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BROOKLYN

Family December 2010

Letter from the publisher

This year has been an enormous transition year for much of our city. High levels of unemployment, loss of property, property values and investments have all contributed to a state of unease and uncertainty, and people have been revamping their budgets and trying to figure out how to make their dollars stretch further.



Continuing to provide for our children and their welfare is every parent's primary goal, and we sacrifice elsewhere in our lives to make sure our children are given all they need to grow and prosper.

It's been a rough year for the many schools and businesses that provide education, care and services for our children. Budgets have been slashed and everyone is trying hard to hold on.

Looking ahead to 2011 we cross our fingers and hope we will return to prosperity and a better economic climate for everyone.

Personally, I have much to be grateful for. I have a super teenage daughter who is a dedicated student and a thoughtful human being. I have a terrific staff with which to collaborate on work I thoroughly enjoy. I have good health, loving friends and relations, and an appreciation of a lot that life has to offer. All this I was taught by my parents and I am trying to pass on this same love of living to my next in line. That's what we, as parents, must do.

And now, I must thank the wonderful people I work with who make these magazines happen. I want to thank our writers — both staff and freelance — our design people and our distributors. I especially want to thank Tina, Cliff, Linda, On Man, Arthur, Irene, Yvonne, Leah, Vinnie, Nikki, Courtney, Joanna, Earl, Patti, Pat and Paul.

The biggest thank you of all goes to my partner in effort and intellect and my fondest collaborator, Sharon Noble. Without her, it wouldn't be fun and it wouldn't be possible.

Happy holidays to all of you. Happy New Year and thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher

FEATURES

- 4 Gifts for less**
Personalized presents will win children's hearts
BY BELINDA MOONEY
- 8 Holidays with heart**
Spend less and savor more this holiday season
BY KATHY SENA
- 12 Hollywood Rx for the holidays**
Classic movies to revive weary parents
BY CHRISTINA KATZ
- 16 Seasonal minefield**
Tips for special needs families navigating the holidays
BY REBECCA MCKEE, MSED, BCBA
- 20 Affordable child care is possible**
Finding the best care for your child when you're on a budget
BY CANDI SPARKS
- 34 PS 3 to the rescue**
When theatre troupe lost its space, school stepped in
- 40 To Facebook or not to Facebook?**
Is it ethical for a teacher to 'friend' students?
BY VERA BORUKHOV
- 42 Autism support**
Queens group helps families cope with the disorder
BY MARY CARROLL WININGER
- 44 Bugging out again**
Greenpoint cartoonist dishes on his new kids book
BY CHUCK O'DONNELL
- 46 Learn the lingo**
Tips for parents hoping to communicate with teens
BY JOANNA DELBUONO
- 48 Pee-wee in the 'house'**
Paul Reubens's TV show hits Broadway
BY LISA J. CURTIS

COLUMNS

- 2 Newbie Dad**
BY BRIAN KANTZ
- 6 Good Sense Eating**
BY CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD
- 10 Lions and Tigers and Teens**
BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL
- 14 Parents Helping Parents**
BY SHARON C. PETERS
- 18 Growing Up Online**
BY CAROLYN JABS
- 28 Our Relationships**
BY JOAN EMERSON, PhD
- 32 Family Health**
BY DR. PRAMOD NARULA, MD
- 36 Cinematters**
BY LAURA GRAY
- 30 Twice the Advice**
BY JACQUELINE AND KERRY DONELLI
- 56 It Figures**
BY CYNTHIA WASHAM
- 60 New & Noteworthy**
The hottest new products

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 51 Going Places**
Take the family out and find out what's going on in your town

SPECIAL SECTION

- 20 Education Directory**

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NEWBIE DAD

BRIAN KANTZ

Sensing the holidays

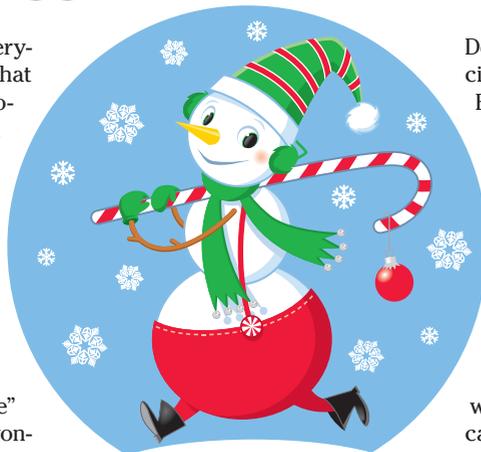
Traditions trigger memories for this father

As a parent, I want to do everything I can to make sure that my two boys have a memorable childhood. Memorable in a good way, of course. Not in a my-dad-made-me-star-in-“Home Alone”-then-squandered-all-of-my-earnings way. So, my wife and I take them to interesting places, encourage them to try different foods, and snap about a bazillion photos to document our experiences together.

Still, for all of the “memorable” stuff that we do, I can’t help but wonder how much my kids will actually remember. After all, they are only 6 and 3, and unless you’re Junie B. Jones, it’s kind of tough to write first-grade memoirs with any great detail. I’m 37 and those closets in my brain that hold 30-year-old memories are filled with a lot of, ahek-ahék, dust.

There is hope, however. In my humble, non-scientific — but always correct — opinion, the brain best remembers those things that, at a moment in time, inundated one of your five senses: taste, sight, hearing, smell, or touch. And, it seems to me, that kind of attack on the senses is bound to happen each year when the holidays roll around. That’s the time when colors are a tad sparklier (yes, I said sparklier), songs are a bit zazzier (yes, zazzier), and cakes taste more rum-my (no, not yummy, rum-my).

That’s why, for me, a good percent-



age of the early childhood memories that do still exist revolve around the holidays and the senses. And I’m making a concerted effort to pass those memories on to my two sons. Here’s a sample:

Taste

I know you’ll be right with me on this one: candy canes. One lick of a candy cane and you’re immediately transported to the holidays of your childhood. My favorite version of candy canes is the seasonal special, peppermint stick ice cream. It’s mint ice cream with crushed candy canes. My boys prefer mini-candy canes, which turn their fingers red.

Sight

Watching holiday specials on TV is a great memory. Seeing the

Dolly Madison ice cream commercial that accompanied “A Charlie Brown Christmas” was a sure sign that the holidays were here. “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” and “Frosty the Snowman” endure to this day.

Hearing

Two words: Bing Crosby. No album will ever top Bing’s “White Christmas” for direct association with the holidays. In my mind, I can hear Bing singing, “I’m dreaming...” and my dad singing, “... of a ...” and my grandfather singing, “... white Christmas ...” Who doesn’t love to impersonate the bub-a-dub-bub sound of der Bingle?

Smell

The smell of the holidays is pine. I’m told my father once tried to put up an artificial tree in our house, but one look at my mother’s face told him that he better throw it in the trash and drive, as fast as he could, to the lot down the street to pick up a real tree. Once inside a house, a pine tree’s scent dominates everything.

Touch

The holidays always recall the feeling of squishing cookie dough in my hands. One of my family’s great traditions was the annual baking of a cookie called, “Winter Rainbows.” The recipe calls for the dough to be colored red, yellow and green. My mom would squeeze a few drops of food coloring on the dough and then let my brothers and I have at it. I remember going to school with green fingers. Now, it’s my sons’ turn to squish dough.

And since it is the season of giving, I’d like to offer the gift of the “Winter Rainbows” recipe. Spend some time with your kids making memories and making some really great cookies. Enjoy — and happy holidays!

Brian Kantz really wants you to make these cookies. They’re good. Seriously. Visit Brian online at www.briankantz.com or drop him a note at thenewbie-dad@yahoo.com.

Winter Rainbows

Makes six dozen cookies. (Yes, you’ll want at least that many.)

INGREDIENTS

2 cups all-purpose flour
 ½ tsp. baking powder
 ½ tsp. salt
 1/8 tsp. baking soda
 10 tbsp. (1-¼ sticks) butter, softened
 ½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
 ¼ cup granulated sugar
 1 egg
 1 tsp. vanilla
 Yellow, green and red food coloring
 Milk

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large bowl, mix or sift together flour, baking powder, salt, baking soda. In another bowl, beat butter with sugars until fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Stir in flour mixture, a third at a time, blending well to make a soft dough. Divide dough into three equal portions, tinting one green, one red and one yellow.

Roll each portion of dough into a nine-by-five rectangle between sheets of wax paper. Chill in freezer 10 minutes. Cut each piece of dough in half lengthwise, cutting through wax paper. Peel off top sheets.

Brush top of one strip lightly with milk; place another strip, paper side up, on top. Peel off paper. Repeat procedure with remaining dough strips, alternating colors, to make six layers. Press lightly together. Cut finished stack lengthwise to make two narrow stacks. Wrap in plastic wrap, foil, or wax paper; chill in refrigerator three hours or overnight. Unwrap dough. Cut into 1/8-inch slices with a sharp knife. Place on greased cookie sheets. (They won’t spread much, so you can put them pretty close together on the cookie sheet.) Bake in moderate oven (350 degrees) for eight minutes, or until edges are golden.

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Gifts for less

Personalized presents will win children's hearts

BY BELINDA MOONEY

Holiday time is also gift-giving time, especially for children. Buying presents for everyone in the family can stretch your budget to the limit, if you're not careful. Deciding what to buy for all of those kids — your own, nieces and nephews, grandchildren — is a challenge when you're not only trying to get the most from every dollar, but also trying to give a gift that has the individual in mind. But it can be done! Here are some thoughtful and fun ideas that will make every child — from toddlers to teens — feel special and save you some money as well.

Gift baskets

While we often think of gift baskets as for adults, they are enjoyed by kids, too. And if you put them together yourself, you can save money while creating a customized present that says, "You're important to me." A gift basket is as fun to make as it is to give. Start with a container to hold your gifts in. This can — but doesn't have to — be a basket. You can use wicker baskets; storage containers; a large, colorful bowl; a plastic bucket; or even an upside-down cowboy hat. They can be filled inexpensively with items from the local dollar store, with homemade treats or even thrift store finds. Most retail stores sell the cellophane wrappers you see around gift baskets. Just slip yours in, tie it off with a colorful ribbon and — voila! — a beautiful gift.

Here are some fun themes for kids' gift baskets:

- **Artsy gift basket** — This theme is just right for the child who likes crafts or creating in any form. For those who like to draw, include colored and drawing pencils, a pad of paper, erasers and an instruction book. For younger kids, anything that lets them be creative works — paint sets, coloring books, crayons, safety scissors and glue sticks. Add whimsical items like glitter glue, stickers, construction paper and foam cut-outs.

- **For the sporty type** — A gift basket for the sports enthusiast is easy

to make and can be created for any type of athletic activity. It might be a soccer, swimming, football or golf theme. You can also create a gift basket around her favorite sports team, if she enjoys that, but doesn't actually play sports. Products that work well in this type of basket are mugs, sports bottles, hats, pencils, a rolled up sweatshirt or gym shorts with a team logo.

- **Just for girls** — These gift baskets are perfect for when your child needs a present for someone you may not know very well. Kids especially enjoy shopping for their friends or cousins and the dollar stores are perfect for this. You can use a pretty wire basket or even a small plastic bin that you can personalize with permanent markers. Fill with toiletries such as shampoo, bubble bath and body wash, or whimsies such as barrettes, inexpensive jewelry, a small stuffed animal or lip gloss.

- **For the guys** — Just like a basket for the girls, this is a quick-and-easy gift idea for friends. A mini crate works great as a "basket." Toss in some toy cars, squirt guns, army men, small model kits or an inexpensive, hand-held electronic game, and you are ready to go.

Personalize it!

Kids love anything that has their name on it or tells the world who they are, such as shorts that say "Big Sister" or "Favorite Niece." You can purchase items like this easily through many local stores or over the Internet, or you can consider making them yourself. Beach towels, mugs, dinnerware, name plaques, shirts and wall hangings can all be personalized with a child's name. Teens especially enjoy shirts, purses, jewelry and other items that have their names or initials on them. Local embroidery and T-shirt shops are affordable, and china markers and fabric paint make decorating on your own easy.

The teenage crowd

Teens can be tough customers to buy for without breaking the bank,

but it is possible. Gift cards for this age are a fool-proof idea.

Get one to his favorite book or music store, sporting goods emporium or game shop. Put the gift card in a cute mug with a candy bar, and you have a simple-but-sweet surprise. Gift certificates to fast food restaurants are always a perfect idea for any teen; after all, eating is what they do best! Or fill a gift bag with a DVD, microwave popcorn and a two-liter of pop. Teens are often easier to please than we think they are.

Get creative

With a little ingenuity and planning, you can shop for kids without going broke. Just like older folks, kids enjoy gifts that say you thought about them and let them know they are special.



DEC 10—19

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Photos: Susana Willman

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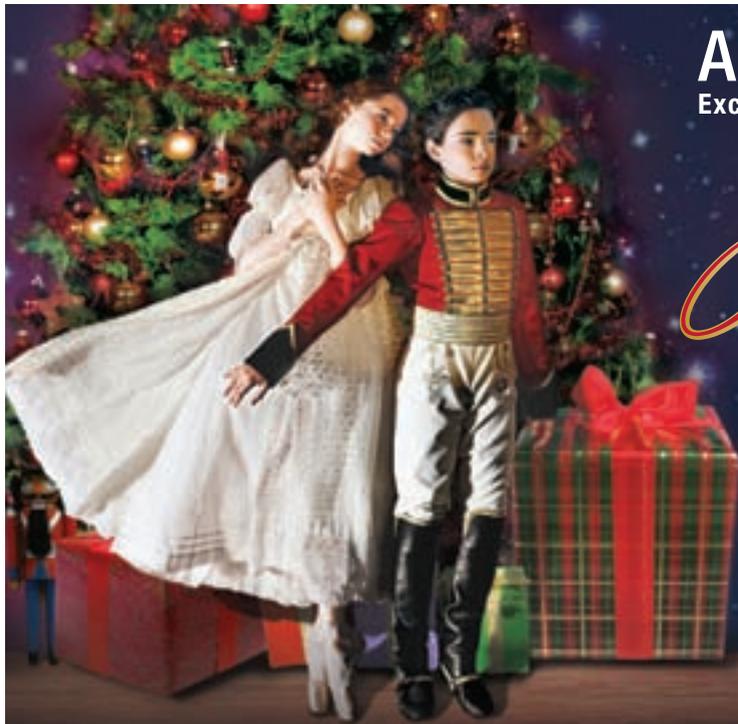
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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Latest guidelines for your child's diet

Have you ever wished for a dietary roadmap to assist you in your family's meal planning? How about one using a science-based approach by our nation's top nutrition experts and updated to align with the latest research? The recently released Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's report is just that.

First developed in 1980, the Dietary Guidelines are updated every five years. In addition to helping Americans navigate the nutrition world, they're used for federal nutrition programs and building consumer messages. For example, the National School Lunch Program utilizes the recommendations in order to feed over 30 million children every day.

Report highlights

Its new focus is on children's health. Preventing childhood obesity is the most powerful public health initiative to combat our country's obesity epidemic in the long term.

It says:

- Children and teens should accumulate at least one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day.

Q: What are "SoFAS?"

