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Letter from the publisher

Happy Holidays!

Time is a crazy thing. It seems like a few short years ago that I was a new mom with the tiniest human being I'd ever seen or held laying on my belly. I can recall it as clearly as if it were yesterday; how exhausted I was and yet how elated



and aware I was of the responsibility of being someone's parent.

Parenting is the most exciting thing I've ever done and the most rewarding. I have worked most of my life at one thing or another, and I have always enjoyed both my studies and my work, but being a Mom is the best. It also happily led me to this wonderful work.

Parenting also brought me to the great partners I have in this work ad-

venture. Sharon Noble, who has become more than a partner is definitely family. It was parenting her oldest son eight years ago that led her here to us, as she was reading Queens Family and called with a question. That question led to a much longer conversation, and here we are.

Cliff Luster, who as the head of our larger company and the father of little ones at the time, gave me the opportunity to put this thing in motion and so we began in 1999 to publish what would go on to become the first of the guides, Brooklyn Family.

We have a super staff of mostly Moms and some Dads, and I appreciate all of them. They are bright, dedicated and lots of fun to be around.

I want to thank them all and specifically mention the name of my personal assistant Tina Felicetti. She has a wonderful sense of humor and is fabulous to work with. I appreciate her more than I can say.

A few names I want to mention out loud are the sales team of Lori Falco (Brooklyn), Sharon Leverett (Brooklyn), Shanika Stewart (Riverdale) and Alexis Benson (Manhattan). They keep me on my toes and are a formidable group of sales professionals.

Vinny DiMiceli (Staten Island), Lisa, Courtney, Joanna, Jessecia and Shavana make up the editorial gang we rely on for great headlines, copyediting, social media, and more. Leah Mitch (the art director), On Man, Arthur, Earl, Charlotte, Mauro, Mariel, Raymond and Cheryl make up our design and production teams,

and Sylvan is our web guru, and I mean guru.

We have a great group of staff and contributing writers at New York Parenting and I thank them all as well. And thank you for the success you have given us. We now have guides in all five boroughs which makes perfect sense, because our team actually lives in all five boroughs!

It's been a great year and I have little doubt that 2014 will be the same. Wishing all of you a Happy Season and a good beginning to the New Year.

Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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From our readers

Dear Publisher,

I am writing you this letter in reference to an article that you had in the November issue of Brooklyn Family, called "The Write Stuff," by Sue Lebreton, about dysgraphia, a type of learning disability that affects a child's ability to write legibly or put his ideas on paper.

My son has dysgraphia and has had it his entire life. He is currently 19 years old. While I'm happy that people are finally seeing this as a disorder, I do not think that assistive technology is the answer. My son has said that it is not the answer, and while it may help certain kids, having to type out his homework or having to use a computer in school further made him feel different from classmates. Teachers also did not understand the problem, and told him to just write neater — not realizing his need for assistive technology and computer use.

In a perfect world, I'd say that I was the most understanding mom and un-



The *write* stuff

How to help a child with dysgraphia succeed at school

BY SUE LEBRETON

Does your child avoid homework or become distressed when that homework involves printing or writing? Does he have an awkward pencil grasp? Is his printing or handwriting difficult to decipher? Can he communicate his ideas verbally, but struggles to organize thoughts on paper? If any of this sounds familiar, your child may have a learning disability called dysgraphia.

Students with learning disabilities have normal intelligence but have difficulty with their brain's ability to receive, process, store, or analyze information.

These disabilities are usually diagnosed after children enter school — when parents and teachers see the gap between affected children and their peers. If not addressed, this gap increases over the years as learning becomes more complex. The sooner children are identified and receive help, the better they do in school and in their social life.

There are three distinct types of dysgraphia: motor, spatial, and processing. Children can have one or more of these types of dysgraphia. Helen Painter, occupational therapist and author of "Dysgraphia: Your Essential Guide," says that it is crucial to determine which form of dys-

graphia your child has so you can choose the appropriate treatment and accommodations.

Motor dysgraphia is the easiest to recognize, as it is when a child struggles due to poor motor skills, such as a poor pencil grasp. Often, a child will be screened and will begin working on those fine motor skills with an occupational therapist. Painter suggests that the motor issue (if it occurs as the only form of the disability) can be almost fixed in a month or two. If issues continue, she says parents should have their child seen by a medical doctor or a psychologist, the professionals who are qualified to assess spatial dysgraphia and

Signs of dysgraphia

Top-10 signs of dysgraphia (ages 4-6)

- Trying when writing due to awkward pencil grasp
- Difficulty learning the alphabet and identifying letter sounds to the letter.
- Difficulty thinking of words to write.
- Poor comprehension of what is written.
- Self-esteem slipping further.

Top-10 signs of dysgraphia in teens and adults

- Missing print and cursive styles of writing
- Poor pencil control for curved letters
- Frustration and shutting down behaviors
- Self-esteem slipping, feelings of being stupid
- Poor organization of writing ideas in general
- Difficulty organizing what has already been written down
- Weak avoidance

Top-10 signs of dysgraphia (ages 7-12)

- Taking huge amount of time to work completion
- Decreased comprehension when writing requirement increases
- Difficulty with grammar and spelling
- Poor spacing between words
- Poor placement of letters and words on the line

Source: "Dysgraphia: Your Essential Guide," by Helen Painter

processing dysgraphia, there is a missing link between working memory and the muscle movements required to do the printing or writing. People with this form say they cannot see the letters or words in their "mind's eye." Spatial dysgraphia occurs when the person has difficulty understanding what the eyes are seeing. People with spatial dysgraphia struggle to see how objects are positioned relative to each other and how things are being they struggle today," says Painter.

Unfortunately, both spatial and processing dysgraphia remain with children throughout their lives, so a physician or psychologist performs testing so that your child can get the appropriate support.

"It will help your child develop sound study habits and realize this is a condition that can be worked with, and it is not something that needs to be disabling. Today's children are fortunate to be able to benefit from technology, compared

to kids in the past who could only have dreamed of such help," says Painter. Despite the availability of a wide array of technology, Painter has noticed that both parents and educators are hesitant to use the technology, because they fear that children will not learn the skills if they use this crutch. Her practical experience disproves this. "Anybody can succeed if they are given the right tools, linking tools. There is no excuse for not helping these kids today," says Painter.

If you suspect your child may have issues with dysgraphia, have a physician or psychologist perform testing so that your child can get the appropriate support.

Sue Lebreton's son *was finally diagnosed with dysgraphia after many years spent focusing on motor skills. He has both motor and processing dysgraphia and has become a happy, more engaged student with the help of technology.*

derstood that he had a disability, but that was not the case. I used to nag him to just write neater as well. I also used to tell him what to write using assistive technology, and he never truly felt that the work was his own.

He had all kinds of therapy and that helped somewhat, but what really helped was time, because eventually

he learned how to compensate in his own way. Through time, maturity, and his hand muscles getting stronger, he improved. Also, video games were actually the best therapy he had. While assistive technology might help some, it is definitely not the entire answer to the problem.

Stacey Allam, Brooklyn

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TOO SICK for school?

How to make the call

BY KIKI BOCHI

It's understandable that many parents might feel conflicted about what to do when their child whines, "I don't feel good." Children are constantly coming down with illnesses big and small — a runny nose, a sore throat, a tummy ache. For many parents, it can be

hard to know when a child is actually too sick for school.

The answer is not as simple as it might seem. There's a lot of pressure to make sure children have good attendance. Plus, keeping a child home from school or day care can interfere with a parent's ability to go to work that day.

The stakes can be high, and not only for your own family. The repercussions of sending a contagious child to school were illustrated in a highly publicized recent incident when a stomach virus swept through an elementary school in Florida and more than 300 stricken students had to go home in a single day. It was later determined that the children were infected with a norovirus, a highly contagious stomach bug that causes severe vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping. Special maintenance crews had to be sent in to sanitize the school in an effort to stop the spread of the bug.

The case was notable because of the number of affected children. Panicked parents had no idea what kind of illness was sweeping through their

school. But at the core of the incident was the kind of decision that happens every day, at schools across the country. Probably uncertain of what to do that day, a parent had sent a sick child to school, allowing a virus to spread through the classrooms like wildfire.

With the official flu season upon us, chances are that most parents will eventually face the question of what to do about a child who is feeling under the weather. The American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical experts advise the following:

- To protect against the flu, the first and most important thing you can do is to get a flu vaccine for yourself and your child. Vaccination is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for everyone 6 months and older.

- If your child has a fever of 100.5 and higher, keep him home. Fever is an indication that your child is fighting off some germs. Fevers can be controlled by over-the-counter medication, but you should wait until children are fever-free naturally before letting them return to school.

- If your child has diarrhea, keep him home until things get back to normal. Diarrhea can often be a sign of an infection or virus that might be contagious. While you are waiting it out, make sure your sick child stays well-hydrated.

- Vomiting is another way for the body to rid itself of the germs making it sick. Keep children home if they've vomited twice or more in the last 24 hours. Hydration is important here, too, but you should offer only a few small sips at a time.

- Mild rashes may be harmless and easily resolved, but more serious eruptions merit the review of your doctor. Rashes can be the sign of contagious conditions such as chickenpox or impetigo. Children should be kept home until they're diagnosed.

- Children with severe cough and cold symptoms should stay home. Each cough or sneeze spreads germs. Mild cold or respiratory symptoms, however, are no reason to keep children at home, so long as their nasal drainage is clear and their cough is mild.

A good measure of whether your child is well enough for school is if he seems well enough to engage in classroom activities. If kids seem too run down to get much out of being there, keep them home.

Kiki Bochi is a freelance writer and editor who specializes in family health and child development.

Healthy habits

In addition to getting your children vaccinated, encourage them to make these steps part of their everyday routine in order to prevent the spread of germs:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom and prior to eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes,

nose, and mouth. Germs are spread this way.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Teach children to cough or sneeze into the crook of their arm or elbow instead of into their hands. This prevents the spread of germs when they touch something.
- Stay away from people who are sick.



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12 ways to keep the meaning in your holiday season

BY DENISE YEARIAN

In the midst of holiday hooplas, children often lose sight of the significance of the season. Taking a spin off the “Twelve Days of Christmas” song, the following is a list of a dozen ways to create a more meaningful holiday celebration.

1. Grassroots giving. One of the best ways to make your holiday more meaningful is to adopt a family from a local charity. When you call, ask for a family with children your own kids’ ages. Then, if you normally give your child five gifts, suggest giving three and let him pick out two for each needy child.

2. Aspiring ornaments. Have

each family member secretly write one non-monetary thing they want to work for, wish for, and pray for in the coming year. Then, put it in a decorative envelope or ornament and attach it to the tree. On Christmas morning share it with the other family members and discuss ways everyone can help that person fulfill his goal.

3. Go green. Reuse holiday wrapping paper to cover another gift, line a drawer, or draw on the reverse side. Christmas cards can be recycled, too. Cut them in half and use the blank side to jot down reminder notes or let your kids cut them up and make new cards for next year. Christmas trees can be

recycled as well. Take them to state parks rather than sending them to the curb for trash pick up.

4. Multicultural merriment. Every year, pick one country and find out how it celebrates the holiday season. Make mock passports that can be used year after year. Find out what the culture and traditions are like, learn a few words, and try their foods. If you have extended family members from other parts of the country, have them share insights and tell stories about their holiday celebrations.

5. Advent virtues. Make an advent calendar with character traits you want to instill in your family. Pick one virtue each day, discuss what it means, and talk about someone in history who displayed that character. Then, decide how you and your children can put that virtue into action. For example, extend kindness by raking an elderly neighbor’s leaves or shoveling snow from her driveway.

6. Family photo tree. Decorate your tree with individual photos of family members taken throughout the year. Mount images on construction paper, felt, or foam, write the date on the back, attach a ribbon, and hang it on the tree. Keep photos year after year and add more as you go to remind kids of how blessed they have been throughout their childhood. When your children are grown, pass along the pictures so they can carry on the tradition.

7. Inter-generational experiences. If grandparents have personal items they want to pass along to their grandchildren, the holidays are an opportune time. Suggest they give something that is special to them, along with the story behind it. It could be one of grandma’s old dolls, a piece of jewelry, a book, or even a photograph. If the kids are old enough, they can video record the story

More ways to a meaningful holiday

Looking for more ways to make the holiday season more meaningful?

- Befriend an elderly person at a nursing home and create a comfort care package with tissues, sox, stuffed animal, potpourri, etc.

- Visit a local children’s hospital and take balloons, gifts, or other goodwill cheer to the patients.

- Donate time and resources to a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, or food bank.

- Give staples to an animal shelter. Call and ask what they need first.

- Write a note of appreciation to someone who has helped you or your family this year.

- Give the gift of experience. Wrap up an i.o.u. or tickets to a live theater presentation, aquarium, zoo, or other venue, along with the date you plan go in the next few months.

- Make homemade gifts that cost little or nothing for family, friends, and pets.

- Create homemade ornaments using everyday household materials.

- Create a coupon book with certificates that can be redeemed at a later time — help with housework, an hour of quality time, etc.

- Discuss the meanings and symbols of the holiday season.

- Create a flag that represents what the holidays mean to you and your family.

- Interview grandparents about what Christmas was like when they were a child. Video record the session and make it a keepsake.

- Create your own family version of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” or write your own holiday poem.

- Have a pajama holiday where everyone gets a new pair and stays in their pjs all day.

- Teach a new skill to someone, such as computers for the elderly or knitting for a child.

- Spend one-on-one time with each child creating a special holiday tradition.

- Create a time capsule to represent events that have happened throughout the year. Seal and bury it for 20 or more years.

- Create an annual paper quilt that links 12 pieces (3-by-4) of construction paper with scenes depicting each month of the year. Punch holes around the sides that connect and sew it together with yarn.

- Invent a new holiday recipe.

- Donate new children’s coats to an organization such as Operation Warm (www.operationwarm.org).

- Read one holiday classic (or a chapter of one) every night leading up to Christmas.

- Have a family Christmas program where each person presents a song, poem, reading or artistic presentation. Video record and view in years to come.

Top Tips



for keepsake.

8. Mindful of military. Have your child write a letter of appreciation to someone in the military. Include a picture of your child and an e-mail address, and ask the service person to send a reply e-mail along with pictures if he has them. There are several websites that provide officers' names and care package suggestions. If your children love animals, check out Operation Military Pride's Kindness for K9's link (www.operationmilitarypride.org), where you can send dog biscuits, chew toys, and other pet items to service dogs.

9. Warm fuzzies. Families so often forget to share positive and encouraging words with one another. Have your family sit in a circle and pass a fuzzy teddy bear around. As you do so, have the person holding the bear say something he appreciates about one sitting to his right or left. This will set the tone for an uplifting celebration and teach your kids how to give strokes of encouragement to others.

10. Critter Christmas. Decorate an outdoor tree with pinecones rolled in peanut butter and birdseed, popcorn and cranberry garland, and orange and apple slices that have been attached to pipe cleaners or opened paperclips and hung on the tree's boughs. This is a way to take care of neighboring wildlife and wish them a happy holiday.

11. Family fitness. Incorporate the "Twelve Days" theme into a family fitness routine. Decide on one activity you can do together each day to stay fit — walk around the neighborhood and look at lights, jump rope to a favorite holiday song, or play a round of basketball while the pie is baking. Then make it a family New Year's resolution.

12. Family video newsletter. Each child can take turns being the anchorperson while you record, but make it more than just reading off news. Take footage from the kids' bedrooms where they are showing a favorite stuffed animal or in the yard performing a newly acquired skill. Send copies of the DVD with your holiday cards, or attach it to a holiday greeting e-mail and donate the money you save on stamps to charity.

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

Simplifying your gift giving with **APPS**

BY SUSAN FRENCH

With the holiday season in full swing, the pressure's on to find that perfect gift. Gift-giving is a skill, especially when finding presents for kids.

There are traditional gifts like toys and clothes, which can be costly, and not always what children are wishing for. Practical items like sweaters, gloves, and scarves are not fun for the youngest recipients to open. When children are the target audience, keep in mind a few essential gift-giving goals: find items that are entertaining, educational, interactive, and cost-effective.

This may sound like a tall order, but it's a cinch with apps!

Children's mobile apps fulfill all the key elements of perfect gift giving. Apps turn learning into a game. Children's apps use fun, colorful graphics to engage short attention spans. Task- and level-based apps help young children develop important skills, such as vocabulary, math, reading, and organization. Great children's apps allow the child to interact not only with the app itself, but also with the parent or teacher.

For instance, if we want to teach children organizational and time-management skills, voice-activated calendar apps are great gifts (es-

pecially for a new calendar year). They allow kids to hone organizational skills through play with colorful sticker graphics as they learn the days of the week and schedule their activities. Look for interactive features that encourage self-awareness and build self-confidence, such as recording reminder audio memos and sharing activities through social networking.

Not sure how to find the perfect app? Lucky for you, there are entire websites devoted to reviewing educational apps that can help guide you through the process in just minutes.

For a quick review, check out fun-educationalapps.com and bestapps-for-kids.org. It is the goal of these sites to provide our kids with enticing, educational apps, and they provide a place for parents and caregivers to see the app in action.

And the great thing about apps is that you can give in bulk. They make great presents for teachers to give their students, and they are a one-stop shop for grandparents' gift-giving needs. To top it all off, apps only cost a few dollars, as compared to expensive toys and planners. They also cut-down on clutter and help the environment! Plus, app-giving allows you to shop from home and avoid the holiday season's long, stressful lines.

So do yourself and your little ones a favor this holiday season — give the gift of an app!

Susan French is a kindergarten teacher, mentor, and math coach, working for the city's Department of Education for more than 20 years. She is the co-creator of the 4KidCal brand of mobile calendar apps designed specifically for children. For more information on 4KidCal, visit 4KidCal.com or write to 4kidcal@gmail.com.



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School of rock

Hit songwriter
and school
teacher team
up to create
music for kids

BY JANE BIANCHI

West Village residents Maria Christensen and Jessica Harvey make a good team. Christensen has spent the past 10 years writing pop songs, such as “Waiting for Tonight” for Jennifer Lopez and “Christmas Eve” for Celine Dion. Harvey has taught elementary school for 15 years, and is an amateur musician and songwriter. So when the two met at a songwriting seminar and hit it off, working together to create an album of children’s music felt like the perfect project.

The album’s target audience is pre-K students to third graders, and Harvey was able to try out some of the rough versions of their songs on her students before they produced the album.

“That helped us key into what kids like and what makes them dance around,” says Harvey.

One hallmark of the album is that it’s funny.

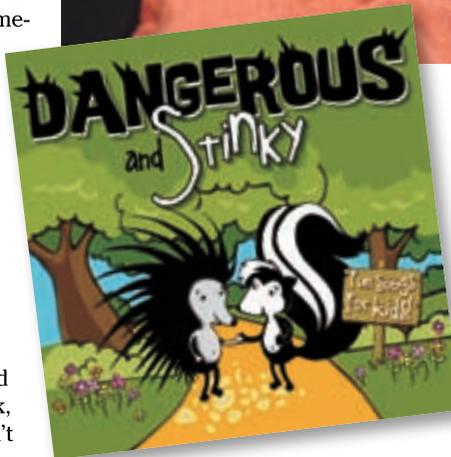
“I had been told a million times that my sense of humor was something I’d never showcased in songs,” says Christensen. “I wanted the album to be like a Bugs Bunny cartoon — something clever that would make both kids and adults laugh.”

For instance, if kids want to know what happens after they flush a toilet, they may want to listen to the song “Where Does It Go?” Poop, after all, never fails to cause the giggles.

The album, “Dangerous and Stinky” — which features rock, pop, funk, and even polka — isn’t just humorous, though; it also includes educational messages.

“We wanted every song to matter. We wanted to say something about the world. We didn’t want to write fluff,” says Christensen. For example, the song “Temper Tantrum” teaches children about self-control, “Everybody Needs a Home” is about protecting the environment, and “If You Wanna Be a Friend” reminds kids to be kind to one another.

The name came from a dream that Christensen had. She pictured a porcupine dancing with a skunk



Elementary school teacher Jessica Harvey is part of the duo behind children’s music album *Dangerous and Stinky*.

On Oct. 10, the women had a CD release party at Bleecker Street nightclub The Bitter End.

“We had a full band perform and a turnout of about 120 kids plus their parents,” says Christensen. “So far, the album is a huge success. Parents keep reaching out to tell us that their kids come home from school and play it every day. We’re very proud of the album and believe that it will go on to do big things.” Their goal is to play the album live at festivals this summer.

To buy music (\$12 for a CD, \$10 to download the album, \$0.99 per song download) or find out about upcoming performances, visit dangerousandstinky.com.

Jane Bianchi was an editor at Seventeen, Family Circle, and Good Housekeeping, and now freelance writes for a variety of publications. She lives with her husband in Brooklyn.

and thought about the theme of prejudice. Her goal was to teach kids that, even though they might be afraid of someone, deep down, we’re all the same.

The pair sought help from family and friends to put the album together. Christensen’s sister Lynda Abraham, an artist, provided the cartoon illustration for its cover.

“We’ve been working on a shoestring budget,” says Harvey. “We were lucky to have connections in the music world who helped us.”



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2020

Families who survived Hurricane Sandy

A year after
the storm,
three families
share their
firsthand
accounts

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

“Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned” took on a whole new meaning on Oct. 29 last year — her wrath and “Don’t mess with me” fury sparking fear in the hearts of otherwise brave New Yorkers.

Many were bystanders and watched with utter disbelief images of homeless victims struggling to carry on, despite their horrible circumstances — thousands of them in our very own backyards. Parents across the city wondered how to protect and provide for their families and children — some of them without access to food, heat, transportation, or power.

Each survivor has his personal story to tell.

As they still struggle getting their lives back on track, three families from New York City share their firsthand accounts with NY Parenting readers.

Moore family

Many New Yorkers seem to forget that Manhattan is surrounded by water.

When the storm hit, the normally placid Hudson turned strangely dark and menacing, with high ocean-like waves. Nobody could have imagined that the river would breach its banks and overflow into Battery Park and beyond — flooding streets, buildings, and the tunnel — like something out of a doomsday scenario.

Battery Park City resident Ron Moore and his family lived in one of those posh riverfront buildings. The vibrant community and scenic views drew them to this area a couple of years ago, until a raging river and flood waters forced them to evacuate after the storm.

“When the water came into our lobby, I knew it was time to pack up the SUV and get the heck out of Dodge,” recalled the father of three. “Suddenly, nothing mattered — only that my fam-

ily was safe and warm, and out of harm’s way.”

