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FEATURES

6 | Kids and Vaping
What parents need to know about this dangerous trend

7 | Filling Easter Eggs
(Without the candy!)

20 | Meeting History's Heroes
New PBS KIDS series teaches history—and important life lessons

22 | Introducing Fido & Junior
Ten tips for preparing your pets for a newborns' arrival

COLUMNS

8 | Special Needs
An education and disabilities advocate shares essential info for parents navigating the Individualized Education Plan process

12 | Family Financial Planning
Planning a trust for your special needs child

18 | Spotlight: The Arts
The importance of infusing the arts into your child's life from a young age

29 | Wellness
Important info for parents to know about allergies in children

30 | Good Sense Eating
Choosing baby's first foods

FAMILY FUN

24 | Calendar
The best family-friendly events in April for families

ADVERTISING

10 | Special Needs
14 | Camps

letter from the publisher

Award wins for our designers and writers

I attended the recently held Parenting Media Association Annual Awards Dinner where numerous honors are given out for excellence in Editorial & Design. It was with real pleasure that I was there to accept nine awards for our titles in the city and three for our sister publication in Westchester. Among our winners were three for our front covers; one being an illustration and two for our use of stock photography. Congratulations to Leah Mitch, Art Director.

Danielle Sullivan's Healthy Living column was a winner of a GOLD AWARD for Child Development & Parenting Issues; contributing writer Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman won a BRONZE AWARD for a personal essay "What Can We Teach Boys?"; contributing writer Tammy Scileppi won



three awards, two for provocative Q & A interviews and one for a feature in our Special Child magazines about folic acid supplements helping to prevent birth defects and lower the risk of autism. They translated into a BRONZE and two SILVERS.

Finally, contributing writer Alison Plitt won a GOLD News Feature Award for an article on a local New York Mom who has successfully raised her son "range free," a term that encourages childhood independence.

I was so proud to accept these Awards. I have been attending the PMA conferences for the last 20 years and have developed significant relationships with my colleagues around the nation and around the world



who publish in this niche. It's always a learning experience as well as one where I actually mentor the newer members and publishers just starting out. I am a veteran now it seems.

Thank you to the many talented and committed people who contribute and have contributed to our overall excellence. Over the years we have won numerous awards and I'm thrilled to say that this year was no exception.

Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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Kids and VAPING

What parents need to know about this dangerous trend

By Tanni Haas

Most parents have heard about vaping, but many are unsure about the answers to basic questions, such as how many kids actually do it, and whether or not it's something they should be concerned about. Here are the answers to some of the most common questions parents ask about this trend, based on the latest scientific research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Who vapes?

Twenty percent (one in five) of all high school students across the U.S. vape regularly, according to the research. For middle school students, that number is five percent (one in 20).

Those figures have increased dramatically over the past few years. In 2011, only 1.5 percent of high school students and less than one percent of middle school students vaped regularly. Put differently: more and more kids are starting to vape, and they are doing so at an alarmingly younger age.

What are kids ingesting?

Kids prefer either flavored vaping liquids with nicotine or marijuana.

The by far most popular vaping product, Juul, contains a lot of nicotine. Each Juul pod has as much nicotine as one full pack of regular cigarettes. Kids are especially attracted to vaping liquids that taste like alcoholic drinks, chocolate, fruit, menthol, and sweets.

When and where are they vaping?

In a word, everywhere, and any time they can get away with it.

They do it at school—in bathrooms, in hallways, even during class. Many kids admit to exhaling the vapor into their shirts or doing it when the teacher isn't looking.



They also do it at parties, where they try each other's vaping devices and liquids. They host so-called "cloud competitions" where they demonstrate and video each other's vaping tricks, like blowing smoke rings or creating funnels of smoke that look like tornadoes, and then upload videos to social media, especially YouTube.

Why vape?

When asked why they vape, most kids say because it's considered cool among their friends.

They enjoy entertaining their friends with tricks and watching other kids perform tricks on social media. They also do it to escape from boredom: They do it when they can't come up with anything better to do, just like constantly and mindlessly fidgeting with their phones and checking their texts and social media. Finally, they think it's harmless and very different from smoking cancer-causing regular cigarettes. More than 70 percent of middle and high school students have seen online and print advertising making that claim, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What are the effects?

Contrary to what kids believe, all vaping devices and liquids are bad for their health, especially those that contain nicotine, like Juul.

Nicotine is highly addictive and negatively impacts kids' ability to focus and learn. It also affects their mood and impulse control. Vaping increases kids' heart rate and blood pressure, causes the same kind of lung irritation like regular cigarettes, and can lead to coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.

Kids who vape are four times more likely than those who don't vape to start smoking regular cigarettes, according to the research. Instead of being a substitute for smoking, as many people think, vaping can actually lead kids to start smoking, researchers found. Finally, many vaping devices are of poor quality. There have been numerous incidents of exploding devices that have caused burns and other injuries.

Tanni Haas, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Communication Arts, Sciences, and Disorders at the City University of New York – Brooklyn College.

Filling Easter Eggs (Without Candy)

By Sarah Lyons

Our family loves an Easter egg hunt. It is always fun to see the kids running through the yard rushing to find the most eggs. As a mom of a child with food allergies, it is always a challenge to find items to fill all those plastic eggs with that are not candy. Having a variety of egg sizes helps you be able to stuff all your new ideas into the eggs without frustration. Whether, like me, your child has a food allergy, or you would just like to cut down on sugar overload, here are some non-candy ideas to fill all your eggs for the annual hunt.

Small toys

There are numerous ideas for small toys that you could fill eggs with: bouncy balls, small craft items, Play-Doh, tiny cars like Micro Machines, Shopkins, whistles, mini kazoo's, hand stamps, Polly Pockets, Barbie



accessories, mini rubber ducks or other bath toys, finger skateboards, marbles, jacks and a ball, fake bugs and worms, pirate patches, play money, stickers, tops, LEGOs, sticky hands, or just for fun—confetti! When choosing small toys to fill your eggs, please consider the age of the children participating in the egg hunt. Small toys may pose a choking hazard for young children.

Something practical

Practical items can be fun, too. Try filling eggs with erasers, pencil sharpeners, key chains, magic towels, cute Band-Aids, travel-size lotion, or hand sanitizer. My kid's favorite practical Easter egg filler is money!

Something to wear

Your kids can have fun and accessorize with these ideas: barrettes, hair ties, socks, nail polish, chapstick, lip gloss, silly shoe laces, bracelets, earrings, rings, temporary tattoos, zipper pulls, or bead necklaces.

Snacks

If you are avoiding candy due to the sugar rush, try these little snacks that are the perfect size for Easter eggs: Goldfish crackers, pretzels, grapes, soup crackers, Cuties (oranges), veggie straws, berries, animal crackers, bite-size graham crackers, nuts, raisins, or other dried fruit.

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The ABCs of IEPs

An education & disabilities advocate shares essential info for parents navigating the Individualized Education Plan process

By Margarycel E. Nunez.

In today's society, it is not uncommon to know a child who needs an IEP (Individualized Education Plan). This is due to the awareness that parents have about child development and milestones, along with the efforts from preschools that are receiving more training to help identify, and properly guide parents on how to manage this difficult task. Another factor that adds to more IEP designations is that children are more sedentary and technologically connected, this leads to the inability to develop social skills, and therefore concerns from teachers result in evaluations to rule out delays or neurological disconnect.