A: SoFAS refer to the solid fats and added sugars that contribute too many calories — about 35 percent — to the American diet for kids, teens and adults. You, likely, understand the meaning of added sugars. Solid fats are the fats in butter, cheese, stick margarine, vegetable shortening and the fats in meat.

- Kids should be discouraged from drinking sugar-sweetened beverages.

- We should eat a more plant-centered diet that emphasizes vegetables, cooked dry beans, fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds.

- The benefits of cooked seafood outweigh the risks from mercury and other possible contaminants. Aim for two 4-ounce servings per week.

- Healthy patterns of eating include the Mediterranean diet and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet.

- Daily vitamins don't benefit healthy people. An exception is peo-

ple who have a calcium or iron deficiency who may wish to supplement their diet.

Environment change

The report acknowledges the difficulty in changing your diet unless changes are made to the overall food environment. How do you eat a nutrient-dense diet at the same time supermarkets, schools, restaurants and other food venues offer myriad food and beverage choices high in fat, sugar and sodium?

The report recommends that we:

- Improve people's nutrition literacy and cooking skills.

- Motivate families with children to prepare and enjoy more home-cooked meals.

- Encourage the food industry to offer smaller portions of foods that promote health. These include foods low in sodium, added sugars, refined flours and solid fats.

A bit of controversy

The committee suggests people reduce sodium to just 1,500 milligrams each day, and cut out foods with added sodium. Some nutrition experts dismiss this as being unrealistic in today's society. The report also recommends upping potassium in the diet — plentiful in produce — which helps cut sodium's effect on blood pressure.

According to Toby Smithson, RD, LDN, CDE, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, some groups feel there should be more definitive guidelines for the amount of fat in the diet and more emphasis on vitamin D. She adds that some critics want, "more focus on choosing whole grains instead of making half your grains whole."

The committee's recommendations will be considered when the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services develop the final Dietary Guidelines early next year.

To read the full report, go to www.dietaryguidelines.gov.



Grape Tomato Bruschetta

Makes eight bruschetta

INGREDIENTS

4 Arnold® Honey Wheat Sandwich Thins® rolls, separated
2 pints grape tomatoes, sliced in half lengthwise

1 tablespoon aged balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons garlic-infused extra-virgin olive oil
12 fresh basil leaves
Kosher salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS: Toast Sandwich Thins® halves to a light golden brown. In a bowl, mix tomatoes with balsamic vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper, to taste. Stack basil leaves and roll them in the shape of a log. Slice the rolled basil, making ribbons. Toss most of the cut basil with the tomatoes, reserving a bit of fresh basil to garnish. Spoon dressed tomatoes on top of each toasted Sandwich Thins® half and garnish with a few fresh basil ribbons.

NUTRITION FACTS: 100 calories, 14 grams carbohydrate, 3 grams protein, 4 grams fat, 0.5 grams saturated fat, 0 trans fat and cholesterol, 3 grams dietary fiber, 3 grams sugar, 115 milligrams sodium, 15 percent DV vitamins A and C, 2 percent DV calcium, 4 percent DV iron.

Recipe courtesy of Claire Robinson of "Five Ingredient Fix."

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Holidays with heart

Spend less
and savor
more this
holiday
season

BY KATHY SENA

With the holidays approaching, I've found myself chatting with friends about how we often regret spending too much money, running around like lunatics with our to-do lists, and stressing out during a season that should be spent enjoying family and friends. So this year, I'm planning to make my family's holidays more meaningful — and less crazed and costly. Want to join me? Here's how:

Plan ahead

First and foremost, make a list of every person you plan to buy a gift for, then create a budget. Don't wait until the 11th hour to shop — when you're more likely to feel desperate and spend too much on that fancy doodad the kids saw on TV on Dec. 23. You know the one. It's just like that thingamajig they got tired of by Dec. 27 last year.

Give gifts that help others

The possibilities here are endless, but here's one fun example: My family and I started giving gifts from Heifer International (www.heifer.org) a few years ago, and that has been a great experience. In your loved one's honor, you can give the gift of a share of a sheep, a flock of baby chicks, or a goat that will provide income and food for a needy family. Kids love to help pick out the gift. You buy as many shares of an animal or a flock as you like, so this gift idea works even for young kids who want to contribute some of their own money. The organization provides beautiful gift cards to give to your recipients.



Give experiences, not things

Does your sister really need another scarf? Instead, buy movie tickets for a fun girls' night out and spring for the popcorn. Want to include the nieces and nephews and not break the bank? Make a gift of a movie night at your house and go all out with movie-style candy, popcorn, soda — maybe even hot dogs. When you buy the goodies yourself and serve them at home, you can treat everyone for dimes on the dollar compared with those insane

movie theater prices (Plus, you can plan this event for January, after the craziness of the holidays is over). Even more fun — make everyone a star and show old family movies as the “previews” before the show.

Say no to new decorations

You already have boxes full of decorations — and if you're like me, you whine about a lack of storage space — right? Is it all that important to buy the new “must-have” decorations this year? Another option: Make decorations with the kids. I still

You'll support your community and you'll often find one-of-a-kind gifts at craft fairs and school auctions. (And there's usually a bake sale nearby!)



remember the fun I had sitting with my mom and making elves out of pipe cleaners, styrofoam balls, and red felt when I was a kid.

Create photo gifts

They're something only you can give. Grandparents love calendars and photo books featuring the grandkids. My brother and I exchange CDs featuring high-res photos of our families from the past year. We e-mail photos to each other during the year, of course, but we usually send low-res versions. To have all the best photos on a CD is a wonderful (and inexpensive) gift. Another winner: we visited my parents for spring break one year and for Christmas that year, we gave them a photo book that included the photos from our visit.

Be a savvy online shopper

Check out PriceGrabber and other price-comparison sites to find the lowest price. And search Google for online coupons. If you want to buy something at a particular store, just Google the store name and "coupon." I've found coupons for everything from free shipping to 20 percent off my entire order.

Consolidate your online purchases

You'll save time, minimize shipping costs and help the environment. When shipping gifts yourself, re-use boxes and packing peanuts. Also, watch those shipping deadlines and order early to avoid higher costs for faster shipping as the holidays approach.

Buy local

You'll support your community and you'll often find one-of-a-kind gifts — at great prices — at craft fairs and school auctions. Plus, this kind of shopping can be relax-

ing and fun! (And there's usually a bake sale nearby!)

Choose useful gifts

They don't have to be expensive. A car-care kit for a new driver. A gardening-magazine subscription for a new homeowner. A selection of spices or a fun cookbook for a budding young chef.

Get creative with gift wrap

Try to re-use materials rather than buy new wrap. Use gift bags and fabric ribbons and bows that can be reused year after year. For gifts wrapped in paper, have fun with Sunday comics or brown paper bags colored or stamped by the kids. My favorite: have little ones make hand prints with non-toxic paint on inexpensive butcher paper or brown paper bags and use as wrap. The grandparents may love the wrap more than the gift! Leftover scrapbooking paper and stickers are great for wrapping small gifts, too. Use extra scraps of wrapping paper as gift tags.

Focus on what counts

Whether it's attending a religious service, enjoying the school holiday play, making thumb-print cookies with your preschooler or playing Monopoly with the whole family, be sure to stop and really focus on the true blessings of the season. This year, my son is going to be playing piano in church, along with other young musicians, on Christmas Eve. For me, there's no present that could appear under the tree that will be more wonderful than that.

Kathy Sena is a freelance journalist and essayist. The best gift she ever received was Matthew Benjamin Sena, who was born Dec. 22, 1995, and came home from the hospital on Christmas Day.

The Colonial Nutcracker
Sunday, December 12, 2010 at 2pm

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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Teens & gift giving

I had just turned 13 when I came home with this beautiful bracelet from a boy who admired me. When my mother saw it, she freaked out and told me that I had to give it back immediately. She said that she doubted he bought the bracelet and that it was an inappropriate gift for him to be giving me anyway. So much for that little bauble!

As it turned out, he had taken the bracelet from his older sister's jewelry box because he overheard that she would "never wear it again." Supposedly, she was fighting with

her boyfriend.

There are simpler ways for teens, even for those who don't have jobs yet, to show their appreciation for peers, coaches, or family members — and these ideas won't break the bank!

The act of giving

Your teen will likely get more out of the act of "giving" than the person receiving the gift. But not if a parent does the purchasing. Teens need to do the buying themselves, even if funds are running low. After all, it's the thought that counts; and for many, this adage is oh so true. Some of the most modest gifts I've received are those which I cherish the most.

The holidays are a great time for teens to think about giving to their favorite charity as well.

"Small acts of purposeful kindness and giving to charity (not necessarily money, but time) should be part of every teen's life," explains Dr. Jodi Stoner, a psychotherapist and co-author of "Good Manners are Contagious" (Spinner Press, 2009). She stresses that giving to others "develops integrity, boosts self-esteem, and adds meaning to children's lives no matter what age."

Make it Personal

My daughter took a photograph of an art piece she created for a contest in which she had to express the theme, "Beauty is ..." She put the photograph in an inexpensive, magnetic photo frame and printed out the words, "Beauty is ... a teacher who cares."

For that special someone

If your teen is giving something to a "significant other," be sure that it is appropriate in nature and that her feelings are reciprocated. Explain to your teen that gift giving is over the top for a new crush, but is a nice way to express feelings if a relationship has formed.

Overdoing it with expensive jewelry or electronics is not the answer. Making things by hand or personalizing the gift are great ways to express your affection for someone. Is

your teen creative? She might draw a portrait of her boyfriend from a photograph of him participating in his favorite sport or pastime. If your son likes to cook, suggest that he invite his girlfriend to dinner and make the meal himself.

"Sit down with your teens and help them come up with a budget," suggests Stoner. "This is a great time to talk about what the gift means. Big ticket items are not appropriate — small, meaningful gifts are."

Stoner also points out that teens should be responsible for the cost. If teens are not working, Stoner believes that gifts should come from their allowance.

"Otherwise, teens tend to lose perspective on the monetary commitment," she says.

Tips and tales

"Collage is a great gift. All you need are magazines, photos, glue sticks, and a surface to glue everything to. Teens love collage because they are using pop culture images mixed with their likes or a friend's likes. It's a great gift for their friend's bedroom wall."

Jessica Galkin, Woodstock, NY

"My 15-year-old daughter and her friends bake cookies and give them out at school to their closest friends for their birthdays."

Deb Ciccone-Yaeger, Saugerties, NY

"Every year, my daughter makes her own Christmas present for her grandmother and aunts. We have a file folder for crafts that catch our attention throughout the year. She chooses one of those crafts to make as gifts."

Gretchen Burnett, Salt Point, NY

Share your ideas

Upcoming topic:

Your teens are old enough, but can you trust them to stay home alone?

Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to: myrnahaskell@gmail.com, or visit home.roadrunner.com/~haskellfamily/myrna/

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer and columnist specializing in parenting issues and children's development. She is the mother of two teenagers.





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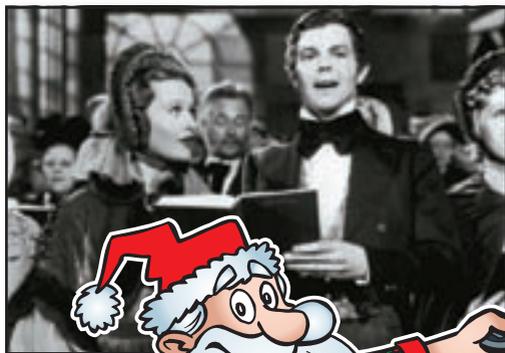
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REEL HOLIDAY FUN: (Clockwise from top left) "A Christmas Carol;" "How the Grinch Stole Christmas;" "A Christmas Story;" "Home Alone;" and "Home for the Holidays."

Hollywood Rx for the holidays

Classic movies to revive weary parents

BY CHRISTINA KATZ

Feeling humbug this holiday season? Here's a sure-fire prescription for kick-starting your holiday spirit. Tuck the wee ones into bed, grab a cup of seasonal cheer, and settle down for a festive movie marathon that will put the "hush" back into your holiday rush.

Detach from family drama

In Jodie Foster's 1995 film, "Home for the Holidays," Claudia Larson (Holly Hunter) flies home to spend Thanksgiving with her wildly dysfunctional family. How many of us

empathized with the family reunion drama that prompts Claudia to explain, "Nobody means what they say on Thanksgiving, Mom. You know that. That's what the day's supposed to be all about, right? Torture."

Whether this year's drama is your aging grandmother deciding she can't tolerate your spouse, your drunken uncle knocking over the heirloom china or your youngest child coming down with the worst kind of flu, you can remain unruffled regardless of what happens. Family drama is not usually the problem — it's our response that determines how much we will or won't enjoy the holidays. A brisk walk or a quick

call to a supportive friend can make the difference between a happy or a hopeless holiday season.

Opt for more fun and less stuff

"And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before! Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, he thought, means a little bit more." If an over-emphasis on the material aspects of the holidays has you feeling as crabby as "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," then maybe you need a refresher on the 1966 Dr. Seuss TV film. Or, if you're a Jim

Carrey fan, try Ron Howard's 2000 feature film version.

Before frustration drives you over the grinchy edge, seek relief at the Center for a New American Dream. It's a national non-profit foundation helping people challenge the "more is better" definition of the American Dream. "More Fun, Less Stuff" is its motto. The brochure about simplifying the holidays contains frugally creative and eco-friendly gift ideas, perfect for downsizing your holiday celebrations without skimping on the fun.

Check out the brochure at www.newdream.org/holiday/brochure.php.

Do a good deed

In "It's a Wonderful Life," perennial do-gooder George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) is devastated when the financial security of his family's Building and Loan business is threatened by a missing \$8,000 deposit. But all is not lost because George can't resist helping others in greater distress than himself. Instead of plunging to his own death, he rescues angel-in-training, Clarence, who beat him to the jump. Clarence illuminates that without George's good deeds, Bedford Falls would be a much bleaker place indeed.

Making a charitable gesture towards someone less fortunate than yourself will add satisfaction to your holiday season. Is there a soup kitchen where you and your family can volunteer for an afternoon? How about asking your children to donate some of their old toys to a worthy cause before asking Santa for new ones? Could you spearhead an impromptu fund-raiser at your office or social group? You may decide to donate locally or abroad.

For some ideas, visit www.altgifts.org or www.heifer.org/.

Cultivate an attitude of gratitude

In the 1938 big-budget version of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," we witness a ghostly, ghostly tour of Ebenezer Scrooge's (Reginald Owen) stingy past, present and future. Subsequently, you may be inspired to cultivate a more loving and generous attitude of your own. Think back to every kindness offered to you in times of struggle or despair. I distinctly remember a college friend listening to my broken-hearted sob story and telling me afterward that I was beautiful. I remember a former

boss offering a kind word instead of criticism, although I'd royally messed up some important documents. Next thing you know, you may look more kindly on the person who jostles you on the street, the car that rudely cuts you off, or the telemarketer who dares to invade your hallowed holiday home. An attitude of gratitude reminds us that we have been wretched and have still been worthy of love.

Spend time 'Alone'

In the comedic family classic, "Home Alone," 8-year-old Kevin McCallister (Macaulay Culkin) declares, "This house is so full of people, it makes me sick. When I grow up and get married, I'm living alone." When his extended family leaves for Paris without him, he discovers that his wish has come true. Does he crumble with fear? Does he run for the nearest sensible adult? No, in fact, he relishes his new-found freedom, at least for a little while.