Luckily, they had a place to go — their home in Connecticut. But once there, they were shocked to discover they’d have to make do with a similar situation. After a month or so they returned to their city dwelling, but never felt safe there again. Now they’re back in Connecticut for good.

Brookins family

Rockaway Beach is home to the city’s only legal surfing. Sandy ravaged the area, destroying its boardwalk and covering its streets with sand.

Film director and surfer Thomas Brookins, 41, was fighting another battle — the scariest one of his life — as the storm hit his community.

“We had just purchased our home in July, at the same time I was in an ongoing battle with cancer, so moving in was very hard. We had a 1-year-old son,” he recalled.

In his condition everything was a chore, and between his film work, raising the child, and working on the new house, life was tedious and exhausting for him and his wife Jess.

When he and his wife bought the house, Thomas said they were assured their block would never flood — neighbors told them they never had any problems. So, the couple turned down flood insurance, opting instead to invest their money in renovations.

Little did they know that the ocean they loved so much would suddenly turn on them, fueled by an angry superstorm — and that they’d lose everything.

“I saw water rushing in from the Bay and we decided, for [my son] Takoda’s safety, to leave and go live in Brooklyn,” Thomas recalled. So, they stayed in a tiny apartment with a friend, his wife, two babies, and two dogs.

Thomas said a guest had been staying with them in their Rockaway Beach house, and decided to remain in the home, since he had work in the morning.

“A few hours later, we got texts from him saying the street was rushing like

rapids over the tops of cars. He heard a noise downstairs in the extra bedroom and my office and editing bay. He observed what he called, ocean waves spewing out of the floor and hitting the ceiling. From there the basement flooded in three minutes to the top of the stairs. As it reached the front door, he texted, ‘I just saw what looked like someone’s house float down the street; your basement so far is a total loss.’”

Thomas and his wife were horrified. He recalled rushing home the next morning to find something from a movie scene.

“I walked through debris and filth to the house, ran inside and stood at the top of the cold dark staircase looking at swirling water about head high, as everything was banging around. It finally went down to about a foot high that night. I stayed overnight, put on boots, and started shoveling almost three feet of sand out of the basement. Everything we had raised up off the floor was now gone — every memory, every keepsake; my office, gone. The walls were smashed and it smelled like raw sewage. It became an obsession to clean this mess.

“After that, the world slowed to a halt,” Thomas recalled.

There was no heat, and winter was destroying the house almost instantly.

Takoda and Jess stayed in Brooklyn, while for two weeks Thomas shoveled sand and carried belongings out of the house. He said their living room was soiled with dripping filth and boot prints.

Not one organization, including the Red Cross, came to his community’s aid, he says.

“No info ever came from the city, the government, or any media outlets. We kept Googling or using social media to find info on what to do.

“Gas shortages forced me to leave my wife and little guy in Brooklyn, so we could preserve gas. It was harder and harder and getting colder.”

Maybe a month or so later, food and cleaning products from church groups, the Red Cross, and citizens started flowing in, Thomas recalls.



Caroline Enz and her two sons’ basement apartment in her parents’ house was hit hard by Sandy.



(Above) Far Rockaway residents and surfers Thomas Brookins with wife Jessica and son Takoda. (Right) Thomas took this shot a day after Sandy, when his block was flooded.



“We had my good friends with the FDNY come and rewire my boiler and heater; we were excited to be warm while working, but it was a race against mold now.”

Then they learned about the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Thomas said the agency came in with six workers, looked at the heating, and told him he couldn’t keep the repaired heater because it was unsafe, since unlicensed work was done on it. So, workers yanked it out and said they’d replace it. It took months.

Thomas and his wife couldn’t stay with their friends any longer, so they headed to a local airport hotel.

“Takoda was sent away to my sister’s house in Maryland; it was so hard to be apart from him, but it was just too cold and unsafe.”

Eventually, with help from friends, neighbors, and folks from all over New York and beyond, Thomas and Jess finally cleaned out everything “to a raw shell.” Finally, clothing was being donated and they had heat, nearly four months later. “It’s passed the one-year anniversary of Sandy and we’re still rebuilding,” said Thomas. “All of my friends and neighbors had the exact same things happen. The neighborhood is still not rebuilt; roads are temporary blobs of black tar, curbs are still chunky, and there’s no sign of the boardwalk in site. I still don’t think people understand how bad it was.”

Looking back, Thomas said he found out how “humbling” Mother Nature’s power really was.

And he and his wife discovered something else: it turned out the traumatic circumstances, coupled with Sandy’s impact, had affected their son, a sweet, bright child. In fact, Thomas said he believes his

neighbors’ kids were impacted in similar ways.

Thomas says sometimes his son has nightmares and has some issues in school, since he was so isolated during the last couple of years. He tends to play independently rather than with groups.

“Takoda is now 3; he was a trooper through it all. We’re just now hearing him say things he couldn’t say before like, ‘The big storm came and trashed the street.’ Quite often we hear him playing and using the ‘big scary storm’ as the distress, which his ‘heroes’ have to remedy. His language skills are amazing; with a vocabulary that shocks us daily.”

“He’ll be fine, but we hope he pulls through it all, and the storm fades into a little corner somewhere in his memory,” Thomas adds.

Enz family

As Sandy continued its campaign of destruction — unleashing fierce winds and dislodging homes, shops, cars and boats as if they were toys — a single mom with two boys living in the basement of her parents’ home in Howard Beach was praying that the entire house wouldn’t be totaled.

Flood waters turned Caroline Enz’s backyard into a small lake and entered her apartment, rising to eight feet. She recalls how she and her sons, Justin and Matthew, scrambled to find their valuables and salvage whatever they could.

“On the night Sandy came, my oldest son Justin and I were in our rooms when we heard the water start coming in through the AC unit in his room, and then through the windows. We moved as fast as we could to get as much stuff out of the rooms, before

the water would consume the place we once called home.”

They went without heat, hot water, and electricity for more than three weeks.

The day after Sandy, Caroline said it looked like a bomb exploded in the neighborhood.

“There were boats and cars everywhere. People’s homes were gone and their stuff lined up on the street to be thrown away; whole lives gone in one night,” she remembered. “At that time neighbors became family and we all banded together to make sure no one went without a meal, or a warm blanket and coat, clothes and shoes, or just a simple hug to say, ‘Together, we are all gonna get through this!’ There wasn’t one person in my neighborhood that wasn’t affected by this storm. People drowned that night in basement apartments or trapped on rooftops — it was so unreal!”

But they helped each other get through.

Caroline said their lives were really tough that following year.

“Not easy when you’re used to having your own and have to impose, and live with other people.”

They received some money from FEMA, but not much.

“Enough to start to fix but not enough to finish, which makes building back harder,” she said, frustrated. “As for my neighbors, they’re no longer my neighbors — they’re now my family; adopted during a very hard time in all our lives. A family that bonded together.”

She added, “There are some who are still fixing and some that are not even back yet, but each day, more people are back and we get closer to

having a normal way of living.”

The family just recently moved back and has to start over, but Caroline says she’s grateful that at least they have their own beds, blankets, and pillows, and aren’t sleeping apart, on other people’s couches.

Local volunteers

The Howard Beach and Breezy Point communities struggled to make it after Sandy’s devastation, and a Middle Village, Queens, songwriter and filmmaker was sitting in front of her TV, like millions of fellow New Yorkers, watching the unbelievable images before her. Lori Martini felt lucky to have heat, power, and a bit of food in her fridge, but she also had an overwhelming sense of guilt: so many people were suddenly homeless, cold, and hungry. Compelled to give back and help those in need, she decided to get out there and take action.

As luck would have it, her friend, Forest Hills resident Frank Kenna — the chief deputy at the Queens County Clerk’s Office — reached out to Lori during the relief efforts, and they teamed up to volunteer.

“After Sandy struck, I noticed Lori kept posting about it on Facebook, and could tell that she wanted to help. So I informed her about one particular volunteer effort being headed up by the Woodhaven Residents’ Block Association, whose president is my friend, Ed Wendell. I picked her up in my minivan, along with items we both donated, and then drove to Woodhaven, where we packed the car as much as we could.

“We then drove to Howard Beach and delivered everything to state Sen. Joseph Addabbo’s office, where he had set up a distribution center,” Frank recalls.

• • •

Life will never be the same for these families, but thanks to the help of big-hearted volunteers and neighbors banding together, communities are coming back. They say every cloud has a silver lining. Well, a year after Sandy wreaked havoc on Thomas Brookins’s beloved Rockaway Beach community, it seems that new businesses, eateries, and shops have been popping up here and there. Thomas reports that surprisingly, the area has been gradually transforming into a popular vacation spot for city folk and even some celebs, who are buying waterfront homes.

Apparently they fell in love with it when they came to volunteer after Sandy.

Home alone

How to know if your child is ready

BY JAMIE LOBER

When it comes to staying home alone, parents are often unsure about how to judge whether their child is ready. It is important that you do not rush into things, even if your child appears confident in his ability to take care of himself while you are away.

“A lot of states do not have a legal age limit or cut-off point for when children can stay home alone, so it is about making sure that you know if your child is comfortable,” said Dr. Kirsten Cullen Sharma, clinical assistant professor in the department of child and adolescent psychiatry, child study center at New York University Langone.

According to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services website, “Some children are responsible, intelligent, and independent enough to be left alone at 12 or 13 years of age. Likewise, there are some teenagers who are too irresponsible or have special needs that limit their ability to be safe if they are left alone.

Parents and guardians need to make intelligent, reasoned decisions regarding these matters, asking, “What has the child done in the past to show you he is able to take on this kind of responsibility?”

Sharma says that one of the ways to help your child feel com-

fortable is by “progressively letting him stay home for longer and longer periods of time.”

Each child has different emotions regarding the potential responsibility.

“I work with a mom who is going through this with her 13-year-old daughter who is nervous to stay home, and the mom is working a plan with her where the first day she went to the gym in her apartment building for 15 minutes, the next day to the store across the street for 20 minutes,” said Sharma.

Every couple of days, you can attempt to do something and let your child stay home alone to build up his belief that he can do it. Knowing how to respond in various situations can help get him to that point.

“A big part is planning ahead, so you need to have a safety or emergency plan and make sure you know a neighbor who is home next door,” said Sharma. Be sure your child knows how to contact you, even if it just sending a text message every half hour, so they have a check-in plan.

Practice can make all the difference. Your child may feel better prepared if he has a chance to role-play an emergency situation or plan before he is allowed to stay home for a short period of time.

“Practice calling an emergency contact person if the child gets injured or a fire starts in the house,” said Sharma. You should also practice the scenario of someone knocking at the door.

“Let your child know to never open the door to strangers and always check before opening the door to anyone by looking through a peephole or window first,” said Melanie Pipkin Kozel, media relations lead at the American Red



Practice can make all the difference. Your child may feel better prepared if he has a chance to role-play an emergency situation or plan before he is allowed to stay home for a short period of time.



Cross. He should inform you or an emergency contact person if someone comes to the door.

"Make sure he knows not to go outside to check an unusual noise," said Kozel. Knowing how to turn the security alarm on and off can be helpful as well.

Some kids are able to cope with situations easier than others.

"Talk about whether your child is mature enough and whether he is nervous or scared, since that is a huge part of the picture — even if he is mature," said Sharma. Discussing fear and anxieties is beneficial.

"Have your child keep a journal of thoughts or feelings that he had while you were away and then at night, sit down and review what came up," said Sharma.

Some kids are more expressive than others.

"Some write down nothing and they are fine, and others say they were scared, because it was starting to get dark outside," said Sharma.

Depending on age, your child may be reassured knowing that you have a first aid kit that is accessible should he need it.

"He should know where to find working flashlights, a battery-operated radio, and extra batteries," said Kozel.

Set expectations. Some children are excited to stay home alone, because it builds confidence and self-esteem while others take advantage and have parties at their house or call people that they are not supposed to call.

"Your child should know exactly what he is allowed to do and that if he does something he is not supposed to do, that there is a consequence," said Sharma. "Most kids are okay, but some will push the limits, so parents have to be ready for that and have a plan in place in case that happens."

Keep safety in mind and consider child-proofing your home

before you leave.

"Knives, hand tools, power tools, razor blades, scissors, guns, ammunition and other objects that can cause injury should be stored in locked cabinets or locked storage areas," said Kozel. Potential poisons like detergents, pesticides, car-care fluids and polishes should also be out of reach. The same applies to medicines.

Give your child a run-down of what you will be doing. Let him know if he can have friends over or watch certain movies.

"He wants to know where you will be, how long you will be gone, and what time you are coming home," said Sharma.

It is hard to give a recommended age of when a child is ready to stay home alone, and mental health professionals set some loose boundaries.

"Most guidelines say that you should not leave a child who is younger than 12 home alone, but there are a couple of states that allow a child to stay home alone even at the age of 8," said Sharma. For kids who are babysitting or staying home with a younger sibling, the recommended age tends to be higher, around 15.

Offer feedback.

"Parents can review the night with their child, not just by asking how it went and saying the child did a great job, but actually sitting down and talking about what went really well, when they felt uncomfortable, and giving the child an opportunity to express any worries they have," said Sharma.

Try not to compare your child to his friends or neighbors' children. Accept him for who he is, and he will let you know when he is ready to stay home unsupervised.

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

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Dora the insufferable

This dad doesn't share his daughter's love of Dora the Explorer

BY TIM PERRINS

The inevitable has happened, and sooner than I expected. My daughter is not even 2 years old, but already she has fallen under the spell of the South or maybe Central American sorceress known as "Dora." Yes, THAT Dora — Dora the Explorer.

Despite the odds, you believe that you can avoid it. You envision yourself raising your child on a wholesome diet of old fairy tales and Woody Guthrie songs — but instead, THIS is what you get: a 22-month-old girl looking at you while pointing at the darkened TV, yelling "Doh-ahhh! DOH-AHHHH!!"

My little Hazel has Dora pajamas, Dora coloring books — let's just say Dora everything. She gets upset if you try to make her brush her teeth, but if you really want to hear her scream, well, try taking away her Dora toothbrush. She's hooked. I figured it's something she'll grow out of in a year, but we may not be so lucky. My wife teaches first grade at a public school in Brooklyn, where one of her students recently told her, "My friend in second grade sings the Dora theme song all the time!"

"Second grade?" my wife said to me when she got home. "When does it stop?"

The first year of parenting was hard because of the constant sleep deprivation, but this is a new phase — one in which your remaining sanity is ground down to nothing by the incessant droning of a little girl on the television. It's like some kind of torture devised by the CIA.

I know, it's just a silly kids' show — so why is it so maddening? For one thing, Dora is an assault on the intellect. I don't have a problem with all shows targeted at little kids. Mr. Rogers was benevolent and comforting. "Yo Gabba Gabba" is visceral and fun, even when introducing basic concepts of fairness. Dora, though, while teaching rudimentary math and decision-making skills, makes me want to rip my scalp off and pummel my own brain until I

can no longer see or hear.

Every useful lesson that Dora teaches somehow comes at the expense of logic and common sense. In one episode, Dora and her pal Boots The Monkey catch a ride with their friend Tico The Squirrel. But OH NO! There are giant pot-holes in the road, and YOU have to tell

NEW DAD

Tico every time he's about to hit one so he can steer around it. So what happens? Dora, Boots, and even Tico turn to look backwards over their shoulders at you, waiting for your instructions, while the car is hurtling down the road. Say, if you want to avoid the potholes, maybe you should start by WATCHING THE ROAD. How did this idiot squirrel even get a driver's license?

Dora gives all kinds of mixed messages. It's great that she always wears her seat belt, but shouldn't she also check with her parents before getting into somebody else's car? Especially if it's a car being driven by, say, an IDIOT SQUIRREL? Stuff like that happens every three minutes with this infuriating kid. Dora teaches you to make basic choices while also being an ignorant moron. For instance, that sneaky fox Swiper is always trying to steal their stuff. Dora and her friends, including Benny the Bull, stand there looking scared while they implore Swiper not to do what he does. That's when I start yelling at the TV.

"Swiper is a fox. YOU HAVE A BULL! You're so good at counting, Dora, DO THE MATH. CRUSH HIM!"

Cartoons aren't realistic, I know, but this show is a constant stream of misinformation. Take Dora's sloppy environmentalism. Dora and Boots are at the beach, where she tells viewers, "We have to clean up the beach. I need YOUR HELP!" Then she picks up some food wrappers and soda cans and carelessly drops all of it into a bin marked with the universal Recycling logo. Yes, Dora, you do need my help, because YOU ARE THE WORST. Look, I'm learning to make peace with the fact that a lot of adults grew up in the days before recycling and can't be bothered to separate Dr. Pepper cans from

the rest of their garbage, but only because I have faith that for kids growing up now, recycling is as second-nature as say, swiping a touchscreen or hacking the parental controls on the cable box. Dora, you do realize that you are a role model to millions of children, right?

What bugs me the most is that Dora succeeds at everything she does. Every contest or race that she's in, she wins. I'm all for encouraging a positive outlook, but aren't we past this business of raising spoiled kids who think they are more special than all the other kids, and who believe that they deserve to win at everything? Aren't the '80s over?

I suspect that Dora's particular brand of "dumbing down" isn't just for kids — it's targeting adults who have been convinced that we need resources tailored to every micro-stage of our children's development. Episodes of Dora start with a brief intro touting the show's educational value: Kids learn early math and problem-solving skills. But you know what else teaches those things? Living, that's what. Figuring out how to open a box of cereal. Playing with other kids. Counting crayons. If you think your toddler is getting some great developmental boost because a cartoon is asking her whether Tico the Idiot Squirrel should take the unobstructed left path, or the polar bear-infested right path, then you may need to spend more time with your kid.

I'm going to stop complaining now. For one thing, my daughter is never going to take the show half as seriously as I do. Plus, I'm realizing that the sorceress has cast her spell on me, too — these days I only find myself yelling at the TV when something's different.

"Why is Dora's voice so nasally in this episode? They're ruining the show!"

Somewhere along the way I went from being a critic to a connoisseur. Maybe I should turn off the TV and spend more time with my kid.

Tim Perrins is a part-time stay-at-home dad who lives with his wife, their toddler, and at least two Dora dolls in Park Slope, Brooklyn. More of his thoughts about babies and other things that confuse him can be found at www.RevoltOfTheImbeciles.blogspot.com.



Hazel: A uncritical fan.

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Sore throat or strep?

Winter hasn't even started yet, but my 10-year-old daughter already has a runny nose and a sore throat! When this happened last year, I did my best to help her with over-the-counter cold remedies and tea, but the problem didn't go away until I took her to the doctor, who said she had developed strep throat several days prior. How can I better identify the differences between a simple sore throat and strep? Should I take my daughter to the doctor right away?

Strep throat — an infection of the throat and/or tonsils caused by the streptococcal bacteria — is often the result of a condition that has similar onset symptoms, such as the common cold, laryngitis, or the flu. The strep bacteria is responsible for nearly 40 percent of sore throats in children — which means that 60 percent of the time, a sore throat has not been caused by strep. That “line” isn’t

always easy to discern, so it’s understandable that you want to know more.

As you have noticed, the initial symptom of strep is often a sore throat that does not go away, despite lozenges, over-the-counter medications, tea, or any other home remedies. A strep infection starts to differentiate itself, however, when your child spikes a fever, loses her appetite for an extended period of time, has no energy, and develops pain in her lower abdomen. That’s when it’s time to visit your child’s pediatrician.

To determine if a child has strep, the doctor will first perform a medical examination and look for key symptoms, which can include enlarged lymph nodes, fever, redness, swelling, and white spots on the tonsils. The doctor may then administer a rapid strep test, which provides highly accurate results in minutes.

A throat culture (a laboratory diagnostic test to find bacterial or fungal infections in the throat) is another method to test for strep throat, and may also be necessary. Throat cultures are still considered to be the “gold standard” of strep diagnosis, but the results of a throat culture can take 24 to 48 hours, making a rapid strep test a more ideal option in many cases, especially if your child’s symptoms are strongly indicative of a case of strep.

Strep is very contagious, and can potentially cause complications. However, once it has been diagnosed — the earlier the better — it is usually treatable with a full course of penicillin, amoxicillin, or other common antibiotics. So, as long as you keep your eyes peeled for the symptoms of strep, and work with your child’s pediatrician if necessary, you will be well prepared for the winter ahead.

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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

10 holiday refusals

Are you the kind of person who looks forward to the holidays all year long, but sometimes secretly wishes they were already over? I admit I have both opposing feelings swishing about inside of me every single holiday season. Most of the angst comes from doing a lot of things we don't want to do or worse, don't have any time to do. (Why is it still so hard for so many of us to simply say "no"?)

In an effort to retain my sanity, and actually enjoy the holiday as opposed to just get through it, I've compiled a list of a few things I just will not do this holiday season:

- Attend holiday parties that I don't want to attend. We all have obligations, but shouldn't our own happiness fall somewhere into our priorities? There are often too many parties and too little time. As parents, we have trouble just getting to all the holiday shows, Christmas tree lightings, and plays that our own kids star in. Adding in the many party invites and long shopping list might require pulling all nighters just to keep up, because the house, homework, kids, grocery shopping, cooking, work projects, etc. just do not go away in December — as much as we might wish they did.

- Go overboard on presents. More

does not equate with a better holiday, because material things never equal happiness — ever.

- Buy any overpriced piece of junk, because it's this year's biggest fad. When I've done this in the past, I have always regretted it.

- Do last-minute shopping. This makes the holiday annoying and stressful — the polar opposite of fun.

- Stress. In any capacity. I plan to start not stressing ASAP. "Whatever happens, happens, and I will find a way to go with the flow." That will be my mantra.

- Buy anything just because it's on sale. Deals can, unfortunately, be synonymous with junk. I will do my

homework way before I buy anything and know exactly what I want to buy and why.

- Rush. I want to take in each moment, because that is the only way to enjoy anything. (If I can accomplish this, then that will be a gift to myself this holiday season.)

- Spend more time in the kitchen, cooking, cleaning, or decorating, than time with my family.

- Miss watching "Charlie Brown's Christmas," "Frosty The Snowman," or "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." Homework be damned (or at least finished earlier). When those movies are on, we're watching them together as a family.

- NOT enjoy the season. Life's too short and the holidays are too precious to not savor. Kids grow up, family members pass on. The time to enjoy each other is right now!

Wishing you and yours a very healthy, happy, and memorable holiday season!

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 Danielle on her blog, Some Puppy To Love.