An IEP, as the name suggests, takes education and unitizes it for the specific child listed on the document. It's a road

map of success for everyone (parents, teachers, support professionals, and school administrators) to be on the same page, and effectively work on the skills as mandated in the document. It's not an instrument of doom, as some parents erroneously believe; its purpose is to provide all the help necessary for a child to succeed in school and in society at large. A child that goes without needed services will develop deeper issues, something as simple as a speech delay can become behavioral, stemming from frustration of not being understood.

An IEP is a living document that is revisited every year in order to determine its viability, and every effort is made by the education team to provide the least restrictive environment for the child. During the meeting everyone discusses what they think needs improvement and would like to see change.

Every year the meeting ends in one of three conclusions: Either the child is found to still need the services provided, or the child needs to add services or frequency of services, or the child no longer needs an IEP. These meetings and the needed evaluations are made by the professionals (child psychologist, followed by a Special Ed teacher, Speech Therapist, OT, or PT) that come to do formal assessments at home or at school (in the case of an initial evaluation) or the teachers and therapists at school that are in constant contact with the child and know what has been improving and what will need more work or different strategies, including the school social worker or preschool director if a child is under 5.

Most people wait until the child turns 3 in order to request an evaluation from the DOE, when in fact, it can be requested as soon as the child turns two and a half. The benefit in requesting an evaluation a bit earlier is that this process takes a long time and the more services a child receives before entering Kindergarten, the more likely it will be that the child will overcome some, if not all, the concerns if the child has a simple IEP that lists just speech or Physical Therapy as the prescribed service. All children are categorized as "preschooler with a disability" if they have an IEP, even if

there is no diagnosis and what they need is minimal to reach their educational goals; it is a blanket statement and there is no diagnosis or stigma behind it, so parents shouldn't be alarmed to see that. Once the child no longer needs services, the document will read "preschooler/student without a disability"

In order to request an evaluation, parents need to follow a few steps and be prepared to be persistent, staying on top of everyone who is handling the case will ensure you don't wait for a year. It is wise to enlist your child's preschool director and their teacher; they should be familiar with this process, but for reference please see this list:

1. Make a letter to the school district, citing your concerns and requesting an evaluation packet, make sure to include your child's name and date of birth, as well as your name, address and phone number. Make a few copies for your records.
2. Take the letter in person to the designated CPSE district, this way they will give you the packet on the spot which shaves a few weeks off the process.

An IEP is not an instrument of doom, as some parents erroneously believe; its purpose is to provide all the help necessary for a child to succeed in school and in society at large.

3. Do not sign anything from the packet, this gets done during the initial evaluation with someone from the agency you will select out of the listing they provide.
4. Choose an evaluation site to conduct the evaluation, I highly recommend to schedule all evaluations and observations at the child's school as much as possible; it is likely that the child will have different behaviors when in a group setting versus in the comfort of home. The more

information is provided to and observed by the specialists, the more accurate the education plan will be.

5. Receive and go over the evaluation summary that the site will send you via mail and speak to them should you have any concerns or if they forgot to include crucial information such as delays at birth or existing diagnosis, both of which have weight in a service determination.
6. Attend the meeting.
7. Follow up on recommendations.

During the year when the child turns 5 there is a "turning 5 meeting" which basically means that the child is reassessed and transferred from CPSE (Committee for Preschool Special Education) to CSE (Committee for Special Education). With the right supports, adequate professionals and follow up, every child will do an amazing job during their school years.

Margarycel E. Nunez, MASSED., is an accredited preschool administrator and proud mother-of-three, one of whom has Down Syndrome.

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Planning a Trust for Your Special Needs Child

Ensuring legal and financial care to make sure your vulnerable child is protected

By Anthony Corrao

If you have a child with special needs, you've probably stayed up at night with unique concerns about the future. One natural concern is who will take care of your child if you are unable to do so. Another major concern for parents of special needs children is how much it will cost to care for your child and who will pay for it. Even if you are around, the need to care for special needs children may continue into their adult years. Here are some tips for creating a plan that will help ensure your child is protected and cared for:

Set up a special needs trust

A special needs trust will formalize decisions about your child's care after you pass away. This is an important step. Without a special needs trust established before your death, other people, or even the courts, will make decisions for your child. A special needs trust provides for your child—the beneficiary. The funds in a special needs trust are allocated toward the cost of caregivers, education, travel, and medical expenses not covered by Medicaid or other government programs.

Special needs trusts are complex legal documents. Each trust is set up to meet your child's unique needs. They must comply with state laws and government agency rules. There are also costs associated with establishing and managing the trust, which you'll need to budget for properly. Consulting a lawyer who specializes in this area can help you understand and set up a special needs trust, and manage it safely.

Choose your trustee carefully

A trustee is the person you choose to administer the trust with for the purposes specified in the trust. You'll need to designate a trustee to oversee the special needs trust, and that person pays service providers and other vendors directly from the trust for goods and services involved in your child's care. He or she will also decide how much money your child gets out of the trust.

The job of the trustee is extremely

important. Choose this person wisely—the trustee should understand your wishes for your child, is someone you trust, and is willing to accept the long-term commitment and responsibilities of being a trustee.

Consider how the trust will be funded

A well-executed special needs trust should protect the assets for the benefit of your child. Assets in the trust invested in stocks or mutual funds will be affected by market swings and volatility. Working with a financial advisor to create a diversified portfolio may give you some comfort during tumultuous periods in the market.

Another method people choose to fund a special needs trust is with life insurance. There are many different types of life insurance to choose from. I recommend consulting with a financial advisor to learn about the options and which type of life insurance might be best suited for your specific circumstances, goals, and concerns.

Important documents

Another often overlooked step it is to prepare some important documents to guide the trustee and future caregivers. This will help them honor your wishes for your child's care. These documents might include:

A life care plan or letter of intent. While not a legal document, it can be very important. This document should include every aspect of day-to-day care requirements for your child, including dietary needs and restrictions. It should mention family dynamics that might make care challenging. These instructions should be given to family members, caregivers, guardians, trustees, or anyone else who will be regularly involved in your child's care.

Beneficiary designations. If you set up any additional trust funds, make sure family members know who your other beneficiaries are so there's no dispute about trust fund assets.

Last will and testament

This is separate from the trust, but your lawyer should prepare it with the trust in mind.



You should also have a list of caregivers and successor trustees or guardians. These are people whose commitment you already have, in writing, to accept these roles.

Communication is key

Talk to your family members about the trust, the life care plan, and other important documents so they understand their roles. They'll need the names and contact information of your attorney and trustees who aren't family members. Also, make certain family members know where they can find these documents you've prepared.

Planning for the future of your special needs child can be challenging. You can ensure peace of mind for you and your family by following these tips early and updating your care plan and other documents as needed.



Anthony N. Corrao is President of Wealth Management and Director of Corporate Education at Manhattan Ridge Advisors. For over 25 years he has helped families move towards their financial

goals by developing financial, educational, and retirement planning strategies.

