for their children.

"All product labels made claims related to nutrition and health, and many made claims about expert recommendations that may lead caregivers to believe these products are necessary and healthy. In fact, they are not recommended by health experts, as there is no evidence that they are nutritionally superior to healthy food and whole milk for toddlers," said Pomeranz.

According to the study's authors, toddler drinks are unnecessary and may undermine a nutritious diet, although they are marketed otherwise.

"It is stressed that labels should be clear, transparent, and accurate. The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration] and manufacturers should work together to end the inappropriate labeling of toddler drinks and ensure caregivers have reliable information to nutritiously feed their children," said Pomeranz. The researchers encourage the Food and Drug Administration to provide more guidance and recommend manufacturers change their labeling practices and support informed consumer decision-making.

Whether you choose to supplement with toddler drinks or solely stick with cow's milk, remember that toddlers need healthy fats, vitamin D, and calcium, as well as iron-rich foods in their diet. This aids healthy growth, learning, and development. A picky-eating toddler can be given a multivitamin or other calcium-fortified foods, like dairy products, juices, breads, and cereals. Consultation with a pediatrician is encouraged prior to using any new product, which will safeguard your child's health and maximize their intake of truly nutritious foods.

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



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Planning for preschool

BY LAURA VAROSCAK-DEINNOCENTIIS

Choosing a preschool that fits the needs of your family may seem daunting. There are many programs out there, each offering their own unique style and perspective, all claiming to be “the best.” Do not be swayed by schools that entice parents with unprecedented academic achievement, state-of-the-art equipment, or the latest educational trend. Above all, preschoolers need a safe and comfortable place in which to learn, while also building socialization skills with peers. Knowing your child, and yourself, is the key to successfully navigating your way through the process. Beginning the journey

with an open mind and a clear plan will also help eliminate unnecessary stress and make the search more enjoyable. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

Plan ahead

Start by making a list of local licensed preschool programs. Most New York City preschools begin their application process several months to a year before your child will start school. Call programs that you might be interested in to find out their application deadlines and minimum age requirements. This will shorten your list right off the bat.

Know the basics

Location, cost, and operating hours are

three very important considerations when deciding where to send your child. Some programs offer early drop-off and late pick-up options for parents who work long days. Others are not flexible with their hours. You may find a preschool with a stellar reputation, but if the tuition costs more than you make each month and you and your little one need to travel two hours by bus, train, and ferry to get there, forget it!

Research

After narrowing down programs that are affordable, conveniently located, and accepting applications in your child’s age group, start asking questions. Call the director and request some information about

Popular early childhood educational approaches

Here are some methods of teaching you may want to look for:

Bank Street

Less structured than some other programs, the Bank Street Development Interaction approach lets children make their own choices in the classroom, while interacting with a wide variety of materials, ideas, and people. This helps a child discover things in her own way, at her own pace.

The curriculum is based on the idea that children make sense of the world by studying it. Teachers encourage questioning and exploration as children start to make connections between their ideas and the surrounding environment.

Creative Curriculum

The Creative Curriculum balances both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning, with an emphasis on responding to children’s learning styles and building on their strengths and interests. Play is considered children’s “work,” which prepares them for future academic learning. Teachers support thinking and experimenting as children explore the world.

High Scope

Designed for children who need more individualized attention, the High Scope program uses a cognitive approach to learning and values the relationship between teachers and children. It stresses the idea that children need hands-on experiences with people, materials, ideas and events in order to thrive. The curriculum is built around five content areas: language, literacy and communication, social and emotional growth, physical development, health and well-being, and arts and sciences.

Montessori

The Montessori method encourages child independence and self-direction.

The teacher acts as an observer, preparing the classroom to best suit the individual student’s needs. Children value diversity and practice respect for self, others, and the world around them.

Self-esteem is nurtured as children master skills and move on to the next developmental level in their work. In addition to language arts, mathematics, science, and cultural studies, the Montessori Method emphasizes sensorial

and practical life work.

Reggio Emilia

The Reggio Emilia approach is a collaborative effort, involving teachers, students, parents, and community members. It emphasizes children’s symbolic relationships.

Teachers develop a project-based curricula based on students’ interests, and support learning through observation, dialogue, and documentation of children’s work. Learning is an ongoing process as children build relationships with others while making connections between ideas and their environment.

Waldorf

The Waldorf approach embraces the whole child — body, mind, and soul. Early childhood educators model appropriate behavior, and children are encouraged to imitate what they see. Teachers also support physical, emotional, intellectual, and artistic growth by designing curriculum based on children’s stages of development and offering many opportunities for creative and imaginative play.



the program: Is it accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children? What is the educational philosophy? How many children are in each class? Are the teachers trained and certified? Is there frequent teacher turnover? Talk to other parents about their experiences. Hang around outside the school at dismissal and introduce yourself to others. Observe the children: Do they look like they enjoyed their time at school? Listen with an open mind. If you like what you see and hear, schedule a tour of the school.

Prepare for the tour

Think about your child. Would she benefit from a child-centered program, or

one that is more teacher-directed? Does a large, active classroom seem more conducive to learning than a smaller, more nurturing environment? Do you have specific needs regarding toileting, diet, or napping for your child? Make a list and write down questions to ask while on the tour. Remember, it will be your school community, too. If parental involvement and a strong family-school relationship are important to you (and they should be), inquire about opportunities for parents as well. All preschools should have an open door policy.

Tour

Visiting a school is one of the best indicators of whether the program is a good fit

for your family. From the moment you walk in the door, keep your eyes and ears open. Do you feel welcome? Safety is critical in a preschool setting. Look to see if the children are well supervised. Are they happy and engaged? How are the relationships between teachers and students? Are the children playing together, practicing taking turns, or are they fighting? How does the teacher deal with conflict resolution? Is there an outdoor play space?

Take notes during your observation period to help you remember the details when you're comparing programs later on. During the question-and-answer session, gather as much information as possible — and do not leave with unanswered questions. If the tour is for parents only, be sure to schedule a time for your child to visit so you can observe her in the environment.

Decide

Each school will most likely highlight its philosophy. Do not let names like Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf confuse or overwhelm you. There are many methods of teaching, and all you need to figure out is which one would best suit your child's personality and learning style. As your child's first teacher, you are an expert at this.

Apply

Depending on where you apply, submitting an application does not mean your child will automatically be accepted. There are often waiting lists based on space availability or uneven gender or age ratios in the class. In this case, apply to a few of your top choice programs and wait patiently. If you strongly prefer one school, you may include a thank you letter, which also expresses your interest in the program.

Relax

As hard as it might be to wait for a decision, admissions directors do not like to be harassed by anxious parents. So take it easy and congratulate yourself on a job well done. If your child was accepted into a program and you have second thoughts, ask yourself why. Are you feeling guilty about sending your baby to preschool (totally normal) or does something not sit right with you? If the latter is true, trust your intuition. In the end, there are many wonderful preschool programs that will provide your child with a safe, fun and engaging learning environment.

Laura Varosca-DelInnocenti is a teacher and freelance writer. Her articles appear regularly in these Family Magazines and have won editorial awards from The Parenting Media Association. She lives in Bay Ridge and has two sons, Henry and Charlie.

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Continued on page 14

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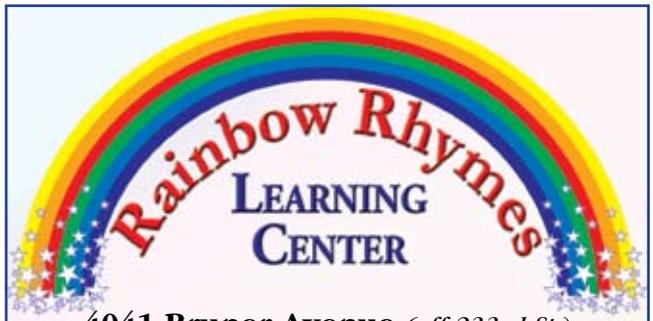
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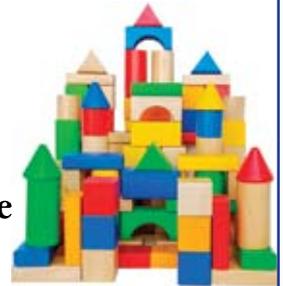
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Early Childhood Choices

Continued from page 12

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In the 'Zone'

Initiative helps Bronx kids to ditch sugary drinks

BY BRITTANY D. COREA

At the start of spring, the eager faces of the Bronx's future walked down their school halls ready to not only be part of the borough's Healthy Beverage Zone anniversary video, but also to take on a new task: paving the way for a healthier community. For the students at MS 327, the Comprehensive Model School Project, it was the first time they had tried fruit-infused water. The students curiously took a sip — then smiled.