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DEATH BY CHILDREN

CHRIS GARLINGTON

New Year's tenacity

Last year, I was standing around about midnight when everyone shined their New Year's resolution spotlight on me and I choked. They had amazing resolutions. One guy said he was going to fly to Cote du Rhone and teach tourists how to properly pronounce the name of the island. Another guy said he was going to change to an all-foraged diet, taking his food directly from the land, like our ancestors. My wife said she was going to try to see the miraculous in the mundane. They looked at me and I blurted out, "I'm gonna climb mount laundry."

And I was serious.

This year I'll be ready for them. After everyone's plied the room with hippy manifestos, I'm going to reveal my short list of New Year's resolutions I will actually keep.

I will fix that one doorknob. It fell off the door six weeks ago. I don't know how a doorknob falls off a door. Maybe it jumped. Maybe it couldn't take it anymore. I know I can't take it anymore after going through an entire junk drawer of things that will fit in the hole to open the door to the basement (spatula, turkey baster, raw carrot).

I will invent growable shoes. We moved into Niketown last year after realizing it was the most cost effective way to keep my Sasquatchian son properly shod. The view sucks, but we get a new pair of shoes every day. It would be easier, and we could go back to living in casa de dirty clothes, if I could just stick his feet in a vat of nanogoop, which turns into a pair of shoes that grow along with his feet.

I will shave my dog. There is no part of my life without dog hair in it. It's in my towels, my toothbrush, my burritos. I found a dog hair in an ice cube yesterday. I love my dog. He's beautiful, like Lassie, but he sheds like a dog-hair yard sprinkler, and I can't take it any more. Is he going to look post-apocalyptic? Yes. Will I care? Are you kidding me?

I will stop going to McDonalds when the kids can't agree on what I'm going to cook for supper, and I'm too tired to care if they gain 300 pounds. Taco Bell's better anyway.

I will scale mount laundry, and at the top, I will plant an underwear flag. I will build a small house from discarded Tide lids. I'll sew drapes from dryer sheets. I'll plant a small garden on my son's dirty jeans and grow cabbage. It'll be peaceful, quiet. I'll paint pictures of the view (I can see all the way to the basement bar and empty VHS box graveyard) and sell them to passers-by for a pittance. They'll sit with me for tea, and I'll tell stories about my journey from the floor, up the ravine of ironic T-shirts, through gym shorts pass, and rappelling across the great tube sock divide.

Chris Garlington lives in a standard two kids, wife, dog, corner-lot, two-car dream package. He drives a 2003 Camry, sports a considerable notebook fetish, and smokes Arturo Fuente Partaga Maduros at the Cigar King as often as possible. His stories have appeared in Florida, Orlando, Orlando Weekly, Catholic Digest, Retort, Another Realm, The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, South Lit, and other magazines. His short story collection, "King of the Road," is available on Amazon.

His column, "My Funny Life," was nominated for a national humor award. He is the author of the infamous anti-parenting blog, Death By Children; the anti-writing blog, Creative Writer Pro; and co-author of "The Beat Cop's Guide to Chicago Eats."



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Till death do us part

Safeguard your children's future with a will

All of my assets are held in joint accounts with my spouse. Do I still need a will? Also, my spouse refuses to go to an estate-planning attorney or to even discuss doing his will. I am really concerned about naming a guardian for my kids and don't want to leave them unprotected. Do I have to wait for him or can I do my documents on my own?

There are two types of assets when it comes to administering an estate, in other words, transferring title to assets. There are “probate” and “non-probate” assets.

Probate assets are transferred by a person appointed by the court as the representative of the estate, who then marshals the assets and distributes them either pursuant to a Last Will and Testament, or, if there is no will, by the law of descent.

Non-probate assets are those that are transferred by operation of law, by presentation of a death certificate. Joint bank accounts, most retirement accounts, and life insurance are non-probate assets if a beneficiary is properly named.

A will is still recommended even if you think that all of your assets are non-probate. First, for parents of children under the age of 18, a will is necessary to nominate a guardian for your children and a trustee to oversee funds left to a child. Absent a will, any assets left to a minor child must be held jointly by any guardian (appointed by the court) and the Clerk of the Court, requiring permission to take any money out. The child also has legal title to the property when he becomes 18, which is not always advisable or desired.

Second, there is almost always an asset that materializes that requires some form of proceeding, either a Social Security check or paycheck issued just prior to death, a car, or just personal property. Third, your



joint or non-probate assets might not be distributed as you intended. Say you have three joint or “In Trust For” accounts, one for each of your children. You fund them with equal amounts, but as time goes on, you draw on those accounts for your living expenses, not always proportionately. At your death, one child might have a balance that is higher than the other. The inequality can spur disputes that can cost more than the proceeds in the accounts.

Clients often avoid executing a will, because it forces them to make difficult decisions they would rather not, while considering their own mortality. However, the failure to make a decision is in itself a decision to defer to the state laws dictating who gets your assets when you die. You might not want your spouse to inherit 50 percent of your assets outright, with your minor children getting the other half.

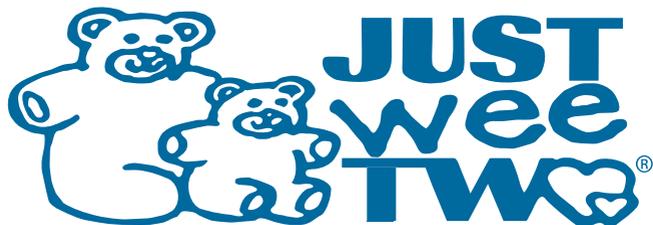
A will allows you to put certain protections in place, like a testamentary trust, that would protect your assets if your spouse remarries and

ensure that the assets pass to your children. This is especially critical in a second marriage. A will allows you to specify who will inherit and in what proportion.

As for the second question, you are not obligated to wait for your spouse to make a will. There are certain laws about a minimum amount you must leave to a spouse — called a “right of election” — but you can make a will without your spouse's consent or knowledge. If you have a pre-nuptial agreement that gives certain parameters about what you are promising to leave in a will, you should be mindful of that, but it still does not impact your ability to execute a will on your own.

Alison Arden Besunder is the founding attorney of the law firm of 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.besunder-law.com.

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Outwit your appetite

You *can* control the urge to overeat with these simple methods

BY SANDRA GORDON

To control the urge to eat — and eat and eat — during the holidays and beyond, try these simple mealtime tricks, and see how easy it really is to lose the weight for good.

If you've ever polished off an entire bowl of potato chips while chitchatting at a party, or ploughed through a basket of tortilla chips before your entrée arrives, you might think you have little control over your appetite. Yet, research shows that the drive to eat often doesn't have much to do with actual hunger.

"Your appetite can be influenced by the mere sight of food, the portion sizes, and what the people around you are eating or ordering," says Dr. Gerard J. Musante, author of "The Structure House Weight Loss Plan." Those are just a few of the factors that cue you to eat when you didn't plan to, or overindulge when you only wanted a taste. Awareness is key to controlling your appetite.

Lighten up, literally

Studies show that dimmed lights at meals can also make you eat more. In restaurants with soft lighting, for example, consumers tend to stay longer and maybe enjoy an unplanned dessert or an extra drink.

Low lighting can also make



you feel less inhibited and self-conscious; you're more apt to eat more, especially when you're with others.

You can't control a restaurant's lighting level, but you can have a skim latte as dessert. At home, keep the lights bright at meals and reserve candlelight dinners for special occasions.

And our temptation-taming tactics can help.

Temptation trigger: Generous plates and serving spoons; wide drinking glasses.

The bigger the plate and serving utensil, the more you'll dish out. One study had people eat at an ice cream social, and those who were given a large bowl and a three-ounce scooper ate 53 percent more ice cream than those given a smaller bowl and a two-ounce scooper. With beverages, research shows that people pour 28 percent more in short, wide glasses than into tall, skinny ones, says Dr. Brian Wansink, director of the food and brand lab at Cornell University.

Slimming solution: Downsize plates and utensils. If your dinner dishes are larger than the standard 10.5 inches, use a salad plate for your main dish. Try a tip from Asian cultures and artfully arrange what's on your plate. A small serving of sirloin, for example, will be less likely to leave you hungering for more when sliced and fanned on a pretty plate. Also, use smaller serving utensils, such as soup spoons for doling out portions. Replace any squat tumblers with tall, slender drinking glasses.

Temptation trigger: Too many choices.

If you always try to have something new for lunch and dinner, your meals are probably more of a calorie splurge than you realize.

"A varied diet stimulates your appetite," says Dr. Hollie A. Raynor, a registered nurse and adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry and human behavior research at Brown

Medical School in Providence, Rhode Island. The more flavors, textures, and color a particular meal offers and the less often you eat something, the more you'll be tempted to load up your plate, because the food looks good or you're curious about how it will taste.

Slimming solution: Downplay diversity. Come up with a standard repertoire of meals. It's easy to get into the habit of having the same healthy breakfast (whole-grain cereal, skim milk, and fruit) five days a week, so why not do the same with dinner? Raynor suggests rotating among five or six of your favorite healthy core entrees. You can branch out one night a week, if you feel you need to. To beat boredom and boost your diet's overall nutrient content, vary the fruit and veggies you use in the repeat meals. Dessert can be the same small dish of low-fat yogurt every night, jazzed up with almonds, walnuts, strawberries, kiwi, fresh pineapple, or whatever's in season.

At holiday parties and other events with an appetizer or buffet spread, "Follow the rule of two," suggests Wansink. That is, don't put more than two foods on your plate at any given time. By doing so, "you intuitively limit your choices, while focusing on your favorite foods, so you don't feel deprived," he says. In one study, Wansink conducted, participants who followed that guideline ended up eating 36 percent less than those who didn't over the course of an evening.

Another trick: When buying food that comes in flavors, such as yogurt and salad dressing, buy only one flavor at a time. One study found that



At holiday parties with a buffet spread, follow the “rule of two.” That is, don’t put more than two foods on your plate at any given time.

those who were offered three yogurt flavors ate 23 percent more than those who were offered only one.

Temptation trigger: Eating while doing anything else.

Most people are guilty of driving, watching TV, or reading while noshing on something.

“When we multitask with food, we consume more without realizing it and sacrifice a feeling of satisfaction,” says Dr. Susan Albers, a psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic Family Health Center in Wooster, Ohio, and author of “Eat Q: Unlock the Weight-loss Power of Emotional Intelligence.”

It’s an easy way to consume more without even realizing it and sacrificing a feeling of satisfaction. Albers relates the story of a client who had a habit of eating lunch while driving from one job to another.

“One day, she was so distracted

with driving and thinking about her job that she actually had to open her lunch bag at a stoplight to see if her sandwich was gone,” Albers says. (It was.) Sound familiar?

Slimming solution: Make meals important.

“No matter how busy you are, find a distraction-free spot to sit and eat,” suggests Albers. Make a habit of taking one mindful bite at the beginning of each meal and then putting your utensil down. This serves as a speed bump and slows the pace of the entire meal. For a similar effect, ditch your fork and knife for chopsticks, no matter what type of cuisine you’re having. And if you can’t avoid eating while doing something else, pre-portion your food and tell yourself, “No seconds.”

Temptation trigger: The food on the counter.

If you frequently cross paths with

the office candy bowl, you probably realize that the mere sight of food can cause unplanned eating. In a study in which office workers kept Hershey kisses in either see-through dishes or in opaque, lidded jars, those with the see-through dishes ate two more chocolates daily. That translates to 50 calories a day, which adds up to an extra five pounds per year.

Slimming solution: Stash food out of sight. At home, keep cereal, crackers, and holiday treats hidden in a top cabinet, and store extras in the basement or pantry. Research shows that people tend to store their inventory in visible areas consume it quickly until it’s depleted to manageable levels. Also, “wrap leftovers in aluminum foil, not plastic wrap,” adds Musante, so you won’t constantly be tempted when opening the refrigerator.

At work, place treats in dark con-

tainers, preferably in a distant office refrigerator, not in your desk drawer. You’ll eat even less if it takes effort, such as having to reach or take a walk to access food. If the communal goodie jar resides on the desk of someone who sits nearby, offer to fill it — and then do so with treats you don’t like.

Temptation trigger: Entrée envy.

“Research shows that you can be influenced by other people’s food decisions,” says Musante. When out to eat, if everyone orders cocktails, appetizers and dessert, you’re apt to go with the flow.

Slimming solution: Be the first to order. Speak up quickly and order a salad and grilled salmon.

“You’ll have a positive effect on what others choose — and will be less likely to see lots of tempting foods,” says Musante. If everyone wants dessert, order one and split it.



FABULYSS FINDS

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Family resolutions

What's your New Year's resolution? Whatever you choose, make it a meaningful one!

New Year's resolutions are not just for moms and dads! With the end of the year and lots of holiday celebrations, it's never too early to start thinking about resolutions as a family. Making them with your children can be fun and exciting. Pointing out that your children's choices can contribute to a happier family is very important.

For example, have the whole family resolve to make their beds everyday. It's a lot easier and more meaningful for the kids, if you and your spouse say you'll do the same! Having multiple, smaller resolutions is best when dealing with your little ones, and it's also best to keep the resolutions related to health, safety, and responsibility. For example, washing hands, wearing helmets when on a bicycle, eating fruits and vegetables, and drinking more water are all simple resolutions kids can make and stick with. Making this part of an annual family tradition is very important.

Sit down and talk about the past year — it's a great bonding experience and provides ideas for resolutions everyone can make. In my house, we each share a few things we felt worked for us and a few that didn't. Even my youngest, who is 6, participates. Things that need improvement — and pointing out that the child himself decided what needed improvement — are great starting points for developing each child's individual resolutions.

The family can make group resolutions as well; for example, last year, my family and I vowed to go to Central Park and have a healthy game of catch every Saturday morning to get ourselves up, out, and active. My son also vowed to give our dog food, water, and walks, which was crucial in teaching him compassion and responsibility.

Children love feeling responsible and accomplished, especially when it is noticed by their mom and dad. That's why it's important to acknowledge your kids' successes as you go. If your child's eating habits are what



concern you, then try and encourage a resolution centered on nutrition. If your child always leaves your playroom a complete disaster, have her make herself a cute poster saying "Clean up," and hang it by the door of the room as a reminder.

On PBS.org, Laura Lewis Brown writes, "for preschool-aged children, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends resolutions that focus on cleaning up toys, brushing teeth and washing hands, and being kind to pets. However, parents who consider these behaviors part of their regular expectations may want to provide resolutions that focus on higher goals. A resolution could be 'I will be a better listener when Mommy or Daddy asks me to do something' or 'I will help out more when Mommy or Daddy asks me.' If you keep it simple, your child is more likely to understand the concept as well as succeed."

Leading by example is so important, as well as being realistic and encouraging when it comes to the actions of your children. The resolutions have to be personalized; this is only a meaningful and worthwhile tradition and the vows make sense when it comes to the individual. A non-smoker wouldn't resolve to quit smoking, so nobody should en-

courage a relatively healthy child to change his diet and exercise! An example of a specific resolution would be to put a pet's name or a sibling's name in with the resolution, for example: "I will try and help Tommy with his homework more," or "I will give Buddy his morning walk."

My almost-10 year old told me as I was writing this article that one of his resolutions for 2014 is going to be: "I will limit the time I spend watching television and playing video games to 45 minutes a day (except for the weekends)."

My almost-7 year old told me one of his resolutions is going to be: "I will keep my bedroom organized and my bed made. I will put my dirty clothes in the laundry basket and hang my towel up in the bathroom."

As for me, I will lead my boys by example — one of my New Year's resolutions for 2014 will be to add more exercise into my busy week. I want my boys to see a healthy mom inside and out.

Wishing you a FabULyss, happy, and healthy New Year!

*Lyss Stern is the founder of DivaL-
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and co-author of the best-selling book,
"If You Give A Mom A Martini: 100
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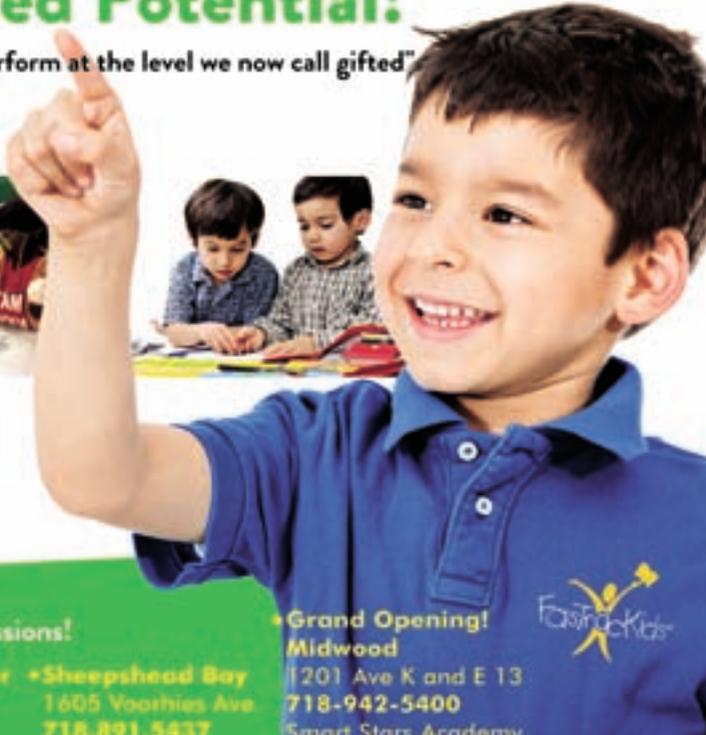


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Disappointment... the next time around

Secondary infertility is on the rise

BY JENNY CHEN

Secondary infertility — the inability to conceive after already biologically giving birth to a child — is on the rise. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about four million couples in the United States experienced secondary infertility in 2010 — up from 3.3 million couples in 2006. Secondary infertility is a devastating shock for many couples who had planned to have multiple children in their family.

When treating secondary in-

fertility — as opposed to treating primary fertility, doctors look for things that have changed since the first pregnancy. Inevitably, the one thing that has changed for all couples is age.

“The woman’s age is the biggest factor to determining whether a woman’s pregnancy will be successful or not,” said Dr. Isaac Sasson, an expert in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at the Shady Grove Fertility Center in Maryland.

The quality of the female’s eggs are a large factor in determining whether or not the woman will get

pregnant, and as a woman ages, the quality of her eggs decline. By the time she is pushing 40, her chances of conceiving have drastically decreased. Similarly, the quality of the male’s sperm also declines around the age of 40, but more gradually.

Why has age become such an issue? Dr. Lisa Kolp, from Johns Hopkins Medical Center, and an expert in female infertility, says that because divorce rates are rising (around 40 percent according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and many women are trying to have kids with their sec-

ond partner at an older age.

Furthermore, the fault may lie with the second partner — oftentimes when people switch partners, they find that they are unable to conceive.

Clue to health problems

Aside from age, said Dr. Morgan Rau, a naturopathic doctor from Maine Family Natural Health who specializes in women's health and childbirth, infertility is often an indicator of deeper health issues.

"The body is not healthy enough to welcome a baby," Dr. Rau said.

Some of the most common reasons for female infertility include diabetes, thyroid dysfunction, endometriosis, and polycystic ovarian syndrome. Dr. Rau says that many of the female conditions are caused by an imbalance of the hormones (usually an excess of estrogen). Often, treating those issues first is extremely effective in raising chances of pregnancy.

"Lifestyle issues, thyroid dysfunction, and diabetes can be the first identifiable cause for infertility," Dr. Sasson said. His office, like many fertility centers across the country, employs a step-wise approach — first the doctor does a comprehensive check of both partners' health histories. This may include everything from excessive alcohol consumption to sexually transmitted diseases.

Male infertility

However, contrary to popular opinion, infertility is not always due to the woman's infertility. Doctors estimate that 70 percent of the time, the infertility is due to a female cause, 50 percent of the time the infertility is due to a male cause, and 20 percent of the time, it is a combination of both male and female causes.

Dr. Pravin Rao, a specialist at Johns Hopkins specializing in male infertility, says that the most common cause for male infertility is a condition called varicocele. This condition is an enlargement of the veins in the scrotum, which may cause low sperm count or low sperm quality. Treatment for varicocele involves a micro-surgery called varicocele ligation, said Dr. Rao.

Other factors for male infertility may include hormone function, excessive consumption of alcohol, or chemotherapy. The

popularity of recent testosterone-enhancing supplements often hinders conception as well. A study conducted by the University of Alabama in May of this year, and presented to the American Urological Association, found that the testosterone-enhancing supplements turn off sperm production, and it generally takes six months for the man's sperm count to return to normal after he has gone off the supplement.

Sometimes though, the cause of male infertility may simply be a case of running the bath too hot, since the testes is usually 3 degrees cooler than the rest of the body, and overheating the area may cause sperm to die.

"It's often surprising how small adjustments can make a difference," Dr. Rao said.

However, Dr. Rao also indicated that, just like for women, male infertility may be a sign of underlying health issues, and thus it is important for the couples' well-being to be evaluated thoroughly.

Reproductive technology

"Infertility often points to higher rates of testicular cancer and prostate cancer," he said. Doctors across the board agree that good health is the ultimate solution to infertility. Procedures such as in vitro fertilization, while faster and sometimes more effective, are extremely invasive and costly, said Dr. Sasson.

Other assisted reproductive technology includes surrogacy or artificial insemination. There are risks to these technologies however: a study completed by the American Society for Reproductive Medicine found that children conceived through in vitro fertilization were more likely to be born with birth defects.

"There are risks, costs, and success," said Dr. Sasson. "As a medical professional, I make a recommendation based on these three factors. It's important to make an informed decision."

Jenny Chen is a freelance writer specializing in education and parenting. She has written for Washington Parent and Mothering Magazine. More work can be found at www.jennyjchen.com and on Twitter @americanhaiku.

