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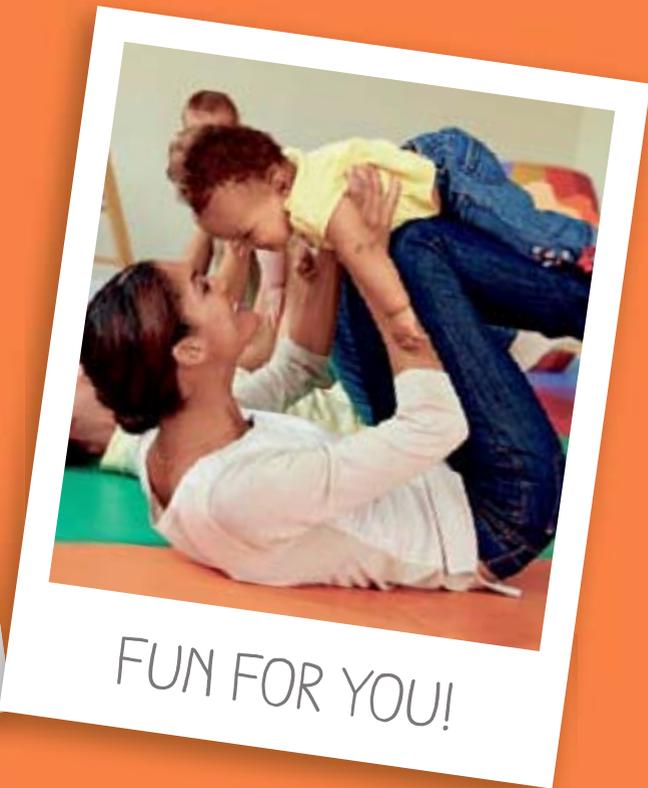


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Letter from the publisher

Our multicultural city

If one listened to the news all the time one could get a very dismal point of view about the world today and become largely despondent. There's little doubt as one story after another points out the horrors and the inadequacies



of the global reality that the human experience has room for growth and that outrageous suffering is endured by millions.

Here in New York, however, we are better off in so many ways, starting from the basic fact that we are a pluralistic society that becomes only more so with each passing day. Not that it's perfect here, and we have loads of issues

to deal with and to improve, but it's my contention that if you take warring peoples from far away and bring them here to Coney Island Avenue or the Grand Concourse or Victory Boulevard or Steinway Street or the Lower East Side, they

will go into business together and find their brotherhood and commonality.

This is the great beauty of our complex multicultural city and most of the time there is great beauty and one finds displays of human kindness here and sensitivity that surprise the false impression that we are a rude bunch with no manners and a lack of caring.

Raising children in New York City is a breeze actually compared to the isolation of some of the suburbs and/or a rural world where there is less stimulation and far less contact with others.

Our children are sharper, more astute and more worldly. They are more at ease with differences and thrive because of them. They become creative and sophisticated in ways that are copied by every major industry. The fashion world looks to our street kids to find the next wave and the music is created often on those streets, just a few of the trend setting examples of young influence coming out of our neighborhoods.

Life isn't perfect, but human contact is key to the transition from barbarism to conflict resolution.

As New York parents we must provide our children with as much contact as possible because the opportunity here is profound. Meet your neighbors, get involved in the parent association and make sure your children's day to day world is inclusive. Only by knowing each other can the future society rid itself of ancient grudges, vendettas and prejudice.

Happy New Year! Thanks for reading.

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

OPERATIONS ASSOCIATE:

Tina Felicetti

SALES REPS: Alexis Benson, Erin Brof, Jay Pelc, Stephanie Stellacio, Shanika Stewart

ART DIRECTOR: Leah Mitch

WEB DESIGNER: Sylvan Migdal

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: Arthur Arutyunov, Raymond Cho, Mauro Deluca, Yvonne Farley, Earl Ferrer, Mariel Perez, Cheryl Seligman

MANAGING EDITOR: Vince DiMiceli

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Courtney Donahue

COPY EDITORS: Lisa J. Curtis, Shavana Abruzzo

CALENDAR EDITORS: Joanna Del Buono, Danielle Sullivan

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
1 Metrotech Center North
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PEACE ON EARTH

Tips for choosing, promoting and teaching peace in your life

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

Pace, as with most aspects of the human condition, is a choice. It may not be obvious or even conscious, but it is always an option. For every instance or occasion when cruelty, abuse, or violence occurs, a more peaceful solution existed.

The thing about peace, though, is that it is hard. It typically requires giving something up — having the last word, making a point, believing your way is the right way, winning at any cost, or getting what you want. There are even those who have given up their lives in the pursuit of peace. Peace is not compatible with selfishness, competitiveness, prejudice, or arrogance. These obstacles to peace grow out of vulnerability, fear, ignorance, and insecurity.

Peace requires personal discipline, courage, patience, tolerance, and grace. An essential prerequisite for peace is empathy — as Atticus Finch explains to Scout in “To Kill a Mockingbird,” “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” When we can

look into the eyes of others and see all the ways they are like us rather than the ways they are different, we are primed for peace. When we accept the equality of all humankind, we can promote peace.

Unfortunately, we are living in a time when being kind, polite, considerate, decent, respectful, and peace-seeking is not “in.” These qualities are not considered sophisticated, edgy, or trendy. Those observed exhibiting these characteristics are scorned for their naivete and assumed lack of worldliness. But these individuals are not strangers to controversy and conflict. For peace is not merely the absence of conflict. Peace is both the means as well as the desired end of conflict resolution.