"I was not expecting that. Can I take some home to let my mom try?" asked a student.

Representatives of the Bronx Healthy Beverage Zone, a committee motivating Bronxites to ditch sugary beverages, gifted each student a bottle of fruit-infused water, and in return, the students unknowingly rewarded the Zone organizers with the best anniversary present: the young ambassadors were going home to spread the word to their families about delicious, low-calorie alternatives to sugary drinks.

"Healthy beverages are an important factor to reversing the effects of weight gain, diet-related diseases (such as diabetes and heart disease), and poor dental health," explains the Bronx's Healthy Beverage Zone website, thebronxhbz.org.

In April, the Bronx Healthy Beverage Zone proudly celebrated its first anniversary. The Zone's mission is to enlist and assist Bronx organizations, schools and businesses in creating an environment where the community can learn about and choose healthier beverage options by ditching sugary drinks. Today, the Healthy Beverage Zone has secured pledges from almost 50 worksites across the borough to not only rethink their drink, but actively select drinks that encourage a healthier tomorrow.

"Setting a positive example for our community is the first step in cultivating change. It's a privilege to help lead a borough-wide movement of small changes that will help improve the health of our community," said Dr. Vanessa Salcedo of Union Community Health Center, one of the Healthy Beverage Zone's founding organizations which works in partnership with Bronx Health REACH, and the city's Department of Health and Mental



The Healthy Beverage Zone initiative is encouraging Bronx students to choose healthy beverage choices over sugary drinks.

Hygiene's Bronx Neighborhood Health Action Center.

After bringing national attention to the Bronx and receiving a grant of \$10,000 from Aetna Foundation's Healthy Community 50 challenge, the Healthy Beverage Zone is now in the running to receive a prize of up to \$500,000 that will support their mission to change the borough's grim health statistics. "Since 2009, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings Report has ranked the Bronx as number 62 out of New York State's 62 counties in terms of health outcomes," claims the Zone's website.

"I supported this initiative since it began because the Bronx Healthy Beverage Zone works to make our community healthier," said New York City Council Member Fernando Cabrera. "I am going to continue to support the Bronx Healthy Beverage Zone, and we are going to win!"

The Healthy Beverage Zone's support expanded this year with the help of more than 40 partners. Bronx elected officials Borough President Rubin Diaz Jr., state Sen. Gustavo Rivera, Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, and Cabrera contributed by pro-

moting the initiative and ensuring Bronxites understand how sugar-filled beverages affect the body.

PS 811, a public school partner of the initiative, became the youngest travel ambassadors by sharing their knowledge of the adverse affects of sugary beverages with their families. The students have committed to abstaining from consuming sweetened beverages, proving that the initiative is one that can be adopted by people of all ages.

"Thank you for working with us and for working with the Bronx," Diaz Jr. told the Healthy Beverage Zone. "While we still have a long way to go, this anniversary is a milestone in that the Bronx is headed in the right way."

For the Zone, celebrating its first anniversary is just the beginning. The initiative plans to keep working towards a healthier future for the Bronx. There is no statistic too scary, or drink too sugary, that the Healthy Beverage Zone won't campaign to change.

To learn more about the Healthy Beverage Zone, visit its website at thebronxhbz.org.

— additional reporting by Lisa J. Curtis

A mother's intuition

Autistic son improves with mom's own therapeutic approach

BY ALLISON PLITT

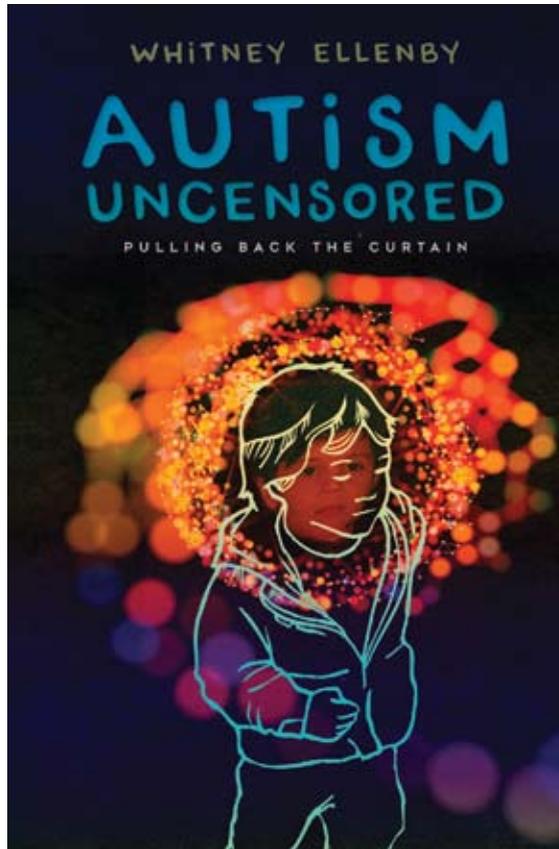
This is the second half of a story about Whitney Ellenby's compelling autobiography, "Autism Uncensored: Pulling Back the Curtain" (Koehler Books), in which she describes her life with her autistic son, Zack.

Whitney Ellenby learned her son Zack had autism when he was 19 months old. At the recommendation of a pediatric neurology team at Georgetown University Hospital, she enrolled him in Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy.

Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy required her son to be in an isolated room with a therapist for at least 40 hours a week reviewing "emotions, objects, people, or colors via flashcards and manipulative objects." According to Ellenby, the psychologist who developed the therapy in the 1950s, Dr. O. Ivar Lovaas, predicted that if a child receives less than 40 hours of instruction per week, he would fail. Zack showed progress during his first six months of therapy, but his development plateaued after another six months, and both Ellenby and her son fell into a state of disappointment and depression.

As many autistic children use "perseverative" behavior (such as repetitive hand flapping or staring at spinning objects) to calm themselves down, the Lovaas Model of Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy tries to suppress these natural instincts — a method which Ellenby finds "authoritative." She claims that many pediatric neurologists also believe that by denying a child his natural tendencies to cope with fear or anxiety, Applied Behavioral Analysis takes away a child's individuality and innate personality.

Although Zack could not verbalize his anger to his family, he rebelled against the rigid structure of therapy in his own ways. Unable to sleep, Zack kept his parents up all night with tantrums. When Ellenby or her husband went to soothe him, they found Zack had scratched off the paper on the walls of his bedroom and had destroyed all of his books and toys.



Venturing into the real world

Many families with autistic children usually isolate themselves in their homes, because their children can impulsively fly into fits of rage over any perceived fears or obstacles.

As Ellenby had decided to scale back on the number of hours Zack was receiving Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy, she chose a different approach with her son, who threw temper tantrums every time the family left the home.

In one scenario, Ellenby's family attempted to attend a birthday party, but the moment they got into an elevator, Zack began screaming, biting himself, and banging his head against the door to get out. After this incident, Ellenby figured out what triggered her son's temper tantrums: "His fear of the unknown, because he could not decode the world outside of his immediate view in those indoor spaces."

Unlike other kids with autism, Zack was not overly sensitive to noise and crowds.

In the most defining moment of the book, Ellenby decided to take her son into an auditorium to see a show about Elmo. As she expected, Zack threw a tantrum as soon as they entered the public indoor space. While Ellenby spent more than half an hour trying to calm him down, she was able to prevent her son from fleeing the scene.

The moment Zack saw Elmo on stage, he calmed down and stopped struggling. His eyes were riveted to the stage in deep concentration until the end of the show. As Zack smiled at his mother after the performance ended, Ellenby decided that her "experiment" was a success.