Resources:

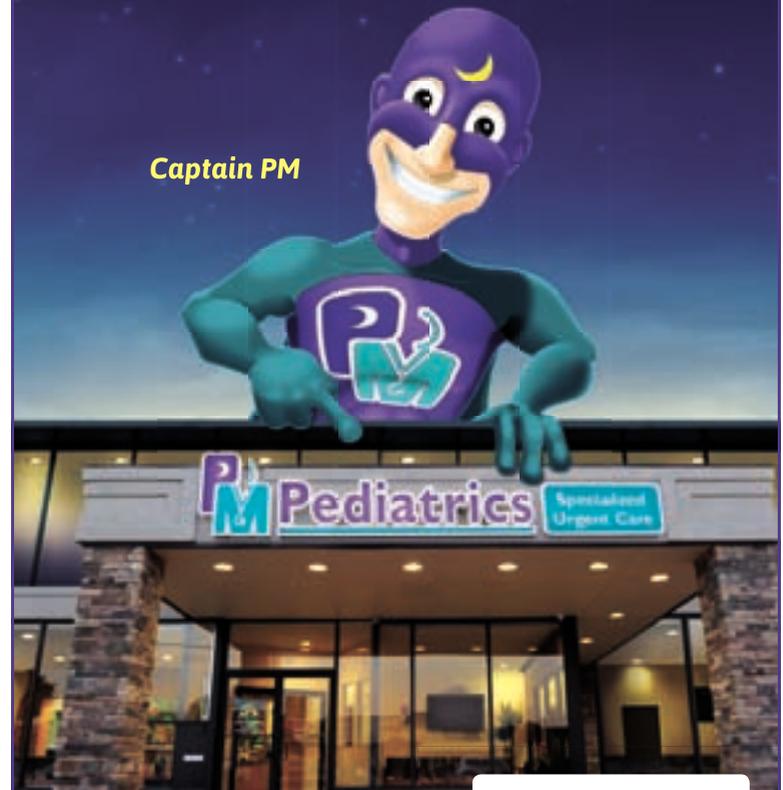
Resolve: The National Infertility Association (with local chapters), <http://resolve.org>

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Book gift guide

What to give EVERYONE this holiday season

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Doesn't it seem like your gift list grows each year?

One new member of the family by birth, three more by marriage. Two "adopted" kids who call you Mom or Dad just because. Friends who have become dear. A new Secret Santa program at the office. It adds up, and it subtracts from your holiday budget.

But here's a great gift idea: books! They are cost-effective. They're like taking a trip without going anywhere. They give and give again, and they're share-able. What more could you want to give?

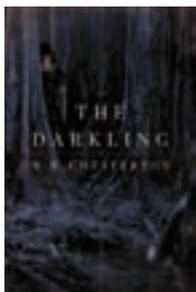
So, without further ado, here are some great books you can give to the people on your gift list this holiday season.

Adult fiction

Perfect for historical fiction fans, "The House of Special Purpose" by John Boyne takes a trip back to czarist Russia with an elderly man who must lay secrets to rest before he dies. Give this book as a gift — and borrow it back!

Does your giftee like the kind of novel that'll keep her guessing? Then you'll want to wrap up "The Unchangeable Spots of Leopards" by Kristopher Jansma. At first, it seems like this is a book about rivalry between two writers, but there's so much more to this story. Unwrapping it isn't going to be the only surprise your giftee gets — particularly when you pair "Unchangeable Spots" with "This is How You Die: Stories of the Inscrutable, Infallible, Inescapable Machine of Death," an anthology with the premise that every character knows the end is near ... they know how, but they don't know the circumstances or when.

So how well do you know that new family member? In "The Darkling" by R. B. Chesterton, a family takes in a teenager who's been orphaned, and they hire a tutor to get the girl up to speed. But there's something about the girl that just doesn't seem right — something that will scare the daylights out of your recipient.



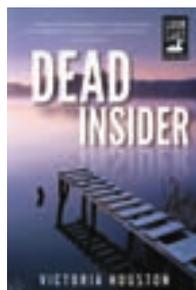
Wrap it up with M.J. Rose's "Seduction," which is a novel of suspense and chills.

For the person who likes a little terror with his tinsel, "The Demonologist" by Andrew Pyper will give him that, abundantly. This is the story of a professor who accepts a dark offer that's too good to be true. Problem is, it's not too good to be hor-

rifying. Package this one up with "Domino Falls," by Steven Barnes and Tananarive Due, for a perfectly frightful night-ful.

If your giftee loves a novel that sprang from real events, then wrap up "My Mother's Secret" by J.L. Witterick, a fictionalized tale of two women who sheltered a Jewish family in their Sokal, Germany home during World War II. It's a bit of a thriller, made even more so, because it's based on a true story.

Fans of suspense won't be able to resist opening the cover of "Storm Front" by John Sanford. In this thriller, an ancient stone has been stolen, which sparks an international manhunt that settles in Minnesota. Yes, it seems like a movie plot, but for fans of this genre, this book is far from mere drama. Team it up with "Dead Insider" by Victoria Houston, for the most thrilling gift you can possibly give.



If a danger-filled novel is what that certain someone on your list would love, look for "The Return" by Michael Gruber, a book about a man who isn't who he seems. Yes, he looks like an easy-going guy, but revenge is really what's on his mind ... and he's not going to stop until he finds it. Pair it with "Island of the White Rose" by R. Ira Harris, a historical novel of revolution in Cuba and intrigue, love, and danger.

For the reader who loves a good murder novel, "Love Gone Mad" by Mark Rubinstein will make 'em happy. When a famous heart surgeon and a nurse meet at work, it seems like romance is in the air. But no, it's danger they sense, and a fight for their very lives. Wrap it up with "The Russian Endgame" by Allan Topol, an international thriller with political undertones, and watch your giftee end up with a smile.

The person on your list who loves a good romance will fall for "Love Rehab: A Novel in Twelve Steps" by Jo Piazza. It's a story filled with all those things you DON'T want to do when lookin' for love. And for something different, give them a second helping of literature with "Dying for Dinner Rolls" by Lois Lavrisa, the first in the Chubby Chicks Club mystery series. Food and murder ... what more could you want?

General non-fiction for grown-ups

If there's a poker player on your gift list this year, then you've got to give them "Straight Flush" by Ben Mezrich. This is the story of a bunch of college

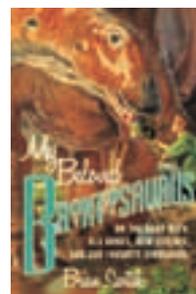
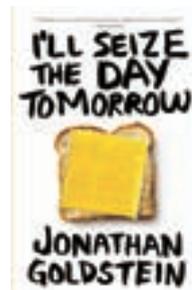
buddies who start an online poker site and rake in the cash ... but the U.S. Department of Justice wants them to fold. Will your giftee love this book? Yeah, it's in the cards!

Surely, there's someone on your gift list who fears growing older — or someone who's embraced it wholeheartedly. For them, wrap up "I'll Seize the Day Tomorrow" by Jonathan Goldstein, who recounts his last year before he turns the "dreaded 4-0." Give it to the 30-something on your list, as well as to the something-something who only barely remembers his 40s. Wrap it with "It's Never Too Late" by Dallas Clayton, a "kid's book for adults" that will make the recipient think about life, love, and where both are taking her.

Why did you pick the gift you picked? Was it just because you knew your friend well, or was there another reason? In "You Are Now Less Dumb" by David McRaney, your giftee will learn a little bit more about what makes you tick, why they didn't get lots of money as gifts, and why that's a very good thing.

For the biography lover on your list, "More Scenes from the Rural Life" by Verlyn Klinkenborg is an excellent gift. This book takes a look at the beauty, the grace, the elegance, and the troubles of living on a farm. It's a nice companion to the first volume by this author, published 10 years ago.

The amateur paleontologist on your list will love unwrapping "My Beloved Brontosaurus" by Brian Switek. What do we know about dinos — and what do we only think we know? The author's passion for the giant critters comes shining through here as he writes about new theories, old myths, and big truths. Yes, this is a book about dinosaurs, but it's for big kids only. Wrap it up with "Last Ape Standing" by Chip Walter, a book about our distant ancestors, who they were, and how we out-survived them; or "The Girl With No Name" by Marina Chapman, which is a true story about a girl who claims to have been raised by monkeys.



For the movie buff, "Sleepless in Hollywood" by Lynda Obst is a great gift. In this book, your giftee will read about the movie industry, how it's changed during the last 10 years or so, and why it

costs so much money to make fewer movies. Wrap it up with a pair of tickets and **"The Horror Show Guide: The Ultimate Frightfest of Movies"** by Mike Mayo. If it's a scary movie, it's likely to be listed in this book, making it a reference guide that adrenaline junkies simply should NOT be without.

If your giftee loves old reruns and can't get enough of the girl who "turns the world on with her smile," then you need to wrap up **"Mary and Lou and Rhoda and Ted"** by Jennifer Keishin Armstrong. This is a book about the people who created the classic 1970s sitcom, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Wrap it up with **"The Joker"** by Andrew Hudgins, which is part biography, and part look at jokes and things that make us laugh.

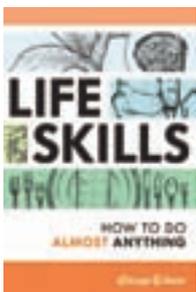
Sometimes, it's just fun to read about normal, everyday people. **"American Story"** by Bob Dotson takes a look at your neighbors, your friends, your distant relatives, and comes up with some sweetly amazing stories. For another kind of American story, give **"Humboldt: Life on America's Marijuana Frontier"** by Emily Brady, a book about a Northern California community and legalization of their cash crop. For the right person, it'll be the perfect gift.

The trivia buff on your list will love **"Life Skills: How to Do Almost Anything"** by the folks at the Chicago Tribune. He'll learn how to trim hair and unclog a sink, how to pack for a long road trip, and how to bowl. Present it with **"How to Win at Everything"** by Daniel Kibblesmith and Sam Weiner, which will further those valuable skills; and "Stats & Curiosities" from the Harvard Business Review folks, for even more knowledge.

For that person on your list with the unique sense of humor, **"That's Not Funny, That's Sick"** by Ellin Stein may make your gift-giving easier. This book takes a look at The National Lampoon magazine and its founders, writers, humor, and more. Think: John Belushi. Think: Second City Comedy. Think: perfect gift. And you can't go wrong if you bundle it with **"Inside MAD"** by the "Usual Gang of Idiots" at MAD magazine. This is a look at many beloved, classic spreads from the publication, and it features essays from 17 celebs who loved the mag as much as you did.

The giftee with a soft spot for ancient Egypt will love reading **"The Shadow King"** by Jo Marchant. It's a book about King Tut's mummy: where it's been, what we've learned about it, and why we're still so fascinated with it.

Students of culture and politics will smile when they unwrap **"Clash! 8 Cultural Conflicts That Make Us Who We Are"** by Dr. Hazel Rose Markus and Dr. Alana Conner. This book looks at eight common them vs. us themes: east vs. west, men vs. women, and more, and how it affects us as individuals and the world at large.



Does your giftee appear cool as a cucumber opening gifts, but inside, he's excited as a pig in tall corn? Then wrap up **"Similes Dictionary"** by Elyse Sommer, and you know you'll receive a smile as big as the world. The wordsmith on your list will find lots of food for thought in **"Hard Times Require Furious Dancing"** by Alice Walker, a book of verse to inspire, soothe, and provoke thoughts; or **"A Slap in the Face"** by William B. Irvine, which is a book about insults, subtle and not-so-subtle, where they come from, and why they're so darn barbed.

The newlywed, newly single, or new college student on your list will appreciate **"Don't Screw It Up!"** by Laura Lee. This is a book that offers household tips that will make life run more smoothly, whether it's finances, home maintenance, cooking, or another of life's sticky situations. And then — just because screw-ups are unavoidable — show your giftee that it's okay by pairing "Don't Screw it Up" with **"Always Look on the Bright Side: Celebrating Each Day to the Fullest"** by Allen Klein. The title says it all.

For the person who has it all, how about a very unusual book? **"Roy G. Biv"** by Jude Stewart is a book about color, myths about it, history of reds and oranges, purples and blues, what the colors mean in culture, and what they do to us. Be sure to wrap it up with lots of colorful tissue paper and a copy of **"The Handy Art History Answer Book"** by Madelynn Dickerson for a truly vibrant gift.

For the person who loves historical photographs, look for **"The Big Picture"** by Josh Sapau. This book is filled with panoramic photographs from the days when film only came in black-and-white and people dressed up — to look good for posterity — on Picture Day. Even the size and shape of "The Big Picture" says "fun!" Make "Picture" perfect by adding **"The Heart of Everything That Is: The Untold Story of Red Cloud, An American Legend"** by Bob Drury and Tom Clavin.

It seems like everybody's got somebody on their list who's single, doesn't it? And the person on your list will love reading **"Modern Dating: A Field Guide"** by Chiara Atik. This humorous book isn't just funny — it also offers real advice and tips on loving one's singlehood, dating etiquette, make-up-or-break-up tips, and more. It might not put a ring on someone's finger, but it'll make her smile. Be sure to pair it with **"Data, A Love Story"** by Amy Webb, which is the tale of Webb's experience with finding love online.

For the giftee who claims to have had the oddest childhood, you can challenge that assertion by giving **"Free Spirit: Growing Up on the Road and Off the Grid"** by Joshua Safran. It's the story

of the author's childhood on the open road with his mother, who seemed to be forever searching. And if your special someone really cherishes his individualism, wrap it up with **"The Last Wilderness: Alaska's Rugged Coast"** by Michael McBride, the story of a married couple, the business they built, and their life in America's northernmost state.

For the wanderer on your gift list, journey to the bookstore for a copy of **"The Turk Who Loved Apples"** by Matt Gross. This is a book of unexpected travels and surprising journeys around the world in unusual places. Further satisfy your giftee's wanderlust with **"Hidden Cities"** by Moses Gates, in which the author travels to unusual sites within larger metropolises.

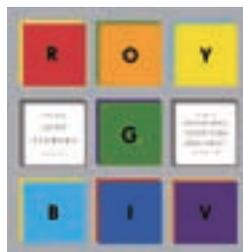
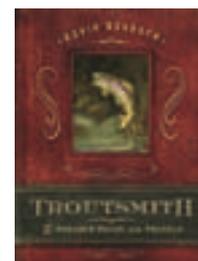
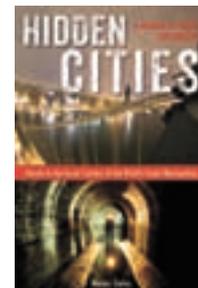
The environmentalist on your list will cheer when she unwraps **"Invisible Nature: Healing the Destructive Divide between People and the Environment"** by Kenneth Worthy. (As long as you used recycled paper, of course.) This is a heavy-duty book and not for the casual reader, but anyone who lives the green life will think it's the best gift ever. Pair it up with **"Future Primal"** by Louis G. Herman. It's a book on our past, our future, and how understanding one can affect the other.

I'm betting there's a sports fan on your gift list this year, and I'm betting he (or she!) will love reading **"Breaking the Line"** by Samuel G. Freedman. This is a book about the players, the rivalry, and the coaches, during one season at a black college, and the way it changed collegiate football forever. And if that sport fan happens to be a fisherman, **"Troutsmith: An Angler's Tales and Travels"** by Kevin Searock will be the catch of the day. It's a book about being outdoors, drowning flies, and life.

Now out in paperback, **"Life Upon These Shores"** by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. will make a fantastic gift for the historian on your list. This book is a deep look at nearly 500 years of African-American history and it includes lots of photos. Buy it, top it with a bow, and borrow it back. Or add **"Old Man River: The Mississippi River in North American History"** by Paul Schneider to the gift and borrow them both.

The baseball fan on your list is going to go wild when they unwrap **"Sports Illustrated Baseball's Greatest."** This huge, heavy, picture-and-stat-filled book goes way back in baseball history to find the best pitchers, the best batters, the best managers, and even the best games. If you've got someone on your gift list who can't miss a game, you've got a homerun with this book.

For the person on your list who loves a touch of the gruesome, wrap up **"Heavenly Bodies: Cult Treasures & Spectacular Saints from the Catacombs"** by Paul Koudounaris. This picture-packed



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Books...

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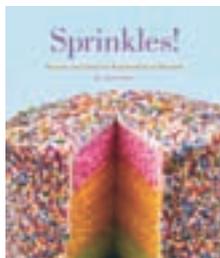
book takes a look at the bones and sarcophagi of Rome, the people who decorated the deceased in jewels and finery, and the history of the people that still lie in underground burials there. It's fascinating stuff — for the right person, so give wisely.

If you think it's hard to buy for Grandma or Grandpa, here's some help: look for **"Al Capp: A Life to the Contrary"** by Michael Schumacher and Denis Kitchen. It's a biography about the creator of the cartoon character Li'l Abner. Bonus: your giftee will get a chance to revisit some of the comics she grew up with. Wrap it in the Sunday comics page along with **"Sister Mother Husband Dog"** by Delia Ephron, a book about family, love, and loss.

If there's someone on your gift list who's reaching for higher education this year, **"PhD to PhD: How Education Saved My Life,"** by Dr. Elaine Richardson, might help you ace the gift-giving test. This inspirational story is about overcoming a bad situation and pulling one's self up from the worst in order to become the best. For sure, it's a fighter's story, and it's perfect if your giftee needs a self-esteem boost.

Cookbook

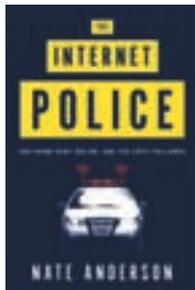
No doubt, your giftee will want to put a little color on the table with **"Sprinkles! Recipes and Ideas for Rainbowlicious Desserts"** by Jackie Alpers. The recipes in here — I need to warn you — are fun and addicting. I mean, who wouldn't want to eat homemade pop tarts, homemade donuts, cupcakes, waffles, and more? Pass the dessert, please, but don't pass up this book.



True crime

If you've got a true crime lover on your gift list this year, then **"Stories from Jonestown"** by Leigh Fondakowski is a must. This book delves deep into what happened 35 years ago in Guyana and why it happened, and it includes interviews with survivors. This is chilling stuff, and not for the faint of heart.

If you've got a techy who loves true crime on your list, then wrap up **"The Internet Police"** by Nate Anderson. This is a sobering book about the people who serve and protect us online. Tie it up in crime scene tape with **"Bombed in His Bed: The Confessions of Jewish Gangster Myer Rush"**



as told to his nephew, Bruce Farrell Rosen. Its narrative circles the globe and contains all the chutzpah in the world.

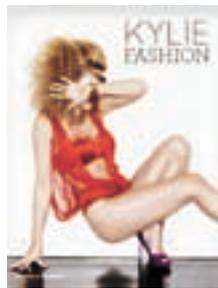
For anyone who cares for someone who's elderly, for anyone who's online all the time, and for anyone who thinks nothing is too good to be true,

"Faces of Fraud" by Martin T. Biegelman is a book you need to give early. This book tells readers how to fend off fraud, how to spot something that just doesn't seem right, and how the problem is more widespread than they might think.

Surely, there's a big "CSI" fan on your gift list, perhaps someone who loves to solve the unsolvable? **"The Sixteenth Rail"** by Adam J. Schrage is the solution to the riddle of what to get them. This is a book that may solve the case of the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby some 80 years ago. Science, it seems, is now pointing at the guilty party ... or not. Give it, and see if your armchair detective agrees.

Music and fashion

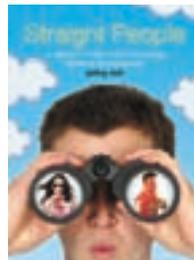
Perfect for photography fans and fashionistas alike, **"Kylie Fashion,"** by Kylie Minogue and William Baker, is a huge coffee-table-sized book filled with photographs featuring the ensembles and career of the award-winning singer. Yes, there's a little bit of text here (and a forward by designer Jean Paul Gaultier), but mostly, it's pictures, and more pictures.



If there's a future rock star on your gift list, you'll get applause when you deliver **"The Worst Gig,"** by various musicians and band members, as told to Jon Niccum. In this book, rock 'n' roll has never looked more soul-crushing — or more fun.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

If there's someone on your gift list who has the opposite of gaydar and a good sense of humor, then wrap up **"Straight People: A Spotter's Guide to the Fascinating World of Heterosexuals"** by Jeffrey Self. This book will help anyone identify the (not-so) elusive heterosexual in its natural habitat, including its habits, breeding information, and a comprehensive overview of the various species and sub-species.



For the political animal on your list, Christine Quinn's **"With Patience and Fortitude"** may be just the right biography to wrap up. It's the story of Quinn's life, her rise to power in New York City, her battle with breast cancer, and the secret she knew would eventually come out.

For novel lovers, choose **"The Revelations of Jude Connor"** by Robin Reardon, the story of a young man who desperately wants to reconcile his church life with the life he senses he needs to live. Can his belief stand beside temptation?

Is there someone on your gift list who's very close to a sibling? How far would he (or she!) go to help them? In **"My Brother's Name"** by Laura Krughoff, a young woman is convinced by her mentally-ill sibling to assume his identity, but the ruse can't work for long.

For your introspective friend or family member, **"Out Your Ego!"** by Staci Backauskas may help put a few things into perspective. This book will help tame an out-of-control ego to get to the root of who your giftee really is. Wrap it up with **"The Scar Letters"** by Richard Alther, a novel about a man who must confront the demons of his past in order to move into the strong future he knows he deserves.

For the person on your list who loves the holidays — all holidays — wrap up **"Gifts Not Yet Given and Other Tales of the Holidays"** by Kergan Edwards-Stout. It's a collection of short stories about the holidays we hold dear and the ways we keep them.

For animal lovers

If your gift recipient has lost a beloved family member this year, then show your support by wrapping up **"Furry Friends Forevermore: A Heavenly Reunion with Your Pet"** by Gary Kurz. Will we meet our furkids again someday? Will they be waiting for us? The author answers those questions in a very comforting way. Be sure to put "Furry Friends" in a gift bag with a big box of tissues. It's that kind of book.

Pigeons. Cockroaches. Sea gulls. Why do we hate them, while we love doves, spiders, and pelicans? In **"Trash Animals,"** edited by Kelsi Nagy and Phillip David Johnson II, your giftee will read a series of essays on why these creatures — which are often considered disgusting — are really quite intriguing.



Or add **"One Big Happy Family"** by Lisa Rogak. It's a heart-melting book about animals of different species that care for other animals, and it might be the soothing balm that's needed.

For the new doggy parent on your gift list, you can't go wrong with **"The Complete Book of Home Remedies for Your Dog"** by Deborah Mitchell. This book starts off with the most basic of health care (nutrition) and will help your favorite pet lover take care of the new family member. Pair it with **"Throw the Damn Ball"** by R.D. Rose, Harry Prichett, and Rob Battles. It's a book of puppy poetry, as told by several short-haired Longfellows.

No doubt you've got a bird lover on your list, and that amateur ornithologist will chirp with thanks for **"1,001 Secrets Every Birder Should Know"** by Sharon "Birdchick" Stiteler. The author shares fun-to-know facts about all kinds of feathered friends: their physical quirks, migratory habits, diet — plus, tips and hints on being a successful birdwatcher. Give it to show you're no birdbrain.

Regional books

So your giftee thinks that there may be ghosts in New Orleans. In the French Quarter, right? But if you wrap up **"Haunted Lafayette, Louisiana"** by Chère Dastugue Coen, you'll see that NOLA doesn't have the corner on scary. This book includes tales of ghosts, ghouls, and yes, (bonus!) pictures.