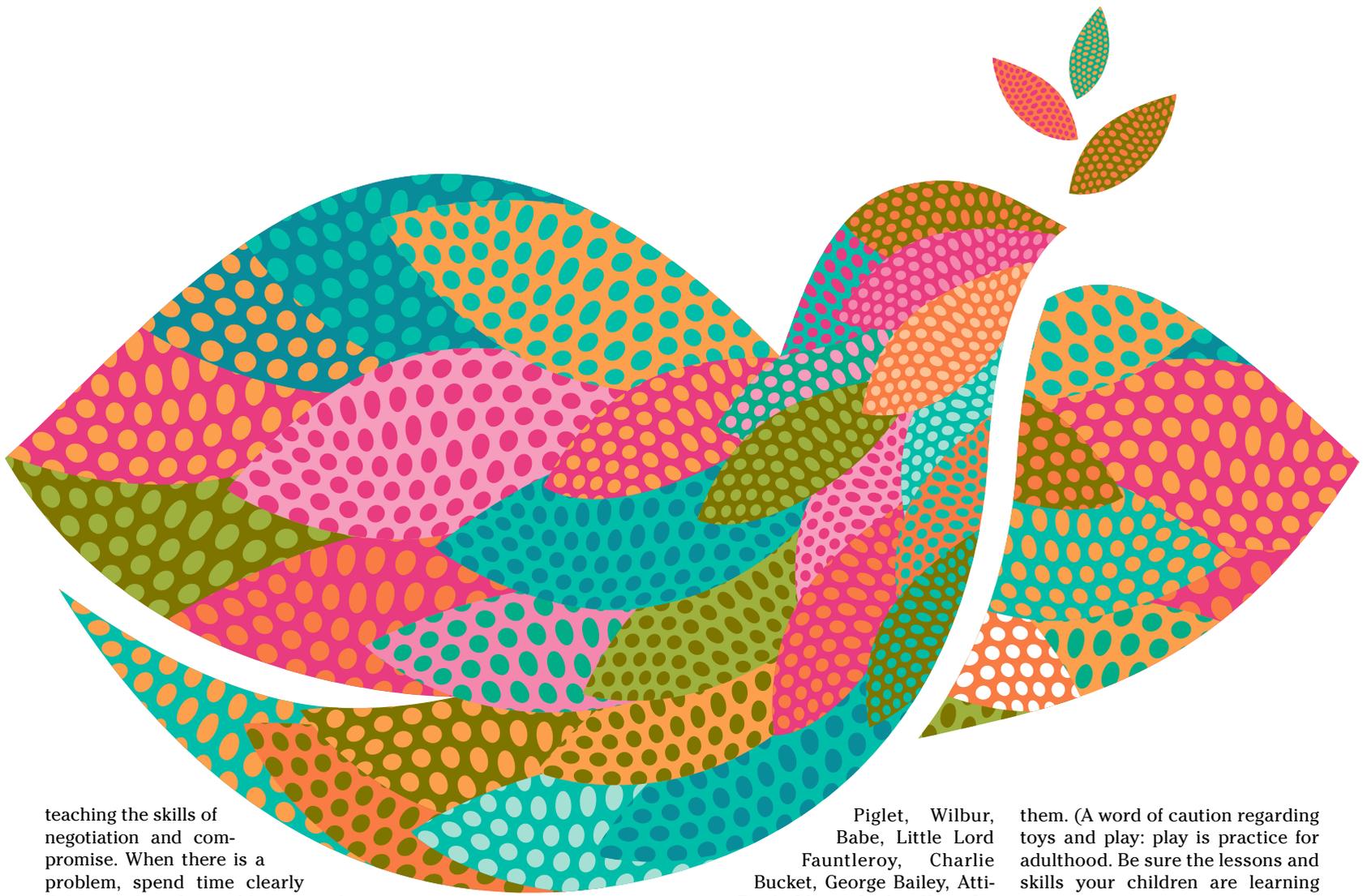
Eleanor Roosevelt said, “It isn’t enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it. One must work at it.” How do we choose peace? What can we do to promote peace in our lives? How do we teach our children peace? Here are a few suggestions for how we can be models of peace in our families, for home is where peace begins:

Study peace. Familiarize yourself with the meaning of peace. Explore the lives of those you would

describe as peaceful individuals. Identify those qualities and practices that exemplify peace. Decide what peace means to you. Evaluate your position on it. Choose words and actions that reflect your beliefs. Share your position with the other significant adults in your child’s life. Develop a plan for peace.

Practice peaceful communication. Remember: communication includes listening as well as speaking, so listen carefully to what others say. Listening does not mean you agree, approve, or give permission. It just means you are listening. Try to identify the feelings behind others’ words. Try getting “into their skin.” Increase your peaceful vocabulary. Think before you speak. Ask yourself how you would feel if someone said to you what you are about to say. Speak without raising your voice. Learn to be honest in a way that expresses caring and concern. It is possible to be honest without being cruel. Make saying something kind a habit. Keep a smile close at hand.

Seek peaceful solutions to conflict. Share the plan for peace with your family. Discuss what the expectations are for resolving conflict peacefully. Spend time learning and



teaching the skills of negotiation and compromise. When there is a problem, spend time clearly defining what the problem is and who is involved. Include all family members in the peace process, when appropriate. Create an atmosphere of trust among family members. Empower family members with the courage to take responsibility for their words and actions as well as the consequences. Take responsibility for whatever part you have played in starting or continuing an argument. Apologize if you have said or done things that have caused another pain. Explore alternatives to unacceptable behavior. Expect everyone to cooperate in instituting the agreed upon peaceful solution. Look for common ground. You are a family. You love each other. That's a good place to start.

Employ peace-compatible discipline. Adopt a preventive approach to discipline. Be sure expectations for behavior are age-appropriate, clear, and understood ahead of time. Be sure consequences are also age-appropriate, related to the offense, consistent, and occur in a timely manner. Whenever possible, make consequences for failure to comply clear ahead of time.

Instead of telling your children what they can't do, try telling them what they can do. Make compliance and cooperation more desirable than misbehavior by expressing appreciation when they occur. We — children, too — tend to respond more favorably to fans than to critics. In her book, "Positive Parenting," Jane Nelsen reminds us, "Our children do not have to be made to feel worse in order to do better." Remember that *you* — your time, attention, approval, and affection — are your child's greatest reward.

Provide age-appropriate models for peace. In addition to modeling peace for your children, point out examples in the world around them with whom they can identify. Introduce them to age-appropriate role models from sources such as history and literature. Knowing that others their age have made peaceful choices in difficult situations can inspire and encourage them when they face the inevitable challenges to peace. (Some of our favorites are Winnie the Pooh and

Piglet, Wilbur, Babe, Little Lord Fauntleroy, Charlie Bucket, George Bailey, Atticus Finch, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi.)

Choose peaceful forms of entertainment. Pay close attention to the messages your children are getting about relationships, conflict, violence, and peace from television, movies, toys, games, music, and literature. When the messages they are getting go against the values you are trying to teach, speak up! (If you do not believe your children are influenced by what they are watching and listening to, then why do companies spend billions of dollars on advertising? Don't fool yourself. Take control of the influences on your children's lives.)

Take advantage of the opportunity to explain your views regarding what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable messages and behavior. Engage your children in a dialogue about how situations could be addressed in a more peaceful manner. Make it clear how you would expect them to behave in a similar situation. If there are shows, movies, or toys that do not meet with your approval, refuse to let them be viewed — refuse to buy

them. (A word of caution regarding toys and play: play is practice for adulthood. Be sure the lessons and skills your children are learning will be useful to them as peace-seeking adults.) Take the time to explain your position.