Ellenby took Zack to other public events where she found he learned more by experiential learning than by sitting in an isolated room trying to imitate Applied Behavioral Analysis concepts. Choosing to take Zack to a movie theater, she first informed the audience that her son was autistic and would probably struggle with her before the movie. With the public's approval, Ellenby tried to subdue Zack, who once again became calm when the movie began.

Similar to his behavior at the Elmo performance, Zack was fixated by the movie on the screen and said nothing until the show ended. Realizing that Zack was finally making a breakthrough, Ellenby accompanied him on more outings — including a visit to a water park, where a gang of tough teens helped her son descend a scary water slide.

Ellenby was surprised by the amount of support she received from the public when she explained that her son was autistic and may behave in an unusual manner. Zack wet himself on a subway, and as Ellenby explained her situation to the passengers, they gave her their own tissues and wipes to help her clean her son.

Ellenby gave birth to her daughter, Cassie, when Zack was 5. As Zack realized he was no longer the center of his mother's attention, he began to misbehave. Crying because he believed his mother favored the baby over him, he was finally able to articulate his feelings by saying, "Baby is Mommy favorite. Baby is love of Mommy life."

When Ellenby responded to Zack that

he was “the first love of her life,” she had a realization: “We have never had a true conversation, and never an exchange about anything as important as this. And I realize at this moment that there are still many crucial truths about Zack that I have yet to uncover. Does he feel love deeply, and does he feel it for me? ... He is capable of experiencing jealousy and loss as much as any other person, maybe even more?”

After his initial resentment, Zack learned to love and protect his sister. In one instance, Ellenby baked the children brownies and decided to hide them in the kitchen so she could share them at a later time. When she later checked in on her kids, she discovered Zack had found the brownies and was sharing them with 1-year-old Cassie.

Zack learns to conquer his fears

As Zack became less fearful interacting in the real world, he had less frequent tantrums. Consequently, Ellenby decided to abandon Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy. On a family trip to Disney World, where Ellenby had to provide the hotel with medical documentation of her son’s autism, Zack was a different boy — laughing in the amusement park and finally pointing out to his parents something funny that he saw.

When Zack turned 7, Ellenby enrolled

Ellenby figured out what triggered her son’s temper tantrums: “His fear of the unknown, because he could not decode the world outside of his immediate view in those indoor spaces.”

him in the neighborhood public elementary school, where he would be fully mainstreamed with his peers in the first grade. While Zack would be with his classmates for the majority of the day, he would also be pulled out of class for special-needs instruction.

The therapist had told Ellenby never to disclose Zack’s condition, but she thought differently when preparing a presentation for her son’s class about his autism. “Concealment of Zack’s diagnosis suggests shame, and my purpose is to educate, not obfuscate.”

During the presentation to the class, Ellenby explained to the children, “Zack has a disability called autism, and it’s a condition

that affects his brain. His brain isn’t better or worse than yours, it’s just different.”

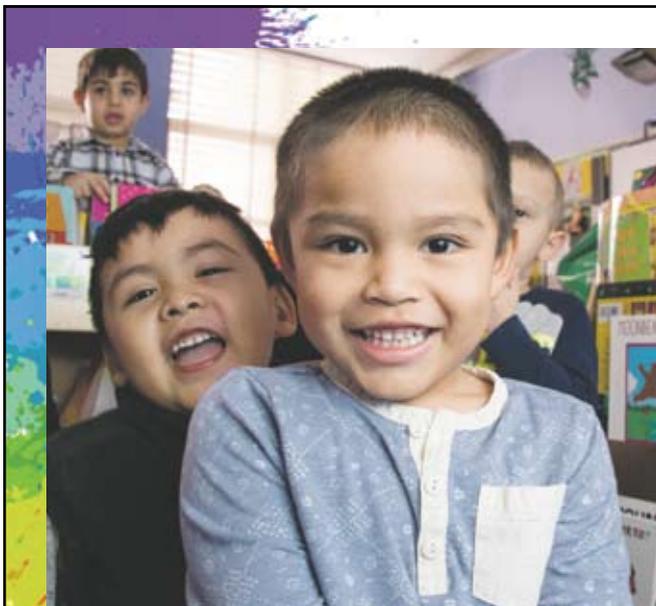
She also told the class that Zack learns from repetition, so he would be watching his classmates’ behavior as an example of what to do.

Ellenby’s story ends happily as Zack was “assaulted by peers, not with cruelty, but exaggerated expressions of kindness and instruction.” When his mother dropped him off at school, Zack told his mother “goodbye,” literally cutting the cord between them.

When Zack stopped having temper tantrums, he learned that he had overcome his phobias. Reflecting on the experience of helping her son, Ellenby recounts, “I’m not just a better parent, I’m a better person because of what Zack has unearthed in me.”

Ellenby founded a charitable foundation more than 10 years ago called Autism Ambassadors for people with autism and their families. To help these families leave the isolation of their homes, Ellenby established monthly outings at various venues (such as movie theaters and water parks) where people can meet and not be shocked when others “erupt into unconventional behavior.” So far, Ellenby has recruited more than 600 families to join her organization.

Allison Plitt lives in Queens with her 12-year-old daughter.



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Untold stories

Book shines light on challenges of raising special-needs kids

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

It's about time someone wrote a humorous novel that shines a light on the plight of parents who are coping with unbearable stress and impossible challenges while raising their amazing, special-needs kids.

Washington Heights-based author Maxine Rosaler's just released, must-read book — "Queen for a Day: A Novel in Stories" (Delphinium Books) — does just that.

In the book, Rosaler's own experience and her quest for answers as the mother of an autistic son are told from the perspective of her novel's heroine, New York City parent Mimi Slavitt, and her circle of funny but frustrated friends who are conflicted, complex characters all trying to stay emotionally afloat while raising children with special needs.

It "crackles with insight, energy, and New York City wit," according to Eliza Factor, author of "Strange Beauty," who says Rosaler is "compassionate and wonderfully unsentimental in her portrayal of [Mimi and her friends'] fear and fury, longing and isolation." Factor says the author is "really good at capturing the random bursts of connection so endemic to New York City street life, and her take on the Kafkaesque bureaucracy, otherwise known as the Department of Education, is hilarious."

Factor says she "loved this book and recommend it highly, not only to parents dealing with autism, but to anyone who enjoys gritty, funny, heartbreaking, and ultimately affirming stories of modern family life."

Surprising inspiration

In one episode of the strange 1950s game show "Queen for a Day," host Jack Bailey asks the all-female audience: "Would you like to be queen for a day?"

As the women applaud and cheer loudly, a super long, top-of-the-line Chrysler Imperial appears onstage, waiting to whisk one lucky lady away for a day in movie land if she's crowned queen. The winning contestant enjoys additional perks, as well, like an entire wardrobe fit for a queen ... and a deluxe vacuum cleaner! But the super-duper prizes are the ones that these worn-

out housewives were really hoping for in the event they were chosen to sit on the throne. They were modest requests by today's standards. Washers were a popular choice.

A mother of seven asked for a diaper service for her triplets, and another, a haggard-looking former waitress, only wished for a wheelchair and special exercise bike for her disabled son. But the smartest one of all told the host she could really use some time away. After all, she had been a caretaker her entire life. In the end, the mom with the special-needs boy won.

While all of these wives, mothers, and caretakers had devoted their entire lives to their families and sacrificed their own happiness and dreams for domestic bliss, there were perhaps some who dreamed of the day they could just walk away from it all.

After all, they never asked for this. Never expected that their lives would be so hard. It had all been thrust upon them and nobody asked.

There were times when Rosaler's heroine, Mimi, felt that way.

And it was that vintage TV show from a naïve, bygone era of societally enforced domesticity, coupled with quiet discontent, that had been the surprising inspiration for the author's new novel. Rosaler's authentic stories examine imperfect women (not martyrs or saints) living mostly unfulfilled lives laced with overwhelming misery, fear, and isolation; parents who yearn for fun and freedom but can only enjoy fleeting moments of triumph and normalcy.

