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Letter from the publisher

Happy holidays and more

It's hard to believe that a whole year has passed. It seems like I was just writing this column a few months ago, not an entire year. The speed of things passing is truly awesome and I don't think I'm the only one who's experiencing



it. So here it is again and I'll soon be going to various performances of "The Nutcracker" and celebrating the holiday season with the special art events that New York offers in abundance. Lucky me!

On the other hand, recently we had to say a difficult good-bye to my right arm and soul mate Sharon Noble. For the last nine years Sharon and I have partnered together in harmonious ways to create these magazines, website and digital plat-

forms. We grew and the business grew with us and our children who also were integral to the process grew too. It was a match that anyone could see was a perfect union until quite recently when Sharon expressed her desire to move on and try something new in her life. It wasn't easy to let her go and I did my best to hold on, but as the months passed we came to an understanding and now after a wonderful party send-off by our company to this extremely well liked and popular staff member, her office is vacant.

We all wish her well. We will miss her laugh, her insight, her intelligence, her vision. Lucky me, I still get to see her because we are a lot more than mere colleagues. We are family.

That said and speaking of family, I want to extend a big thank you to all the members of our team and wish all of them a wonderful holiday season and a great New Year. Notably I want to thank Tina for all she does to make my work easier and for being funny too! A big shout out of thanks to our sales team, those still with us as well as the few who have moved on. Lori Falco, Sharon Leverett, Shanika Stewart, Alexis Benson and our newest member Erin Brof. Welcome!

Thanks to Vinny, Leah, On Man, Arthur, Cheryl, Yvonne, Raymond, Earl, Mauro, Courtney, Sylvan, Shavana and to all our columnists. Thank you to Tammy, Shneika, Allison, Risa, and Jamie, who are our go-to's for articles, interviews and profiles. Thanks to Joanna and Danielle for their calendar skills and for being super to work with. An additional

thanks to Danielle for her expertise and for helping us to understand and utilize social media. Thanks to Pat, Paul and Charlie for their distribution skills. Thanks to Lisa and to Jesseca and most definitely thanks to Cliff, Les and Jennifer.

Finally all of us wish to thank you our readers, for reading our magazines, visiting our website and for logging on to our Guides. We wish each and every one of you a happy season and a new year filled with health and prosperity. Thanks for making a successful 2014 for New York Parenting.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
Publisher/Executive Editor
Family@cnglocal.com

Community News Group

CEO: Les Goodstein

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER: Jennifer Goodstein

New York Parenting

PUBLISHER / EXECUTIVE EDITOR:

Susan Weiss

PUBLISHER / BUSINESS MANAGER:

Clifford Luster

SALES MANAGER / ADVERTISING:

Sharon Noble

OPERATIONS ASSOCIATE:

Tina Felicetti

SALES REPS: Alexis Benson, Shanika Stewart

ART DIRECTOR: Leah Mitch

LAYOUT MANAGER: Yvonne Farley

WEB DESIGNER: Sylvan Migdal

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: Arthur Arutyunov, Mauro Deluca, Earl Ferrer, Cheryl Seligman

MANAGING EDITOR: Vince DiMiceli

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Courtney Donahue

COPY EDITOR: Lisa J. Curtis

CALENDAR EDITORS: Joanna Del Buono, Jesseca Stenson

Contact Information

ADVERTISING: WEB OR PRINT

(718) 260-4554

Family@cnglocal.com or
SWeiss@cnglocal.com

CIRCULATION

(718) 260-8336

TFelicetti@cnglocal.com

EDITORIAL

(718) 260-4554

Family@cnglocal.com

CALENDAR

(718) 260-2523

ADDRESS

New York Parenting Media/CNG
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Parenting resolutions

for the not-so-perfect parent

BY GAYLA GRACE

Considering the innumerable parenting books I've read and parenting workshops I've attended, I should be a perfect parent. I'm not. I've been a parent long enough, however, to realize that if I keep pressing forward and do the best job I can with a loving and sincere heart, my kids won't be eternally scarred by my imperfections.

This year, instead of making resolutions about being a better parent, I decided to ponder a few resolutions on how to move past my imperfections and keep going on days I want to quit as a not-so-perfect parent.

So, this year I commit to...

Let go of the mommy guilt. We all experience it from time to time. We do too much for our kids one day, and the next day, we do too little. One day, we give them too much slack, and the next day, we nag them incessantly. Our parenting choices never seem right. Or maybe our thinking isn't right. Mommy guilt comes from the expectation that we need to be perfect. But a perfect mom doesn't exist. We can choose to let go of unrealistic expectations that keep us bound to guilt when we don't measure up.

Forgive myself when I fail. A defeated parent doesn't parent effectively. When we barrage ourselves

with negative self-talk over a poor parenting choice, we continue down a negative path. Forgiving ourselves for less-than-stellar parenting moments allows us to begin again with a renewed mind and fresh perspective for our parenting challenges.

Seek out support from other moms on hard days. My neighbor is a single parent with two school-aged children. She recognizes her need for help in juggling her responsibilities and seeks out other moms to assist with car pool or after-school care when the demands of her work schedule become overwhelming. Fellow moms understand the struggles of busy moms and are usually happy to help when asked.

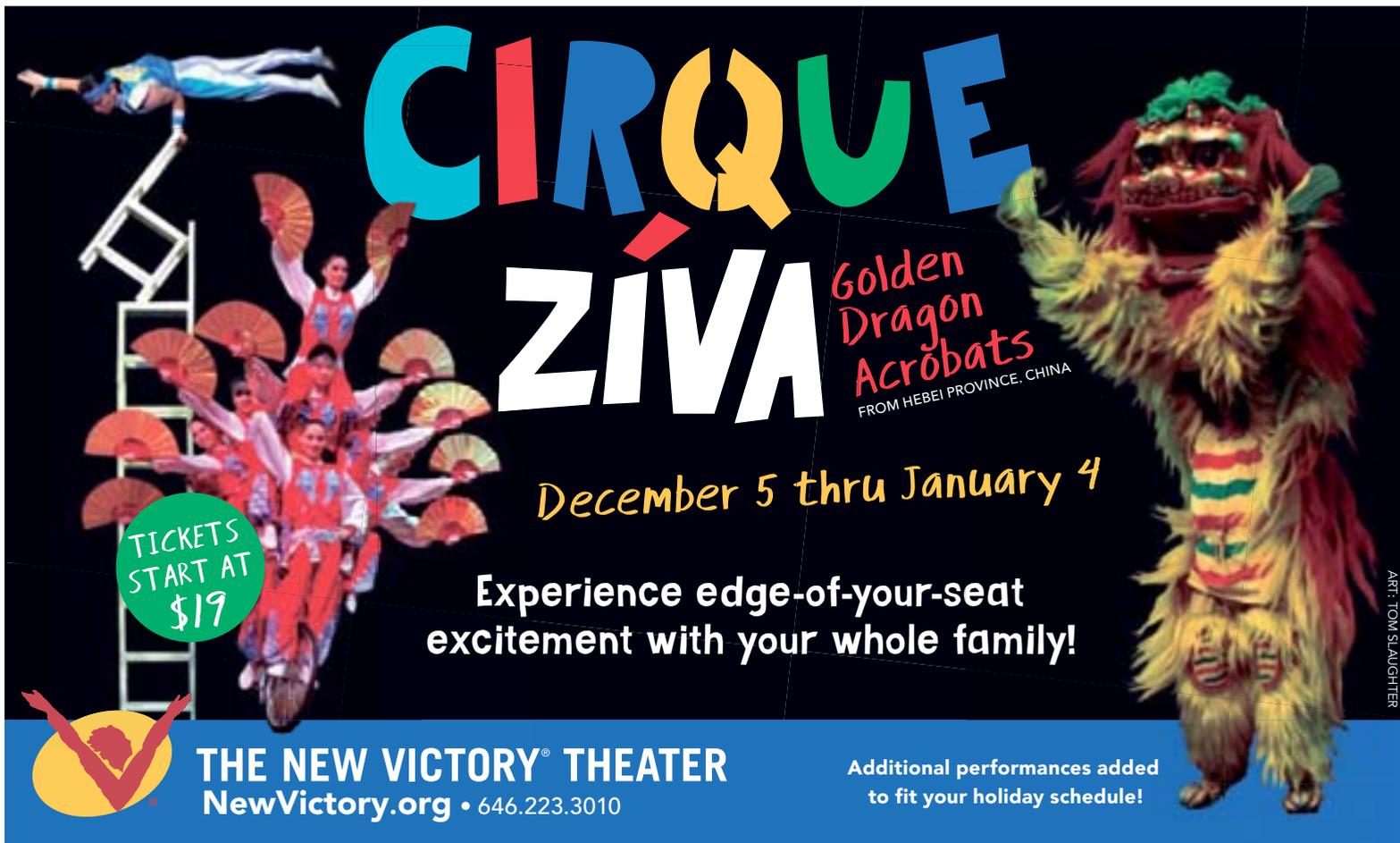
Listen to my heart on how to parent my child, instead of others' opinions. It's easy to run to the phone and ask our best friend what to do when we're facing a difficult parenting moment, but if we step back and listen to our heart while considering our options, we make better decisions. Considering our child's personality (which we know better than anyone) as part of the parenting equation allows us to tailor our parenting in a healthier light.

Take time to run, or quilt, or whatever activity works for me to re-group when the parenting strain takes over. It's important to re-group and make time for self-care when we're about to go off the parenting cliff. Balancing parenting demands with activities we can look forward to and enjoy alone or with others creates a well-rounded parent who can more effectively handle the strains of parenting.

Remember that my kids love me, even on days I'm a not-so-perfect parent. Our kids don't expect us to be perfect parents. If they know we are doing our best to care for them, emotionally and physically, they love us on our good days and our days that aren't so good. I heard the reply of a young child recently when asked what he thought about his mom's significant weight loss. "I don't see her any different — I love her either way 'cuz she's my mom."

As you start a new year, do you have resolutions to consider as a not-so-perfect parent? Do you need a mindset do-over that includes room for imperfection and second chances as a parent? Perhaps that's the ticket to success this year on your not-so-perfect parenting journey.

As a freelance journalist, Gayla Grace loves sharing experiences to encourage other parents. She is thankful for her five children, who love her despite her not-so-perfect parenting.



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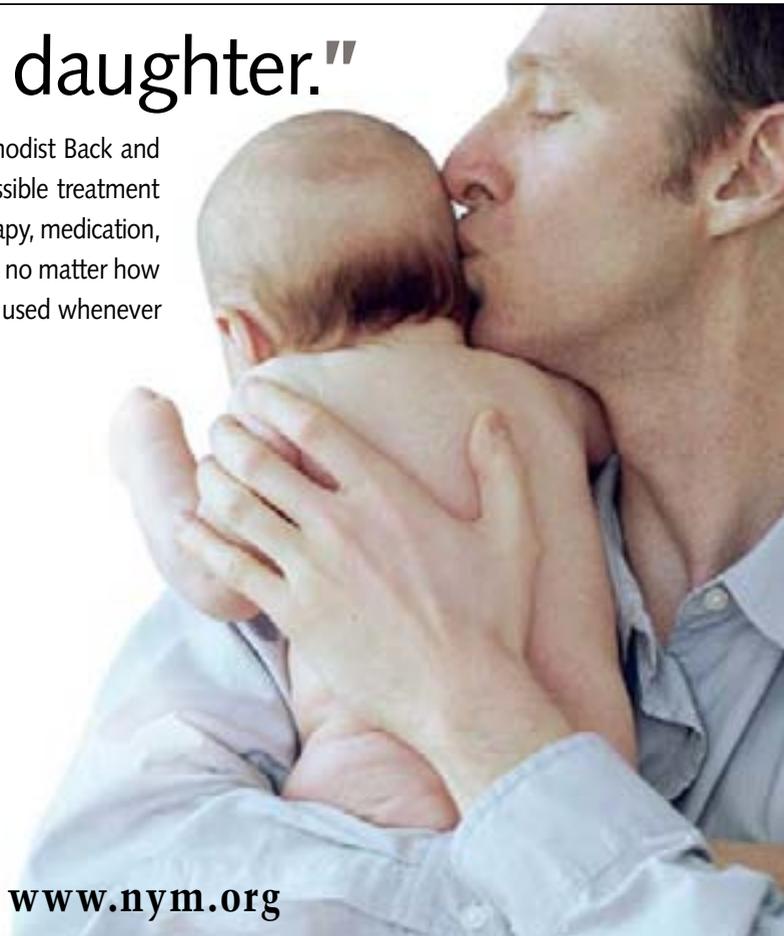
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This holiday, turn your child into a tradition tracker

BY SARA MARCHESSAULT

Every year, my dad looks forward to Christmas, because he knows he will get one specific treat — homemade, chocolate-covered peanut butter balls. We've never called them buckeyes, and we aren't from a place that is famous for making them, but they mean "Christmas" to my dad and without them, the holidays just aren't the same.

Every family has traditions like this. Special foods, putting out the old decorations, favorite carols, and even rituals like going to midnight

mass or sharing what we're thankful for are all ground in tradition.

There are things that we do that make the holidays feel like the holidays. Each one of those acts in which we participate is special and unique. But where do they come from? Why are they special?

My dad looks forward to the peanut butter balls, because they were a treat that appeared at Christmas Eve when he was a kid. They remind him of a grandmother who was reported to be an excellent cook, and she delivered favorite sweets every holiday.

My great-grandmother is long

gone, but my dad still speaks of her fondly, usually when his memory is prompted by food, and the stories rise to the surface.

These stories are important. Traditions can become more meaningful when we know the history behind them. Tracking holiday traditions is about recording the stories of the rituals that make the holidays special for you and your family.

And the best part? Tracking traditions is a great project to give your kids over winter break.

If you have a kid who's into writing or storytelling, let him take the lead on collecting stories from fam-

Questions to get your interviews started

When your child sits down with your grandmother or great uncle to talk about what holidays were like when they were kids, it's smart to have a few questions handy. Thoughtful questions can help keep the conversation going and help to elicit memories. Here are a few to start with:

- What was (Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's, etc.) like for you as a child?
- Describe to me how you celebrated this holiday when you were a kid.
- Do you have a favorite Thanksgiving?
- What is the one food that

you absolutely have to have around the holidays?

- What was your role in the family around the holidays? Did you prepare food? Help with the dishes?
- What relatives did you most look forward to seeing?
- What relatives did you least look forward to seeing?
- Were the holidays busy and crowded or pretty quiet and low-key?
- Do you enjoy the holidays more, less, or the same now as you did when you were a child?
- What was my mom or dad like around the holidays when she or he was a kid?

ily members about their holiday memories. How about the sleuth in your family? Let her dig up facts and details from the days of yore and turn her results into a news broadcast.

There are three basic ways to accomplish the goal of tradition tracking: audio, video, or good, old-fashioned writing. Let your youngster choose his tools of the trade.

For audio recordings, he'll need a handheld voice recorder or a voice recording application or software on a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. Tapes and tape recorders may be outdated, but they still work.

To conduct video interviews, you'll ideally want a camera with a good, built-in microphone, or you may want to use a lapel microphone. In addition to the camera, a tripod is a good idea, too. That way, if you have a long-winded great aunt, your videographer won't get tired arms trying to hold the camera up.

Finally, if your tradition tracker prefers to write, maybe a new journal or blank book would be an enticing tool to take notes and capture stories. And of course, if you use video or audio, you can transcribe any interview into a text format for future use. This is a nice option because then you have a recording with the voice of the interviewee (and maybe what they look like too).

Once the tools and method of

tracking are selected, the real fun begins. You can work with your son or daughter to create a list of potential questions for tradition tracking, or let them give it a shot on their own. A list of questions is good to help people get started talking.

The next step is to make a list of the people your child would most like to interview. A list will help keep him focused on getting the job done and give him the satisfaction of crossing off one name at a time.

Once your youngster has a collection of holiday traditions, let him decide what to do with them. Will they become files that are stored in a special place on the shared family hard drive? The topic or content of a family home movie? Or perhaps put into a book that can be shared with family members?

Not only will you have a record of family traditions and stories that you can treasure, but you'll also get to watch your child connect with other family members, learn about family history, and maybe even gain a new appreciation for the circumstances of his own life.

Sara Marchessault is an author, professor, and coach. She has maintained personal journal writing for 25 years. Many of the journals from her childhood include stories she has collected from family members that she has been able to share with her own children.



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Arts get a boost



A program with the goal of arts education for all

BY ALLISON PLITT

After years of seeing funding for arts education slashed from their budgets, New York City public schools got a big surprise this past summer when Mayor DeBlasio promised \$23 million dollars would be spent on arts education for the 2014-2015 school year. Besides stating that the money would be used to hire 120 new, certified art teachers, DeBlasio also said the financial support would also be ap-

propriated to improve art facilities in schools as well as create “new partnerships with cultural institutions.”

The city’s public schools aren’t the only recipients of this much-needed funding. Non-profit organizations that bring arts education into public schools have also received additional money from the city for this school year. One such organization, Arts For All, has been bringing free arts programming into public schools and youth organizations for nearly a decade. Seventy percent of

the clients that Arts For All serves are public schools that lack access to an arts curriculum.

The services Arts For All provides are free of charge to its clients, so the organization has to focus a lot of effort on fund-raising.

“We’re always working really hard to get funding wherever we can,” admits Executive Director Anna Roberts Ostroff. “We have a number of wonderful private donors. We’ve also now secured city and state funding, which has been really helpful, and also corporate sponsors, and family foundations. We’re always out there looking for fund-raising opportunities to offer more quality art programs to the children we serve.”

The story of how this non-profit was created is an inspiring story in itself. According to Ostroff, Arts For All started as a small club at New York University and taught at a couple of organizations at the time. When Ostroff and the club’s other founder graduated in 2003, they realized no one was going to take over the club, but they really believed in the work they were doing and decided to try to continue to sustain the club.

For four years Arts For All worked with two established non-profit organizations that helped it expand its programming and grow.

“Back when we were first getting started, there was certainly a lot of us introducing ourselves to youth organizations,” recounted Ostroff. “It really did take a while for people to realize what we were doing. We weren’t trying to sell anything. We were trying to offer accessible programming to organizations that may not have had the opportunity to offer that to their students. We now have a waiting list of clients.”



(Above) PS 69 students with their flowers. (Top) A student works on a mural.

By 2007, Ostroff said, “We realized we were ready to branch off on our own and became our own non-profit. As a non-profit standing on our own, we’re still pretty young, but we do have a history with some of our clients, our schools, and our programs that go back beyond 2007.”