Have the courage to make unpopular decisions. After all, we expect our children to do so when they are pressured to participate in bullying, alcohol, drugs, or promiscuity. Practice the peace you preach.

If you fall short of your efforts, forgive yourself, make amends, and try again. Peace is worth it. There is a beautiful song, composed by Sy Miller and Bill Jackson, that proclaims, "Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me." Imagine what might happen if each of us made this our New Year's resolution? Peace be with you.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman has degrees in Child Development, Family Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapy. Waterbury-Tieman has been married for 29 years and has two sons, ages 24 and 14. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator and has written extensively on the topic of parenting. To contact her, please e-mail parent4life@yahoo.com.



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Cut the mean girls out of your circle

Do you have a toxic friend? If you are a woman, chances are you have had a toxic friend, and surprisingly, you may have kept that friendship for a while. Self Magazine and Today.com asked 18,000 readers about their experiences with toxic friends. 84 percent of women said they'd had a toxic friend at some point, and 1 in 3 surveyed said they had a toxic best friend.

The disturbing part is that 83 percent said they had held onto a friendship longer than was healthy simply because it was hard to break up with that friend. Yet a dysfunctional relationship is still dysfunctional, even if it is between two female friends, so why is it so difficult to end the friendship?

"The reason it's hard to dump a toxic friend is the same reason people stay in all kinds of dysfunctional relationships," says Dr. Gail Saltz, associate professor of psychiatry at New York Presbyterian Hospital. "There's something in it that you find compelling or familiar. Depending on the nature of what's going on in the relationship, you may feel guilty [about breaking things off]. Or it could be that the person has implied you need them in some way — that you would be a bad person to walk away."

It's worth noting that women's friendships are centered on feelings where as men's friendships mostly focus on joint activities and business. Some of the toxic friendship types include those who are chronic downers, self absorbed, overly critical, undermining, and unreliable.

The popular movie, *Mean Girls* that focuses on high school social cliques and the detrimental effect they can have on girls, reflects not only high school. Unfortunately often cliques form in elementary and middle school, and continue into adulthood, in friendship circles, family get-togethers and even the workplace.

What we should teach our young girls is that if anyone treats them poorly on a consistent basis, they probably shouldn't be their friend.



Furthermore, they shouldn't feel bad for ending a friendship; they should feel empowered for protecting themselves. Of course, most of us don't want to be intentionally mean, but setting boundaries for what you accept from others is one of the very most important ways you can teach your kids self-love.

I am just now learning how to do this over the past few years. Growing up, I was always taught to be polite, help others, and extend yourself, which are all good things. It's just that I never learned how to set boundaries for myself or even realize when I was being taken for advantage in my friendships, and being helpful can quickly turn into being an easy target. It's amazing how many of us can recognize when

a boyfriend or a boss is being insincere or sneaky, but don't immediately see it in our girlfriends.

The ironic part is that my friends, my best friends in adulthood, have showed me through example how to be set boundaries without being mean and how to cut off those female friends who are there for the wrong reasons, or in other words, toxic. It's the most freeing thing I've done. Have you had a toxic friend? Did you stay friends longer than you should have?

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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FOCUS

on eye health

How to know
if your child
needs glasses

BY ALLISON PLITT

Every parent should be on the lookout for potential problems with her child's health, and vision impairment is no exception. Marc Weinstein, who worked as the Optometric Director for various New York locations of Macy's Vision Express, gives parents some guidelines to help them evaluate

their child's vision.

Although all pediatricians offer some type of vision testing, Weinstein refers to the recommendations of the American Optometric Association, which represents 39,000 professionals in the field of optometry in the United States. According to the Association, the first eye exam a child should have is by 6 months of age, which consists of

a general evaluation that's done to assess the overall health and alignment of the eyes.

Subsequently, the Association typically recommends a second exam at age 3, when the child is able to give some responses. The first full exam for a child will happen usually before first grade. If the child's eyes are healthy, then he will need an eye exam every two years after that.

"If the child doesn't like the eyeglasses, he's not going to want to wear them. If he doesn't wear them, then this defeats the purpose."

"At the end of the day, children's performance in school is highly dependent on their vision," Weinstein says. "If you notice that your child is having difficulty in school, or if they're complaining that they're rubbing their eyes a lot, or if they're complaining that they're having trouble seeing the board, it's really important to take them in for a full eye exam."

A full eye exam should also include a dilated exam, which is when the optometrist puts drops in the eye to dilate the pupil. This allows the doctor to look in the back of the eye and check for any possible conditions that could be causing a decrease in vision.

Weinstein stresses the necessity of the dilated exam.

"Even though people might say, 'My kid is young and healthy,' it's a really important exam to have done on your child," Weinstein explains. "It gives the doctor baseline measurements, so if anything does change in the future, they can reference previous exams and see what changes have taken place."

For parents with children who have eyeglasses, Weinstein advises, "Make sure your kid really likes the eyeglasses. At the end of the day, no matter what we all do as professionals and as parents, if the child doesn't like the eyeglasses, he's not going to want to wear them. If he doesn't wear them, then this defeats the purpose."

Weinstein encourages parents to "really engage their child in the process of choosing the right pair of eyeglasses. Make sure they get something that they really want to wear. Going beyond that, make sure, obviously, that the eyeglasses fit well, that they're not too loose or too tight, that they're comfortable for the child."

As Weinstein advises, an important component for children's eyewear is that all eyeglasses should always have polycarbonate lenses.

"Polycarbonate is a type of lens. It's shatter-resistant material," Weinstein explains. "It includes scratching and ultraviolet

protection built into the lens. You shouldn't have to pay extra for that. It protects the child's eye, and it's also 30 percent lighter and thinner than standard glasses."

If your children wear prescription eyewear, Weinstein recommends that he should also have a pair of prescription sunglasses.

"People might not realize this, but even at a very young age, exposure to the sun does put us at a higher risk in the future, for things like cataracts," he warns. "So it's very important, even at an early age, to wear protective eyewear for the sun."

Weinstein is the CEO and founder of a company called 39DollarGlasses.com, a website where people can buy glasses for toddlers to adults for only \$39 a pair. Not only does the company provide quality and affordable eyewear, but they work with non-profit organizations to provide free eyewear to children in public schools.

Explaining his charitable work, Weinstein adds, "A lot of times, even when people have vision insurance, if the child loses or breaks the eyeglasses, they don't have coverage for a second pair. Even if the child did get one pair, if there's a problem, and children do frequently break or lose their eyeglasses, they need another pair and the parents can't afford it. That's where the kids fall through the cracks."