This holiday season, there will be plenty of well-meaning messages touting the benefits of "spending time with loved ones." Of course, while it's always wonderful to spend time with family and friends over the holidays, there is something to be said for taking time to be alone, too. Certainly, when we don't spend time alone, we can become irritable and exhausted. Like Kevin, when you take time to be with yourself, you will find that you can better appreciate time with others.

Buy yourself a present

Still feeling a little blue this holiday season? All right, let's pull out the secret weapon movie. Sometimes there's nothing to brighten up your holidays quite like that gift you deeply long for but have never received. In Bob Clark's 1983 hilarious comedy, "A Christmas Story," little Ralphie Parker (Peter Billingsley) is dying for a Red Rider BB gun. Although his parents and teachers warn that he will "shoot his eye out," Ralphie is relentless in imagining his dream coming true. The dozen or so universally hilarious childhood memories will perk you up enough to grab your car keys, drive to the mall, sit on Santa's lap and ask for that ridiculous childhood toy you always longed for. It's never too late.

Happy holiday movie season, everyone!



PARENTS
HELPING
PARENTS

SHARON C. PETERS, MA

My child is bullied but wants no help



Dear Sharon,

My 12-year-old daughter is being picked on by a group of girls in her school. She is being bullied by them in a variety of ways, and she's afraid of them, but she won't let me do anything about it. She won't let me contact the school, and she becomes hysterical when we discuss it. What should we do?

Dear Parents,

I am sorry to hear that girls are picking on your daughter at school. Unfortunately, this is a common problem.

Most children, especially tweens, are embarrassed or humiliated by the thought of "telling" on another child and/or acknowledging that they are not able to handle a difficult social situation. Nevertheless, it is usually difficult and sometimes impossible for a targeted child to deal with repeated bullying in the absence of adult intervention.

Of course, the details of specific situations can be quite different, but I know of many cases when a parent has gotten help by contacting her child's school (sometimes even without her child's permission or knowledge). In most of these instances, the parent had a strong prior relationship with one or more staff members who she knew could be effective at offering assistance.

I often suggest that parents in your situation begin by reaching out

to a teacher, counselor, or administrator you respect and who would be able to maintain your family's anonymity. I have heard many stories of caring educators who have kept an eye out for a problem and figured out ways to intervene without anyone knowing that they received information from a parent. I also know of examples of schools that have succeeded in involving multiple staff members in thinking through solutions to bullying and who were willing to give parents feedback about progress and/or steps a child might take to help resolve the problem.

While waiting for help from school there are, of course, steps to be taken at home, as well. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind as you offer support to your child:

- It can be hard for a parent to listen to her 12-year-old recount all of the gory details of bullying without getting upset. However, if parents can manage to listen to stories and sympathize with difficulties in a relatively calm way, it can help a child get out her stress and feel more relaxed at the end of a long day.

- Sometimes parents are quick to offer solutions to complicated problems like this one. Parental suggestions can be useful, but it can also

be helpful for Mom and Dad to elicit their child's thoughts about possible ways to handle the challenges coming her way. If parents can help their child produce a few of her own solutions, it can build her confidence and self-esteem even under such understandable stress and strain.

- Including adult friends, relatives and other children who have witnessed or survived incidents of bullying in family discussions can help as well. Putting a number of heads together to generate possible solutions can produce a variety of ideas that can help.

- Having close, thoughtful friends around can also be useful. Bullies are less likely to be effective if there are good friends that a child can talk to and stay with when aggressive behavior is happening. Setting up social occasions outside of school with caring friends can shore up a child's confidence and help her go toward friendly and supportive peers in difficult times.

• • •

I wish there were simple answers to the complicated problem of bullying, but I do believe that getting help while offering consistent support to your child can make a big difference over time.

Sharon C. Peters is a mother and director of Parents Helping Parents, 669 President St., Brooklyn (718) 638-9444, www.PHPonline.org.

If you have a question about a challenge in your life (no issue is too big or too small) e-mail it to Dear Sharon at SWeiss@cnglocal.com.



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Seasonal minefield

Some tips for
special needs
families
navigating
the holidays

BY REBECCA MCKEE,
MSED, BCBA

For those of us who have the joy of sharing our lives with a family member who has Autism Spectrum Disorder or another special need, we know the feeling of living Halloween way before autumn arrives, or having to listen to Christmas carols the first day of October.

For many, the idea of happy holiday happenings can quickly turn into too-much-too-soon and lead to a downward spiral. Here are some simple strategies that may ease the overwhelming excitement, and allow one to celebrate the holidays in a timely, successive order:

- Always keep a calendar, not only for listing appointments and birthdays, but for also listing what people generally do during specific times of the year. For example, in October, I would write at the top of the page: "People decorate their homes with pumpkins. Maybe we can go apple picking. People talk about baking and eating apple pie and pumpkin bread. We can watch 'The Wizard of Oz' and scary movies. Everyone looks at Halloween costumes and buys bags of candy." You should continue this throughout the year.

- When each major holiday ends, prepare for the next holiday. When Thanksgiving ends, write the following the day after: "Start taking down Thanksgiving decorations and talking about Christmas. Start writing a list about what Christmas decorations to get."

- Include your family member in functional tasks during the busyness of the holiday season as much as possible, such as creating a food shopping list pertaining to Thanksgiving dinner or Christmas cookie recipes, or having him push the cart and find the items in the supermarket. In other words, try to use his excitable, nervous energies as much as possible in a positive, proactive way.

- As each holiday ends, have your family member recycle the catalogs and magazines, as this is a physical way to symbolize its ending.



- Limit his choices of music and movies to a seasonal selection or those that are relevant all year. Lay-out the "TV Guide" to demonstrate when most people watch Christmas movies. A good rule to follow is: in someone's bedroom anything can happen, but in the living room we have to follow certain rules. So, on Christmas Eve, nobody in the family wants to watch a movie about Easter!

- Proactively preparing each person about the upcoming changes in his or her schedules is the best

bet. Letting them know the location of the holiday dinner is a must. If visitors are coming over, please let them know. Making these changes known via a written note and/or photographs are gladly appreciated.

- Always provide items and activities to keep your family members occupied during these holiday meals. We can amuse ourselves with conversation but sometimes others cannot. Keep that in mind.

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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

An iPhone for baby?

These days, cellphones are for more than just calls. But are the devices good for toddlers?

This holiday season, there will be lots of delighted squeals when someone in the family opens a package containing a new mobile digital device. Often, those squeals are from toddlers and even babies who are as mesmerized by new technology as their parents and older sibs.

Little kids have an uncanny ability to manipulate touch screens, and programmers are responding with a robust collection of so-called “baby apps.” All of this begs the question:

Is mobile access to interactive

technology good for toddlers? In the meantime, parents can draw on what we do know about child development to make wise decisions on behalf of kids. Here are some suggestions:

Defer to development

Common sense says you shouldn't give electronic equipment to a child who drools or reflexively puts things in his mouth. Ditto for the child who is still conducting if-I-drop-this-what-will-happen experiments.

Pick time & place

Little kids often have to accompany their parents to places that strain their patience.

Even a car ride can be a trial for a toddler. In these settings, a mobile device may be a merciful way to pass the time. It's also an opportunity for parents establish limits: “You can hold Mommy's phone while we're in the car and then you'll give it back to Mommy.” Like other limits, this one will work only if you enforce it. The best way to create a cellphone junkie is to give your child random access to the device. Instead, think through the rules you want to establish and keep them simple. Be consistent.

Encourage mobility

Despite their name, mobile devices actually discourage mobility. Kids who use them tend to stay planted firmly on their fannies, staring at a tiny screen. The American Academy of Pediatrics continues to recommend that children under the age of 2 have no time in front of screens of any size. For children over 2, the recommended daily allowance is one hour. Both of these rules are regularly violated even by very conscientious parents, in part because everyone — including those parents — needs a little downtime now and then. Kids, however, need much, much more uptime. A child who is running, climb-

ing, bouncing and playing may need more supervision than one who is glued to a screen, but research shows that active play promotes both physical and mental development. Screen time may also promote certain kinds of development but the benefits are unclear and unconfirmed, so moderation makes sense.

Talk!

Of all the things children learn in their first six years, language is one of the most important. Here the research is crystal clear. Talking to little children — even infants — encourages more rapid and more complex neural development. Fooling with a mobile device or, for that matter, any other toy, is more enriching if parents talk about what's happening and, with older children, encourage them to talk, too. Not only is this fun but it lays the ground work for the idea that, instead of being the main event, technology is valuable because it supports relationships.

Maintain ownership

Unless the kid is paying the bills, the phone belongs to the parent (older children should be reminded about this rule, too). You set limits about lipstick, sharp knives, and the TV remote, so spend some time thinking about whether, and when, you want to allow access.

•••

Despite all the innovations in technology, the ingredients for a good childhood remain surprisingly constant: loving, engaged parents; sensible, consistent limits; safe and abundant opportunities to explore the world. For children who have those essentials in place, a little time spent with — or without — a mobile interactive device won't much matter.

Carolyn Jabs, MA, has been writing about families and the Internet for over 15 years. She is the mother of three computer-savvy kids. Other Growing Up Online columns appear on her website www.growing-up-online.com.

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technology good for tots?

For many parents, a first rush of pride — look what he can do! — gives way to unease, especially when kids clamor constantly for the phone. A recent article in the New York Times told the story of one tot who hid her mom's phone under her bed so she would be able to use it whenever she wanted.

The research about how cellphones and other mobile devices impact young brains

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Affordable child care is possible

Finding the best care for your child when you're on a budget

BY CANDI SPARKS

One of the most difficult — and most important — decisions a parent can make is finding reliable and safe child care. Unfortunately, child care can become a budget buster, and finding affordable care in these tough times is difficult. When you cannot be the caregiver, the choice of how your child spends his day guides the search for child care. So will family finances.

It helps to identify what type of program is needed, and then figure out how to work that into your budget. Although a paid position generally creates higher expectations of what will and will not be done with your child and in your home, the different positions — nanny, au pair, sitter, casual sitter, family friend, relative, or child care programs — all have different pay scales and infrastructures.

If you don't have a huge budget, try to craft a position for a child care provider and add perks to go with the job. If the caregiver has access to the family car, gets a ride after sitting, or can use your swimming pool

or art studio, it might be attractive enough that she will lower her fee. If your position comes with paid sick days, vacation days, and holidays, these perks may put you in a better negotiating position. Leverage whatever perks you can during the interview process.

Relatives

A relative — for instance, a mother-in-law — may assist for free, but then might feel comfortable to criticize parenting skills (but not yours, of course). Or, you may not be overjoyed that Uncle Jim still smokes cigarettes in the house. Yet, you don't want to take any chances with your precious child, so what's available for free may not always be the best choice. If you can find someone good for free, consider yourself lucky. Adela, in Queens, had to opt out of free family child care when her son, Gian, starting using some unsavory language he picked up at his cousin's house.

Nanny

The most popular type of child care for working families with young children, which has been popularized by reality TV, is the nanny. Brooklyn resident Mary was able to keep her nanny at a lower price for several years by throwing in benefits like vacations with the family.

"She is one of the family," said Mary. "The boys love her and she is very good to us."

Mary found that the child care relationship turned into "family care." Her situation beautifully illustrates that the search for child care can also consider what other needs the family may have in connection with this person. If a mother's helper is needed to assist with shopping, laun-

dry and child care, this is a different position than one that will focus solely on child care. Some nannies will cook and clean for the child, but may not be willing to do so for the entire family. Most nannies are hired by referrals.

Day care

When you don't have room in your budget for full-time care with paid vacations, an affordable option is drop-in day care, which provides flexible and part-time care. This option allows you to pick and choose the day and time slot combination that is needed. It is ideal for those who work at home or stay at home and only need a few random hours of child care. A drop in center provides a safe and healthy environment and usually has some creative activities for the children. The drop-in day care also provides a chance for your child to socialize with others, and many are connected with nursery schools or summer day camps.

Casual sitter

A legal live-in or nanny will need to be paid on the books with health insurance and regularly scheduled time off. On the opposite end of the spectrum is the person who is looking for immediate cash without the hassles of it being a job on the books — like high school and college students. The student may be most affordable, but may not be the most reliable in keeping to a schedule. Exams, social obligations and lack of interest may eventually clash with your expectations. The potato chips on the sofa may someday irritate your sensitivities. But your reactions may pale in comparison to the savings in child care expenses. The easiest place to find a student

Resources

Check out these websites for finding child care options:

- A good resource for finding a variety of child care workers who run the gamut from casual sitters to live-ins is www.care.com.
- There are two agencies that will assist parents in locating community-based child care and educational programs: Office for Children and Fam-

ily Services (212) 383-1788, www.ocfs.state.ny.us and Administration for Children's Services (877) 543-7692, www.nyc.gov.

- For finding nannies in New York, www.nycnannyfinder.com is great.

- If you're considering hiring a nanny, you'll want to be aware of the nanny tax and employment guidelines, and www.4nannytaxes.com is a great resource.



is in the neighborhood, or even at a local college. Many schools have employment and career offices that will keep a list of students available for child care services. To cover yourself and your child, interview more than one person and keep a list of five alternate candidates that you have interviewed at all times. You never know when you need backup for the backup.

Interviews

Unfortunately, child neglect and abuse lingers in the back of every parent's mind when selecting child care. Providers should pass at least a minimal background check and

you should check more than one reference before any hiring decision is made. Make a list of interview questions for this person as well. For example, questions like, "Have you ever had a medical emergency on the job, and what did you do?" "What would you do if there was a blackout while you are sitting?" Also, lay down your ground rules and expectations during the interview process. The more you talk about things, the clearer they will become and will help solidify your position for the candidate.

These are tough times, but a family can easily go from family care to full-time nanny to a sitter and on to

a nursery school program over the course of the child's development. I recommend negotiating at every step in a way that will not compromise the quality of care, but won't break the banks, either. If you feel that you need to transition from one provider to the next, try to keep a good relationship going and line up your replacement nanny before you fire the current one. Remember what is best for your child. After all, your child is priceless, but your budget is limited.

Candi Sparks is the author of the "Can I Have Some Money?" book series. You can follow her on Twitter and Facebook as Candi Sparks (writer).

It helps to identify what type of program is needed, and then figure out how to work that into your budget.

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Continued on page 24



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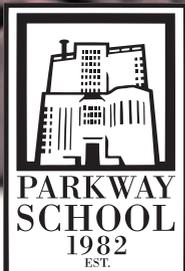
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Continued from page 22

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Parkway School is a private not for profit institution that is dedicated to academic excellence. Educating students from pre-kindergarten through eight grade. Learning is the epicenter of activities at Parkway. Our students engage in stimulating curriculum, which encourages intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. By giving our students the ability to critically and objectively analyze, we can be confident that they will seek to change what they conclude needs changing and to defend and strengthen that which is worth preserving. Academics and critical thinking skills are not the only lessons learned at Parkway. Parkway school has an excellent after school program in our Custodial Care which runs from 3-6 p.m., the children are supervised until they are picked up. Generally, they do their homework or play educational games with other children. In our tutorial program which runs from 3:15 - 4:15 p.m. children are tutored in specific subject areas depending on their individual needs. Children do not have to be enrolled at Parkway School to participate in programs. Children may be enrolled in a combined Custodial and Tutorial Program.