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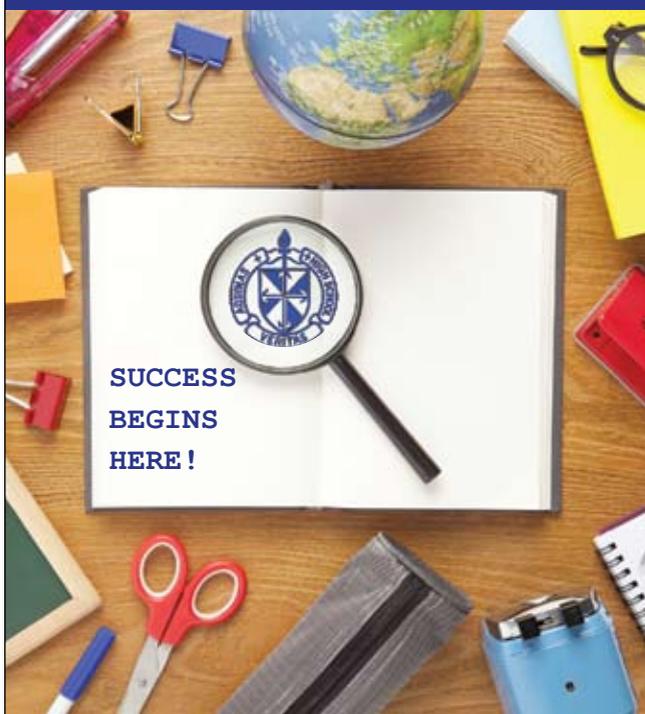
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AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL



2019 SUMMER ENRICHMENT WORKSHOPS

- ▶ Aquinas High School is offering summer enrichment workshops for girls and boys entering grades 6, 7, 8 and 9.
- ▶ Each workshop is \$50 per week, per student, in which morning and afternoon sessions are available from July 8th through August 9th (weekly sessions may vary based on enrollment).
- ▶ These workshop sessions will include an Actors' Workshop, Basketball Skills & Drills, Creative Fairy Tales, Newspaper Publishing, Real World Math, and Surgical Techniques.
- ▶ To register online, please visit www.aquinashs.org/admissions.
- ▶ For more information contact Ms. Hernandez at 718-367-2113, ext. 137 or ahsenrichment@gmail.com.

685 E. 182 Street | Bronx, NY 10457
www.aquinashs.org

Aquinas High School Summer Enrichment Workshops

Belmont
 718-367-2133
ahsenrichment@gmail.com
www.aquinashs.org/admissions

New summer enrichment workshops for girls and boys entering grades 6, 7, 8 and 9. Each workshop is \$50 per week, per student, in which morning and afternoon sessions are available from July 8th through August 9th (sessions may vary). These workshop sessions will include an Actors' Workshop, Basketball Skills & Drills, Creative Writing, Newspaper Publishing, Real World Math, and Surgical Techniques.

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www.cardinalspellmanprep.com

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Summer Camp at the Cary Leeds Center for Tennis & Learning

South Bronx
 718-247-7420
caryleedstennis.org
caryleedsinfo@nyjtl.org
 Led by seven-time Grand Slam Champion and Executive Director Liezel Huber, the Cary Leeds Center for Tennis & Learning offers Summer Camp from June 17 - August 23, 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. for juniors ages five to 18 years old. All levels are welcome from beginners in the development level program to advanced players in the competition level program. Players will train to develop necessary tennis technique, improve consistency and create basic patterns of play for effective point construction. Included is a fitness component designed to improve players' footwork, balance, speed and strength. Round-trip transportation is available.

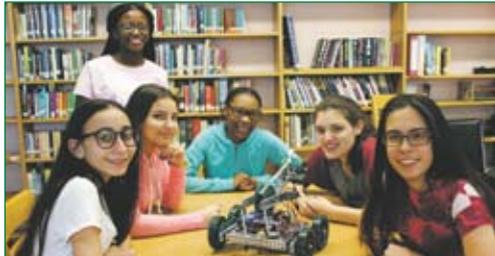
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www.newsettlementcommunitycenter.org
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YOUTH TECHNOLOGY

Registration is now open.
Next cycle starts 7/13

ALVIN AILEY DANCE

Registration starts:
7/1 member, 7/3 non-member

GROUP SWIM

Registration starts:
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7/22 member, 7/24 non-member

Summer Swim Camp Registration is Now Open. Camp starts on July 18th

ARTES MARCIALES MIXTAS

Incripciones empiezan:
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YOUTH TECHNOLOGY

Incripciones esta' abierta.
El proximo ciclo comienza 7/13

ALVIN AILEY DANCE

Incripciones empiezan:
7/1 miembro, 7/3 no-miembro

NATACION EN GROUP

Incripciones empiezan:
6/24 miembro, 6/26 no-miembro
7/22 miembro, 7/24 no-miembro

El campamento de natación de verano inscripciones Está Abierta. El campamento comienza el 18 de julio



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TACHS CODE 303



The Arts

A critical component for a child's education and development

By Jean Sheff

Most parents have heard of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education, but maybe not as many know about STEAM (science, technology, education, art, and math) education. Some educators contend that adding the “A” for art is essential for a child's full development and education.

Why are the arts important for children?

Arts education encompasses many disciplines including music, drama, dance, design, and the visual arts. Yet, it is more than just studying specific disciplines, an arts education can teach children to generally use their imagination to solve problems and approach their work in a variety of ways.

“The arts teach discipline, focus, cooperation, and creativity—a trait that 72 percent of employers say is the number one skill they seek when hiring,” says Mara Manus, executive director of New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). “Students involved in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, and arts engagement makes low-income students more than twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.”

Many educators agree that arts education can help build determination and resilience in children and can also help them master important skills. Yet, in many school districts funding for arts programs have been slashed to the bone.

Providing financial support

“Through the Arts Education Program, NYSCA provides \$3 million statewide in dedicated support to community arts education programs as well as hands-on grade pre-K-12 in-school instruction,” Manus says. In addition, she says the agency provides nearly \$500,000 to support scholarships and training programs for underserved communities and \$150,000 to support community music schools.

Manus says NYSCA sees the impact of



this support in so many ways: students build self-esteem and confidence as they learn and excel at new talents; they cultivate empathy as they study the viewpoints of diverse characters through theater and literature; they develop diligence as they practice an instrument or polish dance moves; they learn to express themselves in healthy ways as they write, paint or create their own films and videos.

NYSCA in-school grantees must all meet state learning standards. “We are continually

impressed by the innovative ways they connect the arts to school curricula—from a mummy-inspired dance segment tying into a social studies class about Egypt to architecture instruction that integrates math and science concepts as students build their own bridges,” Manus says.

Throughout the city, there are so many opportunities for children to explore the arts through NYSCA's programs. According to their website: “NYSCA's Arts Education

Program cultivates the creativity of all New Yorkers, from preschoolers to seniors, in both school and community settings. Arts instruction empowers students of all ages and backgrounds to build hands-on skills in a range of disciplines, such as mastering a musical instrument, experimenting with a collage technique or learning a new dance choreography.”

Manus says that it’s also worth noting that museums often have special family programming during school vacations, and local libraries may be able to provide passes for museum admission.

How parents can help

Manus says parents can encourage children of all ages to explore the arts by sharing experiences with them and helping them pursue artistic interests through community arts education programs.

Here is just a small sampling of New York City arts programs for parents to explore with their children:

- **The Art Farm** theartfarms.org
- **The Brooklyn Museum**

“Students involved in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, and arts engagement makes low-income students more than twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.”

brooklynmuseum.org

- **Carnegie Hall Kids** careniehall.org
- **Children’s Museum of the Arts** cmany.org
- **Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM)** cmom.org
- **Church Street School for Music and Art** churchstreetschool.org
- **The Craft Studio** craftstudionyc.com
- **JCC Manhattan** jccmanhattan.org
- **Private Picassos** privatepicassos.com
- **Symphony Space** symphonyspace.org
- **Theatreworks USA** twusa.org
- **WeBop at Jazz at Lincoln Center** academy.jazz.org/webop
- **Young Audiences New York** yany.org
- **92Y** 92y.org

Anywhere, anytime

“An increasing number of arts and cultural

organizations also have rich digital offerings, making even snow days or sick days opportunities to engage with the arts, often for free or at a low cost,” says Manus.