You can't blame those women from the '50s, for they neither had the insight nor self-awareness to understand how to change their lives for the better — had they been able to. Therefore, they accepted the cards they were dealt with what seems like a form of graciousness born of an unselfish nature. During that time, options for women were limited, and "finding happiness" wasn't considered a priority until the Women's Lib movement and the "me" generation expanded the list of acceptable personal desires and goals. That's when people — both women and men — wanted more out of life.

"But now I told myself: 'Wake up, Mimi!

Is this how you want to be? Seeing misery in every grain of sand?'" Rosaler writes.

Drawing from real life

Mimi was in denial when she found out her young son, Danny, had autism.

The author says getting support as her child was growing up was challenging as well.

"There were years when all I did from the moment I woke up to the moment I went to sleep, was work to get Benjy the help to which the Individuals with Disabilities Act supposedly entitled him," she recalled.

So, how do moms and dads raising special-needs kids learn how to accept things as they are? And if they can't, what's the alternative? And, should parents put aside their happiness for the sake of their children?

The author, whose son Benjy is now 26, opened up about her life and her family. She says "Queen for a Day" is the most important story she has ever told.

Tammy Scileppi: Why did you write this unique novel?

Maxine Rosaler: I was a writer before I became a mother, but for a long time after my son's diagnosis with autism, all I wrote were letters begging the Board of Education to help Benjy, and various treatises and documents I created to support my efforts. When the air started to clear a little bit, I went back to writing fiction. Eventually, I decided to map out a collection of short stories based on my experiences being the mother of a child with autism.

TS: Tell NY Parenting readers about your son, his interests, and what he's been up to.

MR: Benjy is, to a remarkable degree, the same person he has always been. Incredibly cheerful and inquisitive and a delight to be around. Of course, there have always been the things we wanted to "fix" about him — his impulsiveness, his lack of social awareness, his problems with organization — the list goes on. But I'm happy to say that as much as Phil and I have been trying so hard to fix Benjy, we have never damaged his spirit. He remains indomitably himself.

Benjy is a junior at City College, where he is majoring in chemistry. Through New York State's Self-Direction program, I am

able to hire people to go to school with my son, to make sure he pays attention and doesn't call out in class.

He has a ton of interests and hobbies, including rocks and minerals, musical instruments (how they are constructed), botany, birds, biology, chemistry, physics, orchestrating video music, playing piano, playing violin (which he has been studying seriously for the past eight years), geology, geography, entomology, etymology, and so much more.

I can't say that Benjy has ever really had a friend — the closest he has ever come to having friends are the mentors who work with him. But obviously, it's not the same. That's always been on my list: to find Benjy a friend who shares one of his many interests.

As far as goals are concerned, Benjy does not have a realistic understanding of what it means to have goals, nor what it takes to achieve one's goals. This is one of many things that are on our list of things we need to work on with him.

TS: Describe what raising your special child has been like?

MR: Benjy was a joyful baby, and a joyful child. He is still full of joy, although there are signs of anxiety that I am beginning to recognize that I never realized were there. He doesn't have a mean bone in his body. He is without vanity, pride, jealousy, envy, or any of the usual vices. His unquenchable thirst for knowledge and the agility with which he is able to absorb and assimilate all sorts of information amazes everyone who knows him.

We have had to teach — and continue to teach — Benjy the things that other children seem to pick up automatically. In terms of challenges, there are too many to enumerate here. I would say that his impulsiveness is one of the biggest challenges we have to deal with — for one thing, it put him in danger.

TS: How do your novel's stories speak to the loneliness and isolation that can be an inherent part of raising a child with a disability?

MR: I think the themes of loneliness and isolation inform every story in the collection. Mimi's dependence on Amy in the story "Queen for a Day" stands out in my mind as the most cogent manifestation of those feelings. "The Bike Path" is the story that most baldly expresses the misery and loneliness and fear that being the mother of a child with a disability entails: Mimi's irrational fear of something happening to her husband. Her incapacitating depres-

sion. Her overwhelming worry about what will become of her son. The guilt she suffers because of her growing impatience with him.

TS: How did you and your family deal with everything?

MR: I didn't "deal" with it at all. I just went ahead and threw the full force of myself into everything — no matter how big or how small. Which was a mistake.

Although [my husband] Phil grieved a lot at the beginning, as I pointed out in "Route 94," he accepted Benjy for who he was a lot sooner and a lot more easily than I did. Also, Phil, unlike me, has always been gifted with an ability to escape (a distinctly male trait, I think). As far as [my daughter] Sammy is concerned, I am just beginning to realize that all this affected her in ways I had never imagined it did.

TS: There must have been some good times?

MR: I can't think of any specific "good times" to cite as examples here. I can only say that, setting all my worries and anxieties about him aside for a moment, Benjy's entire way of being — his loving nature, his innocence, his happiness, his endless curiosity, his gifts — is a wonder.

TS: Describe your parenting styles.

MR: Phil knows how to have fun with our children. He knows how to talk to

Benjy in ways I do not. Phil, like Benjy, has all sorts of interests and he knows a lot about a lot of things. He also knows how to relax. So, he knows how to have fun. I'm always so busy doing all the behind-the-scenes work that I don't have time for fun. This is one of my biggest regrets.

TS: How have your son's issues impacted your marriage?

MR: I think our marriage has been both positively and negatively affected by having a child with a disability. As far as the positive part is concerned, Phil and I just naturally assumed different roles in Benjy's care. As far as the negative aspects are concerned, living in a constant state of emergency is very stressful, and this is bound to affect a marriage. Since I am by far the biggest worrier, and the more anxious of the two of us, Phil has to live with a woman who is often in a state of high anxiety.

TS: What do you do as a couple to de-stress?

MR: I wouldn't say that Phil and I ever consciously do anything to relieve the stress. But we have always had fun together, and so just being together is in and of itself a source of comfort and fun to us both. We hardly ever go out, although this is something we know we should do. We're both too lazy to do it. And aside from the time we spend writing (Phillip Margulies is also a fiction writer), our favorite time is at the end of the day, when all the work is done, and it's time to go to bed and watch television.

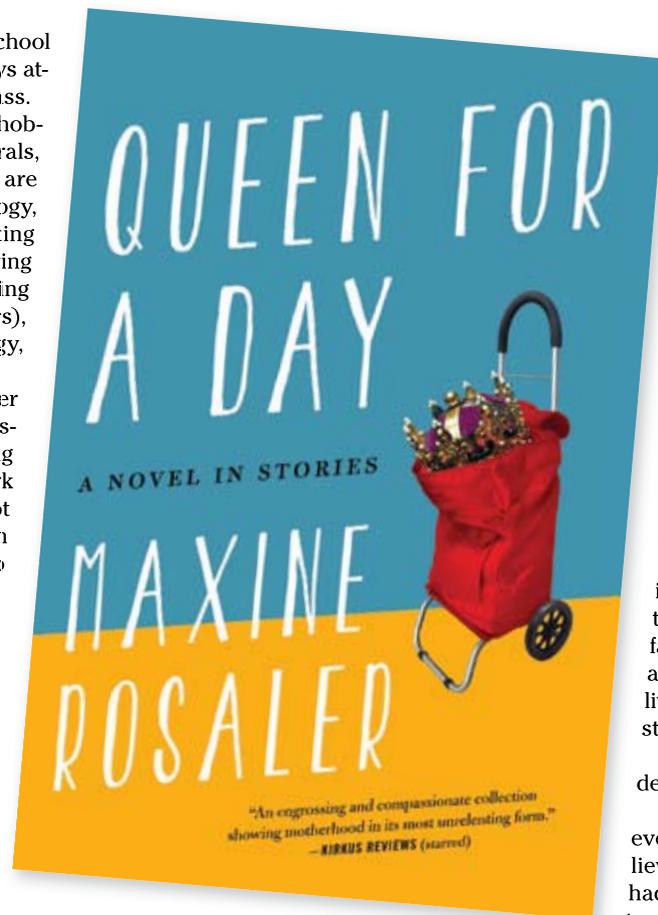
TS: Why should parents of special-needs kids read "Queen for a Day?"

MR: For one thing, when it comes to the books that have been written about autism, I don't think that the subject of being the mother of a child with autism (or any other disability, for that matter) has been dealt with through fiction or non-fiction the way I deal with it in "Queen for a Day." My book is both a work of literary fiction and also a kind of expose of the underworld that the parents of children with disabilities inhabit. It portrays a range of mothers (none of whom are anointed with the sainthood that is often automatically conferred on us unfortunate women).