The true crime fan on your list will love peeling back the paper from **“The Crime Buff’s Guide to Outlaw Pennsylvania”** by Ron Franscell and Karen B. Valentine. This arresting book takes a look at murder, scandal, robbery, and other mayhem from around the state. Would your giftee want to visit the crime scenes? He can — addresses are included!

If you’re shopping for someone who likes to shake her head and say, “only in California,” then you’ll want to put a bow on **“California Fruits, Flakes & Nuts”** by David Kulczyk. It’s filled with lots of true, short tales of the crazy, wild things that happened in the Golden State, and it’s plenty of fun.

Health and special needs

One in 88 children is diagnosed in the U.S. with autism, and our knowledge about the autism spectrum has grown over the years. Author Temple Grandin has contributed to that research and in **“The Autistic Brain: Thinking Across the Spectrum,”** she writes about autism science, what the future holds, and she offers tips for parents on raising a child who’s just been diagnosed.

If the only thing on your giftee’s want list is a holiday of “peace and quiet,” wrap up **“The Power of Silence: The Riches that Lie Within”** by Graham Turner. This is an introspective book on solitude and quiet in religion, music, medicine, and in some unlikely places. Pair it with **“Quiet Influence: The Introvert’s Guide to Making a Difference”** by Dr. Jennifer B. Kahnweiler for a gift that loudly says, “I understand!”

If you know someone who’s kicked the bottle, then look for **“Her Best-Kept Secret”** by Gabrielle Glaser. It takes a hard (though gentle) look at women and drinking — not that at-the-bar-all-night kind, but the glass-of-wine-after-work kind. It’s a hidden epidemic, it’s possible to overcome, and the book will show your giftee that she’s not alone.

I also liked **“Quiet Kids”** by Christine Fonseca. It’s a book about introverted children, and how to help them cope with being that way in a world that definitely is not. Wrap it up for parents, and add **“A Private History of Happiness”** by George Myerson, which is a book of joy from around the globe and through time. Your giftee will quietly smile.



Any medical pro on your gift list will appreciate **“In the Kingdom of the Sick”** by Laurie Edwards. This is a look at long-term, chronic illnesses — how they’re proliferating, how we deal with them, and what’s being done about them. Doctors, nurses, and PAs will love this book. So will anyone who’s facing a long-term disease. To counteract the sadness that may go with it, combine it with **“Grace, Under Pressure”** by Sophie Walker, an uplifting story of a girl with Asperger’s syndrome and her mother, who decided to do something about it.

For the giftee who loves a good memoir, look for **“Mind Without a Home: A Memoir of Schizophrenia”** by Kristina Morgan. It’s a book by a woman who isn’t afraid to pull out the stops when

writing about her life. It’s honest, it’s painful, and (spoiler alert!) it’s got an awesome ending.

Is there someone on your gift list who’s in chronic pain? Show her that you’d love to help by wrapping up **“Holistic Pain Relief”** by Dr. Heather Tick. This book is filled with worth-a-try methods of managing pain and may even help get rid of it altogether. Best of all, in addition to helping with physical pain, it can help with the emotional side of pain, too.

For the giftee who’s grappling with life’s questions, **“The Gray Zone”** by Deborah Day Laxson may be of some comfort. This tiny little book hopes to make clearer that “fuzzy place” where life is questionable. Yes, it may help.

Business

If there’s a hardwired someone on your gift list this year — someone who wants to cut the too-available cord — then wrap up **“Boundaries in an Overconnected World”** by Anne Katherine. This is a book for someone who longs for communication the way it used to be, someone who wants to know how to get away from it now and then. Wrap it up with **“Confidence: Overcoming Low Self-Esteem, Insecurity, and Self-Doubt”** by Dr. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, an empowering book that will help that businessperson on your list to gain the strength to say “no” and take her life back.



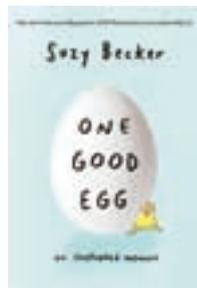
It’s always nice to have a plan for the new year, which means your business-minded giftee would appreciate unwrapping **“Financial Fresh Start”** by Shari Olefson. This book offers a step-by-step process for adapting to the “New Economy,” and some of the tips can be used the minute your giftee rips open the wrap.

For the person on your list who needs to know how to kick-start creativity in the workplace, **“The Myths of Creativity”** by David Burkus will be a welcome gift. It’s a book about how innovation starts, where the best ideas come from, and how to put that knowledge to work. Pair it up with **“Unlimited Sales Success”** by Brian Tracy and Michael Tracy for a well-rounded (and very helpful) holiday gift.

Parenting

For the first-time parent or for an “only” adult kid who loves a little controversy, look for **“One and Only”** by Lauren Sandler. In this book, Sandler discusses being an only child and the advantages of stopping at a family of three. It’s thought-and conversation-provoking and the right giftee will love it.

If there’s a mother-to-be on your gift list, then **“One Good Egg”** by Suzy Becker is a good choice. This is the (true) story of a much-wanted baby, a mom with a dream, fertility treatments, and the long, sometimes hard journey to being a parent. Wrap it up with **“Baby Steps”** by Elisabeth Rohm



(with Eve Adamson), which is also a book by a mom who chose in-vitro fertilization to have her family, and how she got support from her own mother to help it happen.

And if there’s a special someone who is thinking about having children, then **“Motherhood, Rescheduled”** by Sarah Elizabeth Richards would make a good gift. It’s about egg freezing, spurning a biological clock or an illness, and having a family when the time is right. It’s written from the point-of-view of women who’ve done it, which is just a bonus.

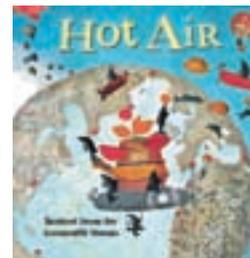
Don’t forget the new dad when you’re holiday shopping. Wrap up **“Someone Could Get Hurt: A Memoir of Twenty-First-Century Parenthood”** by Drew Magary, a humorous take on raising a family, being a parent, making mistakes and knowing that your child loves you anyhow. Use a necktie to bundle it with another book that looks at parenting the way your parents never did: **“Twenty Something: Why Do Young Adults Seem Stuck,”** by Robin Marantz Henig and her daughter, Samantha Henig. It looks at what it’s like to be young and not-so-carefree in the 21st century.



It’s always good to know about the person who’s giving you advice. Is he qualified, for instance? Your giftee will know, after she’s read **“Learning to Listen: A Life Caring for Children”** by Dr. T. Berry Brazelton. This is the story of Brazelton’s life, his findings, his work, and his outlook on today’s families. Wrap it up with **“Parenting Without Borders: Surprising Lessons Parents Around the World Can Teach Us”** by Christine Gross-Loh, for a few very different looks at how we raise our kids.

Children’s picture books

For the sensitive kid who worries about whales, **“Hot Air”** by Sandrine Dumas Roy, Emmanuelle Houssais, and Sarah Ardizzone offers information on global warming and environmental concerns, and it leaves off with a big question for little minds. Give it along with **“Jasper’s Story”** by Jill Robinson and Marc Bekoff, illustrated by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen. It’s about the endangered moon bear, and efforts to save the gorgeous creatures.



If there’s a young child on your list who’s fascinated with all things disgusting, then you’ll have a hit when you give **“Rotten Pumpkin: A Rotten Tale in 15 Voices”** by David M. Schwartz, photos by Dwight Kuhn. Yes, this is a book about icky stuff, and it’s got icky pictures. But the real surprise is that this book offers an education on germs, mold, and gardening.

If a Christmas book is mandatory for gift-giv-

Continued on next page

Books...

Continued from previous page

ing, you're in luck this year. **"Christmas Eve with Mrs. Claus,"** by M.P. Hueston and illustrated by Teri Weidner, is ideal for smaller children. It's a seek-and-find book with flaps and windows that are perfect for the kid who loves to be a part of the story. Use garland to pull it together with **"Santa Claus: All About Me,"** compiled by J & J Atkinson. It's a lovely gift book filled with lots of information about the holiday through history, and while it may sometimes seem too advanced for little kids, it's a book they'll grow with. You might also look for **"The Gift of the Magi"** by O. Henry and Sonja Danowski. It's a classic with new, gorgeous artwork.

If discovering a new Christmas book is a tradition in your home, then wrap up **"Deck the Walls! A Wacky Christmas Carol"** by Erin Dealy, illustrated by Nick Ward. Your child will want to sing along with the silliest of songs, and maybe even make up her own funny verses.

If you're a grandparent looking for the perfect book for your favorite little one, look for **"Grandma Loves You!"** by Helen Foster James, illustrated by Petra Brown. This absolutely adorable book explains, in rhyme, all the ways you love your grandchild and, of course, the child who gave you grandkids. Bonus: there's room in the back for a personalized letter from you, which will make this a wonderful keepsake.

For the littlest water lover, **"How Roland Rolls,"** by Jim Carrey (yes, THAT Jim Carrey) and illustrated by Rob Nason, will be a delight. This is the story of an ocean wave who's afraid of what will happen if he rolls the wrong way. It's a cute rhyme made cuter by the pictures, and your tiny giftee will love it.

For middle grade readers

Your young dorsal-fin fan will want to bite into **"Shark Wars: The Last Emperor"** by EJ Altbacker. It's the story of an undersea battle that could result in a change of power between two warring groups that want control of the oceans. And here's a hint for future holiday gift-giving: this book is part of a series.

What tween doesn't like money? For sure, your giftee does, and she'll also like reading **"The Short Seller"** by Elissa Brent Weissman. It's the story of a young girl who discovers that she's good at investing. Almost too good, in fact, and that's a dangerous temptation. Wrap it up with **"Jack Strong Takes a Stand,"** by Tommy Green-

wald and illustrated by Melissa Mendes. It's a novel about a boy who's mad as heck about his overscheduled life, and he's not going to take it any more.

For the child who already loves the classics, you can't go wrong with **"Tales from the Brothers Grimm,"** selected and illustrated by Lisbeth Zwerger; or **"Aesop's Fables"** from Ayano Imai. These books are filled with stories your giftee will love, and new artwork that definitely adds to each story.

If your young giftee enjoys a challenge, then you can't go wrong with **"Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library"** by Chris Grabenstein. It's the tale of a boy who loves a good game, so when a famous game-maker designs the town's new library, the boy jumps at a chance to be part of its grand opening lock-in night. Wrap it up with the latest board game, and a promise to play (and lose graciously).

For the next star in the family, wrap up **"Lulu in La La Land"** by Elisabeth Wolf. It's the story of a girl whose entire family is glamorous, but she's not. Lulu likes what she likes — and what she'd like is to have her whole family at her birthday party.

Savvy young consumers will love **"Made You Look: How Advertising Works and Why You Should Know,"** by Shari Graydon and illustrated by Michelle Lamoreaux. This excellent book teaches kids to understand how and why they're being manipulated by ads, what they can do about it, and how to avoid wasting their money because of a flashy commercial. Tuck a gift certificate inside the card and see what happens.

Here's a great suggestion for your "Charlotte's Web" fan: **"The Web"** by Nette Hilton. It's the story of a young girl who loves spending time with her great-grandmother, the small creatures that share her yard, and the memory-making things they do. This is a perfect book for girls ages 8 to 12, and for their tenderhearted mothers, too. Wrap it up with **"Ready, Set, Dogs!"** by Stephanie Calmenson and Joanna Cole, a book about best friends who discover something magical about pooches.

For the historian on your list, **"Courage Has No Color: The True Story of the Triple Nickles,"** by Tanya Lee Stone, is a great book to wrap up for the holidays. It's the story of America's first elite team of black paratroopers, explaining why their story is so important, the segregation and racism they endured to do what they did, and how their achievement impacted the world.

If you've got a kid on your list who's curious about life in other countries, then you can't go wrong with **"If You Were Me and Lived in ... Norway"** by Carole P. Roman. Your armchair explorer will learn about the culture in Norway: the transportation, food, hobbies and language,

and what it's like if your kid was a Norwegian "barn."

Your budding gymnast will be excited to unwrap **"Raising the Bar"** by Olympic gymnast Gabrielle Douglas. This picture-filled autobiography includes inspirational words, advice for life, and Douglas's story in her own words and that of her family. Kids, especially those who tumble through each day, will love it. Wrap it up in an ace bandage with **"Coach Dan on Sportsmanship,"** by Dan Venezia and illustrated by Denis Proulx. It's a book that will teach young athletes how to win and lose with grace.

Young adult fiction and non-fiction

What's more fun than a paper airplane? Making your own motorboat, that's what, and in **"The Motorboat Book"** by Ed Sobey, your giftee will learn how to take everyday objects — and some ingenuity — and turn them into something that's fun in the tub or the pond. This is perfect for science lovers, ages 13 and older, and it's definitely fun for their dads, too.

For the fantasy-romantic on your list, wrap up **"Midnight Frost,"** by Jennifer Estep. The latest in the Mythos Academy series brings more danger to Gwen Frost — and someone else who happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Yes, your giftee would probably be happier with the whole Mythos Academy series. You know what you need to do.

Inspired by a true story, **"Odette's Secrets,"** by Maryann MacDonald, is the story of a young Jewish-French girl who's sent to live in the countryside during World War II. Without her parents, she assimilates into the new family she's living with, but she wants desperately to find a confidante. Wrap it up with **"Little Fish: A Memoir From a Different Kind of Year"** by Ramsey Beyer, about fitting in and finding your place in life.

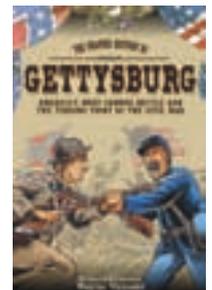
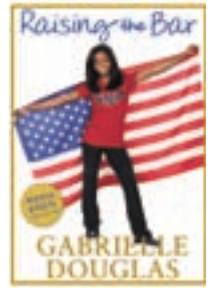
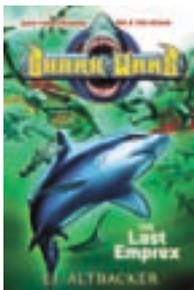
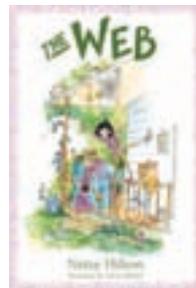
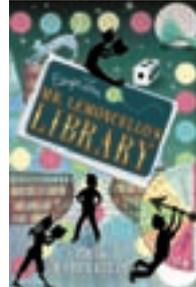
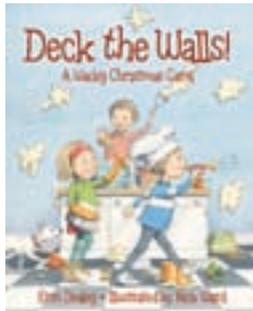
Young historians will really enjoy **"The Graphic History of Gettysburg"** by Wayne Vansant. This graphic novel (a type of comic book, for those of you not in-the-know) tells the story of what may be the Civil War's best-studied battle. And this may be your young giftee's best-studied gift.

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First, the housekeeping: some of these books may be challenging to find. Still, there you have it: gift ideas for everybody you love.

And if you don't see the perfect book on this list, throw yourself at the mercy of the friendly bookseller in your neighborhood. She knows books and making someone smile makes her smile, too.

Season's Readings!



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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

Spot the scammers

With more than one billion people on Facebook, it's inevitable that some will be crooks. Over the years, scammers have figured out plenty of ways to get Facebook users to give up important information including user names, passwords, cellphone numbers, and even credit card data.

You may think that you and your kids are savvy enough not to share that kind of personal detail. Unfortunately, clicking on the wrong Facebook link can make you a victim or an unwitting accomplice who "shares" the scam with friends. The only way to protect yourself and your network is to be aware — and make your kids aware — of the tell-tale signs that mischief is afoot. Here are some of the most common scams:

- **Freebies.** Everyone loves a deal, but online as well as off, it's wise to be skeptical about offers for free gadgets, gift cards, airline tickets, etc. Some companies do offer legitimate giveaways, but don't take Facebook's word for it. Go directly to the website of the company that is making the offer to be sure it's legit.

- **Very special videos.** Hard as it is to resist a video of your favorite celebrity, it's even harder to turn down a video that arrives with a heading like "I can't believe they got you on film!" Clicking on these links often results in a message inviting you to download a new media player. Don't! If you feel you must see the video in question, search for it by name. If it's not on YouTube or another well-known site, it's

probably a ruse to get you to download malware.

- **Apps and ads.** Most ads and apps are damaging only because they waste your time. Some, however, are nothing more than pretexts for collecting personal information. Be suspicious whenever you are asked to provide a user name, password, or any other kind of identifying data. If the app steers you to a new page, check the domain name to see if it's long and weird-looking. Any legitimate e-commerce site will have a web address that starts with https. Never respond to pop-ups that ask you to fill out a survey or download an additional bit of software.

- **Facebook features.** Some scams promise to improve your Facebook experience by, for example, changing the look of your page or allowing you to see a list of people who have looked at your profile. Facebook doesn't allow other companies to mess with the structure of the site, so don't even consider downloading anything that suggests otherwise. Also, some scammers claim to be part of the Facebook security team and threaten to close your account if you don't provide account information. On its website, Facebook makes it clear that the company will never ask for an account password, Social Security number, credit card, or pin number. If you are worried about the status of your account, go directly to the Facebook Help Section.

- **Links from friends.** Scammers take advantage of the fact that Facebook users trust their friends, so you have to be wary of links even when they are embedded in posts or messages from people you know. If a link seems out of character — a weight-loss message from someone who hates dieting — send a private message. It's possible your friend has been hacked and doesn't realize what's being posted in his name.

If you or your kids realize, after the fact, that you've clicked on something you shouldn't, don't panic. Here are specific steps that will restore security to your Facebook account:

- Change your password at facebook.com/hacked. Choose

a sequence of characters that will mean something to you but not to others. If you've used the same password for other accounts, change those passwords, too.

- Delete every copy of the scammy post or link post so other people won't get infected. To remove a post, move the cursor to its upper-right corner. When the pencil icon appears, click "delete."

- Alert your friends. Tell them your account has been compromised so they should be cautious about any messages that seem to be from you.

- Review your "likes" to be sure you actually added each one. Go through your app list, too, at www.facebook.com/settings?tab=applications. If you see any you don't recognize, delete it.

- Run your anti-virus software. Update it if necessary. Activate the "safe" feature on your browser, so you and your kids will get warnings about risky websites.

- Tighten privacy and security settings by going to the Account Settings section of Facebook (upper-right corner). While you are there, click on "active sessions" to be sure no one else is logging onto your account.

- Report scams and other problems by clicking on the "report a problem" button under settings.

The people who engineer Facebook scams are nothing if not creative, so make it a habit to visit websites that report on new scams and hoaxes. At Snopes.com, putting Facebook into the search engine brings up the real story behind a variety of common schemes. Facecrooks.com, a website devoted entirely to Facebook, has a helpful section called Scam Watch.

Like any other neighborhood, Facebook is populated mostly by trustworthy people. When those people watch out for each other, the occasional scoundrel is less likely to find gullible victims.

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 to read other columns.

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DEAR
DR. KARYN
DR. KARYN GORDON

Bullying must-knows

Dear Dr. Karyn,

I saw you on “Good Morning America” this week discussing the complex topic of bullying. As a parent of four kids, ranging from ages 6 to 17, I often struggle knowing how to respond. Are we creating a “soft generation,” or should we be more firm? I really appreciated hearing some of your thoughts. Can you share your perspective on what parents needs to know about bullying?

The topic of bullying is everywhere! Bullying has long been recognized as a problem, but parents and educators are now taking the topic seriously, to the point that there are “zero tolerance” rules in schools. So what do parents need to teach their kids about bullying? Here are my five tips:

Know the key differences between “bullying” and “teasing”: While it is a good thing that more attention is being paid toward getting rid of bullying, the problem is that kids are now likely to label every mean comment or action among friends as “bullying,” which is dangerous for two reasons:

- The term “bullying” loses its impact when it is over-used or used inappropriately
- How kids should respond to bullying is very different to teasing

The key is to understand the difference. Bullying is the correct term when there is a power imbalance and the intent is malicious. It often

involves more than one child targeting another, often with a pattern of repetition, and can be physical (hitting, punching) or social (spreading rumors) in person or online. Teasing occurs between two people whose power is the same, and frequently the roles are reversed, with both teasing the other, and the intent is not to cause harm. Feelings may be hurt by teasing, but it is important for parents to understand the context before we or our kids label someone else as a bully.

Empower your teased kids to stand up for themselves: If your kids are being teased by another child, empower them to stand up for themselves. Encourage them to face the person, give eye contact, and in a strong, assertive voice, address the issue directly, such as, “Don’t say that — that’s mean.”

Tell them to quickly change the topic (which will defuse the situation) and move onto another toy or activity. For your child’s self-respect, it’s important for him to be courageous and not have an adult rescue him! Role-play this out with your child to help him feel confident about his response. You can play your child (and how you want him to respond) and he can act out the “teaser.”

Warning: kids love to role-play, so give yourself enough time for this!

Empower your kids to report bullying to an adult: Bullying is not the time to practice conflict-resolution skills. In bullying, there is a power imbalance, so it’s important to get an adult involved to help right away. This is why differentiating between bullying and teasing is so critical for kids because the solution is different. If the adult they tell is not handling it properly, or taking it seriously enough, they need to tell another adult.

Parents also need to teach their kids about the role of the bystander. More than 85 percent of children will see bullying happen at some point during their school career — the question is what did they do? Seeing it and feeling badly about it is not enough! The key is to take action and tell someone!

Teach social and emotional learning: What’s the solution to bullying? There are many solutions, but one key solution is social and emo-

tional learning! A lot of research has shown that kids who are bullies and aggressive are actually quite sensitive themselves. The problem is that they don’t know how to express their emotions so a lot of their pain and anger comes out as aggression towards others. This doesn’t excuse it, but it helps to understand it.

Many schools across the country that have implemented social and emotional learning programs that teach skills such as empathy, conflict skills, and emotion management have experienced dramatic results with students’ academics increasing, and are also seeing bullying and acts of aggression decreasing.

Be empathetic with emotions and firm with boundaries: As parents, the key is to be empathetic yet firm — validate the emotion and have consequences for inappropriate or aggressive behavior. Part of emotional learning is understanding the difference between emotions and behavior. We cannot control how we feel — anger, sadness, hurt, frustration — but we can control our behavior.