For example, she points out that the Metropolitan Museum of Art website offers a digital search of its collection, and you can download more than 400,000 public domain images that can be “remixed” to create your own works of art. The New York Philharmonic website includes free video of recent concerts.

Audiences of all ages have greater access to the arts than ever before, says Manus, and this means that sharing the arts with children is an attainable and deeply worthwhile goal.

Jean Sheff is editor of Westchester Family and an enthusiastic supporter of children’s art programs.

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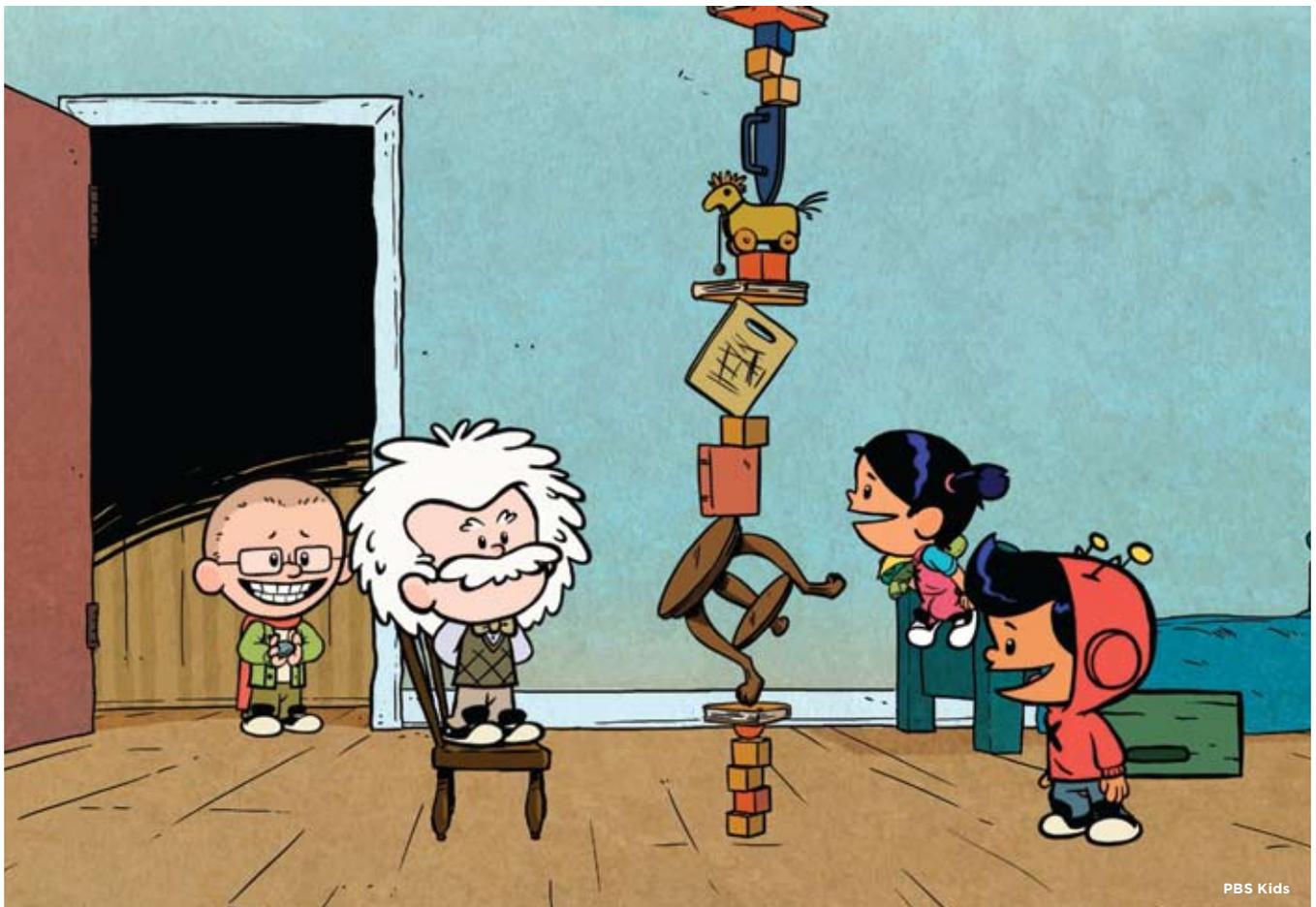
No previous experience necessary. Classes for 2019-2020 begin in September at SAB’s Lincoln Center headquarters in Manhattan. Substantial scholarship program for students with need. Additional auditions in New York City neighborhoods throughout April.

Optional pre-registration and more information at SAB.ORG/AUDITIONS

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and Council Members Stephen Levin and Helen Rosenthal, by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, and by gifts from Capezio and The Ralph M. Cestone Foundation.



Center photo by Jai Odell. Other photos by Rosalie O'Connor.



Kids will meet historical figures such as Albert Einstein in the PBS KIDS show “Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum.”

Meeting History’s Heroes

New PBS KIDS series teaches history—and important life lessons

By Tammy Scileppi

Kids can do incredible things! Tomorrow’s changemakers are being told from a young age that they can accomplish anything, as long as they work hard and believe in themselves.

And it seems clear that today’s girls and boys are getting a strong sense of who they are early on in their development. Ask any parent and they’ll tell you their feisty preschoolers already know what they want and oftentimes, just how to get it.

Because our cute, super-bright stars also need good role models outside the home, it’s a shame that these days, there aren’t that many real heroes they can look up to.

And, in case you haven’t noticed, the quality of our future movers and shakers’ education isn’t what it used to be. Angry city parents are asking: “Where have all the millions of funding dollars gone?” and “Why are so many

public schools getting failing grades?”

So, thank goodness for PBS KIDS! The channel has helped children ages 2-8 by providing a much-needed educational boost that has given America’s kiddos the opportunity to explore new ideas and worlds through television, digital media, and community-based programs. The free PBS KIDS 24-seven channel and local stations across the country support the entire ecosystem in which kids learn, along with their teachers, parents, and community.

In the fall, PBS KIDS will be filling in a bit of that history gap as well, with a new animated series based on the children’s book series “Ordinary People Change the World” by *New York Times* bestselling author Brad Meltzer (and illustrator Christopher Eliopoulos). “Xavier Riddle And The Secret Museum” debuts on November 11 and will introduce youngsters to inspiring, real-life historical figures they can learn about and

look up to, and the character virtues that helped them succeed.

Young viewers will feel like they’re taking part in the exciting adventures of Xavier Riddle, his sister Yadina, and their friend Brad, as they face a new “teaching moment” challenge each episode. The trio must turn to the Secret Museum, a hidden room under an ordinary museum, which gives them the ability to travel back in time to meet several historical folks, portrayed as kids. These inspirational encounters will help the adventurers solve those challenges through relatable stories that imaginative girls and boys can easily connect with.

A young, brave Rosa Parks and a creative Leonardo da Vinci; budding athlete Jackie Robinson and fearless Amelia Earhart, as well as other historical figures, will teach kids important lessons in history—and about themselves—through which children can recognize their own unlimited potential and

make the connection between attributes that made each historical figure a hero and the same qualities they possess as well.

“Our goal is always for children to see themselves in our characters,” said Linda Simensky, vice president of children’s programming at PBS. “The series takes a fresh and accessible approach to teaching kids ages 4-7 about important historical figures and the experiences that shaped their lives, while exploring social and emotional concepts and character traits, like courage, resilience, and setting and accomplishing goals.”

