

BROOKLYN

# Family

Where Every Child Matters

## Holiday bliss

21 *mellow  
solutions*

## Families after the hurricane

## Visiting the grandparents



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School Guide  
December 2012  
**FREE**

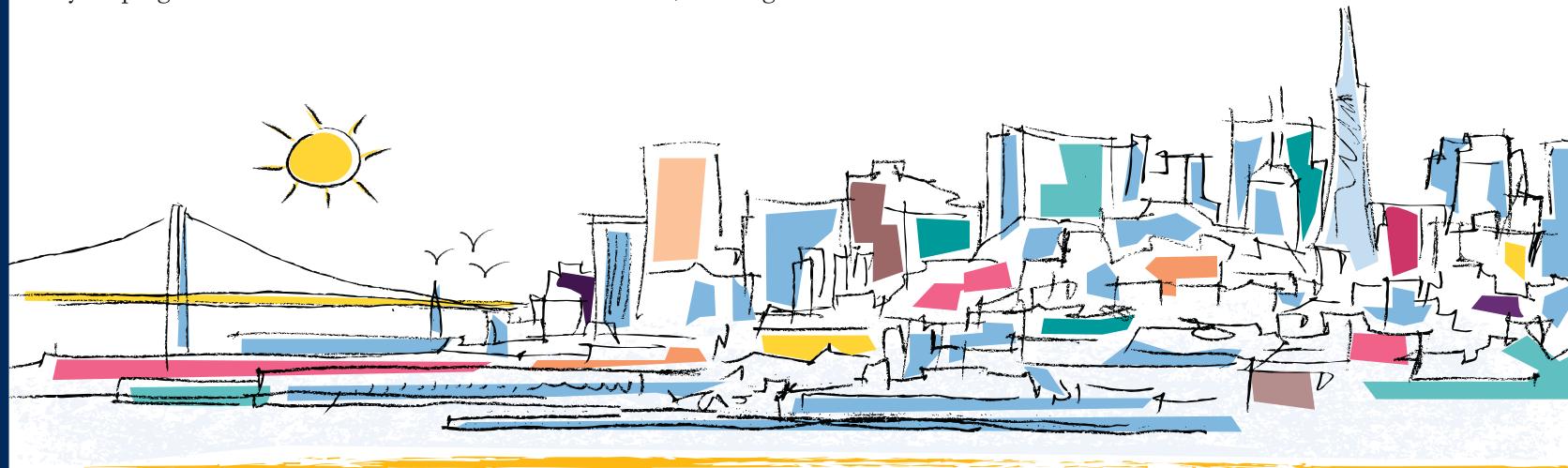


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BROOKLYN

# Family December 2012

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# *Letter from the publisher*

## After hurricane, community

This is certainly not the column I had in mind for this issue just a few weeks ago, but that was before Sandy blew into town and uplifted our surrounding waters. That was before the coastal bliss turned into the home-wrecked nightmare and before the lights went out in so many parts of New York.

Many communities inside our larger New York community are devastated; so many families have lost their homes and their memories; some things just cannot be replaced. Still, in spite of the horror and the punch of this storm and its aftermath, we have learned that our neighbors will not be abandoned; we have learned that thousands



of our citizens will rise to the occasion to lend a hand, a heart, and their energy. From lower Manhattan to Red Hook, from Sheepshead Bay to Howard Beach, from City Island to the Rockaways, our shoreline and shores have taken a hard hit, and the people who inhabit them, the residences, and the businesses will not instantly be reestablished. There will be continued suffering and loss. The beaches of Staten Island and the Boardwalk of Coney Island have become rubble and the families who lived there will not live there anymore for now until we sort this out, rebuild perhaps, and reexamine what we need to do down the road to avoid such catastrophe.

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# The holiday

**Don't despair!**  
**Tips to keep**  
**on smiling**  
**amidst the**  
**stress of the**  
**seasonal rush**

BY CHRISTINA KATZ

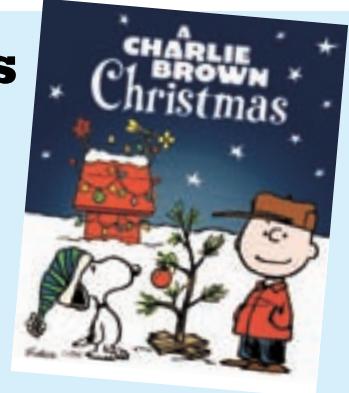
**A**re you excited about the holidays, but dreading the end-of-year rush?

If so, you are not alone. Most parents approach the season with equal parts excitement and trepidation, which can lead to difficulties with decision making from moment to moment. That's why I've created this list of 21 reminders to help you preserve your family's good cheer all the way through the most wonderful time of the year.

• **Go for good enough.** If you have an idea in your mind of the "perfect" holiday, you may be disappointed when your imperfect brood can't uphold your image. Aim for "good enough" instead. You'll smile more if you can let unimportant things — like slightly burnt cookies, lights that won't blink in unison, and late holiday cards — slide.

• **Just hit delete.** If you think your holiday schedule is grossly overloaded, call a family meeting and vote on what to scratch off of your joint to-do list. Decide what you don't want to do first. Then, decide what matters most to each family member. A one-gift-per-family-member tradition might be a sanity-saving plan that sticks.

• **Call in fresh recruits.** Even if you don't normally hire a house-cleaner, you probably could use some help now. Why not call in a



## Holiday films

*Enjoy these fun family movies with your kids this year:*

- "A Charlie Brown Christmas"
- "Home Alone"
- "How The Grinch Stole Christmas"
- "A Christmas Story"
- "The Polar Express"
- "The Year Without A Santa Claus"

*And don't miss these movies you can snuggle by:*

- "Love, Actually"
- "Home For the Holidays"
- "It's a Wonderful Life"
- "A Christmas Carol"
- "The Nightmare Before Christmas"
- "When Harry Met Sally"

## Holiday tunes

*Tired of those holiday songs you hear over and over? This season, check out these refreshingly different tunes and albums:*

- "Cool Yule" by Bette Midler
- "A Christmas Cornucopia" by Annie Lenox
- "O, Holy Night" by Jackie Evancho
- "And Winter Came" by Enya
- "James Taylor at Christmas" by James Taylor



- "A Swinging Christmas, Featuring The Count Basie Band" by Tony Bennett
- "A Lovely Way To Spend Christmas" by Kristin Chenoweth

cleaning service in mid December and in mid January to bookend the holidays, even if you don't use one the rest of the year? Consider it a holiday present to yourself.

• **Hum your favorite tunes.** Haul out your seasonal music early before you tire of the omnipresent Muzak that is sure to come. Load up your smartphone or iPod and carry headphones in your purse to jolly things up when you are ticking chores and errands off of your to-do list. If your old faves are getting overplayed, jazz up your playlist with some fresh downloads or albums. (See sidebar.)

• **Shop the plan.** First, the plan: write down the names of everyone you truly want to give to and what you think they would like. Then, shop: keep the list in your wallet to jog your memory when hunting down a gift for each person you cherish. For store shopping, pay cash, so you won't overspend. For online shopping, search for coupons before ordering and act early for cheaper shipping.

• **Sip your way to heaven.** When you are having a hectic day, take a time-out. Warm up or buy an extra-hot cup of chai tea with a spritz of whipped cream on top. The spices will put you back in touch with your

senses, and the warmth will spread through your belly and soothe your frazzled cheer.

• **Get bazaar.** Take the whole family to a local holiday craft bazaar. Look for gifts for teachers and other folks who enrich your family life. Give each child a spending limit and enjoy interacting with the vendors. Plan to spend a couple of hours browsing, so you can soak up all the creative energy.

• **Take 30.** Line up winter reads from the library or download them onto your e-reader. Encourage the whole family to take 30 minutes a day to relax and read. Collections of short stories or essays are good choices for moms with very young or multiple children. This is a great way for everyone to decompress after a busy day.

• **Bring Mother Nature inside.** Pine cones, holly, evergreen boughs, twigs, and poinsettias all remind us that there is life hibernating underneath that blanket of snow or wicked frost. Gather reminders of the season from your backyard or local garden shop and decorate the front hall, mantle, and stairway. Remember: simple is as merry as ornate.

• **Huggy holidays.** Use "Happy holidays!" as an excuse to hug your

# trap

loved ones often. Every time you feel stressed, hug or get hugged. Your holiday stress will melt away.

• **Stay healthy.** Put holiday-scented soaps by every sink and encourage plenty of hand washing. Install a bottle of hand sanitizer next to every box of tissues. Chase every “Ah-choo!” away. (But stock up on cold medicines, just in case, to avoid midnight trips to the market.)

• **Lighten up.** Twinkling lights create a comforting mood. Don’t limit shimmery lights to the tree and outdoor eves. If it sounds fun, bring some sparkle into the kid’s bedrooms, as well as yours.

• **Take a deep breath.** Bring some uplifting scents into your cleaning routine. Check out the Mrs. Meyers brand of earth-friendly cleaning supplies. Your home and laundry will smell winter wonderful.

• **Enjoy spreading cheer.** Save the annual holiday letter composing and Christmas card address labeling for when you can carve out time to relax and enjoy the process. And don’t try to do it all yourself. Break the job down into steps and enlist the whole family. Remember: taking everything on without helpers is naughty, not nice.

• **Question tradition.** Traditions are wonderful, but let’s face it — sometimes even the fondest can become tired. So, if you don’t feel like tromping around all afternoon hunting for the most splendiferous evergreen on the tree farm or frying the most perfect potato latkes, buy a pre-cut tree at your local grocery store or pick up latkes at the deli instead. Use saved time to enjoy tree trimming or dreidel playing instead.

• **Create classic memories.** Play hooky from holiday prep for the day and go ice-skating or frolic in the snow with your kids. Drink hot chocolate. Take lots of family photos. Build a fire. Goof off. Enjoy the grins.

• **Save it for a heat wave.** If you are really feeling a time crunch, don’t

donate time to help the less fortunate during holiday time. Give time later during a less hectic time of year. There are people in need throughout every season, after all.

• **Sock it to ‘em.** Don’t wait until the temperature hits zero to stock up on slippers and socks. You’ll keep your heating bills down and your kids smiling if everyone in your brood has warm tootsies as the mercury plunges.

• **Hit the hay harder.** There’s less light during the winter. Take advan-

tage of it and put the kids to bed an hour earlier than normal. There’s the extra hour you need to keep some hustle in your holiday muscle, or at least wrap some presents without interruption.

• **Pop plenty of corn.** Line up holiday movie classics in your mail-order DVD queue. Watch some with the kids and some with your honey in the wee hours. See sidebar for movie ideas.

## • Deck the bathroom.

Hang up some scented pomanders. Bring in lots of little candles (be-

yond the reach of little hands, of course). Look for winter-scented bath indulges in juniper, cedar, or musk. Sink into a bubble bath wonderland. Forget your name for 10 minutes.

You’ll feel more holly jolly if you can get calm and stay centered all holiday season long. Happy holy days!

*Christina Katz is a freelance writer who adores the holidays. Her latest book is “The Writer’s Workout” from Writer’s Digest Books.*





Houses on Staten Island after Hurricane Sandy hit the borough.

# Holidays after the hurricane

**As displaced families rebuild their lives after Sandy, ways New Yorkers can help**

BY MARIE HUESTON

The expression “home for the holidays” conjures nostalgic images of family and friends gathered around a bountiful table. But what if your home — and all that was in it — had been badly damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Sandy? This is the reality for thousands of New Yorkers whose homes were in the direct path of the October super storm. As they continue the arduous work of repairing their homes and rebuilding their lives, their situation is made

all the more challenging by the approaching holiday season. This is especially difficult for households with young children.

Imagine yourself in Cathy Borgognone’s shoes. When the mother of two stood surveying her severely water-damaged home in Staten Island’s New Dorp Beach neighborhood, her 5-year-old son Francesco looked at her earnestly and asked, “Will Santa still come to this house?”

Borgognone’s heart sank.

“Of course I told him that Santa would find him and his sister,” she

recalls, “but at times like that it’s hard to put on a brave face.” With the day-to-day logistics of fixing her house foremost on her mind, Borgognone is currently staying in her brother-in-law’s basement has had little time to wonder what her holidays will look like this year or where she and her family might go to celebrate them. “I’m trying not to think about it,” she says.

It’s a sentiment shared by Red Hook, Brooklyn, resident Jolene Festa, whose family was also displaced by Hurricane Sandy.

“I haven’t made any decisions about the holidays yet,” says Festa. “Our floors, walls, doors, everything was destroyed. We won’t be back in before Christmas.” On the night of the storm, Festa and her husband frantically pushed towels and rolled-up carpets against their front and back doors, trying to keep out the rising tide, only to watch in horror as water began to seep up through the floorboards from their flooded basement.

Now living in a friend’s apartment, Festa is doing her best to

# Kids helping kids

All across the city, children have been watching their parents and other adults in the community helping people affected by Hurricane Sandy. In turn, many kids are lending a hand themselves. High School sports teams have gone door-to-door offering to help clean up debris, Brownie troops have organized book collections for schools whose libraries were wiped out, and countless boys and girls have parted with beloved playthings and chosen new ones to donate to toy drives.

"It feels good to do something nice for someone else," says 9-year-old Georgia Fu-

musa, a fourth grader at PS 58 in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, and a founding member of the school's charity bake sale club, Cookie Kids. On a single, sunny Saturday last month, the Cookie Kids raised a whopping \$1,300 to support their peers at nearby PS 15, in hard-hit Red Hook.

Of her club's contribution, Fumusa reflects, "It goes to show that kids really can do something to make the world a better place."

In the midst of a tragedy, these children are learning the true meaning of the holidays — that the deepest joy comes from giving to others.

remain positive for her 8-year-old son, River, but admits that her emotions can catch her off guard.

"There are times when I remember what isn't downstairs anymore, like my son's baby clothes or our bins of Christmas ornaments that held so many memories." As for River, he has been buoyed by the generosity of friends, who have reached out not only with invitations for meals and play dates, but also with thoughtful gifts to replace what is gone. "One parent gave River a new Christmas ornament and a gift certificate to Barnes & Noble since most of his books were ruined. Moments like that fill him, and us, with a huge sense of gratitude."

Indeed, the kindness of friends and strangers alike has made an incredible impact on the lives of storm victims throughout the five boroughs.

"People need to understand that many of the hardest-hit areas were multi-generational neighborhoods," says volunteer Kim Shamoun. "If you lived there, then your brother probably lived down the street and your grandmother lived around the corner. So now if your house is gone, your whole support system is gone, too."

Together with nine close friends, Shamoun mans a Facebook page, [facebook.com/GivingBackToThoseAffectedBySandy](http://facebook.com/GivingBackToThoseAffectedBySandy), that has been tirelessly connect-

ing people who want to help with people who need help since the day after the storm. Their experience has been nothing short of miraculous.

"I can't count how many times we talk with one person who needs something and then a minute later someone calls offering just the kind of supplies that are needed. There's a bigger thing happening here."

As the holidays get closer — and with them the hectic pace that generally ensues — it's important for those of us who were only minimally affected by the storm to keep our neighbors in our hearts and to continue helping in any way we can. Whether you can donate a warm meal, coat, school supplies, gift certificates, toys, or an hour of your time, there is truly no end to the opportunities that make a difference.

"Americans are always incredibly generous when there is a disaster anywhere in the world," Borgognone points out. "It's important for everyone to remember that this time it's in our own backyard."

To find out how you can get involved, visit [facebook.com/GivingBackToThoseAffectedBySandy](http://facebook.com/GivingBackToThoseAffectedBySandy), [nycservice.org](http://nycservice.org), [redcross.org](http://redcross.org), [fema.gov/sandy](http://fema.gov/sandy) or call religious institutions or municipal offices in neighborhoods affected by the storm.

Marie Hueston is a freelance writer and a native of Staten Island, who now lives in Brooklyn with her family.

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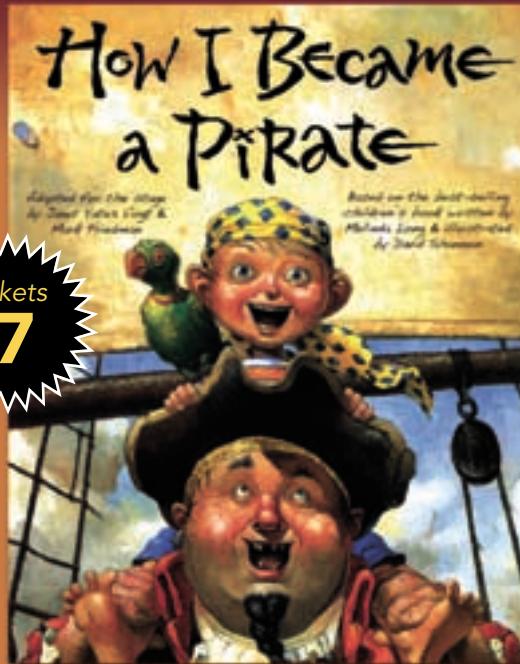


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# Stranded at the AIRPORT

## Tips for surviving a canceled flight with your family

BY HEATHER VAN DEEST

**F**lying long distances with young kids, whether cross-country or abroad, is no easy feat. Between security checkpoints, the umpteenth diaper change, and keeping your kids occupied and fed for hours on end, traveling with young kids could qualify as an Olympic sport for many parents. And that's before you see those dreaded words flashing on the nearest airport departure board: "flight canceled."

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, more than 100,000 flights were cancelled in 2011, affecting 7.5 million passengers. And the demand for air travel is only increasing. Read on for a step-by-step guide to getting you and your family on the next plane

out, and how to prevent a headache or two in the process.

- Reschedule your flight as soon as possible. Don't assume the airline will automatically rebook your ticket. Head to the nearest ticket counter, and while waiting in line, try to reschedule your flight using your Wi-Fi-enabled smartphone or tablet.

- If you're traveling alone with the kids, ask an airline agent about expedited assistance for families with small children. Be polite and assertive. It never hurts to ask!

- Think ahead about your family's needs. How many meals will your family require until your rescheduled flight? What about snacks and extra diapers? Discuss your needs with the ticketing agent, who should be able to provide meal vouchers for the airport.

Some airlines also provide free diapers and baby food to stranded passengers. Be sure to save all receipts for any expenses you incur.

- If you require overnight accommodation, ask an airline agent for details. Does the airline provide hotel vouchers or do you have to pay upfront and submit a receipt later? If so, what is the airline's maximum reimbursement amount? Although airlines are not required to cover hotel costs for events such as inclement weather or traffic control issues, confirm this with an agent. You never know, you might get a hotel voucher just for asking politely.

- Review your updated flight information. Before you leave the ticket counter, check your boarding passes and itinerary. Are you booked on the correct flight? Does

## What to consider when your flight is canceled

### Your family's needs

- How many meals will your family need before your rescheduled flight?
- Do you have plenty of snacks, baby food, and diapers?
- Does the airline provide overnight accommodation? If so, does it offer a hotel voucher or do you have to pay and submit the receipt to get reimbursed?
- What is the airline's maximum reimbursement amount for a hotel stay?
- Which affordable hotel options are closest to the airport? Does the hotel offer airport shuttle service?



### Your rescheduled flight

- Are you booked on the correct flight?
- Does each family member have a seat? Are the seats located next to each other or in different rows?

### After the flight

- Did you submit all expense receipts via the airline website?
- Will you provide feedback to the airline about your experience?
- Did the airline respond with any offers of compensation for your inconvenience?



everyone in your family have a seat? Reviewing the details will save you a headache down the road if the agent makes a mistake during the ticketing process.

• Book your family's hotel room. Once you have tickets in hand and a plan for your family's meals and other items, it's time to secure overnight accommodation, should you require it. Unfortunately, penny-pinching airlines often recommend hotels located 30 minutes or more from the airport, adding to your family's inconvenience. Use your smartphone or tablet to book an alternative hotel as close to the airport as possible, or ask airport services for hotel suggestions. Make sure the nightly rate is within the reimbursement amount the airline

agent earlier quoted you. Or, pay the difference, if you don't mind footing some of the bill.

• Follow up. Once you're back home safe and sound, visit the airline's website to submit electronic copies of your receipts and provide feedback about your ex-

perience. Offer details about staff members who were particularly kind or helpful.

Most airlines will offer some sort of compensation for your inconvenience, such as credit in a rewards program or vouchers for future travel.

Flying long-distances with your little ones is challenging, to say the least, especially when your flight gets canceled. These tips will help get you and your family back on track to your destination.

*Heather Van Deest is a freelance writer and mother of two young sons.*

## Before your trip...

- Avoid booking flights with partnering airlines. If possible, try to travel with one airline carrier for the entire flight, including any connections. This helps avoid reticketing issues, should one leg of your flight get canceled.

- Confirm your flight. Up to a week in advance, contact the airline to confirm your itinerary and other details, or visit the airline website. Seating assignments sometimes change without notice, especially for long-distance flights on large aircraft.