In addition to increasing in size, Arts For All increased its clientele. Through an application process, a public school or youth organization can apply to have Arts For All come teach arts education in the classrooms. The board of directors reviews the applications to get a sense of what the organizations specifically need, who their students are, and why these organizations need arts programming to be accessible to children.

When Arts For All approves the organization that it knows will fit its mission, the staff works one-on-one with the individual school or youth organization.

“We basically will discuss with each of these organizations what age group is most in need of our programming and specifically what art forms the students would most respond to,” says Ostroff.

Arts For All offers a wide range of art programs from visual arts to dance and music to drama and film. The organization hires teaching artists who are not only talented in the artistic discipline, but who are also comfortable teaching their art form in challenging learning environments.

“We work really hard to then pair the right teaching artist with each school,” explains Ostroff. “We do work really closely with the schools and youth organizations to create unique programs that work for them whether in terms of the artistic disciplines, the lengths of the residency, and the specifics about what that teacher might want to focus on to enhance what they’re already learning in the classroom.”

Arts For All also does academic-based art programming. For instance, its Literacy through the Arts Program, which is one of its strongest programs, works with kindergarten through second-graders to help improve their reading, writing, and verbal expression. Literacy through the Arts Program also has a teaching artist tie the lesson plans in with the Common Core Standards and what the teachers are doing in the classrooms.

Giving an example of another academic-based program, Ostroff offers,

“We’ve also recently created a haiku program that blends haiku poetry of the late Sydell Rosenberg, with either visual arts or music. This program is made possible because of a very generous donor, Amy Losak.”

Arts For All changed its mission statement two years ago to one that is now more specific about arts education helping children mature through the arts. The mission statement reads, “Arts For All offers accessible artistic opportunities to children in the New York City area who face socioeconomic, physical, or emotional barriers to exploring the arts. Through Arts For All, professional artists work with youth organizations to build self-confidence, self-expression, teamwork, resilience, and creativity in children.”

Ostroff explained the reason for the change.

“What was really important to the organization and to the board of directors was to put out our core values in our mission statement, so people had a really strong understanding of what we were doing through the arts,” she says. “We believe very much in art for art’s sake. However, our staff is doing a little bit more than that in teaching life skills through the arts.”

She adds, “We may or may not have someone in one of our classes that one day becomes a Broadway star or a famous painter, but that’s really not the goal of the work we are doing. We want all children to have access to the arts and feel all students, even if they don’t necessarily do this as a career going forward, can gain so much from having accessible arts programming.”

As for the mayor’s current support of arts education in public schools, Ostroff says everyone in her field is “very excited” to see an increase in funding, although she thinks there is still more work to be done.

“The biggest hope is that it can sustain and we can really start to see those results,” Ostroff observed. “As New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer recently stated in his State of the Arts report, last year, 419 schools in New York City still lacked one full-time, certified arts teacher, so we still have a long way to go.”

For more information about Arts For All, visit www.arts-for-all.org or call (212) 591-6108.

Allison Plitt is a freelance writer who lives in Queens with her husband and young daughter. She is a frequent contributor to *New York Parenting*.

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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Teens and holidays

So, your teen has decided to ditch the family and spend time with so-and-so. Really? No more chestnuts roasting on the open fire? No more cozy family traditions? Did you pitch a fit and tell your teen if he doesn't spend time with the family this holiday season you're cutting him out of the will?

When our kids were young, holidays were easy. The anticipation of rich chocolate desserts and time off from school to go sledding was all it took to keep them grounded. Once adolescence strikes, they suddenly get a severe case of ants in their pants. If there is a boyfriend or girlfriend in the picture, the inclination to spend the holidays somewhere else is probably more intense. One friend regaled me with a tale about a ruined holiday. When her family headed out-of-town to Grandma's, her teenage daughter remained miserable for the entire 10 days, and then some.

Is this a case when parents should abide by the adage of picking your battles? Or should parents insist their teens spend the holidays with family?

Despite her preoccupation with friends and crushes, holiday traditions and family rituals are more important to your teen than you might think. You'll realize this when your teen announces that she can't find the ornament from Great Uncle Jack on the tree, or she notices that Grandma's sweet potato pie is not on the Thanksgiving table.

"The teenage years are a time when children are struggling to differentiate themselves from their family. They are also wishing to strike out on their own and test boundaries. At this age, kids are highly influenced by their peers, but studies tell us that they still look up to their parents, and wish to please," explains Dr. Scott Haltzman, a clinical assistant professor at Brown University's Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior and author of "The Secrets of Happy Families: Eight Keys to Building a Lifetime of Connection and Contentment" (Jossey-Bass, 2009).

It might help to ask for your teen's assistance with the holiday planning.



Remember, your teen probably has some creative talents you can utilize. Give him things he can be responsible for, such as creating the family newsletter or choosing items for the holiday menu. This gives your teen an opportunity to make a contribution. If he feels like he is an integral part of the holiday experience, instead of a mere spectator, he might buy into your need to have him around.

However, despite your best intentions and efforts, your teen might still want to spend time elsewhere. Dr. Haltzman says, "While it's important to inject routine and tradition into your family life, it's also important to know that some traditions can change slightly, and it won't kill anyone. Children, including teens, should be with their families whenever possible, but there should also be room for compromise. Perhaps your child can go to a friend's house before or after a holiday dinner, or perhaps you can change the time you open presents so that he or she can still go to work at the restaurant up the street."

Sometimes the idea of "family coming first" is foreign to teens because they tend to be egocentric. Consider the age of your child, her relationship with this friend or friends, and her attitude toward the family. It doesn't have to be an "either or" situation if you don't want

it to be. Discuss a compromise with your teen that will work for both of you. If there is a religious service or annual family tradition that can't be missed, explore the idea of inviting the friend, or allowing your teen time with him or her afterward.

Do your best to avoid a nasty battle with your teen, and you'll find you can keep the "happy" in the "holidays."

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). For details, visit www.myrna-haskell.com.

Tips and tales

"My 18-year-old son wanted to be with his girlfriend in California one Thanksgiving. I realized that if I didn't let him go, he might be miserable and resentful. Give them freedom to make choices to be with their peers. They will come back and hang out with the family in no time."

Lisa Zarowitz, Woodstock, NY

"Share the holidays and special events. If your son has dinner at the girlfriend's house, then he can have dessert at home. The next holiday he should switch. This may sound a little complicated, but it works. *everyone is happy.*"

Corinne Clerkin, Hyde Park, NY

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Treating dry winter skin

External factors are the most common cause of dry skin — and the cold and dry air of the winter season can worsen the level of dehydration in the skin. Exposure to cold air outside can especially be a problem for children who get dry skin. Combining the effects of cold air outside with low humidity inside our heated homes adds to the problem. Winter's freezing temperatures and heat-induced dry air can leave skin dry, flaky, and itchy, which makes it difficult to keep your children's skin from getting too dry.

Babies and young children are prone to winter dryness that can cause irritation to the skin of the cheeks, lips, and hands. Children most commonly exhibit peeling and itching, and areas may appear red with a rough texture. Although tempted to scratch itchy skin, it will only make your child's irritation worse. So, how do we prevent winter itch and flakiness?

I spoke to Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley,

Tips for the whole family

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

Dry skin is a very common condition, typically characterized by a lack of moisture in the epidermis, which is the superficial layer of skin. The epi-

dermis is composed of lipid (fatty oils) and protein. When fatty oils are removed from the skin, the skin loses moisture more easily. As skin becomes dry, it also becomes more prone to rashes and skin breakdown.

Winter's freezing temperatures and heat-induced dry air can leave skin dry, flaky, and itchy, which makes it difficult to keep your children's skin from getting too dry.

a board-certified dermatologist in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. A member of a private practice, she's seen irritations from mild to severe. Here's her take on what parents can do:

Shnieka Johnson: Is sunscreen a "must" even in winter?

Jennifer Hensley: Sunscreen is still important in the winter months, especially on the face. We are still exposed to UV light. In most cold-weather areas, people spend more time inside, and cover up when heading out. Our faces are always exposed and wearing a moisturizer with sunscreen is recommended.

SJ: What other products are important to use in winter months?

JH: Moisturizers are VERY important this time of year. Our skin is protecting the rest of our body, so it is imperative to keep its barrier intact. Dry air and cold temperatures can lead to dry skin and itching, or exacerbate skin conditions, such as eczema. Many people forego moisturizers, but in winter months, I recommend taking the extra step.

SJ: Are dry hands, chapped lips, and red cheeks worth a doctor visit?

JH: Not necessarily. If this occurs after being in the cold for a period of time, moisturizers and an emollient lip balm should lead to resolution. However, if other symptoms are involved or this persists, a trip to the doctor is warranted.

SJ: What will happen if dry skin is ignored or worsens?

JH: Ignored conditions such as this will often lead to extremely dry skin and a weakened skin barrier. This can lead to fissures or open areas, which could be po-

tential access for bacteria and viruses to enter the skin and cause infection.

SJ: How should parents treat these winter skin problems?

JH: Start with gentle skincare practices to prevent problems. Use a gentle moisturizing soap and bathe with warm, not hot, water. Moisturize immediately after bathing. It is important not to over-bathe, especially with infants. Ceramide-containing moisturizers are good year round. In the winter, cream formulations of moisturizers are more beneficial for dry skin. Applications twice a day may be needed.

Ointment forms of moisturizers, while slightly greasy, are good at keeping moisture in the skin.

Patches of itchy dry skin may be treated with an over-the-counter cortisone cream.

If persistent, I recommend following up with a doctor as further treatment may be necessary.

SJ: Are there ingredients to avoid using on young skin?

JH: I recommend avoiding products with significant amounts of fragrance, which could potentially cause further irritation.

SJ: What tips do you have for parents to prevent winter skin problems?

JH: Again, gentle, daily skincare is key. Consider a humidifier if the air is dry in the home. Protecting skin from the elements when outside and immediately caring for any chapped areas is key.

Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley received her dermatology training at Georgetown University-Washington Hospital Center Department of Dermatology in Washington, DC. Dr. Hensley completed a Clinical Research Fellowship at Northwestern University Department of Dermatology in Chicago, as well as a Melanoma Fellowship at Washington Hospital Center Department of Dermatology in Washington, DC. Dr. Hensley completed her medical studies and Internal Medicine Internship at the University of Louisville. She is on staff and sees patients (both adults and children) at Shady Grove Dermatology, Laser & Vein Institute with locations in Maryland and Northern Virginia. For more, visit www.northernvirginiadermatology.com.

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

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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Searching for Santa

Memories of tracking the sled in real time

When my oldest daughter Amanda was 3, we were at my brother-in-law's house one freezing-cold Christmas Eve. My husband has seven siblings and many of them had kids at the time, so the house was filled with Christmas spirit. As they waited for their presents, they ate, played, danced, and asked the big question over and over, "When will Santa come?"

At regular intervals, one of the adults would take all the kids out onto the stoop, and we would stare into the sky looking for Rudolph's shiny red nose.

"Be quiet," my daughter said. "I think I hear his bells."

"I think I see something. Look over there," another would say pointing to the dark sky.

Amanda swears she heard those bells and listened each year after that for them to ring again or see the lights move along the heavens.

At home, we would track Santa on North American Aerospace De-

fense Command's (Norad) website (there is a science to tracking the big guy!), but once we got to the Christmas Eve celebration, we lost track of the Command's path since my brother-in-law's computer was not downstairs (and this was before everyone had a smartphone). By the time we got back home, the kids would be exhausted, and if they hadn't already fallen asleep in the car, they would conk out the minute their heads hit the pillow.

Tracking Santa in real-time is probably the most fun there is for a child on Christmas Eve. I remember searching for Santa about 20 years ago with my nephew, Michael, who is now grown. Santa's in Africa, now he's in Europe: Ireland, England, Scotland. With each new country or continent, a glimmer of light would shine in his eyes. The ultimate was when Santa got to Canada because that meant we were next.

Over the years, the thrill of it all, and the delight of seeing the kids' faces brighten up was

so much fun that I almost forgot that Santa wasn't really on his sled high above. Part of the real fun of Christmas is seeing just how happy our children get and enjoying those special moments with family and friends.

This year, the Christmas Eve celebration will be closer to home. In fact, it has been at my home the past few years. The party starts when Santa is overseas and ends when he gets to Canada. Somewhere in between, there will be trips to the stoop, some lights in the sky, and hopefully, lots of life-long memories.

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 Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.



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DOWNTOWN MOMMY

NOTOYA GREEN

A secret ingredient

How I got my picky kids to eat everything

When my kids began eating solid food, they gave new meaning to the term “picky eaters.” They hated everything, and most of our meals ended with more food on our walls than in their mouths.

As you can imagine, family mealtime was not a lot of fun. It was stressful both physically and mentally. I would make two or three different meals each sitting, just to get my kids to eat something. Some days I'd cook nine meals for them, only to watch most of the food go right into the trash.

There was a bigger problem, though. The kids weren't eating enough and were having trouble gaining weight. That's when I pressed the panic button.

So we needed help — and got it. To deal with our weight issues, I consulted a nutritionist who put them on a high-calorie diet, which consisted mostly of adding butter or cheese to everything. The theory was that even if the little guys ate only a couple of bites per meal, there would be enough calories in those bites to give them sustenance.

The new diet worked, and the lit-

tle guys gained weight, but they still weren't eating much of the food I made. Eventually I cut back on the butter and cheese, and gave them food that I knew they would eat — processed food like chicken nuggets and hot dogs. It lasted about a year and wasn't my proudest mommy moment, but, hey, sometimes you have to meet kids where they are.

Then I discovered the best condiment known to man: ketchup. With the help of that wonderful red sauce, I got my kids to eat foods like salmon, chicken, and ground beef. Once my kids started eating, over time it got easier to get them to try new things, like vegetables.

It's been two years, and I don't worry much about my kids weight anymore. They're eating everything I prepare, even vegetables like broccoli, spinach, carrots, and beets. Yes, beets! Last Sunday I made salmon, rice, and broccoli for dinner and they ate everything. I looked at their plates and almost cried.

Getting to this point wasn't easy. It took a lot of time, patience, and our progress came in stages. Now, instead of being anxious at mealtime, I actually look forward to our meals together.

Here are four tips for dealing with extremely picky eaters:

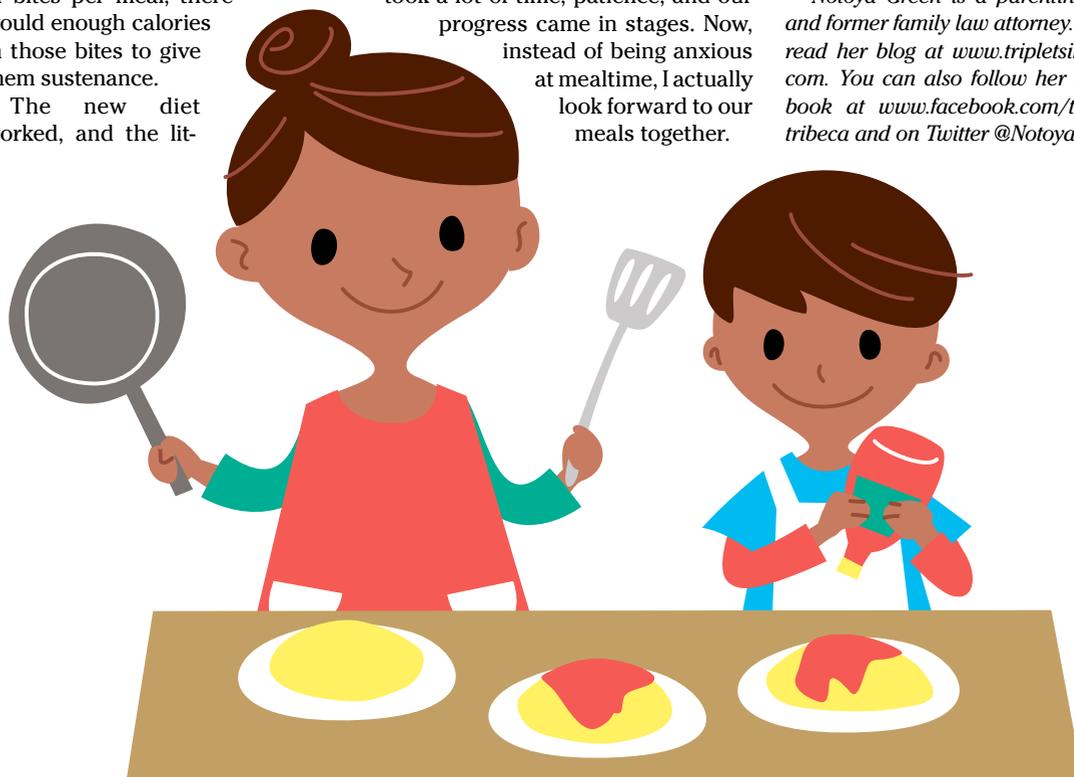
Consult with a nutritionist if weight gain (or growth) becomes an issue. Most insurance plans will cover the cost of a nutritionist.

Don't be afraid to give your children “less healthy,” processed foods. Do this especially if they're barely eating. After all, processed food is better than no food at all, right?

Condiments are your friend. If adding a little ketchup or salt will get your kids to eat healthy foods like eggs or vegetables, it's worth it. A little extra flavor can make the difference between a failed meal and a successful meal.

Be patient and keep reintroducing healthy foods like vegetables. Don't assume that because your child doesn't like a food now, that he won't like it six months from now. When my kids were 3, they wouldn't eat carrots. Now, they can't get enough of them. So be patient, be persistent, and stay positive. Happy eating!

Notoya Green is a parenting expert and former family law attorney. You can read her blog at www.tripletsintribeca.com. You can also follow her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/tripletsintribeca and on Twitter @NotoyaG.



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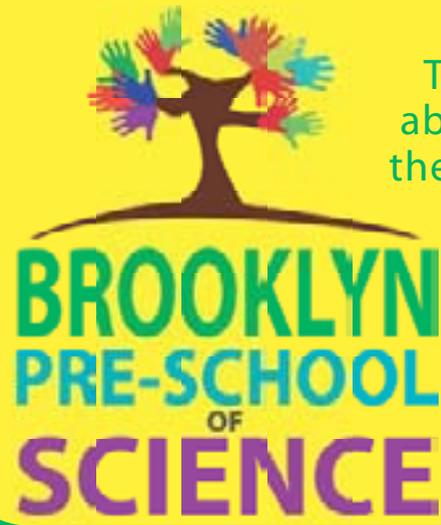
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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Stress & the heart

What stresses you out most during the holidays? Hosting family get-togethers? Buying gifts? All that wrapping? Or all that pressure from family and friends (not to mention yourself!) to plan the perfect memory? It's been well documented that social ties can improve heart health, but the worry often caused by family and friends can hurt you.