Rivendell School

277 Third Avenue
718-499-5667, ext. 14

A Montessori pre-primary inclusion school, was founded in 1977 as The Children's House of Park Slope and incorporated into Rivendell School in 1998. Rivendell provides a respectful, inclusive community that helps children feel powerful and confident as learners and as social and emotional beings. Toddler, half day and extended day programs are available (two through six years). Rivendell School offers beautiful Montessori classrooms, an excellent student/teacher ratio, and a warm, cooperative atmosphere where children learn to work and play. Shelly Wolf Scott is the Admissions Coordinator.

St. Saviour High School

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www.stsaviour.org

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Treasure Island Preschool

405 81st Street 2nd FL
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Their mission is to create an environment that recognizes and nurtures children's strength and unique abilities thereby building upon what children already bring in with them. Learning opportunities exist the extent that children are appropriately engaged with the environment in activities that are concrete nature, capitalize on children's interest, are authentic and meaningful, and reflect developmentally appropriate practice. Strong partnerships with children's families are sought through parent involvement to further extend and support children's learning in the home environment. Then, and only, can all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

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9am-10:30am

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Going beyond the apple

15 fabulous gifts under \$10 for your child's teacher



The best gifts come from the heart, not the pocketbook.

BY DENISE MORRISON YEARIAN

Finding a gift your child's teacher will enjoy at a price you can afford can be a challenging task. But it doesn't have to be. Following is a list of 15 fabulous 10-dollar and under gift suggestions.

1. You're an angel. Get a list from the teacher of practical things she can use in the classroom then create an angel tree. Children who want to give a gift can choose an angel item that will benefit the teacher and the classroom.

2. Contribute to charity. Teachers like it when families donate to a charitable organization in the student or classroom's name. Suggest names of charitable organizations that focus on helping children then let your child choose one to give to. Follow up with a note to the teacher letting her know about your giving efforts.

3. Practical potpourri. Teachers don't often realize what they need to have on hand until it's too late, so an assortment of practical sundries makes a great gift. Ideas include Chapstick, a lint roller, safety pins,

Tide-to-Go, Static Guard and a small tool kit. Or consider a collection of health and wellness items to keep the classroom flu-free this winter: tissues, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray and Clorox wipes.

4. Conference day coupons. Conference times make it difficult for teachers to grab a hot meal or squeeze in a healthy snack. But parents can help by giving post-dated special delivery coupons. Send in a paid-for pizza one night during conference time. Or create a homemade fresh fruit basket and deliver it to the school when teachers are there for 13 hours straight.

5. Medley of rewards. Create an assortment of rewards and incentives the teacher can use in the classroom such as stickers, character pencils and mini erasers. Websites such as www.OrientalTradingCompany.com have a large variety of products and may offer free shipping.

6. Time-honored efforts. Most teachers welcome volunteer efforts. Create a coupon offering your services to make copies, grade papers or prepare classroom supplies after hours. Or offer to come in once a

month to read to the class, help with science projects or tutor students who need a little assistance.

7. Crazy about cocoa. Chocolate, either in candy or baked goods, is a top choice amongst teachers. If you make something yourself, include the recipe so they can duplicate it when they are craving chocolate in the future.

8. Thumbs up planter. Purchase a terra cotta pot and have your child place random thumbprints on it using different colors of paint. Use a permanent marker to turn the thumbprints into different bugs and flowers. Fill the pot with a live plant and attach a note that says, "Thank you for helping children grow."

9. Best bet bookends. Every classroom needs bookends but they can be costly. If you can't find a set on sale, pick up a couple of bricks from the home improvement store and cover them with a layer of soft foam and school-themed material.

10. You've got talent! If you have a special skill, talent or interest, gift it to your teacher. Are you a hair stylist? Offer a haircut. Manicurist? Offer a manicure. If you like to bake, treat

your teacher to a baker's choice club membership. For Christmas, whip up a batch of cinnamon rolls and include a coupon for one baked good every month between now and school year's end. In the future, deliver the baked item on the same day each month so your teacher knows when to expect it.

11. Take note! Writing supplies are a useful luxury. Purchase a pack of pretty stationery, blank thank you notes or paper with matching envelopes so the teacher can write letters to her parents. Or personalize the gift by having your child draw a watercolor picture. Scan it on the computer, crop the image, print it on Vellum paper and then mount it onto colored cardstock and give it with matching envelopes.

12. Bestow books. Purchase your child's favorite book and donate it to the school library. On the inside cover, have your child create a sticker that says, "Donated in honor of (teacher's name) by (child's name)," along with the date.

13. Reel fine. Make a movie-themed package and include a 5

Group gifts

Need some collective classroom gifts suggestions? Consider these:

- Invite several families to join you in taking out a children's magazine subscription for the classroom. Websites such as www.Amazon.com and www.MagazinesUSA.com offer deeply discounted rates to such publications as Highlights,



Ranger Rick, Your Big Backyard and more.

- Pick up a small, flip-style photo album and fill it with crowd-pleasing recipes submitted by other families in the classroom. Title it, "Class of 2009 Cookbook" and package it together with a couple of kitchen accessories: spatula, mixing spoons and

measuring cups.

- Teachers love to help other students learn. Gather money from other families and purchase a gift certificate to a local cosmetology school for a manicure, pedicure or haircut. Package it with a comb, brush, deep hair conditioning packet and the school's brochure of services.

- Gift certificates are a popular present this time of year. Suggest students in the classroom all purchase 5 dollar gift cards to the same educational, book or dollar store or local eatery. Collectively it will make enough to buy something useful or give the teacher a night out on the town.

dollar gift card to a nearby video rental store, a box of microwave popcorn and Swedish Fish or Milk Duds candy. Stop by a local movie theater and purchase a clean popcorn bucket for a minimal cost to use for themed packaging.

14. Great games. Keep kids occupied indoors during inclement weather by purchasing classroom games. Find out what games and activities the teacher does and doesn't

have then watch for sales in store flyers, look on Ebay or find them at a garage sale.

15. Kid crafted. Teachers agree the best gifts come from the heart, not the pocketbook. Cards with sincere sentiments or pictures drawn by students are the most cherished presents of all.

Denise Morrison Yearian is the former editor of two parenting magazines, an educator and the mother of three children.

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OUR RELATIONSHIPS

JOAN EMERSON, PhD

Relating to in-laws

You may try to keep the holidays about family, love and giving, but what if you (secretly or not) can't stand certain members of the family?

Unfortunately, the holidays can remind us just how difficult extended family relations can be.

You love your spouse and support him, but to you, his family may have totally different views, seem to be very judgemental, or act in crazy ways. You may even feel that they treat you, your spouse or your kids, in ways that cause intense discomfort. Part of that discomfort may come from noticing that your spouse is less observant and more accepting of his family's behaviors than you are, even though he is — at least in your eyes — often the victim.

If some of these situations hit close to home, remember that there are ways you can see past it and enjoy the holidays.

If your spouse has kids from a previous marriage, his loyalty to those kids is something that is unwaveringly deep and non-negotiable. Guilt, and ways of compensating for it, juggling the custodial arrangements, and, often, dealing with the ex-spouse, can be very difficult for you to watch.

With your spouse's family coming over, you might be trying to prepare yourself for a barrage of abuse from his (in your opinion) crazy parents or siblings. Here, again, is something that can upset you more than him. He'll tell you he's used to it, he can handle it, and not to worry. Yet, it can be consistently galling to watch the person you love receiving and reacting to, what you clearly see as, a kind of emotional victimization.

Your spouse's ultra-close relationship with his parents (by spending too much time with them or being too dependent on their help) could also make you feel uncomfortable — especially if you have a different set of ideas about the desirable adult child and parent relationship. Although you can admire the strong bond your spouse has with his parents, sometimes you might feel secretly threatened by it and



wonder (childishly, you admit) who would win if it came to a question of "it's me or them."

And then, of course, spouses' families have different values when it comes to the style of relating during get-togethers. Some families talk openly about members' lives — who's going through a depression, who's going through a divorce, or children with particular issues. Other families prefer small talk, focusing on the food or keeping too busy during the visit to personally connect to each other. Both are, of course, fine, but may be difficult for the spouse who is more comfortable with one and now has to deal with the other.

While issues may be bothering you, what doesn't work is getting more upset than your spouse is about extended family. Even though the intent is to be helpful by pointing out how things could be handled better, how to take or give less abuse or how to stand up for oneself, once your spouse has listened and acknowledged the usually valid point, he'd like you to just let it go. If you stay more upset about the situation than your spouse, and consistently bring up the topic, it can cause intense pain and a deep anger that begins to flare up toward you, and not toward the family in question.

So what's the most constructive path to take? The answer is easier said than done: containment.

After describing some of the difficulties with the in-laws or step-kids, and feeling that your discomforts and requests have been heard and understood, and that your spouse has expressed the desire to try to accommodate you the best he can, you must keep further feelings contained. You must deal with them yourself, and bring them up again only when the timing is right and you can be gentle and positive. You must avoid being a barrier between your spouse and his family; it just causes intense hard feelings and, often, a desire to get back at you by criticizing or rejecting your family.

When it comes to holidays and gift giving, being willing to honor your spouse's wish that you'd kept your feelings from causing conflict and divided loyalties between him and his family is one of the best gifts you can give. Holiday times, when these stressors often emerge, can be a reminder to look inward and check with yourself that you're taking the high road and giving your spouse the best gift you can: acceptance.

Dr. Joan Emerson is a New York psychologist who specializes in couples therapy. Visit her website at www.Joan-Emerson.com.

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KERRY DONELLI

Cross-dressing kid

Dear Twins,

I think my son is a cross-dresser. As a young boy he loved watching me do my makeup (and I let him try my lipstick once or twice). And since the age of 11 (he is now 14) he has always dressed as a girl for Halloween. Finally, the other day I found a bag in the back of his closet containing women's undergarments. I'm appalled. Is it my fault? What can I do?

— *Distraught*

Jacqueline says: No, it's not your "fault." Plenty of women put on makeup with zero interest from their sons. If your son is a cross-dresser (which we are jumping to conclusions), then there is nothing you can do but let him know you love him no matter what. There is no magic pill that stops cross-dressing.

Kerry says: I disagree with Jackie about you jumping to conclusions because it appears your son IS a cross-dresser. However, I agree that you should begin now to accept and embrace him fully; he is who he is and he is not going to change.

• • •

Dear Twins,

I came home the other day and caught my 16-year-old son having sex with his 17-year-old girlfriend. I was appalled and forbade them to have sex in my house. I can't even stand the sight of her anymore and I want him to dump her. What should I do?

— *Disgusted*

Jacqueline says: Mid-adolescence is often more often than not when teens explore sex. Your son is one of them and you're not going to stop him. What you can do, however, is educate him on the importance of safe sex. Be glad you found out now before you turn into a grandmother.

Kerry says: I agree with Jackie in that you should absolutely educate your son about safe sex. That said, what century are you from? This is about the age when kids lose their virginity. Please, mother, get with



the program. Besides, where should they have sex? On the roof? If you really want to estrange yourself from your son, then keep being unreasonable and hysterical, and then forbid him to see his girlfriend.

• • •

Dear Twins,

My ex-husband and I have two young children ages 7 and 10 whom I have custody of. We share them for holidays, when we take them to see their grandparents. We try to be fair so that each set of grandparents will have the kids for Thanksgiving dinner with one of us each year. However, the children really favor one set of grandparents over the other because the other set is so strict. I know I can force them to go, but they are so miserable there ... is it really fair?

— *Thankful*

Kerry says: One meal out of the year is not going to kill them. Besides, they may appreciate the fact that they got to know both grandparents when they get older. Instead, why not have them visit their favorite grandparents more often?

Jacqueline says: I agree with Kerry. When their grandparents are long gone, they will value the time they spent with them.

Dear Twins,

My husband and I believe our 6-year-old is being bullied either on the school bus or at school, but he won't tell us. He cries every school morning that he doesn't want to go on the bus and he doesn't want to go to school, and he used to love going to school. I've spoken to the school bus driver, his teacher, and to some of his friends and no one seems to have seen anything, but I know something is going on. What should I do?

— *Afraid*

Kerry says: Have a sit down conversation and very calmly get to the bottom of this. Have a talk with the school counselor as well to see if she can help. If he is being bullied I would take immediate action, such as speaking with the principal, the teacher and the bully's parents. I don't want to be an alarmist, but with bullying these days, it's best to err on the pro-active side.

Jacqueline says: And if this approach doesn't work, try a child psychologist. Your child is uncharacteristically expressing anxiety and fear. It's good that you saw this. There is a problem, so get to the bottom of it before it gets worse.

• • •

Dear Twins,

Another young mother in my neighborhood (who is a friend of mine) and I decided that we would alternate babysitting for each other's child for one day a week so the other has some time to herself. This past week was my second time sitting for her 4-year-old for the day, and I was ready to hang myself by the end of the day. That child was into everything and had temper tantrums if I tried to stop him — including kicking furniture, walls, breaking dishes, and anything else he could get his hands on that was breakable. He is utterly spoiled, and I want to get out of this arrangement. What do I say to his mother?

— *No More Monsters!*

Jacqueline says: Why not tell her the truth? Two children are a bit much for you to handle every week. And be done with it.

Kerry says: I agree with Jacqueline. Tell her it's more than you could handle and leave it at that.

Jacqueline and Kerry Donelli, twin sisters, are multi-award winning filmmakers. They are currently getting their *Masters in Mental Health* and have a radio show on WBCR-AM also called, "Twice the Advice" — where one twin gives advice and, often, the other completely disagrees! Please e-mail them at TwiceTheAdvice2@gmail.com.



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If I start to tell my 5-year-old son that he must do something, he'll start to scream and cry, which makes it impossible for him to listen. How can I help him calm down and follow directions?

At some point, every parent will be faced with a situation in which a child refuses to follow directions. It can be challenging to maintain your patience and attempt to reason with your son when he doesn't want to listen to you. As hard as it may be, try to view these experiences as opportunities to help your son understand that he won't get what he wants by being difficult. Here are a few strategies that you can use that will teach your son to listen to you.

First, get his attention by making eye contact and moving close to him. Children are more inclined to follow your directions if you're nearby.

When you do give your son directions, be very straightforward and brief. Children have a tendency to ignore adults if they talk for a long period of time or use complicated language. For example, if your son refuses to go to bed, instead of giving him a lengthy explanation as to why it's important for him to sleep, say something like, "You need to go to bed now."

Also, even if you're frustrated, try not to yell. While it may be tempting to yell when you're angry, raising your voice can make it difficult for your son to understand what you're saying and could even make it appear that you're not in control. Instead, attempt to speak at a normal volume.

Sending your son to "time-out" can be helpful. Pick a nearby safe spot away from television, toys or anything else that he enjoys. Stop your son from whatever he happens to be doing and move him to your



time-out location. If your son attempts to leave time-out before you give him permission, you should return him to the designated spot.

No matter how disruptive your son becomes, you should try to be quiet and ignore anything that he might be doing, as long as his actions aren't putting him in any danger. Paying attention to your son will reward his behavior and make him think that he can control the

situation simply by misbehaving. Allow him to leave time-out when he's quiet and willing to listen to what you have to say.