- Pack wisely. In a carry-on bag, bring medicines, extra diapers, your cellphone charger, and iPad or tablet charger, a change of clothes for each family member, and any items that will help soothe young children during an unexpected overnight stay, such as a favorite toy or small blanket.

# Gifts for travelers

Ways to make your globe-trotter happy



BY STACEY ZABLE

**W**e took a look at products that make perfect gifts for friends and family who like to travel. Some of our favorites are below, and they all feature one common element: each and every one is easy to pack when it's time to hit the road.

## Pretty in a box

Skin needs to be especially pampered when you travel, and with the "Glitz & Glow" Holiday Box by

Image Skincare, you'll get everything you need in handy travel sizes in a beautiful box for gift-giving. The Holiday Box features a three-step day and night regimen for all skin types, including four of Image Skincare's

top-selling products in convenient, one-ounce travel sizes, along with lip gloss and mineral shimmer powder for a little extra "glitz." The suggested retail price is \$79.90.

Visit [www.imageskincare.com](http://www.imageskincare.com) for details and call (800) 796-SKIN to find the nearest spa that sells Image Skincare.

## Natural odor elimination

Nothing is worse than getting home from a trip with a suitcase full of dirty laundry that, well, stinks. The new mini 50-gram Moso bags are great as stocking stuffers that you can place in luggage to remove odor and moisture.

Moso bags are fragrance-free, natural, air-purifying bags that contain moso bamboo charcoal, which absorbs and filters odors, harmful

pollutants, allergens, and bacteria while dehumidifying to prevent mildew, mold, and moisture. They are great for the car, too. A two-pack is priced at \$9.95.

Visit [www.MosoNatural.com](http://www.MosoNatural.com) for more about the product and stores where you can purchase them.

## The gift of travel

What travel lover wouldn't love the gift of a hotel stay? Gift cards from Fairmont Hotels and Resorts can be used for overnight stays and in hotel restaurants. Willow Stream gift cards that give the gift of pampering at Fairmont's destination spas are also available. The cards can be purchased online or at any Fairmont hotel starting as low as \$50. The Fairmont website also allows you to



purchase gifts at The Fairmont Store, featuring some of the products you find at the hotels, such as bed linens, pillows, bathrobes, or premium tea blends. You can also purchase Willow Stream spa products and Miller Harris bath amenities, perfumes, and scented candles. There are more than 60 luxury Fairmont Hotels and Resorts around the world, including The Plaza in New York.

Visit [www.fairmont.com/about-us/guest-services/gift-shop/](http://www.fairmont.com/about-us/guest-services/gift-shop/).



## A bag with a giving message

Give the gift of giving as part of your holiday season this year. For every When In Need of Kindness toiletry bag that is purchased, the company will donate one bag to Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms.

The bags are filled with a selection of three luxury toiletry items that can include organic breath spray, bath salts, lip gloss, hand lotion, hand sanitizer, or solid perfume.

When In Need of Kindness bags were created by a mother inspired by her 3-year-old son's near drowning.

A portion of the proceeds also go to the company's non-profit arm, the C.L.A.Y. Foundation, which advocates for CPR training, swim instruction, automated external defibrillator availability, and a year-round warm water swim facility.

The company is also encouraging consumers to only buy socially conscious products for their holiday gift-giving.

The \$25 bags can be purchased at [www.winkbags.com](http://www.winkbags.com).

*Stacey Zable is an award-winning veteran travel writer and family travel expert who has written about destinations, resorts, and cruise lines around the world. Her favorite trips are those that she shares with her husband and two daughters. Send travel questions and comments to her at [info@familytraveltrails.com](mailto:info@familytraveltrails.com).*



# Brooklyn Parent Center

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# Brooklyn Parent Center

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# Keep your baby safe at Grandma's house

Don't forget,  
a new location  
can mean  
new dangers

BY KIKI BOCHI

If you are headed to Grandma's house for the holidays, it may feel like you are returning to the safe haven of your youth. But don't let your guard down when it comes to protecting your little one.

You may have put a lot of energy into making your home baby safe, but that is not necessarily the case at the home of an older relative who no longer has little ones underfoot.

Watch for medications that may be accessible to inquisitive little hands, cleaning products that are not secured, sharp edges on furniture, and breakable items that are within your child's reach.

Keep an eye, also, on Grandma herself. She may have raised several children quite adeptly, but today's recommendations when it comes to child safety have changed. In particular, many older adults are unaware of safety recommendations when it comes to appropriate child sleep position, crib safety, and car seat and walker use, according to a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

When asked, "What is the best position for a baby to sleep in?" 33 percent of senior respondents chose "on the stomach;" 23 percent, "on the side;" and only 43.8 percent, "the back." The Academy recommends that infants be placed to sleep on their backs to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. When asked about correct car seat positioning, 24.5 percent responded that a 22-pound, 9-month-old child should be facing forward, and yet the Academy recommends that children remain in a rear-facing car seat until age 2.

Last year, the Academy recommended that bumpers, stuffed animals, and blankets be removed from infant cribs, and yet 49 per-



cent of grandparent caregivers thought these items were acceptable. Nearly 74 percent of respondents stated that a walker is a good device to help babies learn to walk. Yet, the Academy does not recommend walker use, and in fact, urges caregivers to dispose of them because of serious safety concerns.

"Pediatric health and safety

recommendations are constantly evolving," said study author Kathryn C. Hines, MD. "Many recommendations are likely to have changed since these grandparent caregivers parented their own children."

*Kiki Bochi, an award-winning journalist, reads hundreds of reports monthly to bring readers the latest insights on family health and child development.*



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# A relaxed hostess

Keeping your cool through the holidays in true diva-mom fashion

BY LYSS STERN

**D**o you ever hope the holidays could just happen without you? As if you could sit in the corner with a big glass of wine and watch everyone else do all the work while you take your time to finally relax?

We all know how overwhelming and draining the holidays can become. The stress is always there, no matter how hard you might try to avoid it. But don't fret, because here are some tips to help you find some mommy time and navigate the holidays without losing your mind!

- Have peace of mind. You know there will be lots of yummy food and drink, but don't stress yourself out on the day of the holiday! Let yourself exercise extra hard the week before and after to get yourself mentally and physically prepared. You deserve that indulgence anyway.

- Decide in advance who is cooking what and take charge, so you can pick whatever isn't going to overwhelm you. If you plan things right, you won't have to worry about anything but the green beans.

- Plan ahead for anything that could possibly go wrong, especially travel delays. If you're traveling to your holiday party, make sure you have some travel-sized board games or lots of new apps downloaded for the kids so you have one less thing to worry about.

- Once you arrive to wherever it is you're celebrating the holiday, make sure to immediately put all the kids together with the grandparents. It will give you the chance to enjoy some adult time, and your parents or in-laws will finally see those glowing faces they've missed so much.

- Have a designated camera man. This will let you sit back and enjoy the moments that you will tell stories about for years to come, rather than constantly scrambling for your camera to capture the moment — only to then realize it's already over.



- If you are hosting the holidays at your home, get ready in advance! There is no harm in decorating the night before, or, if you prefer to do the dinner yourself, prepping some of the food, so it's practically ready to be popped in the oven when guests arrive.

- Go buffet style! There is no need to serve everyone his own plate or pile up the dinner table with food. If you put everything in a separate place, then guests can serve themselves. This way, you can keep the table surface simple with some beautiful seasonal flowers as a centerpiece. (Bonus point: if the food isn't right in front of you, it will stop you from reaching over for thirds.)

- Make it fun! Set up a Wii or some kind of fun family game, like charades or a talent show, that everyone can participate in to lighten the mood and get everyone laughing.

- Make cleanup a group effort. Don't do the dishes — if you know that's only going to stress you out, save that for the next day. Until

- then, have everyone put the leftovers into containers together, so the time goes by quickly and you keep it social, rather than taking yourself out of the conversation and feeling isolated from the festivities.

- Treat yourself when it's all over. Maybe that means having a warm bubble bath with a big glass of wine, or asking your loved one for a well-deserved foot rub (because I KNOW you weren't wearing comfy shoes).

- No matter what your holiday plans are this year, always find something to be thankful for! If it's Christmas, Hanukkah, or New Year's Eve, don't let yourself get caught up in your mental to-do list. Enjoy the celebration and embrace the little things you might have missed otherwise.

Happy holidays, and have a Fab-LYSS New Year.

*Lyss Stern is the founder of Diva-Moms.com and co-author of best-selling book "If You Give A Mom A Martini ... 100 Ways to Find 10 Blissful Minutes for Yourself."*

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## MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SERADOVA

# Oh Christmas tree!

## Passing my mother's holiday spirit to my child

**M**y mother lives for Christmas. Every year, the weekend after Thanksgiving, she starts her holiday tradition of decorating the house. But unlike many moms, my mother has mostly done this alone. I'm ashamed to admit that I haven't always shared her enthusiasm for the holidays (I'm more of a Thanksgiving fan than Christmas), and while I'm sure a big part of her did it for me, I just wasn't always so into it. But that never stopped her. She carried on, filling our house with poinsettias and garlands, candy canes and gingerbread houses, and infusing the house with the smell of apple cinnamon and pine cones.

Part of her tradition is displaying one of my children's books around the house, "Twas the Night before Christmas." She reads it to me every year, as if I were still a kid. A proud mama, she even hangs up the Christmas tree I made for her in grade school; out of green construction paper and full of glitter. The poor tree is ripped in several places, but she's kept it all these years, as if it were a masterpiece. She loves Santa Claus, so I started a tradition of buying her a new Santa for Christmas to add to her collection — or a Grinch. She loves the Grinch, too.

It wasn't until I had my own daughter that I realized why she loves Christmas so much. It's a way for her to relive her childhood and feel some magic. I now feel a certain kind of magic around the holidays, too, that wasn't

there before. My mom made Christmas a happy time for me growing up, and I want Olivia to have that, too.

Luckily, I have a husband who loves Christmas as well. He grew up with his own traditions passed on from his

mother, also a single mom. But, up until we had Olivia, we never even put up a Christmas tree. When he mentioned it in the past, I would remind him that it was too much work and that it took up too much space; something we didn't have much of back then, in our studio apartment. I definitely sounded like a Scrooge!

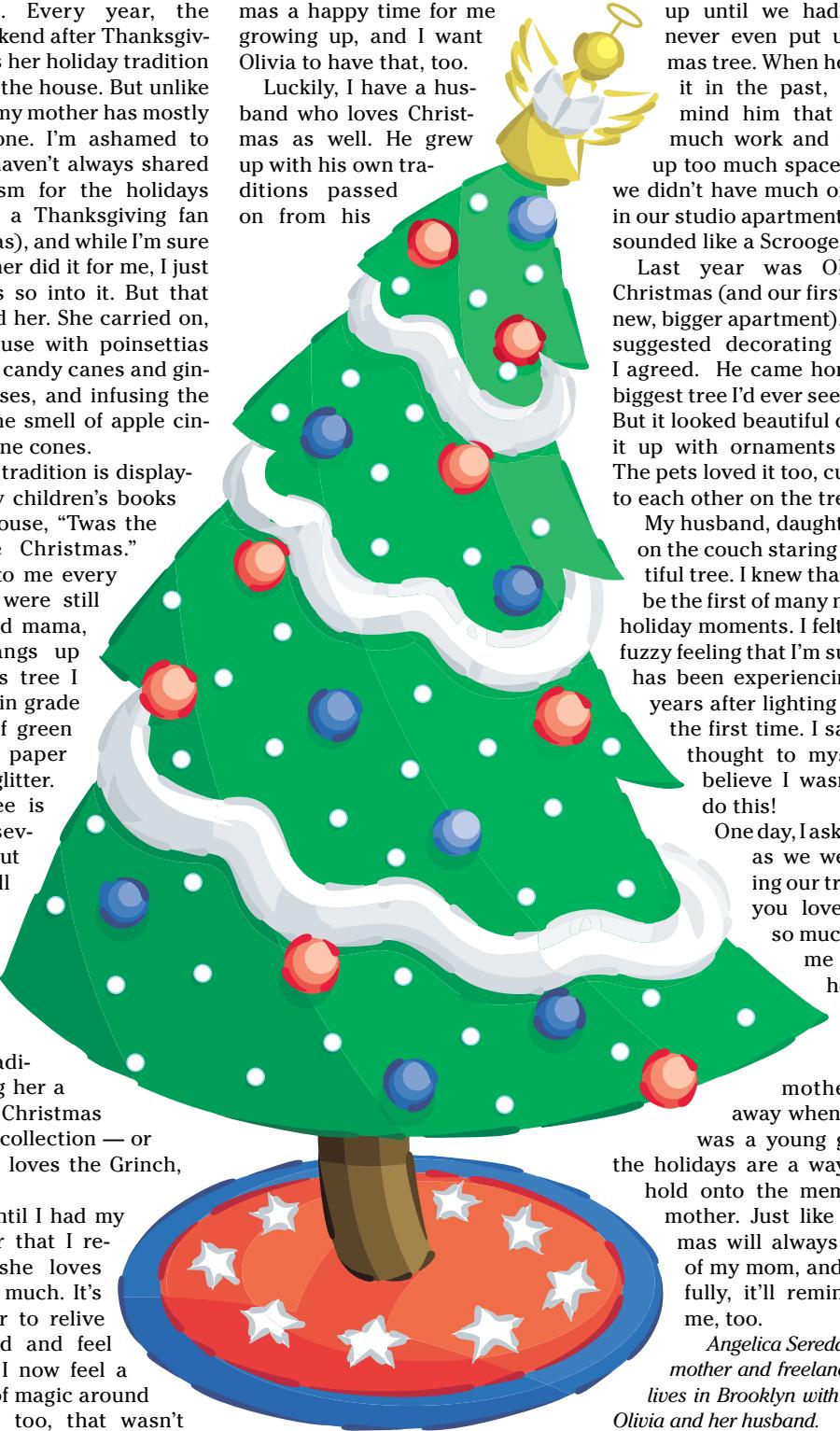
Last year was Olivia's first Christmas (and our first year in our new, bigger apartment), so when he suggested decorating the house, I agreed. He came home with the biggest tree I'd ever seen in a home. But it looked beautiful once we had it up with ornaments and lights. The pets loved it too, cuddling next to each other on the tree skirt.

My husband, daughter, and I sat on the couch staring at the beautiful tree. I knew that that would be the first of many more special holiday moments. I felt that warm, fuzzy feeling that I'm sure my mom has been experiencing all these years after lighting our tree for the first time. I sat there and thought to myself: I can't believe I wasn't going to do this!

One day, I asked my mom, as we were decorating our tree, "Why do you love Christmas so much?" She told me that it was her mother's favorite holiday.

My grandmother passed away when my mother was a young girl. I guess the holidays are a way for her to hold onto the memory of her mother. Just like her, Christmas will always remind me of my mom, and now, hopefully, it'll remind Olivia of me, too.

*Angelica Sereda is a working mother and freelance writer. She lives in Brooklyn with her daughter Olivia and her husband.*



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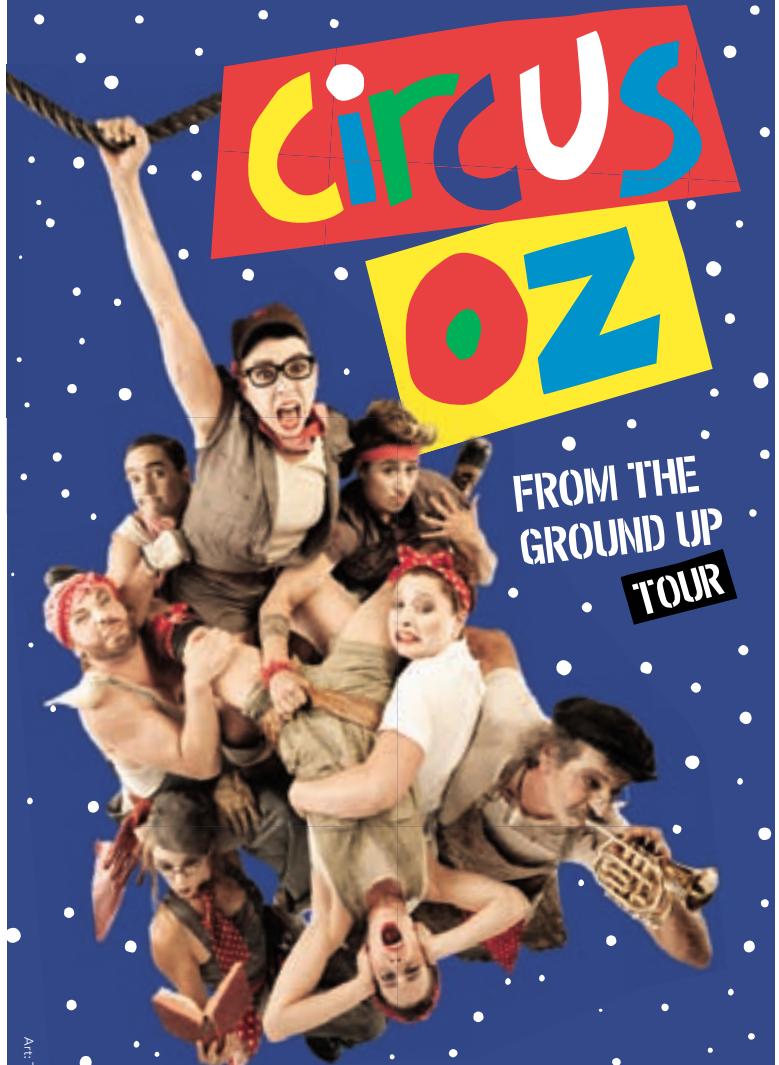
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## DEATH BY CHILDREN

CHRIS GARLINGTON

# Santa at the airport

**T**his is a true story.

Normally, wild exaggeration is part of my job description. But not now. I've been sitting on this story since my daughter was 7, and now I'm finally comfortable telling the embarrassing, ridiculous, stupid truth: I believe in Santa Claus.

We were headed out for the holidays. A young family, huddled together in the airport's waiting lounge listening to my inexhaustible daughter list her preferred Christmas presents for the 88th time, a list that extended to near infinity, included live animals, and living household items one can only purchase in a cartoon, when the big, white-bearded guy sitting behind us turned around and blew our mind.

It was Santa. Don't stop reading! I know; you've had it up to here with Xmas glurge, I know. But this really happened. I swear.

My daughter's belief in Santa was as strong as my belief in gravity.

Christmas was not a December event for her. Christmas was her life. She sang Christmas songs in June without a hint of irony and when this guy, this plaid-shirted, red-suspended, bald, bearded, gnomish nut turned around, her heart stopped and, moments later, so did her mouth.

"That's a very long list," said Santa.

"Grrhm Flurny Nerb," said Sarah.

"It might fill up my entire sleigh," he winked. His eyes crinkled up with little Hollywood special-effects crow's feet. My daughter's heart restarted and she leapt into an embrace of this stranger followed by an interrogation about reindeer, elves, and the weather at the North Pole. My wife and I smiled warmly and basked in the crazy coincidence. We were starring in our own personal Christmas special. Other passengers leaned in to listen. They smiled and stole glances at each other to check their sudden and mysterious lack of cynicism.

I finally pried my daughter off the

ironically dressed Canadian (I'm assuming — there was a lot of flannel) and she promptly fell into sugarplum dreams, drooling copiously on my wife. I looked at Santa.

"I bet you get that a lot."

"Well, I am Santa. So, yeah."

"Ha ha. Good one. So, uh, seriously."

"Chris, seriously. I'm Santa Claus."

As he said this, he pulled out his wallet. His driver's license read "Chris S.C. Kringle."

And then my inner child exploded. I know, I know, he was listening before and heard my wife call my name and blah, blah, blah. You weren't there. It was December and there was snow and Dean Martin was singing "Silver Bells;" I'd just spent two weeks power-shopping, building a tree, falling off a ladder, and wearing plaid. I was sitting in an airport lounge with Santa Claus. Seriously.

I let loose. As my wife stared at me like I'd lost my very last struggling vestigial shred of sanity, I went

wide-eyed, little-kid Mall Santa on this guy. My Christmas list unspooled. I practically sat on his lap. And he listened. He smiled. He asked questions ("A seven iron? Really?").

Ever classy, ever practical, my wife finally reached over and peeled me off of my seat. I tried to catch my breath and become an adult again.

And here's what still sticks in my barren, cynical, wasteland of a mind: he stood up, shook my hand, winked a randy Burl Ives wink at my wife, and walked away.

I got a seven iron (bought it myself — I'm not crazy) and my wife got a lovely diamond tennis bracelet. But after the tornado of torn of wrapping paper subsided and we'd put batteries into all the toys and had a cup of coffee, there was a moment in which my wife and I looked at each other and for a moment, briefly, I think even she, the most practical woman in the world, was willing to believe we'd met an elf in an airport.