When our kids are hurting, encourage them to talk and get their feelings out. Validate the emotion (“I understand why you feel hurt”) and listen. At the same time, have a firm boundary and consequence if a child is acting out an emotion. For example, it’s okay for a child to feel angry, but it’s not okay for the child to hit his sister. If he does, there needs to be a consequence.

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As parents, it’s our job to teach these critical skills to our kids. Research tells us that while we can intellectually teach empathy and boundaries to our kids, the best way for our kids to learn it is to experience empathy and boundaries from us — the beautiful balance between being loving yet firm!

Dr. Karyn Gordon is one of North America’s leading relationship and parenting experts. She is a regular contributor to “Good Morning America,” founder of dk Leadership, best-selling author of “Dr. Karyn’s Guide To The Teen Years” (Harper Collins), and motivational speaker to a quarter of a million people. Visit her at www.dkleadership.org and on Twitter: @DrKarynGordon.



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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Positively pregnant

Every mother can recall the moment when she found out she was pregnant. However, at the initial sign of a late period, the first place most women run to is not their doctor — it's their pharmacy, to purchase a home pregnancy test. Years ago, at-home pregnancy tests were confusing. Did you need to see two lines? What if one was faint? Were you pregnant? What if two appeared ever so slightly to make themselves known? Or were you really just imagining it, because you wanted it so badly?

Lindsay Young from Tribeca remembers when she first suspected she was pregnant.

"I was only a few days late, but I was so excited to start a family. I bought a test and the results were so confusing, I honestly had no idea if I was pregnant or not after taking it. So I bought another the next day, and it said I was not pregnant. No little line ever showed up. But a week later, still no period, so I bought another that said a plus sign would indicate a pregnancy. I received a minus sign."

Disappointed, Young says she spent \$50 dollars with all the tests and none ever showed a positive result.

"Over those three weeks, while I waited for a doctor's visit, I thought I had a really severe case of premenstrual syndrome and emotional mood swings, until they took a blood test at my midwife's office that confirmed I was actually pregnant!"

Today, more pregnancy tests take the guesswork out of the big question: am I pregnant? Once you discover the answer and find out that you do indeed have a baby on the way, the next question is almost always, how far along am I? It would be so nice to know how many weeks pregnant you might be during the anxious days between a positive pregnancy test and a doctor's visit. Now one manufacturer is making that possible.

ClearBlue, a company that has offered pregnancy tests for years, has recently unveiled its newest product, the Clearblue Advanced Pregnancy Test with Weeks Estimator. It is the only at-home test available that offers a newly pregnant woman an estimate on how many weeks



pregnant she may be by measuring the amount of human chorionic gonadotropin hormone in the urine at the time of the test. It is 99 percent accurate in confirming a pregnancy and 93 percent accurate in determining how many weeks pregnant. The results show one of the following choices: Not Pregnant; Pregnant 1-2; Pregnant 2-3; Pregnant 3+.

Dr. Rebecca Brightman, Clinical Instructor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and an OB-GYN in private practice in New York City, explains that knowing how far along a woman is in her pregnancy provides valuable benefits.

"This test takes two measurements instead of one, giving women two essential answers and more information. The additional information provided helps patients before the very first appointment. Based on test results, and how far along the patient is, that information will be

helpful to me as an OB-GYN when interacting and treating patients."

This is especially helpful for women who have irregular periods and inconsistent cycles because in these women, the typical calendar tracking method of determining a pregnancy may be faulty. Dr. Brightman notes that this test is no replacement for a doctor's visit, but rather something you would do before you can see the doctor or midwife.

"Like all home pregnancy tests, results should be confirmed by a doctor, especially when making decisions about future prenatal care. Always consult a doctor if you suspect you are pregnant and to confirm, date, and monitor pregnancy."

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 Danielle on her blog, Some Puppy To Love.

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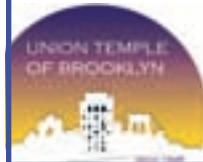
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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Why you can't rush feeding milestones

Cathy Derus's daughter is five months old and still nursing full time. But the first-time mother is keenly aware her baby will soon begin the transition to solid food.

A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics concluded that parents are often uneducated about important eating milestones. According to the study, 40 percent of parents give solid food to their babies before they reach the age of four months, and nine percent give solids to babies as early as four weeks.

Readiness and pacing

Usually around six months of age, babies are interested in solids, especially when they are able to sit up.

"They should also be able to have good head control, reducing tongue thrust, and willingness to lean forward toward foods and sit back when done," according to certified

pediatric nutrition specialist Florence DiMarco.

Some mothers are proud their babies can handle the spoon earlier. But DiMarco disagrees.

"Solids initiation is exciting, but starting too soon — before six months — does not mean that babies are developing better."

Cup drinking can also be encouraged around the same time solids begin.

At one time, rice cereal was the first solid food, followed by other single-grain cereals, then fruit and

vegetables, and finally meat. Now, there is no strict sequence of which solids should be introduced first.

DiMarco recommends offering one new food a time, then waiting for a couple of days to see if baby shows signs of an allergic reaction.

"There is also concern for possible food allergy or intolerance if solids are started too soon," she adds. "Nevertheless, delaying solids initiation for more than eight months does not prove to prevent food allergy either."

What hasn't changed is the use of cow's milk or its alternatives in the dairy case. They are not recommended before the age 1.



Pomegranate Relish

Makes two to four servings
Prep time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

For POM Molasses:

3 cups POM Wonderful 100% Pomegranate Juice
1/4 cup sugar
1 lemon, juiced

For Relish:

1/2 cup arils from POM Wonderful Pomegranates
1 tablespoon POM Molasses
3 tablespoons finely diced shallots
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon sliced flat-leaf parsley
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

POM Molasses: Combine pomegranate juice, sugar, and juice from



one lemon in a saucepan; bring to a simmer. Reduce until a very thick syrup forms that can thickly coat the back of a spoon, then cool to room temperature.

Relish: Prepare fresh arils. Place the shallots, lemon juice, and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a small bowl and let sit five minutes. Whisk in the POM Molasses and then the olive oil. Stir in the fresh arils and the parsley.

Taste for balance and seasoning. Suggest serving on toasted crostini with brie.

NUTRITION INFORMATION: 30 calories (0 calories from fat), 1 g protein, 7 g carbohydrates, 1 g total fat (0 g saturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 95 mg sodium, 1 g dietary fiber, 2 g sugars, 36 mcg vitamin A, 4 mg vitamin C.

Suzanne Goin, Chef & Restaurateur, Lucques, A.O.C., and Tavern Restaurants, Los Angeles, Calif.

The path to healthy eating

By eight or 10 months, most babies are able to sit up independently, grasp finger foods, and able to start to chew. By 12 months, their skills get more and more refined for grasping foods and chewing.

Of course, fresh, one-ingredient foods are preferable to prepackaged items with food coloring, preservatives, or nitrites and nitrates.

Derus is looking forward to her baby's next stage.

"While I was pregnant with Monica, we joked we had a foodie baby on our hands. Now that she's about to start eating solids, we can't wait for her to taste the foods she smelled during our cooking and eating."

Christine Palumbo is a registered dietitian nutritionist in Naperville, Ill. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.



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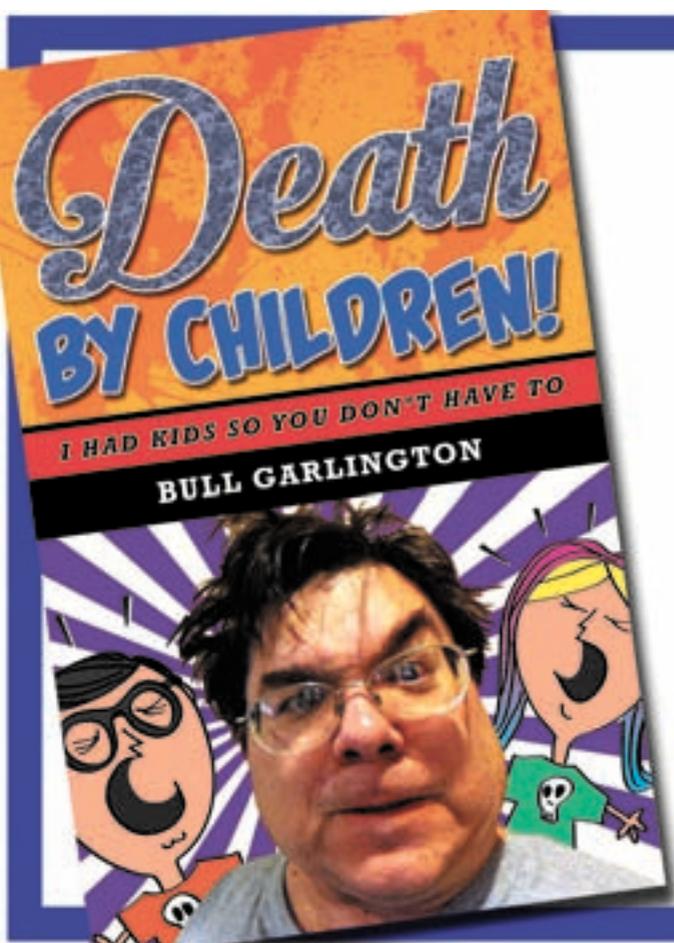
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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

New Year's promise

Most folks get excited about the promise of a new year. Some might choose to start a daily exercise routine or spend more time with family in order to facilitate a positive lifestyle change. Many of us go into these resolutions with gusto, determined to make a change, only to find that a few weeks later, our enthusiasm has quelled with the whirlwind of everyday life.

As a teenager, I pledged to stop biting my nails on several New Year's Eves, only to find that by mid-gymnastics season, they were bitten down to stubs again. As an adult, I botched several new exercise regimens.

Is it more difficult for teens to keep their New Year's promises? After all, this is the crowd that quickly ditched Facebook for Twitter and Aeropostale for Forever 21. Can parents help their teens find resolutions that are successful, or is this a pipe dream considering many parents can't stick to their own?

The fickle teen

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, teens can be impulsive.

"The parts of the brain involved in keeping emotional, impulsive responses in check are still reaching maturity. Such a changing balance might provide clues to a youthful appetite for novelty, and a tendency to act on impulse" ("The Teen Brain: Still Under Construction," 2011).

Most teens don't stick with much of anything for very long, changing their minds frequently about fashion, music, and social networking apps. However, does it follow that teens are less likely to adhere to resolutions than adults?

Dr. Robert Epstein, senior research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology and author of "Teen 2.0: Saving Our Children and Families from the Torment of Adolescence," believes that teens are no more likely to bail on resolutions than adults.

"Resolutions, by their very nature, are hard to keep, because they almost always deal with destructive, deeply entrenched habits people have had for years," he says. "If any-



thing, teens have a better chance now and then of keeping their resolutions simply because those bad habits aren't so old."

Susan Kuczmarzski, EdD, author of "The Sacred Flight of the Teenager: A Parent's Guide to Stepping Back and Letting Go," encourages families to familiarize their children with resolutions when they are young.

"Then, when they become teens, they will relish the opportunity. It gives them a chance to focus on something that is meaningful and familiar."

Define specific goals

First, define the goal (e.g. better homework habits), and then find a focused activity to support it (e.g. keeping the cellphone out of sight while studying, etc.). If a teen feels strongly about making a change, she'll likely stick with it.

Kuczmarzski recommends that families work on resolutions together and make it a regular New Year's event. She suggests that families discuss personal growth and what each member would like to learn and acquire in the New Year.

Teens should choose goals that are attainable to avoid becoming quickly discouraged. Running six miles a day, for instance, when a teen has a full schedule of activities, might not be feasible. On the other hand, a 20-minute run three days per week is a more practical goal.

Persistence and resilience

Kuczmarzski says that the advent of a New Year is a perfect time to

talk about the importance of sticking with something that is meaningful.

"If teens don't continue with the resolution, then it is a great time to talk about the value of persistence, resilience, risk-taking, and that it is okay to fail," she explains.

Parents need to stress that taking chances and trying new things is better than not having tried at all.

"Many successes were first 'failures.' Starting over again and giving it another try is how new services and products are introduced and launched," Kuczmarzski points out. "Learning to stick to a resolution is part of the process of discovery."

Kuczmarzski says that this time of year is a great way for families to bond by sharing dreams and helping each other reach goals.

Teens' tips and tales

"I occasionally make New Year's resolutions, but I rarely stick to them religiously. I believe they can be useful if people actually force themselves to follow them. They can be the perfect way to either break a bad habit or to create a new beneficial habit."

John Ackerman (age 17), Staatsburg, NY

"You have to be very motivated. I would rather make a lot of little resolutions throughout the year."

Mali Holmes (age 16), Evergreen, CO

"I haven't really bought into the whole New Year's resolution thing. If there's something I want to do, though, I try it (new homework habits, fitness routines, etc.). Most often, I don't stick to these resolutions."

Hannah Vuozzo (age 17), Salt Point, NY

Share your ideas

Upcoming topic: The effect of divorce on the teen psyche. Ways parents can ease the transition.

Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to myrnahaskell@gmail.com, or visit www.myrnahaskell.com

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist, and author of "Lions And Tigers And Teens: Expert Advice and Support for the Conscientious Parent Just Like You" (Unlimited Publishing LLC, 2012) available at Amazon.com.

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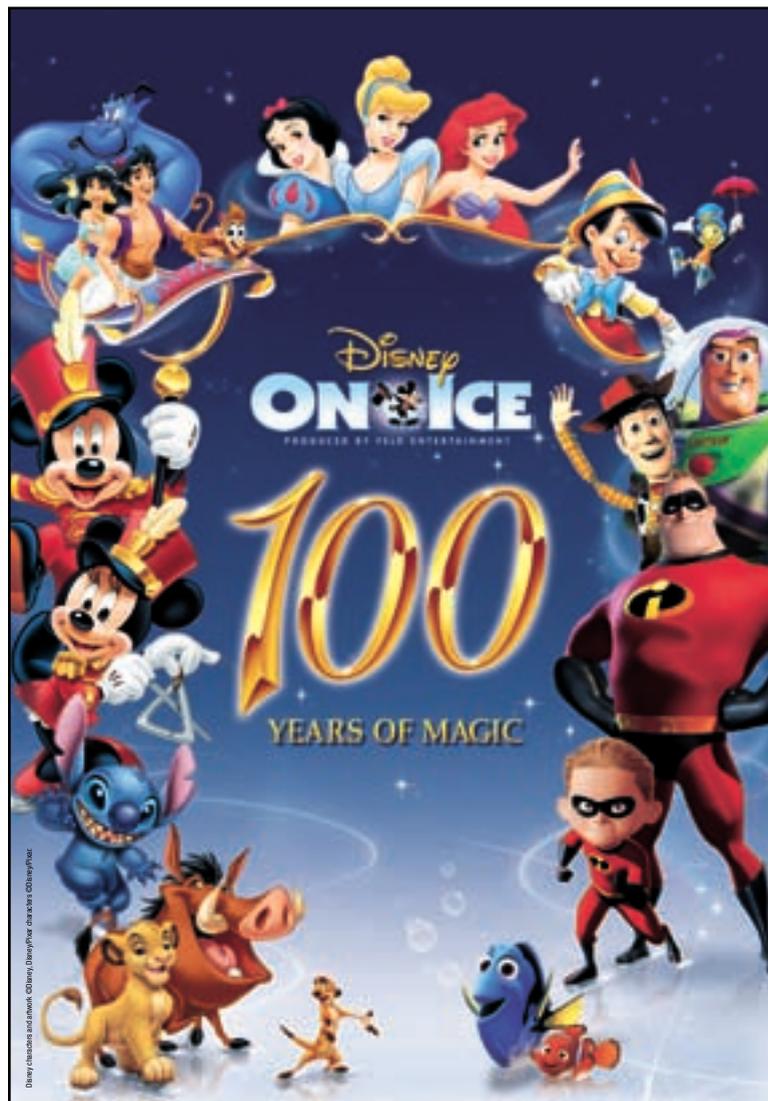
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LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

You pick your lawyer

I received a call from a man interested in mediation. Ultimately, his wife did not want to pursue it, and since mediation requires that both spouses agree to the process, we never met for a session. That's as it should be. Mediation is a voluntary process. The parties have freedom to reach their own agreements — or not to agree, and not even to attend a first session.

The man, who also has kids, called me sometime later. He thanked me for informing him about how mediation works, even though he was unable to participate himself. He said he liked mediation's forward-looking approach that encourages parties to examine and understand their current situations, and to consider their respective needs (and their children's). With that foundation, spouses are helped to develop options to meet those needs, which often include money and a place to live, returning to school, or changing careers.

The past is not ignored in mediation, but it is de-emphasized. Unlike the courts, which weigh and assess blame for past actions, mediators help the parties to deal with the here and now, and with how to plan for and create the most positive future for each family member.

The man shared with me that he had hired an attorney, as his wife had done earlier. Further, he said that he liked my approach (really the approach of many mediators) much

better than his lawyer's. His lawyer was being antagonistic towards his spouse and looking for what his client could get, seemingly without any regard for the effects his aggressive tactics might have on the future parenting relationship and the impact on the children — which were very much at the forefront of the client's mind.

The client seemed to believe that his divorce case would have a better outcome, for his wife and children as well as for himself, if his lawyer were open to working cooperatively with opposing counsel (while of course safeguarding his client's rights) rather than behaving like a steamroller.

Yet, the man was apparently reluctant to openly question his attorney — and this reluctance, to my mind, is a great problem that many clients have.

I did not advise the caller, and do not know who was representing him. But I did share the thought that, “your attorney works for you.”

In mediation, the lawyers are acknowledged to be experts — in the law, that is. But they are not the experts when it comes to their clients' lives. The clients themselves are the experts in that realm.

Think about it — who knows better about your wants and needs, you or your lawyer? Who knows your children better, you and your spouse, or your attorney who has

probably never met your kids?

Your legal eagle can help you get where you want to go, but shouldn't you be the pilot, or perhaps more appropriately, the co-pilot in your own case?

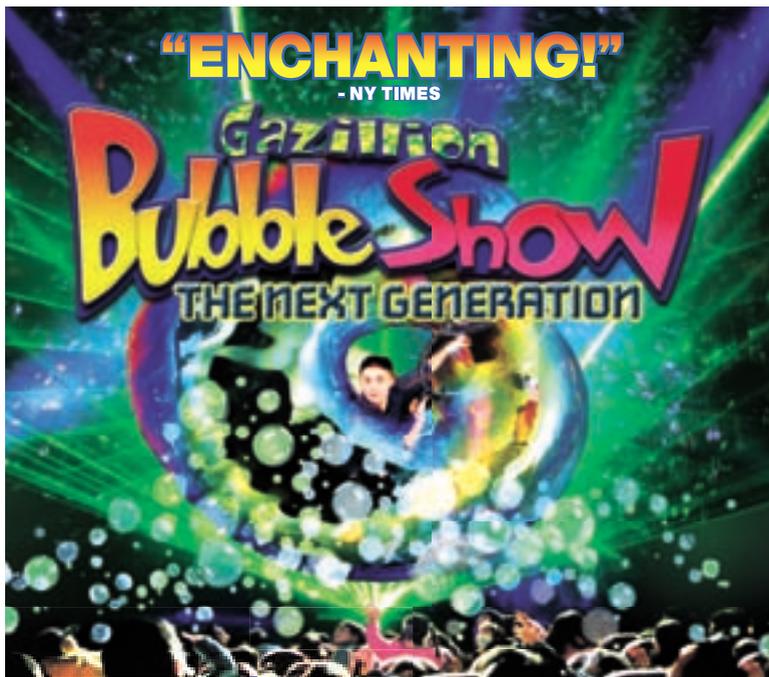
It is not uncommon (but it is most unfortunate), that clients allow or even look to their lawyers to make all of the important decisions about the clients' lives. Whereas, in my view, the more preferable relationship for both client and attorney is a partnership between them, where clients can easily ask questions, and their expertise in their own lives is fully respected.

Your lawyer is there to advise and advocate for you, and you should carefully consider everything he has to say. But you are the one writing the check, and ultimately many decisions come down to you, including whether the attorney you have interviewed or hired is the right one for you.

New York City- and Long Island-based family and divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin, Esq., helps clients resolve their disputes respectfully and without going to court. He is also the director of Training and Court Program Development at Community Mediation Services, Inc. in Queens. Contact him at lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com or (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/>. Like him on Facebook.

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A LETTER FROM COLLEGE

AGLAIA HO

No place like home

People say that the grass is greener on the other side. Living in New York City my entire life, I have my own lengthy list of complaints about my hometown. I have always scorned the crowds of tourists, resented the materialistic nature of the city, lamented the lack of trees and parks, and groaned about the inconvenience of public transportation. However, living away from home as a freshman in college — in an environment so different from what I am used to — I have come to appreciate the city, and the people back home who have influenced my life.

Coming back home during break has been one of the most valuable experiences of my life. It has taught me to never take for granted the security of familiarity and the love of my family.

As I approach the end of my first semester, I look back on the whirlwind of an adventure I have experienced. The first few weeks were nothing but fun, meeting new friends and professors, exploring the school, and joining extracurricular activities. Living away from home came with so much excitement. Transitioning from high school to college felt a lot easier than I had expected. During the first month of school, I was surprised by how quickly I took to the college experience. My school became like a second home to me, and the students in my dorm grew to be a second family.

The happiness I felt during the first month at college was almost too good to be true. The initial thrill

of novelty soon began to wear off. What once was a beautiful walk to class, marveling at the landscape around me, became a long trek and daily chore. The enthusiasm I had for my new classes soon diminished and suddenly, I realized that school will always be school. There seemed to be so much to do during the first few weeks at school, but all the activities seemed to disappear or be trumped by the priority of schoolwork. The homework began to pile up. The friends I made early on were rarely seen during the day. I suddenly felt lonely and desperately homesick.

Up until this point, my college experience had seemed much like a summer camp, down to even toasting marshmallows around a fire during orientation. All along, being at college had seemed like a temporary ordeal. I would be living away from home for a short period of time and my purpose was to live the storybook college experience. However, after a month living in this made-up fantasy, the reality sunk in that college was a much more permanent situation. The homesickness I felt now had always been in me. It was only realized when my new life had settled into a routine.

I found myself longing to be back home in the city. What used to bother me about the Big Apple soon became aspects I missed most dearly. I loved my college, because it was a utopia of sorts — but I pined for the drama of the big city. I also missed my best friends from home and my family. I had been communicating with them, actually quite frequently, but I sensed that a distance was developing between us. I longed to talk to my friends face-to-face and sit at the dining table with my parents and chat about our days.