I recently came across a study from the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, performed by Dr. Rikke Lund at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, which says that family stress can increase angina. Moreover, the closer you are to the person, the more damage they can do.

With the pressure of shopping, finances, and family get-togethers, nervous tension is especially on the rise during the holiday season. As most parents are running around trying to plan the perfect holiday, it's

a recipe for tension.

Interestingly, according to the study, the more you care about the person, the more your health is affected. This makes two key categories prime to induce stress: spouses and kids. But which stresses you out more?

“When the source of these worries/demands was a spouse or partner, the angina risk was increased more than threefold, while for children it was more than twofold. Other family members nearly doubled angina risk. By contrast, excessive demands or worries caused by more distant family relations or from friends and neighbors were associated with little or no risk.”

Since angina may be a risk for future heart disease, it makes sense to let things slide over the holidays, rather than allowing yourself to become stressed.

Does this study beckon the questions, who are parents closer to:

their spouse or their children? Maybe. But perhaps moms and dads just don't get as stressed out by their own kids, because they are just that: kids. After all, when a spouse does something inconsiderate or ill-mannered, as an adult, he is held responsible. Kids, however, to a certain extent, are released of that culpability.

On the contrary, the good news is that the less you care about someone, the smaller chance they have of risking your health. So eat, drink, and be merry this holiday season, and when the snide remarks surface from in-laws or acquaintances, just let them roll right off your shoulder — and away from your heart.

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 Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.



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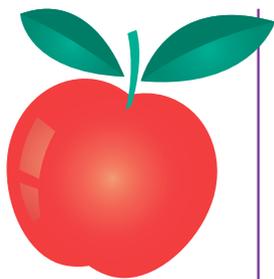
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DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND
MARGE EBERTS

Improve studying

Eliminate your kid's bad habits in the new year

Dear parent,

The year is ending, but this school year is not quite at the halfway point. You now probably have a very good idea of how the year is going for your children. So much of the success that children have in school is due to the study habits that they have. This is true whether they are just starting school or are in college. Bad study habits eventually can lead to poor performance in school.

Why don't you have your children in fourth grade and beyond take the following quiz to see if they have any bad study habits? A "yes" answer to any question shows a problem or a potential problem area where you or they may wish to make a New Year's resolution to turn things around. One caution: If it appears that your children have several bad study habits, do not have them try to change too many of them with their resolutions. Just one or two resolutions may pay big dividends in improving their study habits.

- Are you using Facebook or other social media while studying? If so, your grades are probably lower than those who concentrate on their school work.

- Do you frequently copy classmate's homework? Depending on classmates does not help you learn a subject.

- Are you a negative thinker who does not believe that you can master certain subjects? If so, chances are you may never master those subjects.

- Do you eat while you study? Fixing and consuming food may take too much time away from your studying. Instead, fix a small snack before your study session.

- Do you try to get all of your studying done in one long study session? Short breaks can pay dividends.

- Do you take frequent breaks while studying? Too many breaks indicate a short attention span.

- Do you frequently study with groups of your friends? This can be an effective study habit, unless your study time is just fun with friends.



Pros and cons of e-books in classroom

Dear teacher,

Now that we are in the age of electronic books, what are the pros and cons of using them in the classroom? Do they really help kids learn to read?

Dear parent,

There hasn't been a lot of investigation into the use of ebooks in the classroom. The features that really help children learn to read have not truly been identified. There are those with animated characters, just text, narration, games, and much more.

What has been observed is that ebooks can serve as a motivational force for children with a low level of interest in reading, especially when the ebooks have both narration and animation. Furthermore, ebooks have been shown to increase fluency when stories are read to students, as they hear proper intonation and pronunciation. They also have been effective as instructional tools when new vocabulary is introduced by the teacher before the story is read.

The time to change tutors

Dear teacher,

How long should we stick with a tutor when little or no progress has been made over the past two

months?

Dear parent,

The big question is whether the teacher and tutor have been working together — talking about exactly the help your child needs. Talk with the teacher and find out if more time is needed for your child to bring up his work to grade level or if it could be time to find another tutor. Before making the decision to find a new tutor, consult with your child: Does he like working with the tutor? How helpful does the child feel the tutor has been?

Some children may need a great deal of help in some subjects to catch up with the work being done in the classroom. In this case, progress will not be apparent immediately. Results of a good tutoring program should usually be seen in 10 to 20 weeks.

First grader having trouble with math

Dear teacher,

My first-grader is having a difficult time handling addition math facts even though she practices on drill sheets every night. I'm afraid that if she doesn't get it soon, her road ahead in math is going to be very rocky.

Dear parent,

It is early still to give up on your daughter getting addition. What she needs is a lot of practice with real objects. For example, to illustrate the math fact $3 + 2 = 5$, show her three coins and ask her to put down two more. The next step is for her to count the coins to get the answer. Then she should write what she has done as the math fact $3 + 2 = 5$.

Once your child understands what addition does, she is ready to move on to using addition flash cards. If she can't solve a problem in three seconds, she should lay out the problem using coins or markers, or even count it out on her fingers or use a number line.

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com. © Compass Syndicate Corporation, 2014.

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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

The health benefits of fermented foods

As the temperatures plunge and sick days loom, did you know fermented foods can boost your family's immune system?

Fermented foods contain the beneficial bacteria *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. This friendly organism consumes the natural starches and sugars in foods. At the same time, it creates several byproducts, including lactic acid, the agent responsible for preserving those foods.

As the bacteria do their work, they enhance the nutritional value of the food by increasing its digestibility, enzyme level, and vitamin content. Fermentation can decrease the gas-producing compounds in legumes, increase the availability of certain nutrients like the vitamin B group, preserve levels of nutrients like vitamin C, and decrease the level of compounds that may interfere with nutrient availability.

If you or your child has taken antibiotics, try fermented foods before trying probiotic supplementation. Fermented foods can reintroduce beneficial bacteria to rebalance the intestinal flora. They may also help

treat diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome.

You may already be enjoying fermented foods. Natural pickles, sauerkraut, miso, tofu, tempeh, kimchi, kombucha tea, and fermented cheeses all fall under the fermented banner.

The real deal

What are the basics of fermentation? Adding salt to fresh produce kills the harmful bacteria present while allowing the good *Lactobacillus* bacteria to thrive. This preserves the food while also developing a distinctive tangy flavor.

But many commercially available pickled products are high in salt and lack beneficial bacterial cultures. Most jarred pickles on supermarket shelves are simply cucumbers in a vinegar solution and are not fermented.

When buying fermented foods, look for "live cultured" pickles or sauerkraut. To be sure, call the manufacturer to ask if the product has live cultures. Shopping at a health food, ethnic,

or "fresh" store may be your best bet to find old-fashioned barrels of pickles or sauerkraut near the deli counter. Or look in the refrigerated section of your usual supermarket.

Making your own at home can be a fun kitchen experiment with the kids this winter. Any vegetable can be fermented, including carrots, radishes, green beans, eggplant, and cabbage. A terrific resource is the National Center for Home Food Preservation, as well as several books written by Sandor Katz.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who is a new Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. While growing up, she loved sauerkraut and is inspired to make her own after researching this column. Find her at Christine Palumbo Nutrition on Facebook, @PalumboRD on Twitter, and Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.



Homemade sauerkraut

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 small cabbage head (one-and-a-half to two pounds)
- 1 tbsp. salt
- 1/2 cup filtered water

DIRECTIONS: Sterilize a one-quart sized wide-mouth Mason jar and all tools (knife, canning funnel, metal mixing bowl) by dipping into boiling water for one minute. Air dry.

Wash cabbage head and remove outer leaves, saving one of them. Quarter cabbage, cut out core, and cut into 1/2-inch (or thinner) slices.

Place cut cabbage into metal bowl and sprinkle with salt. Crunch up cabbage with your hands and allow it to sit for 5 minutes so the texture softens.

Using the funnel, stuff cabbage and any liquid that appears into the Mason jar, tapping it periodically to make it fit. Pour filtered water into metal bowl to get out any extra salt, then pour over cabbage. Top cabbage with reserved cabbage leaf. Keep the funnel in your jar to help press down the cabbage.

Take a quart sized freezer bag and fill it with water part way. Place this bag in the funnel. This will act as a weight to keep the cabbage leaves pressed down under the liquid.

Store cabbage in a cool, dark place inside a bowl to catch liquid in case it bubbles over.

Daily for the next couple weeks: Press down leaves to ensure cabbage

leaves are under water. If not, take 1/2 cup water and 1 tsp. salt and heat until salt dissolves. Cool liquid then add the water to the cabbage as needed.

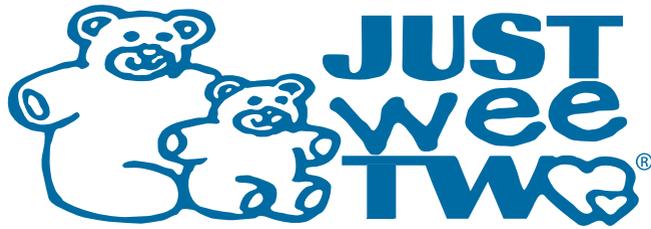
Skim off any foam.

Every week taste your cabbage. After two to four weeks when it has the desired sourness, discard the top cabbage leaf. Screw on the jar lid and store sauerkraut in the refrigerator.

Used with permission by Wendy Jo Peterson, MS, RD, CSSD, culinary nutritionist

NUTRITION FACTS: 120 calories, 8 g carbohydrate, 0 g protein and fat, 4 g fiber, 880 mg sodium, 24% DV vitamin C.

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A baby lost, a couple's love and hope

After the
pain of my
miscarriage,
my husband
knew just
what to say

BY JUDY M. MILLER

My mom used to remind me that every cloud has a silver lining. Yes, I heard her. This saying lodged somewhere in my subconscious, along with the many, many other colloquialisms and Yiddish expressions she so lovingly imparted to me.

• • •

I knew before I was told. A woman always knows; this innate knowledge is part of who she is.

My worst fears were confirmed on a Friday, with an exclamation point. I laid on the exam table, expectant, yet apprehensive as the technician prepped me for the ultrasound. Cool jelly was smeared onto my skin, warming to my own body heat as she moved the wand over my abdomen. My breathing quieted as I waited to hear confirmation.

"There's no heartbeat."

A black chasm exploded open, and my dreams went rocketing into a bottomless void. Herculean de-

nial raged forth.

Hyperventilating and shaking, I fought back to calm myself, to slow my breathing, to challenge what I thought I had imagined. I told myself she was mistaken or inept, perhaps just freshly certified. I corrected her in fury, "There is a heartbeat. You just need to look around."

"I'm going to get your doctor. Why don't you sit up?" and she vanished.

My fear grew into torrential panic as the door closed solidly behind her happy pink scrubs and silent white shoes. Pink and white; my baby girl.

My husband held my hand as silent tears rolled down my cheeks and dripped onto the pale blue paper covering the exam table. His large warm hand softly rubbed my back. I looked at him with difficulty. Hazel eyes held my brown ones, pleading with me to remain calm and present, patient for an explanation. Concern etched in his forehead. We were still.

Baby-blue walls held watercolors of smiling mothers with soft, delicious-smelling newborns, mocking and closing in on me. I unquenchably ached to again experience the awe and magic of a newborn, to nurture another child, to add to my small family; it seemed my son had become a 4-year-old all too quickly.

There was a knock on the door. My doctor entered, followed by a nurse. I had been forced to open my soul to this man in order to find some help in conceiving again. I had struggled to trust him. His gentle eyes and quiet voice registered worry.

"Let's have a look."

I lay back down on the tear-dampened exam-papered surface. He re-coated my abdomen with ultrasound jelly. Its coolness reminded me that what was happening was real, not something I could escape.

"You took a pregnancy test?"

"I did; several. They were all positive." I willed myself into believing that my doctor would find what the technician had missed.

He moved the wand over my abdomen slowly, pausing every now and then.

"I believe you," he said, pulling the stirrups out. He went on, "I want to do a quick exam."

He was exceedingly gentle as he palpated my abdomen. I winced as he went over to the left side.

"You're tender," he commented. "Any pain, vomiting, or bleeding?"

I shook my head. What was he getting at?

My doctor turned to the nurse, "Draw a beta. Stat."

Well, I knew what "stat" meant. Stat meant "immediately," as soon as the lab could turn the result around. Why did he want the result as soon

Miscarriage statistics

The chances of an ectopic pregnancy (tubal pregnancy) occurring are one out of every 50 pregnancies. An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg implants outside of the uterine lining, usually in one of the fallopian tubes. On rare occasions, the fertilized egg can implant in the abdominal wall, an ovary, or the cervix. The fertilized egg cannot continue to progress. An ectopic pregnancy can be life threatening; it is the leading cause of death during the first trimester.

Planned Parenthood states that miscarriages happen for a number of reasons, among them chromosomal abnormalities, maternal age, maternal trauma, maternal exposure to toxic substances, a history of miscarriages, fibroid tumors, unsuccessful implantation of the egg into the uterine lining, and maternal lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol, and drug use.

According to the American Pregnancy Center, 10 to 25 percent of women experience miscarriages (defined as within the first

20 weeks of gestation). The majority of miscarriages happen before the 13th week of gestation.

Chemical pregnancies account for 50 to 75 percent of all miscarriages. Chemical pregnancies are early pregnancy, typically before five weeks of gestation. They are diagnosed by a missed period or biochemical test or (home pregnancy test, which check the level of hCG in urine, or a hCG blood test), before an ultrasound would have been able to show evidence of a gestational sac. The test results are the only proof that the pregnancy existed.



as possible? The chasm reappeared, opening wider, beckoning. I fought the pull of falling, fainting. I began to sob and shake.

"Talk to me," my doctor said, as he came over to my side and stood next to my husband. He reached down and took my hand, pulling me into a sitting position.

I began slowly, barely getting the words out between hiccupping sobs. I grew calmer as I shared the joy of discovering I was pregnant, how I

had felt at peace, grounded by the life that grew inside of me. Then I told my doctor something I had never said, not even to my husband, out of fear it would come true — how I had felt a change in my body several days prior. I had sensed a lack of progression, but ignored it, chalking it up to fear related to all of what I had been through to get pregnant — batteries of tests, fertility drugs, and invasive procedures.

"Do you think I'm crazy?"

"No. I always listen to women. They know things I can't. Let's wait for the test."

"What do you think?" I asked quietly.

He still held my hand and he continued to watch me as he spoke, "I think you might have an ectopic pregnancy." And he went on to explain that he suspected the baby was lodged in my fallopian tube. He would have to surgically remove the fetus.

My husband and I wanted to go home, to spend time to come to terms with the news, to hold our son, however, that was not to be. I was immediately prepped for surgery, because I was at critical risk for hemorrhaging. The IV went in on the fifth try. I drifted off, with my husband by my side fighting his tears back and the anxious expression of my physician.

Afterwards, groggy, I avoided waking up, irritating one of the nurses. I drifted in and out for some time — emerging from sedation, and then understanding I had lost my child and quickly retreating back into the deep.

It was my husband's voice that eventually pulled me to the surface and kept me there, "Babe, wake up. I need you. We need you." Finally alert, I opened my eyes and looked at the man I had vowed to love through anything and everything.

He looked spent. My sorrow for him piled up on top of the baby — loss and grief that threatened to suffocate me. I felt as though I had committed the worst imaginable act, because I had lost our baby. I had let him down. Us down.

I apologized to him. He smiled tenderly. Kissing me, he said, "I have you. I thought I was going to lose you."

"But, the baby ..."

"We'll have another child. How can we not?"

• • •

I sometimes reflect on the loss of our baby and the acute grief I experienced. Years later there is no remaining anger, only fleeting sadness and the occasional pain of loss, and of not raising and knowing this child, particularly around her due date.

The passing years have provided wisdom and perspective. I am humbled by the knowledge that there was a bigger plan. My baby was a very special cloud and her loss was one of the greatest silver linings, ushering forth three extraordinary sacred gifts over the next five years — our three children though adoption.

Judy M. Miller is a freelance writer living in the Midwest with her husband and four children. She is a certified Gottman Educator and the author of "What To Expect From Your Adopted Tween and Writing to Heal Adoption Grief: Making Connections & Moving Forward." and the author of "What To Expect From Your Adopted Tween and Writing to Heal Adoption Grief: Making Connections & Moving Forward."



A LETTER FROM COLLEGE

AGLAIA HO

A 'Love Note'

New musical explains the power of parental support for bullying victims

Looking back at our childhood, all of us can remember a time when we were picked on, teased, or just made to feel inadequate. Most of our experiences probably occurred in school behind the teacher's back. Maybe it was a shove in the schoolyard, a taunt hurled across the lunchroom, or another student spreading rumors. Children and teens can be ruthless and petty. However, they can also be sensitive, especially to harsh words from their peers or so-called friends.

In order to overcome bullying, children and teens need support, especially from those they trust the most: their parents. A new family musical at the Actor's Temple Theater in Manhattan captures just how meaningful parental support and encouragement can be to a child facing bullying at school.

"The Love Note Musical" is a high-energy journey that follows Jessie, a warm-hearted fourth grader, as she navigates the social hierarchy of both friends and foes at her new school. Along the way, she encounters a group of mean girls who are determined to make her first few days in town a living hell. Even as Jessie copes with loneliness, broken promises, and lack of self-esteem, her day is instantly brightened by the kind words in a little pink note that her mother packs in her lunch.

The musical is the brainchild of Gail Phaneuf, a Boston-based playwright, director, and strong advocate against bullying.

"I believe that bullying is prevalent in our society at every age, social status, job, school, and even within families themselves," says Phaneuf. "We have basically created a society that is ruled by fear and that is the

main objective for the bully."

The inspiration for this musical came after Phaneuf heard heartwarming childhood anecdotes from friends about having received "love notes" from their parents in their lunches.

The impact of these small acts of kindness and support truly moved Phaneuf.

"Many people that I have spoken to about this say that they treasured the notes that were put in their lunches by their mothers," says Phaneuf. "They were also a little embarrassed by them at the same time, but they *loved* being *loved*."

Watching this show brought back memories of my own experiences being bullied in school. Like Jessie, I have a mother who used to leave me Post-it notes in my book bag reminding me to have confidence in myself and have a great day at school. My mother also left me corny jokes and puzzles, too.

As a theatrical experience, "The Love Note" is definitely a nod to other successful family musicals such as Disney's "High School Musical" or Jason Robert Brown's "13." The show features a well-balanced score of lyrical ballads and powerhouse show-stoppers that reflect different aspects of school life.