• • •

Look for part two of this interview with Maxine Rosaler, author of "Queen for a Day: A Novel in Stories" (Amazon.com), in next month's issue.

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer, parent, and regular contributor to New York Parenting.





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'Island' dream

Celebrated novelist Junot Díaz debuts first children's book

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

Author Junot Díaz has won prestigious prizes and accolades for his works, including "Drown," "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao," and "This Is How You Lose Her." But it may have surprised some when the literary lion, who attended Rutgers University and went on to earn a Masters degree from Cornell University, decided to write a children's book. Díaz was born in the Dominican Republic, immigrated to the United States with his family when he was 6, and he spent the bulk of his childhood growing up in New Jersey. Traces of his childhood parallel that of the protagonist in his debut picture book.

Díaz's "Islandborn" (Dial Books) explores the topics of culture, identity, and belonging through the eyes of the main character, Lola. His colorful picture book relates Lola's experience as she discovers her heritage and celebrates imagination. The artistry is the work of illustrator Leo Espinosa.

"First time and I got so lucky to work with Leo. He's so brilliant, and he brought a magnificent Caribbean sensibility to the project — vibrant, playful, and soulful. I'm hoping we work together again very soon," Díaz told our publication. The text and illustrations of this well-crafted children's book will resonate with young readers around the country and will lead to wonderful conversation in the classroom and at home. Díaz believes exercising imagination is especially important for immigrants, because they often need to make homes for themselves where previously there were none.

In this book, Lola's teacher asks her diverse class to draw a picture of the places where their families emigrated from. Lola struggled to remember her island. Just a baby when she immigrated with her clan, she seeks the help of her family and friends to uncover her

extraordinary journey. Her imagination takes her on a trip back to her island.

Díaz hopes that his work will encourage more multicultural representation in children's books. (He is also the co-founder of the Voices of Our Nation Arts Foundation, which provides emerging writers of color with workshops and mentoring.)

"Every little bit helps. Diverse books for a diverse world. Nothing else will do. Otherwise, we cheat ourselves of what is so sublime about humanity — our splendor, endless variety," Díaz noted.

When asked how he became inspired

to write a children's book, Díaz said, "I kept having to explain to the young people in my life why, if I'm a writer, had I not written any books for them? And I didn't have any good answers for them. So I ended up writing the book as part of my answer." Like his fiction for adults, "Islandborn" has earned rave reviews, including from the School Library Journal as well as Publisher's Weekly.

The process of writing content for a children's book is quite different than writing for adults, which was a distinction not lost on Díaz.



“Diverse books for a diverse world. Nothing else will do. Otherwise, we cheat ourselves of what is so sublime about humanity — our splendid, endless variety.” — Junot Díaz

“I’ve never thrown out so much work in my life,” he said. “The demands of the form are cruel. You don’t have a lot of space for anything.”

Despite the limited space, Díaz included a lot of content within the pages of “Islandborn,” touching on themes of immigration, culture, and identity.

“It is in childhood where we create paradigms about ourselves and others which will guide us for many years to come. If you are not exposed to these fundamental questions early — how can you live healthily in a world that is a world in which immigration, culture, and identity play a central, if not determinative, role?” He added, “Books like this



are first and foremost an opportunity for adults and children to connect over stories, which is always a beautiful thing. This is a story about how it often takes a whole community to face a monster and how each generation has to face that monster anew, if only so that they can

keep alive the story of all that courage it took to do so.”

In his own act of courageousness, Díaz most recently made waves with the publishing of a very personal essay in *The New Yorker*, revealing that he had experienced sexual abuse as a child. In it, he explained the toll that this trauma had on his behaviors during his adolescence, young adulthood, and in adult relationships. From depression to uncontrollable rage, Díaz faced many challenges as a male victim of sexual assault. He maintained his silence until, as an adult, he finally sought help.

Many are anticipating what will come next for the influential author, who has been named a *New York Times*-bestselling author, MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellow, Pulitzer Prize-winner, and is currently professor of writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It seems, though, that Díaz has embraced the title of “children’s book author.”

“[I] already handed in my second picture book. We’ll see what comes next,” said Díaz.

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

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Online Activity Guide

Check it out on
www.NYParenting.com

Calendar

JUNE



Watch out for that big bad wolf!

The three little pigs are building their houses and watching out for the big bad wolf at Highbridge Library on June 28.

The big bad wolf is coming to huff and puff and blow their houses down. Which little piggie is the smartest?

Find out in this whimsical puppet

show presented by WonderSpark Puppets.

“The Three Little Pigs” June 28, 3 pm. Free. For all ages.

Highbridge Library [78 W. 168th St. in Highbridge, (718) 293-7800; www.wonder-sparkpuppets.com/free-summer-shows].

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Calendar

FRI, JUNE 1

IN THE BRONX

Seasonal Arts and Crafts: Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; 2:30 pm to 4 pm; Free.

Kids create fun art inspired by the season, using various materials and techniques. Techniques include Magnetic Art.

First Friday: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm; \$5 (\$15 non-members; \$10 seniors & students).

Glenwood is at Bartow-Pell! Enjoy the music, explore the museum, and stroll the garden; light refreshments available. The free trolley makes an hourly loop starting at 5:25 pm from the 6 train Pelham Bay Park subway station to the museum to City Island.

SAT, JUNE 2

IN THE BRONX

Summer Sports Experience – Basketball Clinic: Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East; (718) 543-8672; <https://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/06/15/wbo-talent-show>; 9 am to 10 am and 10 am to 11 am; Free.

Summer Sports Experience is a free program open to the public. These basketball clinics are geared towards 6-13 years old. The program will run five weeks. Please come dressed in active wear. Ages 6-9 on Saturdays 9:15-10 am, and 10-13 years old Saturdays 10:15-11 am.

Soccer Clinic: Shoelace Park Benches, Bronx Boulevard and E. 213th Street; (914) 434-0958; <https://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/06/02/top-clinics>; 9 am to 11 am; Free.

Join T.O.P Soccer every Saturday morning at Shoelace Park to enjoy free soccer clinics from 9 am to 11 am. T.O.P Clinics are designed to teach kids the fundamentals of soccer. Our qualified and interpersonal coaches incorporate mind, individual, and team building exercises to engage our future leaders. Classes will begin with stimulating warm-ups followed by various soccer station drills then culminate with a scrimmage game and re-cap of the session.

Horsehoe Crab Walk: Orchard Beach Nature Center, Orchard Beach; (718) 885-3466; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 10 am to 11:30 am; Free.

New York City is home to an amazing abundance of wildlife. In May and June, horseshoe crabs visit our shores to lay eggs. Our Urban Park Rangers will guide you to the best wildlife viewing spots in the urban jungle.

Family Art Project – A Turtle's Pace: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults,



Celebrate dear old dad

It's Bats! Brats! and Beer! for dads at Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum on June 16.

Calling all dads! As part of Father's Day weekend, the staff at Bartow-Pell thinks you deserve a Saturday afternoon ball game with beer and brats. Come celebrate on the front lawn of the mansion and watch the New York Mutuals play with 1864 rules, balls, bats, and uniforms — but no helmets or gloves!

After the game, kids join in the fun for a game of rounders with team members.

Refreshments and food available for purchase. Suitable for all ages.

Bats! Brats! and Beer! on June 16, 1 pm to 4 pm. Free for dads, \$10 other adults, and (\$5 for children). Registration required.

Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum [895 Shore Rd. in Pelham Bay, (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org].

\$2 children 6-18, children under 6 free. Admission is free until noon on Saturday.

Marvel at the beautiful patterns that cover the protective shell of the local box turtle. Use fabric and leather scraps to design and decorate a stuffed, wearable turtle-shell backpack. Make a turtle egg-shaker and, wearing your shell, gather outside to waltz in a parade.

Boogie Down at the Bronx Zoo: Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd.; (718) 220-5100; www.BronxZoo.com/boogie-down; 1 pm to 2 pm; \$36.95 (\$26.95 children 3-12; \$31.95 seniors; Free for children 2 and under.