I still do.





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# Longing to be lean

What to do if you suspect your teen has an eating disorder

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

**E**ating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia seem to be in vogue today. Demi Lovato, Britney Spears, Nicole Richie, Mary-Kate Olsen, Paula Abdul, and Lady Gaga are among the many celebrities who suffered from them. Their disorders are glamorized on magazine covers and professionals wonder what effect stars' disclosures have on our children.

In Psychology Today's October 2011 issue, Dr. Judy Scheel distinguished between stars who disclose their ailments for mere publicity and those who share their private struggles to help fans better understand eating disorders. But no matter whether these celebrities are trying to help or not, Scheel tells me that vulnerable teens believe a disorder is no big deal if it helps them lose weight, look like their idols, and garner similar attention.

"In our pop-culture existence, teens think if they look a certain way they will feel good, preferring to share their idols' symptoms and behavior, and focusing on someone else's life, rather than tackling their own emotional issues," Scheel explains.

## Spotting an eating disorder

Concerned parents often have trouble differentiating between finicky eating and an eating disorder. Eating disorders are illnesses that seriously disrupt an everyday diet, most often characterized by severe distress about weight, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

"Parents are going to miss the signs," says Dr. Ira Sacker, former director of Eating Disorders at Brookdale University Hospital, who observes that parents' busy lives make the signs almost impossible to spot.

"Eating disorders often start as



weight loss diets," writes Sacker in "Regaining Your Self-Understanding and Conquering The Eating Disorder Identity," but change as body image and exercise become the focal point for girls' anxiety and ultimately their identity. Some common signs include: eating very little or extreme dieting, having a distorted body image (incorrectly believing one is fat), lying about eating, excessive exercise, avoiding social situations where eating is involved, withdrawing from friends, excessive weight loss, a decline in grades, and a sudden penchant for baggy clothing.

Dr. Susan Bartell, author of "Girls-Only Weight Loss Guide," tells me that eating disorders are sometimes misdiagnosed as attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, mood swings, or are overlooked totally.

Still, Bartell notes that bulimics can hide their problem for years. According to "Dying to Be Thin," which Sacker co-authored, "symptoms can develop little by little, day by day. And if you initially approved of the dieting or the exercising, then you may find it difficult to withdraw your approval, especially if your child seems pleased with his or her accomplishments."

Bartell once treated a patient as young as 9, as eating disorders often start before high school.

Rebecca Allen, a 20 year old from Long Island who was treated for an eating disorder, tells me it started in seventh grade when there was a "dying trend" amongst the girls. As a dancer, she spent hours in front of a mirror daily, which only exacerbated her situation.

One out of every five eating dis-

order sufferers die, according to Sacker. In fact, eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any emotional disorder, he says. Impressionable adolescents with immortality complexes don't recognize this, as they watch most of their idols recover. More than one patient confided in Sacker that she never realized how sick she was before treatment. And, recovery can take years.

## Not just a food thing

Parents may incorrectly assume that an eating disorder is strictly food-related, and that monitoring a child's intake can solve the problem, but that's not the case.

"It's the catalyst, not the cause," says Scheel, who serves as director of Westchester's Cedar Associates Eating Disorder Treatment Centers.

"Eating disorders are complicated," Bartell tells me, and there's never just one trigger, but many, including low self-esteem, poor self-image, and social issues. Sacker agrees, noting that even a fear of bullying can lead to an eating disorder, as adolescents can be critical of peers' weight.

Scheel notes that both nurture and nature contribute, and stresses parents' role in helping their child grow emotionally. Once this is done, a child is able "to weather the storm" by learning to cope with disappointments and negative feelings. In this way, young people are no longer dependent on others to tell them how they feel. She also explains "there is no eating disorder gene, but it is more common amongst those kids with a predisposition to anxiety and depression."

A teen lying about how much food she eats is not a breach of trust, say experts. Sacker explains that an eating disorder patient will not see hiding her disorder as lying, but rather as not being understood, and parents' accusations of mistrust will push her away more. Moreover, eating disorder patients truly believe they need to be thin or they're nothing, adds Scheel.

"As an adolescent becomes more and more restrictive of her food intake, the brain starts to be starved of needed nutrients like fat and protein," Scheel says.

"Being in a state of semi-starvation causes changes in the metabolism and brain chemistry that reinforce the restricting behavior by creating a natural high," writes Sacker. This "dieting success" can be very satisfying and self-perpetuating.

## Cover stories?

When my daughter entered 11th

grade, seemingly half of her girlfriends turned vegan or vegetarian, and parents some wondered if these regimens were a gateway to an eating disorder.

Fortunately, parents need not necessarily panic if girls exhibit no other signs of a disorder. Veganism or vegetarianism can be healthy diet options for teens whose diets are balanced with sufficient vitamins and nutrients. But, for others, it can be the start of an eating disorder or orthorexia, which strikes healthy eaters who do not consume enough calories. Significantly, Sacker has treated many patients who have used veganism or

but instead talk about what she is eating.

## Eating disorder incubators

As girls' bodies develop curves, their clothes tighten uncomfortably and the media bombards them with size zero airbrushed images, all of which can make them particularly vulnerable to eating disorders. In addition, girls' preoccupation and anxiety about their bodies are magnified by the technology that is now a permanent fixture in their lives. The 24-seven Internet and Facebook world permeates their lives everywhere, and photos, videos, and tweets can

**"So trust yourself. If something about the way your child deals with food worries you, then you have nothing to lose by talking with your child, asking a doctor, checking with a specialist, or going to the library or bookstore to find reading material that will give you the information you need to be helpful for everyone concerned—including yourself."**

— "Dying to Be Thin" by Ira M. Sacker and Marc A. Zimmer

vegetarianism to help conceal their extreme eating restrictions.

## Parents' words can reinforce dangerous behavior

Parents who always demand perfection think they are protecting their children against feeling vulnerable, but instead they are running the risk of contributing to a possible eating disorder.

"Young people really need help dealing with life's disappointments, including not looking like a celebrity," Scheel advises. "There's beauty in imperfection."

Allen warns against complimenting girls on how they look when they lose weight, lest they suffer from a disorder. "You are losing weight," can be received as a compliment and motivation to lose more. Unfortunately, many girls already have strong peer reinforcement for their behavior, as friends undoubtedly tell them they look great and ask them how they did it. Additionally, comments normally considered criticism, like "you look too thin," continue to reinforce the behavior, says Sacker. Bartell advises parents to refrain from criticizing or complimenting their daughter's body,

be unforgiving and relentless.

In addition, academic hypercompetition and overscheduling, coupled with often unrealistic expectations, plague teens caught in limbo between childhood and adulthood. Some feel the only control they have is over their bodies.

And parents can be clueless, as Scheel notes, "we live in a quick-fix culture, which fosters the whitewashing of underlying problems, encouraging parents to buy things for their kids instead of allowing them to feel bad when they need to."

## How to help

Concerned parents should not hesitate to follow-up on reasonable suspicions for fear they are "invading their teen's privacy" by checking if their child is purging or hiding food. Bartell equates a parent's need for surveillance with that of drug or alcohol issues, as these disorders too can present a mortal danger.

She adds, "it is our responsibility as parents to keep our kids healthy and safe."

Sacker tells me that parents should not assume they are paranoid merely because eating disorders seem so commonplace now.

"If you are not a parent who is

forearmed, then you are an ostrich with your head in the sand," he advises. "Parents need to be cautious and aware."

Still, micromanaging every morsel can backfire.

"If parents suspect an eating disorder, they should never assume they can handle it on their own by monitoring food. If they take that approach, then their child will go underground," according to Bartell.

Instead, Sacker encourages parents to create an ongoing non-threatening dialogue with their teens.

"Parents need to understand their child's interests, although not necessarily be part of them," Sacker tells me. Moreover, he emphasizes the need for parents "to give up the guilt and the blame" in order to help.

The first step in treatment would be to locate an eating disorder specialist, preferably a medical doctor, to do a physical and mental evaluation, notes Sacker.

This decision may likely need to be made despite protestations from your child, Allen points out. If the patient is not medically stable, then inpatient treatment by a pediatrician, nutritionist, and a psychologist may be required. Although a parents' first reflex might be to consult her trusted pediatrician, Sacker notes that pediatricians have varying levels of experience diagnosing and dealing with eating disorders. He reminds parents that they have to be prepared to ask their pediatrician about his background in these, if they are to rely on his advice or referrals.

Bartell also points out "the longer an eating disorder patient waits for treatment, the harder the recovery and cure."

If one could say there is any benefit to having an eating disorder, Scheel would say it is that treatment can be instructive in helping patients and their families begin to concentrate on the real underlying problems.

Now that you know what to look for and what to do, pay attention to your kids and be aware of the signs. Parenting can be very challenging, but watching out for our children is just part of the job description.

*Risa C. Doherty is a parent, attorney and award-winning freelance writer. Read more at [www.risadoherty.com](http://www.risadoherty.com).*

*For more information contact the National Eating Disorders Association [(212) 576-6200; Helpline (800) 931-2237; [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/)]; Academy for Eating Disorders [(847) 498-4274; [www.aedweb.org](http://www.aedweb.org)].*



# Breathing easy

## How to avoid allergy and asthma triggers during the holidays

BY KIKI BOCHI

**T**he last thing you need during the holiday season is for someone in your family to experience an asthma or allergy episode. But mixed in with the mistletoe, miles of garland, and mounds of food, there lurk many hidden holiday triggers.

Whether you are concerned because someone in your family is among the 40 million children and adults who suffer from allergies and asthma, or you just want to make sure your home is safe for yuletide visitors, you can make your holidays enjoyable and symptom-free by following these tips from the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology.

• Opt for natural aromas. While pumpkin, gingerbread, and pine-scented candles and air fresheners can help create a cozy atmosphere, they can also be hazardous to some people. About one third of people with asthma report health problems from scented air fresheners, which

contain volatile organic compounds.

Studies show that an exposure to these compounds that is even below accepted levels can increase the risk of asthma in children. Open the windows to air out the house, or let the scents from the oven provide natural aromas.

• Be selective when you deck your halls. Everyone loves a festive house, but hidden allergens can lurk in decorations. If you didn't store your decorations in airtight containers, last year's items may be moldy, dusty, and full of allergy-triggering dust mites. The tree can also be a problem; some people are allergic to terpene found in the sap of pine trees, or are bothered by the mold that lurks on the trees.

If asthma or allergies are an issue in your home, consider an artificial tree, wreaths, and garland — and store them carefully. Also, watch out for poinsettias, which are problematic for people with latex allergies, since the plant is part of the rubber tree family.

• Feast cautiously. Food allergens can show up in the strangest places — soy in mock caviar, peanuts in pie crust, shellfish in stuffing — so be cautious about what you put on your plate (or the plates of your guests) during the holidays. Even turkey can be risky. Allergens in stuffing can be absorbed into the meat, so try cooking your bird unstuffed. You also may want to stick to a natural turkey, which contains only turkey and water, since self-basting turkeys can contain soy, wheat, and dairy.

• Select gifts carefully. Exchanging gifts with allergic friends can be tricky. Nickel, a common cause of contact dermatitis, can be found in earrings, necklaces, and watches. Candy can include nuts or other allergens, and perfume and other items with strong scents can cause asthma episodes and rashes. Instead, play it safe with gifts such as clothes or books.

*Kiki Bochi, an award-winning journalist, reads hundreds of reports monthly to bring readers the latest insights on family health and child development.*

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# When a child is sick for the HOLIDAYS

## How to adapt your family celebrations in times of illness

BY LARA KRUPICKA

**I**t starts out with your child being tired and looking a little under the weather.

But it's a holiday, so you chalk it up to the extra activity and some richer foods than normal. Soon enough, you realize what's really happening: your child is sick and tomorrow is another celebration.

Most families face illness during a major holiday at some point in time. Given the right attitude and a good Plan B, you can still make holiday memories.

Here are a few tips on celebrating through (and in spite of) varying degrees of illness.

### Short-term illness

Sarah Williams's family enjoyed a holiday with relatives, but they still had a special event on the calendar when two of her children came down with the stomach flu.

"We had tickets to a play that my aunt had given them. They were going to be gone the whole day," she explains.

Instead, they stayed home to allow the sick children to recuper-

ate. But rather than mope around the house, Williams planned a special activity: game day. Her three children each picked a favorite game and together they played all three.

"It was fun. It actually forced us to do something we would not have done on a normal day," Williams says.

Not every family may be able to have a game day with sick children, but the holiday doesn't have to be a complete bust.

Follow your regular traditions, albeit in a more subdued form, out of respect for the person who is ill. Include her as much as possible, while giving her space to simply be sick.

Your Plan B could include a second celebration once the child (or parent) has recovered. Because it's not the actual holiday, it won't be exactly the same. So don't try to make it that way. Find opportunities to make it uniquely special — like the Williams's game day.

### Hospital stays and more serious illness

No one wants to consider a hospital stay during a holiday. But sometimes it can't be avoided, whether due to an accidental injury or chronic illness.

The best resource for coping with a special date on the calendar while in the hospital is the hospital's staff. Find out from your child's doctor or the medical center's social worker what activities are planned for the holiday. And discuss the expectations your family might have.

"We work with families on an individual basis to encourage them to continue their traditions, just looking a little different," says Rose Seelenbinder, a child life specialist at

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Different is an operative word in this case. There's no getting around the fact that your child or other sick family member won't be at home for the holiday. Don't try to ignore it. Instead, address kids' hopes for the holiday.

Seelenbinder urges parents to be appropriately honest with their children.

"We recognize it's hard to be away from home, and these are hard conversations for parents to have."

Encourage your child that "different" doesn't have to be bad. In fact, with some planning on your part, it can be exceptionally memorable.

"Think about 'how can we translate what we do at home,' in a different environment," Seelenbinder says.

It's also important not to go overboard to compensate. It may seem like a good idea, but often ends up backfiring during the transition back home.

Remember to give yourself space. Holidays can be crazy even without a sickness. Add on the challenges of caring for your home while making frequent hospital visits, and you'll be primed for a meltdown.

"What we really encourage parents to do is take a moment for themselves and look at their whole family and how they can support everyone," says Seelenbinder.

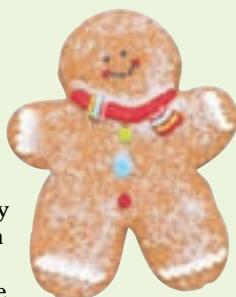
This may mean leaving the holiday preparation to someone else. Your Plan B could include engaging in the activities available through the hospital and keeping the bedside celebration simple.

Focusing on the meaning behind the celebration and not the calendar date can also free up your family to observe the holiday in a more

### Holiday to go

Create a holiday basket that takes your tradition to the sick room, whether in your house or at a hospital. Include these elements to make the day special:

- A traditional symbol of your family's holiday (a cornucopia at Thanksgiving, or a menorah for Hanukkah)
- A holiday story book, particularly if it's one you've enjoyed together before
- A gift that can be enjoyed in bed, such as a new CD or music download
- If the patient can eat, include one or two of her favorite holiday foods that are easy to transport, like a plate of cookies.





traditional sense once the hospital stay ends.

### Terminal illness

More than 1.6 million people use hospice services each year. So it's not uncommon for a person to be approaching death before or during a holiday.

This doesn't make it any easier, but there are approaches parents can take to help. The first is to acknowledge the situation and how that impacts the holiday.

"Don't expect it to be the same as every other year," says Dr. Don Schumacher, president and CEO of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. "You have to acknowledge that some change is coming. With every death, a new family is born. You have to figure

out how to go forward."

Schumacher suggests starting a new tradition right away. You don't need to scrap your old traditions, but it is important to begin the transition.

Talk with your children about how life will be changing and ask their input on what new tradition they would like to start. And if possible, include the ill person in creating the plan.

"Incorporate them in the discussion without saying they'll be gone," says Schumacher. "It shows them that you're taking on the burden."

Make sure to include visits with the sick family member in your holiday observances. Schumacher points out how this can particularly aid children as they work

through issues of separation. Holiday traditions provide a great avenue for sharing memories. Talking about those memories and the role the family member has played can be powerful for enabling the child to walk toward closure as death nears.

• • •

When it comes to holiday preparations, accepting that there might come a time for Plan B can be a helpful process. Then, when you encounter a sickness in your family, you won't have to waste energy on shifting gears.

You'll be ready to find your own Plan B for adapting your celebration.

*Lara Krupicka is a freelance writer who found new ways to enjoy a holiday during a daughter's bout of bronchitis.*

Follow your regular traditions, albeit in a more subdued form, out of respect for the person who is ill.



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*Continued on page 30*



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# Education DIRECTORY

*Continued from page 28*

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## Education DIRECTORY

*Continued from page 30*

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<sup>†</sup> USA Today, "Average cost of 4-year university up 15%," Christine Armario, June 13, 2012.

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The Comptroller of the State of New York and the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation are the Program Administrators and are responsible for implementing and administering the *Direct Plan*. Upromise Investments, Inc. and Upromise Investment Advisors, LLC serve as Program Manager and Recordkeeping and Servicing Agent, respectively, and are responsible for day-to-day operations, including effecting transactions. The Vanguard Group, Inc. serves as the Investment Manager. Vanguard Marketing Corporation markets, distributes and underwrites the *Direct Plan*.

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For more information about New York's 529 College Savings Program *Direct Plan*, obtain a Program Brochure and Tuition Savings Agreement at [www.ny529directplan.com](http://www.ny529directplan.com) or by calling 1-800-420-8580. This includes investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other information. You should read and consider them carefully before investing.

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# Preparing yourself for disasters to come

*The aftermath of Hurricane Sandy has made me concerned about what I would do if my home were flooded or destroyed. How can I be better prepared to keep my family safe and minimize the impact of the aftermath of a natural disaster?*

**H**urricane Sandy and its devastating aftermath have once again reminded us of the need to implement a crisis plan for ourselves and our families. Having a crisis plan gives us peace of mind that we can act calmly under pressure and to expect the unexpected. Here are some quick and easy steps you can take in your quest to be prepared.

### Create a plan

Develop a written crisis plan. Samples and guidelines are available on the city's Office of Emergency Management website located at [www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get\\_prepared/prepared\\_plan.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get_prepared/prepared_plan.shtml).

Share the plan with your family. Better yet, upload the plan to a document share site on the "cloud" like Dropbox or Google docs, and download it to your phone, so you and others can access it even if the computer goes down. Your plan should cover:

- Where your household and family members will reunite after a disaster. Identify two places to meet: one right outside of your home and another outside of your neighborhood, such as a library, community center, or place of worship.
- Identify all possible exit routes from your home and neighborhood.
- Designate an out-of-state friend or relative who your household members can call if separated during a disaster. If New York City phone circuits are busy, long-distance calls may be easier to make. Your out-of-state contact can help you and your



family communicate when local land lines and cell towers are down.

- Identify a place where you could get to in the event of a flood.
- Account for everyone's needs, especially seniors, people with disabilities, and non-English speakers.
- Ensure that household members have a copy of your household disaster plan and a "short form" card with emergency contact information to keep in their wallets and backpacks.
- Pack a "go" bag that has sufficient emergency supplies for all household members and pets. Make sure your bag includes cash for immediate money needs. (Like gas stations, ATMs do not operate in power outages.)

• Decide how you will handle caring for any pets and whether you will take them with you. Have a copy of your veterinarian's contact information and any pet insurance policies in your "go" bag.

• Your children are never too young to review the plan with you. Instruct them on exit routes in the event of a fire and reinforce the neighborhood meeting place.

### Evacuate when you're told to do so

Too many people stayed where they were during Hurricanes Irene and Sandy, despite clear evacuation orders. This was also what was so

disastrous with Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The issue is not just surviving the storm, but being able to weather the aftermath if rescue teams cannot get to you.

Know your flood zone and those around you. (To see if you are in a flood zone, check [www.freeflood.net](http://www.freeflood.net).) The saying "better safe than sorry" is all too applicable. During Hurricane Sandy, a family reportedly remained in the evacuation zone, because its house was looted during Irene, only to have the mother and son perish in the flood.

You can replace the stuff. You can't replace a life. Be smart, be safe, be prepared to leave when necessary.

### Make a personal financial crisis management plan

Mitigate the mess. Are you insured? Where are your insurance policies (homeowners, life, auto, disability)? Are they up to date? Are all your valuables on your homeowner rider? Are you covered in cases of flood or hurricane, or do you need a separate rider?

Confirm that you do not need any additional insurance to protect you. Take an inventory of all your home, auto, disability, and life insurance policies, put it in writing, upload it to the cloud and keep written copies in your "go" bags. You should also keep a detailed list of your bank accounts, investments, trusts, titles and deeds, mortgages and home equity loans, credit and debit cards, and tax records in a safe and secure place, together with all contact information and online passwords.