While each musical number does not necessarily move the plot ahead, they do provide immense entertainment value for impatient young ones who might be in the audience. The set is colorful and versatile, reflecting a child's innocent imagination. Best of all, the young cast does a tremendous job developing their characters and emulating restless 10 year olds. They manage to convey even minute nuances characteristic of young children (that is, sitting cross-legged or fidgeting).

Phaneuf creates a world that resonates with audience members from across the age spectrum. In this fictional school, the quirky nerds appeal to a younger elementary school crowd, while the snobbish mean girls are more representative of high

school cliques. The protagonist, Jessie, sits somewhere in between and is relatable to all. As a sophomore in college, I see reflections of myself in Jessie such as her shy, sweet demeanor and her wild imagination. Even parents will find a connection with the lunch lady who witnesses the bullying and is reminded of her own experience being picked on.

However, the most commendable aspect of "The Love Note" is the strong and relatable message that emerges as the show progresses. There is an emphasis on a parent's role in mediating conflicts and helping their children overcome bullying. At the same time, "The Love Note" reminds parents that their children need to be the ones to stand up to the bullies.

"The Love Note' is different in that it allows the kids to work the problems out for themselves," Phaneuf explains.

Although Jessie's mother never makes an onstage appearance, her presence is clearly felt throughout the show. Parents can play an integral part in strengthening their children's confidence.

According to Phaneuf, "The small gesture of putting a love note in a child's lunch is a huge way of reminding that child, during their hectic time at school, that they are loved and safe."

"The Love Note" convinces us to think more critically regarding our efforts to eradicate bullying. It is clear that dealing with this issue is a collective effort that involves the actions of the victims, the perpetrators, and the bystanders.

"My dream for this project is to help spread the word," Phaneuf shares. "Once this show spreads, it will allow for the conversation about bullying to be discussed in these different forums."

"The Love Note" is a great experience for families and schools. The portrayal of the issue strikes a chord in a wide audience and promotes important discussion on how we can best deal with bullying in our community.

"The Love Note – A Musical" at Actor's Temple Theater (339 W. 47th St. between Eighth and Ninth avenues in Hell's Kitchen, www.the_love_note.com), \$39.50.

Aglaia Ho is a sophomore at Williams College and a native New Yorker. She also writes for her own blog at www.aglaiaho.weebly.com.

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Building Bridges To Tomorrow

Tiny babies, big love

Part 2: Two micro-preemie moms share their experiences

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

Jennifer Degl's straight-from-the-heart memoir, "From Hope to Joy: A Mother's Determination and Her Micro-preemie's Struggle to Beat the Odds" chronicles her harrowing journey. It's a touching and riveting story, filled with love, determination, strength, hope — and finally, Joy.

Degl, her husband John, and their three boys live only 40 minutes north of the city in Westchester. The family remembers all too well the grueling ordeal that became their daily existence, and the emotional roller coaster they endured after their miracle micro-preemie Joy (now 2) burst unexpectedly into the world. The author details her troubled pregnancy,

the scary delivery, and Joy's struggle to survive. For a long time, it was one step forward and four steps back.

Tammy Scileppi: It's been two years since your child left the NICU. Please tell our readers how your daughter is doing, and what she's like.

Jennifer Degl: Joy is doing very well! She is an energetic little lady who is determined to keep up with her three big brothers. Joy wakes up each morning calling, 'Mommy, Mommy!' and if I don't answer her within a few minutes she switches to 'Daddy, Daddy!' She just started pointing her index finger in the air while saying, 'be right back,' before she runs away, laughing.

Joy asks for her hair to be done each morning, after she is dressed. She loves to point to pictures of babies and puppies because she can say those words, as well.

Developmentally, Joy is closer to her due date and not her birthday, which is what doctors expect of such an early preemie. Joy was born four months before her due date, at the brink of viability, and this is where her brain development seems to be at. She rolled about five months after most full-term babies roll, and she walked a few months after most other full-term babies walk. The same applies to talking. That being said, Joy sees a speech therapist twice a week, as well as an educational expert twice a week, and both of these women work to catch her up.

We are very lucky that Joy does not have any physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy. Disabilities like CP are very common in micro-preemies (babies born before 27 weeks gestation). Micro-preemies typically have issues with their eyes, and as far as we can tell, Joy has normal vision.

TS: Tell us about your boys. Are they protective of their little sister?

JD: The boys each have their own special relationship with Joy. Sean

(9) carries her around the house after she asks him to pick her up. Jack (7) enjoys tickling her. And Shane (5) and Joy seem to share an unspoken language, where they play for hours making silly sounds at each other. But overall, they all include Joy in their playtime and also help us encourage her speech by trying to get her to pronounce words correctly.

TS: Please discuss the following topics from your personal experience:

Maintaining normalcy at home with a baby in the NICU

JD: This is difficult for the most organized parent, but it is possible. I would suggest one or two days a week that you do "normal" things with your other children and just visit the NICU in the evenings on those days. Maybe even take a day off of visiting. You will feel wonderful after spending time with your family, and your children will feel like life is normal.

TS: Involving siblings in the life of a baby in the NICU

JD: This can be hard if the siblings are very young because they cannot tolerate long visits to the NICU and they can also be loud and full of germs. We brought the boys to the NICU only a handful of times, but showed them pictures and videos of Joy almost daily.

Another fun thing we did was buy preemie undershirts and onesies and allowed the boys to decorate them with fabric markers and paint. We would then take pictures of Joy wearing the shirts and show them, or we ask the nurses to put her in one of the shirts if we were bringing the boys to visit.

TS: High-risk pregnancies and living with a high-risk pregnancy

JD: [Degl's doctors told her that having a fourth child would be risky, but she yearned for another baby.] A pregnancy is considered high-risk when there are potential complications that could affect the mother, the baby, or both. These are always stressful! I would love to say I handled it well, but hindsight begs to differ! Looking back, I would suggest that both partners communicate their hopes and fears as they arise and that will help maintain sanity. Also, there are many different online communities and support groups in which you can find friends and confidants.

TS: Neonatal intensive care units

JD: Most people (luckily) do not really know what a NICU is. My advice to new NICU parents is: introduce yourself to the NICU social



From left, Sean (9), Shane (5), mom Jennifer, and Joy (2), and Jack (7) Degl on Mother's Day 2014.



Ayla in the neonatal intensive care unit.

worker (unless they find you first), and they can inform you about the available support services. Then, I would talk to the other NICU parents who are going through something very similar and will most likely welcome your company. I made two very close friends in the NICU when our babies were there together.

TS: The life of a micro-preemie in the neonatal intensive care unit.

JD: Micro-preemies have a rough go of it. Most of their first few months are full of pain and stress. They are subjected to breathing tubes, IVs, numerous heel pricks and blood draws a day, daily X-rays, medications, and feeding problems. They should be listening to the muffled sounds of their mother's voice for months to come yet they are exposed to pain, alarms, and bright lights. Only the toughest will go home.

Micro-preemies are not done with medical interventions once they go home. Many are sent home on oxygen, with trach tubes, and almost all will have daily doctor or nurse appointments for the first few months of being released from the NICU. The majority of micro-preemies will have interventions for a few years. Joy now has physical therapy once a week, speech therapy twice a week, and a teacher that comes to work with her twice a week. Many other

micro-preemies have more services than Joy.

TS: How did you and your husband cope with everything, emotionally, psychologically, financially?

JD: Honestly, we are still dealing with it. At first, we fought a lot during my time on bed rest. Then things calmed down while Joy was in the NICU, because neither of us could focus on anything else, other than her health and taking care of our other children. After Joy's first birthday, we really had time to reflect on all that we went through and we are still trying to move past it, both as a couple and individuals.

...

For parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends of preemie parents, "From Hope to Joy" is a truly inspirational and in-depth look into the author's journey. Here's an excerpt from chapter 23, Waking Up to New Challenges, www.fromhope-tojoy.com.

The longer I was denied access to my daughter, the more depressed I became. Later that evening, John tried to show me pictures of our baby girl — I refused to look at them, and I refused to name her. She's going to die. My positivity had flown out the window. I feared that naming her would somehow make me more attached to her, and I didn't want to be attached to her

in case she died before I saw her.

That night after everyone left, I couldn't sleep. At 3 am, I was still wide awake — and crying. A few hours later, my doctor was back in the hospital and came to see me. I begged her to let me see my daughter.

"No. You don't seem to understand that you're in critical condition," she admonished. She told me my job was to get better — and then I could see my daughter.

Sunday was Mother's Day, and I didn't even get to see my kids. John came and spent the afternoon and evening with me. We watched the finale of "Desperate Housewives" on TV and when John left, he promised to bring the boys on Monday.

When I was alone, Susan — the one nurse with whom I had bonded — came to my room. Susan was a surgical nurse, around my age, and a mom. "It's Mother's Day. I need to see my daughter," I pleaded with her.

To my astonishment, Susan agreed. Somehow she got me in a wheelchair, pain pump, blood transfusion, and all. She wrapped me up, and down the hall we went, to the NICU. Susan told me I had five minutes, and then introduced me to Helen, a NICU nurse with an Irish brogue. Helen reminded me of my paternal grandmother, and I liked her instantly.

Our daughter was way back in the

corner, in one of the two rooms in the front of the NICU, where the sickest babies are. There were tubes everywhere. I burst into tears that wouldn't stop. She was so tiny: She weighed one pound, four ounces at birth, and was a tad over eleven inches long.

Helen carefully explained each of the bags and tubes. She wheeled me to a sink so I could wash my hands and then put my wheelchair right next to my daughter's isolette.

I stuck my finger through the opening in the isolette, and my tiny daughter grabbed my finger.

After Susan wheeled me back to my room, I called John, and woke him out of a sound sleep. "We have to name her," I said.

...

Another New Yorker, Jaime Hamm, shares her daughter Ayla's micro-preemie baby story:

When I found out I was pregnant with a second daughter, I thought of the tea parties she could have with her sister. I thought of all the experiences I could share with them and what I could teach them, and what they could learn together. However, at 27 weeks and three days, I went into labor at a hospital I'd never heard of, with a doctor I'd never met, and delivered via C-section a one-pound, 14-ounce, 13-inch baby girl, Ayla Evelyn, who had less than a

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

10 percent chance of survival. A bacterial infection that began in my placenta and spread to my uterus forced Ayla to find a way out of what should've been the safest place in the world for her.

The next three-and-a-half months would require a strength that our family didn't know we were capable of, as we navigated through our new life in the NICU. Small victories, such as when Ayla would gain 30 grams or when one of her many IVs were removed, were short-lived. It was a two-steps-forward and 10-steps-back kind of world. One minute I'm breast feeding her for the first time, the very next minute, her lung collapsed. There was no relief ... only hopeful sadness that would occasionally make way for a bit of good news. The possible outcomes of having such a premature baby were severe. If she did survive, Ayla could suffer from cerebral palsy, brain damage ... just pick your worst case scenario; according to statistics, it was a likelihood.

When their daughter Mila was 6 months old, Jaime and her husband Eric moved from their Upper West Side apartment to a home in Edgewater, NJ, a waterfront town right under the George Washington Bridge, less than three miles away. Hamm said it gave them a bit more space without leaving all the creature comforts of Manhattan, including her obstetrician and gynecologist, which she would need a mere two months later, when she found out she was pregnant again. She continued to see her doctor at her Upper West Side office and planned on delivering at St. Luke's Roosevelt in Manhattan, where Mila was born.

My pregnancy with Ayla was [otherwise] unremarkable: all my blood work was fine; I was eating well; and [I was] getting exercise through long walks in Central Park with Mila. Since I was 34, I wasn't high-risk, so there wasn't any need for an amniocentesis — the only thing that would've detected the infection!

On the evening of March 13, 2012, I started having what felt like contractions. Surely, at six months I wasn't going into labor — or so my husband and I told ourselves — so I took a warm bath and tried to relax. A couple hours later, the "contractions" had not subsided. We called my ob-gyn, Dr. Shulina, and she advised that we go to the local hospital and have them rule out contractions, just to be on the safe side. An hour later, it was confirmed. They were contractions, and I was in pre-term labor.

The emergency room advised that its hospital wasn't equipped for a pre-

mie of that size, and I would need to be transferred to another hospital that had a level III or level IV NICU. Dr. Shulina, who was in constant contact with the hospital in Edgewater, requested that I be brought to St. Luke's Roosevelt immediately for treatment.

Anyone that has spent any time in New York City knows that with the bridges and tunnels, [traffic flow is unpredictable]. Either you fly on through, or you're stuck in soul-crushing traffic. The physicians in Edgewater knew this, too, and refused to transfer me with the risk that I could go into labor while stuck in the Lincoln Tunnel. The decision was made to take me to Jersey City Medical Center. It was the closest hospital with a level IV NICU. I was frightened. I had no idea where I was going, who would be helping me, and I certainly didn't know if my child would survive this — I was only 27 weeks!

Seventeen hours later, after a painful emergency C-section, and horrified gasps from an attending nurse upon seeing the condition of my uterus, Ayla was born. I saw her for only a moment before CPR was initiated and she was whisked away in a plastic box.

A doctor from the NICU met me in recovery to explain the situation. Ayla was sick, really sick, and her chances were less than 10 percent of surviving the night. In the words of the neonatologist, "we need her to fight." And fight she did!

Ayla had lost three quarters of her blood supply fighting the infection my body had failed to protect her from. She survived six blood transfusions, three collapsed lungs, a grade-2 brain bleed, retinopathy, dangerously high bilirubin counts (jaundice), a slight opening in her kidney, and a heart murmur.

Ayla suffered through countless infections and infinite needle pricks to her tiny hands and feet. The suffering a mother goes through, watching helplessly as their baby fights with every labored breath in their small body to survive, is immeasurable. All I could do was use my hospital-grade breast pump, dutifully, every three hours, so that Ayla would always have fresh breast milk; read countless books and studies on prematurity; sit next to her incubator for hours at a time; and pray to God for a miracle — even if my lack of attendance in church didn't quite warrant one, I prayed for one anyway.

On June 4, after Ayla's brain bleed had begun to resolve, and it was safe enough to move her, Ayla was transferred to New York Presbyterian Hospital to have sight-saving eye surgery by renowned pediatric ophthalmologist Dr. Chan. The increase in oxygen delivered to Ayla after the collapse of



New Yorkers Jaime and Eric Hamm with their daughters Mila and Ayla.

her right lung, then her left, and then her right again, caused her right eye to hemorrhage. However, upon closer inspection, Dr. Chan told us that she wouldn't need the surgery after all.

After months of setbacks and heartbreak, Ayla was out of the woods. In three more weeks, at a whopping five pounds, nine ounces, Ayla came home!

Today, Ayla is a happy, playful, walking, running 2-year-old, who loves Fisher Price Little People, her Pinkie Pie doll, and adores her big sister Mila. There are no more neonatologists, urologists, cardiologists, or ophthalmologists. She finished physical therapy and after four months of speech therapy, she is starting to talk!

My experience changed me forever. I learned so many things, namely, patience. I had to learn that it would take hours, days, weeks, months, sometimes YEARS to get answers to questions I had (and still have) about what her life would be like. I learned to trust the neonatologists, nurses, specialists, X-ray technicians, even the ambulance driver that transferred her to New York Presbyterian. I had to relinquish my

most basic right as a mom to protect and care for my baby to strangers who had the medical expertise to help her. I'm glad I did; they saved her life.

I learned that I was stronger than I gave myself credit for, that you can never cry enough, and that a mother's love for her child trumps all. I learned that miracles can and do happen, and I've learned to be thankful. I'm thankful for the incredible doctors at both Jersey City Medical Center and New York Presbyterian. I'm thankful for the nurses who held Ayla when I wasn't there and thankful for the friends and family who rallied behind us. I'm thankful for the advances in modern science that in only the last few years have helped give these tiny angels a better chance at life.

Finally, I'm thankful that instead of holding Ayla's hand through a small opening in an incubator, I get to hold it when we cross the street to go to the playground. In the end, it was Ayla who was the teacher, and I was the student. Through her, I learned how to be the best mom I can be — to two wonderful little ladies, who like to have tea parties.



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Creating the new Cooper Hewitt

Pen helps
kids to script
their design
experience
at revamped
museum

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

There are elaborate plans for the re-opening of the newly renovated and restored mansion that houses the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, not the least of which are the 10 exhibitions that will make the most of the revamped and expanded exhibition space which includes four floors of exhibition galleries. The Cooper Hewitt, which will re-open on Friday, Dec. 12, was founded in 1897 and is the only museum in the United

States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design.

Families will love the digitization of the museum's collections, which are now more interactive and engaging. For example, a hands-on "Process Lab" will emphasize how design is a way of thinking, planning, and problem solving, and will provide a foundation for the rest of the design concepts.

Families can also explore the museum's collections and exhibitions using groundbreaking, interactive technology called "Pen," which is a

key part of the visitor experience. With it, visitors will be able to record their visit, which they can view and share online with the option to save and supplement during future visits.

I spoke to Sebastian Chan, director of digital and emerging enterprises, and Kim Robledo-Diga, deputy director of education, about the renovation, digitization, and family-friendliness of the Cooper Hewitt.

Shnieka Johnson: What are some of the noticeable changes to the museum?