This event presents a variety of cultural contributions with artists and performers from a diverse representation of Bronx cultures on-site to celebrate the Bronx Zoo, Bronx culture, and wildlife.

Kids Paper Arts and Crafts: Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm; Free.

Kids create cute and fun objects out of paper and other ordinary materials they can take home. Parents are invited to join their little ones in the activities.

"Sherlock Holmes – The Musgrave Ritual": Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 7:30 pm; \$35 (\$30 seniors and Students with ID).

An ancient family document hidden on the grounds of a beautiful country home hides a sinister ritual that only Sherlock Holmes can unlock — but some secrets might be best left buried. Together, we'll explore the gorgeous 19th century mansion and surrounding gardens on a quest to solve a deadly mystery.

SUN, JUNE 3

IN THE BRONX

Family Art Project: A Turtle's Pace: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, June 2.

Calendar

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

Basic Canoeing: Van Cortlandt Golf House, Van Cortlandt Ave. West and John Kiernan Nature Trail; (718) 548-0912; <https://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/06/03/basic-canoeing>; 11 am to 2 pm; Free.

Few experiences compare with being on the open water in New York City. Our trained Urban Park Rangers will lead you on canoe adventures that range from the gentle waters of protected lakes to the challenging open waters of rivers and bays. All canoe programs are for ages 8 years and older. Participation in a mandatory safety review led by a trained Ranger is required. This basic canoeing program is great for all skill levels. This program is first-come, first-served. Due to demand, line may close prior to end time.

Turtle and Shell show and tell: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 1 pm to 1:30 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults, \$2 children 6-18, children under 6 free. Admission is free until noon on Saturday.

Our youngest visitors and their families are invited to drop by this informal info station to see turtle shells, eggs and meet a live turtle as a part of Wave Hill's Turtle Day. Ages 4 to 6 are welcome with an adult.

Boogie Down at the Bronx Zoo: 1 pm to 2 pm. Bronx Zoo. See Saturday, June 2.

Turtle talk: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 2 pm to 3 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults, \$2 children 6-18, children under 6 free. Admission is free until noon on Saturday.

June is an active time for turtles, as the females strike out on land in search of safe places to lay their eggs. Join environmental educator Carl Heitmuller from the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum for an informative (and humorous) foray into the world of turtles. Meet rotund reptiles from the museum's collection. Ages 6 and older are welcome with an adult.

"Sherlock Holmes – The Musgrave Ritual": 2 pm and 7:30 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. See Saturday, June 2.

TUES, JUNE 5

IN THE BRONX

Kid's Le Petit Art: Dioramas and 3D Art: Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm; Free.

Kids create adorable miniature art and miniature worlds as gifts for others, or to keep. Parents and kids may participate together. For ages 6 to 12 years old. Parents or adults welcome with their younger child. Children can make a mini greeting card or journal or coloring book.

WED, JUNE 6

IN THE BRONX

Recycle to art: Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm; Free.

Participants will create cute arts and crafts projects to keep, or give as a gift to their favorite person. (Ages 6-12 years old).

THURS, JUNE 7

IN THE BRONX

WBO Field Day: Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East; (718) 543-8672; <https://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/06/07/wbo-field-day>; Noon to 3 pm; Free.

School is out for Chancellor's Day. Come get active with us! In partnership with the Montefiore School Health Program, we will have a variety of activities including soccer, tug of war, parachute, obstacle courses and more! This program is geared toward 6-13 year olds. All are welcome. A small snack and giveaways while supplies last.

Imaginative Arts for Kids: Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm; Free.

Kids will learn various techniques for creating imaginative arts, including Kirigami, Collage, Tissue Work, Pointillism, and 3D Illusion. Drop in for a program, or try them all!

Capoeira in the Park: East Lawn at Memorial Grove in Van Cortlandt Park, Broadway and 242nd Street; (718) 430-1890; Led by expert instructors, this series introduces participants to the basic fundamentals of the Brazilian martial art of Capoeira and its history; 6:30 pm to 8 pm; Free.

Led by expert instructors, this series introduces participants to the basic fundamentals of the Brazilian martial art of Capoeira and its history.

"Sherlock Holmes – The Musgrave Ritual": 7:30 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. See Saturday, June 2.

FURTHER AFIELD

Topsy Turvey Thursdays: Sugar Hill Children's Museum, 898 St Nicholas Ave., Manhattan; (212) 335-0004; www.sugarhillmuseum.org; 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Join the fun, and help our amazing storyteller and local resident Carletta Joy Walker bring each story to life!

FRI, JUNE 8

IN THE BRONX

Seasonal Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4 pm pm. Poe Park Visitor Center in Poe Park. See Friday, June 1.

"Sherlock Holmes – The Musgrave Ritual": 7:30 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Mu-

seum. See Saturday, June 2.

SAT, JUNE 9

IN THE BRONX

Soccer Clinic: 9 am to 11 am. Shoelace Park Benches. See Saturday, June 2.

The Great Randall's Island Treasure Hunt: Randall's Island Park, 20 Randall's Island Park, (212) 830-7722; Jennifer.wainwright@randallsisland.org; <https://randallsisland.org/events/great-randalls-island-treasure-hunt-2>; 10 am; Free.

Join us for an adventure as we unlock Island secrets, search for treasure, and explore Randall's Island Park. This free event teaches you how to use a map and compass (materials provided) to navigate a fun course. Suitable for ages 5 and up (with an adult).

Family Art Project – Paper Sky Lanterns: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults, \$2 children 6-18, children under 6 free. Admission is free until noon on Saturday.

Venture outside to sketch and observe the sky for cloud shapes and inspiration. Cut colorful tissue paper into shapes resembling your favorite sky scene. Work with a simple papier-mâché method to transform your sky scene into globe-like lanterns.

Survival Series – Fire Building: Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th Street at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 11 am to 12:30 pm; Free.

Our Urban Park Rangers are well-versed in outdoor lore. Learn tips and tricks that will enhance your knowledge of the natural world. Fire is mankind's greatest discovery. Learn primitive and modern methods for making fire safely and responsibly while exploring the great outdoors. All programs are family-friendly, but are recommended for ages 8 years and older.

"Sherlock Holmes – The Musgrave Ritual": 2 pm and 7:30 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. See Saturday, June 2.

Kids Paper Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Saturday, June 2.

Outdoor Movie Nights: Randall's Island Park Field 81, 20 Randall's Island Park; (212) 830-7722; Jennifer.wainwright@randallsisland.org; <https://randallsisland.org/events>; 8:40 pm; Free.

"Ferris Bueller's Day Off" is the fun movie for the night. Randall's Island Park is an amazing setting to watch a movie under the stars! The film, which is rated PG-13, starts at sunset (8:40 pm).

FURTHER AFIELD

Sou Sou: Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, 120 E. 125th St., Manhattan; cccadl.org/sousou; Noon to 4 pm; Free.

The family-oriented program is inspired



Julianne Harris

Inspiring dance troupe

Philadanco takes the stage at the Joyce Theater from June 12 through June 17.

The dance troupe returns for another season of athleticism and dance featuring new movements including “Folded Prism,” “A Movement of Five,” “New Fruit and With(in) Verse.”

Known as a company that often champions African-American traditions in dance as well as using the art form to tackle social issues which

impact African-Americans, Philadanco has curated a program that shines light on the current social climate that affects all people of color.

Philadanco, June 12, 13, 16, and 17 at 7:30 pm; June 14 and 15 at 8 pm; June 17 and 16 at 2 pm (June 16 show is a family matinee). Tickets range from \$20 to \$40.

The Joyce Theater [175 Eighth Ave. at 19th Street in Chelsea, (212) 242-0800; www.joyce.org].

by the savings clubs tradition of the African Diaspora with a twist — a culture savings club for the entire family. Attendees get to enjoy art, dance, music workshops, and many more activities that elevate the history and traditions of the African diaspora. This month is Baba Sousou, Celebrate Our Fathers — it’s Baba and me time with a presentation from Callaloo Kids theater.

SUN, JUNE 10

IN THE BRONX

Family Art Project – Paper Sky Lanterns: 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, June 9.