### Make a legal plan

Everyone should have a Last Will and Testament, Healthcare Proxy, and Power of Attorney. For those

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with children, an appointment of a Standby Guardian and Medical Authorization is also helpful to have. Review the documents every few years or anytime you or a close family member experiences a significant life change such as marriage, divorce, or the birth of a new family member. Every review should ensure appropriate beneficiary designations and titling of assets are up to date. Keep copies in your "go" bags and online.

### **Put it online**

Many companies offer "online vaults" to give you secure access to your legal and financial documents from any location with an internet connection. Many financial service companies and financial planners offer this as a courtesy to their customers and clients. Putting everything in a secure online database is a great way to back up your original and photocopy records.

### **Mind your business**

If you own a business, you must have a business disaster plan. It should include the following:

- A business continuity plan. Make sure your business can continue to run as smoothly as possible in the event that you or your employees cannot get to there, or when the power goes out at the business or your employees' homes.

Organize your contact database, keep a regularly updated client and customer list and open items; have a written procedure manual detailing the normal workflow of your business and all emergency procedures; keep your billing and time records up to date if applicable; and execute estate planning documents for your business such as limited powers of attorney or appointing a successor managing member in your corporate operating agreement. You may want to consider moving your files or at least an automated backup in the cloud, so that you can access files remotely even if power goes out in your office.

- Insurance information. Hurricane Sandy caused significant damage to many businesses. Without the right insurance, you might not be able to recoup those losses. The owner of powerHouse Books in DUMBO was reported to have as much as \$100,000 in inventory losses. Without insurance to cover such loss, your business might not be able to survive.

If you are (hopefully) properly

insured, should any of your business assets be affected by a natural disaster, you need to be able to contact your insurer immediately to ensure maximum coverage under your policy. You should also take photographs of any and all damaged assets, and save receipts for any work done in repairing or replacing business assets. Now is the time to make sure you have the right insurance in the event your business is flooded or inaccessible. Look into business interruption insurance, which can help cover losses incurred as a result of natural or unanticipated disasters.

- Loan information. If you need a business loan following a disaster, you can contact the SBA Office of Disaster Assistance at (800) 659-2955 or e-mail [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov) for loans that may be available to your business.

- Additional support. Additional support for businesses can be found at the Department of Small Business Services ([www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/home/home.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/home/home.shtml)) and the Economic Development Corporation ([www.nycedc.com/backtobusiness](http://www.nycedc.com/backtobusiness)).

- Contact information maintenance. Be sure to retain all contact information in a safe and accessible location so that you can act quickly and efficiently towards business recovery. This should include not only all disaster-related recovery services, but also alternative and emergency contact information for your employees. In our age of smartphones, there is no excuse for not having your contacts synched to your password-protected device.

It is worth the investment of time to prepare a reliable strategy that allows you to be prepared when faced with economic and natural disasters. Be well, stay safe, and do not get lulled into complacency that we won't see a storm like Sandy again.

*More information about how you can be prepared and make a plan is available on the Office of Emergency Management website located at [www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get\\_prepared/prepared\\_plan.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get_prepared/prepared_plan.shtml).*

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



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# After the flood

## Helping children in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy

BY SHARON PETERS

**H**urricane Sandy caused major damage to the five boroughs when it hit New York City in October, and cleanup is still ongoing. Every family is unique and has unique ways of getting through a tragedy. Here are some ideas that might be useful as you help your children understand and weather the effects of Hurricane Sandy.

**If you have been directly affected by the hurricane:**

- Take care of yourself as much as possible. Make sure you are warmly dressed, drinking liquids, and eating regularly. It is hard to be there for your children if you are not "there" for yourself.

- Keep in touch with close friends

and family. Take advantage of whatever trusted help is available. This is not a good time for you or your children to be isolated.

- As things are in flux, understand that it is OK for normal routines and guidance to vary. Once things settle down you can get back on track.

- If at all possible (it may not be) spend a few minutes, or more, a day doing something with your child that he likes to do. This simple act can be reassuring, calming, and generally useful to everyone. Something active (going for a walk, throwing a ball, play wrestling, etc.), can lighten the pressure your family is experiencing.

- If possible, listen to your children tell their stories of the storm. Their perspectives might be different than yours, and getting a chance

to share their versions can lower stress. Some children benefit from drawing or writing, as well.

**If you are not directly affected by the hurricane:**

- Remember that children of all ages are aware that something has happened in the city. They notice when adults and their routines, even those outside of their home, seem different.

- Whenever possible, spend time each day playing with your child. This communicates that although some things might be different, key things in his relationships stay the same.

- Times such as these are good opportunities to share your values, remembering to listen as much as you explain. Children often have important perspectives and questions. Even young children need to be given the opportunity to say what is on their minds; this helps them feel less overwhelmed by adult concerns.

- This could be an opportunity to talk to young ones about the importance of neighborhoods and community. You might say that when something happens to one group of people, we all pitch in to make things better. You could also take some time to explain the specifics of the sharing and communicating going on in your neighborhood and beyond. Having a chance to see and understand adults acting together for the common good is very hopeful to children. Enlisting their participation and ideas can also be invaluable.

- Older children are often very aware of societal issues, including those related to the environment. Finding opportunities for them to exchange ideas and actions about organizing, climate change, urban planning, etc. can be invaluable.



Jane's Carousel in Brooklyn Bridge Park during Sandy's storm surge.



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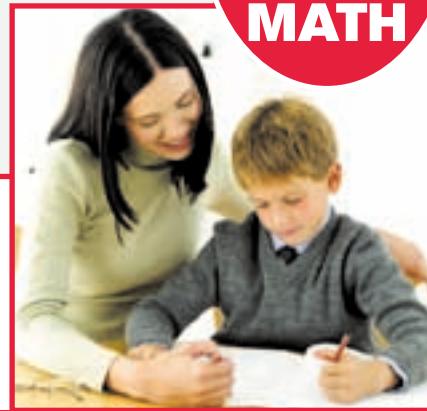
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# The joy of getting

**Learning why receiving is important for giving**

BY MEAGAN J. MEEHAN

**W**hen I was a child, I loved presents; getting gifts was the focal point of my birthday and Christmas. Whenever it was a friend's birthday, my parents came to the toy store with me and helped me select a gift that would suit my friend's personal tastes. We wrapped the gift carefully and enjoyed watching the receiver smile as she un-

wrapped her present, but to me, all of that was purely a formality. The real joy was the thrill of opening my own gifts and getting my own things.

I can still recall the crinkling sound of the wrapping paper, the anticipation of opening the box, and the elation of revealing some wonderful new toy that was all for me!

And that was only part of the fun — the real joy was the hours I got playing with my new toys. Most of the presents I received were cherished for years. I especially got untold hours of fun out of my dollhouses, Legos, and video games, and all of those fond memories began as soon as I tore open the wrappings. As a child I could not fathom that ridiculous adult adage: "It is better to give than to receive." I used to snicker when I heard it, assuming that all adults were insane.

Alas, as I got older, the appeal of receiving gifts faded. I still smile if I get a gift, but the difference is that as I grew up, the thrill of presents gradually lessened. I learned there was no Santa (except for the goodwill of others — a concept I actually find more touching) and

then I started to lose that "I want it, I want it, I want it!" drive that most small children possess.

As I got into my teens, I started appreciating the other aspects of the holidays more: decorating the house, touring around neighborhoods looking at lights, marveling at store windows in the city, baking, giving to charity, listening to the endless stream of Christmas songs on the radio — all the festive, yet, gift-free aspects to the season. Now, instead of presents being the focal point of the holiday, they are merely a delightful extra.

Some people see children's love of presents as an indication of a shallow, consumer-driven culture. These same individuals view children as bratty and ungrateful, and even go so far as to discourage parents from buying their children presents. Granted,

some children do behave ungratefully and they should be reprimanded before their poor attitudes develop into bigger problems. However, the majority of children are excited AND grateful to receive gifts, and should not be painted with the same brush as those who are unappreciative.

Similarly, I agree that the spirit of Christmas — goodwill — should always be conveyed to a child first and foremost. However, gift giving and receiving are integral parts of the celebration process that actually motivate children to be more generous and giving later in life.

The human mind is a complex thing, and it largely bases its processes upon past experiences. Thus, if someone recalls the joy that receiving gifts gave them in their younger years then, as adults, they are far more likely to have the desire to create the same sense of joy for younger generations. Likewise, someone who has no good memories of receiving presents is less likely to partake in the seasonal custom due to long-standing feelings of isolation, bitterness, and regret.

We learn from memory, and our personalities are molded from our experiences. A vast portion of our memory relies on the recollections of the emotional reactions that we experienced during certain events or times. In short, if we recall pleasant things about the holidays, then we are more likely to enjoy them every year.

Parents must realize that what seems like children being selfish is actually a normal foundation-laying process for what will later become the basis of selfless and giving behavior. All of that starts with making holidays special, both materially and spiritually.

*Meagan Meehan is a published author of poems, short stories, novels, and articles in numerous publications. She is also a cartoonist and an award-winning modern artist. Meehan holds a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from New York Institute of Technology and a Masters of Communication from Marist College.*



# Along for the ride

Taking the baby on our hurricane missions

BY TIM PERRINS

**W**hen deciding to have a child, you think about all the big responsibilities — feeding, changing diapers, losing sleep. But you don't think about spontaneous cravings for Funyuns.

And if you want to run to the corner store for a bag *after* you have a baby, it's going to become an hour-long production. Suddenly, there's all these extra little responsibilities involved — a tiny hat, mini-mittens, baby booties, a fuzzy coat with sheep ears on the hood — not to mention a stroller or carrier, a bottle, diapers, and changing pad (just in case!). Oh, and a toy to keep the baby occupied — which you'll have to go back to look for once you realize she dropped it somewhere along the way.

Actually, better make that an hour-and-a-half-long production.

That's the new law of the land: where you go, she goes.

Owing to the cataclysmic storm named Sandy that barreled through this area (and by "area," I mean "sea-board"), my wife and I have had lots of extra places to go lately.

My wife is a teacher, and not only was her school knocked out of commission by the floodwaters, but several of her colleagues and students found their homes — and lives — washed away.

In the aftermath of the storm, my wife began coordinating with teachers from her school — as well as with friends and generous strangers all around Brooklyn — to round up supplies for people who had seen everything they owned submerged by the surge of a swollen ocean.

My wife is admirably proactive. I just happen to have dumb luck on my side and, purely by chance, I filled up the gas tank of our car a couple days before the storm hit, so



we were in the perfect position to do some good. We spent a lot of time driving around to different people's homes picking up donated clothes, toys, books, and other necessities.

Throughout these excursions, baby Hazel was along for the ride. It seems funny to drag a baby along on such errands, but she is travel-size.

Driving in Brooklyn can be harrowing on an ordinary day, but after the storm it only became worse. The subways were out of commission, and with so many people surprisingly eager to get to work, the roads became more crowded and hostile than ever. Over and over again we found ourselves caught in a traffic jam, only to discover that it wasn't so much "traffic" as a gas station line, stretching for 15 blocks.

That was enough to sour our moods, but to make matters worse, my wife and I were both recovering from a shared case of "walking pneumonia" (fortunately baby Hazel isn't walking yet, which must be the reason why she didn't catch it).

The result of all of this was that in the midst of our noblest efforts, little Hazel was subjected to some of our worst moments, including the treacherous game of chicken with the driver of a box truck who thought he could selfishly cut in front of a line of 10 cars, and the subsequent verbal exchange that followed.

It's funny that even in the midst of historic events, our baby is oblivious to anything beyond her immediate needs and interests. Whether we're at home, in a grocery store, or double-parked outside of an apartment building so we can pick up a box of toys destined for another little kid who three days earlier was terrified to see his own bedroom fill up with water, our 9-month-old baby is just happy to see that someone is there to offer her a goofy smile and a bottle of formula.

For me, those post-hurricane days weren't much different than the average weekend — my wife tells me where we need to go and I oblige. But for my daughter, it's the beginnings of our family mythology — the Flood of Two Thousand Twelve. And for someone else's kids, it's the start of re-building their lives.

There are so many things we take for granted —most of the time we feel like we are in control of our lives — but in the midst of something so much bigger than ourselves, that's when we realize we're all just along for the ride.

*Tim Perrins is a part-time stay-at-home dad who lives with his wife and their brand-new tiny human in Park Slope, Brooklyn. More of his thoughts about babies and other things that confuse him can be found at [www.RevoltOfTheLmbeciles.blogspot.com](http://www.RevoltOfTheLmbeciles.blogspot.com).*

# The busy season

## How to prepare your special-needs children for the holidays

BY REBECCA MCKEE

**Y**es, it's true, Halloween has crept up and slithered away. The stores will be bypassing Thanksgiving and zooming towards Christmas before we know it! For those of us who share our lives with someone who has autism spectrum disorder or another special need, we know the feelings of experiencing the haunts of Halloween months before autumn arrives and hours spent listening to Christmas carols while we still don shorts. Aah, the anticipation of it all.

For many, this 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 families to celebrate holidays in a timely, successive order.

- Using a calendar works for many reasons. Some include appointments and birthdays, but they also list unwritten social rules. This may mean what others generally speak about during special times of the year and what activities people partake in. For example, in October, I may write at the top of the calendar page: "People decorate their homes with pumpkins. Maybe we can visit a farm and pick apples. People talk about baking, eating pies, and pumpkin bread. We can watch 'The Wizard of Oz' and scary movies like (fill in your child's favorite). Everyone looks at Halloween costumes and buys bags of candy." Try to continue this throughout the year.
- When each holiday ends, begin groundwork for the next. Once Thanksgiving is over, your family member can self-talk through writing: "Our family will start taking down Thanksgiving decorations. We will start talking about (Christmas, Hanukkah, etc.). We will get out the ornaments."

- Include your family member in household chores during the holidays as much as possible, such as creating a grocery list pertaining to Thanksgiving dinner or mixing Christmas cookie dough. Having



him push the cart and locate the items in the supermarket or load the dishwasher after the meal, which will alleviate that over-abundance of liveliness. In other words, direct his excitable, nervous energies towards a meaningful goal.

- As each holiday ends, have your family member recycle the wrapping paper, catalogs, and magazines. This is a physical and definite ending.

- Limit the choices of music and movies to a seasonal selection or to those that are relevant all year. Display the television listings as a visual cue. Recognizing that our relatives do not want to watch a Passover movie on Thanksgiving is using nice manners. Manners are a learned social skill.

- Proactively preparing each per-

son about the upcoming changes in his schedule is the best bet! Information regarding the location of the holiday dinner is a must. If visitors are expected, please provide details. Social scrapbooks work wonders.

- Make available items and activities to keep your family members occupied during these holiday meals. Luckily, we can amuse ourselves with active conversation, passive listening, and daydreaming. Let's be sensitive to others who struggle with intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

Follow this holiday prep guide to avoid bumps in the rum cake road! You'll be helping these special needs individuals move through the holiday season as we do, with a purpose. Cheers and be merry!

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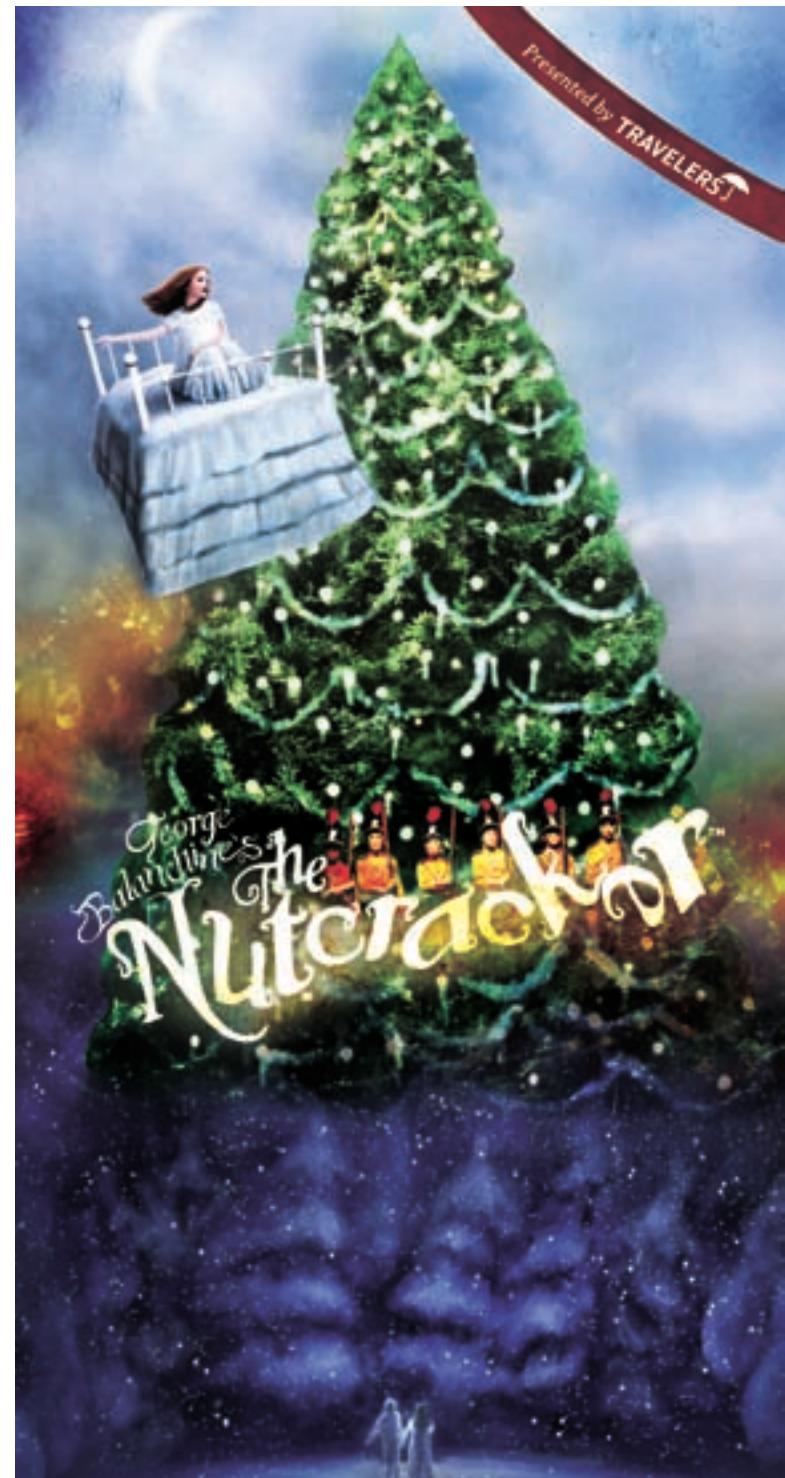
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## THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

# A book that will teach and entertain all animal lovers

If your child loves critters of all sorts — and loves learning about them — she might enjoy reading a new book about a woman who shares her home with domestic and wild pets.

In Peg Kehret's latest, "Animals Welcome," Kehret and her husband, Carl, buy 10 wooded acres in Washington state where deer and elk roam, baby fawns are born, bears and 'possums steal birdseed from feeders, and peacocks wander over to snoop. And Kehret loves to watch them all.

She adores the many birds that visit her woods as much as her household pets. She's always shared her home with at least one dog and says that all but one of her tail-waggers has been a rescue. Kehret, you see, is a big supporter of her local animal shelters.

She also writes about her many kitties, including Molly and Pete, who are beloved companions. There is also Mr. Stray — a semi-feral cat, who Carl honored after his death by turning the workshop into a cat room, where the couple fosters cats with the hope that they'll be adopted by loving families.

Animals, it seems, know that the

of all things furry and feathered, it's sometimes hard to find books that satisfy her story cravings. Fortunately, "Animals Welcome" fills that void nicely.

Kehret's words feel like snuggly flannel sheets, resonating with rich, warm tones that respect both subjects and readers. Her curiosity and a keen love of animals meld with an obvious love for children, that makes this book seem undeniably friendly.

I particularly liked that Kehret is careful to teach readers to watch — not touch — wildlife, and to be mindful of all animals. Kids can learn a lot, in fact, from this passionate, creature-minded author.

Though this is a book for 7- to 12 year olds, don't be surprised if you're tempted to read it, too. With its loving tales (or shall we say "tails?") and gentle, flavor, "Animals Welcome" will be welcome on anybody's bookshelf.

*"Animals Welcome: A Life of Reading, Writing, and Rescue," by Peg Kehret [175 pages, 2012, \$16.99].*

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

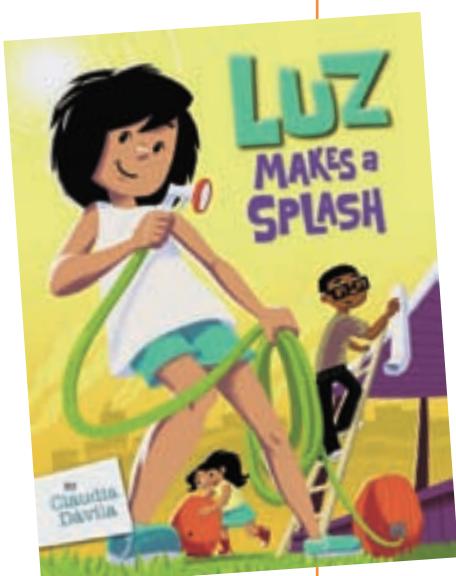


Kehrets are softies for soft fur.