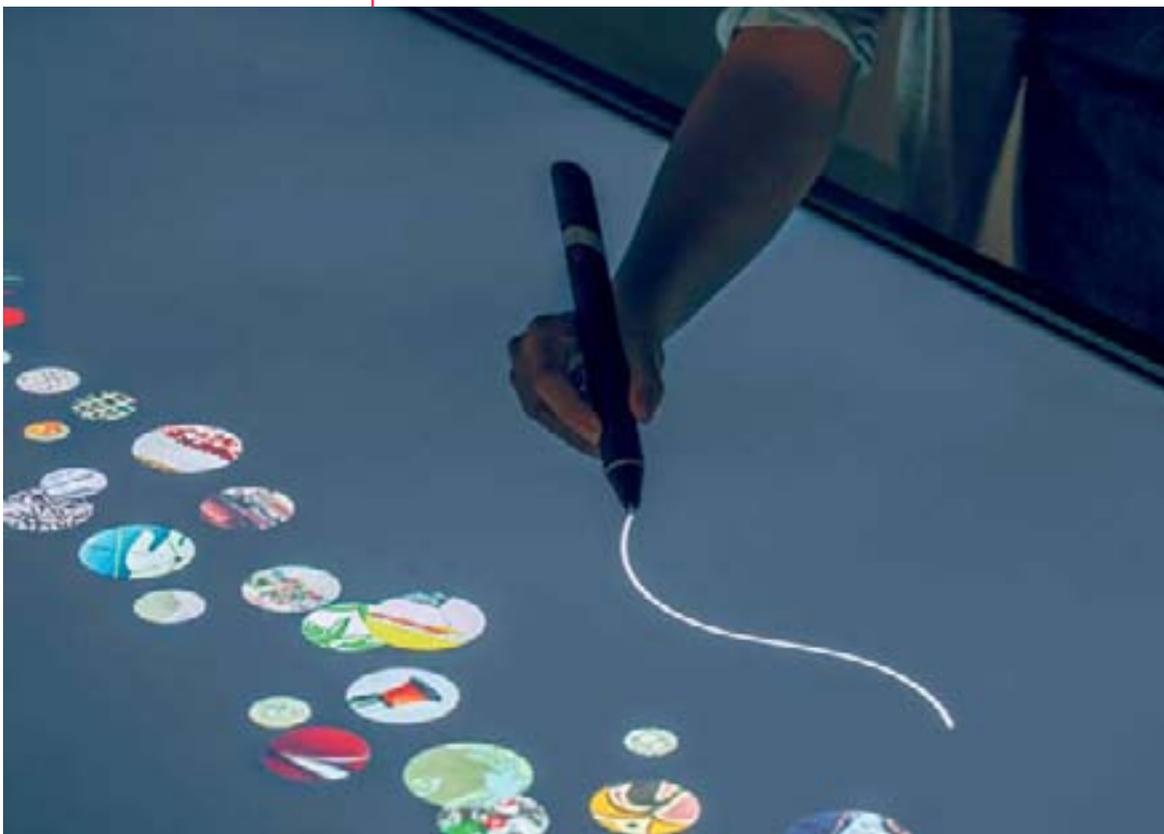
Sebastian Chan: When the museum reopens, it will have four floors dedicated to exhibitions and public programs, all connected by a new public staircase and elevator. These facilities include a versatile, new 6,000-square-foot gallery on the third floor, which has never been used for public exhibitions; expanded gallery space on the second floor; and restored first-floor galleries; as well as a revolutionary interactive visitor experience.

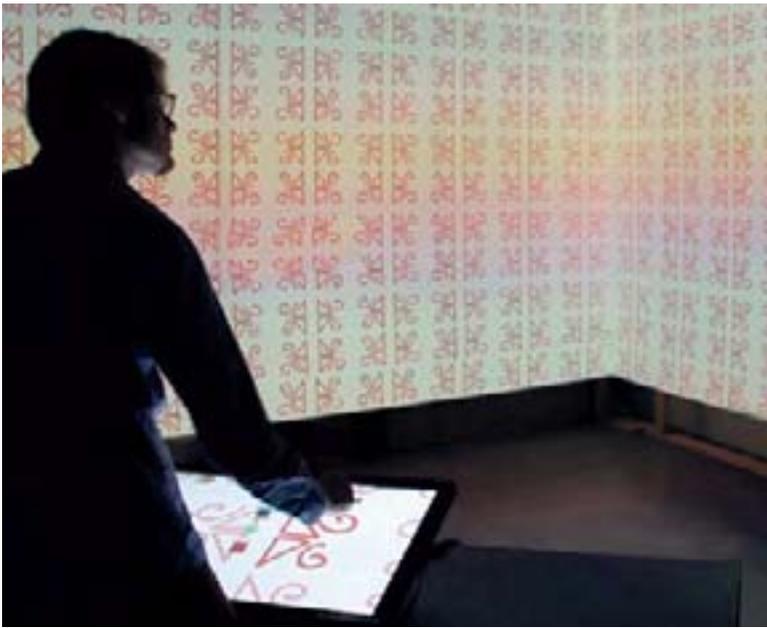
SJ: Why did the museum go in this direction?

SC: We wanted to make design relevant and exciting to today's audiences, invite people to join in the design process in order to understand design from every perspective, while maintaining the integrity of the historic Carnegie mansion that we call home.

SJ: Can you explain the "Immersion Room?"

SC: The Immersion Room features Cooper Hewitt's extraordinary collection of wall coverings. Visitors can select from over 200 digital images of wallpapers or sketch their own on interactive tables, and then





2014 Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

(Clockwise from top left) The Immersion Room of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum was designed by Diller, Scofidio + Renfro, and Local Projects LLC. The Pen in use on the interactive tables and the “digital river” of collection objects. A rendering of the new Process Lab. The museum’s Gesture Match activity.

project them onto the walls at full scale to see their impact. The Immersion Room will give visitors the opportunity to see how the wall coverings were intended to be installed, as well as provide a high-tech design experience.

SJ: What is the interactive “Pen?”

SC: Symbolizing and embodying human creativity, the Pen is a key part of every visitor’s experience. Given at admission, it enables every visitor to collect objects from around the galleries and create their own designs on interactive tables. At the end of a visit, the Pen is returned and all the objects collected or designed by the visi-

tor are accessible online through a unique web address printed on every ticket. These can be shared online and stored for later use in subsequent visits.

Shnieka Johnson: How will the Pen aid visitors with children?

Kim Robledo-Diga: Exploring, playing, and collecting are part of how children and family units learn and build meaningful experiences. The Cooper Hewitt Pen empowers children to design their own museum experience and make choices like they never have been able to do before in a museum environment. The intuitive nature of touching a screen is present at the time of a child learning how to walk and

can be experienced as a family in our galleries. At the primary school ages, the Pen encourages children to script their own visit and deliver a more meaningful purpose to their exploration of the exhibitions and design interactives. After their visit, children can continue their Cooper Hewitt experience when they go online to view and share their story.

SJ: What age is appropriate for this component?

KR: Primary-school ages and up.

SJ: Do you anticipate new family programming incorporating the Pen?

KR: The Cooper Hewitt Education team is working on prototyping best ways to incorporate the Pen in

family programming, which will be introduced in mid-2015.

Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum inside Andrew Carnegie Mansion [2 E. 91st Street at Fifth Avenue in Carnegie Hill, (212) 849-8400, www.cooperhewitt.org. Opens Dec. 12. Open Sunday through Friday, 10 am–6 pm; Saturday, 10 am–9 pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. General admission, \$18; seniors and college students, \$12. Members and children under 18 are admitted free of charge.

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

A family favorite

Caribbean
Princess
delivers an
experience
worthy of
royalty

BY STACEY ZABLE

Cruises have long been a top family travel choice for us, with trips at sea starting when my youngest was only 2. This past summer, we boarded the Caribbean Princess for a five-night Western Caribbean itinerary round trip from Fort Lauderdale. Princess Cruises' 3,080-passenger ship provided plenty of family-friendly features to keep our 12- and 15-year-olds, as well as my husband and I, entertained and happy throughout the cruise.

When deciding on a cruise for the family, itinerary and ship should be the top considerations. Caribbean Princess is currently sailing through April 2015 on a series of four and five-night Getaway cruises (with seven-night itineraries available from January to April 2015 as well) to the Eastern and Western Caribbean round trip from Fort Lauderdale.

The shorter getaway options are a good choice if you have never cruised before and want to try it for the first time. Our five-night itinerary included port stops in Grand Cayman and Cozumel. Princess offers a variety of excursions to get you exploring the region, with top family picks including a pirate ship cruise in Grand Cayman and the dolphin swim in Cozumel.

The days at sea, however, turned out to be the most relaxing for us as we enjoyed all the Caribbean Princess had to offer. With the ship having five pools, plus two splash pools, there was always a lounge chair and space to relax, so often a luxury on other ships. Although it's a large vessel, Caribbean Princess has numerous areas to cozy up and make your own fun in addition to the pools. Movies Under the Stars features a gigantic pool-side screen where you can watch films on a lounge chair with popcorn



The cruise had plenty to keep the writer's 12- and 15-year-old daughters happy.

and blanket provided. The Lotus Spa and Fitness Center offers an extensive array of treatments, and my oldest daughter and I enjoyed continuing our vacation tradition of the mother-daughter couples massage. The Sanctuary, near the spa, is an adults-only area for when kids are in camp and you want some quiet time.

Youth Centers, for ages 3 to 12, divide the youngest passengers into two age groups for supervised activities virtually all day and into the night, with breaks for lunch and dinner.

Evening group kidsitting is also available from 10 pm to 1 am (except for midnight on the last night) for parents who want to keep the fun going until late. Activities include pizza parties, games, crafts and more. A Teen Lounge caters to ages 13 to 17 with their own space filled with foosball tables, Wii games, and the latest movies and music.

Highlights of the week for the kids included my 12-year-old participating in a Jr. CHEF@Sea program, where she (and a small group of other kids accompanied by their parents) got to go "behind the scenes" in the shipboard galley and learn how to decorate a cake. The delicious end results were hand delivered to our stateroom, and each kid received an official photo with the pastry chefs.

Another top pick for the week was the Family Fun Fair, where the main piazza was transformed into a place for games, cookie decorating, face painting, crafts, and a visit by Pelican Pete — the program's mascot — for the en-

tire family to enjoy together. Trivia also became a daily activity for us.

Three main dining rooms; a buffet restaurant; pizza, burgers, and ice cream by the pool; as well as 24-hour room service is just the start of the food offerings. Be sure to purchase the kids drink package that allows them to get unlimited sodas, virgin cocktails (such as pina colodas), and milk shakes throughout the cruise for a single price. Enjoy dinner at least one or two nights at Sabatini's for a special Italian culinary experience or at the Crown Grill for steak and seafood; both of these restaurants have a per person additional charge.

In the evening, the Princess Theater plays host to a variety of shows, talented vocalists entertain in the Piano Lounge and Crooners Bar, and a live band plays dance favorites at the Wheelhouse Bar.

When it was time to end our days, our mini-suite stateroom with balcony was very comfortable for four. The balcony was just the place to say good night to the day or welcome the morning in happy anticipation of the new day's possibilities.

Visit princess.com or call (800) 774-6237 for more information.

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

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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Mediation & people that just won't budge

Anyone familiar with this column knows that I am a big proponent of mediation. But not every case can be mediated.

When “Darlene” called me, she said that she and her partner “Jeremy” were ending their relationship. Darlene wanted to talk out all of the issues with Jeremy, and to work together with him to reach the best agreements possible, to allow each to move on, and to insure that their children would be well cared for.

Darlene called me, and we briefly discussed how mediation works. She liked hearing that she and her husband would have a chance to communicate; they hadn't really talked in months. Darlene seemed happy that she and Jeremy would be the ones making the decisions that would so greatly affect their family (as opposed to a judge deciding matters for them). She understood that by talking over the issues between them, and by staying out of court, tensions could be reduced.

Our short conversation ended with Darlene saying that she would

speak to her husband and get back to me.

Within a few days, Darlene called again saying that Jeremy had agreed to come in for a consultation. We scheduled a time for the three of us to meet together.

At the consultation, I soon learned from Jeremy that he (perhaps with the help of a lawyer) had already written up what he considered an agreement for him and Darlene. He wanted this so-called “agreement,” which the wife had not helped to create, to be the final agreement. For Jeremy, the purpose of mediation was to begin and end with what he had prepared, perhaps allowing for minor changes.

I explained that we could discuss his proposals during mediation. Jeremy would be welcome to share his ideas and concerns that were reflected in his document. However, his agreement would not be the basis for all discussion (just as it wouldn't have been had Darlene prepared one and demanded that the outcome adhere to it).

Not surprisingly, Jeremy, who perhaps tellingly had arrived to our appointment 30 minutes late, wasn't happy with what I had to say. Darlene was clearly saddened at this breakdown before we had even had a first session. But she understood, and seemed to appreciate that proceeding as Jeremy had been demanding wouldn't have been mediation at all.

We didn't meet again.

A discussion along the lines that Jeremy was insisting on would probably have been very limiting. Most or all questions would have dealt with his — and only his — plan. The conversation would have been stunted, the freedom to express and consider different views and ideas (often critical in reaching agreements) strongly discouraged.

In mediation — even during a consultation — parties who have up until then been rigid and uncompromising often demonstrate a shift in their thinking and a willingness to be open-minded; not to give in, but rather to be open to the possibility that there may be other ways of having their needs met. Such people can let go of their ultimatums, and engage in a constructive dialogue.

For other people, it is “my way or the highway.” They won't consider any plan other than the one they walked in with. Parties like this are poor candidates for mediation; they won't get anywhere in the process, because they are unwilling or unable to engage in it. Often, they wind up in court, expecting a judge to decide in their favor.

Quite frequently, they are disappointed with the outcome.

New York City and Long Island-based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without going to court. Contact him at lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com, (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/>. Follow him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lchabin.

Disclaimer: All material in this column is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.





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FABULYSS FINDS

LYSS STERN

Holiday fun in NYC

There is so much to do and explore with the children in New York City in December. Whether you are busy shopping for holiday gifts (make sure to do some window shopping) in all of the glittering big department stores, going ice-skating at Rockefeller Center or Bryant Park, visiting the Christmas tree, or going to see a Broadway show, I have put together a Holiday LYSS of some things you'll especially enjoy experiencing with the kids.

Everyone loves the "Radio City Christmas Spectacular" with the Rockettes. And whether you love musical theater or the books by Theodor Geisl, Dr. Seuss's "How The Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical" is playing at Madison Square Garden. The New York Botanical Garden's Holiday Train Show is also a very popular attraction. The Union Square Holiday Market is one of my favorite places to shop during this festive season — from the DeLysscious foods

to the unique and special gifts — I always find something for everyone here.

If you are celebrating Hanukkah or Christmas — or both! — this is one of the most beautiful cities in which to celebrate. Take a stroll along Fifth Avenue to see all the stores lit up like a winter wonderland. Stop into a restaurant that you always wanted to try but never had the time to. This holiday season is about family and spending powered-down time with yours.

"Radio City Christmas Spectacular" at Radio City Music Hall [1260 Avenue of the Americas between W. 50th and W. 51st streets in Midtown, (866) 858-0007, www.radiocitychristmas.com] now through Dec. 31. Tickets \$46-120.

"How The Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical" at the Theater at Madison Square Garden [4 Pennsylvania Plz. between W. 31st and W. 33rd streets in Midtown, (212) 465-6741, www.theateratmsg.com/thegrinch] Dec. 5 to 28.

Tickets \$40-160.

The New York Botanical Garden's Holiday Train Show [200th Street and Kazimiroff Boulevard, (718) 817-8700, www.nybg.org] Tuesdays - Saturdays, 10 am-6 pm now through Monday, Jan. 19. Tickets \$20 (\$8 children, free for children under 2).

Union Square Holiday Market in Union Square [University Place and E. 14th Street in Union Square, (212) 529-9262, http://urbanspacenyc.com/union-square-holiday-market] now through Dec. 24, weekdays 11 am-8 pm; Saturday 10 am-8 pm; Sundays 11 am-7 pm.

There are lots of family events during the month of December that are wonderful. On Dec. 3, DivaMoms is hosting a moms' and kids' holiday event at the Armani Junior store on Madison Avenue to benefit Riley's Dance. There will be face painting for the kids, champagne and Armani makeovers for the moms, a DivaDiscount, and of course, a FabULyss raffle prize.

DivaMoms holiday benefit at Armani Junior (1223 Madison Ave. at 88th Street in Carnegie Hill) Dec. 3, 5-7 pm. RSVP at rsvp@divamoms.com. Free.

On Dec. 17, The Brooks Brothers store on Madison Avenue has a holiday event that benefits St. Jude Children's Research Hospital with the Wynton Marsalis Orchestra.

Brooks Brothers holiday benefit (346 Madison Ave. at E. 44th Street in Midtown) Dec. 17, 5-8 pm. RSVP to events@brooksbrothers.com. Free.

Also on Dec. 17 is The Jewish Museum's 20th Annual Family Hanukkah Party. This festive event brings together children ages 2 to tweens, parents and grandparents for an engaging evening of live entertainment, art projects, games and a holiday buffet dinner.

The Jewish Museum Hanukkah party [1109 Fifth Ave. at E. 92nd Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 423-3264] Dec. 17, 5:30-7:30 pm. On Sunday, Dec. 21 (the first day of winter), Carnegie Hall has its annual holiday event, and this year's theme is Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer.

Carnegie Hall Family Holiday Concert [881 Seventh Ave. between W. 56th and W. 57th streets in Midtown,



Photo by Ivo Vermeulen

The New York City skyline is part of the annual Holiday Train Show at the New York Botanical Garden.

DeLysscious gingerbread house recipe

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, at room temperature
1/2 cup dark brown sugar
1/4 cup light molasses or dark corn syrup
1 tablespoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cloves
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons water
For assemblage and decoration:
Melted white chocolate or royal icing (recipe follows)
Gumdrops, licorice, and peppermint, as desired
Royal icing:
1 pound (3-3/4 cups) powdered sugar, sifted if lumpy
1 to 2 large egg whites, or substitute 4 teaspoons packaged egg whites and 1/4 cup water
1 teaspoon almond extract, vanilla or lemon juice

DIRECTIONS:

GINGERBREAD HOUSE: In a large mixing bowl, cream the butter, brown sugar, molasses, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and baking soda together until the mixture is smooth. Blend in the flour and water to make a stiff dough. Chill at least 30 minutes or until firm. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Cut out the following paper patterns for the gingerbread house template:

Two rectangles, 3 by 5 inches, to make the front and back of the house. Two rectangles, 3 by 5 1/2 inches for the roof. Two pieces for the ends of the house, 3 inches wide at the base, 3 inches to the

roof line, and slanted to a peak 5 1/2 inches from the bottom. Four smaller rectangles, 1 1/2 by 1 inch for the roof and sides of the entryway. And one piece, 2 inches wide at the base, 1 1/2 inches to the roof line, and slanted to a peak 2 1/2 inches from the bottom for the front of the entryway.

Roll gingerbread dough out to edges on a large, rimless cookie sheet. Place paper patterns onto the rolled out dough. With a sharp, straight-edged knife, cut around each of the pieces, but leave pieces in place.

Bake at 375 degrees F for about 15 minutes until dough feels firm. Place patterns on top of the gingerbread again and trim shapes, cutting edges with a straight-edged sharp knife. Leave to cool on baking sheet.

Place royal icing into pastry bag with a writing tip and press out to decorate individual parts of house, piping on decorations, windows, door, etc., as desired. Let dry until hardened.

Glue sides, front and back of house together at corners using royal icing. Place an object against the pieces to prop up until icing is dry. (It only takes a few minutes.)

Glue the two roof pieces to the pitched roofline of the house. Then, similarly, glue the sides and roof of the entryway together with icing. Attach the entryway to the front of the house.