The more consistent you are with using time-out, the more effective this discipline strategy will become. While it may be hard to reason with your son now, things will get better over time, and he'll eventually learn the importance of following your directions.

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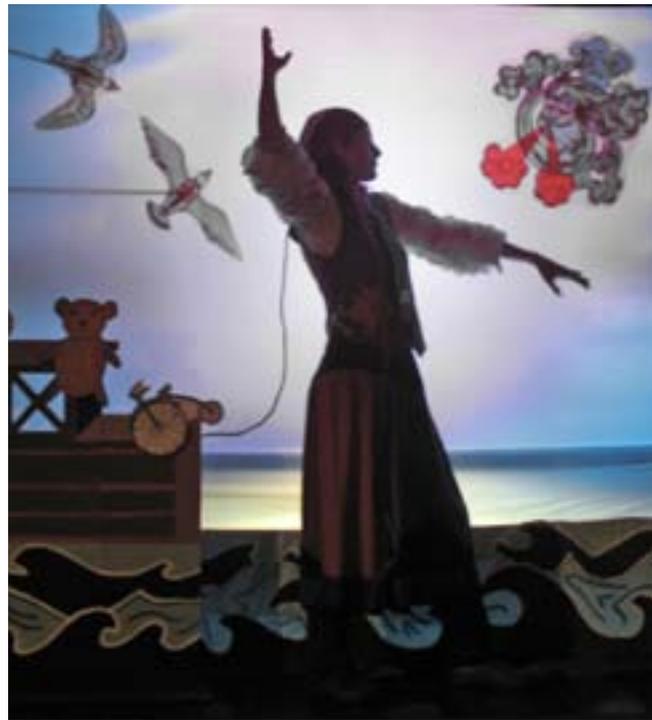
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PUPPET MAGIC: (At left) The Shadow Box Theatre's annual performance of "The African Drum" celebrates Black History Month. (Above) "Big Annie" is a Christmas story.

PS 3 to the rescue

When a theatre troupe lost its space, a Brooklyn school stepped in

Since the beginning of November, hundreds of young children and teachers have experienced the joy of seeing a performance from the Shadow Box Theatre inside PS 3, the Bedford Village School, in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Forty-three years ago, Sandra Robbins — with a cadre of talented mothers — created the Shadow Box Theatre to fill a void in New York's multi-ethnic environment. Their aim was to present innovative musical puppet theatre relevant to a diverse population of young children and families. At the time, very little children's theatre of that nature existed.

The organization enjoyed its housing at the Theatres at 45 Bleeker St. in Manhattan until October, when, due to a financial dispute between the owners of the building and the management company, it was shuttered.

Robbins and her staff worked tire-

lessly to find the theatre a new home, and, with many phone calls to many friends in the community, the city's public schools came to their aid. PS 2 in Chinatown hosted the theatre for the run of its Halloween show, "Lumpy Bumpy Pumpkin." Then, a week before the troupe would be homeless again at the start of November, PS 3 opened its doors for the Thanksgiving-themed production, "Tobias Turkey."

At the time, the school's auditorium was getting an upgraded sound system and lights. The school's principal, Kristina Beecher, and the arts coordinator saw this as an opportunity for the school and troupe.

Now, the children of PS 3 not only watch the shows, but also experience them as they are being created. In addition, they read the troupe's books, and Robbins shares her inspiration in the process of writing them

with the students.

In December, the troupe will present its annual holiday show, "Big Annie." Coming in January is the annual show, "The African Drum," running through March to celebrate Black History Month.

The partnership is considered by many to be a win-win situation for all — the children, teachers, school, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, The Shadow Box Theatre, and the city of New York.

The Shadow Box Theatre's "Big Annie" at PS 3, The Bedford Village School [50 Jefferson Ave. in Bedford-Stuyvesant, (718) 622-2960], Dec. 9-23. "The African Drum" Jan. 25 - Mar. 4.

The Shadow Box Theatre's offices [138 South Oxford St., #2A, in Downtown (718) 398-7772] and [325 West End Ave., in Manhattan (212) 724-0677]. For more information, visit shadowbox-theatre.org.



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LAURA GRAY

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Ramona and Beezus

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Once her puppy is in obedience school, his rambunctiousness is curtailed. Your daughter learns how to train him to behave. Before long, he's back to being the darling little pup she always wanted — at least most of the time.

With some hard work, she learns that loving someone (or something) means accepting his annoying traits along with the endearing ones. That's the conclusion that the Quimby family comes to, as well, in "Ramona and Beezus," now available on DVD. Enjoy this entertaining film with your family and then discuss it with our Talk Together points. Later, you can get "Stuck On You" in our Play Together activity.

"Ramona and Beezus," based on the best-selling children's book series by Beverly Cleary, focuses on two sisters and their close-knit family. The Quimbys find their household turned upside-down when Dad loses his job. Mom must return to the workplace, leaving Dad in charge of 15-year-old Beezus (Ramona's nickname for Beatrice), 8-year-old Ramona and baby Roberta. Ramona



Ramona and her family enjoy some backyard waterworks.

overhears her parents discussing their money woes and decides to help out.

Ramona asks Beezus to help her enter a competition for a national advertising campaign. The winner becomes the high-paid poster child for a peanut butter ad. But tomboy Ramona has trouble pulling off the "princess" style the company is seeking. She loses the competition, but is consoled by Beezus. Ramona's other money-making schemes also fail.

Finally, the Quimbys are forced to sell their home. No one is happy

about it, but Ramona is the most upset. When the real estate agent shows the house to some prospective buyers, Ramona bursts in the door, runs upstairs — and falls through the ceiling. Distraught, she helps convince her parents to find a way to stay in the family home. Beezus and the rest of the family reaffirm their love for Ramona, despite her irritating antics. After all, that's what you do when you love someone.

Talk together

Ramona's imagination is sometimes out of control. Which was your favorite of her wild daydreams? Why does her dad encourage her to dream?

Ramona's wacky ideas often cause trouble for other people. Why does this happen? How do her family and friends respond? How would you react?

Schedule a family movie night during the holidays! Check out our archives at www.Cinematters.com and get some great ideas for fun with your favorite films.

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Play together: Stuck on you

You will need:

- Masking tape or duct tape
- Slips of paper
- Pens or pencils

Distribute 10 slips of paper to each player. Have each person write five positive traits (such as funny, creative or athletic) and five negative traits (such as messy, picky eater or always late) that de-

scribe the person on his or her left. Mix up the slips and spread them facedown on the floor. (Make sure it's a clear, open space.) To play, one person is "It." Wrap several strips of masking tape, sticky side out, around "Its" chest. "It" then has five seconds to roll across the floor, collecting as many slips of paper as will stick to the tape. No

hands allowed! At the end of five seconds, another player removes each slip one by one. If the group agrees that the trait describes "It" accurately, "It" gets five points. If a trait does not apply, deduct two points from "Its" score. Reuse the slips and let each player take a turn as "It." The player with the most points wins. And everyone learns the importance of loving each other, no matter what!

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To Facebook or not to Facebook?

Is it ethical for a teacher to 'friend' students?

BY VERA BORUKHOV

Should teachers "friend" their students on Facebook? The question is circulating around schools everywhere.

Some people feel that their Facebook page is too private to share with anyone but their closest friends. To them I say: Exactly what is it you're posting that's so private? Facebook doesn't exist in a bubble. You can search for anyone on the site — and even find Facebook

pages on Google and other search engines.

Personally, I see nothing wrong with befriending my students on social media, as Facebook offers customized features that allow me to keep certain information private.

For instance, I can create a group made up solely of my students and then, if I'm posting something I don't want the kids to see, I can choose to block the post from that group.

I've sent out "friend" requests to my students, and I gladly accept

their requests in return. It allows me to get to know my students on a deeper level — and the better I know them, the better I can teach them.

However, as long as a child is my student, I make it a point to stay neutral about the information he or she shares online. Even if a student posts pictures of himself smoking, wrapping weed, making out, or flipping the bird, I don't get involved online. If I see something truly alarming on his page, I talk to

him privately; otherwise, it's his page and his business. Sometimes students will send me a personal message on the site. If the student is concerned about something, I give a quick response and then suggest he or she talk to me in person.

Once the child is no longer my student, then I might comment here and there if I find a status update or a picture compelling. But, if you're worried about the ethics and privacy issues involved in being a part of your teacher's or student's social network, then don't friend him or her — or do it after your student-teacher relationship is over if you want to stay connected.

Vera Borukhov is the founder of Veracity Learning Inc., devoted to providing English and Entrepreneurial education to uncover your child's genius. Contact Veracity to better your child's school experience and give you peace of mind at (718) 790-8911. For more info, visit www.veracity-learning.com. E-mail Vera at vera.borukhov@gmail.com.



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Autism support

Queens group helps families cope with the disorder

BY MARY CARROLL WININGER

When a young child is diagnosed with autism, the amount of therapy and special attention he needs can initially seem overwhelming to his parents. But a new support group in Queens, that's aiming to empower, educate the caregivers of autistic children, just might be the answer for those who feel that they have nowhere to turn.

Autism, a neurodevelopmental disorder, affects the way information is processed by the brain, and it's characterized by delays in social

know anyone who had it. I started scouring the Internet to learn more information."

While Zariah's preschool did offer workshops detailing what parents of autistic children could expect, the Queens-based mom found them lacking.

"I didn't think it was enough," says Ocampo. "There needed to be a way to connect with other parents and show them how to cope and adapt."

So, she decided to take matters into her own hands. Ocampo founded the group on Nov. 1, 2006 as an informal support group through meetup.com. Back then, it was called

One recent workshop involved a board-certified behavioral analyst speaking with the group about what parents and caregivers should do when autistic children have issues with sensory over-stimulation.

"He broke it down for us and introduced ways in which parents can reinforce good behavior," says Ocampo.

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest have also spoken to members about the legal issues they face. And the group can direct parents to products and services for their children that are free, or for which they could be reimbursed. "There are things that kids with a documented disability are entitled to have," asserts Ocampo.

Members know how to have fun, too.

"We take our kids on outings — movies, parks and zoos — places where we want our kids to develop social skills," she explained.

With all of the programs and support the group offers, it's not difficult to find members who flourished there.

"I can think of one example in particular," muses Ocampo. "[A mother] came to us two weeks after her son was diagnosed. When she first came to [the group], she just cried. She vented and talked with us. Then, she left for a year to cope and grieve. After that year, she came back with a bang. She started out doing office support for [us] and in January 2011, she will become our treasurer as part of our board of directors. It has been an honor to see the transformation in her, and to see her child progress. She and the other team members [have become] the best advocates for their children."

The knowledgeable and supportive members give Queens families of autistic children a haven, as well as a place to gather strength. For more information, visit www.qcpac.org.

Mary Carroll Wininger is a writer based in New York City. She is a frequent contributor on topics ranging from etiquette to feng shui.



Members of the Queens County Parents Autism Coalition celebrate their accomplishments at an awards ceremony.



interaction and communication. The exact cause of the disorder is still unknown, although it remains an area of active research. Symptoms of autism can appear in a child as young as six months.

Queens County Parents Autism Coalition is an organization that seeks to strengthen families who have loved ones living with autism through support, education and networking. Group meetings, lectures and the occasional trip to the local park are all part of its support method.

The South Ozone Park-based group grew out of one mother's quest to find local support when her daughter was diagnosed with autism a few years ago.

"[My daughter] Zariah was diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder on June 13, 2005," explains Cheryl Ocampo. "Back then, I didn't

Queens Autism Meetup Group.

"At first, it was just two or three of us meeting at a coffee shop to talk about our experiences. Within two years, the group had taken on a mind of its own," explains Ocampo. "In November 2008, we were incorporated as a non-profit [and changed the group's name]. Today, we partner with the Queens Special Education Parent Center to educate and empower parents of children with special needs. [Of course, our group] offers more of a concentration of support for families dealing with autism."

The group allows parents the time and space to vent and talk, but also provides information on caring for children with autism.

"We arrange for meetings and workshops where parents can receive training," explains Ocampo.

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Bugging out again

Greenpoint cartoonist Neil Numberman dishes on his new kids graphic novel

BY CHUCK O'DONNELL

Greenpoint's Neil Numberman didn't want the characters in "Joey Fly Private Eye 2: Big Hairy Drama" to freeze their thoraxes off.

There's a cold snap hitting the big city in this second installment of the Mickey Spillane-inspired noir spoof. Joey Fly and his scorpion sidekick, Sammy Stingtail, go slogging through the snow as they try to solve the disappearance of leading lady Greta Divawing.

Numberman went out onto the streets of Brooklyn and took shots of people bundled up in hats and scarves to reference when he drew the kids' graphic novel. So if there's a pair of red thigh-high boots on a praying mantis that look familiar, maybe they were yours.

Numberman and writer Aaron Reynolds first Joey Fly book, "Creepy Crawly Crime" was nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe Mystery Award in the juvenile category.

In this whodunit, which is currently out through Macmillan imprint Henry Holt, Numberman brings a bit of Brooklyn alongside more fun, more bugs and a hornets nest of suspects.

Brooklyn Family: What are Joey and Sammy up to in the sequel?

Neil Numberman: They are approached by a gigantic, hairy tarantula, Harry. Harry is the owner and director at the famous Scarab Beetle Theatre. His lead actress has gone missing, and he's convinced Joey Fly is the only one that can find her in time for opening night. So Joey and Sammy are back on the case. There are quite a few suspects: a villainous stinkbug who's dedicated to the craft of acting, a lovesick gypsy moth who's making eyes at Sammy, a geriatric mosquito janitor and even the



Greenpoint-based graphic novelist Neil Numberman brings back his popular "Joey Fly" character in his latest kid's comic book.

"It's the type of book I would have loved to get on Christmas morning."

giant mustachioed tarantula.

BF: How did you improve over the first book, art-wise?

NN: I was really uptight with the first book, because I had never worked on anything that big before. It was 96 pages; the most I had done up until then was three pages. I'm still happy with it, but it's got nothing on the second Joey Fly, art-wise. Between the two books, I've made a lot more comics and I loosened up considerably. The panels are a lot more fun and all over the place, [and] the word balloons are dynamic when they need to be.

BF: How do you take Aaron Reynolds's script and make it better/funnier/funner?

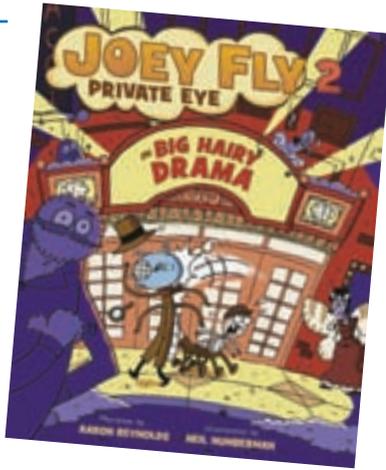
NN: I try to pack each page with plenty of hidden jokes and hints, so folks can take a look at it more than once. I also like to slip in some of my own stories, told entirely through the drawings. It's partly a way for the readers to have fun, and partly so I have fun making it.

BF: What did you mean when you said you were "born to draw this book?"