Other feral cats and kittens that they bottle-raised have also visited the couple. A lost, elderly dachshund showed up one day, missing her owner, and two ponies wandered down Kehret's driveway after escaping from their corral.

"Helping animals," says Kehret, is "a way of life." At her house, "animals will always be welcome."

If your young reader is also a fan



## This tome gets kids thinking

It's easy to think that a kid's tiny voice won't make a difference in this big world. "Luz Makes a Splash" shows your child otherwise.

In the book, there's a heat wave and Luz and her friend Anika go to the mall every day to cool off. But air conditioning is bad for the environment, so they decide to take a cool dip Spring Pond, but when they get to the natural body of water, they are sad to see that it is al-

most dry. They become even more upset when they learn that their local soda pop company is at fault — and they actually liked Top Cola!

Then, Luz sees Mr. DeSouza with a big pickle barrel. He's taking it to the park to catch rainwater, although there hadn't been rain for a long time. Luz asks Mr. DeSouza how wild plants withstood drought, and when he tells her that they survive with groundwater, she starts to think.

Using a fun, comic book style that lightens the tone, author Claudia Dávila illustrates the adventures of a girl who loves the environment, planet, and her neighborhood. I like this book and what it stands for, but

I especially like Dávila's Luz: she's sharp and resourceful as she subtly encourages kids to find their own solutions to environmental issues they might find locally.

Even though this book has a roasting-in-the-summertime theme, I think kids ages 6 to 12 will learn a lot in any season. For them, "Luz Makes a Splash" might get a few ideas cooking.

*"Luz Makes a Splash," by Claudia Dávila [96 pages, 2012, \$16.95].*

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



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## DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

# Dad's extended trip gives mom jitters

## Seeks help after absentee pop's surprise

**I** received a call from "Sharon," a single mom concerned about her 4-year-old daughter's contact with her father, a man largely absent from the girl's life. The parents had never married. Our conversation was informal, in part because I am not familiar with the laws of her state.

Sharon was apprehensive. The father, "George," was to take their child "Elisa" away for several days during a holiday break. But then, without discussion, George told Sharon that he was adding extra days to the trip — during time not his, according to their parenting schedule.

The mother had many concerns: will Elisa be safe? George has never gone away with Elisa. A lot of driving, part of it well into the night, is planned. Would George get drowsy and into an accident? Would he even bring their daughter back?

Additionally, Sharon didn't want to set a bad precedent. She felt that she has been very flexible and accommodating to George during the past year, when he had been around more, but now she feels that he is taking advantage — something that she could eas-

ily imagine being repeated.

I wondered if George might be immature, as opposed to being a bad father. Certainly, he was inexperienced. Sharon agreed that immaturity was an issue; perhaps a good sign, since maturity and experience can be acquired.

After discussing these matters, I shared my thoughts and we spoke about her options, and the approaches she might take. I suggested that Sharon:

- Focus on her child's welfare: what is best for Elisa? What does a child her age need, and what causes Sharon's fear and disappointment? Focusing primarily on Elisa's needs, rather than her own — which are also valid — may meet with less resistance from George.

- Make use of a mutual acquaintance: I asked Sharon if she and George have a mutual friend, a family member or a clergyman, who she might be able to discuss her concerns with, and who in turn could discuss them with George. Likely, George has trouble listening directly to Sharon; but he might be open to hearing her concerns if expressed by a third party. Sharon said there was no such person to turn to.

- Go with George to a child psychologist or other parenting expert: a parenting expert can address concerns such as how a trip of several days away from her mother (here including lengthy car travel and some by plane) might affect a 4-year-old — especially a child who has not spent much time alone with her father; and how sticking to a routine makes a child feel secure. It's one thing to tune out your ex, who may be accusing and negative; and another to ignore an impartial expert.

- Consider mediation: as discussed in my March and November 2012 columns and more fully on my website, mediation is a process

through which many couples learn to communicate better and work together to get what they need. Sharon was unaware of what mediation entails.

I gave a brief description and then put on my mediator hat, asking questions and reframing her responses, and confirming that I had understood her.

When I then told Sharon that she had just experienced what she likely would in an actual mediation session, she seemed pleased, and felt capable of doing it for real.

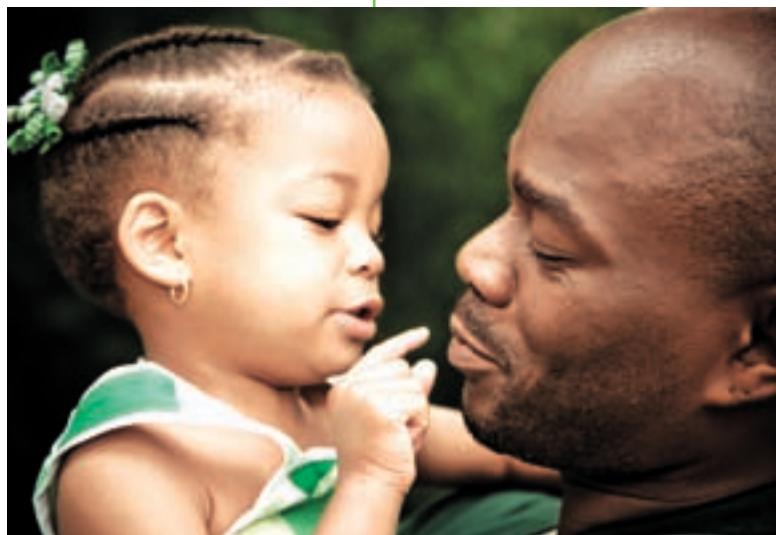
- Speak with an attorney: I have hope that legal action can be minimized in this case, if not avoided. Still, with her concerns, I offered that it might be wise to meet with a local attorney who is knowledgeable about her state's laws. Sharon, wanting to know her "recourse," could learn this from such a meeting.

Sharon was very grateful for our having talked, believing that she had a lot more information than an hour before. Energized, Sharon ended our conversation, wanting to immediately follow-up and find individuals and groups that might help her move forward constructively.

Postscript: Two weeks later, Sharon said that "Things are going better. I am armed now with more information, and feel like I am tuning into my intuition, and more capable of making powerful decisions."

*New York City and Long Island based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin, Esq., helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without going to court. Contact him at lee\_chabin@lc-mediate.com, or (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/home>.*

**Disclaimer:** All material is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Discussing your particular circumstances with a legal professional before making important decisions is strongly encouraged.

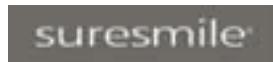




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# Truly not the best medicine

## Antibiotics may foster obesity

BY KIKI BOCHI

**W**hen our children are sick, we want medicine to make them better. But sometimes that is not the answer. Sometimes, it is best to let nature run its course.

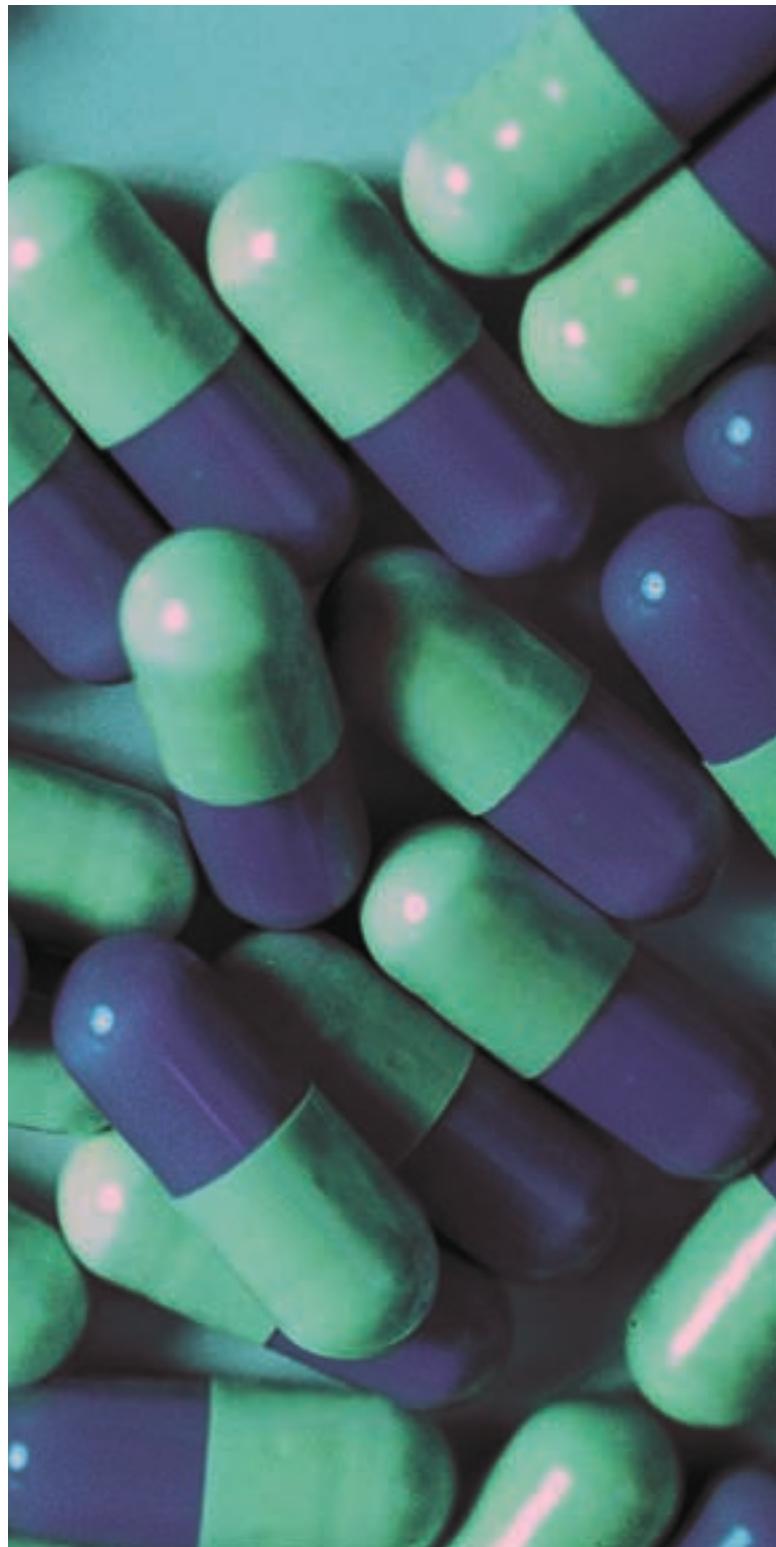
Pediatricians have been warning for years against seeking antibiotics for illnesses caused by viruses, such as colds. Overuse of antibiotics promotes “superbugs” that are increasingly resistant to the medicines we have at our disposal.

Now, researchers are finding another reason parents should be wary of giving their children unnecessary medicines. Treating very young infants with antibiotics may predispose them to being overweight in childhood, according to a recent study of more than 10,000 children.

The study found that on average, children exposed to antibiotics from birth to 5 months of age weighed more later compared to children who weren’t given antibiotics. By 38 months of age, exposed children had a 22 percent greater likelihood of being overweight, according to research conducted at the New York University School of Medicine and published in the International Journal of Obesity.

Researchers theorize that exposure to antibiotics may affect the microbes in the intestines that play a critical role in how we process calories and absorb nutrients, especially early in life.

For this study, the timing of ex-



posure mattered: the results were most pronounced among children who received antibiotics before the age of 6 months. Children exposed to antibiotics from 6 months to 14 months did have slightly higher body mass than children who did not receive antibiotics, but not significantly so.

The researchers noted that the study does not prove that antibiotics in early life causes young

children to be overweight. It only shows that a correlation exists. Further studies will need to be conducted to explore the issue of a direct causal link. But it certainly is something to think about as flu season approaches.

*Kiki Bochi, an award-winning journalist, reads hundreds of health reports monthly to bring readers the best advice and latest developments in family health and child development.*



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**DEAR  
DR. KARYN  
GORDON**

# Inspire your kids to organize their rooms

*Last week I heard you speak at a parenting conference about the importance of kids keeping their rooms tidy. I thought it was interesting that you pointed out how our rooms affect people's moods and motivations. I've tried everything to get my kids to tidy their rooms (and I sometimes end up cleaning them myself), but we seem to go in circles, and it causes a lot of tension in our home. What do you suggest?*

**O**rganization is one of my favorite topics, because I see the dramatic impact it has on the moods of kids, teens, and their families! I've helped hundreds of my young clients learn important organizational skills and also recently helped my 12-year-old niece transform her bedroom on a tight budget. Here are seven steps to help you inspire your kids and teens to organize their rooms.

## Inspire, don't nag

I know — this is easier said than done! Try asking them a simple question: "What is your mood when you are in your room?" If they say, "I don't know," give them options. "Do you feel angry, upset, overwhelmed, stressed, or tired?"

Research tells us that our environment highly impacts our mood, which impacts our motivation. It's im-

portant that their rooms inspire and energize them! If it doesn't — offer to help them (but do not take over).

## Remove

Assuming that they are willing and interested to allow you to help them create an inspiring room, the next step is to remove everything from the room. This step is important because if we try to organize around our stuff while it's still in the room, we're not as thorough. Take it all out! It gives a better perspective!

## Sort

Next, divide everything into three piles: Keep, Garbage, and Give Away.

When sorting, be ruthless. Ask your child or teen if he has used the item in the last six months. If a season has gone by without him wearing an item, there is a good chance he will never wear it again. Less stuff is better! It took my 12-year-old niece four days to do this step. Depending on how much "stuff" you have, this task could take an evening or a few days.

## Write a shopping list

As you help your kids to go through their stuff, start keeping a list of things you need to buy. You may find that they "need" a few key items of clothing or that their clock radio no longer works. Be sure that your kids or teens have key items for their rooms, including: a comfortable bed, night table, desk (it's really important for them to have a desk to do their homework on, and to not be working on it on their bed), alarm clock (by grade four, children should be starting to wake themselves up), bulletin board, garbage can, a good light to read with in bed, and possibly their own laundry hamper.

## Home for everything

The key with organization is that everything has a home. I constantly ask my young clients, "Where is the 'home' for your cellphone, loose change, blank paper, pens, and tickets to your next concert?"

If items don't have a designated spot, they could end up anywhere and possibly lost. One 17-year-old client I worked with decided to make a shoebox in his desk drawer the home for his cellphone, wallet, keys, and loose change. Creating this home helped save him a huge amount of time.

Make a list of all the items you have in your room, and assign a home for each item. Buy a few key organizational boxes and items to create the home for all craft and art supplies. Once things are in place, it radically helps maintain organization.

## Think inspiration

It's important that when a child walks into his room, he is inspired. So, work with him on colors he finds inspiring.

If your child wants his room repainted, encourage him to look through various magazines to see what rooms and colors appeal to him, and then take those pictures into a paint specialist at your local hardware store. Paint is very inexpensive, and it really can make a big difference to someone's mood.

## Reflect personality

Finally, it's important that your child or teen's room reflects his personality, goals, dreams, and what is important to him. My niece is highly relational (she loves her family and friends) and creative. So, knowing that, I bought several frames and had several pictures blown up to 8-by-10 to feature her and her family and friends. I also bought some magnetic boards to feature some of her beautiful art work. Some of my male teen clients wanted to hang some of their favorite snowboarding and skateboarding posters.

The key is to not only help our kids become more organized, but also more be inspired and energized in their new space. This will not only help their mood, but also the mood of their parents!





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Photo by Heather Weston

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## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Heather Von St. James and her daughter, Lily.

# A cancer survivor

## How a young mother battled mesothelioma

**W**hen you hear the word mesothelioma, what do you think? Most of us probably conjure up those bad commercials of lawyers asking men if they were exposed to asbestos at work. However, mesothelioma remains a very real and deadly form of cancer that can affect any of us, not just men working with asbestos. Just ask Heather Von St. James, a young mother who learned she had the disease only three months after her first daughter was born.

"I never anticipated that at the age of 36 I'd hear the shocking words,

'You have cancer.' I had just given birth, yet three-and-a half months later, I would learn that I was sick with pleural mesothelioma, a type of cancer that is a result of asbestos exposure."

Not knowing much about the disease when diagnosed, she later learned that she had not acquired malignant pleural mesothelioma through first-hand exposure, but second-hand. Her father was a construction worker who handled materials that contained asbestos, so through daily contact in the form of riding in her dad's truck or hugging him when he came home, or even simply just being in the same room with his work clothes, Heather was exposed to the deadly substance almost daily.

Heather says that when she was diagnosed, the Mayo Clinic (where she was treated) "had limited knowledge of anyone else my age dealing with this type of cancer. The idea that it only affected men who worked construction-type jobs was the focus of this deadly disease. However, secretaries, teachers, and students who were exposed to the carcinogenic building materials in which the schools were built were also affected. Wives who frequently washed their husbands' work clothing were affected additionally."

Even more disturbing is the fact that the number of pleural mesothelioma cases in the younger population is rising.

"This generation includes children who attended schools built of the materials containing asbestos. Deteriorating insulation and tiles within these buildings especially posed a great risk," explains Heather. "Beyond school, homes proved to be a contaminated environment as wives and children cheerfully welcomed dads and fathers home from a hard day's work. Mothers who taught or secretaries who aided in those contaminated schools likewise were greeted with hugs from family members whom they unknowingly placed at risk."

Anyone who has been exposed

to asbestos in any way would benefit from a full exam, particularly if you have symptoms. For those that have a history of asbestos exposure, early warning signs are dry cough, shortness of breath, shoulder pain, fever, night sweats, and sudden unexplained weight loss. Once you contact your doctor, as with any other disease, the key is to be proactive. Explain to him that you have had asbestos exposure, and you would like to be checked for mesothelioma. Keep in mind, the disease can take anywhere from 20 to 50 years after exposure to appear.

At the time of her diagnosis, Heather was given 15 months to live unless she took drastic measures, which she did, having one lung, one rib, and half of her diaphragm removed. Amazingly, it has been nearly seven years since Heather's diagnosis, and at her last check-up this past October, it showed there was no evidence of the disease in her body anymore.

"I guess you could call it remission, but I don't. I say, 'cancer free.'"

Heather now works as a patient advocate and strives to bring awareness of the disease to others. She is very active in the mesothelioma community. Her positive attitude has only strengthened her outlook.

"My prognosis? Fantastic. We keep on top of appointments; every six months I go back for check ups. It's been seven years, and I'm feeling great. I'm very active in the mesothelioma community, as a patient advocate, and am getting ready to celebrate seven years at our annual Lungleavin' Day party, Feb. 2, 2013! I'm having a fund-raiser for mesothelioma research. I'm giving back to the community that has been so wonderful to me."

*Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find her on Facebook and Twitter @DanniSullivanWriter, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.*

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## GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

# Getting the most out of gift cards

**G**ift cards have become the go-to present for parents who have run out of time, ideas or, let's be honest, holiday spirit. The National Retail Federation estimates that each holiday, eight out of 10 shoppers turn to gift cards for at least some of their purchases. Maybe that's because the cards make especially good gifts for teachers, teens, tweens, and other people who are hard to please. Easy as they are to purchase, getting the most from gift cards requires a bit of savvy. Here are a few tips:

- **Choose the right card.** A closed-loop gift card can be used only at the store or restaurant that issues it, so be sure the recipient likes what they have to offer. Prepaid bank gift cards can be used wherever a debit card would be accepted, but there's a fee for that convenience. The American Express website, for example, charges \$3.95 per card, regardless of the amount.

- **Don't buy off the rack.** When cards are easily accessible, crooks can collect identifying numbers, using pocket scanners or old-fashioned pencil and paper. By calling the toll-free number, they find out when the

card is activated and spend the balance while your present is waiting to be given. To avoid this problem, purchase cards that are kept behind the counter. Look for a scratch off pin number, and be sure it is intact.

- **Look for discounts.** Legitimate discounts on gift cards are available from resellers such as Plasticjungle.com, Giftcardrescue.com, and Cardpool.com. Before buying, be sure the website guarantees the value of the card. Check shipping charges, too, because they can quickly offset discounts. Another way to find safe discounts is to visit scriptsmart.com, a website that rates gift cards based on their features. The site also provides information about how laws governing gift cards vary from state to state.