Continue decorating the house, glueing on gumdrops, licorice, and peppermint, as desired.

ROYAL ICING: Mix all of the ingredients together using an electric hand mixer, until the icing is smooth and thin enough to be pressed through a pastry bag with a writing tip. Add more lemon juice, if necessary.

Recipe courtesy of Food Network.

(212) 247-7800 www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2014/12/21/0300/PM/Carnegie-Hall-Family-Holiday-Concert-The-New-York-Pops] Dec. 21, 3 pm.

December date nights are very important, and on Mondays, crooner Michael Fredo serenades diners at luxury hot spot Beautique on West 58th Street. The glamorous restaurant and lounge is one of the best places to see and be seen with celebrity patrons Marion Cotillard, Joaquin Phoenix, Kevin Spacey, and Uma Thurman.

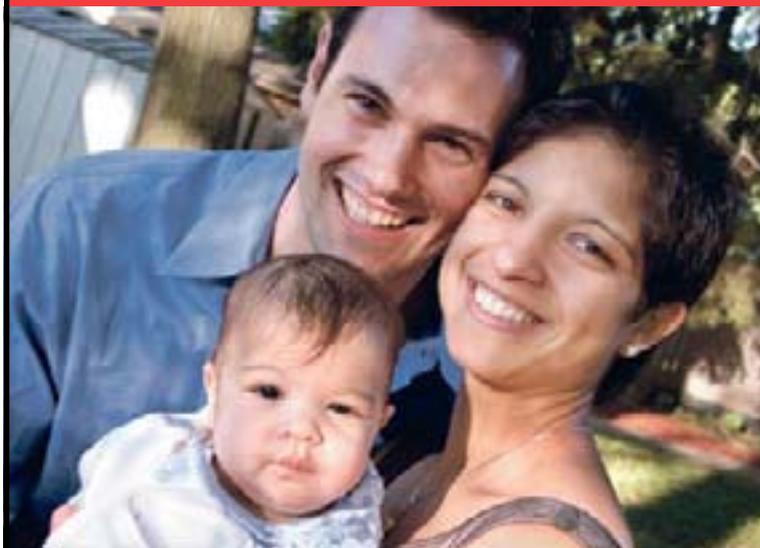
Michael Fredo at Beautique [8 W. 58th St. near Fifth Avenue in Midtown, (212) 753-1200]. Mondays, 7-11 pm. Reservations recommended but not required.

Wishing everyone a very happy and healthy 2015! It's sure to be a wonderful new year for all.

For some DeLysscious gingerbread house fun, I selected an easy recipe that should take just about an hour.

Lyss Stern is the founder of DivaLysscious Moms (www.divamoms.com).

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Keeping the happy in the holidays

Celebrating the season should be satisfying, not stressful

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

As parents we long to create magical holiday memories for our children. However, while their heads are filled with “visions of sugarplums,” we often feel overwhelmed by all we think we have to do and spend to make them happy. So how do we make this holiday season memorable and meaningful while minimizing the hassles and stress?

When planning your holiday celebrations, ask yourselves, “What do we want the holidays to mean to our children? What kind of memories do we want them to have? What feelings do we want them to associate with the holidays? Are we effectively communicating the meaning this holiday holds for us through our celebration?” Spend time revisiting your own childhoods and your favorite holiday memories. What kinds of things did your families do to make these memories possible?

My suspicion is that when you recall your favorite memories they have little or nothing to do with how many gifts there were or how much your parents spent on them. You may or may not even remember specific gifts. Most people’s memories have more to do with the atmosphere of the holidays that existed in their homes — the aromas, the music, the voices, the feelings. Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli remind us in their book, “Unplug the Christmas Machine,” that no matter what cultural or religious holiday you are celebrating, “What

children want and need is more time with their parents, an evenly paced holiday season, traditions they can count on, and realistic expectations about gifts ... Most people spend more time and emotional energy on gift-giving than anything else, and yet gift-giving is consistently rated as the least-valued aspect of the celebration.”

Here are a few suggestions for creating the meaningful holiday memories you desire:

View the holidays through the eyes of your child. Children experience the holidays differently at different ages. For example, the infant who rests calmly in Santa’s arms may become the toddler who shrieks in terror at this bearded stranger. The very young child for whom you carefully shopped may be more interested in the package’s wrapping than its contents. Pay attention to and respect your child’s reactions and avoid taking her preferences personally. By demonstrating respect toward your child, she will learn to respect you and others. Your responsiveness to her needs and feelings will leave a more lasting impression than any picture with Santa.

Make time together as a family a priority. Let decorating the house, making and wrapping gifts, and preparing meals be family activities. Delegate tasks according to age and ability. Everyone can do something. Having a special job to do makes everyone feel that they are making an important contribution to the family’s celebration.

Put together a collection of holi-

day books and read to each other! Listen to holiday music! Get out the art supplies and create! Take a walk in the neighborhood and enjoy the sights and sounds of the season. Limit television viewing to holiday specials that the family can watch together. Take advantage of this opportunity to discuss the portrayal of the holiday and whether or not it is in agreement with your values. Spend time exploring with your children the meaning of the holiday you are celebrating and its religious or cultural significance.

Simplify your social calendar. Attend only those functions that you believe to be absolutely necessary. Space events and maintain a flexible, realistic schedule as much as possible. When children will be accompanying you to events that may last past their bedtime, take along pajamas to change them into if there is a chance they will fall asleep. If you are attending an event that involves a meal with lots of unique or unusual dishes, take along food that you know your child will eat or feed her ahead of time. Take along a few quiet toys, books, or art supplies in case the entertainment is geared mostly toward adults. Your children will remember your efforts to make these experiences enjoyable for them, too.

Schedule some quiet time for your family. Listen to soothing music and use soft voices. Some families choose to institute a “whisper hour” during which everyone is asked to speak only in whispers. Individual family members are encouraged to spend this time in whatever



way they find most relaxing — reading, drawing, doing puzzles, resting, or writing letters.

Limit your children's wish list. Help your children learn to make choices by limiting their list to three items. They are more likely to identify what they really want this way. Encourage them to make choices that are within the family budget. Let making the list be part of the fun by having them write it themselves, draw pictures of the desired items, or cut them from catalogues and paste them on a piece of paper (you will want to save these).

Try to give your children at least one thing from their list. Remember that more is not always better. Knowing that someone cared enough to get what she really wanted tends to leave the recipient feeling very special.

Avoid taking your children

shopping. Arrange to let them stay with trusted relatives or friends. Set up a babysitting co-op for the holidays with these individuals or couples so that everyone gets a chance to get some uninterrupted shopping done. When taking your children along is unavoidable, plan several, short trips during the time of day when they are at their best — after meals or naps. Involve them in the shopping when possible. Let them hold or read the list and help look for the items.

Involve your children in the joy of giving. Ask them who they want to include on the family's gift list and for gift suggestions. Encourage them to make as many gifts as possible. This is best accomplished by starting early. Close friends and relatives will treasure simply framed original works of art, homemade calendars using your child's art-

work or photos, or treats your children helped bake and decorate. Never underestimate the value of a handmade gift, for these come from the heart.

Include children in a holiday tradition of giving to those less fortunate. Help them collect for food, clothing, coat, book, or toy drives in your area. Let them put some money in the Salvation Army bucket and explain what that money is used for. Prepare a meal for a lonely individual or needy family in your neighborhood. Teach your children the lesson that Scrooge's friend, Jacob Marley, discovered too late — that humankind is our business.

Whatever the holiday you are celebrating, keep the focus where it belongs. The common thread woven through all of these holidays and traditions seems to me to be reaf-

firming our commitments, strengthening our families, and dedicating ourselves to making this world we have been given a better place.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Kentucky. She has degrees in Child Development, Family Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapy. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator. She has written extensively on the topic of parenting. After six years as Arts Facilitator for the School for the Creative and Performing Arts, she chose to return to her favorite place of employment — home. Her son, Douglas, 24, is now based in New York City when he is not on the road performing. He is an actor, singer, musician, dancer, writer, and visual artist. Joseph, 14, is a freshman theatre major at the School for the Creative and Performing Arts who also sings, dances, plays piano, and creates visual art.



MOMMY 101
ANGELICA SEREDA



On playing favorites

Ask parents who their favorite child is, and they'll all tell you that they love their children all the same. I used to challenge this response, before I had children, as did my mother. She's a firm believer that parents do in fact have favorites. The fact that she only had one child doesn't make her the most reliable source for this discussion, but I'm confident that if she did have other children, I'd still be number one.

When Olivia was a baby I could never imagine loving another child as much as I loved her. I remember rocking her to sleep many nights in her perfect little nursery, feeling so thankful to experience the kind of love I had for her. I secretly told myself that I'd be fine having this one little girl as my daughter.

Then I became pregnant with Julia and experienced that feeling that many parents feel when they're expecting baby number

two: guilt. How could I love another child as much as my firstborn? Would Olivia be jealous? Would she feel like I loved her any less? These are normal thoughts and feelings, I soon learned, as I talked to other parents. But as soon as Julia was born, I realized how absurd it was to think that I wouldn't have enough love for both of my children.

With the birth of my second daughter I felt even more love and appreciation for Olivia. She was now a big sister and I knew that she had so much to offer and teach her little sister. I was overjoyed to experience being a "new mom" all over again. I was so elated with my two babies. I'm sure all moms have this same feeling — whether they've just given birth to their first or fourth child; it's an intense feeling no matter where you are in your parenting journey.

At this stage, Julia needs a little more physical care, but Olivia defi-

nately needs more attention. Don't think that you can spend your time cuddling with a baby while your toddler sits on the sidelines. It's not happening!

Julia is easier (now) in a lot of ways, because she finds everything hysterical. Everything. Especially her big sister. Olivia is 3 and, in case you don't know what that entails, essentially it means that no matter what I say, she'll want to do the exact opposite. Their personalities are taking shape now, and I have to respect that they will change. Things will change. As their mother I understand the ebb and flow relationship that I'll have with each child. My challenge as a mom is to never make them feel like one is superior to the other. They each have a special place in my heart, and while I don't necessarily disagree with my mother, nurturing our relationships with each other is my favorite part of being a mom.

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TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER



Sweet treat for little writers

Grandma says you have a sweet tooth. You're not sure which one it is, but it might be the one that loves biting into cookies. It could be the tooth that chomps into cake or candy, or maybe it's the one that loves a lick of ice cream.

Those things are really yummy, so maybe Grandma was right. And when you read "How to Bake a Book" by Ella Burfoot, you'll find another thing you'll like to bite into.

When someone bakes cookies, she probably start by putting her favorite pans on the kitchen counter. She gathers mixing cups and bowls, spoons and sheets, eggs and sugar, flour and chocolate. Each thing she uses has a certain job.

There's a recipe to follow when you bake cookies — but when you're baking a book, it's quite a different thing.

The first ingredient you need is a cup full of ideas. Then you'll want to stir in words, but be careful! The big words will take some extra stirring.

You definitely want your book to be tasty, so you'll need plenty of flavorings. That means you'll want to

drop in reds and blues and greens, three spoonfuls of pink and one of purple. Add in zap! And oh! And wow! And zing! Sprinkle in a bit of silliness, a smile or two, commas and periods at the end of the sentences, some sad things and lots of happy ones, and add two or three pictures that you can only see when you close your eyes and think.

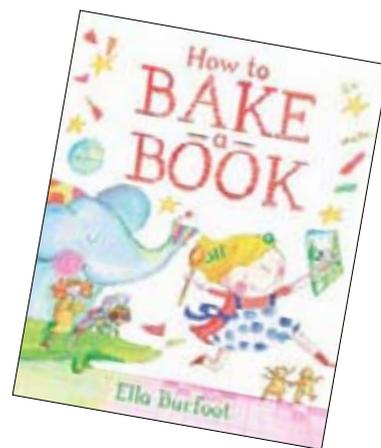
Now cover it all up and wait.

Like the little girl in this book, you won't know what your book is about until you roll it out on the counter, add your best filling to make it "thrilling," decorate it with your favorite things, and bake it well.

When it's done, you'll shake the pan, ease it onto the table, and take a look. Doesn't it smell good? Flip through the pages and take a nibble.

Congratulations, Chef! You've made a delicious, yummy book!

Could it be true that lifelong readers and lifelong foodies both need to start early in their passions? I'll bet it is — which is why "How to Bake a Book" could be a good addition to your (pretend) kitchen.



With a cute rhyme and colorful illustrations, author Ella Burfoot tells the story of a little girl who takes to the oven to create her own story. Just like cookies or pies, there are many steps to a tasty tale and ingredients that magically help "flavor" the recipe — both of which result in sprinkles of giggles, a slice of fun, and icing on your day.

I think this may be a perfect read-aloud for kids 18 months to 4 years old, especially if they have a fascination with the culinary arts and love to "help" in the kitchen. For them (and for the grown-up who gets to read this aloud), "How to Bake a Book" is the sweetest story.

"How to Bake a Book," by Ella Burfoot [32 pages, 2014, \$16.99].

A dark 'Red,' 'White,' and 'Blue' history

A move from California to Colorado is at the heart of the new book "Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky" by Sandra Dallas — but this move was not voluntary.

Twelve-year-old Tomi Itano hoped that her little brother, Hiro, wouldn't notice the hurtful word on the door of the grocery store. It made her cringe that he was 7 years old and was perfectly able to read the word "Japs."

It was 1942, and the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. America entered World War II soon after, which meant plenty of discrimination for Japanese-Americans like the Itanos. Tomi, Hiro, and their older brother, Roy, had been born in America, but that didn't seem to matter to many in their California town.

Mom said "Shikata ga nai" ("It cannot be helped"). Pop just kept working on the strawberry farm where they all lived — until the day the FBI showed up, arrested him, and took him away to prison camp. Shortly af-

terward, the rest of the Itanos packed a single suitcase and were forced to move to a relocation camp.

Ellis, Colorado, was nothing at all like California, and Tallgrass Camp was nothing like the strawberry farm. Tomi's family lived in a barracks surrounded by barbed wire, in an area that didn't seem like it would grow anything. There was a school and a community hall where mom taught other Japanese-American women to sew, but the Itanos didn't much like living there — especially without pop. Still, they made friends and started new projects, and things returned to a new kind of normal.

Then the one thing Tomi wanted more than anything finally happened — but it made her mad and bitter. The Itanos were as American as anybody, so why were they treated as if they weren't? She couldn't stop being angry, until her brother asked her to do something very important.

Based loosely on real history and internment camps in the U.S., "Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky" is a

fascinating story, both for kids and for adults.

In addition to explaining the history, author Sandra Dallas says in her afterword that, years ago, she met a couple of Japanese-American journalists who'd spent the war years in camps, and their stories were the basis for bits of this book.

My favorite part here is that Dallas's Tomi is EveryGirl circa 1946, despite what she and her family endures. That will resonate with young readers, who will very easily identify with her.

While boys can surely enjoy this book, it's meant more for girls ages 9 to 12, particularly those who love historically based chapter books. For them, "Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky" is golden.

"Red Berries White Clouds Blue Sky," by Sandra Dallas [216 pages, 2014, \$15.95].

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



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Avoiding frostbite

My children simply cannot get enough winter: the more snow there is on the ground, the more they want to go out and play. However, after the frigid “polar vortexes” we’ve seen lately, I’m concerned about the health risks posed by exposure to the cold weather. Can you tell me what I should be most watchful for, and what can I do to keep my children safe?

Even if there weren’t this recent rush of arctic air to contend with, you’re right to be wary about the hazards of playing in the cold. Colds and flus are indeed more common in the winter, but when it comes to the hazards of playing outside, frostbite is the biggest threat that your children will face in the months ahead.

Frostbite occurs when the skin is subjected to extremely cold temperatures — as the name would suggest, generally freezing or below — for an extended period of time. How long it takes to get frostbite is a function of just how cold it is. When the temperature feels like 30 degrees Fahrenheit, frostbite can take 30 minutes or more to occur. But when the temperature, including wind chill, plunges to zero degrees Fahrenheit,

frostbite can take as little as 15 minutes to set in. Children are particularly susceptible to the condition, and unfortunately, parents often mistake the early indications of frostbite for the simple discomfort associated with exposure to the cold.

Frostbite begins with extreme redness, followed by a loss of feeling and color in the affected area. It appears most commonly on the extremities — the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers or toes. Frostbite doesn’t go away when you come inside to warm up; and it can cause permanent damage to the skin and nerves. In the most severe cases, amputation of the affected area is the only treatment.

Since it sounds like sequestering themselves indoors for the whole winter isn’t the ideal option for your children (nor is it really desirable!), dressing appropriately for outdoor activity is the best way for them to avoid frostbite. Make sure they wear warm coats that are snug at the wrist. Your children should also wear hats, mittens, and scarves or (in very cold weather) knit masks to cover their faces and mouths. For activities where your children are exposed to snow, waterproof parkas or waterproof jackets are crucial, and

layering several light fabrics such as wool, silk or polypropylene will help to retain more body heat than one heavy layer of cotton.

Finally, do not ignore shivering, an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Persistent shivering is the body’s way of saying that it’s time to take a break from wintry weather.

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

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

2014-15 Private/Independent School Guide



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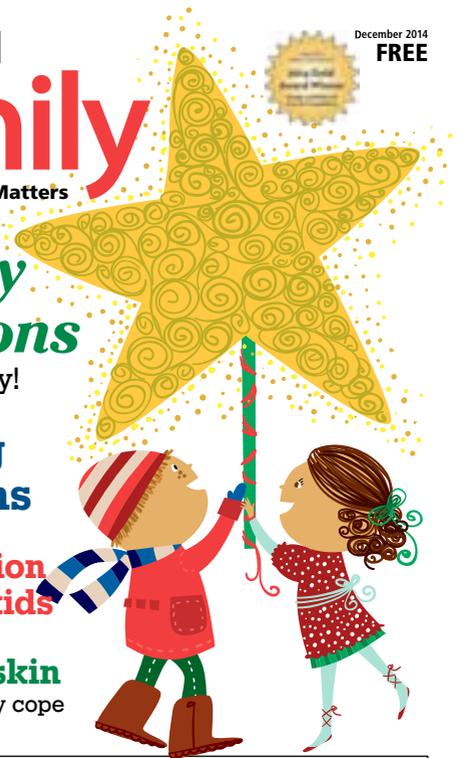
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Warming up muscles, minds

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

Students at PS 30 on Staten Island can enjoy an invigorating gym class — before they hit the books.

The Westerleigh school became the 37th in the city — and the 1,000th around the world — to enroll in Reebok Foundation's Build Our Kids' Success program to help improve academic performance, health, and learning ability. More than 50 students have already signed up for the free morning sessions of warm-ups, running-related activities, and games.