Seining: Orchard Beach Nature Center, Orchard Beach; (718) 885-3466; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; Noon to 1:30 pm; Free.

Catch-and-release fishing is a great way to get outdoors and discover nature just a few blocks from home. Our experienced Rangers teach the ethics of fishing and the ecology of our waterways on every fishing program. Get ready to get your hands wet! Seining programs use nets to catch fish. All equipment provided; this program is recommended for ages 8 years and older. Participation is first-come, first-served.

Family Nature Walk: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 1 pm to 2 pm; Free with admission to the grounds.

Join naturalist and educator Gabriel Willow on a family-friendly walk through the gardens or woodlands. Registration is not required. Ages 6 and older are welcome with an adult. Severe weather cancels.

“Sherlock Holmes – The Musgrave Ritual”: 2 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. See Saturday, June 2.

TUES, JUNE 12

IN THE BRONX

“Lion and the Mouse” and “Goldilocks”: Crotona Park Playground of the Stars, 1511 Fulton Avenue and 171st Street; 311; www.wondersparkpuppets.com/free-summer-shows; 9 am and 10 am; Free.

Two favorite fairy tales come to life on stage with the Wonderspark puppets.

Kid’s Le Petit Art – Dioramas and 3D Art: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center. See Tuesday, June 5.

“The Three Little Pigs”: Van Cortlandt Library, 3874 Sedgwick Ave. and Stevenson Place; (718) 543-5150; www.wondersparkpuppets.com/free-summer-shows; 3:30 pm; Free.

Find out who is the smartest of the Three Little Pigs in this fun interactive puppet show presented by WonderSpark Puppets.

WED, JUNE 13

IN THE BRONX

Recycle to art: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center in Poe Park. See Wednesday, June 6.

THURS, JUNE 14

IN THE BRONX

Imaginative Arts for Kids: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center in Poe Park. See Thursday, June 7.

Capoeira in the Park: 6:30 pm to 8 pm. East Lawn Memorial Grove at Van Cortlandt Park. See Thursday, June 7.

FURTHER AFIELD

Topsy Turvey Thursdays: 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Sugar Hill Children’s Museum. See Thursday, June 7.

FRI, JUNE 15

IN THE BRONX

Seasonal Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center in Poe Park. See Friday, June 1.

WBO Talent Show: Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East; (718) 543-8672; <https://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/06/15/wbo-talent-show>; 5:30 pm to 7 pm; Free.

Check out the local talent from the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center! We will have all types of artists, including dancers, magicians, singers and more. All are welcome to watch the performances. Do you have talent? Showcase your dance, poetry, art, comedy. Please reach out to quiana.haynes@

Calendar

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

parks.nyc.gov or sarah.bishow@parks.nyc.gov.

SAT, JUNE 16

IN THE BRONX

Soccer Clinic: 9 am to 11 am. Shoelace Park Benches. See Saturday, June 2.

Family Art Project: Pollinator Bats and Nocturnal Flowers: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults, \$2 children 6-18, children under 6 free. Admission is free until noon on Saturday.

Take part in an interactive project painting nocturnal flowers in fluorescent colors to add to a night-garden, "glow room" installation. Then make a furry, handmade paper-puppet bat to fly in the dayglo garden for a nectar feast at night. Pollinators Weekend event.

Meet the Bees: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 11 am to 1 pm; \$40.

This hands-on adventure is held in the apary. Get up close and personal with the bees of Wave Hill! Observe bee behavior in the gardens, then suit up in a hat and veil to peek inside a hive filled with 50,000 honeybees. Search for worker bees, drones, brood (baby bees), and maybe even catch a glimpse of the elusive queen. This event is appropriate for curious adults, and kids aged 14 and older who are accompanied by an adult.

Family Fitness Festival: Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East; (718) 543-8672; <https://www.nycgov-parks.org/events/2018/06/15/wbo-talent-show>; Noon to 3 pm; Free.

Come to the fifth annual festival and enjoy some fun and healthy activities for the entire family! There will be free cooking demos, fitness demos, sports and games for the kids, arts and crafts, face painting, and free raffles and giveaways. It's important a family makes staying healthy fun! This way it will be a part of a regular lifestyle. When adults workout and eat healthy, children are more likely to follow in their footsteps. The entire family will be engaged for the day, learning how to cook a healthy meal, creating their own fruit creature and participating in relay races.

Junior Pollinators Walk: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 1 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults, \$2 children 6-18, children under 6 free.

Join an expedition to hunt for colorful flowers and their creature pollinators in the gardens. Pollinators Weekend event. Meet at Perkins Visitor Center.

Bats! Brats! Beer! Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 1 pm to 4 pm; \$10 adults (\$5 children) Free for dads all day.

Calling all dads! This Father's Day Weekend, come celebrate on the front lawn of the

mansion and watch the New York Mutuals play with 1864 rules, balls, bats, and uniforms — but no helmets or gloves! After the game, kids join in the fun for a game of rounders with team members. Beer, brats, and hot dogs available for purchase.

Kids Paper Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4:30 m. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Saturday, June 2.

SUN, JUNE 17

IN THE BRONX

Family Art Project – Pollinator Bats and Nocturnal Flowers: 10 am-1pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, June 16.

MON, JUNE 18

FURTHER AFIELD

NYC Autism Charter Schools Board Meetings: NYC Autism Charter Schools, 433 E. 100th St. Manhattan; 977 Fox St. Bronx; (212) 860-2580; csecharan@nycacharterschool.org; www.nycautismcharterschool.org; 5 pm; Free.

The NYCA Charter Schools Board Meetings are open to parents, staff and any other members of the public.

TUES, JUNE 19

IN THE BRONX

Kid's Le Petit Art: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center. See Tuesday, June 5.

WED, JUNE 20

IN THE BRONX

"Lion and the Mouse": Slattery Park, 231 E. 183rd St; 311; www.wondersparkpuppets.com/free-summer-shows; 11 am; Free.

An Aesop Fable that teaches and entertains, presented by WonderSpark Puppets.

Recycle to art: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Wednesday, June 6.

THURS, JUNE 21

IN THE BRONX

Music Music New York: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 11 am to 5 pm; Free.

Make Music New York is NYC's largest one-day free celebration of music. The museum is joining the fun by participating in this unique music holiday, in which music makers of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds take center stage through live performances in outdoor public spaces across all five boroughs. Participants are encouraged to perform on the Sing for Hope piano that day.

Imaginative Arts for Kids: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Thursday, June 7.

Capoeira in the Park: 6:30 pm to 8 pm. East Lawn Memorial Grove at Van Cortlandt Park. See Thursday, June 7.

FURTHER AFIELD

Topsy Turvey Thursdays: 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Sugar Hill Children's Museum. See Thursday, June 7.

FRI, JUNE 22

IN THE BRONX

Seasonal Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Friday, June 1.

SAT, JUNE 23

IN THE BRONX

Family Art Project – Butterfly Habitat Hats: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults, \$2 children 6-18, children under 6 free. Admission is free until noon on Saturday.

See them and sketch them flying among the meadow grasses or on the butterfly bush in Wave Hill's Flower Garden. Learn about the life cycle of local butterfly species and the conditions they need in order to survive. Then make a richly textured butterfly-habitat hat filled with flowers and insects in an active landscape.

Kids Paper Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Saturday, June 2.

SUN, JUNE 24

IN THE BRONX

Family Art Project – Butterfly Habitat Hats: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, June 23.

TUES, JUNE 26

IN THE BRONX

Kid's Le Petit Art: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center. See Tuesday, June 5.

WED, JUNE 27

IN THE BRONX

Recycle to art: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Wednesday, June 6.

THURS, JUNE 28

IN THE BRONX

Imaginative Arts for Kids: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Thursday, June 7.

Capoeira in the Park: 6:30 pm to 8 pm. East Lawn - Memorial Grove - Van Cortlandt

Student art on display

Learning Through Art's exhibit A Year with Children 2018 is currently on display at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum through June 13.

The annual presentation, now in its 47th year, showcases select artworks by students in grades two through six who participated in Learning Through Art during the 2017–18 school year. More than 100 creative and imaginative works — including collages, drawings, found objects, installations, paintings, sculpture — and prints will be on display.