She added: “Characters find out that you have to practice something to be good at it, or they might learn a strategy for dealing with stage fright. Or perhaps they’ll find out that learning can inspire you. Many of the ideas are basic, but to our viewers, these are new.”

Boys and girls will meet a young Marie Curie, who follows her dreams no matter what, and a school-aged Harriet Tubman, who models courage and bravely moves forward even when she is scared.

“Author Brad Meltzer is a visionary

storyteller, and we’re thrilled to partner with him and 9 Story Media Group to bring this series to life. We hope that it will help kids across America discover that anyone can change the world,” Simensky says.

“‘Xavier Riddle And The Secret Museum’ isn’t just an entertaining educational series, but something much more personal to me. I was determined to give my kids better heroes to emulate,” said Meltzer. “When my own kids watch this series, I get to see them realize that there’s extraordinary within the ordinary. This was my hope in creating the book series for my kids—and my hope for children around the world. Through this show and the heroes we feature, I hope all children find their own heroic abilities and feel empowered to change the world.”

“This series has it all—endearing characters, action-packed adventures, a healthy dose of humor and an important message for kids,” says Angela Santomero, Chief Creative Officer for 9 Story. “We love that it celebrates the idea that kids have the curiosity and adventurous spirit to change the world. This series does just that and

inspires us all.”

Along with the TV series, “Xavier Riddle And The Secret Museum” will offer digital content for kids, parents, and teachers, debuting this fall. These resources provide an opportunity to extend the learning at home (PBS KIDS for Parents) and in the classroom (PBS LearningMedia) for educators.

Kids, parents, and teachers will be able to stream clips and full episodes across PBS KIDS’ video platforms, including the free PBS KIDS Video App. “Xavier”-themed games will be available on pbskids.org and the free PBS KIDS Games App.

For more, visit pbs.org/pressroom, or follow PBS KIDS on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer and journalist, parent, and regular contributor to New York Parenting. Interviewing hundreds of New York City’s movers and shakers has been an amazing adventure for her. Scileppi’s work has appeared in a variety of media outlets. She has also written book cover copy for Simon and Schuster.

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INTRODUCING Fido & Junior

Ten tips for preparing your pets for a newborns' arrival

By Denise Morrison Yearian

Expectant parents who want to foster a loving relationship between their pet and the newest member of the family may want to consider these 10 expert suggestions.

Acclimate early

When the pet's domain begins to change, start preparing him to share his space, says Pat Hoffman, a 30-year veteran dog trainer.

"As you paint the nursery and bring furniture or other items into the house, invite your pet into the baby's room to sniff around. Keep the atmosphere positive by stroking him and using a loving tone of voice."

That's what Abby Drobinski did.

"Tank had been around babies before, so I wasn't so concerned about his behavior; I was more worried he'd feel displaced," she says of her then 6-year-old Labrador Retriever. "When we began to set up the nursery, I encouraged Tank to go in and sniff the baby's clothes, toys, and other things so he would feel included."

Introduce the audible

If there is a mobile or baby monitor, turn it on before the baby comes home so your pet can get familiar with nursery noises, says Ilana Reisner, DVM, Ph.D., DACVB, behavioral medicine specialist.

"Commercial CDs with baby sounds such as crying, laughing, and playing may be helpful too [soundtherapy4pets.com]. Have your pet lie on a mat with a chew toy or treat while these sounds play so he associates them with calm, positive feelings."

Elizabeth Warren didn't purchase a CD

to replicate infant sounds, but she did use a baby doll.

"I found one that made crying noises so Cali could hear somewhat lifelike sounds and get used to seeing something in my arms," says the mother of her then 2.5-year-old pup. "Also, several times when we were resting together, the baby kicked in my belly and it startled Cali. So I pointed to my tummy, patted Cali and calmly said, 'That's Abby, she's our new baby.'"

Set forth smells

Introduce the pet to the new family member before baby is even home from the hospital.

"While your baby is still at the hospital, bring home a clothing item or blanket he used and let your pet sniff it," Reisner says. "A wet diaper is a good idea, too. Some parents even use baby powder and lotions beforehand, though that's not necessary."

Build in boundaries

If you don't want your pet to have unsupervised access to the nursery or other room, start prohibiting that space before the child arrives, Hoffman says.

"Place a baby gate across the doorway so your pet knows the area is off limits. When the baby does come home and you go into those rooms, let your pet to accompany you so he doesn't feel left out."

Reisner agrees.

"Likewise, create a safe space where your dog or cat can retreat to if the noise becomes bothersome or he wants to be left alone. Make it an inviting environment with bedding, food, water, and chew toys. If you have a cat, include a litter box and an area to hide," she says.

Offer lap alternatives

If your pet likes to sit on or snuggle next to you, create a substitute location for times you and the baby need space, Reisner says.

"Place a comfortable bed with chew toys in each primary room where your pet can lie without being right on top of you. Teach him to go to that space on cue. Do it well in advance of the baby's arrival."

Reinforce rules

Make sure your dog knows and obeys basic commands such as: "Sit," "Lie down," "Come," and "Get off the furniture," Reisner says. "If you are unsuccessful, find a trainer who uses positive reinforcement techniques to help you."

Allow introductions

"When the baby is brought home, put your dog on a leash and take him outside on neutral territory to meet the newest family member," Hoffman says. "Hold the infant securely and let your dog sniff him while you make verbal introductions. Then go into the house together."

When the Drobinski baby was born, Tank stayed with relatives until the infant had settled in.

"When Tank did come home, my husband took the two of them into the nursery and held Sebastien while he got down on the dog's level and made introductions," she says. "Almost immediately Tank could tell the baby was special to us; whenever Sebastien would cry, Tank made a beeline for the nursery to find out what was wrong."

Provide positive reinforcement

Hoffman says when you hold, feed, or diaper



your newborn, use positive words and a loving tone with your pet.

“Praise positive behaviors. You don’t have to continually pet during these times; stroke with your voice,” she says. “You may not always have access to food, so save treats for times your baby is in the stroller or a high chair and you have a free hand.”

Spend quality time

“After the baby comes home, carve out one-

on-one time with your pet for grooming, training, exercising, relaxing, or playing,” Hoffman says.

Warren did this.

“I was careful to maintain—and not increase—the level of attention I gave Cali before the baby was born so she didn’t experience a decrease in attention afterward,” she says. “That said, whenever Abby went down for a nap, Cali and I would sit, play, or roughhouse together.”

Provide supervision

Hoffman says no matter how well behaved your pet is, it should never be left alone with a small child.

“Always provide constant supervision. If the baby cries or starts to scream, it can invoke an animal’s prey drive,” she says.