The program is both proactive and health smart, according to the school's lead trainer.

"It will help set the stage for a day of learning and a lifetime of healthier habits," said Jacquelyn Mahoney.

Principal Alan Ihne was excited about the outcome.

"We are eager to see the difference

it makes in our students," he said.

The group of moms who created Build Our Kids' Success believe that active kids equal active minds; they were inspired by Dr. John Ratey's book "Spark," which theorized that physical activity supercharged mental circuits in children to beat stress, sharpen thinking, and enhance memory. A recent National Institute on Out-of-School Time study found exercise before school had a positive influence on classroom performance and behavior, while results from its 2013 survey showed participants had an edge over their peers when it came to memory.

The program is a win-win, claimed founder and executive director Kathleen Tullie, who has shared the stage with First Lady Michelle Obama to promote active lifestyles.

"It helps improve classroom performance and behavior while building healthier lifestyles," she said.

www.bokskids.org



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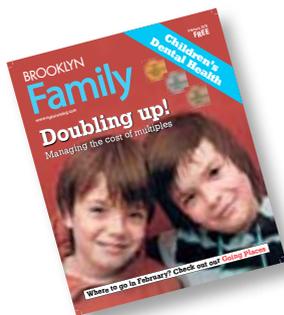
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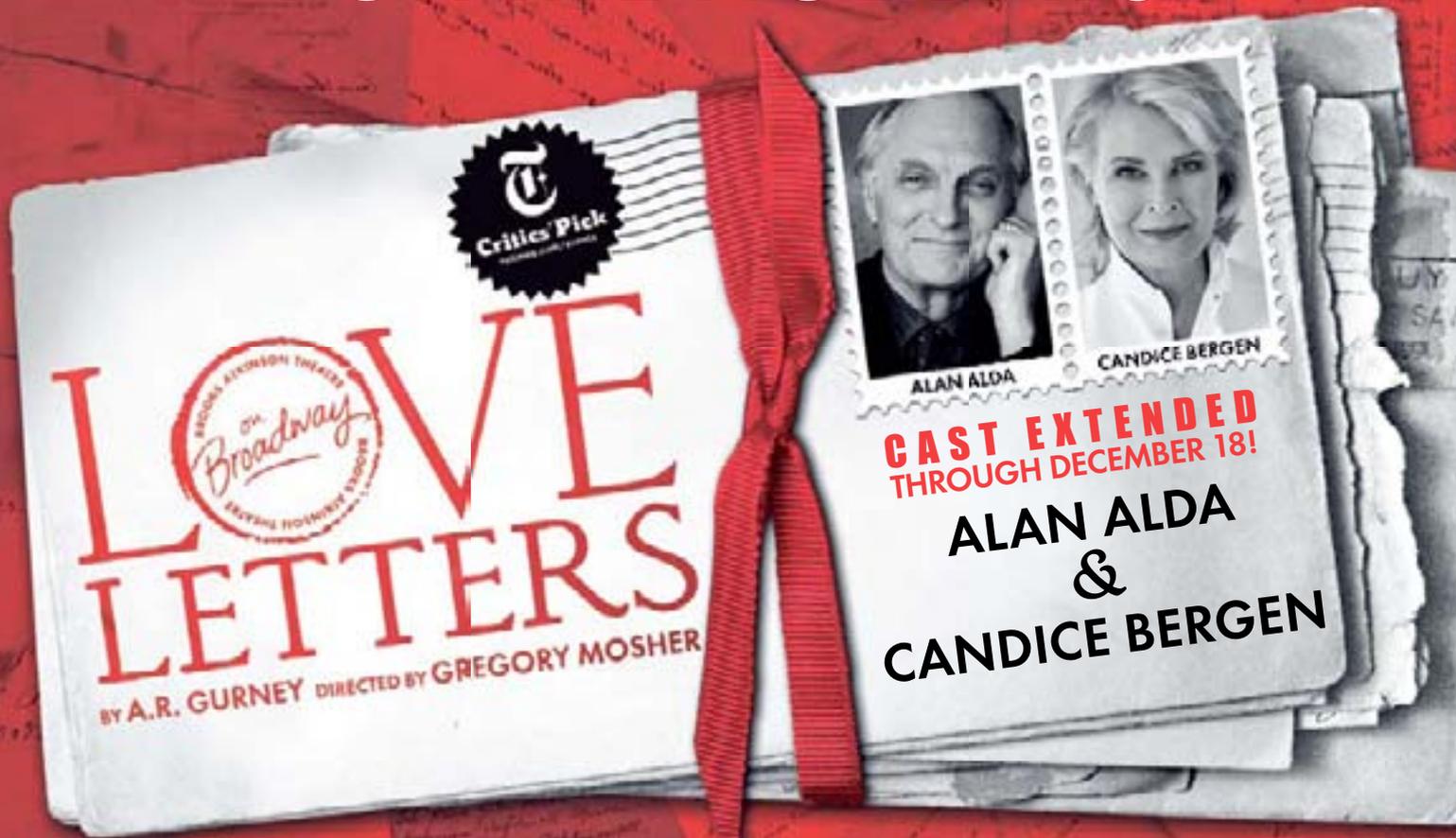
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Calendar

DECEMBER



Double the historical fun

It's family fun at the Brooklyn Historical Society with Handmade History and Lloyd H. Miller in a double header on Dec. 13.

Families can discover fun Brooklyn facts in Handmade History and get inspired! After visiting one of the galleries, participants let their creativity run wild with a fun art-making project that they can take home with them.

If art work isn't enough you can

sing along in "Sing Back Brooklyn," a monthly musical event featuring stories, skits, movies, and the ever tuneful Lloyd H. Miller who sings, dances, and shares quirky historical tidbits about the borough.

Both programs are on Dec. 13 from 11 am to noon and are free.

Brooklyn Historical Society [128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 222-4111, www.brooklynhistory.org].

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!

SUN, NOV. 30

IN BROOKLYN

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

Use your imagination and a little inspiration to create a blueprint and model of a vehicle that is strong, safe and smart for the 21st century. For children 6 years and older.

Winter on a Flatbush Farm: Lef-ferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; 1-4 pm; \$3.

Get ready for winter the way they did in the 19th century — learn how to make candles, watch a master spin-ster spin wool thread, and enjoy Dutch treats. St. Nicholas also makes an appearance at 3 pm.

Blooming naturalist: Prospect Park Audubon Center, enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; 1-2 pm; Free.

Children use fun games and activities to learn what makes birds so special.

Movie Matinees: BAM Kids, 30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place; (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org; 2 pm; \$7 children 12 and younger (\$10 adults; \$9 for BAM members).

The BAM series offers the perfect opportunity for families to introduce their children to the classics on the big screen, featuring "The Sound of Music."

Animal encounter: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; 3-4 pm; Free.

How did Snappy get its name? Find out in this fun event.



A really big adventure

Come on board for a river boat cruise with "Big Annie" at PS 3, the Bedford Village School, from Dec. 11 through 23.

The Shadowbox Theatre presents "Big Annie," a joyous celebration of a Creole flatboat captain and her animal friends. The crew saves Christmas by pulling a boatload of toys through a terrible storm one Christmas Eve a long, long, time ago.

The larger-than-life American heroine and a host of animal puppets share a joyous sing-along celebration of Christmas, Hanuk-

kah, Kwanzaa and Three Kings Day.

Children join in to help "Big Annie" and friends succeed on this epic journey.

"Big Annie" on Dec. 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, and 23, all shows at 10:30 am. Tickets are \$15 at the door, \$10 in advance and \$7.50 for groups. Children under 2 are free.

PS 3 The Bedford Village School [50 Jefferson Ave. at Franklin Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, (212) 724-0677, www.shadowboxtheatre.org]

MON, DEC. 1

IN BROOKLYN

Grinch day: Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; 4 pm; Free.

Celebrate the eye-guy with a special reading of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" with a coloring activity to follow.

WED, DEC. 3

IN BROOKLYN

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

Candy canes, Christmas carols, Toys for Tots collection, and a visit from St. Nick. Hosted by Sen. Marty Golden.

THURS, DEC. 4

IN BROOKLYN

Free Thursdays: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at

St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm to 5 pm; Free.

Enjoy the museum and have fun exploring.

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

Candy canes, Christmas carols, Toys for Tots collection, and a visit from St. Nick. Hosted by Sen. Marty Golden.

FRI, DEC. 5

IN BROOKLYN

Tree lighting: Belarusian Church, 401 Atlantic Ave. at Bond Street; 6-8 pm; Free.

Annual event hosted by the Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corporation. Features window design competition, live performances, speakers, refreshments, Santa, and the toy and book drive (bring a new toy or book fully wrapped with a written note on wrapping paper indicating age and gender). Tree lighting at 6 pm sharp.

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

It's a special reading of the holiday classic along with special activities.

The Omni Ensemble: Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, 58 Seventh Ave. between Lincoln Place and Seventh Avenue; (718) 622-3300; www.bqcm.org; 7:30 pm; \$50 (\$90 per couple; \$25 students).

An evening of holiday chamber music.

SAT, DEC. 6

IN BROOKLYN

Jingle Bell Jog: Prospect Park Nethermead, Enter the park at Flatbush Ave. and Lincoln Road; www.nyrr.org; 7:30 am; \$55 (entry free).

Festive event is family friendly and features post race hot chocolates, raffles and prizes. The four-mile race begins at Center Drive wends through the park and ends at the starting point. Proceeds benefit New York Road Runner's Youth Programs. Entrance fee includes jingle bells for your sneakers, a pair of knee-high tech socks and hot chocolate.

Yoga: Christ Church, 7301 Ridge Blvd. at 73rd Street; www.facebook.com/yogabrightkids; 9 am-11:45 am; Free.

Children 2 to 10 years old enjoy a class of stretching and getting in shape. Parents' participation welcome.

Handmade History: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; 11 am; Free.

Stained Glass Design - Families explore shapes and patterns related to 19th century design. Back in the studio children paint on acetate to create a stained glass masterpiece to take home.

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

Children 18 months to 2 years explore gingerbread fun — listen to a classic tale and sample gingery snacks.

Winter Jamboree: 250 Baltic St. between Court and Clinton streets; (917) 543-2011; sunflint@gmail.com; Noon; \$25 per family.

Face painting, temporary tattoos, arts and crafts, a bake sale, snacks, balloons, and live music from City Stomp. Proceeds go to Families First charity.

Waltz of the Flowers: Brooklyn

Continued on page 56

Calendar

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

Continued from page 55

Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; Noon-1:30 pm and 2 pm to 2:30 pm; Free with admission to grounds.

Explore the world of "The Nutcracker" in a workshop for children 4 through 12 years old. No dance experience necessary. Online registration required.

Sinterklaas: The Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, 5816 Clarendon Rd. between E. 59th St. and Ralph Avenue; (718) 629-5400; www.wyckoffmuseum.org; 1-4 pm; Free.

Families are invited inside the city's oldest house to explore the origins of Santa Claus. With traditional live music, Dutch treats, holiday crafts, and a special visit with St. Nicholas as he arrives on horseback.

Santa at Mini Jake: Mini Jake, 178 N. Ninth St. between Bedford and Driggs avenues; (718) 782-2005; www.minijake.com; 2-6 pm; \$30.

Kids can have their photos taken with a female Santa.

Holiday fiesta: PS 77, 62 Park Place, between Fifth and Sixth avenues; (718) 522-4696; 3:30 pm and 5 pm; \$10 (\$15 at the door; children under 5 \$5).

Food, fun and dance along with holiday gifts, an audience Nutcracker freeze dance and an open house. Presented by Dancewave.

Kids Corner: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 8:15 pm; Free.

Children don costumes and jewelry while listening to incredible tales of a global journey and enjoy an hour in Aunt Helen's closet. Part of Target Free Saturdays.

SUN, DEC. 7

IN BROOKLYN

Middle of Nowhere: BAM Cafe, 30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street; www.bam.org/programs/bamcafe-live; 10:30 am; \$9.

Elka introduces the audience to the Arctic island home sound, a seamless blend of theater, storytelling and music. Great for children 2 to 6 years old.

Blooming Babies: 11:30 am-12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

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

MetLife presents this musical story



Photo by David Fuller

A perfect holiday mix

Are you in the mood? Musical group RPM is and will be spreading the holiday cheer in concert on Dec. 7 at St. Charles Borromeo Church.

The group, featuring the talents of Mary Lou Barber, John Canary, Paula Hoza, Luisa Tedoff, Tim Weiss, and Paul Sigrist, will perform traditional holiday music, and not-so-traditional holiday selections — including Broadway show tunes, cabaret, and indie theater pop songs. There is also an optional sing-a-long on

some of the favorites. A reception with the artists immediately follows the concert.

"In the Mood" is suitable for all ages.

"In the Mood," Dec. 7 at 3 pm (doors open at 2:30 pm). Suggested donation is \$20 (but any donation is accepted), cash only at the door on the day of the concert.

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church (21 Sydney Pl. between Joralemon and State streets in Brooklyn Heights, www.theater2020.com)

of the classic tale.

Craft time: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 1 to 3 pm; Free with admission to grounds.

Families get crafty together and make seasonal projects and listen to a winter storybook time.

Victorian toys: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 1-4 pm; Free with admission to grounds.

Step back in time and play with wooden climbing bears, Jacob's ladders, do-nothing machines and other olden day whatnots.

Santa at Mini Jake: 2-6 pm. Mini Jake. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

Magical World of Yiddish Song: On Stage at Kingsborough, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; [\[www.onstageatkingsbor-\]\(http://www.onstageatkingsbor-\)](http://www.onstageatkingsbor-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

www.onstageatkingsbor-ough.org; 3 pm; \$35.
Zalmen Mlotek and guest vocalist Magda Fishman go on a musical journey of Yiddish songs from Eastern Europe to the Broadway stage and Hollywood screen.

"In The Mood": St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, 21 Sidney Pl. between Joralemon and State streets; Theater2020@gmail.com; www.Theater2020.com; 3 pm; \$20.

Theater 2020, Brooklyn Heights professional theater company will present "In The Mood," a concert featuring some of favorite traditional, and not so traditional, holiday music.

WED, DEC. 10

IN BROOKLYN

"The Wizard of Oz": Joseph Anzalone Theater at Edward R. Murrow HS, 1600 Avenue L and E. 17th Street; (718) 258-9283 X3051; www.ermurrows.org; 3:30 pm; \$10.

Presented by the Edward R. Murrow Theater group retells the classic story of Dorothy Gale and the magical land of Oz.

THURS, DEC. 11

IN BROOKLYN

Free Thursdays: 3 pm to 5 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

"The Wizard of Oz": 7 pm. Joseph Anzalone Theater at Edward R. Murrow HS. See Wednesday, Dec. 10.

FRI, DEC. 12

IN BROOKLYN

Tot Shabbat storytelling: Bay Ridge Jewish Center, 8025 Fourth Ave. between 80th and 81st streets; (718) 836-3103; office@brjc.org; www.brjc.org; 5 pm; Free.

An interactive reading of "The Shabbat Box" for children, as well as make new friends while learning about Shabbat using music and songs. Under the direction of Rabbi Rosenberg.

"The Wizard of Oz": 8 pm. Joseph Anzalone Theater at Edward R. Murrow HS. See Wednesday, Dec. 10.

SAT, DEC. 13

IN BROOKLYN

Family Bird Watching: Prospect Park Audubon Center, enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; 10-11 am; Free.

Learn to use binoculars and identify the 250 species of birds residing in Prospect Park.

Lloyd H Miller: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; 11 am-noon; Free.

Children join in for a sing-a-long, featuring songs, stories, skits, movies and more.

Railroad & Hobby: Carmine Carro Community Center, 3000 Filmore Ave. at 33rd Street; 11 am-4 pm; Free.

For all collectors and railroad enthusiasts — all brands of model trains and hobby kits, Fun for all ages.

Handmade History: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; 11 am-noon; Free.

After visiting one of the Brooklyn Historical Society's galleries, participants take part in an art-making project that they can take home.

Winter concert and market: PS 133, 610 Baltic St. and Fourth Avenue; www.eventbrite.com/e/ps-133-winter;

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

11:30 am; \$10 (\$5 children; family pricing available).

A daylong celebration featuring Suzi Shelton and Amelia Robinson of Mil's Trills in the new auditorium.

Excerpts from "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; Free for children under 3).

Performed by children in the Cobble Hill Ballet Dance featuring the "Party Scene," the magical "Land of Snow," Clara's journey to "Land of Sweets," and the well-known the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy." Tickets are available after Nov. 17.

"The Snow Queen": On Stage at Kingsborough, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org; 2 pm; \$12.

Hudson Vagabond Puppets presents the Hans Christian Andersen tale with puppets and the music of Arcangelo Corelli.

"The Wizard of Oz": 2 pm and 8 pm. Joseph Anzalone Theater at Edward R. Murrow HS. See Wednesday, Dec. 10.

"Paper Bots": powerHouse on 8th, 1111 Eighth Ave. between 11th and 12th streets; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 3-4 pm; Free.

The future arrives with 20 ultra cool robot designs. Stop by to craft some fun new drones, and come to the book launch of the new book by PaperMade. RSVP requested.

Celebrating the Holidays: 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; \$30-\$40.

Sweet Honey in the Rocks performs many traditional holiday songs to get you in the season, from Christmas to Kwanzaa and new songs in between. Suitable for older children.

FURTHER AFIELD

Gingerbread Lane Workshop: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 1:30-3:30 pm; \$10 (\$8 members).

Marvel at creative culinary constructions of gumdrops, candy, icing and gingerbread. Participants receive a kit with pieces, icing and candy. Register on day of. Space is limited.

SUN, DEC. 14

IN BROOKLYN

Bookfair: Barnes & Noble, 106 Court



'Nut' for everyone

Visions of sugarplums dance on the stage in this production of "Excerpts from the Nutcracker" at the Kumble Theater at Long Island University on Dec. 13 and 14.

Ballet students at the Cobble Hill Ballet Dance studio delight the audience and perform selections featuring the "Land of Snow," Clara's Journey to the "Land of Sweets" and the well-

known "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy."

"Excerpts from the Nutcracker" on Dec. 13 and Dec. 14; two shows each day at 1 and 4 pm.

Tickets are \$15, \$10 for children and free for children under 3.

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

St. between State and Schermerhorn streets; bn.com/bookfairs; 9 am-11 pm.

Purchases help support PS 38. In-store events include a live band and holiday story times.