Weinstein's 39DollarGlasses.com goes even further to help families who are struggling financially.

"We reach out to schools all over the country, and we try to provide free eyewear for children whose families can't afford it," says Weinstein. "The company pays for the eyeglasses directly from its own profits."

For more information about vision care for your child, visit the American Optometric Association's website at www.aoa.org.

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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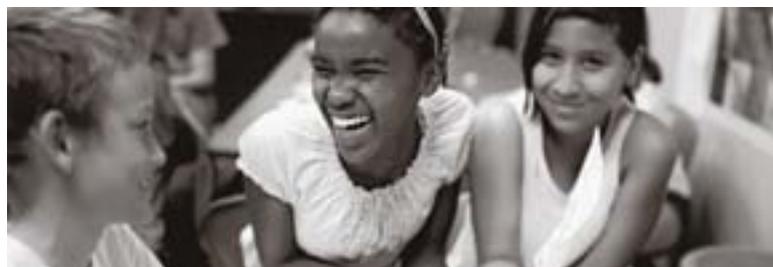
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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Fight colds and flu with these foods

It's back! Cold and flu season, that is. Besides the usual prevention tips — washing your hands often, getting eight-to-10 hours of sleep each night, and drinking plenty of fluids — there are specific foods that can prevent and even help shorten the length of this year's colds and flu.

One of the most important things you can do is to consume foods rich in probiotics. Why? These friendly bacteria promote a stronger immune system by populating the gastrointestinal tract (or gut), the largest organ of immunity in the body.

Yogurt made with live and active cultures, fermented vegetables like kimchi and sauerkraut, fermented soybeans products like miso and tempeh are all rich in probiotics.

It's also important to consume foods rich in prebiotics. These are the foods that fuel our body's friendly bacteria. A plant-based, high-fiber diet that includes artichokes, asparagus, bananas, raisins, onions, garlic, leeks, and oats contains prebiotics and is another way to positively impact your gut microflora.

Looking for menu items? These common foods may be in your kitchen right now.

Vegetarian chili

Most chili dishes contain onions, garlic, beans and a variety of spices. Both onions and garlic contain antiviral properties, which can help combat viruses. Kidney beans are packed with vitamin B, which strengthens the immune system and can ultimately help build your defense system against germs. Lastly, spices not only add a hint of flavor to meals, but can clear your sinuses of congestion as well.

Fresh Clementines

Clementines are packed with vitamin C, which we all know is an antioxidant powerhouse. Although loads of vitamin C cannot ensure total cold and flu prevention, it can decrease the duration of both. Two clemen-



tines account for 100 percent of your vitamin C intake for the entire day.

Roast beef sandwich

Both roast beef and whole grain bread are loaded with zinc. This mineral has been known to stop the growth of microorganisms, including harmful bacteria. A half of sandwich with a cup of chicken soup can make for a comforting meal if you are feeling under the weather. Don't forget, chicken soup has been known to help control inflammation and congestion.

Tuna fish

Tuna contains an amino acid, glutamio, which aids in immune health. Spice up this basic lunchmeat with one tablespoon of low-fat mayonnaise and spread on whole grain crackers.

Ginger

Ginger helps relieve congestion and can calm the throat if you have a cough or slight irritation. Make a cup of homemade ginger tea with a bit of honey and a side of ginger snap cookies for a comforting treat.

Don't let the cold or flu get you or your children down this fall. Boost your immune system by consuming both pro- and pre-biotics. These foods provide a greater volume and diversity of microorganisms in the gut which offers a better defense against disease causing invaders.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who is a new Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

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Windows & wheels

Learning to let go when your child grows up

CHERISH THE MOMENTS

BY PATRICK HEMPFIG

Why did I have to see that when I peered out from my in-laws' patio on Christmas morning? It could have been anything else — a rambunctious squirrel, a trespassing dog, or low-flying vultures. Instead, I saw a teenage girl run across my in-laws' backyard to the rear window of the neighboring house. She paused at the window and looked toward the street. She blew two kisses to, I'm guessing, the friend who dropped her off. Then she carefully lifted the window from the outside, crawled into her house, and closed the window and blinds behind her.

As a parent, I had trouble processing what I had just witnessed. If my daughter was sneaking out of the house for who-knows-what-kind of get together, I'd want to know about it. I'd certainly rather deal with it now than nine months later when there could be additional issues. However, I didn't know the people, and wouldn't want to cause trouble between my in-laws and their new neighbors. I decided to mind my own business; yet, I couldn't get it out of my head.

About an hour later, I was helping my 8-year-old daughter, Jessie, with her new purple dress. As I buttoned it up in the back and tied the bow around her waist, I flashed back to the teenage girl I had seen earlier that morning. It feels like I was just changing Jessie's diaper. Now she's wearing size 10 dresses and stands as tall as her mother's chin.

I felt it was time for a talk. No, not "the talk" as her mother, Mattie, will cover that one. This one I could handle. I told Jessie that she must never sneak out of the house. Her response didn't put me completely at ease, though I accepted it. She said, "I'll check with Momma." Maybe she knows that Dad will say "no" more quickly when it comes to dating decisions.

Later on Christmas Day, Jessie opened a special gift — a pair of roller skates. The next day we went to the park to break them in. Mattie was on one side holding her hand while



I was a steady force on the other side. Even though Jessie had on her helmet and elbow and knee pads, it was still stressful for me. We went back to the park to practice again the following two days. Jessie improved dramatically each day. On the third day, Mattie just watched while I held my daughter's hand. Then Jessie said it. "Daddy, you need to let go."

Reluctantly, I released her hand but remained within catching distance behind her. Mattie's brother, who was with us, laughed at me as I zoomed in ready for the catch each time Jessie flailed her arms. His laughter didn't bother me, though, because I was right where I needed to be.

Later, I again thought about the teenage girl in the window, knowing that Jessie's teenage years aren't that far away. I realize that more "letting go" times are ahead. I also know it's not possible to catch all the falls. I'm hoping that because I've stood beside Jessie when she learns to

skate, and for many of the other important times of her childhood, that I'll never have to stand guard outside her bedroom window.

I've concluded that parenting requires seeing your child through a series of wheels — stroller, wagon, tricycle, training, bicycle, scooter, and now roller skate wheels. I'm going to enjoy the pink skate wheels stage to the fullest. Something tells me that seeing Jessie behind the wheel of a car will be much harder. When that time comes, I'll be beside her in the front seat. Then it will be time for Daddy to let go again, and Mattie and I will find ourselves peering out the window, waiting for her safe return home.