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

calendar

APRIL

© AMNH/D. Finnin

BIG BONES

The American Museum of Natural History has brought a new exhibition to life, “T:rex: The Ultimate Predator.” In honor of the museum’s 150th anniversary, they went big by unleashing the killer-predator T.rex last month. In this exhibit, you will be able to see a T.rex from its early, defenseless hatchling years to a fully grown massive adult. With the most scientifically accurate display of a 43 ft. T.rex on display, you will be in awe of what this historic creature was capable of. Not only was this dinosaur enormous but it weighed 6-9 tons. At this exhibit you will be able to build a 66 million old T.rex

through a virtual reality experience and interact with a life-size animation of the dinosaur reacting to visitors passing by. Whether you are a T.rex enthusiast or know little about these amazing creatures, this engaging exhibit will reel you in with life-like displays and information on discoveries that you never would have expected. The Museum of Natural History’s objective is to spark curiosity and a sense of exploration—“T.rex:The Ultimate Predator” truly represents that and is definitely worth seeing. This exhibit will run through August 9. Prices vary. *American Museum of Natural History [Central Park West & 79th Street, Manhattan. amnh.org]*

1 MONDAY

Tutoring Club. Need a little extra help with reading or ELA? Kids from K-5th can come to Soundview Library to seek out some assistance with their homework after school. Register your student in advance to see a tutor every Monday afternoon for a 30 minute session. Mondays, 3 – 5 pm. Free. *Soundview, 660 Sound View Avenue, Bronx. (718) 589-0880. nypl.org.*

4 THURSDAY

City Center On the Move. To commemorate the 75th anniversary of New York City Center, NYC Parks Arts and Culture & Fun are making performing arts accessible for everyone in the city. There will be plenty of fun for all by bringing dancing and singing performances throughout all the boroughs with Bronx-born performers and other musical New York natives. 6:30 pm. Free. *St. Mary's Recreation Center, 4263, 450 St Ann's Avenue.*

6 SATURDAY

Family Art Project: The Epic of an Eel. See how eels make their annual migration and go through their adaptations—especially in new environments. You will also be able to create your own puppet theater to reenact their fascinating underwater journey. 10 am – 1 pm. Free, and admission to the grounds is free until noon. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

Stop 'N' Swap With GrowNYC. Give items that you no longer use a new life with Stop N' Swap!



Ben Hider

Planter's Paradise

The weather is getting warmer and it is time to plant! Here at the New York Botanical Garden, bring your young ones to learn about gardening. Celebrate spring at the Edible Academy with gardening techniques, such as sowing seeds, digging through dirt, and watering plants. Make sure that you wear clothes that you don't mind getting some smudges on, because you will be getting in the dirt! Yes—you will be getting your hands dirty as you

learn about compost and encountering friendly, wiggly worms. The best part is that you are not limited to just growing at the New York Botanical Garden; you will be able to take home your own worm castings to get growing at home! This is a great way to get outside, get planting, and have a blast with family and worms. This garden will be open from April 2 to May 12. Prices vary. *New York Botanical Garden [2900 Southern Boulevard. nybg.org.]*

Bring your own clean, reusable, and portable items such as clothes, toys, housewares, games, books, and take home something “new-to-you.” If you don't have anything to bring you can still come out and browse! April 6, April 13, April 14, April 18, Noon –3 pm. Free. *Locations vary. (212) 788-7900. grownyc.org.*

8 MONDAY
Tutoring Club. See April 1

12 FRIDAY
Group Overnight Safari (Ages 5 and up). Ever wanted to spend the night at the zoo? This is your time because the Bronx Zoo is allowing you to host a private group to stay overnight with the animals. Experience the sounds of the zoo, meet a live ambassador animal, and enjoy a snack with your best buds. If you are an animal lover, this zoo experience will be like no other. Daily, April 12 – April 13, 5:30 pm – 10 am. \$100/ \$75 members. *Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. tickets.wcs.org.*

13 SATURDAY
Stop 'N' Swap With GrowNYC. See April 6

Group Overnight Safari (Ages 5+). See April 12

14 SUNDAY
Stop 'N' Swap With GrowNYC. See April 6

15 MONDAY
Tutoring Club. See April 1

18 THURSDAY
Stop 'N' Swap With GrowNYC. See April 6

20 SATURDAY
The Zoo: Big Bear Mornings. Learn about bears and how the Bronx Zoo cares for them while enjoying a snack. Following

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 calendar@newyorkfamily.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!

this, your little one will be able to meet one of the zoo's small ambassador animals and be able to see the bears go out on exhibit. April 20, May 18, 8–6 pm. \$45/\$35 members. *The Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. tickets.wcs.org.*

Easter Egg Hunt & Spring Celebration. Grab your family and get ready for a community event that will be egg-cellent! Celebrate Easter in the traditional way by egg hunting! This event is a great way to mingle with community members, win candy, and celebrate Easter with everyone. 12–5 pm. Donation based. *3427 Knox Place, Bronx. eventbrite.com.*

21 SUNDAY

Dinosaur Safari. Go on a safari ride to learn about the dinosaurs that roamed the land long before we were here. Learn about these extinct creatures as well as present animals that are here today, and connect the dots with their similarities. You will also be able to excavate fossils, meet a dinosaur, and document by taking photos! Times vary. Daily, beginning April 21. Prices vary. *Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. bronxzoo.com.*

12th Annual Easter Egg Hunt. Time to hunt for eggs this Easter at the 12th Annual Easter Egg Hunt. Get ready for the hunt with over a 1,000 eggs that are filled with candies and cash. Purchase your tickets on a donation base with all proceeds going towards the American Cancer Society for research. 11am–12pm. Donation based. *Bronx Park East, Lydig Avenue and Bronx Park E Bronx. eventbrite.com.*

22 MONDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

Tutoring Club. See April 1



Green is Great!

The Earth is our home. With that being said, it is our responsibility to clean up, tend to it, and take care of it with kindness. April is a great time to recognize and celebrate our earth with beauty blooming everywhere—flowers, green grass, and trees turning the perfect hue of color. This year for Earth Day, celebrate at The Museum of the City of New York by engaging with the many activities that commemorate the environment. Go on a scavenger hunt in the exhibition *Activist New York*, where you will learn plenty of helpful tips to help the environment. Aside from the hunt, there will be plenty of other activities that will teach you about our planet. This event is a great one for the entire family because not only is it fun, it's informative and vital that we teach our little ones how to protect our habitat. This event will be held from 11am–2pm on April 22nd (Earth Day). Free with museum admission. *Museum of the City of New York [1220 5th Avenue, Manhattan. mcny.org.]*

23 TUESDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

24 WEDNESDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

25 THURSDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

26 FRIDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

Toddler Art. Exposing children to art in a classroom at an early age will get them ready for a

school setting. They will get an introduction to world-famous artists, like Monet, Picasso, and Matisse while being able to create their own artwork and channel their creativity. 12:15–1:15 pm. Free. *Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center in Williamsbridge Oval, 3225 Reservoir Oval E, Bronx. (212) NEW-YORK. nycgovparks.org.*

27 SATURDAY

We Run For The Wild. Run free and wild like animals should! The rate of animals around the world are going extinct at a much faster rate than ever before —

about 10,000 times faster. With that being said, this 5k is to fundraise for the protection of wild and endangered animals. This year the Wild Conservation Society (WCS) will be focusing on the 40 percent declining rate of giraffes in Uganda over the past 30 years. These animals have been highly sought after, and now, we must help preserve their wildlife community. Prices Vary. *Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. my.wcs.org.*

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

Family Art Project: Tree Ring Mandalas. Given by how many rings a tree has determines how old it is. Each year, trees create a visible ring that signifies its age. With this indication, you can tell the changes that it has undergone throughout its lifetime. You will be able to do something similar by creating a mandala that signifies the changes and growth that has taken part in your own life—a great craft reflecting self-growth! 10 am–1pm. Free, and admission to the grounds is free until noon. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

Junior Arborist Station.

Kids will get to ascend into the black cherry tree at Wave Hill to get a new perspective of the land's beauty. Learn and ask questions about trees with the arborist experts. Ages five and older welcome with an adult. 11 am. Free with admission to the grounds. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

Toddler Art. See April 26

Family Walk: Totally Trees.