Luckily for me, my homesickness was only short-lived, for I had the opportunity to go home during study break. Returning was an emotional experience. When I embraced my parents for the first time in a month, I was filled with mixed emotions. It came to me that much time had passed since I had last seen them. Yet, I was blessed for the opportunity I had to talk to them. The time I did spend with my family was often more

meaningful than our usual time together when I was still living at home. Rather than bolting from the dining room table after dinner, this time, I lingered. All I wanted was to hear my parents' voices, tell them stories about my college life, and hear whatever advice they could offer.

Being in the city for a short period of time truly inspired me to fully utilize my time. Rather than moping around or surfing the web, I did not waste a second. I enjoyed dinner with my grandmother and my cousin, who is also a college student. We rekindled our relationship over a Peking duck dinner in Flushing. I spent another evening catching up over sushi with my best friend from elementary school. An afternoon was spent on a shopping spree, an activity I never thought I would miss so dearly.

Another day, I played tourist in the Lower East Side, seeing the city in a completely different way. My parents and I ate our way through the neighborhood. I had my first pastrami sandwich at Katz's Deli and my first bialy. We relished pickles from Pickle Guys, classy donuts at the Doughnut Plant, and expensive gelato at Il Laboratorio del Gelato.

By the end of my visit in New York City, I recognized that, while the city was home, I did have a strong connection to my college. I realized that the animated stories I told my friends and family at home about my college experience stemmed from my love and pride for my school. My constant remembrance of my dormmates, even bringing back bagels and lox for them, reminded me that I had made close friends. The time was right for me to return to college.

I am fortunate that my college is not too far from home. Hence, as the holidays approach, I am more than thrilled to be returning home again. I no longer take for granted the beautiful city I call home. The time I spend there with friends and family will be more memorable than ever. This trip home will be one of appreciation for the place and people who have allowed me to expand my horizons and soar.

Aglaia Ho is a freshman at Williams College and a native New Yorker.



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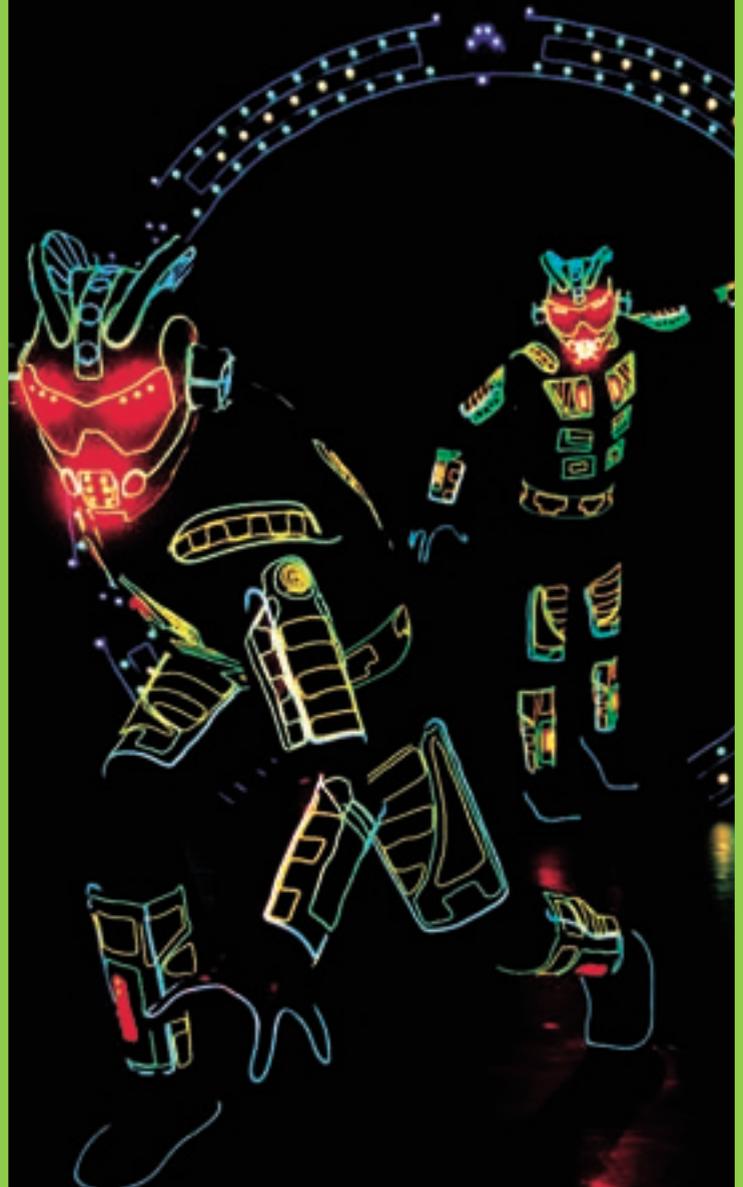
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Calendar

DECEMBER



Colonial Nutcracker comes to Brooklyn

Will Clara rescue the prince and save the day? Find out when the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College presents "The Colonial Nutcracker" on Dec. 15.

The production, performed by the Dance Theater in Westchester and geared for children ages 4 to 10, is based on Tchaikovsky's classic ballet and set in colonial Yorktown during the Revolutionary War. It features classic movements,

including "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" and "Waltz of the Snowflakes." Of course there is the red-coated mouse army, an enchanted nutcracker prince, and the timeless story of childhood innocence and happy fairy-tale endings.

"The Colonial Nutcracker," Dec. 15 at 2 pm. \$10.

Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College [Campus Rd. at Hillel Place in Flatbush (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org].

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

Submit a listing

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

Send your listing request to 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!

SAT, NOV. 30

IN BROOKLYN

Shapes and things: 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 learn how triangles come together to form a pyramid or circles and lines make a face.

Fantastic tunnels: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 11:30 am, 1:30 and 3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Learn all about the train tunnels beneath the city.

"Miracle on 34th Street": Shore Hill Community Center, 9000 Shore Rd. at 91st Street; NCT@nctheatery.com; 8 pm; \$10–\$20.

The Narrows Community Theater performs the holiday classic in a musical.

SUN, DEC. 1

IN BROOKLYN

Arty facts: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 11 am and 1:30 pm; \$10 materials fee plus museum admission.

Children 4 to 7 years old explore the galleries, enjoy an activity and take an art class.

Meet the holiday: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am and 2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children celebrate Hanukkah and make a themed gift bag to take home.

Shapes and things: 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

Fantastic tunnels: 11:30 am, 1:30



Photo by Gerry Goodstein

'Hiccup' for all ages

Yikes! It's "Hiccup Help" at the Kumble Theater at Long Island University on Dec. 3 and 4.

To celebrate the troupe's 55 seasons of performing for children, the Paper Bag Players are performing a bit of the old and a bit of the new.

Old favorites include "Lost in the Mall," "That's Good," and "A Perfect Picture," plus the newest addition, "Hiccup Help."

The funny, fast-paced, and thrilling show is suitable for children ages 3 years old and up.

This production focuses on the

relationships between child and parent, child and grandparent, and child with siblings, friends, and teachers.

Sshh! There's also a surprise party for Judy — and you're invited.

"Hiccup Help," on Dec. 3 and 4, performances are at 10 am and noon. Tickets are \$8; Discounts available for the afternoon production on both days.

Kumble Theater at Long Island University [DeKalb and Flatbush avenues in Fort Greene, (718) 488-1624; www.brooklyn.liu.edu/kumble-theater].

and 3 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

"Anne Frank, A History for Today": Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, 7420 Fourth Ave. at 74th Street; (718) 745-8520; 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm; Free.

The exhibit offers to shed light on the lessons of hope and compassion revealed in Anne Frank's story.

Winter on the farm: Lefferts His-

toric Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; 1–4 pm; \$3.

Learn how to make a patchwork quilt and spin wool into thread. Also enjoy Dutch treats and a visit from St. Nicholas.

Spin the Dreidel: Bay Ridge Jewish Center, 405 81st St. at Fourth Avenue; (718) 836-3103; office@bayridgejewishcenter.org; 2–4 pm; \$10 (\$5 children

(\$15 non-members; \$10 children).

Spin and enjoy a day of food, entertainment, and latkes. RSVP required.

"Miracle on 34th Street": 2 pm. Shore Hill Community Center. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

Grinch day: Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave.; (718) 832-9066; 3 pm; Free.

Celebrate the season with a reading of the Dr. Seuss classic, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas."

Tree lighting: Visitation Academy, 90th Street and Ridge Boulevard; 6:30 pm; Free.

Annual event, nativity, and mass, plus announcing the Faculty Award honorees.

MON, DEC. 2

IN BROOKLYN

Shape Up NYC: Red Hook Recreation Center, 155 Bay St. at Clinton Street; (212) 360-3304; www.nycgov-parks.org; 4–4:45 pm; Free.

Girls get 6 to 13 years old learn all about fitness and fun.

TUES, DEC. 3

IN BROOKLYN

"Hiccup Help": Kumble Theater at Long Island University, DeKalb and Flatbush avenues; (718) 488-1624; www.brooklyn.liu.edu/KumbleTheater; 10 am and noon; \$8.

Show for children of all ages presented by The Paper Bag Players.

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

Learn about the traditions behind Hanukkah.

Tree lighting: Belarusian Church, 401 Atlantic Ave. and Bond Street; 6–8:30 pm.

Councilman Stephen Levin is officiating at the annual lighting ceremony and holiday party featuring the dancers from Dancewave and PS 38.

Hanukkah celebration: King & Grove Hotel (rooftop lounge), 160 North St. between Berry Street and Bedford Avenue; (718) 407-6377; info@northjwilliamsburg.org; 6–8 pm; Free.

Family arts and crafts, interactive storytelling, sing-alongs with Gilad, and latkes and donut-eating contest. Hosted by the Kings Bay Y North. RSVP required.

Continued on page 56

Calendar

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

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WED, DEC. 4

IN BROOKLYN

"Hiccup Help": 10 am and noon. Kumble Theater at Long Island University. See Tuesday, Dec. 3.

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

Children celebrate the holiday and make a decoration to take home.

"The Elf on the Shelf": Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 4 pm; Free.

A holiday tradition with crafts and fun activities.

City Stomp: Dizzy's Diner, 230 Fifth Ave. at President Street; (718) 230-5551; 5 pm and 6:30 pm; Free with a dinner reservation.

Tree Lighting: The Gazebo at Shore Road Park, Shore Road and 90th Street; 6:30 pm; Free.

Welcome in the holiday season with entertainment provided by the Xaverian High School Glee Club and Band, the Guild for Exceptional Children Chorus and musician Mary Carosino. Santa will be on hand along with light refreshments and, of course, the lighting of the Christmas Tree. Presented by the Shore Road Parks Conservancy. (Rain Date: Dec. 5).

FURTHER AFIELD

Franken Science: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 3:30-6 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children in grades three to four become mad scientists and learn all about science.

THURS, DEC. 5

IN BROOKLYN

Transit Tots: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 10:15 am; Free with museum admission.

Children 2 to 5 years old with parent or caregiver listen to stories, play games, and learn fun facts about the transit system.

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

Children make a Star of David to take home.

FURTHER AFIELD

Weird Science: Grades 1-2: New

York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 3:30-6 pm; Free with museum admission.

Explore the weird and fascinating world of science with fun hands-on activities.

FRI, DEC. 6

IN BROOKLYN

Gingerbread Fun: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Listen to the classic tale of The Gingerbread Man and make one to take home.

Shabbat service: Bay Ridge Jewish Center, 405 81st St. at Fourth Avenue; (718) 836-3103; office@bayridgejewishcenter.org; 6 pm; \$20 (\$25 non-members, \$10 children).

Worship and then dine on a Russian-themed dinner. RSVP before Nov. 26.

"Polar Express": Barnes and Noble, 106 Court St. between State and Schermerhorn streets; (718) 832-9066; 7 pm; Free.

Long before the movie there was the book.

"Polar Express": Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 7 pm; Free.

Long before the movie there was the book.

"Miracle on 34th Street": 8 pm. Shore Hill Community Center. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

FURTHER AFIELD

A Night at the Museum Sleepovers: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; 6 pm; \$145 per person, \$135 (members).

Break out your sleeping bags and experience the museum like never before. This unique after-hours program will thrill kids ages 6 to 13 and their caregivers.

SAT, DEC. 7

IN BROOKLYN

"ET the Extra Terrestrial": BAM Kids, 30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place; (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org; 11 am; \$7 (\$9 adults).

"Go home" with this kid-friendly movie directed by Steven Spielberg.

Gingerbread Fun: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Listen to the classic tale of The Gingerbread Man and make one to take home.

St. Nicholas Day: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Hear stories and create a greeting card.

Holiday fiesta: PS 77, 62 Park Pl. between Fifth and Sixth avenues; Noon-5 pm; \$12.

Performances by members of Dance-wave Dance companies.

Create a station: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages fashion a terminal city of their own, with trains, tunnels, skyscrapers, roadways, and more.

"Puppets & Poets": The Bushwick Starr, 207 Starr St. between Wyckoff and Irving avenues; www.thebushwickstarr.org; 3 pm; \$15.

A festival from Alphabet Arts exploring and celebrating poetry and puppetry. Family-friendly program for all ages.

Night Sky: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 6 pm; Free.

Join with rangers and learn all about the stars and view them.

"Miracle on 34th Street": 8 pm. Shore Hill Community Center. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

SUN, DEC. 8

IN BROOKLYN

Holiday event: Dyker Beach Golf Course, Seventh Ave. at 86th Street; (718) 238-4466; www.jbrooklynsocial.com; 10:30 am-12:30 pm and 2-5:30 pm; Call for tickets.

Shopping opportunities, fun activities, and food. Hosted by HOM.

The Suzi Shelton Band: Shape-shifter Lab, 18 Whitewell Pl. between Carroll and First streets; (646) 820-9452; 11 am; \$15 (\$10 advance), free for babies.

Holiday concert with Melanie Hope Greenberg telling stories from her book "Celebrations, Our Jewish Holidays," crafts, face painting, and more.

Arty facts: 11 am and 1:30 pm. Brooklyn Museum. See Sunday, Dec. 1.

Gingerbread Fun: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Listen to the classic tale of The Gingerbread Man and make one to take

home.

St. Nicholas Day: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Hear stories and create a greeting card.

Story time: powerHouse on 8th, 1111 Eighth Ave. between 11th and 12th streets; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 11:30 am; Free.

Alexis Barad-Cutler, author of "Who Are We?" will read. RSVP requested.

Waltz of the flowers: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; Noon-1:30 pm and 2-2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Explore the world of "The Nutcracker" in this workshop geared to children 4 to 12 years old featuring ballet instruction crafting and investigating flowering plants. Pre-registration required.

Create a station: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 7.

"The Nutcracker": The Master Theater, 1029 Brighton Beach Ave. at Coney Island Avenue at Brighton 11th Street; (718) 732-3838; www.mastertheater.com; 2 pm; \$35-\$65.

Performed by the New York Children's Dance Theater. The holiday ballet features Irina Dvorenko and Maxim Beloserkovsky.

"Miracle on 34th Street": 2 pm. Shore Hill Community Center. See Saturday, Nov. 30.

Kids Holiday party: PowerHouse Arena, 37 Main St. at Water Street; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 3-4 pm; Free.

Take a picture with Santa and listen to holiday stories by children's writers including David Soman, Jacky Davis, and Maria Modugno. RSVP requested.

"Puppets & Poets": 3 pm. The Bushwick Starr. See Saturday, Dec. 7.

MON, DEC. 9

IN BROOKLYN

Shape Up NYC: 4-4:45 pm. Red Hook Recreation Center. See Monday, Dec. 2.

TUES, DEC. 10

IN BROOKLYN

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

Toys for Tots donations accepted, cards and items mailed to overseas troops; visit from Santa Claus, hot

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chocolate. Hosted by State Sen. Marty Golden (R-Bay Ridge).

WED, DEC. 11

IN BROOKLYN

Tree lighting: McKinley Park, Bay Ridge Parkway and Ft. Hamilton Parkway; (718) 238-6044; 6:30 pm; Free.

Toys for Tots donations accepted, cards and items mailed to overseas troops, a visit from Santa Claus, and hot chocolate.

THURS, DEC. 12

IN BROOKLYN

Transit Tots: 10:15 am. New York Transit Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 5.

SAT, DEC. 14

IN BROOKLYN

Santa's visit: Mara's Cafe & Bakery, 88 Livingston St. at Court Street; (718) 522-6461; www.marascfe.com; 9 am-11 am.

Create a wish list and then present it to the Jolly Old Elf himself Santa Claus.

"Angelina Ballerina - The Very Merry Holiday Musical": Kingsborough Community College, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org; 10:30 am; \$12.

Angelina and her best friends are planning a holiday dance pageant — the best in all of Mouseland.

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

Noel Pointer presents string instruments performing seasonal standards.

Christmas Boutique: Bishop Ford High School, 500 19th St. and 10th Avenue; (718) 360-2500; 1-7 pm; Free.

Get an early start on shopping with a variety of vendors. Santa will also be on hand and there will be fun activities for the young ones.

"The Nutcracker": Kumble Theater at Long Island University, DeKalb and Flatbush avenues; (718) 488-1624; www.brooklyn.liu.edu/KumbleTheater; 1 pm and 4 pm; \$15 (\$10 children).

Cobble Hill Ballet performs the holiday classic.

Junior Engineer: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years and older learn about the unique design invented by Alfred Ely Beach, the Pneumatic Subway.



Meet St. Nicholas

Have 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 visit to the Lefferts Historic Homestead on Dec. 1.

Children will learn all about life on a winter farm and discover how to make a patchwork quilt, and

spin wool into thread. Dutch treats and cookies add to the excitement. Also on board is a visit from the jolly old elf himself, St. Nicholas.

"Winter on the Farm" on Dec. 1, from 1 to 4 pm. \$3.

Lefferts Historic Homestead [425 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org].

Winter Arts Festival: Bishop Ford High School, 500 19th St. and 10th Avenue; (718) 360-2500; 2 pm; \$5.

Students perform holiday favorites with song and dance.

Night Sky: Prospect Park Picnic House, Prospect Park West and Fifth Street; www.prospectpark.org; 6 pm; Free.

Join with rangers and learn about the stars and then view them.

Jingle Bell Jamboree: Congregation Beth Elohim, 274 Garfield Pl. at Eighth Avenue; www.parkslopecivic-council.org; 7 pm; \$10.

Annual holiday concert with performances from the MS 51 Show Choir, the Mark Morris Dance Group, the Brooklyn Community Chorus, and more.

SUN, DEC. 15

IN BROOKLYN

Arty facts: 11 am and 1:30 pm. Brooklyn Museum. See Sunday, Dec. 1.

Selina Alko: powerHouse on 8th, 1111 Eighth Ave. between 11th and

12th streets; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 11:30 am; Free.

Author and illustrator of "Daddy Christmas" and "Hanukkah Mama." RSVP requested.

"The Nutcracker": 1 pm and 4 pm. Kumble Theater at Long Island University. See Saturday, Dec. 14.

Junior Engineer: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 14.

"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 annual holiday favorite is presented by the Dance Theatre in Westchester. Suitable for children 4 years and older.

Portraits with Santa: Yuppy Puppy/Green Pup, 544 Union St. between Third and Nevins streets; (347) 799-1812; 2-3 pm; Free.

Bring in the family and your pet for a free photo shoot with the head elf,

Santa.

MON, DEC. 16

IN BROOKLYN

Shape Up NYC: 4-4:45 pm. Red Hook Recreation Center. See Monday, Dec. 2.

Portraits with Santa: 5-6 pm. Yuppy Puppy/Green Pup. See Sunday, Dec. 15.

TUES, DEC. 17

IN BROOKLYN

Wrapping paper workshop: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am and 2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children discover how the holiday is celebrated all over the world and then make their own gift paper.

WED, DEC. 18

IN BROOKLYN

City Stomp: 5 pm and 6:30 pm. Dizzy's Diner. See Wednesday, Dec. 4.

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

Children make wintry garland to take home.

THURS, DEC. 19

IN BROOKLYN

Dartmouth One World Choir: Kumble Theater at Long Island University, DeKalb and Flatbush avenues; (718) 488-1624; www.brooklyn.liu.edu/KumbleTheater; 10:15 am and 11:15 am; \$7.

Singing holiday favorites celebrating Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and Three Kings Day.

Transit Tots: 10:15 am. New York Transit Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 5.

Free Thursday Night: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3-7 pm; Free.

Join in for a late night at the museum, explore and have fun.

Holiday card workshop: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am and 2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children create a special card to give to that special someone.

Continued on page 58

Continued from page 57

FRI, DEC. 20

IN BROOKLYN

Hangin' ornaments workshop:

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

Children make an ornament to take home.

SAT, DEC. 21

IN BROOKLYN

Santa's visit: 9 am–11 am. Mara's Cafe & Bakery. See Saturday, Dec. 14.

"A Christmas Story": BAM Kids, 30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place; (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org; 11 am; \$9 (\$8 club members; \$7 children 12 and under).

The perennial holiday classic based on the memoirs of Jean Shepherd is the story of Ralphie and his desire for a Red Rider BB gun for Christmas present.

Ho, ho, ho: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Children hear holiday stories.

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

Amelia Robinson brings holiday cheer with her unique, quirky ukulele music.

Travelin' Treats: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 years and older assembly candies, cookies, and cakes into edible masterpieces. Space limited, registration required.

"Uncle Money Bags": St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 259 Washington Ave. between Dekalb and Willoughby Avenues; (917) 751-6202; 2 pm; \$25 (\$20 seniors; \$15 kids).

A Christmas special presentation written by Gloria Cartwright-Hunter and directed by Jewel Mendoza.

"An R&B Christmas": 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.

Featuring the music of The Drifters, The Coasters, The Shirelles, and more.



A festival of fairy tales

Firebone Theatre presents "Long, Long, Ago," a musical mash up of three popular fairy tales beginning on Dec. 5 at Space 38139.

This production combines Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant," Charles Perrault's "The Fairies," and the Grimm Brothers' "Hans Dumm" into a unique holiday festival series of performances for all ages. Families will enjoy music, laughter, and the ever-comforting milk

and cookies.

"Long, Long, Ago" Dec. 5 through Dec. 20, at 7 pm, with special performances on Dec. 7 at 2 pm, Dec. 10 at 11 am, Dec. 14 at 2 pm, and Dec. 17 at 11 am. Tickets are \$20 for adults, and \$15 for children 15 and under, which includes the cookies and milk.

Space 38139 (38 W. 39th St. between Fifth and Sixth avenues in the Garment District, www.firebonetheatre.com).

SUN, DEC. 22

IN BROOKLYN

Artie Bennett: powerHouse on 8th, 1111 Eighth Ave. between 11th and 12th streets; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 11:30 am; Free.