- **Skip the plastic.** Ten billion gift cards are produced each year. Not only do they contain toxic petrochemicals, but they also create disposal problems. Some companies allow you to bypass plastic by sending an e-card directly to a mobile phone or even a Facebook page. Because this is a relatively new way of giving, be sure to alert the recipient with a card or some other tangible reminder that he has received a virtual gift.

- **Get a receipt.** No matter how you buy your giftcard, get a receipt that includes the number on the card. If the card is lost or stolen, you can recover its value if you have documentation. Should you have a problem with a card, contact the company that issued it. If it can't or won't resolve the problem, complain to the Federal Trade Commission [(877) FTC-HELP] about cards issued by retailers or Comptroller of the Currency [(800) 613-6743] about cards issued by banks.

If you become savvy about buying giftcards, you may actually want to use them to save money on your own purchases. The important thing

is to treat the cards as cash, because that's exactly what they are. Don't leave them lying around. Don't tuck them into a drawer and forget about them.

For the same reason, be sure to spend cards received during the holidays. Bankrate.com estimates that \$40 billion dollars in gift card purchases went unused in the past decade. That's like loaning money to the sponsoring companies without ever asking that it be paid back. Look for opportunities to use cards on things you or your kids really want. Take advantage of after holiday sales both on and offline. If there's an expiration date, mark it on your calendar.

For cards you really can't use, turn to websites that will help you convert them into something more valuable. Cardhub.com has a Facebook application so people can swap cards with friends. Swapagift.com pinpoints local companies that buy giftcards for cash, usually at a deep discount.

The websites that sell discounted gift cards buy them back, too. Before shipping off a card, review the frequently asked questions to be sure you understand exactly what you'll receive in return (and how you'll complain if there's a problem). For example, plasticjungle.com converts cards into cash, credits on Amazon, or even a donation to a favorite charity. Of course, the holidays are a terrific time to convert the odd balances on all of last year's gift cards into donations to organizations that will make the season bright for others. Now that's a way to rekindle holiday spirit!

*Carolyn Jabs, MA, raised three computer-savvy kids, including one with special needs. She has been writing Growing Up Online for 10 years and is working on a book about constructive responses to conflict. Visit [www.growing-up-online.com](http://www.growing-up-online.com) to see past columns. © Copyright, 2012, Carolyn Jabs. All rights reserved.*





## JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

# Hurricane Sandy casts shadow over holidays

**T**his time of year is usually afloat with festive lights, decorations, and seemingly non-stop parties. Often, whether we want to or not, we engage in these over-the-top festivities to commemorate the particular holiday we celebrate. But in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, it doesn't seem right to go all out this year.

For starters, many of us can't. There are numerous families who have lost everything they had and still have no permanent homes. Others have been devastated by immense debt, and lost businesses and jobs as a direct result. Worst of all, there are those who lost loved ones in the natural disaster and will carry on through the holiday season without them.

On one hand, it doesn't seem correct to go overboard with merriment when so many of our friends and neighbors have been devastated, but on the other hand, we still need to celebrate the holidays with our kids, pointing out how lucky we are to have what we have, and most of all, each other.

My family was minimally affected, our basement and everything in it was destroyed. To say that the water rushed in fast is an understatement. One minute we had a dry house and the next minute, four feet of the sea was rushing down our block.

Everything in our basement was wrecked: the furnace, boiler, washing machine, and dryer. Expensive, but replaceable. Then, there are things that cannot be replaced: my kids' baby albums, baptism videos, my wedding album, wedding video, countless videos of trips to my parents' house, holidays, and special events. Also, my daughter's high school yearbook, some of my first published academic pieces, and notes to and from my uncle who passed away.



back then, neighbors (and strangers) have come out of the woodwork to help those who need it. I have received messages from readers all over the country sending prayers and well wishes, and it warms my heart every single time.

I have witnessed first-hand the generosity of the human spirit, and it is nothing short of uplifting. My son's school, Good Shepherd in Marine Park, took in more than 200 students from the Rockaways at a moment's notice. Mr. Paparelli, the principal, the teachers, and students welcomed the new students with open arms.

Mr. Pap (as the kids and parents affectionately call him) showed by example what should be done when something this catastrophic happens: offer help in any way we can. I have never been prouder to be part of the Good Shepherd family. We have also seen countless volunteers from various states heading to New York to help hand out food, supplies, help clean, and offer comfort. Every bit helps.

While we are collectively recovering, we all still want the holidays to be a special time for our families. Our collection of Christmas decorations was lost in the flood, so as we start brand new this year, we will begin with a few, solemn pieces to signify the season and a couple of white lights to welcome hope, love, and light back into our lives, as we send prayers of comfort for all those affected, and prayers of thanks for all those who helped and continue to assist.

Wishing you all a warm and loving holiday season.

*Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for over 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find her on Facebook and Twitter @DanniSullWriter, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.*



## GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

# Bake up memories

**M**oms are about making holiday memories, and there's no better activity for instilling them than baking with your children. Revel in this sweet-smelling activity and invite the aunties and cousins over for even more fun.

### Benefits of baking with children

If you're worried about your children's literacy and math skills, break out the mixing bowls. Baking helps reinforce what they're learning every day. It also covers a wide array of life skills including shopping for ingredients, sequence of steps, measuring, and even cleaning up.

#### Reading

"Your kids will actually become more literate just by reading and going thru the recipe," explains Sharon Davis, a family and consumer sciences educator who teaches for HomeBaking.org and WheatFoods.org.

#### Science and math skills

Explain the role of baking soda and powder in baked goods and how they differ from yeast. Recipes may involve multiplication or fractions.

#### Self-sufficiency

You can prepare your own baked goods, and they can be better for you.

### Problem solving

What happens when you run out of an ingredient? Perhaps you can substitute another similar ingredient. Or you may lack the exact sized pan the recipe recommends. Your child will learn how to solve these little problems, which is practice for tackling bigger ones later in life.

### Healthful ingredients included

Davis says a higher nutrition profile is one of the principal reasons people bake at home. Take sodium, for example.

"In general, food companies are trying to reduce it in soups [and] baked goods." She suggests using unsalted butter and halving the salt in most recipes with the exception of yeast breads.

- Portion control is easier at home. Davis says, "They'll see an option [that is] not like what they see when they're eating out. You can cut that piece of pie into the right size."

- Any recipe you make yourself can be made with whole grains. In addition to wheat, whole grains include oatmeal and whole-grain cornmeal. It's easy to substitute whole grain for half the flour. Consider white whole-wheat flour or the new ultra-grain whole-wheat flours

if taste and texture flags go up.

- For liquids, consider substituting 1/4 to 1/3 cup of pumpkin, cooked sweet potato or squash, grated carrot, apple or zucchini, or pureed banana.

- Add dried fruits to almost anything including yeast or quick breads and cookies.

- Sprinkle toasted nuts on top of pancakes or muffins, or knead into yeast breads.

### Tips for getting started

1. Pick out a recipe and read it together during story time the night before.

2. Get tools that are easy to use with young children. Look for large numbers, visible lines, and sturdy spoon handles. A whisk, two baking sheet pans, three nested mixing bowls, nine-by-13-inch cake pan, nine-inch square cake pan, 12-cup muffin tin, and two bread loaf pans can get you started. A rolling pin is helpful, but a one-inch by one-foot dowel rod works just as well for kids.

3. Store the tools in a low cupboard or drawer and let the children help you get them out. Allow time to read the recipe together and assemble the ingredients and pans before you start.

4. Teach your children the difference between dry and liquid measuring cups. Measure liquids flat on the counter with a liquid measuring cup. To measure dry ingredients, fluff into dry measure cups, then level off.

5. The website [www.homebaking.org](http://www.homebaking.org) provides over 130 "how-tos" for getting started baking, ingredients, methods and pans.

Baking is about making memories, which is reason enough to risk getting flour onto your kitchen floor. Yet it's also about literacy and life skills. And nothing beats the smell of freshly baked goods emanating from your kitchen — especially during this magical time of year.

Christine Palumbo is a dietitian from Naperville, Ill., who plans to bake her usual repertoire of ethnic Christmas cookies using real butter. Follow her on Facebook at *Christine Palumbo Nutrition*, on Twitter @PalumboRD or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

## Country Fruit Cobbler

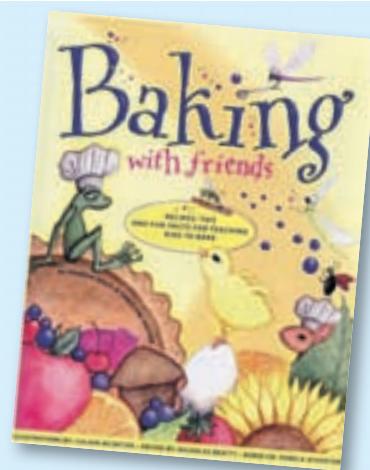
**PREP TIME:** 30 minutes

**BAKING TIME:** 50 minutes

Makes eight servings

#### INGREDIENTS

4 cups sliced fresh or frozen peaches (about 8)  
 1/2 cup fresh or frozen blackberries  
 1 cup sugar, divided  
 1 tablespoon corn starch  
 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
 1/2 cup whole wheat flour  
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour  
 1/4 cup yellow cornmeal, whole grain  
 2 teaspoons baking powder  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 1 cup 1 percent milk  
 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted

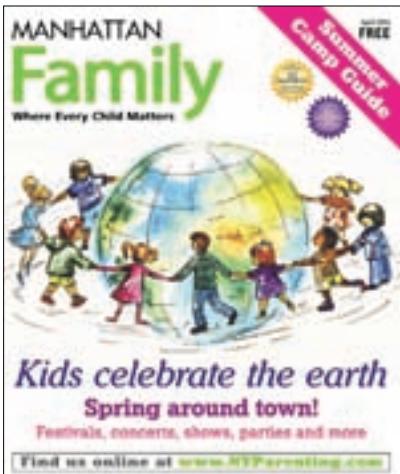


**DIRECTIONS:** Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease or spray a 13- by nine-inch pan, baking dish or cast iron skillet. In a large mixing bowl, combine peaches and blackberries with a

mixture of 1/2 cup sugar, cornstarch and cinnamon. In a separate medium mixing bowl, combine remaining 1/2 cup sugar, whole wheat flour, all-purpose flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. Combine and add milk and melted butter to dry mixture. Blend just until all dry ingredients are moistened. Pour or spoon batter over peach mixture. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes until crust is crisp and golden brown. Serve hot with whipped cream or ice cream.

**NUTRITION FACTS:** Each 6 ounce/174 gram serving provides 257 calories, 4 grams protein, 48 grams carbohydrate, 3.5 grams dietary fiber, 6 grams fat (4 grams saturated), 72 milligram calcium, 182 milligram potassium, 229 milligram sodium.

Source: Adapted from "Baking with Friends: Recipes, Tips and Fun Facts for Teaching Kids to Bake" by Sharon Davis and Charlene Patton.



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## A TEEN'S TAKE

AGLAIA HO



years old when my mother won tickets to see "Beauty and the Beast" through a supermarket sweepstakes. I was bubbling with excitement as I bounced on the red velvet seat, persistently asking when the show would begin. Once the magic began and the curtains gave way to a fantasy land, I was hooked. I was enthralled by the Beast's dramatic transformations, the catchy Disney tunes, Belle's sparkling dress, and the realistic sets. Nothing was more mesmerizing than watching the story unfold before my eyes.

### Age-appropriate shows

Not all Broadway shows are appropriate for everyone. Some shows

# Teens take Broadway

**W**atching a live show at one of many gorgeous Broadway theatres is a unique experience, far different than taking in a movie at your local cinema. It is an opportunity for families to develop a passion for the arts together. Audiences come from around the world every day to experience this extravagant theatrical magic. Living in New York City, it is a privilege to have the wide variety of Broadway shows at our fingertips. A night at the theatre can be a wonderful part of the holiday season and does not have to cost a fortune!

### My first show

My first Broadway show was a pure stroke of luck. I was only 5

contain adult topics and edgy material that might easily confuse young theatre-goers. Because Broadway shows aren't rated like movies, choosing the right show for kids and teens is an important job for parents.

When I was younger, my mother was extremely careful with the shows she brought me to see. She knew I was timid and naive. Thus, she steered away from shows with loud noises and ominous tones. However, what is inappropriate for one child might be appropriate for another.

Luckily, many shows are kid-friendly, like "The Lion King," "Mary Poppins," "Annie," and "Newsies." Others, like "Phantom of the Opera," "Wicked," and "Spider-Man: Turn off the Dark," are generally more family-oriented. Teens can definitely enjoy "Rock of Ages," "Peter and the Starcatcher," and "Book of Mormon."

### Be economical

Let's face it: Broadway show tickets are notoriously expensive. On the somewhat bright side, at least we go home with a much lighter load... in our wallets. Luckily, I have discovered a few ways to obtain tickets at accessible prices.

One popular way to buy tickets at a 20 to 50 percent discount is through TKTS booths. Currently, these booths can be found in Times Square and Downtown Brooklyn. (The South Street Seaport Booth is closed until further notice due to water damage from Hurricane Sandy.) You can purchase same-day tickets for Broadway and off-Broadway shows, and tickets for next day matinee shows at the Brooklyn booth. On the downside, there is no guarantee that your preferred show will have tickets available that day.

Many shows offer their own rush tickets. General rush allows customers to purchase (usually up to two) tickets for substantially lower prices. Tickets are usually bought at the box-office, the same day as the performance. Certain productions offer discounted prices exclusively to students with valid high-school or college IDs. Through general and student rush, I've seen some amazing

shows, like "Evita" and "Jersey Boys." Directions for obtaining both types of rush tickets vary depending on the theater. It's a good idea to check out the show's website beforehand.

Some shows offer lottery tickets for same-day performances. Anyone can enter to win discounted tickets for certain shows. Although there is no guarantee of winning, the exciting atmosphere and the thrill of the unexpected is enough to be an experience itself. You never know, you might score some great tickets! I was lucky enough to win orchestra seat tickets for "Peter and the Starcatcher" for only \$27!

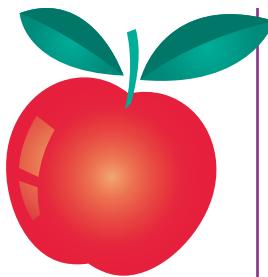
Another great opportunity to obtain lower-priced tickets is through various programs. For instance, Kids Night on Broadway, usually in January and February, allows adults to buy one regular-price ticket and bring a kid to see the show for free. This is a great place to start for families with younger kids. Nevertheless, popular shows sell out quickly.

Another great program is High 5, which offers \$5 tickets to many types of cultural events in the city and occasionally off-Broadway and Broadway shows. (That's cheaper than a standard movie ticket!) Recently, I was able to take three friends and myself to see the five-time Tony Award-winning play "War Horse" at Lincoln Center for only \$20. With the money we saved, we were even able to grab pizza before the show.

### The magic of theatre

For kids, Broadway shows can lead to an appreciation of music, visual arts, and performing arts. They might be fascinated by the catchy music played by the orchestra or drawn to the scenery or costumes. Watching the actors also helps kids develop a respect for artists and their craft. Best of all, the energy of the audience adds to the excitement, often helping to drive the show forward. It is a memorable experience you'll want to share with your family.

*Aglaia Ho is a 17-year-old student from Queens who enjoys writing. Her work has been published in Creative Kids, Skipping Stones, Daily News/Children's Pressline, and The State of the Wild.*



## DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND  
MARGE EBERTS

# A bored first grader

### Dear teacher,

My first grader has become bored in class during the last few weeks. I can see why. His readers are below what he had in kindergarten, and his spelling words are simple three-letter words.

We have tried talking to the teacher, but she becomes aggressive, and says we are attacking her teaching. The principal has agreed to look into this matter. While I am waiting, I have decided to homeschool him. The teacher is definitely not challenging my son enough. What should we do? We pay more than \$20,000 a year for this school, and his education is not appropriate for his abilities.

### Dear parents,

Since you are paying, it is easy to deduce that your son is attending a private school. You might want to consider sending him to a public school as many, especially charter schools, have programs designed for gifted children. Also, a different private school could be a better fit for your child. Removing your son from this school and deciding to homeschool him could be the answer to his getting a challenging education. There is also the possibility of his skipping to second grade or taking a few subjects with the second grade class. This is another solution to discuss with the principal.

Keep in mind that school has only been in session for a little over three months. Students enter first grade at all different levels. Some have completed kindergarten and even pre-k, while others never went to kindergarten. It is challenging for the teacher to get everyone up to speed, so they are working as a class. The curriculum could become more appropriate as the teacher gets better acquainted with the students.

Hopefully, the principal will address your concerns soon, so you can make the best decision for your child.

### Is this teacher unfair?

### Dear teacher,

My eighth grader is very unhappy with his algebra teacher. The teacher gives out demerits all the time for the slightest misbehavior, offers very quick and inadequate explanations of new material, and never reminds the



students about future assignments after they have been assigned. Once, my son got a D for handing in an assignment one day late.

It seems to me that this teacher is handling the students as if they were in high school. I am not alone in complaining. Other parents are complaining about his teaching.

My son is doing well in every other class but only getting a C in algebra. This is not a great grade for someone going onto geometry in high school. I want my son to be a responsible student, but I feel that this teacher is unreasonable. How should I handle this?

### Dear parents,

By now, your son should realize that this teacher has high expectations about how students behave in the classroom and does not hold students' hands when it comes to reminding them about future assignments. Your son obviously knows how to behave in order to avoid getting demerits, and it is his responsibility to do so. It is also his responsibility to write down all assignments when they are given and to put long-term assignments on a calendar. This is a habit that will serve him well in high school.

Teachers vary greatly in how they present material. It is possible that this teacher is simply not realizing that eighth graders need more explanation than older students. Unless this teacher changes, your son and his classmates need to study their math textbook very carefully. There are also websites where they can find good ex-

planations of algebraic concepts.

The teacher could change instructing style if a group of students approached him about needing more explanation. If this fails, a group of parents could ask the teacher how their children could improve their knowledge of the material covered in the classroom. The last step is for the parents to discuss this situation with the principal.

### Resolutions to boost your children's skills

#### Dear parents,

It's New Year's resolution time again. Too often, people go overboard in trying to change too much with their resolutions. Sometimes a simple resolution or two can pay unexpected dividends. This year our resolution suggestions center on building your children's academic skills through supporting their interests. One of the biggest assets children can have is an overwhelming interest in something accompanied by a desire to learn more and more about it.

Children who are mad about baseball can improve their math skills through learning how the all-so-important statistics are figured, read more to learn about recent games, and have a great deal of information to use in reports. They can also study the science involved in throwing different pitches. It's the same story for those who are absorbed in hobbies from stamp collecting to photography.

Resolve to support your children's interests.

- Give them books, magazines, and articles to read about their interest.

- Help them get more involved in their interests by finding classes (music, art, photography, golf) for them to take or going to places (baseball games, museums, plays) where they can see their interests firsthand.

- Respect their interests and speak glowingly about them to others.

Parents should send questions and comments to [dearteacher@dearteacher.com](mailto:dearteacher@dearteacher.com) or ask the columnists on their website at [www.dearteacher.com](http://www.dearteacher.com).



## LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL



**T**he holiday season should be spent enjoying family, not emptying your medicine cabinet of headache-relief medication. A teen that knows every excuse in the book for doing chores is frustrating, especially this time of year when you could use some extra help. So, avoid the typical sigh and exasperated "I'm busy," by assigning your teen tasks she'll actually enjoy doing. Here are some creative ideas to encourage her to get involved in the holiday preparations and lighten your load.

### Foster teamwork

"Scheduling is important so teenagers don't feel put upon. Post a daily schedule of responsibilities in the kitchen. This way everyone knows what is expected of them and that there is an even distribution of work," advise Caitlin and Andrew Friedman, authors of the upcoming book "Family Inc: Office-Inspired Solutions to Reduce the Chaos in Your Home (and Save Your Sanity!)." It is crucial to work as a team.

"Consider bringing your teen into the family planning by discussing what needs to be done,"

the Friedmans explain.

Ken Damato, CEO of DoughMain.com, an online site dedicated to educating families about organization and money management, agrees that teens work best when parents respect their ideas and opinions.

"The best way parents can encourage teens to have a positive attitude towards chores is by including their input. Talking with teens about what types of chores need to be done and which chores they enjoy can help make them more positive about the whole experience," Damato says.

### Chores teens enjoy

The Friedmans offer, "Most teenagers like to help cook. During the holidays, there is a lot of cooking to get done. Additionally, teens like to set up (not breakdown), so give them the job of setting the table."

As a teen, Damato recalls that he liked everything neat and organized, so chores that involved rearranging and re-creating a space were good choices for him. After conducting in-depth surveys about teen chores, Damato's staff proposes the following:

**Holiday decorating.** It's easy for people of all ages to get into the holiday spirit when it involves setting up lights, decorating the tree, or simply wrapping presents. Because these chores are unique to the season, teens will be more willing to help out.