There are trees all around us, but do we really know much about them and their long lives? Learn how trees grow and the different parts that play a large role in their overall life cycle. Join a tree educator while you embark on this tree journey, and learn loads of new information. Ages six and older welcome with an adult. 1 pm. Free with admission to the

grounds. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

28 SUNDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

Children's Zoo Goes Blue.

In honor of Autism Awareness Month, the Bronx Zoo is opening its doors early before it opens to the public for children with autism and their families. Meet one of the zoo's smaller ambassador animals up close, feed barnyard animals, and enjoy some light snacks! 9–10:30 am. \$35 / \$25 for members. *Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. tickets.wcs.org.*

Family Art Project: Tree Ring Mandalas. See April 27

Junior Arborist Station. See April 27

Toddler Art. See April 26

Family Walk: Totally Trees. See April 27

29 MONDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

Children's Zoo Goes Blue. See April 28

Family Art Project: Tree Ring Mandalas. See April 27

Junior Arborist Station. See April 27

Toddler Art. See April 26

Family Walk: Totally Trees. See April 27

Tutoring Club. See April 1

30 TUESDAY

Dinosaur Safari. See April 21

Children's Zoo Goes Blue. See April 28

Family Art Project: Tree Ring Mandalas. See April 27



Wild Things

Run free and wild like animals should! The rate of animals around the world are going extinct at a much faster rate than ever before—about 10,000 times faster. With that being said, this 5k is to fundraise for the protection of wild and endangered animals. This year the Wild Conservation Society (WCS) will be focusing on the 40 percent declining rate of giraffes in Uganda over the past 30 years. This fundraising event will raise funds to protect their habitats and preserve their existence against the poachers who trap these majestic animals with a towering height of 20ft. These animals have been highly sought after, and now, we must help preserve their wildlife community. Come to this 5k to help support these animals and get active outside with the family. This run takes place on April 27. Donation based. *Bronx Zoo [2300 Southern Boulevard. bronxzoo.com]*

Junior Arborist Station. See April 27

Toddler Art. See April 26

Family Walk: Totally Trees. See April 27

LONG-RUNNING

Zoo Play: Stroller Safari Series (0-3 with caregiver). Come for an early morning at the zoo with your child. You and your child will be granted early access to see majestic animals and enjoy the park's theme of the day. Your little one will also get to participate in one of the many preschool adventures. Thursdays, 8 am–6 pm, through April 25.

\$125/ \$100 members. *Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. tickets.wcs.org.*

Budding Botanist. Calling all future plant botanists! Be emerged in the world of plants by discovering bulbs and buds as they begin to wake up from the cold winter days. Get to see how plants and animals change and grow throughout the season. You will even be able to make a spring sprouting tape to plant in your own home to add some greenery. Times Vary. Daily, 8 am – 6 pm. Prices Vary. *New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd, Bronx. nybg.org.*

Putting Down Roots: Celebrating 30 Years Of Bronx Green Up. Bronx Green-Up supports over 200 local green groups, schools, and community organizations that work to improve the neighborhood through green projects. In honor of celebrating their 30 year anniversary, four teen photographers from the Bronx Documentary Center's Bronx/ Junior Photo Lead will be documenting the activity of these organizations planting and gardening to celebrate the community-building taking place. Daily, through April 28. Prices Vary. *New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd, Bronx. nybg.org.*

Nature Club. Come to the Bronx Zoo for an adventurous time at Nature Club. Through these free sessions, you will be able to venture out to nearby parks and get reconnected with nature by exploring with your family. Must RSVP online. Daily. Free with admission. *Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. tickets.wcs.org.*

The Orchid Show: Singapore. The Orchid Show celebrates its 17th year at the New York Botanical Garden with an homage to the wealth of orchids and rich cultural history of Singapore. Singapore is home to more than 220 native orchid species. Native and hybrid orchids alike have become synonymous with the nation. During daylight hours, visitors can enjoy an authentic Singapore vibe with tributes to the Singapore Botanic Gardens' vertical hanging habitats, tours of the garden and orchid care demonstrations. The Orchid Evening activities will also make sure that the fun will continue after the sun has set. *nybg.org.* Daily, through April 28. Free with an All-Garden Pass. *New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd, Bronx. nybg.org.*

Useless: Machines For Dreaming, Thinking, And Seeing. Machines are ultimately practical and used to increase utility— but what if they weren't? In this exhibit regard machines made by artists to stir up dreams, evoke feelings, and prompt critical thinking. These works of art of machines are not machines of utility. Does that make them useless? Examine this idea and consider the utility of art and whether machines of dreaming, thinking, or seeing are truly useless. Daily, beginning March 27, 11 am–6 pm. Free with museum admission. *Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx. (718) 681-6000. bronxmuseum.org.*

DIG! PLANT! GROW! WAKE UP, GARDEN! Spring is here and it is a perfect time to start planting! Get your hands in the dirt at Edible Academy by sowing seeds, digging, and watering. Learn more about the soil and the importance of composting. However, it won't just be plants that you are handling but wiggly worms that you will be able to take home. Times Vary. Daily, April 2 – May 12. Prices Vary. *New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd, Bronx. nybg.org.*

Everett Children's Adventure Garden All-Day Exploration. Winter is subsiding and spring is awakening as it is just around the corner. That means flowers budding, mild temperatures, and a sweet scent in the air. Time to step outdoors and into the Everett Children's Adventure Garden at the plant kingdom, New York Botanical Garden. This garden is perfect for children of all ages as they get to roam 12 acres of delightful greenery. No need to be restricted to just looking at this landscape — climb boulders, meander through Beth's Maze, and see the cattails and lily pads at Habitat Hub. Get ready to immerse yourself in science and nature of this spectacular children's garden



Parade of Bonnets!

Bring your bonnets to the annual Easter Parade and Easter Bonnet Festival that has been a traditional event since the 1870s. You can join the festivities by walking up and down the avenue, grabbing bites to eat, and even stop by some shops on your route. Come and go as you please with your family since this festival will be going on all day and partake in this customary scene of New York. If you are wondering where the best place is to be during this parade that runs from 49th to 57th Street, you can't go wrong with being near St. Patrick's Cathedral. For all ages. This parade and festival will be held from 10am-4pm on April 21. *[5th Avenue between 49th & 57th Streets, Manhattan. nycgo.com.]*

— adventure awaits! Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–4:30 pm. Prices Vary. *New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd, Bronx. nybg.org.*

Birding For Kids. Since birds are migrating due to the season change, it's a perfect time to go birdwatching. Use binoculars and explore the area while you search for birds that are in the midst of their migration. Learn more about this process and discover new birds that you may have never seen before. 11 am – 12:30 pm. Free. *Van Cortlandt Park, Van Cortlandt Park S & Broadway, Bronx. (212) NEW-YORK. nycgovparks.org.*

Meet the Eels. If you have ever wanted to see a live eel, this is your chance. Don't worry about encountering these creatures because you will safely meet

them while inside a classroom, opposed to being in "their" territory. Ages five and older are welcome with an adult. Hudson River Eel Weekend event. 1 – 1:30 pm. Free with admission to the grounds. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

The Zoo: Dr. Zoolittle's Family. Calling all aspiring veterinarians! Learn about the zoo animals and how to care for them. Play pretend with check ups using stethoscopes, thermometers, and scales. After making sure the animals are in good health, head over to the Wildlife Health Center at the Bronx Zoo. 9 – 10:30 am. \$100 / \$75 for members. *Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx. tickets.wcs.org.*