Patrick Hempfig had a 20-year professional career in banking, accounting, and auditing before he became a father at age 44. He is now a full-time husband, stay-at-home dad, and writer. Follow him at www.facebook.com/patricklhempfig and on Twitter @PatrickHempfig.

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Time for creativity

Why innovative thinking is not just for kids

BY JESSICA MEYER

There is no denying how important imaginative and creative play is for our children. As a freelance teaching artist for Lincoln Center for the past 15 years, I lead hands-on experiential music workshops to get children and adults ready to see particular concerts. I have seen firsthand time and time again how students interact more effectively with the world around them, after engaging in activities where they are making artistic decisions.

We learn our first lessons about the world around us by tinkering with how things work and imagining what could be. Children learn about how other people work by inventing games on the playground, role-playing, or collaboratively building with whatever they can find. However, when they make art, they get to take things one step further. By virtue of taking different sounds, shapes, lines, colors, words, movements, or objects and transforming them into

something else, they are processing (consciously or subconsciously) how they themselves work.

The workplace is catching on — recruiters are starting to seek out innovative thinkers with Masters of Fine Arts rather than Masters of Business Administration. Why is this? Because the muscle that gets strengthened the most during creative play is our capacity to endure and process the unknown. We live in a time where we can find out almost anything in just a matter of seconds. Whether it's information to feed a curiosity or distraction to help escape from life for a while, it's only a couple of clicks away. School curriculum has also fallen prey to sacrificing long-term benefits in favor of short-term results: students all the way through college have spent the last decade being shown that preparing for the test far outweighs the ability to think independently and imaginatively.

However, there are plenty of articles out there that talk about what we can do for our children to help them be more creative and connected beings. What about us parents?

There are very good reasons for “putting your oxygen mask on first before putting it on your child,” as the card tucked into the back of every airline seat instructs. With a seemingly endless checklist from work, family, friends, and society of what we should and should not be doing with our lives, it is increasingly hard to find time to authentically process, acknowledge, and celebrate what matters to each of us as individuals. Without this time to process, being truly “there” for your children becomes a challenging, if not downright impossible, task.

I found this out the hard way about five years ago. I was struggling to balance career, motherhood, and marriage, all while trying to maintain (or attempting to find) my

own sense of self. I spent much of my childhood making up songs on the piano, before then switching to the viola, and ultimately studying at Juilliard and becoming a professional musician. We were trying to find an appropriate educational setting for my son, and I just could not emotionally process all that I was feeling. I found myself looking for a piano for our small apartment, remembering what a companion it was through my angst-ridden teenage years. As a musician and composer, I learned that I was just a better version of myself when I had that small period of time every day to make stuff up, instead of just finding distractions to escape from all that I was feeling.

We tend to think that making art should be reserved for those who show a particular talent — which is typical for the outcome-oriented world we live in. But, what if the resulting “stuff” was not as important as just being part of the process? Our bodies thrive during times when we are fully in the zone, have no sense of time, and making choices on the fly. Regardless of the medium — food, fabric, flowers, whatever — engaging in a creative activity helps you process not only what you are experiencing at the time, but also builds the mental and emotional muscles needed for when something way more serious gets thrown in your path.

If we can find the requisite 20 minutes a day to take care of our bodies, we can certainly find another 10 to 20 minutes a day to genuinely take care of our souls. So do something every day that makes you come alive, and go get lost in the process — and you may very well find what you, and your kids, really need.

Jessica Meyer is a violist and composer who just released her first solo CD titled “Sounds of Being,” in which she turns her viola into an entire orchestra of emotion to embody a different state of being for each piece: joy, anxiety, anger, bliss, torment, loneliness and passion. Call (212) 989-9319 for her next performance in New York City at Cornelia Street Café [29 Cornelia St. between Bleecker and W. Fourth Street in the West Village].



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The value of Catholic schools

Why parents
choose this
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alternative

BY CANDI SPARKS

At a time when the New York City public school system is under so much criticism and revision, working families have found an alternative in the Catholic school system. These schools have historically been the ones to reach out to and support communities in need.

Years ago, hundreds of thousands of immigrants came to the New World to have a fresh start. They put in long hours at low-level jobs, striving for greater opportunity and a better life for their children. It was a financial sacrifice for these immigrants to send their children to Catholic schools, rather than through the public school system, but to them, it was well worth it.

The public schools in their working-class neighborhoods were largely overcrowded and not necessarily providing top-notch education. In order to be more assured that their children would be taught their values — including discipline, which was a rigorous part of their children's life at home — they decided to send their children through a parochial school system, even if it meant struggling to find the extra money to pay for it.

In the early days of the immigration wave, it was primarily Irish and Italian immigrants that sent their children to Catholic parochial schools. As the years went by and new immigrants came from more countries

and continents, the demographic shifted and one didn't necessarily have to be Catholic to choose this educational option. As a result, many Catholic schools throughout the city have continued as an integral part of our citywide school landscape.

Currently, Catholic schools serve more than 160 nationalities. With each wave of immigration — Hispanic, Asian, Slavic and many others — Catholic schools offer diversity. These schools are not just racially diverse; there is also religious diversity in the Catholic school system. In fact, non-Catholics comprise about one quarter of the student body.

"Catholic schools are not just meant for the faithful. We are here to grow faith by building community and reaching out to those in need," says Tom O'Brien, of the Brooklyn Diocese, which is involved in raising scholarship funds to help families offset tuition. "But not every Catholic school family is in great economic need. Our demographic is changing. We have seen an influx of middle income families who choose Catholic school because of the class size, excellence in education, and for a safer environment than what most parents think the neighborhood public school would offer."

Patty, a public school teacher from the Bronx, sends her son Ronald to a Catholic elementary school.

"The environment stresses academics and doing the right thing,"

she says. "The teachers set high standards for the children. They are expected to do well and they rise to the occasion."