NN: Aaron wrote a great story with weird and compelling characters, that also happen to be insects and arachnids. It's the type of book I would have loved to get on Christmas morning and run up to my room and sit by the heater in my new slippers and devour. So, when I say I was born to draw this book, I mean any quality story that can be read again and again, with characters that I'm fascinated with and that inspire the imagination. I've been drawing animals and people and monsters since I was 3, maybe since I was 2 (according to my mother), and I've never stopped. So in that respect, I feel like I'm doing what I was born to do.

BF: You mentioned that you took photos of Brooklynites walking on the street to use as inspiration. Where did you go to take the shots and how did this help?

NN: My studio at the time was right on the river in Williamsburg, and I caught people going to work up Bedford Avenue. Fabiane's on Fifth had a great breakfast, and a



nice place to sit and snap pictures where I could keep warm, but see all the folks on their way to work. (Bedford is quite hopping at 9 am) Even though I was in hipster central, and I needed '30s era clothes references, winter clothes tend to be a bit more ambiguous. So after a couple mornings there, I got a hundred or so shots. They were useful for a lot of the theatre scenes toward the end of the book.

BF: How did a nice kid from Jersey who studied illustration at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia end up in Brooklyn?

NN: I needed to set my sights a little higher than Philadelphia. So I applied to the School of Visual Arts's graduate illustration program, as much for the extra education as a reason to move up here. I knew an acceptance letter would light a fire under me, and when I got mine from SVA, it was all the reason I needed to move to New York. I lived in Manhattan for awhile, but after school, I needed an art studio. I mentioned this at a party in Brooklyn, met a guy that had one with extra space in Williamsburg, and I had my spot. I shared a 100-square-foot room with another illustrator and friend, S.Y. Choi, but we outgrew it last year.

BF: What is your workspace like now?

NN: I work out of home. It's a perfect little set-up for me. My studio's in a pretty big room next to my bedroom. I miss working around other friends, because I can always bounce ideas off them, but the upside is I have a workspace and an apartment that's all my own. My desk looks like a space station, with two computer monitors and a television, which I love. The more screen space in front of me, the better.

For more information about Neil Numbeman, visit www.neilnubeman.com.

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Learn the lingo

New book offers tips for parents hoping to communicate with baffling teens

BY JOANNA DELBUONO

Whatever. Fine. Not. Don't despair parents! Your children haven't been taken over by an alien race; it's just teen speak that you are left to decipher. And just like any foreign language, you only need patience and a good dictionary to get you through the rough times. Enter Barbara Greenberg, PhD and Jennifer Powell-Lunder, PsyD, authors of "Teenage as a Second Language, A Parent's Guide to Becoming Bilingual," a must-have for any parent that has suffered through hours of one-word responses and frustrating attempts at conversation.

Their sensitive approach to navi-

gating the turbulent waters of "teen-dom" gives parents hope that all is not lost, just a little misplaced.

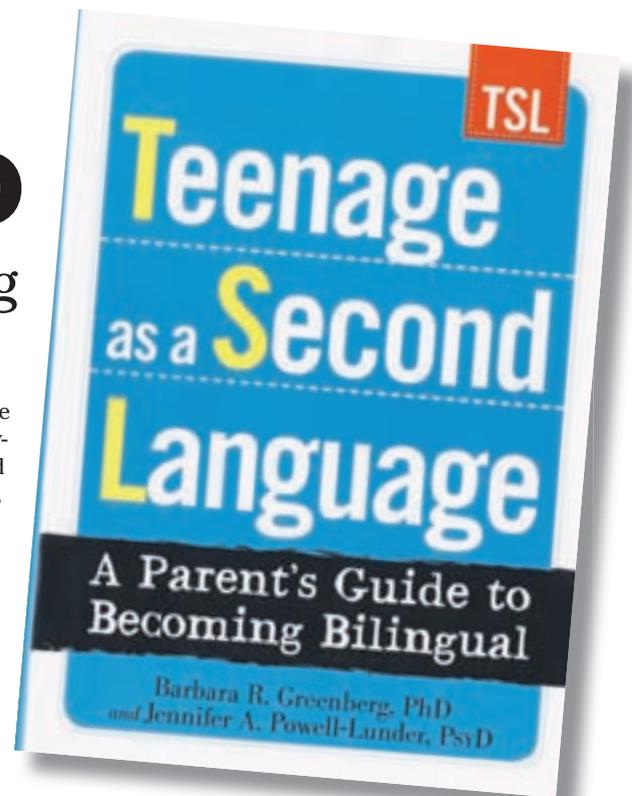
The guide addresses every situation from how to successfully approach conversations regarding sensitive topics to avoid falling into the trap of "Because I said so."

You will also find segments which serve as quick conversation starters and easy ways to understand the most commonly misunderstood words, phrases and nonverbal language that your teen can throw at you.

Remember that as with learning any new language, practice is key and the more teenage you speak, the more comfortable you will become on the road to fluency.

So the next time the frustration levels make your head want to explode, chillax and reach for your copy of the guide. The insightful strategies you learn will keep the lines of communication open and your home from becoming a battleground.

"Teenage as a Second Language, A Parent's Guide to Becoming Bilingual," by Barbara Greenberg, PhD and Jennifer Powell-Lunder, PsyD (243 pgs. \$14.95. Adamsmedia).



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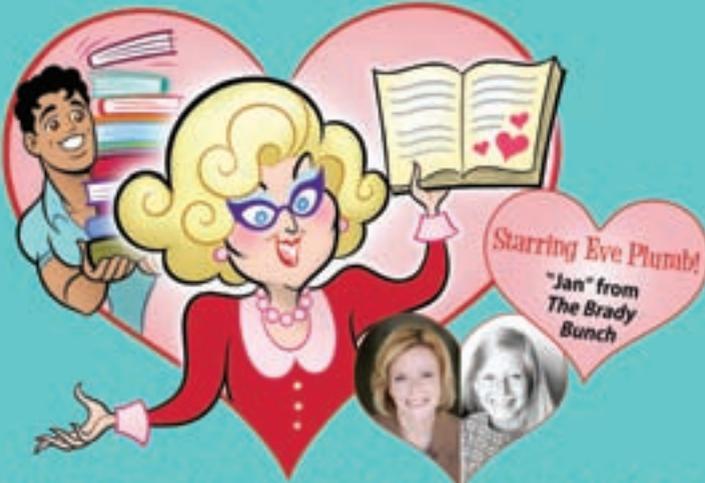


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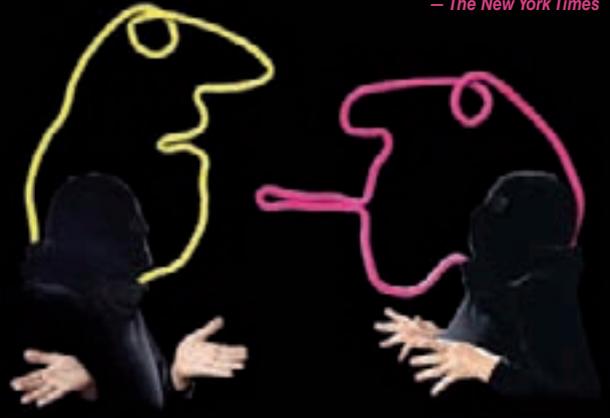


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Photo by Joan Marcus

Pee-wee in the 'house'

Paul Reubens's TV show hits Broadway

BY LISA J. CURTIS

One of the many pleasures of parenthood is being able to revisit joys from our youth — under the guise of introducing them to our unsuspecting kids — without the baggage of feeling juvenile or guilty about the time or cash spent. And while some experiences from yesteryear may make us wince upon being rediscovered by older and wiser eyes, Broadway's "The Pee-wee Herman Show" doesn't disappoint those of us that remember the Emmy Award-winning CBS television series, "Pee-wee's Playhouse."

Pee-wee Herman — played to comic perfection by apparently ageless actor Paul Reubens — is back at the top of his "I know you are, but what am I?" game.

The TV show, which premiered in 1986, featured Reubens as the cheeky, mercurial man-boy in the too-small gray suit and red bow tie and all of his friends — humans, puppets and animated furniture alike — that hung out in his magical clubhouse. Together they learned how to deal with bullies, endure a sick day, enjoy pen pals and much more.

Earlier this year, I introduced my son to the TV series via Image Entertainment's DVD collection. While we enjoyed watching it together, I was disappointed by some segments's dull and fuzzy quality — unacceptable in our current high-def world. So it was especially exhilarating to experience the glittering, jewel-toned eye-candy that is

the set of the current stage production. Similarly, costume designer Ann Closs-Farley has embraced the Bedazzler and her spectacularly garish costumes should be de rigueur for Halloween 2011.

Now add to THAT the electric excitement of live theater. While it may be fun to shout along with the show's characters in your home each time the secret word is heard, it is absolutely thrilling to holler along with hundreds of grinning fans in the Stephen Sondheim Theatre. It's deliciously naughty of director Alex Timbers to encourage this behavior, which flies in the face of the accepted etiquette that you not open a noisy candy wrapper — much less scream — in a theater. Pee-wee's audience enthusiastically embraces this license to exuberantly interact with the cast.

Speaking of manners, the multimedia, vaudeville-esque stage show continues the series's traditions of prominently featuring animation, a wide variety of puppets — by artist Basil Twist, and unspooling a reel of now-ludicrous vintage film — in this case, about how to behave properly in school.

The stage show incorporates nods to TV commercials old (Chia Pets, anyone?) and new (ShamWow and Bumpits). This material does get the laughs, but it also subversively serves as a reminder of just how well "Pee-wee's Playhouse" holds up in 2010 and how necessary it is to share Reubens's still-relevant comic genius with the next generation.

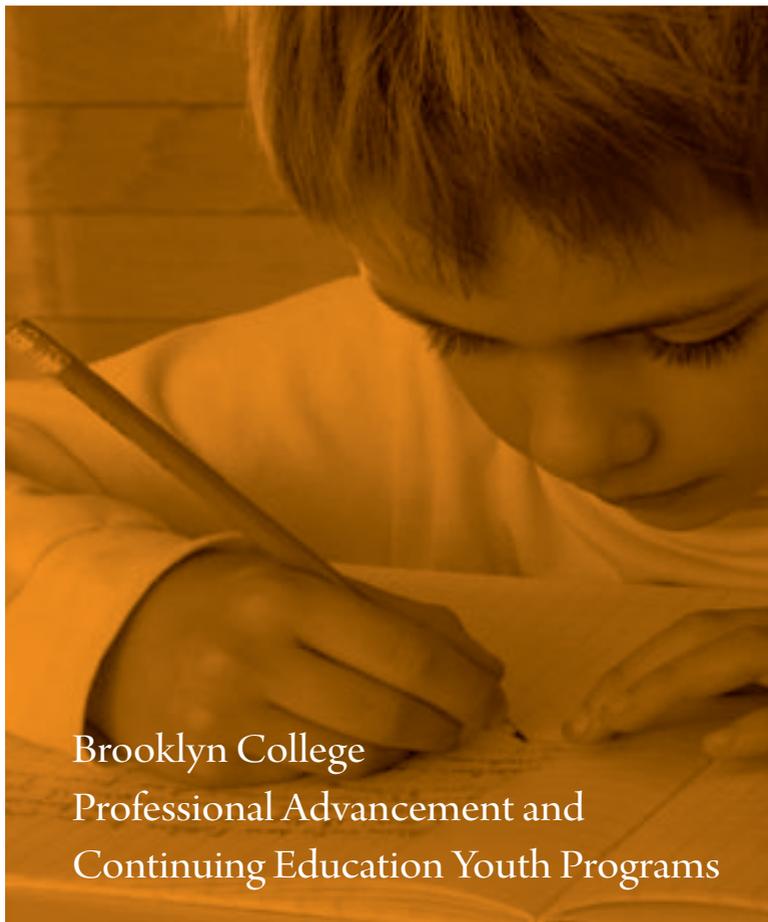
Amidst all of the double entendres and nudge-nudge pop culture references, the show — written by Reubens and Bill Steinkellner — offers up an authentically affecting story line: Pee-wee unrealistically hopes

to fly like his friend Pterri the Pterodactyl. In addition to Pterri, Pee-wee reunites with many of our favorite characters from the ground-breaking children's show, such as Cowboy Curtis (played here by Phil LaMarr) and Chairry (the talking wing chair). Fans are ecstatic to see a couple of the series's actors in the Broadway cast. Just as Pee-wee prefers his yarn-linked soup cans to Wi-Fi, the show's producers have wisely chosen to stay loyal to those seasoned ensemble members. In addition to Reubens as Pee-wee, Lynne Marie Stewart reprises the role of Miss Yvonne — the most beautiful woman in cartoon land — and the riveting John Paragon pulls off the role of Jambi the Genie just by employing all of the talent in his disembodied head. (In fact, several of the actors are original to the stage show of the same name which debuted at the Groundlings Theatre in 1981.)

Pee-wee prefers interacting with his long-time friends Conky the robot (Josh Meyers) and Magic Screen — which is akin to a talking Etch-A-Sketch — to the joys of the newfangled computer. And I have to agree. I was thrilled to leave the technology at home and take my son's small hand in mine while enjoying this live version of "Pee-wee."

Lisa J. Curtis is a freelance writer and editor based in Staten Island.

"The Pee-wee Herman Show" is performed at the Stephen Sondheim Theatre (124 West 43rd Street in Manhattan) now through Jan. 2, 2011. Performances are Tuesdays at 7 pm, Wednesday through Friday at 8 pm, Saturday at 2 pm and 8 pm and Sunday at 2 pm and 7 pm. Tickets are \$67-\$122. Check www.pee-wee.com/broadway for changes in the schedule during holiday weeks.



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Going Places

LONG-RUNNING

"Drawn in Brooklyn": Brooklyn Public Library's Central branch, Flatbush Avenue at Eastern Parkway in Grand Army Plaza; (718) 230-2100; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=265; Mondays – Thursdays, 9 am–9 pm, Fridays and Saturdays, 10 am–6 pm, Sundays, 1–5 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 23, 2011; Free.

Brooklyn-based children's book illustrators show off their favorite pieces.

New York Botanical Garden Train Show:

New York Botanical Gardens, Bronx River Pkwy (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road; (718) 817-8716; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–7 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 2, 2011; \$20 (\$10 children, children under 2 free).

More than one dozen large-scale model trains running on nearly a quarter-mile of track along with replicas of Manhattan landmarked buildings.

Race to the End of the Earth:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5100; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Now – Sun, Jan. 2, 2011; Donations suggested.

The exhibit recounts the most stirring tales of Antarctic exploration: the contest to reach the South Pole in 1911–1912. Highlights include photographs, paintings, and rare historical artifacts as well as actual items of clothing and tools; life-sized models of portions of Amundsen's and Scott's base camps; and a diorama featuring the largest of all penguin species alive today, the emperor penguin. There are also interactive and hands-on activities for all ages.

"Beauty and the Beast": Puppetworks, 338 Sixth Ave. at Fourth Street; (718) 965-3391; www.puppetworks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 pm and 2:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 19; \$8 (kids, \$7).

Classic tale — with marionettes.

Story time for kids: Greenlight Bookstore, 686 Fulton St. between South Elliott Place and South Portland Avenue; (718) 246-0200; abookstoreinbrooklyn.blogspot.com; Saturdays, 10:30 am, Now – Tues, Jan. 11, 2011.