Brunch with Santa: Aviator Sports and Events Center, 3159 Flatbush Ave. in Floyd Bennett Field; (718) 758-7500; 9-11 am and noon-2 pm; \$22 adults and kids over 13, \$20 kids under 13, free for kids under 3.

Includes a brunch buffet, photo with Santa, cupcake and crafts decorating, and a complimentary Bloody Mary or Mimosa for adults. RSVP by Monday, Dec. 8.

House Tour: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Noon-1 pm; \$10.

Teens tour the historic bones of the house and view the many layers that were added, subtracted and changed over the last 230 years. Reservations required; Only 10 persons per tour.

Excerpts from "The Nutcracker": 1 pm and 4 pm. Kumble Theater at Long Island University. See Saturday, Dec. 13.

Victorian toys: 1-4 pm. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. See Sunday, Dec. 7.

"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; \$15.

Children enjoy this timeless classic in this family friendly full-length version of Tchaikovsky's ballet.

Movie Matinees: BAM Kids, 30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place; (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org; 2 pm; \$7 children 12 and younger (\$10 adults; \$9 for BAM members).

The BAM series offers the perfect opportunity for families to introduce their children to the classics on the big screen, featuring "The Muppet Christmas Carol."

Amelia Robinson of Mil's Trills: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Seh's back with an interactive concert of her original quirky songs on her famous ukulele. Great for children birth to 4 years old.

MON, DEC. 15

IN BROOKLYN

"Honeyky Hanukkah": Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; 4 pm; Free.

Special story event featuring the book by Woody Guthrie with an accompanying CD.

TUES, DEC. 16

IN BROOKLYN

"The Elf on the Shelf": Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

It's a holiday tradition — an interactive hide-and-seek with Santa's elf is perfect for all ages.

THURS, DEC. 18

IN BROOKLYN

Free Thursdays: 3 pm to 5 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FRI, DEC. 19

IN BROOKLYN

Holiday Concert: Edward R. Murrow HS, 1600 Avenue L and E. 17th Street; (718) 258-9283 X 3051; www.ermurrowhs.org; 7 pm; \$6 in advance (\$8 at the door) Free for Junior High students with ID.

Featuring more than 300 students from the Symphonic and Jazz bands, Madrigal, Gospel, Mixed, and Women's chorus and Chamber orchestra and guitar ensemble.

Holiday stories: Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; 7 pm; Free.

Come in for a special reading of all the classics — "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "The Night Before Christmas."

SAT, DEC. 20

IN BROOKLYN

Handmade History: 11 am-noon. Brooklyn Historical Society. See Saturday, Dec. 13.

Continued on page 58

Calendar

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

Continued from page 57

SUN, DEC. 21

IN BROOKLYN

Victorian toys: 1–4 pm. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. See Sunday, Dec. 7.

Hanukkah Party: Bay Ridge Jewish Center, 8025 Fourth Ave. between 80th and 81st streets; (718) 836-3103; office@brjc.org; www.brjc.org; 2–4 pm; \$15/adults, \$10/children.

Afternoon filled with food, entertainment, socializing and games. With latkes or a game of dreidel for individuals of all ages.

Concert: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 2 pm; \$18 (\$10 seniors and children under 16).

The Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra continues the tradition of showcasing holiday works.

"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.

Children 6 years and older enjoy this magical performance of a young girl who is transformed by Grandfather Frost into a beautiful Snow Maiden. Performed in Russian with English subtitles.

SAT, DEC. 27

IN BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Family Boogie: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; 11 am–noon; Free.

Participants will learn about Brooklyn's history and use it to create a dance.

FURTHER AFIELD

Gingerbread Lane Workshop: 1:30–3:30 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Dec. 13.

SUN, DEC. 28

IN BROOKLYN

Victorian toys: 1–4 pm. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. See Sunday, Dec. 7.

TUES, DEC. 30

IN BROOKLYN

"Frozen": Bay Ridge Jewish Center, 8025 Fourth Ave. between 80th and 81st streets; (718) 836-3103; office@brjc.org; www.brjc.org; 1 pm; \$5.

Screening of the Disney favorite, with popcorn.

WED, DEC. 31

IN BROOKLYN

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

Start the celebration early with entertainment, hot refreshments and the firework extravaganza at midnight. Ring out the old and bring in the new, but don't forget to bring blankets and chairs; come early to get the perfect spot.

LONG-RUNNING

IN BROOKLYN

College for Kids: Kingsborough Community College, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5000; www.kbcc.cuny.edu; Saturdays, 9:45 am–3:15 pm, Sundays, 9:45 am–noon, Now – Sun, Dec. 7; \$90 for half-day program; \$235 for full-day.

Weekend classes for children, with subjects from drawing, swimming, piano, creative writing, math, and more. Program options include full-day program on Saturday, and half-day program on Sunday.

More than meets the "I": Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–5 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 19, 2015; \$9 general admission (Children under 1 free).

The new exhibit at the museum provides young scientists the opportunity to explore innovations in biology, health, robotics, and technology.

Nature playtime: Prospect Park Zoo, 450 Flatbush Ave. at Ocean Avenue; (718) 399-7339; www.prospectparkzoo.com; Sundays, 10:30 am–12:30 pm; Free with zoo admission.

The workshops are designed to help families explore nature through play, activities include nature inspired arts and crafts, insect observation, playing with snow and more. Children receive a nature play activity guide to the park. Each workshop is led by a trained teen discovery guide.

Arty Facts: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; Sundays, 11 am; Free with museum admission.

Children are invited to imagine and create new worlds and explore the museum.

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, Now – Sun, Dec. 28; 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, Now – Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

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

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–5 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 28; Free.

Children enjoy fun programming, Nature on the Go, Nature's Helpers, and Family Bird Watching.

"The Snow Queen" and "The Emperor's New Clothes": 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. 21; \$8 (\$9 adults).

Puppetworks presents a puppet show of two classic fairy tales. "The Snow Queen" is the story of a mysterious lady who throws ice into the heart of a boy and "The Emperor's New Clothes" is the tale of an emperor who buys a set of invisible clothes only to march down the streets in his underwear.

Native American Art: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Saturday, Nov. 22, 12:30 pm; Sunday, Nov. 23, 12:30 pm; Saturday, Nov. 29, 12:30 pm; Sunday, Nov. 30, 12:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 years and older are inspired by traditional arts of native communities from the Navajo weaving to Tingit totem poles. Then create their own to take home.

Native Tales: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Saturday, Nov. 22, 1:30 pm; Sunday, Nov. 23, 1:30 pm; Saturday, Nov. 29, 1:30 pm; Sunday, Nov. 30, 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 years and older gather around to hear the tales and imagine life when Manhattan was Mannahatta.

Chamber music series: Good Shepherd Church, Avenue S between Brown and Batchelder streets; (718) 998-2800; Sunday, Nov. 23, 6 pm; Sunday, Nov. 30, 6 pm; Sunday, Dec. 7, 6 pm; Sunday, Dec. 14, 6 pm; Free (Good will donation accepted).

Outstanding performances of classic chamber music featuring solo musi-

cians and beautiful singing. The series concludes with Handel's "Messiah" featuring orchestra, choir and soloists.

Ice skating school: Lefrak Center in Prospect Park, Parkside and Ocean avenues; (718) 594-7439; info@brooklynice.org; www.brooklynice.org; Mondays and Wednesdays, 4–6:30 pm, Now – Tues, March 10, 2015; Free.

Instructions, fitness, homework help and lots more. Students in grades first through eighth must live in Brooklyn or go to school in Brooklyn, and be eligible for free or reduced lunch program. Preregistration required.

Bug out!: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 18; Free with museum admission.

Feeling brave? Meet grasshoppers, worms, stick bugs and Madagascar hissing cockroaches.

Special-needs workshop: Kings County Hospital, 385 Lenox Rd. between New York Avenue and E. 34th Street; (718) 512-5269; nameastflatbush@aol.com; Thursdays, 6–8 pm, Now – Thurs, Jan. 8, 2015; Free.

Six-session course for parents and family caregivers of children and teens living with mental illness. Trained parents and caregivers provide fundamental information. Meetings held first and third Thursday of every month.

Ken Siegleman's Poetry outreach: Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; Thursdays, 6:30 pm; Free.

Anthony Vigorito hosts a night of poetry featuring guest poets each week. For teens and adults.

King Hoops: John Jay Educational Center, 237 Seventh Ave. between Fourth and Fifth streets; (917) 536-7233; info@kidsinthegame.com; www.kidsinthegame.com/registration; Saturdays, 9–10:30 am, Now – Sat, Jan. 24, 2015; \$160.

Eight-week basketball camp for boys aged 11-14. Taught by former Columbia basketball coach Michael Murphy, the camp will focus on teaching and honing the fundamentals of basketball.

Family Bird Watching: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Saturdays and Sundays, 10–11 am, Sat, Dec. 6 – Sun, Dec. 28; Free.

Learn to use binoculars and identify the 250 species of birds residing in Prospect Park.

King Hoops: John Jay Educational Center, 237 Seventh Ave. between Fourth and Fifth streets; (917) 536-7233; info@kidsinthegame.com; www.

Calendar

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

kidsinthegame.com/registration; Saturdays, 10:45 am–12:15 pm, Now – Sat, Jan. 24, 2015; \$160.

Eight-week basketball camp for girls aged 8-13. Taught by former Columbia basketball coach Michael Murphy, the camp will focus on teaching and honing the fundamentals of basketball.

King Hoops: John Jay Educational Center, 237 Seventh Ave. between Fourth and Fifth streets; (917) 536-7233; info@kidsinthegame.com; www.kidsinthegame.com/registration; Saturdays, 12:30–2 pm, Now – Sat, Jan. 24, 2015; \$160.

Eight-week basketball camp for boys aged 8-10. Taught by former Columbia basketball coach Michael Murphy, the camp will focus on teaching and honing the fundamentals of basketball.

Needlework and games: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1–3 pm, beginning Sat, Dec. 6; \$3.

Join in with staff and make a small sampler and play board games.

"Big Annie": PS 3 The Bedford Village School, 50 Jefferson Ave.; (212) 724-0677; www.shadowboxtheatre.org; Thursday, Dec. 11, 10:30 am; Friday, Dec. 12, 10:30 am; Monday, Dec.

15, 10:30 am; Tuesday, Dec. 16, 10:30 am; Wednesday, Dec. 17, 10:30 am; Thursday, Dec. 18, 10:30 am; Friday, Dec. 19, 10:30 am; Monday, Dec. 22, 10:30 am; Tuesday, Dec. 23, 10:30 am; \$15 at the door (\$10 in advance; \$7.50 groups; Free for children under 2).

The holiday sing-a-long, story and music by Sandra Robbins, tells the story of Big Annie, a Creole flatboat captain and her animal friends. She pulls a boatload of toys through a terrible storm to deliver to children on Christmas Eve. Children celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and the Three Kings Day. Presented by the Shadow Box Theatre.

Blooming naturalist: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Friday, Dec. 26, 1 pm; Saturday, Dec. 27, 1 pm; Sunday, Dec. 28, 1 pm; Monday, Dec. 29, 1 pm; Tuesday, Dec. 30, 1 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 31, 1 pm; Thursday, Jan. 1, 1 pm; Free.

Children use fun games and activities to learn what makes birds so special. Holiday school break.

Animal encounter: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Friday, Dec. 26, 3 pm; Saturday,

Dec. 27, 3 pm; Sunday, Dec. 28, 3 pm; Monday, Dec. 29, 3 pm; Tuesday, Dec. 30, 3 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 31, 3 pm; Thursday, Jan. 1, 3 pm; Free.

How did Snappy get its name? Find out in this fun event. Enjoy the holiday school break with fun activities.

FURTHER AFIELD

Science Playground: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Wed, Dec. 31; \$4, plus museum admission.

Children are encouraged to explore science through slides, seesaws, climbing webs, a water play area, sand boxes, and more, weather permitting.

Rocket Park Mini Golf: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Wed, Dec. 31; \$6 (adults,) \$5 (children and seniors,) plus museum admission.

Golfers of all ages can learn about key science concepts such as propulsion, gravity, escape velocity, launch window, gravitational assist, and more!

Gingerbread Lane Exhibit: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th

St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Daily, 10 am–4 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

Marvel at creative culinary constructions of gumdrops, candy, icing and gingerbread.

"Galapagos, Nature's Wonderland in 3D": New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 11 am & 2 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 & 3 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 21; \$6 adults; \$5 children.

In this 3D movie, travel to the Galapagos archipelago to meet giant half-ton tortoises and marine iguanas that spit sea-salt from their noses, hunt fishes with the colorful blue-footed boobies, and swim with tiny penguins.

Holiday Train Show: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Saturdays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 19, 2015; \$20 (\$8 children, Free for children under 2).

The annual tradition is open again. Model trains are enlivened amid the glow of twinkling lights in Victorian style glasshouses featuring replicas of New York landmarks crafted of natural materials by designer Paul Busse's team. Closed Christmas Day.

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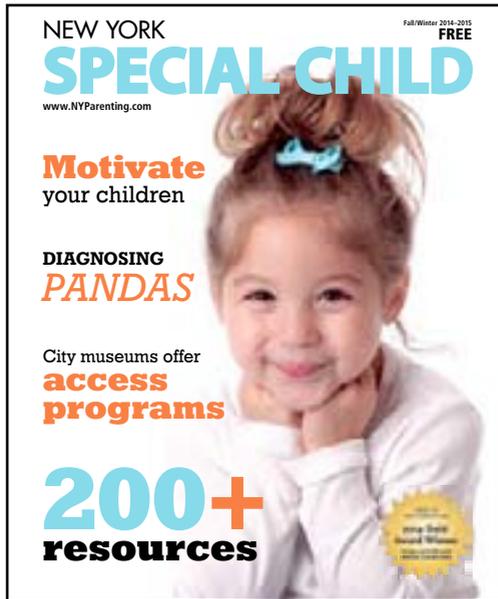
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Enhance your birthday child's fun by creating the ultimate bowling birthday party... consider one or more of our party options:

- BOWLOPOLIS TREAT CUP
- EXTENDED BOWLING AND/OR PARTY TIME
- COLORABLE BIRTHDAY T-SHIRTS
- COSMIC BOWLING
- KIDDIE CAKES ICE CREAM CAKE
- LASER MAZE CHALLENGE

Santa Claus is Coming!
BREAKFAST & BOWLING WITH SANTA
Sunday
Dec. 21, 2014
9am to 12pm
 PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS TODAY WITH SANTA'S EYES AT RAB'S!

Try It First!

Introduce your child to bowling before making the commitment!
4 week introduction program!

WINTER YOUTH BOWLING PROGRAMS NOW FORMING!

ON-GOING REGISTRATION CALL US TODAY FOR DETAILS!



It's Not Too Late To Join In on The **Reindeer Games**
Book Your Holiday Party Today!

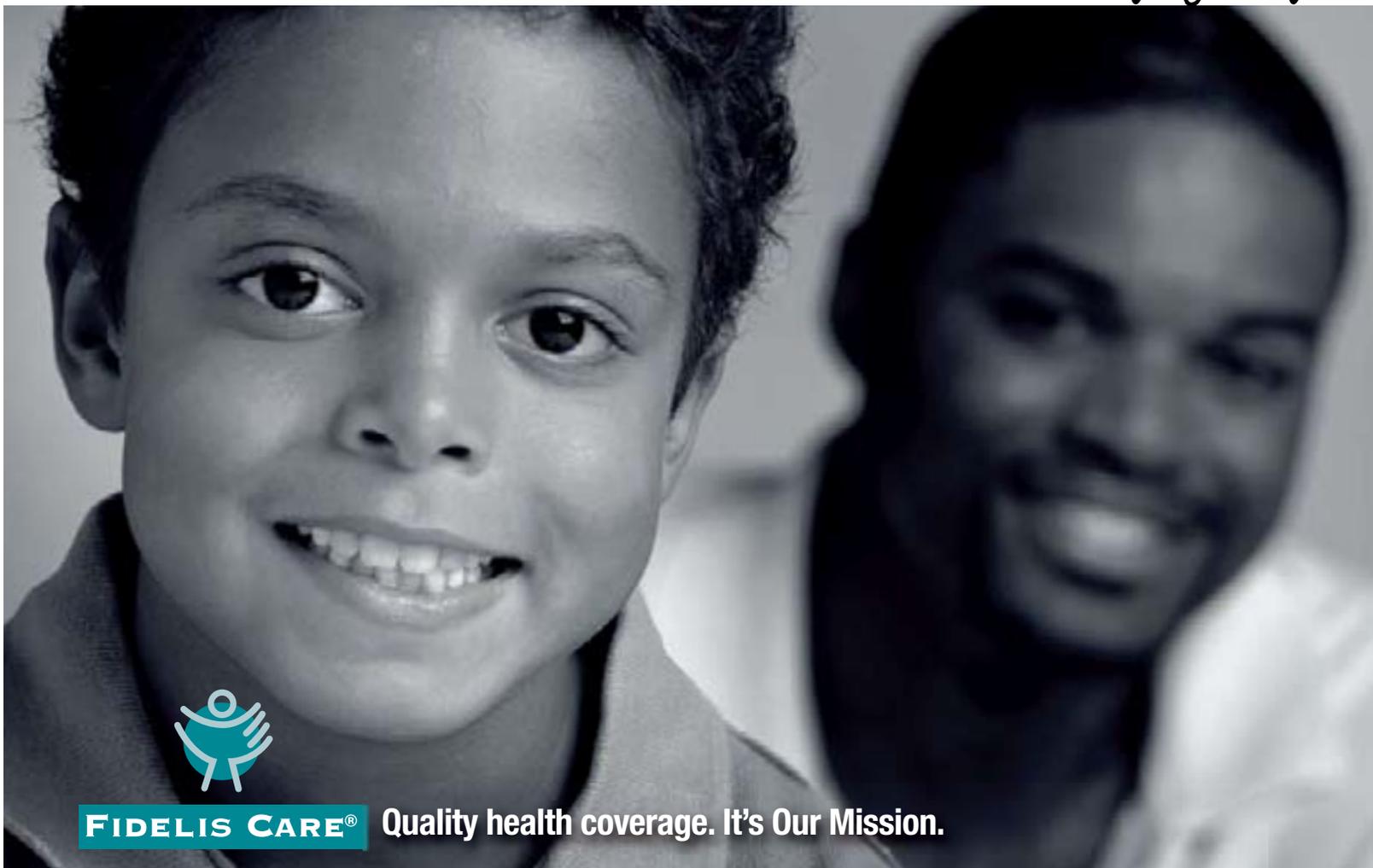


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• Child Health Plus • Medicaid Managed Care	All Year Long!

Products not available in all counties.

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