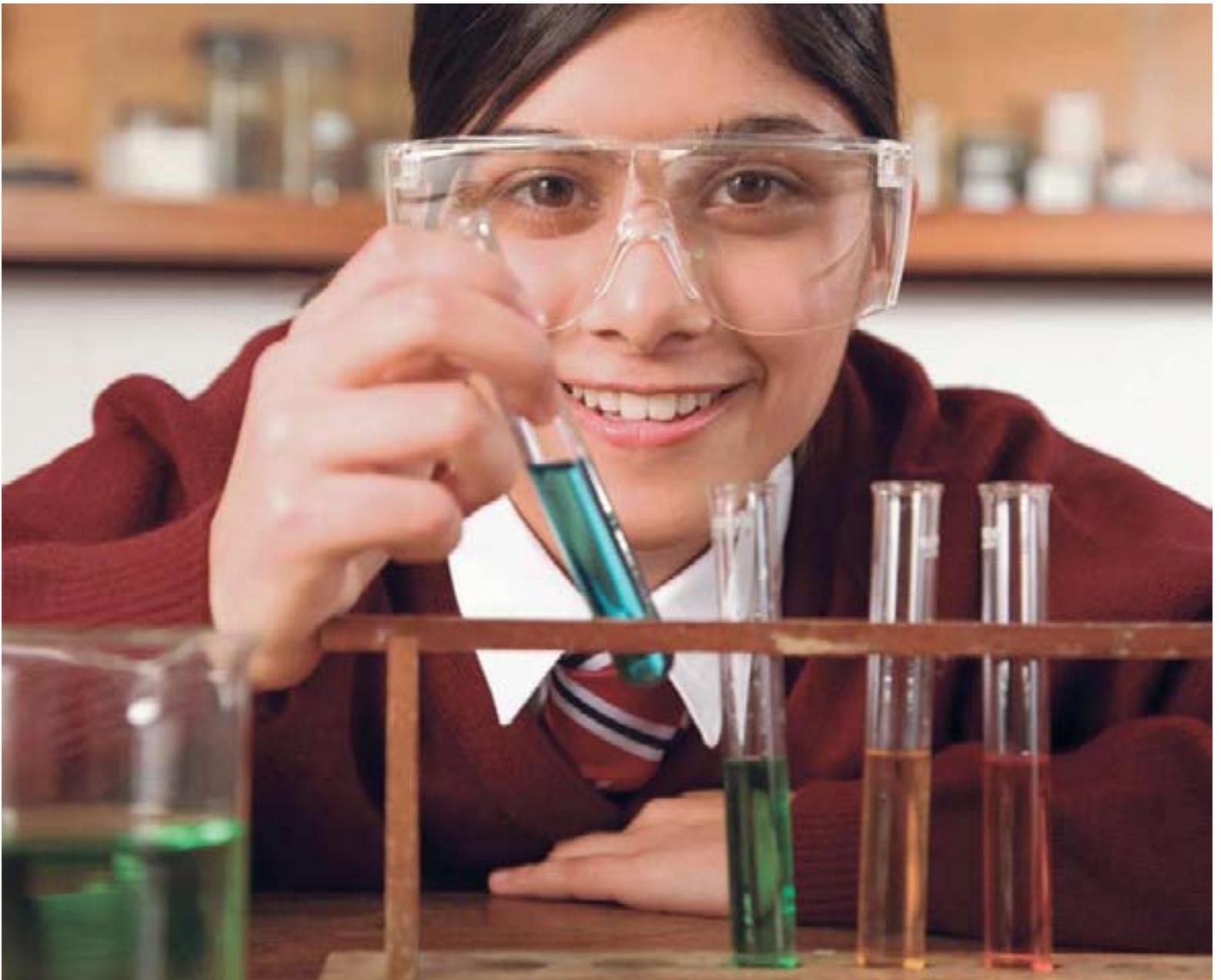
Many Catholic school students are the first ones in their families to graduate from college. In low-income neighborhoods, this means that the school is providing the lion's share of educational support for children who do not have access to private tutoring or help at home.

There is a 99 percent graduation rate for Catholic high schools, followed by a 97 percent college graduation rate for those who graduated Catholic high school. Compared to the 41 percent public high school graduation rate, Catholic school students have a better success rate. They are guided up the ladder of growth and achievement, making a real difference for present and future generations. Overall, Catholic school seems to outperform public school and is a viable, less-expensive system of education in the private sector.

In fact, the only two private schools in New York State that were designated by the U.S. Department of Education as Blue Ribbon — a program that honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels, or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap — in 2011 were both Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York. The honorees were St. Ignatius Loyola School on E. 84th Street in Manhattan and St. Ignatius on Mott Street in Manhattan. This year's honorees show the excellence in education and the diverse population served by Catholic schools. The incentives for getting a Catholic school education are different than what they used to be, and this is changing the demographics of Catholic school students.

"Families that don't have money don't usually have many choices. We needed to find a school with the right mix for Benny. He really wanted to play baseball. The only school that we could find to bridge the gap was a Catholic school. We are all very happy with the switch," says Elizabeth, a Brooklyn mother of two, who chose to send her son to a Catholic school with solid academics and a baseball program.

Likewise, Patty, of East Harlem, sends her daughter Amber to a bilingual Catholic school.



“My daughter goes to a school that gives her [education] in both languages,” says Patty. “Sure, they speak the same languages in the public school around the corner, but it is unofficial. The public school does not have the same structure.” Amber’s Catholic school is also closely related to other parish activities and offers bilingual masses, events and service projects for the community. This makes the Catholic school a great way for Patty and Amber to meet people of similar backgrounds and build a community. Parochial schools celebrate the tradition of faith, family and community.

Unfortunately, keeping these schools open has become a challenge. The Catholic school sector is no different than any other, and closings have been publicized. In response, Catholic

schools are researching and developing new educational business models. Some Catholic schools have closed their doors, only to reopen as academies. For example, in South Ozone Park, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School and St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr School closed their doors, only to be succeeded by the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Because the school involves more than one parish, the school is called an academy to differentiate it from a single-parish school. Since 2005, the Brooklyn Diocese has opened many Catholic academies in Brooklyn and Queens.

The Brooklyn Diocese has also implemented the program “Preserving the Vision.” The name means exactly what it says: preserving what has always been an integral part of Catholic life: the education of chil-

dren. This vision includes developing schools that will be better able to meet the diverse and changing needs of students and parents, and providing competitive compensation and benefits to teachers and staff.

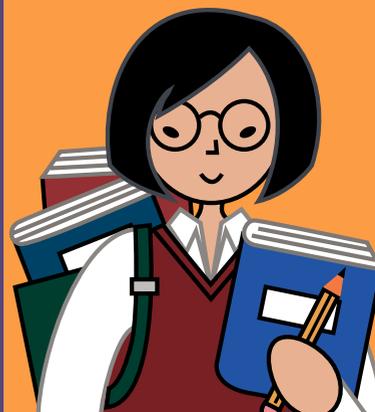
Even though two schools in the Archdiocese of New York have won the 2011 Blue Ribbon Award, the organization is still committed to improving. The Archdiocese has initiated the “Pathways to Excellence” program, aimed at professional development for principals, teachers and staff at schools that already do outstanding work. Because of the diverse population, there is still more than can be done to close the achievement gap. The program is aimed at raising standardized test scores and providing teachers with new classroom tools, such as the digital teaching

program for fourth and fifth grade math, “Time to Know,” which provides online learning, data collection and feedback for the school.