Science power hour: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon;



A holiday sweet

This "Nutcracker" is a sweet classic.

On Dec. 19, the Vicky Simegiatos Dance Company puts on a full-length production of the classical ballet, starring — as per usual — world-renowned ballet star Jenifer Ringer, principal of the New York City Ballet, as the Sugar Plum Fairy, as well as young members of the company performing the other roles.

Given the lush and familiar Tchaikovsky score, the magnifi-

cent and humorous classical choreography, the thrill of witnessing the wonderful talent of the community's young dancers, and the intimacy of the neighborhood theatre, the production promises fabulous entertainment for children and theatre-goers of all ages.

"The Nutcracker" at the Richard Perry Theatre at Poly Prep [Seventh Avenue and 92nd Street in Bay Ridge, (718) 680-0944], Dec. 19 at 1 pm and 6 pm. Tickets \$25-\$35. For info, visit www.vsdnews.org.

Submit a listing

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

All you have to do is send your listing request to calendar@cnglocal.com — and we'll take care of the rest. Please e-mail requests more than three weeks prior to the event to ensure we have enough time to get it in. And best of all, it's FREE!

Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 pm, Now – Thurs, Jan. 20, 2011.

Learn about nature.

Bedtime stories: Leonard Library, 81 Devoe St. between Metropolitan Avenue and Anslie Street; (718) 486-3365; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Mondays, 6 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 27; Free.

Children three to eight enjoy cuddle up stories and activities.

Babies and books: Flatlands Library, 2065 Flatbush Ave. between Quentin Road and Avenue P; (718) 253-4409; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Mondays, 3:30 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 27; Free.

Little ones birth to 18 months and their caregivers listen to songs.

Pre-school story time: Windsor Terrace Library, 160 East Fifth St. between Ft. Hamilton Parkway and Caton Avenue; (718) 686-9707; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Wednesdays, 10 am, Now – Wed, Dec. 29; Free.

For children three to five.

Word Play - Imaginative Storytelling: Rubin Museum of Art, 150 West 17 Street, between 6th and 7th avenues; (212) 620-5000 X 344. www.rmanyc.org; Wednesdays, 4–5 pm, Now – Wed, Dec. 29; \$10 (\$5 for museum members children; Accompanying adult free).

Children ages four to six can travel to the Himalayas with their imagination through a series of fun and interactive stories perfect for the whole family.

Children's movie: Leonard Library, 81 Devoe St. between Metropolitan Avenue and Anslie Street; (718) 486-3365; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Thurs-

Continued on page 52

Going Places

Continued from page 51

days, 2 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 30; Free. Call for titles.

PlayStation: Sheepshead Bay Library, 2636 East 14th St. between Voorhies Avenue and Avenue Z; (718) 368-1815; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Thursdays, 4 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 23; Free. Join friends and play video games.

Tutoring by BUPH: Rugby Library, 1000 Utica Ave. between Snyder and Tilden avenues; (718) 566-0054; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Saturdays, 2:30 pm, beginning Sat, Dec. 4; Free.

For ages 8 to 12 in grades one through six. Registration required.

"Big Annie": PS 3 - The Bedford Village School, 50 Jefferson Ave. between Bedford and Franklin avenues; (212) 724-0677; sbt@shadowboxtheater.org; www.shadowboxtheatre.org; Thursday, Dec. 9, 10:30 am; Friday, Dec. 10, 10:30 am; Monday, Dec. 13, 10:30 am; Tuesday, Dec. 14, 10:30 am; Wednesday, Dec. 15, 10:30 am; Thursday, Dec. 16, 10:30 am; Tuesday, Dec. 21, 10 am; Wednesday, Dec. 22, 10 am; Thursday, Dec. 23, 10:30 am; \$15.

The tale of a Creole flatboat captain and larger-than-life heroine.

"The Hard Nut": Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. near St. Felix Street; (718) 636-4100; www.bam.org; Friday, Dec. 10, 7:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 11, 7:30 pm; Sunday, Dec. 12, 3 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 15, 7:30 pm; Thursday, Dec. 16, 7:30 pm; Friday, Dec. 17, 7:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 18, 7:30 pm; Sunday, Dec. 19, 3 pm; \$25-\$70.

Mark Morris's 1970s-styled twist on the holiday classic, "The Nutcracker."

"Bethlehem or Bust": The Brick, 575 Metropolitan Ave. at Lorimer Street; (212) 352-3101; www.bricktheater.com; Saturday, Dec. 11, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 12, 2 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2 pm; Friday, Dec. 17, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 18, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 19, 2 pm; Saturday, Jan. 1, 8 pm; Sunday, Jan. 2, 2 pm; \$15.

Holiday family comedy.

Family Disco Night: Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave. between Hicks and Henry streets; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot@gmail.com; themoxiespot.com; Saturday, Dec. 11, 6 pm; Free with Dinner.

The Doll Club: St. James Lutheran Church, 2776 Gerritson Ave. at Florence Street. (718) 373-7990.

The First Doll Club of Brooklyn is for all doll enthusiasts.

Winter in the Wild: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Daily, 1-3 pm, Sun, Dec. 26 – Sun, Jan. 2, 2011; Free.

Children discover how squirrels get their food, how birds stay warm and



Santa Claus is coming

Santa Claus is coming to town, and she's — yes she's — full of cheer.

Still Hip, the funky children's resale boutique, has invited lady-Santa Erica Goepel back to the Clinton Hill store to revise her role as Kris Kringle.

This very untraditional Santa will be dressed in the traditional Santa Claus costume (beard and all). Children can have their picture taken on Santa's lap or on the

optional vintage rocker or Harley Davidson ride-on next to Santa.

For \$20, families will receive two four-by-six prints right away. For an extra \$20 photographer Malik Cumbo will create a disc with all the shots.

Santa Claus at Still Hip [283 Grand Ave. between Clifton Place and Lafayette Avenue in Clinton Hill, (718) 398-0008], Dec. 4, 5, 11 and 12 from 2 to 6pm. For info, visit stillhip-brooklyn.com.

other interesting stuff.

Handiwork: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Daily, 1-3 pm, Sun, Dec. 26 – Sun, Jan. 2, 2011; Free.

Children try their hand at needlepoint or write in quill and ink.

SAT, NOV. 27

Winter on a Flatbush Farm: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; 1-4 pm; Free.

Learn how to make candles, start a patchwork quilt, and preserve food for the coming months.

SUN, NOV. 28

Winter on a Flatbush Farm: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; 3 pm; Free.

A special appearance by St. Nicholas.

Dan Zanes: Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. Sixth St. between Kent and Wythe avenues; (718) 486-5400; www.musichallofwilliamsburg.com; 3 pm; \$25.

Everyone's favorite children's music.

MON, NOV. 29

"Bugs Bunny": Cobble Hill Cinema, 265 Court St. between Butler & Douglass streets; (718) 596-9113; www.

cobblehilltheatre.com; 4 pm; \$7.

TUES, NOV. 30

"Steps Across the Water", written by Gopnik and illustrated by Bruce McCall: PowerHouse Arena, 37 Main St. at Water Street; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 4:30-5:30 pm; Free.

Bestselling author and New Yorker staff writer Adam Gopnik and legendary illustrator.

Tree lighting: Gazebo, 90th St. and Shore Rd. 7:30 pm; Free.

Meet Santa, Christmas Caroling by Xaverian High School chorus and refreshments.

THURS, DEC. 2

Tree lighting: Our Lady Perpetual Help (in front of), 526 59th St. between Fifth and Sixth avenues; (718) 439-7767; 3-6:30 pm; Free.

Hear Christmas carols, visit with Santa and see a magic show performed by King Henry.

Karaoke and dance: Clarendon Library, 2035 Nostrand Ave. at Farragut Road; (718) 421-1159; www.brooklyn-publiclibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

For tweens and teens.

Tree lighting: Belarusan Church, Atlantic Avenue at Bond Street; 6 pm; Free.

Sponsored by the Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corporation.

FRI, DEC. 3

Book fair: International School of Brooklyn, 477 Court St. at Nelson Street; (718) 369-3023; njudelson@is-brooklyn.org; 2-7 pm; Free.

Children's books, magazines, games, face painting and food.

French, Spanish Book Fair: International School of Brooklyn, 447 Court St. between Third and Fourth places; (718) 369-3023 X 209; njudelson@is-brooklyn.org; www.isbrooklyn.org; 2-7 pm; Free.

This annual event offers children's books, magazines, games, face painting and food.

Book fair: Barnes and Noble Park Slope, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 6:30 pm; Free.

Musical performance by the PS 321 Children's Chorus.

Tree lighting: Frank's Pizzeria, Bay Ridge Pk'way at 13th Avenue; 917-375-2849; 7 pm; Free.

Hot chocolate, Santa, Christmas carols, give-aways and live music.

Holiday concert: St. Patrick's Auditorium, 9511 Fourth Ave. (718) 482-3173; 8 pm; \$10, (\$5 children).

Going Places

Narrows Community Theater presents an evening of song and dance.

SAT, DEC. 4

A Sunny Day Family concert: Peter J Sharp Theater, 155 West 65th St. at Broadway; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org/justkidding; 11 am; \$13-\$27.

Elizabeth Mitchell and Family perform folk standards.

Book fair: 11 am–3 pm. International School of Brooklyn. See Friday, Dec. 3.

French, Spanish Book Fair: 11 am–3 pm. International School of Brooklyn. See Friday, Dec. 3.

St. Nicholas Day: Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, 5816 Clarendon Rd. (718) 629-5400; education@wyckoffassociation.org; www.wyckoffassociation.org; Noon; \$5 for adults, \$3 for children, students and seniors.

Enjoy warm apple cider, ginger cookies, seasonal crafts, a house tour and holiday music.

Centering circus: Brooklyn Public Library's Central branch, Flatbush Avenue at Eastern Parkway in Grand Army Plaza; (718) 230-2100; www.brooklyn-publiclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=265; 1 pm; Free.

Juggling, plate spinning, stilt walking, comedic acts, balancing, unicycle riding, hula hoop acts and clowning.

Hannukah Lights: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30–2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children six and older learn about the symbols and traditions and then make a candle holder to take home.

Book fair: Barnes and Noble Park Slope, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 2 pm; Free.

Make a holiday globe with the Brooklyn School of Inquiry, for children to seven years old.

Santa visit: Still Hip, 283 Grand Ave, off Lafayette Avenue; (718) 398-0008; www.stillhipbrooklyn.com; 2–6 pm; \$20 (per photo package).

Have your tot take a picture with gal Santa and get your holiday shopping done early.

Orientation - YouthWorks 2011: Brooklyn Arts Exchange, 421 Fifth Ave. at Eighth Street; (718) 832-0018; bax.org/youth/festivalsevents/youthworks; 2:30–4 pm; Free.

Interested young artists, their parents, and coaches learn about the program and the process of developing original work into a professional performance.

Classical concert: St. Saviour High School, 588 Sixth St. (212) 209-3370; www.bqcm.org; 8 pm; \$15, \$8



Celebrate with Suzi

Get down this holiday season with the Suzi Shelton Band.

On Dec. 12, award-winning recording artist Suzi Shelton, Kira Willey and other special guests present a holiday concert for the whole family at the Bell House in Gowanus.

There will be lots of holiday cheer, 'cause treats will be pro-

vided by the Little Buddy Biscuit Company.

The Suzi Shelton Band's Rockin' Holiday Party at The Bell House [149 Seventh St. between Second and Third avenues in Gowanus, (718) 643-6510], Dec. 12 at 11:30 am. Tickets \$10 advance, \$12 at the door, free for children 2 years old and younger. For info, visit www.thebellhouse.com.

students).

The Brooklyn Conservatory Community Orchestra performs works of Stravinsky, Turina and Puccini.

Holiday concert: 8 pm. St. Patrick's Auditorium. See Friday, Dec. 3.

SUN, DEC. 5

Chanukah party: Kings Bay Y, 3495 Nostrand Ave. at Avenue V; (718) 648-7703; 11 am–2 pm; Free.

Rides for children, arts and crafts, latkas, menorah lighting, music and gifts for children.

Children's Hour: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 1 pm; Free.

Children 12 and under create nature-themed scrapbooks. All materials provided.

Spy-ence: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30–2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children five and up learn about communicating in code.

Hannukah Lights: 1:30–2:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 4.

Santa visit: 2–6 pm. Still Hip. See Saturday, Dec. 4.

Chanukah party: Shorefront YM-YWHA, 3300 Coney Island Ave. at

Brightwater Court; (718) 646-1444; www.shorefrontny.org; 2:30 pm; \$6 (free, children 2 and under).

The Chanukah story, songs, crafts, games, treats and prizes.

Holiday concert: 3 pm. St. Patrick's Auditorium. See Friday, Dec. 3.

Winter concert: St. Peter's Church, 53 St. Mark's Pl. at Westervelt Avenue; (718) 448-3656; www.richmondchoral.com; 4 pm; \$25 (\$20 seniors; \$5 students, children under 5 free).

Missa Brevis of J.S. Bach, under the direction of Marina Alexander, musical director, performs Psalmkonzert of Heinz Werner Zimmermann, the Jubilate of Felix Mendelssohn, and selected holiday fare.

Advent tree lighting: Visitation Academy, 8902 Ridge Blvd. at 90th Street; (718) 680-9452; 6:30 pm; Free.

MON, DEC. 6

"Meet Me in St. Louis": Cobble Hill Cinema, 265 Court St. between Butler & Douglass streets; (718) 596-9113; www.cobblehilltheatre.com; 4 pm; \$7.

WED, DEC. 8

Christmas tree lighting: Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon St. at Court Street; (718) 802-3700; 5:30 pm; Free.

The borough's "official" Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

THURS, DEC. 9

PS 10 art show: Barnes and Noble Park Slope, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 6:30–7 pm; Free.

Local students present their work.

FRI, DEC. 10

A-bomb survivors: Brooklyn International HS, 49 Flatbush Ext. at Bridge Street; jonthanfluck@yahoo.com. 1:30–3 pm; Free.

Hiroshima survivors speak to high school students.

Candlelight tour: Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, 5816 Clarendon Rd. between East 59th Street and Ralph Avenue; (718) 629-5400; 4:30 pm; \$7 (\$5 children, members free).

Families explore the historic farm house. Not recommended for young children. RSVP required.

World Beat: A Global Music Extravaganza: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd. at Hillel Place; (646) 458-2815; www.stathc.org; 7:30 pm; \$55, \$40, \$30.

Haitian artist Alan Cave headlines international lineup of performances.

Continued on page 54

Going Places

Continued from page 53

SAT, DEC. 11

Holiday flea market: The Church of the Holy Nativity, 3061 Bainbridge Ave. at 204th Street; (718) 409-6912; 9 am–7 pm; Free.

Fundraiser. New and used items, sports memorabilia, clothing, bric-a-brac and glassware.

PS 39 art show: Barnes and Noble Park Slope, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 10 am; Free.

Local students present their work.

Preschool story time: Brooklyn Public Library's Central branch, Flatbush Avenue at Eastern Parkway in Grand Army Plaza; (718) 230-2100; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=265; 11:30 am; Free.

For children three to five.

Santa visit: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Noon–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children meet the jolly old elf.

"Echoing Voices": Brooklyn Public Library's Central branch, Flatbush Avenue at Eastern Parkway in Grand Army Plaza; (718) 230-2100; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=265; 1 pm; Free.