**Donate or sell personal belongings.** Teens can sort old clothing and sporting equipment and donate to charity. This emphasizes the importance of giving at this special time of year. Teens might also sell their gently worn items to a consignment shop and use the proceeds to purchase gifts for family and friends.

**Incorporate technology.** Teens enjoy using technology to help out at home. After the holidays, ask your teen to create a spreadsheet of your holiday card list (sent and received) — a big time saver! Teens can also help set up new electronics or game systems.

Still stumped for ideas? Suggest chores that match a teen's likes and abilities so she will be more apt to help out:

- Crafty teens — make ornaments or fresh wreaths.

- Teen chefs — prepare dinner on nights parents are out shopping.

- Teen mechanics — change the oil in Mom's car to save her a trip to Jiffy Lube.

- Tech-savvy teens — send digital cards or photos to friends and relatives.

- Licensed teens — newly licensed teens will gladly take siblings to activities or run errands.

- Camera buffs — set up and take the family holiday photo.

- Future vets — groom the family pet.

### Tips and tales

"My daughter's favorite holiday chore is getting all the decorations ready for the house and baking "Peppermint Patty" holiday cookies that we give out to family and friends."

*Stephenie Dimase, Wappingers Falls, NY*

"My teenage son shovels snow during the holiday season. Of course, he hated it until we asked him to build a snowman at the end of the driveway after he finished."

*Lauren Zorilo, Wappingers Falls, NY*

### Share your ideas

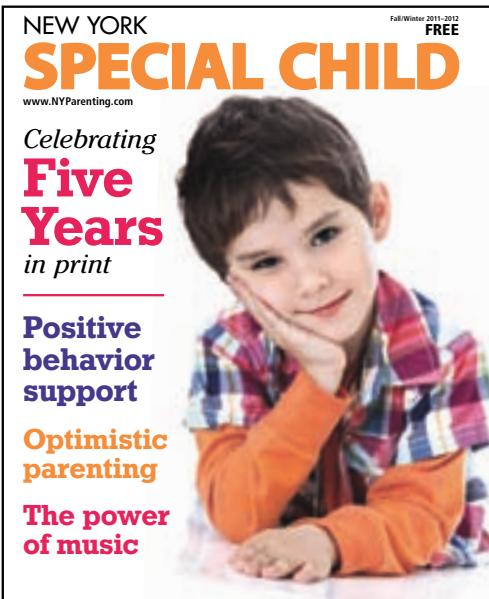
Upcoming topic: Tips to help approach your teen about safety issues concerning sexual activity (i.e. how to say no, protection, personal choice, and safety).

Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to [myrnahaskell@gmail.com](mailto:myrnahaskell@gmail.com), or visit [www.myrnahaskell.com](http://www.myrnahaskell.com).

*Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist and author of the newly released book, "Lions and Tigers and Teens: Expert advice and support for the conscientious parent just like you," available at Amazon.com and [www.unlimitedpublishing.com/haskell/](http://www.unlimitedpublishing.com/haskell/). For details, visit [www.myrnahaskell.com](http://www.myrnahaskell.com).*

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## FAMILY HEALTH

**DR. PRAMOD NARULA, MD**  
Chairman of Pediatrics  
New York Methodist Hospital

# Watch for frostbite!

*My children simply cannot get enough winter — the more snow there is on the ground, the more they want to go out and play. But I'm very concerned about the health risks posed by exposure to the cold weather. What conditions should I be especially watchful for, and what can I do to keep my children safe?*

**Y**ou're right to be wary about the hazards of playing in the cold. Winter is not just cold and flu season; it's also the season of frostbite, which — snowball fights notwithstanding — is the biggest threat that your children will face in the months ahead.

Frostbite occurs when the skin is exposed to extremely cold temperatures. Children are particularly susceptible to the condition. Unfortunately, parents often mistake the early indications of frostbite for the simple discomfort associated with exposure to the cold. Frostbite can happen quickly, and it doesn't go away when you come inside to warm up; rather, it can cause permanent damage to the skin and nerves. In the most severe cases, amputation of the affected area is the only treatment.

Dressing appropriately for outdoor activity is the best way to avoid frostbite altogether. Make sure your children wear warm coats that are snug at the wrist. They should also wear hats, mittens, and a scarf or (in very cold weather) knit mask to cover their faces and mouths. For activities in which your children are exposed to snow, waterproof parkas or waterproof jackets are crucial, and layering several light fabrics such as wool, silk, or polypropylene will retain more body heat than one heavy layer of cotton. Finally, do not ignore shivering, an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Persistent shivering is the body's way of saying that it's time to take a break from wintry weather.

Frostbite begins with extreme redness, followed by a loss of feeling and color in the affected area. It appears most commonly on the extremities — the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Make sure your children recognize the signs of



frostbite, and know to get out of the cold and protect any exposed skin at the first signs of redness or pain. Once they are inside, you should seek medical care immediately. If medical attention is not readily available, anyone — young or old — with frostbite should stay in a warm room and immerse the frostbitten area in warm water. If warm water isn't available, the affected body part can also be warmed against unexposed skin (such as under the armpits).

Almost as important as providing the correct treatment for frostbite is avoiding the "traditional" home remedies that, in fact, do far more

harm than good. Heating pads, heat lamps, or the heat of stoves, fireplaces, or radiators for warming should be avoided; the affected skin is most likely numb, and can be easily burned by the heat. And, no matter what you have heard, under no circumstances should you massage or rub snow over the exposed skin; it will only cause additional damage.

There's no reason for the cold to ruin your children's winter of fun — with awareness, as well as the proper preparation and attire, your kids can have an active winter outdoors while keeping the frostbite at bay.

BROOKLYN

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## PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

SHARON C. PETERS, MA

# Helping kids give instead of receive



### Dear Parents,

I am sure that many New Yorkers have felt your concern for their neighbors during the holidays, myself included. I think it is very possible to involve children in being part of their broader communities. Seven and 9 year olds usually know a lot about community and are often interested in learning more. Many younger children are also eager to help others in need.

I sometimes suggest that families conduct a meeting in which to talk through important topics to help involve children in the decision-making process. If this idea appeals to your family, here are a few guidelines that can help the discussion go well.

To increase efficiency, one parent ideally should lead the meeting and explain why everyone is getting together to talk. (In this case, the hurricane and thoughts about what your family can do to help.)

I often suggest that the youngest

child speaks first and the oldest last. The leader explains that during the talk no one can interrupt or poke fun at anyone else's thoughts. (Even a little one's turn that might be off topic should be treated respectfully.) These ideas can help keep things fair and on track.

Depending on how much your family has taken time to process the storm and its aftermath, some possibilities for this meeting might be: "What do you think happened during and right after Sandy?" "What do you think is going on for people now?" "Do you have an idea of what our family has done or could do to help?"

Listening to your children's thoughts and proposals first can make it easier for them to hear yours — the decision to donate a portion of traditional holiday expenses to relief efforts. More discussion can follow, of course, but if the meeting goes well, everyone will have had the opportunity to offer their input and follow-up meetings can take place as well.

A gathering like this might not work for your family, but there are many ways to involve children in the larger community right now without it.

### Dear Sharon,

With so many of our neighbors all around New York reeling from the effects of Hurricane Sandy, my husband and I were talking last night about how we can help others during this time. Do you have any suggestions as to how we can tell our two kids, ages 7 and 9, of our decision to pare down our own holiday cheer, gift giving, and celebrations, and instead find a way to share what we have with families less fortunate and less stable? What's the best way to make them understand or feel that they are part of the decision process, too? It's important for us to have our kids raised with the understanding and commitment to being a part of community.

Finding opportunities for your family to contribute money or "people power" now can help. I am sure that many New Yorkers have stories of children doing things to assist Sandy victims.

I know of young ones who have decided to donate some of their toys, sent homemade cards to shelter residents, held bake and lemonade sales to raise relief funds, gathered debris in parks, and helped out with neighborhood cooking projects.

As relief work is ongoing and services such a broad geographic area, there are many places to offer assistance, even if you don't live in a highly affected zone. An inquiry at your church, synagogue, school, park, or library is a place to start if an Internet search doesn't provide enough ideas.

Ideally, parents model generosity and care for others on an ongoing basis, but events like Sandy give everyone in a family the opportunity to put their values into practice.

Doing so can bring everyone closer to their community and to each other. Thanks for your wonderful question and happy holidays!

**Sharon C. Peters is a mother and director of Parents Helping Parents, 669 President St., Brooklyn (718) 638-9444, [www.PHPonline.org](http://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 [Family@cnglocal.com](mailto:Family@cnglocal.com).

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THE MAGIC BEGINS NOVEMBER 16



## THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

A PLAY ABOUT HOW TOYS BECOME REAL

Daryl Roth & theatrworks<sup>USA</sup> present

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT  
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY KEVIN DEL AGUILA  
BASED ON THE BOOK BY MARGERY WILLIAMS

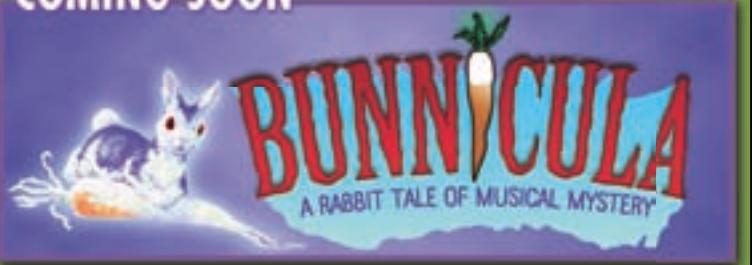


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GREAT FOR  
AGES 4 AND UP

COMING SOON



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# Calendar

DECEMBER



Photo by Rob Reynolds

## The season's classic ballet returns

**S**ugarplum fairies and mice kings leap and prance about at the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College this December when the Colonial Nutcracker comes to town.

The holiday favorite, danced to Pyotr Tchaikovsky's beautiful score, is set in wintry colonial Yorktown during the Revolutionary War. "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" and

"Waltz of the Snowflakes," featuring a red-coated mouse army and an enchanted nutcracker prince, will delight children 4 to 10 years old, along with their parents.

"The Colonial Nutcracker," on Dec. 16 at 2 pm. Tickets are \$10.

*Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College [2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kentilworth Place in Midwood; (718) 951-4500; [www.brooklyncenteronline.org](http://www.brooklyncenteronline.org)].*

# Calendar

## 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!

Send your listing request to brooklyncalendar@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!

## THURS, NOV. 29

**Roli Poli Guacamole:** Gumbo, 493 Atlantic Ave. between Nevins Street and Third Avenue; (718) 855-7808; 11:30 am–12:15 pm; \$25.

Drop-ins for little ones.

**Tree lightening:** Belarussian-Church, Atlantic Ave. and Bond Street; (718) 875-8993; 6 pm; Free.

The annual event will include a toy drive for those affected by Hurricane Sandy, entertainment by Roli Poli Guacamole, local children singing holiday tunes and a visit from Santa. Hosted by the Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corporation.

**Disney on Ice:** The Barclays Center, 620 Atlantic Ave. (718) 942-9587; mgutmann@brooklynnet.com; www.barclayscenter.com/events/disney-on-ice; 7 pm.

Mickey and Minnie have searched the globe for the hippest and hottest acts to perform in Disney On Ice's "Rockin Ever After," and are bringing them all to the brand-new Barclays Center in Brooklyn!

## FRI, NOV. 30

**"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out!"**: The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza; (212) 465-6741; www.thegarden.com; 5 pm; Tickets start at \$45.

DJ Lance Rock and everyone's favorite cast of colorful characters invites fans to get ready to jump, shake and shimmy on the new tour.

**Disney on Ice:** 7 pm. The Barclays Center. See Thurs, Nov. 29.

## SAT, DEC. 1

**Coffee Bark:** Prospect Park Picnic House, West Drive at Third Street; www.prospectpark.org; 7–9 am; Free.

FIDO offers goodies for dogs and owners as well as provide information of off-leash activities and issues — fun for everyone.

**Photography workshop:** Pros-



Photo by Jeff Bachner

## Ring in 2013 at Prospect Park

**W**hat better way to sweep out the old and ring in the new than to see a fantastic fireworks display and enjoy live entertainment at Grand Army Plaza on Dec. 31?

The festivities begin at 11 pm with entertainment and hot refreshments, followed by a phantasmagorical pyrotechnic display

that lights up the winter midnight sky.

Enjoy all the "oohs" and "aahs" at the 31st annual celebration presented by Borough President Markowitz and the Prospect Park Alliance.

Plan on getting there early so you can claim the best spot to watch the show, and then gawk at

the booms and bursts above. It's the most happening place in the city and it's all for free.

New Year's Eve on Dec. 31, 11 pm at Grand Army Plaza.

*Prospect Park at Grand Army Plaza, Union St. between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West, in Park Slope; www.prospectpark.org/calendar/event/1471647.*

pect Park Zoo, 450 Flatbush Ave. at Ocean Avenue; (718) 399-7339; www.prospectparkzoo.com; 10–11:30 am; \$35 (\$40 non-members; \$15 additional child or adult).

Children 6 to 12 years old with an adult tour the zoo and take pictures. Digital camera required.

**Survival workshop:** Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 11 am; Free.

How tough are you? Can you survive in the woods? Urban Park Rangers will lead you in this workshop on how to be prepared for any situation.

**Disney on Ice:** 11 am. The Barclays Center. See Thurs, Nov. 29.

**"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out!"**: 11 am, 2 and 5 pm. The Theater at Madison Square Garden. See Friday, Nov. 30.

**St. Nicholas Day:** Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, 5816 Clarendon Rd. at Ralph Avenue; (718) 629-5400; www.nycgovparks.org; Noon–4 pm; \$5 (\$3 children under 10).

Meet St. Nicholas, hear a reading of "The Baker's Dozen," and listen to balladeer Linda Russell.

## SUN, DEC. 2

**Music for Aardvarks:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 11 am;

\$15, babies under 2 free.

David Weinstone entertains with the electro-funk of Big Boom Whacker and the whimsical blues of the "Belly Button Song," performed live.

**Disney on Ice:** 11 am. The Barclays Center. See Thurs, Nov. 29.

**"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out!"**: 11 am, 2 and 5 pm. The Theater at Madison Square Garden. See Friday, Nov. 30.

**Step into Chanukah:** Hannah Senesh Community Day School, 342 Smith St. between First and Second places; (718) 858-8663; 1–4 pm; \$5.

Step into invites families to explore

*Continued on page 66*

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holiday celebrations with art, music, hands-on activities, food and stories. Recommended for children 2 years and older.

**A Merry Joyful Noise:** St. Charles Borromeo Church, 21 Sidney Pl. at Joralemon Street; (718) 624-3614; theater2020@gmail.com; www.theater2020.com; 3 pm; \$20.

Holiday music presented by the Brooklyn Heights professional theater company with vocals by RPM.

## MON, DEC. 3

**Roadmap to College Admissions:** The Princeton Review, 1305 Kings Hwy. between E. 13th and E. 14th streets; (800) 273-8439; www.princetonreview.com; 7 pm; Free.

An admissions expert will advise students and parents on the college admissions process including topics such as admissions factors, selectivity, college searching, standardized tests, and timelines. Registration required.

## THURS, DEC. 6

**"A Christmas Carol":** Robert Acito Park House, Court and President streets; www.brownpapertickets.com; 7 pm; Free (donation requested).

The classic Dickens tale will be performed in a radio style production. Reserve seats in advance.

## FRI, DEC. 7

**Blooming babies:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am to 12:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Good night sleepy bear is suitable for children 18 months to 2 and 1/2 years and teaches the little ones about the science of hibernation.

**"A Christmas Carol":** 8:30 pm. Robert Acito Park House. See Thursday, Dec. 6.

## SAT, DEC. 8

**Junior keepers:** Prospect Park Zoo, 450 Flatbush Ave. at Ocean Avenue; (718) 399-7339; www.prospectparkzoo.com; 10-11:30 am; \$35 (\$40 non-members; \$15 additional child or adult).

Children 8 to 10 years old learn how keepers create stimulating toys for the animals. Junior keepers work with senior keepers and create holiday enrichment for the zoo's residents.

**Blooming babies:** 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Friday, Dec. 7.

**Seal watch:** Steeplechase Pier, W. 19th St. and the Boardwalk; (718) 421-



## Holiday celebration in Flatbush

**H**ave you been naughty or nice? Only St. Nicholas knows for sure. Little children get the chance to visit with him and sign in the "nice" book, when he comes for his annual stay at the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum on Dec. 1.

**C**hildren listen to the traditional story of "The Baker's Dozen," hear songs sung by balladeer Linda Russell, and try their hand at making holiday crafts like pomander balls and natural bird feeders. Enjoy hot apple cider, holiday food, and

traditional Dutch cookies, while decorating your own Dutch shoe or "klompen" to fill with treats, make a do-it-yourself snow globe, or tree ornament to take home. Finish up the day with a tree lighting ceremony at dusk.

St. Nicholas Day at the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum on Dec. 1, from noon to 4 pm. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children 10 years old and younger.

*Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum /5816 Clarendon Rd. at Ralph Avenue in Flatbush, (718) 629-5400, www.wyckoffassociation.org.*

2021; 1 pm; Free.

The rangers lead naturalists to the best spots to view our aquatic friends.

**"A Radio Christmas Carol":** St. Charles Borromeo Church, 21 Sidney Pl. at Joralemon Street; (718) 624-3614; theater2020@gmail.com; www.theater2020.com; 2:30 pm; \$20 (suggested donation).

Complete with Foley sound effects, the cast performs the classic Christmas tale of Ebenezer Scrooge and Tiny Tim. Presented by Theate2020.

**Celebrate Chanukah:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 2:30-3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years old and younger ex-

plore the traditions of the holiday and discover how people around the world celebrate and make a craft to take home.

**"A Christmas Carol":** 5 and 7 pm. Robert Acito Park House. See Thursday, Dec. 6.

## SUN, DEC. 9

**Blooming babies:** 11:30 am-12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Friday, Dec. 7.

**Hip Tot music fest:** Littlefield, 622 Degraw St. (718) 855-3388; hiptotmusicfest@gmail.com; www.hiptot.com; 2 pm; \$8, kids \$12, adults \$35, family pass.

Jeremy Plays Guitar is the official band of Rock-uation, Inc. where music is not

only educational, it ROCKS! And he is ready to rock the Hip Tot Music Fest stage for December.

**Celebrate Chanukah:** 2:30-3:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 8.

**"Circo Comedia":** Kingsborough Community College, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org; 3 pm; \$12.

Side-splitting comedy and daredevil stunts. Children can meet with the members in the lobby after the show.

## FRI, DEC. 14

**"A Christmas Carol":** 7 pm. Robert Acito Park House. See Thursday, Dec. 6.

## SAT, DEC. 15

**Rockin' in a Winter Wonderland:** Play Greenpoint, 33 Nassau Ave. at Bedford Avenue; (718) 387-2071; www.playspacenyc.com; 4-6 pm; \$10.

Paulie Z provides the music you provide the dance. All proceeds benefit the Rock Asylum Foundation.

**"A Christmas Carol":** 5 and 7 pm. Robert Acito Park House. See Thursday, Dec. 6.

**Astronomy:** Prospect Park Picnic House, West Drive at Third Street; www.prospectpark.org; 6 pm; Free.

Use a telescope and view the night sky.

## Christmas in the Caribbean:

Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 8 pm; \$36-\$45.

The University Singers from the University of the West Indies perform a variety of classical choral works, American Negro Spirituals and Jazz and Gospel arrangements.

## SUN, DEC. 16

**Survival workshop:** Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; 11 am; Free.

How tough are you? Can you survive in the woods? Urban Park Rangers will lead you in this workshop on how to be prepared for any situation.

**"The Colonial Nutcracker":** Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 2 pm; \$10.

The classic ballet comes to town. Recommended for children 4 years old and older.

# Calendar

**"A Christmas Carol":** 5 pm. Robert Acito Park House. See Thursday, Dec. 6.

## MON, DEC. 17

**"The Sound of Music":** Cobble Hill Cinema, 265 Court St. between Butler and Douglass streets; (718) 596-9113; www.cobblehilltheatre.com; 4 pm; \$7.

Children of all ages enjoy this classic film starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer. Recommended for children of all ages.

## THURS, DEC. 20

**Holiday circus:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 4:30–5 and 5:30–6 pm; Free with museum admission.

Clowns and magic come to the museum.

**Mr. and Mrs. Claus:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 6:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

The merry elf and his missus reads a special holiday story to the children. Seating is first come first, seated, so come early. (WORD Up event).

## FRI, DEC. 21

**Winter solstice:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years old and younger celebrate the first day of winter and make a special craft.

## SAT, DEC. 22

**Colonial games:** Fort Greene Park Visitor Center, enter park at Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park; (718) 722-3218; 1 pm; Free.

Children learn about life before electricity.