Personally, I am proud to share that my fondest childhood memories revolve around a humble beginning, in a humble neighborhood. My siblings and I attended a Catholic elementary school, Our Lady of Victory, for eight years. I am pleased that Catholic schools are committed to remaining vibrant institutions for generations to come.

Candi Sparks is the author of children’s books about money including “Can I Have Some Money? Educating Children About Money,” “Max Gets It!” and “Nacho Money.” She is a Brooklyn mother of two and is on Facebook (Candi Sparks, author) and Twitter (Candi Sparks, author). Her website is www.candisparks.com.

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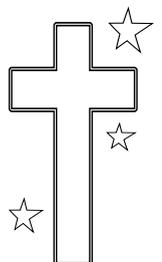
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Treating acid reflux

Children, infants suffer from the ailment as well

My son regularly tells me that it feels like his stomach and chest are “burning,” and that his throat hurts too. A handful of times, these symptoms have been so severe that he has thrown up. It sounds very much like he has acid reflux, but he’s only 5 years old! Can young children really get heartburn? If so, what could be the cause, and what should I do?

Although we often think of heartburn and the conditions that cause it as only affecting adults, infants and young children are also susceptible to them. In both adults and children the stomach contains gastric acid, which assists in digestion by breaking down the food that is eaten. To keep this acid from entering the throat, the esophagus has a sphincter (a circular muscle) at its lower end that constricts when food or liquid is not being consumed. Certain foods, such as cow’s milk, citrus fruit, and chocolate and some conditions, such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (G.E.R.D.), may cause the sphincter to relax and allow acid to flow upward, enter the esophagus, and cause heartburn.

Treatment options for acid reflux in infants or toddlers include propping up the head of the infant’s bassinet, crib, or other sleep area; breaking down the baby’s daily food intake into smaller meals at more frequent intervals; and identifying and avoiding the specific foods that worsen the child’s acid reflux symptoms.

Given the regularity of your son’s symptoms, however, they could be signs of G.E.R.D., which is more serious and characterized by prolonged acid reflux that can damage the lining of the esophagus over time. While G.E.R.D. is most commonly associated with heartburn, other symptoms of the disease include a dry cough or wheezing, throat irritation, trouble swallowing, regurgitation of food and stomach liquid, and nausea.

The process of diagnosing G.E.R.D. begins with a visit to your child’s pediatrician, who may refer you to a physician who specializes



in pediatric digestive disorders. A comprehensive medical history will be taken, and additional non-invasive tests may be performed to evaluate the condition of your child’s throat, stomach, and gastrointestinal functioning. If G.E.R.D. is confirmed, and lifestyle and dietary adjustments have proved ineffective, the doctor may recommend medications to neutralize the acid

reflux. In rare cases surgical procedures may be necessary to improve the function of a child’s esophagus.

Identifying possible signs of acid reflux in your child, and deciding to take action, is half the battle, so you are already off to a good start to help your son overcome his symptoms. No matter what the cause, options are available that will help your son to feel more comfortable.

Recycled love

Talking with Sasha Lipton, founder of Second Chance Toys

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

Her desire to help kids in need went hand-in-hand with her green attitude, and gradually evolved into a vision. And it all started with a couple of discarded, rescued, and recycled plastic toys that she donated for the holidays.

Sasha Lipton grew up in a New Jersey town, about a half-hour outside of Manhattan. In 2006, at age 15, she looked around her and saw a lot of sadness — families living in nearby communities who were struggling to put food on the table and couldn't afford to buy toys for their kids. She felt compassion for them and decided to take action.

Fast forward eight years. Thanks to Second Chance Toys, the organization that Lipton founded as a teen, nearly 200,000 gently used, donated toys have been distributed to local organizations serving kids in need, like Head Starts and family shelters. In so doing, Second Chance Toys has helped keep 40 tons of non-biodegradable plastic out of our landfills.

Lipton calls her movement “recycled love and a second chance.”

Due to its partnership with Kohl's early on, Second Chance Toys got much-needed funding to create a website and hire a full-time employee.

And on Thanksgiving Day 2014, in the spirit of gratitude, Lipton, now 24, appeared on “Good Morning America” to talk about her life's work and Second Chance Toys abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/chance-toys-recycles-unwanted-toys-27218383.

Standing beside a ginormous box overflowing with an array of rescued toys, Lipton, who currently lives on the Upper West Side, described the impact her organization has made on so many kids' lives, and reminded viewers to donate toys for the holidays.

The Second Chance Toys story

NY Parenting spoke with Lipton about Second Chance Toys and what's next.

Tammy Scileppi: What were the circumstances that led to Second Chance Toys?



Sasha Lipton at a Second Chance Toys event.

Sasha Lipton: I came up with the idea for Second Chance Toys in high school, while driving around on a big garbage collection day. I noticed that so many people were throwing away plastic toys and I knew that there were so many kids in towns not far from mine (in New Jersey) whose parents couldn't afford those toys. Additionally, I knew the toys were headed straight for the landfill — and that throwing out these plastic toys presented a hazard to our environment.

When I began collecting plastic toys, I enlisted my mom (and her sports utility vehicle, since I couldn't drive yet) and we started retrieving these toys from the curb, one by one, until our basement was filled. We then cleaned and tagged them with notes for the new owners, and delivered them to a family violence shelter in Newark.

TS: How can people get involved?

SL: The small idea I had really took off and has become contagious because anyone can join in and help! Whether you want to donate, collect, or receive toys, just visit our website, www.secondchancetoys.org, for information.

And we couldn't have expanded without the help of corporate partners like 1-800-Got-Junk, Kohl's, and Old Spice.

TS: Describe your “Good Morning America” experience.

SL: It was so exciting for me to be able to share the Second Chance Toys story with millions of viewers watching “Good Morning America.” I especially loved the big toy box they created and I thought it was awesome that they held a toy drive of their own, with all of the producers, so that we would have toys for the segment and so that they could



make a donation to children in need.

TS: So, what's next?

SL: We want to continue expanding across the US and make Second Chance Toys a household name. I hope that someday people everywhere will know that they can donate their toys to other children and that there is no need to throw them away. In order to do this we are looking to connect with a national retail partner that would hold collections during the holidays or Earth week. We are also always looking for new corporations to partner with that will help us grow.

TS: What do you do in your spare time?