The man of butts and more is bringing his latest children's book "Poopen-dous" for reading, crafting, face painting, and more.

Travelin' Treats: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 years and older assembly candies, cookies, and cakes into edible masterpieces. Space limited, registration required.

"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.brooklyncenteronline.org; 4 pm; \$35-\$50.

The magical Christmas musical where a young girl is transformed by Grandfather Frost into a beautiful maiden. Recommended for children 6 years and older.

TUES, DEC. 24

IN BROOKLYN

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

Get into the holiday spirit by singing carols and hearing cherished stories.

THURS, DEC. 26

IN BROOKLYN

Joyous Kwanzaa: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am and

2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Explore the popular cultural holiday and make a banner to take home.

FRI, DEC. 27

IN BROOKLYN

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

Children make a necklace as a zawadi, or gift for a friend.

Learn about Kwanzaa: 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; 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children performance and learn the seven principals of the holiday.

SAT, DEC. 28

IN BROOKLYN

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

Children learn about the holiday and make fun project to take home.

Families celebrate Kwanzaa: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Join with the Harris family and celebrate.

Miles of Tiles: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 years and older discover the art of mosaics that decorate the subway stations throughout the system.

Wearable Art: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 6 pm; Free.

Children use recycled materials to create fun fashions.

SUN, DEC. 29

IN BROOKLYN

Wilderness survival: McCaren Park, Nassau Ave. at Lorimer Street; (718) 421-2021; 11 am; Free.

Children 8 years old and up learn how to survive incase of an emergency.

New Year's Eve celebration: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Welcome in 2014.

Miles of Tiles: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 28.

TUES, DEC. 31

IN BROOKLYN

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

Learn about the traditions behind the party and make a party hat to welcome in the new year.

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

Celebrate the new year Brooklyn style with a concert, refreshments and the annual fireworks display.

LONG-RUNNING

IN BROOKLYN

"Album Tracks: Subway Record Covers": New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/

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museum; Tuesdays – Fridays, 10 am–4 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am–5 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 12, 2014; \$7 (\$5 children and seniors).

Exhibition celebrates album artwork that features the New York City subway and elevated system.

Pop-up Audubon: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287–3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Saturdays and Sundays, Noon–4 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 29; Free.

Explore the wilds of the park.

Introduction to bird watching: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287–3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Saturdays, Noon–1 pm and 1–2 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 28; Free.

Children learn about the over 250 species of birds that call Prospect Park home.

“Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp”: Puppetworks, 338 Sixth Ave. at Fourth Street; (718) 965–3391; www.puppetworks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 pm and 2:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 22; \$9 (\$8 children).

Puppet adaptation of the most famous of the 1001 tales of the Arabian Nights.

Open ice skating: Abe Stark Ice Skating Rink, W. 19th Street and the Boardwalk; (718) 946–6536; Saturdays and Sundays, 1–3:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 22; \$9 (\$5 skate rental).

Break out the blades and start practicing your jumps.

History in your hands: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789–2822; www.prospectpark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1–2 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 29; \$3 (free for children).

Children learn how to process wool into yarn, card, spin and use a drop spindle and even make a felt ball to take home.

Race Around the Yard: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789–2822; www.prospectpark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 2:30–3:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 29; \$3.

Enter a potato sack; spoon race, and other old-fashioned games.

“Fati’s Last Dance”: Billie Holiday Theatre, 1368 Fulton St. between Marcy and Brooklyn avenues; (718) 636–0918; www.thebillieholiday.org; Thursdays and Fridays, 8 pm, Saturdays, 3 pm, 8 pm, Sundays, 4 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 15; \$15–\$25 (children and seniors \$12–\$15).

Off-beat comedy for teens and up

‘Grand’ designs

If you build it, the children will come — especially to the “Create a Grand Central City” workshop at the New York City Transit Museum on Dec. 7 and 8.

Manhattan’s Grand Central Terminal was created 100 years ago, and today it is an urban world all by itself, set in the middle of the most exciting city in the world, with trains below and soaring buildings above.

Children will learn about the grand old building in this fun workshop, and then build a terminal city of their own using a variety of materials and skills.

“Create a Grand Central City” on Dec. 7 and 8 at 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission. Suitable for all ages.

New York City Transit Museum [Boerum Pl. at Schermerhorn Street in Downtown, (718) 694–1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum].



written by France-Luce Benson.

House Tours: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789–2822; www.prospectpark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1–3 pm, Sun, Dec. 1 – Tues, Dec. 31; \$3.

Children take a view of life on a 19th century farm and tour the Lefferts family legacy.

Portraits with Santa: Yuppy Puppy/Green Pup, 544 Union St. between Third and Nevins streets; (347) 799–1812; Weekdays, 4–6 pm, Saturdays, Noon–2 pm, Sundays, 1–3 pm, Mon, Dec. 2 – Sat, Dec. 14; Free.

Bring in the family and your pet for a free photo shoot with the head elf, Santa.

Sensory room: Brooklyn Children’s Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735–4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm, Tues, Dec. 3 – Sun, Jan. 26, 2014; Free with museum admission.

For children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families. Space limited, first come first served.

Touch tank: Brooklyn Children’s Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735–4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm, Wed, Dec. 4 – Sun, Jan. 26, 2014; Free with museum admission.

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

Ballroom dance classes: FIAO Beacon Community Center at IS 96, 99 Avenue P between W. 11th and W. 12th streets; (718) 232–2266; Wednesdays, 6–9 pm; Free.

For beginners of all ages.

“A Christmas Carol”: Robert Acito Park House, Court and President streets; smithstreetstage.org; Wednesday, Dec. 4, 8 pm; Thursday, Dec. 5, 8 pm; Friday, Dec. 6, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 7, 5 pm; Sunday, Dec. 8, 5 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 11, 8 pm; Thursday, Dec. 12, 8 pm; Friday, Dec. 13, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 14, 5 pm; Sunday, Dec. 15, 5 pm; \$15 (\$10 children).

This is a radio play adapted by Beth Ann Hopkins from the Dickens classic and features Susanna Baddiel, Jordan Coffey, Jonathan Hopkins, Charlie Kravits, Ron McClary, Eleanor McCormick, Vinnie Penna, Clara Strauch, Corey Whelihan and Katie Willmorth.

Meet the museum: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638–5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; Thursdays, 11 am and 4 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 12; call for fees.

Little ones and their caregivers explore art and culture through gallery activities and art making.

Nature on the Go: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287–3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Thursdays and Fridays, 1–2 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 31; Free.

A naturalist leads children and families around the center, where they learn about what’s all around the park.

Animal encounter: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287–3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Thursdays and Fridays, 2–2:30 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 27; Free.

Meet Snappy the turtle and learn about the animals at the park.

“Big Annie”: PS 3 The Bedford Village School, 50 Jefferson Ave.; (212) 724–0677; shadowboxtheatre.org;

Tuesday, Dec. 10, 10:30 am; Wednesday, Dec. 11, 10:30 am; Thursday, Dec. 12, 10:30 am; Friday, Dec. 13, 10:30 am; Monday, Dec. 16, 10:30 am; Tuesday, Dec. 17, 10 am; Wednesday, Dec. 18, 10 am; Thursday, Dec. 19, 10 am; Friday, Dec. 20, 10:30 am; \$15 at the door.

Holiday sing-along celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Three Kings.

Bug out!: Brooklyn Children’s Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735–4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays, 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm, Tues, Dec. 10 – Tues, Jan. 28, 2014; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages meet grasshoppers, worms, and Madagascar hissing cockroaches.

“A Charlie Brown Christmas”: Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Ave. at President Street; (718) 857–4816; www.brooklynlyceum.com; Thursday, Dec. 12, 7 pm; Friday, Dec. 13, 7 pm; Saturday, Dec. 14, 1 pm; Sunday, Dec. 15, 1 pm; Friday, Dec. 20, 7 pm; Saturday, Dec. 21, 1 pm; Sunday, Dec. 22, 1 pm; \$10 (\$35 for 4).

Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus, and Snoopy are all on board in this adaptation of the classic Charles Schulz comic strip.

TheatreSports: The Gallery Players, 199 14th St. between Second and Third avenues; (718) 595–0547; Sunday, Dec. 15, 12 pm; Sunday, Jan. 26, 12 pm; Sunday, Feb. 16, 12 pm; Sunday, March 23, 12 pm; Sunday, April 27, 12 pm; Sunday, May 18, 12 pm; Sunday, June 15, 12 pm; \$10.

Competition improvisational show for children of all ages.

Continued on page 60

Calendar

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

Continued from page 59

FURTHER AFIELD

Holiday train show: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 12, 2014; \$20 (\$8 children).

Large-scale model trains cover a wide variety of ground and features favorites including The Statue of Liberty, Rockefeller Center, The Brooklyn Bridge, and many others.

The Butterfly Conservatory: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; \$27, \$16 (children).

This annual favorite features up to 500 live, free-flying tropical butterflies from Central, South, and North America, Africa, and Asia.

Origami Holiday Tree: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Now – Sun, Jan. 12, 2014; Free with museum admission.

An annual museum tradition, the Origami Holiday Tree and two 19-foot Holiday Barosaurs welcome visitors to the museum throughout the holiday

season, inspired by the new exhibition The Power of Poison.

Gingerbread Lane: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Tuesdays – Fridays, 9:30 am–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am – 6 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 12; Free with museum admission.

It's a 300-square-foot village made entirely of edible gingerbread, royal icing and candy, and is a contender for the Guinness World Record for the largest gingerbread exhibit.

Playground: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 10 am–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 31; \$4 per person plus museum admission.

Children explore, discovery and have fun in this outdoor playground with slides, seesaws and pits as well as fog machines. Each session lasts 45 minutes; weather permitting.

Space Junk 3D: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–5pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 31; \$6 (\$5 children) plus museum admission.

Children experience collisions, soar

22,000 miles above the earth and explore the challenges faced in protecting our planet, without ever leaving Queens.

Rocket Park Mini Golf: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 31; \$6 (\$5 children, plus museum admission).

Putt your way through a nine-hole miniature course that teaches the science of spaceflight.

Train show: Grand Central Station, 87 E. 42nd St., Manhattan; (718) 694-1600; Mondays – Thursdays, 8 am–8 pm, Fridays, 8 am–8pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sun, Feb. 23, 2014; Free.

The annual show features Lionel's new limited edition model of Grand Central Terminal as well as illustrations from Next Stop Grand Central.

Frogs — A Chorus of Colors: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; awang@amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Now – Sun, Jan. 5, 2014; Suggested admission \$19, \$10.50 children, \$14.50 seniors and students.

See more than 150 live frogs, including 10 species of colorful dart-poison

frogs. Learn about their importance to ecosystems and the threats they face in the wild.

Flight of the Butterflies in 3D: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Tuesdays – Fridays, 11 am, Noon & 2 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, Noon, 1, 2 & 3 pm.; \$6 (adults,) \$5 (children, students & seniors,) plus NY-SCI admission.

Join millions of real butterflies on an amazing journey to a remote and secret hideaway in this award-winning film.

"A Christmas Story": The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza; (212) 465-6741; www.thegarden.com; Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2 pm; Thursday, Dec. 12, 11 am; Friday, Dec. 13, 7:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 14, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 15, 1 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2 pm; Thursday, Dec. 19, 11 am; Friday, Dec. 20, 7:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 21, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 22, 1 pm; Monday, Dec. 23, 2 pm; Thursday, Dec. 26, 2 pm; Friday, Dec. 27, 2 pm; Saturday, Dec. 28, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 29, 1 pm; \$49-\$199.

Celebrate the holidays with this cherished story that will entertain the whole family.

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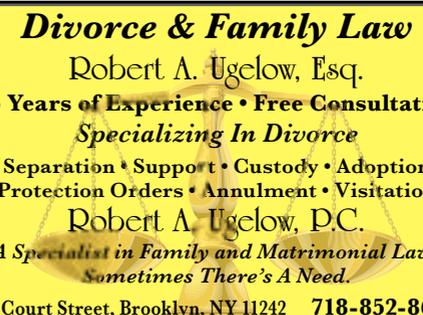
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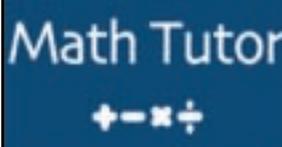


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New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

Puttin' on the ritz

Put the sparkling apple cider on ice and dress the whole family in these tuxedo-style pajamas from Chasing Fireflies for a New Year's Eve that's finally all about being comfortable and ringing in the new year with the ones we love most of all.

The kids version is available in snug-fitting black or pink cotton in sizes 12-month, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 14. The adult pink version is in sizes extra small to extra large, while the unisex adult black version ranges in size from small to extra-extra large. Both adult versions (\$59.50) have trouser legs, vs. the kids skinny leg. (Top hats and canes are not included.)

All that's left is making your resolutions, watching the ball drop in Times Square, and toasting the new year!

Kids black tuxedo PJs, \$49.50, www.chasing-fireflies.com.



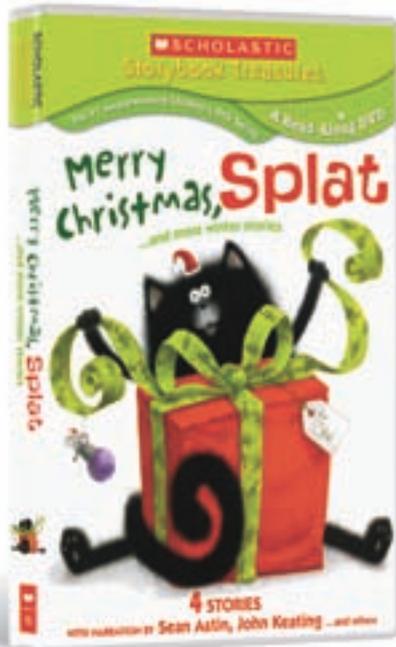
Snow much fun

On the "Merry Christmas, Splat... And More Winter Stories" DVD, the Scholastic Storybook Treasures series brings Rob Scotton's eponymous book to life with a faithful adaptation and comic narration by John Keating. Recommended for kids ages 3 to 7, the whole family

found this DVD to be the perfect excuse to take a break from the whirlwind of holiday preparations and park it on the couch with a cup of cocoa. Our marshmallows bobbed with our laughter as we watched Splat the cat's awkward attempts to help his mother, so he could rake in the gifts at Christmas.

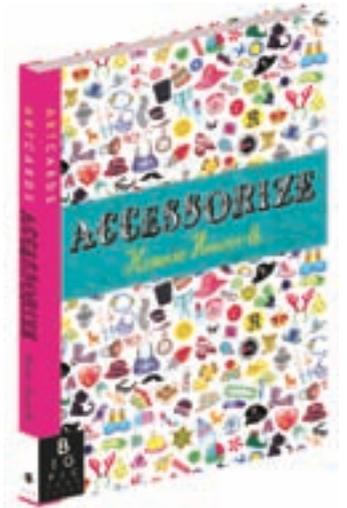
The DVD also includes "Fletcher and the Snowflake Christmas" and a behind-the-scenes bonus feature demonstrating how the animators brought Julia Rawlinson's picture book to life; Jacqueline Briggs Martin's "Snowflake Bentley," a story chock full of fascinating observations about nature's prettiest form of precipitation and the inspiring life of snowflake expert Willie Bentley; and "Owl Moon," Jane Yolen's classic tale about a child and his reserved father venturing out into the cold, snowy, moonlit woods, hoping to catch a glimpse of the great horned owl. These winter stories reminded us to enjoy the season's natural beauty, too.

"Merry Christmas, Splat... And More Winter Stories" DVD, \$14.95, www.scholastic.com.



Stick 'em up

After all of these years, little kids are still stuck on stickers. So it's a good bet that the creative kid on your gift list will enjoy Artcards: Accessorize. Recommended for children ages 6 to 9, the set includes 16 pull-out cards to be decorated with the 600 stickers. Each colorful sticker — whether boasting a sheriff's badge or a mouse riding a paper airplane — is a cool illustration by London-based artist Hennie Haworth. The "artcards" have black-and-white illustrations that beg to be embellished. Pair it with a package of felt-tip markers for a perfect gift. Decorating the cards is a pleasant diversion while at home on a snowy day, or traveling



for the holidays.

Artcards: Accessorize by Big Picture Press, \$17.99, www.amazon.com.

'Pom pom' of your hand

Looking for last-minute stocking stuffers that won't break the bank, create cavities, or stop working after five minutes of play? The Pom Pom Maker kit, from Eeboo, will fill their stocking and their free time with a crafty task that gives immediate satisfaction — creating the perfect pom pom! Then you can sew, glue, or pin 'em to hats, lapels, the backs of mittens and socks, and hair elastics



(for ridiculously adorable pigtailed!) The kit contains detailed instructions; 6-feet of colorful, fluffy yarn; tie string; and the cardboard "maker" that a kid — ages 8 and older — needs to create 3-inch- and 2-inch-wide pom poms. (You supply the scissors and additional yarn to make even more pom poms with the reusable maker.)

Eeboo Pom Pom Maker, \$9.95, www.geniusbaby.com.

The gift of friendship

This year, make sure your little one — ideally between the ages of 3 and 7 — adds Loren Long's picture book, "An Otis Christmas" (Philomel), to their wish list. The fourth in the author-illustrator's beloved Otis-the-tractor series features the farm's residents anticipating the arrival of Christmas — and a new foal! But on Christmas Eve, the pregnant horse begins to suffer complications. The suspense builds as a farmhand jumps

into his truck to retrieve Doc Baker, but gets stuck in the snow. With powder "up to his chin," Otis, the heroic tractor, sets out to save the mother and her baby horse. A story brimming with heroism and the awe we feel in the presence of a new life, "An Otis Christmas" is a welcome reminder of the true gifts of the holiday season — family and friends.

"An Otis Christmas" by Loren Long, \$17.99, www.barnesandnoble.com.



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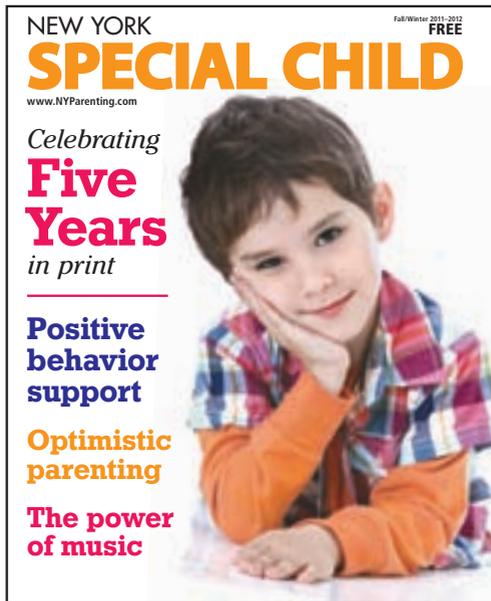
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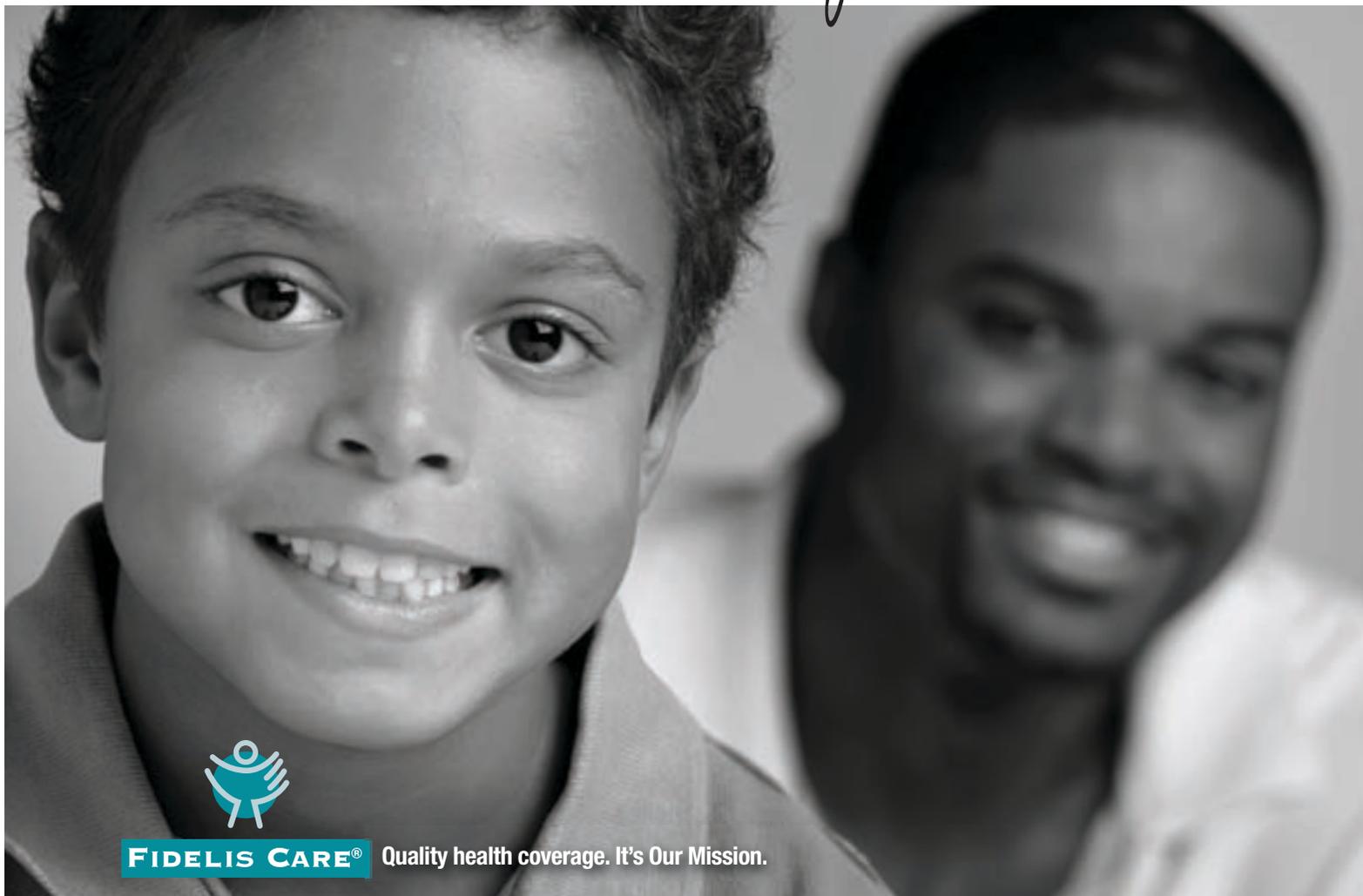


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