Participating schools include PS 86 (Kingsbridge Heights); PS 8 (Brooklyn Heights) and PS 9 (Prospect Heights); PS 28 (Washington Heights), PS 38 and PS 375/Mosaic Preparatory Academy (East Harlem); PS 88 (Ridgewood), PS 130 (Bayside), PS 144 (Rego Park), and PS 317 (Rockaway Park); and PS 48 (Grasmere).

Thirteen teaching artists facilitated 16 residencies in 11 New York City public schools, working closely with classroom teachers to develop projects that promote visual literacy while exploring and making connections with ideas



and themes related to the school's curriculum.

The program immerses students in the creative process and studied modernist artworks on view from the Thannhauser Collection and an exhibition of sculptures by Constantin Brancusi.

Learning Through Art's A Year with Children 2018, daily, 10 am to 5 pm. Free with general admission, no reservations required. Suitable for all ages.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum [1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 423-3500, www.guggenheim.org].

Bronx Zoo Treetop Adventure: Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd.; (718) 220-5100; bztreetop@wcs.org; www.bronxzoo.com; Sundays – Thursdays, 10 am–5 pm, Fridays and Saturdays, 10 am–8 pm, until Sat, June 30; Combo Climb and Zipline: \$59.95; Climb only: \$49.95; Zipline only: \$24.95.

It's a wild adventure at the Bronx Zoo! Climb through obstacle courses in the forest canopy, including rope bridges, tight rope walks, ladders, rolling and swinging elements and more. Plus, zipline over and back across the Bronx River! Arrival to Treetop Adventure must be via the Zoo's Bronx River Entrance (B).

Dig! Plant! Grow! Scent-sational

Herbs: New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Road; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 1:30–5:30 pm, Tues, June 19 – Sun, July 15; Included in All-Garden Pass. Weekends: \$28 adults, \$12 children 2-12, children under 2 free. Weekdays: \$23 adults, \$10 children 2-12, children under 2 free.

Enjoy the Family Garden's herbal delights and learn more about the delicious sweet and savory herbs growing throughout the summer garden. Smell, touch and explore how herbs are used in all parts of our daily lives. Pot up your own herb plant to tend to at home.

FURTHER AFIELD

"Frozen" on Broadway: St. James Theatre, 246 W. 44th St., Manhattan; (866) 870-2717; frozenthemusical.com; \$100 and up.

A musical worth melting for! If you loved the movie "Frozen," you'll love seeing Anna, Elsa, Kristoff, and Olaf come to life on stage to tell the timeless tale of two sisters who are pulled apart by a mysterious secret. Of course, there's the classic song "Let It Go," plus many new numbers for this new production.

Learning Through Art: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street, Manhattan; (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org; Daily, 10 am to 5 pm; until Wed, June 13; Free with general admission.

A Year with Children 2018, is an annual presentation, now in its 47th year, and showcases select artworks by students in grades two through six from the 11 public schools who participated in program. More than 100 creative and imaginative works, including collages, drawings, found objects, installations, paintings, sculpture, and prints will be on display.

Governors Island: New York Harbor, Manhattan; <https://govisland.com>; Weekdays, 10 am–6 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–7 pm, Ferries run from Manhattan and Brooklyn. Check website for schedules and fares. Entry to the island is free.

This unique New York City destination is open for the season! The 172-acre island in the heart of New York Harbor has something for everyone, from biking, slides, play fountains and hammocks to tours of historic Fort Jay and Castle Williams.

Park. See Thursday, June 7.

FURTHER AFIELD

Topsy Turvey Thursdays: 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Sugar Hill Children's Museum. See Thursday, June 7.

FRI, JUNE 29

IN THE BRONX

Seasonal Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Friday, June 1.

SAT, JUNE 30

IN THE BRONX

Family Art Project – Love-a-Tree Canvas Bags: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am–1 pm; Free with admission. \$8 adults, \$2 children 6–18, children under 6 free. Admission is free until noon.

Trees give us so much — shade, beauty, food, even oxygen. Why not make more of them and showcase them on a classy canvas bag! Use stencils and fabric paints, in the

form of sprays, stamps and crayons, to make tree art on your own reusable bag.

Kids Paper Arts and Crafts: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Saturday, June 2.

LONG-RUNNING

IN THE BRONX

Georgia O'Keeffe and Hawai'i: New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Road; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Included in All-Garden pass. Weekends: \$28 adults, \$12 children 2-12.; Weekdays: \$23 adults, \$10 children 2-12; children under 2 free.

Inspired by O'Keeffe's unique style of representing close-up views of flowers and fruit, children investigate botanical specimens and create art. Play in a Hawai'iian sandscape—a sandbox inspired by O'Keeffe's landscape paintings featuring real shell and rock specimens to uncover. Pot up a tropical ginger cutting to take home and observe its growth! Activities in the Everett Children's Adventure Garden.

Writing the book on repeating a grade

BY REBECCA EISENBERG

Do you have a child that repeated a grade? Are you thinking about having your child repeat a grade? This topic comes up often in the public-school system, specifically around this time of the year, when plans are being made for the following year. When I had to consider this question for my son, the lack of information and help on the subject astounded me. So, I wrote it myself with my book “My Second Year of Kindergarten.”

I went through this process with my son about three years ago. When his teachers recommended he repeat kindergarten, my husband and I felt mixed about it. From one perspective, I felt that giving him an extra year, given his age and delays, would be an optimal opportunity. On the other hand, what would this do for my son socially? How would he feel about repeating a grade?

After searching online for research and resources about repeating a grade — specifically kindergarten — I came up with very little valuable information. As a speech-language pathologist, my instinct is to find research and evidence to make informed decisions, but with this topic, there was little research available. In spite of this, my mother’s gut was telling me that my son repeating kindergarten was the right thing for him. The one thing I have learned as a parent is that I need to listen to my instinct about what is right for my child. This instinct, along with support from my son’s educators, is ultimately what helped my husband and I make the decision.

Once we decided our son would repeat the grade, we collaborated with his team at school and spoke to the principal. The decision just felt right for me. However, this was just the beginning, because we then had to tell our son and go through the process of the transition. As a parent and children’s book reviewer, I find that books tend to help my children and I discuss more difficult topics. But again, I found no books about repeating a grade. So I decided to write “My Second Year of Kindergarten.” Reading the draft to my son helped him understand the reasons why he was staying in kindergarten and the



progress he could look forward to making the following year. My husband and I took the time to tell him about this process in a simple, straightforward, and honest manner with little complex language. We also presented the information in a positive way and left the discussion open ended. The topic of repeating kindergarten is not a one-time conversation, it’s a dialogue that occurs over time.

Once I saw how this story helped my son, I published it so other parents and educators could benefit as well. Since the April release, I have heard from many parents about how much they value a book like this because of the lack of available resources on this topic. I also wanted to make this process a positive experience

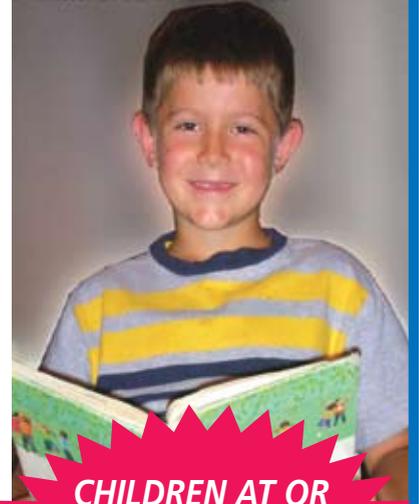
that could help other children develop a more flexible mindset about children with varying delays and disabilities.

Would you like to learn more? I discussed this topic with Penny Williams from Parenting ADHD and Autism at <http://parentingadhdandautism.com/2018/04/05/pap-036-repeating-grade-school-becca-eisenberg>. You can also check out my website, www.mysecondyearofkindergarten.com.

Rebecca Eisenberg is a speech-language pathologist, instructor, parent of two children, and author of several games for children with special needs, a story time workbook, and the children’s books “The Monkey Balloon,” “A Tale of The Monkey Balloon,” and “My Second Year of Kindergarten.”

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