Family Art Project: Roots and Routes Portraits. Meet the

artists from Glyndor Gallery and see their personal artwork telling the stories of their cultural experiences. Stop by the gallery and respond to the artwork by using your own silhouette as the canvas to map out your personal and cultural relationship to the land. 10 am – 1 pm. Free, and admission to the grounds is free until noon. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

Family Nature Walk. Get up on your feet and join Gabriel Willow a naturalist and educator for a family nature walk that will take you through the woodlands and gardens — a great time to get outdoors since it's spring. Ages 5 and older must be accompanied by an adult. 1 pm. Free with admission to the grounds. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

Family Art Project: The Earth on the Turtle's Back. Listen and learn about the stories and culture of the Iroquois. To celebrate the planet's many gifts, screen-print a turtle image and build layers of earth atop its shell to create a printing plate out of upcycled materials. 10 am – 1 pm. Free, and admission to the grounds is free until noon. *Wave Hill, 649 W 249th St, Bronx. wavehill.org.*

FURTHER AFIELD
T Rex: The Ultimate Predator. Calling all dinosaur lovers! The American Museum of Natural History is bringing in a new exhibition that explores the tyrannosaur superfamily (fun fact: did you know that T.rex had feathers?). Learn about the latest research by scientists, discoveries, fossils, and casts. Their engaging learning opportunities and virtual reality experience will surely not disappoint the kids. Daily. Prices Vary. *American Museum of Natural History, 79th Street Transverse and Central Park West. (212) 769-5100. amnh.org.*



Relief from Allergies

Symptoms and treatments for the season

By Jamie Lober

There are many things that make the Big Apple unique and fun, but New York parents may have to take extra precautions to keep their kids safe this spring if their tykes tend to suffer from seasonal allergies.

Many allergy sufferers report spring as their worst season, and it's not surprising why when you consider how many trees and flowers are in full bloom after the cold winter months have finally moved on.

One particular reason for why New York's pollen can be so troublesome is quite surprising.

"In New York we have a higher rate of allergies mainly because a lot of the parks that we have are planting male trees, which have higher levels of pollen," says Dr. Reenal Patel, pediatric allergist at Allergy and Asthma Care of New York.

Male trees are used by the city because they tend to be easier to upkeep than female ones.

"We also have wind tunnels because we have skyscraper buildings, so we get more symptoms in children and adults," said Patel.

And those symptoms can be quite hard on young children.

"Specifically for children, the symptoms we commonly see are runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, and itchy, watery eyes," Patel says. Adults have similar symptoms.

"As parents, you have to be a private investigator and document the symptoms and look back at the month to see if your child was runny and congested, so you should consider starting medicine earlier for the next season to be ahead of the game," Patel says.

There is a wide range of help out there, so there is no reason that any kid should suffer.

"There are nasal sprays, antihistamines, and eye drops, but if someone does not want to be on medications for life, we can consider allergy drops or shots," Patel says. Both are customized for the patient, and the shots will

teach the body to lose sensitivity to the spring pollen.

There are also techniques you can try before resorting to medication.

"Saline sprays help hydrate the mucosa in the nose," Patel says.

Have your kid shower when he comes in from the outdoors to remove pollen from the skin and hair.

"We recommend keeping car windows up and having air purifiers to remove allergens from the air so your kid is less symptomatic," Patel says.

Sunglasses and hats can keep pollen away from the hair and eyes. But if these measures fail, medications are available.

"We recommend nasal steroid spray if oral antihistamines are not working but to start medications earlier and before the season starts so the nasal sprays have time to kick in and help out during the spring season," Patel says.

Certain foods can be problematic as well. Beware of raw fruits and vegetables that can cause an itchy mouth or throat.

"The most common food allergies in children are soy, egg, milk, peanuts, and tree nuts, so we recommend that parents introduce peanuts earlier into the diet so we can evaluate them if there is an allergic reaction and get ahead of the game," Patel says.

Studies show early introduction yields better results.

"If the child is allergic, we have them remove it from the diet, but there is a chance the reaction may have been misunderstood by the parents or something else may have been going on around the same time, so we do the gold-standard supervised food challenge in the office with lifesaving medications," Patel says. This way if your child has a reaction, they are still safe.

The good news is that spring seasonal allergies are manageable.

"At least 75 percent of allergies are here to stay, and some improve with age," Patel says.

There's no need to dread the pollen count that comes with the warmer weather each year. By keeping track of symptoms and when they happen, finding patterns, and having an action plan, your challenging season will suddenly become a lot easier.

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



Baby's First Foods

Solid foods to consider offering your infant

Whether it's your first baby or you've done this before, it's a big day when you begin offering solid food to your infant.

Most babies begin eating first foods—also known as complementary foods—at the age of 6 months. This is no coincidence, according to Keli Hawthorne, MS, RD, LD, Director of Clinical Research, Department of Pediatrics, Dell Medical School.

“Around 6 months of age is the right time because the child is developmentally ready at this point: holding her head up, sitting with assistance, becoming interested in food by watching parents eat and opening her mouth wide when food is headed her way,” Hawthorne says.

Not only is baby physically able to start eating solid food, six months is also the time when the baby's iron and zinc stores from birth have diminished. These minerals are key nutrients necessary for baby's growth and brain development. Breast milk or infant formula does not provide enough on their own.

While the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends introducing solids at around six months, pediatricians can evaluate individual infants with their parents to determine readiness while still promoting the benefits of breastfeeding or infant formula.

Typical first foods

A generation ago, the rule of thumb was rice cereal, then other cereals, then veggies, fruits, and finally meats. But because nutrition science is constantly evolving as we make new discoveries, this is no longer the case.

“The AAP recognizes that there is no medical evidence that introducing solid foods in any particular order has any advantage,” Hawthorne says.

Back in the day, mothers were advised to offer vegetables before fruit. The thinking was that naturally sweet fruits might “spoil” a baby's taste buds and she would subsequently refuse vegetables.

“There's no evidence that if you introduce

fruits before veggies, your baby will develop a taste for sweet foods and reject veggies,” Hawthorne explains. “What is important is to expose your baby to a wide variety of healthy foods and textures.”

A surprising food to consider

Because baby's iron and zinc stores are dwindling at this time, consider serving meat as baby's first food.

“Meats are an excellent source of iron and zinc, nutrients that are especially important for a baby's growth, brain development, and immune function,” says Hawthorne. “The iron in meat is very well absorbed by babies and is easily used for growth and development. Research has shown that babies who receive meat as early as 6 months of age have better growth and psychomotor development—such as reaching developmental milestones—than those who didn't.”

Baby-led weaning—infant self-feeding—can work with home-cooked meat. For example, give baby a bit of crumbled ground beef, piece of steak, chicken drumstick, or even a pork or beef rib. While only about 10 percent of the meat (or just the juices) actually makes it into her stomach, she is experiencing the flavor!

And what about single-grain infant cereals?

“Although infant cereals have iron added to them most of the time, not all products on the market have iron included,” Hawthorne says. “Parents need to read labels and choose iron-rich infant cereals to meet their baby's nutritional needs. And the iron in cereals is not as well absorbed or utilized by your baby's body as the iron in meat.”

Of course, until your baby is 12 months old, the majority of her calories will come from milk or formula. Choosing a wide variety of healthy foods for your baby such as meats, eggs, iron-fortified cereals, fruits, and veggies starting at 6 months of age will set them on a pathway to a lifetime of health.



Christine Palumbo is a registered dietitian nutritionist and Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She is a 2018 recipient of the Medallion Award from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

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