Musical history of America.

Santa at the Marsh: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 1 pm; Free.

Ho! Ho! Ho! Santa is back for his annual visit.

Linked by lights: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30–2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children six and up learn about Christmas, Hannukah, and Kwanzaa.

Santa visit: 2–6 pm. Still Hip. See Saturday, Dec. 4.

Christmas celebration: Cannon Ball Park, Enter at 100th St. and Fourth Avenue; (718) 238-6044; quaglion@senate.state.ny.us; Noon–4 pm; Free.

Visit with Santa, hear carolers and watch Brooklyn's own Rockettes in a special Christmas performance while sipping hot chocolate and munching on candy canes. There will even be a U.S. Postal Mailbox which will provide direct mail service to the North Pole for letters to Santa. Sun, Dec. 12

Concert: Barnes and Noble Park Slope, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 10 am; Free.

Children from MS 443 perform.

Children's Church: Seventh-day Adventist Church, 136 Fire Island Ave. (631)



A beary fun bash

These bears sure know how to party.

The talented people at the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre in Central Park invite you to get in the holiday spirit with the marionette production of "The Three Bears Holiday Bash," now through Dec. 30.

Experience all the fun and error that occurs when Baby Bear invites Santa to Mama and Papa Bears' Christmas Show. With song, dance and puppetry, the story draws inspiration from Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

"As one of the most fascinating children's theatres in the country,

the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre in Central Park is the perfect place to tell this vibrant seasonal story," said David Rivel, executive director of City Parks Foundation.

This spin on the classic "Goldie Locks and the Three Bears" brings a diverse community together to celebrate the holidays.

"*The Three Bears Holiday Bash*" at the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre in Central Park [81 Street and Central Park West in Manhattan, just south of the Delacorte Theater, (212) 988-9093], now through Dec. 30. Reservations required. \$5/children and \$8 adults. For info, visit www.cityparksfoundation.org.

661-1890; www.sdachurchinbabylon.org; 11 am; Free.

Bible class and interactive puppet show. All ages.

Santa visit: 2–6 pm. Still Hip. See Saturday, Dec. 4.

Sing-It-Yourself Messiah: Union Church of Bay Ridge, 8101 Ridge Blvd. between 81 and 82nd streets; (718) 745-0438; www.ucbr.org; 4 pm; \$15 (\$12 students and seniors).

Bid to conduct the Hallelujah chorus with the Academy of Union Church.

MON, DEC. 13

Karaoke and dance: 3:30 pm. Clarendon Library. See Thursday, Dec. 2.

Tree lighting: Lady Moody Square, Van Sicklen St. and Avenue U; (718) 238-6044; 6:30 PM; FREE.

Christmas caroling, hot chocolate and Santa.

TUES, DEC. 14

Tree lighting: McKinley Park, Ft. Hamilton Pk'way and Bay Ridge Parkway; (718) 238-6044; 6:30 PM; FREE.

Christmas caroling, hot chocolate and Santa.

WED, DEC. 15

Christmas fair: Visitation Academy, 8902 Ridge Blvd. at 90th Street; (718) 680-9452; 9 am–2:30 pm; Free.

Get a jump on holiday shopping.

Internet workshop: Clarendon Library, 2035 Nostrand Ave. at Farragut Road; (718) 421-1159; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 1:30 pm; Free.

Learn how to search online for grants, scholarships and other financial assistance.

FRI, DEC. 17

"Toy Story": Pacific Library, 25 Fourth Ave. at Pacific Street; (718) 638-1531; <http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org>; 4–5 pm; Free.

Join Woody, Buzz and the whole gang.

Origami: Brighton Beach Library, 16 Brighton Beach First Rd. between Brightonwater Court and Brighton Beach Avenue; (718) 946-2917; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children learn the ancient art of paper folding.

Candlelight tour: 4:30 pm. Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum. See Friday, Dec. 10.

SAT, DEC. 18

Holiday party: CPAC, 1020 E. 48th St. at Farragut Road; (718) 666-6194;

Going Places

1-8 pm; \$10.

Celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa with food, entertainment, games and raffles. All children who attend leave with an age appropriate toy.

"The Magical Castle of Now":

Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1-1:30 pm and 2-2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages hear stories about light, family and tradition.

Santa visit: 1-4 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 11.

"The Nutcracker": Kingsborough Community College, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Decatur Avenue; (718) 368-5000; www.kingsborough.edu; 2 pm; \$12.

Performed by the Brighton Ballet Theater's Russian American Kids Ballet.

Jingle Bell Jamboree: Old First Reformed Church, 729 Carroll St. at Seventh Avenue; (917) 514-4591; eon-88keys@yahoo.com; 7 pm; \$5-\$10 (suggested donation).

Holiday concert featuring performances by The Brooklyn Tech High School Choir, The Old First Family String Band, St. Joseph's High School Step

Holiday food drive

Children at the Montessori School of New York International and Doubletree Hotels are partnering in a holiday food drive, hoping to reach a goal of collecting 500,000 non-perishable food items to help those less fortunate.

Collection containers designed by the children have been placed in each of the three schools and in the Doubletree Hotel lobbies.

Team, the PS 97 Show Choir and the Brooklyn Community Chorus.

SUN, DEC. 19

"The Nutcracker": Richard Perry Theatre at Poly Prep, Seventh Avenue and 92nd Street; (718) 680-0944; www.vsdnews.org; 1 pm and 6 pm; \$25-\$35.

Presented by the Vicky Simegiatos Dance Company.

Doubletree will donate \$.10 to World Food USA for each item collected.

To help these students meet their goal drop off your contribution at any of the three school campuses.

Drop off non-perishable foods [105 Eighth Ave. in Park Slope], [347 E. 55th St. in Manhattan], [55-30 Junction Blvd. in Queens] by Dec. 31.

"The Nutcracker": Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm.

The Brighton Ballet Theater performs excerpts from the holiday classic.

MON, DEC. 20

"Pippi Goes on Board": Cobble Hill Cinema, 265 Court St. between Butler &

Douglass streets; (718) 596-9113; www.cobblehilltheatre.com; 4 pm; \$7.

Free tee-shirts for all kids attending.

THURS, DEC. 23

Arts and crafts: Dyker Library, 8202 13th Ave. between 82nd and 83rd streets; (718) 748-6261; www.brooklyn-publiclibrary.org; 3:15 pm; Free.

Create holiday decorations.

SAT, JAN. 1

Story time with Mary: Barnes and Noble Park Slope, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; Noon; Free.

For children four to eight.

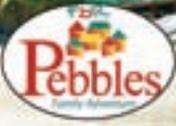
SAT, JAN. 8

Bowling lessons: Maple Lanes, 1570 60th St. between 15th and 16th avenues; (718) 331-9000; 10-11:30 am; Free.

Children six and up learn the game from members of the junior coaching staff. Pre-registration required.

Story time with Mary: Noon. Barnes and Noble Park Slope. See Saturday, Jan. 1.

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HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS



75 Number of years Coca-Cola has been using Santa Claus in its ads.

80 Percent of children visiting Santa Claus that psychology researcher John Trinkaus discovered are indifferent toward him.

87 Percent of their parents who appeared happy during the Santa visit.

1957 Year a woman baking peanut butter cookies in Ohio stuck a Hershey's Kiss in the middle to create the first Peanut Blossom, one of the holiday season's most popular cookies.



600 A.D.

Approximate year Pope Gregory first encouraged the tradition of bringing greenery indoors to celebrate Christmas.

1917 The year Boys Town, for homeless boys — now Girls and Boys Town — was founded in Omaha, NE, on Dec. 12, by Father Edward Flannigan.

2 million Number of people who pay \$13.99 a year for American Greetings' e-card service featuring 30,000 e-cards, including many for the holidays.

25 Percent of people who consider "A Christmas Carol" their favorite Christmas show.

12 Percent who picked either "It's A Wonderful Life" or "Charlie Brown's Christmas."



13 Percent of Jewish couples who had an interfaith marriage before 1970.

47 Percent who have an interfaith marriage now.



75 Percent who exchange Christmas presents.

50 Percent of interfaith couples who put up a Christmas tree.

Sources: Marketing Week, Improbable Research, Interfaithfamily.com, University of Connecticut, Boystown.org, Associated Content, Bugwood.org, Notmuch.com, Mother Nature Network

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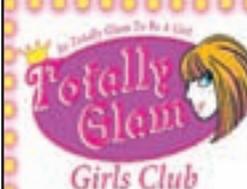
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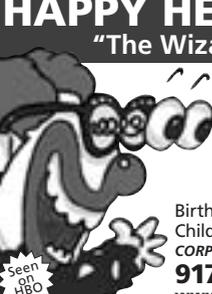
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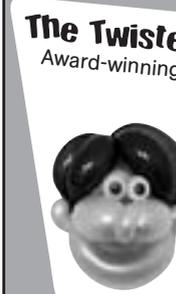
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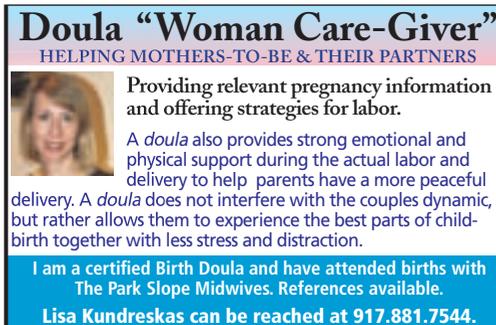
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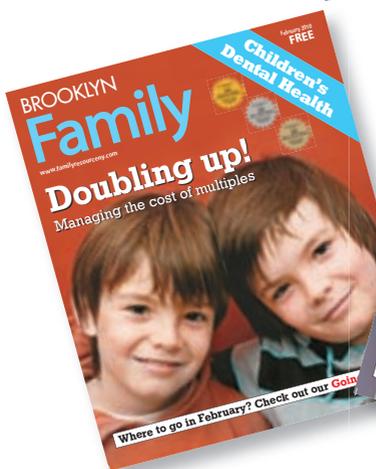
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New & Noteworthy

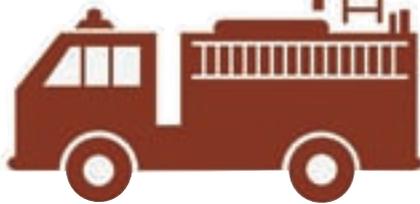
Tall order

Don't mark up a wall to keep track of your child's growth. This Fire Truck Growth Chart is a fun, decorative way to note every inch your little boy (or girl!) grows.

The decal adheres to walls, windows and other surfaces, and comes with adhesive markers so you can keep track of your child's growth without leaving a mark, as well as reuse for another little fire-fighter.

The chart comes in a variety of colors — through red is sure to be a desirable option — can measure up to five feet. It also comes with four ladder pieces, five numbers and five hose markers. The only thing missing is the fire hat!

Fire Truck Growth Chart by DECOMODWALLS. \$30 plus shipping. For info, visit www.etsy.com/shop/decomodwalls.



Rockabye baby

Cramped for space in your apartment but still want a baby swing? The mamaRoo has you covered.



This hi-tech product doesn't take up as much room as your typical baby swing, primarily because it isn't really a baby swing — it sways from side to side, or up and down, mimicking the movements of parents — perfect for comforting and calming your baby when you don't have your hands free.

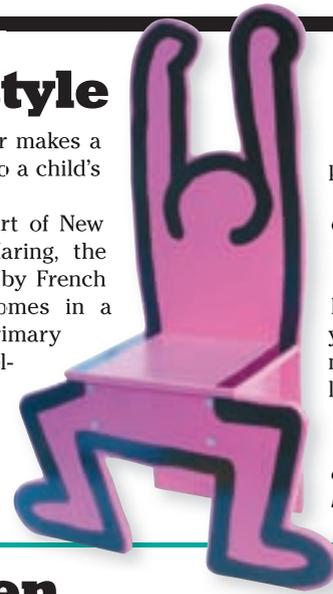
The mamaRoo has five motions, ranging from "Car Ride" (a figure eight) to "Ocean Wave" (around in a big circle). It also comes with a toy mobile with plush toy balls decorated in the style of classical artists (Van Gogh, Monet and Seurat), built-in nature sounds, or a hookup for mp3 players so you can choose your own music.

The mamaRoo is suitable from birth to 25 pounds. \$199. For more info, visit www.4momsonline.com/mamaroo.

Chair style

This colorful chair makes a wonderful addition to a child's room.

Inspired by the art of New York artist Keith Haring, the wooden seat, made by French designers Unica, comes in a variety of bright, primary colors, including yellow and orange — but just the one, fun shape, which is perfect for sitting.



Haring, who was prominent during the 1980s, was first recognized for the chalk drawings he created in the subways. At least with this chair, you can have a permanent piece of the collection.

For more information on the Keith Haring chair, visit www.unica-home.com.

Go green

You dress your kids in all-natural clothing, use all-natural body lotions, and your toys are all handmade. But how green are your cleaning products?

GrabGreen has your covered.

Patricia Spencer developed the line of eco-friendly home cleaning products when her two daughters were younger after she was shocked to learn

that the detergent she used on their clothing failed to meet her health standards — with her concerns ranging from rashes resulting from use to un-needed plastics in the detergents.

GrabGreen products include laundry detergent, bleach alternative, dishwashing detergent, fabric freshener sprays, and more, and are made with naturally derived ingredients, are free of phosphates and chlorine, and are 100 percent cruelty free, with no animal testing involved. So you can clean your house with a clean conscious.

For info on GrabGreen, visit www.grabgreenhome.com.

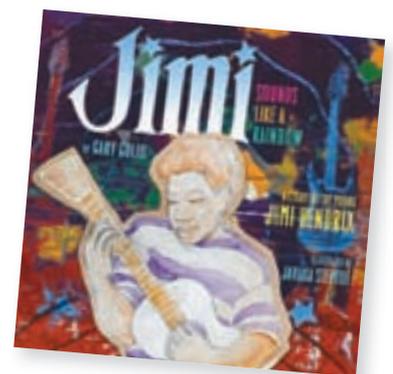


Jimi lives on in new book

A new generation can meet legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix in a bold new picture book for kids.

In "Jimi: Sounds Like a Rainbow: A Story of the Young Jimi Hendrix," author Gary Golio and illustrator Javaka Steptoe show how a quiet boy from Seattle with a love of sound and color became one of the greatest guitar players of all time.

Golio brings the young Hendrix to life, revealing how passion, friendship, and a father's love helped Hendrix make a connection with music that would one day set the world on fire. Steptoe's full-color original art uses mixed media on recycled plywood to create arresting visuals perfectly suited to this story of a



groundbreaking musician.

"Jimi: Sounds Like a Rainbow: A Story of the Young Jimi Hendrix" is suitable for ages 6-9. For info, visit www.garygolio.com.



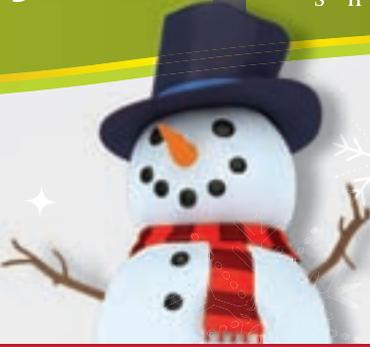
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