**Celebrate Christmas:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 2:30–3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years old and younger learn about the traditions of the holiday and how different people celebrate, then they make an ornament to take home.

**"The Snow Maiden":** Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenter-online.org; 6 pm; \$35-\$50.

The Russian classic where a young girl is transformed by Grandfather Frost into the beautiful Snow Maiden. Performed



Photo by Andie Lefort

## Join the Circo

**H**old your breath and hang onto your seats, because the Circo Comedia is performing as part of On Stage at Kingsborough on Dec. 9.

The show, recommended for children ages 3 and older, is full of unpredictable thrills, sidesplitting comedy, and daredevil stunts. The duo of Jean Saucier and Patrick Cote juggle, pedal,

and perform death-defying, dizzying stunts.

Audience members have the chance to chat with the performers after the performance.

Tickets are \$12 for the 3 pm hit show on Dec. 9.

*Kingsborough Community College [2001 Oriental Blvd. in Manhattan Beach; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org].*

in Russian with English subtitles. Recommended for children 6 years old and up.

## SUN, DEC. 23

**Celebrate Christmas:** 2:30–3:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 22.

## MON, DEC. 24

**Celebrate Christmas:** 11:30 and

2:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 22.

## WED, DEC. 26

**Celebrate Kwanzaa:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years old and younger

learn about this African inspired holiday and its traditions, then make a craft.

## THURS, DEC. 27

**Celebrate Kwanzaa:** 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Wednesday, Dec. 26.

## FRI, DEC. 28

**Celebrate Kwanzaa:** 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Wednesday, Dec. 26.

## SAT, DEC. 29

**Celebrate Kwanzaa:** 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Wednesday, Dec. 26.

## SUN, DEC. 30

**3,21 Happy New Year:** Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years old and younger add a wish to the museum's New Year's Wish Mural, decorate a party hat and noisemaker.

**Celebrate Kwanzaa:** 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Wednesday, Dec. 26.

## MON, DEC. 31

**Fireworks:** Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; 11 pm–12:30 am; Free.

Come on down to the star-studded, annual celebration of New Year's eve with great entertainment, hot refreshments and fantastic firework display.

## LONG-RUNNING

**Singalong:** The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave. between Hicks and Henry streets; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Tuesdays, 11:00, \$2.50.

Come clap, dance, sing or just watch!

**George Balanchine's "The Nutcracker":** Lincoln Center; (212) 875-5374; Now – Dec. 30; \$29 and up.

This acclaimed holiday tradition features a one-ton Christmas tree that grows from 12 to 40 feet, an onstage snowstorm, and hundreds of elaborate costumes, as well as more than 60 children from the School of American Ballet, the official school of New York City Ballet.

**Global shoes:** Brooklyn Children's

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Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; [www.brooklynkids.org](http://www.brooklynkids.org); Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–5 pm, Now – Sun, March 10, 2013; \$7.50 (Free for members and children under 1).

The exhibit, which incorporates cultural artifacts from the museum's collection and a variety of hands-on, feet-on activities, encourages children and their families to explore global cultures within the context of fantasy shoe store and factory. Suitable for children 5 to 12 years old.

**Fair:** Soho, 100 Varick St. (914) 295-4794; [varicksflea@gmail.com](mailto:varicksflea@gmail.com); [www.meetup.com/varicks/](http://www.meetup.com/varicks/); Daily, 10 am–4 pm; Now – Sat, Dec. 29; \$55/Space.

Enjoy shopping and schmoozing in the all day market.

#### **Winged Tapestries Moths at Large:**

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; \$24 (\$14 children, \$18 seniors and students).

This exhibition features 34 striking and dramatic images of moths, displaying the arresting beauty and surprising diversity of moths from Ottawa-based photographer Jim des Rivières. Runs through September 2013.

**Creatures of Light:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; [awang@amnh.org](mailto:awang@amnh.org); [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Now – Sun, Jan. 6, 2013; \$24, \$14 children, \$18 seniors and students.

This interactive exhibit explores organisms that produce light, from the flickering fireflies to alien deep-sea fishes.

#### **The Butterfly Conservatory:**

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; [awang@amnh.org](mailto:awang@amnh.org); [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; \$24, \$14 children, \$18 seniors and students.

The annual exhibition, "Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter" returns and celebrates its 15th year.

**Ice Skating:** Aviator Sports and Events Center, 3159 Flatbush Ave. (718) 758-7500; Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11 am–4 pm, Wednesdays, 11 am–4 pm, Fridays, 11 am–4:20 pm and 7 TO 11 pm, Saturdays, Noon–5:30 pm and 6–11 pm, Sundays, Noon–3 pm and 3:30–6:30 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 31; \$9 (\$7 children) plus \$5 skate rental fee.

Bring your own skates or rent a pair.

**Rock Climbing:** Aviator Sports and Events Center, 3159 Flatbush Ave. (718) 758-7500; Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11 am–4 pm, Wednesdays, 11 am–4 pm, Fridays, 11 am–4:20 pm and 7 TO 11 pm, Saturdays, Noon–5:30 pm and 6–11 pm, Sundays, Noon–3 pm



Photo by Joshua Miller

## A special Chanukah program

**B**ring your dreidel and Hanukkah gelt and come on down to the Museum of Jewish Heritage on Dec. 2 to enjoy a special holiday program of "Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins."

The dynamic "Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins" is the story of the miracle of lights set to lively klezmer music. The entertaining and international duo Uri Sharlin and Maya Blank invite the audience to participate in the storytelling of how Hershel outwits

the goblins that haunt the old synagogue. Following the performance children 3 to 10 years old create holiday-inspired crafts.

Tickets are \$10 and \$7 for children 10 years old and younger. Members pay \$7 and \$5. The performances are at 10:30 am for infants to 3 year olds, and 2 pm for kids 3 to 10.

*Museum of Jewish Heritage [Edmond J. Safra Plaza, 36 Battery Pl. in Lower Manhattan, (646) 437-4202; [www.mjhnyc.org](http://www.mjhnyc.org).]*

and 3:30–6:30 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 31; \$10 for two climbs.

Challenge and adventure just one rock wall at a time. The wall is the tallest indoor wall in the borough standing at 35 feet. Test your endurance if you dare. Suitable for children 5 years and older.

**Sky-jump:** Aviator Sports and Events Center, 3159 Flatbush Ave. (718) 758-7500; Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11 am–4 pm, Wednesdays, 11 am–4 pm, Fridays, 11 am–4:20 pm and 7 TO 11 pm, Saturdays, Noon–5:30 pm and 6–11 pm, Sundays, Noon–3 pm

and 6–11 pm, Sundays, Noon–3 pm and 3:30–6:30 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 31; \$6 for a 3 minute jump.

A 12-foot bungee trampoline located on the main street level. Must weight between 40 and 150 pounds.

**Homework Help:** Gerritsen Beach Public Library, 2808 Gerritsen Ave. between Bartlett Place and Gotham Avenue; (718) 368-1435; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Tuesdays, 3–6 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 25; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Homework help:** Kings Highway Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, 2115 Ocean Ave. between Kings Highway and Quentin Road; (718) 339-2783; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3–5 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 27; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Teen time:** Dyker Public Library, 8202 13th Ave. between 82nd and 83rd streets; (718) 748-6261; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Tuesdays, 3–4 pm, Now – Tues, Nov. 27; Free.

Children 13 to 18 years old enjoy books, games and music along with RIF book club.

**Teen game time:** Paerdegat Branch Library, 850 E. 59th St. at Flatlands Avenue; (718) 241-3994; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Tuesdays, 3–4 pm, Now – Tues, Jan. 8, 2013; Free.

Children 13-18 years old play video games.

**Homework help:** Brighton Beach Public Library, 16 Brighton First Rd. at Brightwater Court; (718) 946-2917; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Tuesdays, 4–6 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 25; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Homework help:** Brooklyn Public Library's Central branch, Flatbush Ave. at Eastern Parkway in Grand Army Plaza; (718) 230-2100; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch\\_library\\_detail.jsp?branchpageid=265](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=265); Mondays, 4:30–6:30 pm, Tuesdays, 4:30–7:30 pm, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 4–6 pm, Saturdays, 11 am–1 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 29; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Homework help:** Red Hook Public Library, 7 Wolcott St. between Richards and Dwight streets; (718) 935-0203; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Tuesdays, 5:30–7 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 25; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Toddler time:** Dyker Public Library, 8202 13th Ave. between 82nd and 83rd streets; (718) 748-6261; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Wednesdays, 10:15 and 11:15 am, Now – Wed, Nov. 28; Free.

Children birth to 5 years old hear a read-a-loud story, fingerplay and meet other children. Availability first come first served.

**Storytime:** The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave. between Hicks and Henry streets; (718) 923-9710; [themoxiespot.com](http://themoxiespot.com); Mondays, Wednesdays and Fri-

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days, Noon, \$2.50.

Come hear a few stories with a simple craft to go with it.

**Homework help:** Bedford Public Library, 496 Franklin Ave. at Fulton Street; (718) 623-0012; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Wednesdays, 4–7 pm, Now – Wed, Dec. 26; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Homework help:** Carroll Gardens Public Library, 396 Clinton St. at Union Street; (718) 596-6972; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Wednesdays, 4–6 pm, Now – Wed, Dec. 26; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Dance-around:** The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave. between Hicks and Henry streets; (718) 923-9710; [themoxiespot.com](http://themoxiespot.com); Thursdays, 11, \$2.50.

For children.

**Homework help:** Flatlands Public Library, 2065 Flatbush Ave. at Avenue P; (718) 253-4409; [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org); Thursdays, 5–7 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 27; Free.

Available for children through eighth grade. Call to confirm.

**Movie night:** The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave. between Hicks and Henry streets; (718) 923-9710; [themoxiespot.com](http://themoxiespot.com); Fridays, 6:15, Free!

Shorts and a full length family appropriate movie.

**Story time with Jordan:** powerHouse Arena, 37 Main St. at Water Street; (718) 666-3049; [www.powerhousearena.com](http://www.powerhousearena.com); Fridays, 11:30 am–noon, Now – Fri, Dec. 21; Free.

Pre-schoolers listen to stories from favorite books.

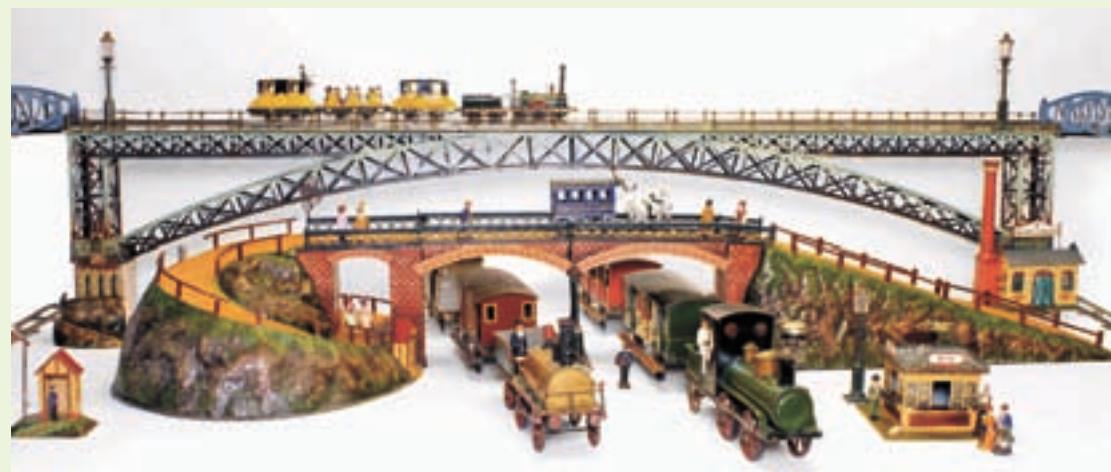
**Quilt show:** Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; [www.prospectpark.org](http://www.prospectpark.org); Saturdays and Sundays, Noon–4 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 20, 2013; \$3.

The 21st annual show features theme of Cool—whether it's a cold wintery science, and cool colors.

**"Hansel & Gretel":** Puppetworks, 338 Sixth Ave. at Fourth Street; (718) 965-3391; [www.puppetworks.org](http://www.puppetworks.org); Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 and 2:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 16; \$9 (\$8 children; \$7 groups of 20 or more).

The Brothers Grimm classic comes to life and music with songs by Humperdinck and adapted for marionettes by Nicolas Coppola, suggested for children 4 years old and up.

**Nature's helpers:** Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; [www.prospectpark.org/audubon](http://www.prospectpark.org/audubon); Saturdays and Sundays, 2–3 pm, Now –



## Terrific trains on display

**C**ho choo — all aboard! Come see the magnificent model train display on view at the New York Historical Society, now through Jan. 6, 2013.

**Holiday Express: Toys and Trains** from the Jerni Collection is a must-see for any model train or train buff.

Sun, Dec. 30; Free.  
help keep the park and the waterways clean and enjoy the day.

**Tasks and crafts from the past:** Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; [www.prospectpark.org](http://www.prospectpark.org); Saturdays and Sundays, 2:30–3:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 23; Free.

Try your hand at needlepoint, play old fashioned games and more.

**Sundays@Senesh:** Hannah Senesh Community Day School, 342 Smith St. between First and Second place; (718) 858-8663; Sundays, 9 am–noon, Now – Sun, March 17, 2013; \$15.

For newborns to preschoolers, includes open play in gym, guided play in music and movement, led by a early childhood instructor.

**Winter workshops:** Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; [www.bbg.org](http://www.bbg.org); Sunday, Dec. 2, 2 pm; Sunday, Jan. 6, 10 am; Sunday, Feb. 3, 1 pm; Monday, Feb. 18, 10 am; Tuesday, Feb. 19, 10 am; Wednesday, Feb. 20, 10 am; Thursday, Feb. 21, 10 am; Friday, Feb. 22, 10 am; Free with garden admission.

New series of discovery programs for children. Hands-on discovery for children of all ages. Activities are indoors.

The beautifully created miniatures artfully depict train stations, sheds, bridges, and tunnels true to scale. Dioramas are complete with Ferris wheels, carousels, and toy figurines in colorful 19th-century dress.

Admission to the Society is \$15; children 5 to 13 years old, \$5. Daily

now through Jan. 6, 2013. The society is open Tuesdays through Fridays from 9 am to 3 pm, and on Saturdays from 10 am to 1 pm. Closed Sunday and Monday.

*The New York Historical Society  
170 Central Park West at 77th Street  
(212) 873-3400; [www.nyhistory.org](http://www.nyhistory.org).*

28, 12 pm; Sunday, May 19, 12 pm; Sunday, June 16, 12 pm; \$10 (Parents free).

Freestyle Repertory Theatre is bringing improv to a new level and adding children to the mix. Groups of teens challenge each other to create scenes on the spot. Come with your children and have as much fun as they do.

**Holiday circus:** Millennium Theatre, 1029 Brighton Beach Ave. at Brighton 11th Street; (718) 615-1500; [www.holidaycircus.com](http://www.holidaycircus.com); Friday, Dec. 21, 7 pm; Saturday, Dec. 22, 3 pm; Sunday, Dec. 23, 3 pm; Monday, Dec. 24, 3 pm; Tuesday, Dec. 25, 3 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 26, 3 pm; Thursday, Dec. 27, 3 pm; Friday, Dec. 28, 3 pm; Saturday, Dec. 29, 3 pm; Sunday, Dec. 30, 3 pm; \$35–\$55.

Hosted by the Jolly old elf himself, the production features illusionist Brad Ross, canine trainer Irina Markova, the Castle Performing Bears and the clowns Alex Barney and Bill Murray.

**Needlecrafting:** Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; [www.prospectpark.org](http://www.prospectpark.org); Daily, 1–3 pm, Wed, Dec. 26 – Tues, Jan. 1, 2013; Free.

Before video games, movies and TV there were indoor projects that helped pass the long winter nights. Try your hand at needlepoint.

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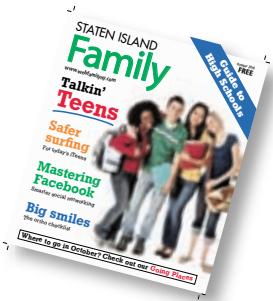
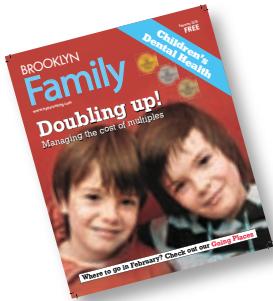
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# *It figures*

BY CYNTHIA WASHAM

## Season's snippets



**16** Percent of spending on holiday decorations that goes for inflatable Santas, penguins, and polar bears.

**1** Percent of Americans who leave their holiday decorations up all year.



**83** Percent of Americans likely to watch a Christmas movie during the holiday season.

**66** Percent likely to attend a religious service.

**23** Percent of adults who named "Silent Night" as their favorite Christmas song.

**6** Percent who named "The Chipmunk Song."

**More than 1 million** Number of books Barnes & Noble collected and donated to needy children during the 2010 holiday season.

**\$45.99** Cost of a Nerf N-Strike Stampede ECS soft-dart gun, ranked 2011's hottest Christmas gift by The Perfect Toys website.

**147** Minutes the average adult spends wrapping Christmas presents.

**\$2,255,750,000**

Approximate amount Americans spend each Christmas season on photos of their children visiting a shopping-mall Santa.

**10** Percent of American families who celebrate another December holiday along with Christmas, such as Hanukkah or Kwanzaa.



**60** Percent of families who open gifts on Christmas morning.

**27** Percent who open them on Christmas Eve.

Sources: Men's Health, Professional Services Close-Up, ThePerfectToys.com, Amazon.com, Squidoo.com, Uberreview.com, Facts.about.org, The Huffington Post.

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# New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

## Fit for a queen

If your little diva has been very good this year, why not give her a holiday dress fit for a queen? Queen Elizabeth I, that is.

The pleated bodice of Laura Ashley's red taffeta dress evokes none other than the British Tudor queen, fruit cake, and Christmas crackers.

With lovely details such as velvet ribbon at the waist, your little one will be the belle of the yuletide ball in this dress, which comes in sizes 2T, 3T, 6, and 6X.

*Pleated bodice with velvet ribbon toddler dress, by Laura Ashley, \$52, [www.lauraashleyusa.com](http://www.lauraashleyusa.com).*



## Keep them forever warm



Handmade gifts are often the best, especially when it comes to accessories that keep little ones warm and healthy, like the infinity scarf for children knitted by Julie Giustino for her Frayd Clothing Company on Etsy.com. Because the Massachusetts-based textile artist uses a "super soft" yarn to crochet the thick, chunky V-pattern stitch, Giustino's scarves are both stylish and practical. The scarves are available in pink or purple marble, but the designer can accommodate requests for your little fashionista's favorite hue. And don't despair, Frayd Clothing Company sells them in Mom's size, too, for \$38.

*Children's Infinity Cowl Scarf by Frayd Clothing Company, \$28, [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com).*

## Sweet read

Start a new family tradition this December with the help of Bakerella's "Cake Pops Holidays" cookbook. Bakerella, aka Angie Dudley, takes these balls of crumbled cake and frosting coated with candy melts to amazing holiday heights. And you can, too, with the help of her clear, encouraging instructions on how to form, store, decorate, display, and wrap your pops. Even small children will enjoy helping to roll the balls, but it will take a



more patient, older child to pop them on the lollipop sticks and help you transform these confections into the fantastic polar bears, ornaments, snowmen, or dreidels depicted in the gorgeous photographs.

*"Cake Pops Holidays" book, by Bakerella, \$14.95, [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com).*

## Merry mix hits high note

Santa will be filling those stockings a little faster this year with the help of Laurie Berkner's new Christmas CD. Her renditions of 15 holiday classics like "Jingle Bells," "Little Drummer Boy," and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" are joined by three original tracks, such as the lively "Candy



Cane Jane" and short-but-sweet "Christmas Lights." All are sure to win the hearts of little ones who will recognize Berkner's voice from her music videos that play on the Nick Jr. television channel. Do you hear what I hear? The sounds of an even merrier Christmas!

*A Laurie Berkner Christmas" CD, by Laurie Berkner. \$10.79, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).*

## Share the joy of 'One' story

Parents are their child's first storytellers, so why not be the best you can be with the "Little One Inch Story Box." Designed by educator-artist Steve Light, the keepsake wooden box (measuring 8-inches wide by 11.25-inches deep by 3-inches high) holds a story booklet and five hand-painted, resin characters that enable the storyteller to act out the classic Japanese folktale, "Little One Inch," about a little boy who is short on stature but long on courage as he battles his way out of the belly of the "oni," or demon. Visit [www.guidecraft.com/SteveLight](http://www.guidecraft.com/SteveLight) to watch Light show you how



it's done. For ages 4 and older.

*Little One Inch Story Box by Guidecraft, \$50, [www.cricketmag.com](http://www.cricketmag.com).*

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