SL: I love to workout (mostly barre and spin classes), cook or bake, try new restaurants, and get outdoors as often as possible!

While Lipton sits on the board of Second Chance Toys, she also has a "day job," working as a digital producer at Everyday Health for the past year and a half. Each summer, her company hosts an event in which employees divide up amongst various organizations and spend their day volunteering.

Recycled love and pro-social millennials

Millennials like Lipton are eager

to make a difference. She is a shining example of how pro-social behavior benefits others by changing people's lives for the better and helping make the world a nicer place in which to live. With Second Chance Toys, she says she has the ability to put smiles on children's faces — and that's a powerful thing.

The Millennial Generation (about ages 18 to 33) is made up of extremely ambitious young people who believe in good causes and have high expectations for themselves, as well as for those around them.

In fact, one in-depth, worldwide study by Deloitte revealed that many millennials, like Lipton, tend to be very charitable: 63 percent donate to charities, 43 percent actively volunteer or are a member of a community organization, and 52 percent have signed petitions. And a new study on millennials in the workforce shows that 88 percent — especially young women — gravitate toward companies with strong corporate social responsibility programs. More and more companies have been focusing on addressing a variety of social and environmental issues.

Solange Charas, a gender-in-the-workplace expert, weighs in why young women like Lipton are leaders in the business of helping others.

"Women want their work to have meaning and purpose — for them to have a feeling of usefulness and worth, to feel like they make a difference, that they have some control over their jobs and lives and that they are socially included," she explains. "There is a draw for women to work at organizations with a strong culture of giving back because of what those organizations stand for — namely, providing a context for purpose and meaning of their work. I think this is particularly important for women, as they have a natural (and learned) propensity to take care of others, and organizations that align their mission and vision with taking care of others, naturally resonates with women."

"Organizations that have strong corporate social responsibility cultures are good at connecting the dots of what employees do in their work, and how it impacts the world — or provides a social good, like Toms, [a company that matches every pair of shoes purchased with a pair of new shoes for a child in need]," she adds.

Reputational Institute has identified the top-10 corporate-social-responsibility-organizations as:

- Microsoft
- Google

- Disney
- BMW
- Apple
- Daimler (Mercedes Benz)
- VW
- Sony
- Colgate-Palmolive
- LEGO Group

Making a difference

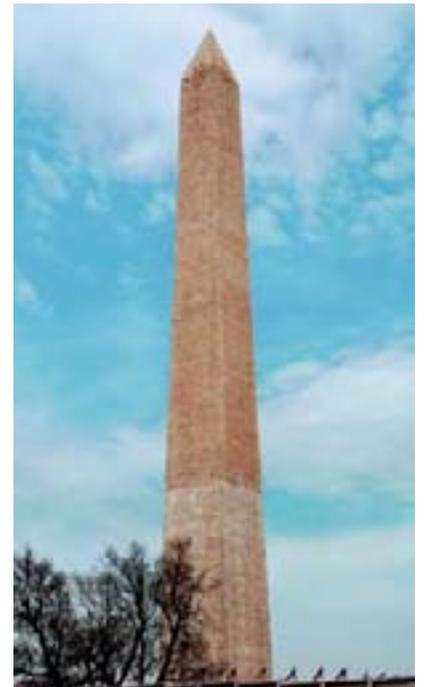
It's the dawn of a new year, so in the spirit of giving back and de-cluttering, why not ask your kids to donate their gently used toys, as they make room for all those cool, new gifts they got over the holidays?

The process can also serve as a teaching moment: You have to give to get.

Second Chance Toys holds two toy drives annually: One in December and another for Earth Day, in April.

Visit www.secondchancetoys.org and click "donate" for drop-off locations in New York City and other areas. There will be plenty in the spring and you and your family can celebrate Earth Day by recycling plastic toys and giving them a second chance.

Don't see a drop off location near you? Consider starting a collection. It takes just 50 toys to be matched with an organization.



The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial on the National Mall (left) is hosting special events this month.

Washington DC

A great weekend for families

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

Trying to figure out what to do over the long weekend of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day? Looking to go somewhere that is just a short plane, train, or car ride from New York? Consider Washington, D.C., where you can learn more about the civil rights leader. Although America's capital city is known for its politics, its history, diversity, and accessibility draws families from throughout the country all year long.

Some of the biggest draws in D.C. are the impressive monuments, museums, mansions, and government buildings — many of which are free of charge. As expected, there is heightened security in D.C., but there are concerted efforts to keep the significant buildings open to the general public. With proper planning, you can schedule a visit or even a tour. The opportunity to witness the government in action is equally

thrilling. Imagine walking through the Pentagon, taking a peek into the Supreme Court, or standing in awe of the lavish rooms in the White House. If you are planning to visit the White House, remember that trips must be coordinated through your member of Congress at least 21 days before the planned trip.

The Arlington National Cemetery — and its “sea of stones” that holds thousands of graves of those who served in the U.S. military — will humble you. The gravesites of President John F. Kennedy and his well-known brothers (former Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and former Sen. Ted Kennedy) are also housed at Arlington.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is grand in scale, and is even more impressive in the evening with its spotlight beaming. By visiting the Memorial (or any of the memorials on the National Mall and Tidal Basin) at night, you will encounter smaller crowds. If visiting on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Jan. 19), you can

witness the parade and peace walk. As part of the celebration for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, you can also attend the Kennedy Center celebration “Let Freedom Ring,” or participate in a day of service to honor the slain civil rights leader.

Throughout D.C., there are statues, plaques, and monuments to honor those who helped shape our country. The most visited sites are on the National Mall, and the National Park Service has conveniently developed an app to navigate the area easily (entitled “NPS National Mall”). Another feature of the app is the “park lens” that aids users in locating nearby monuments. You can follow a recommended tour or create your own. If you plan ahead, you can also print a copy of the useful “Be a Park Ranger” packet for your kids. This will add a sense of adventure to your visit to the National Mall and its monuments.

Washington D.C. is a terrific place for families, and you will be drawn in

by the educational and historical appeal the city offers. There are also tantalizing restaurants that you will want to seek out. During the week of Jan. 19 to 25, you can take advantage of Restaurant Week, when more than 200 restaurants will be offering three-course lunches for \$20.15 and three-course dinners for \$35.15. This will be a great opportunity to experience D.C.'s best restaurants at affordable prices.

Here are 10 places and events that you cannot miss:

Bureau of Engraving and Printing

www.moneyfactory.gov/tours/washingtondc.html, 300 14th St. SW, Washington, DC 20228, (202) 874-2330

Also referred to as the "Money Factory," it offers a self-guided tour that takes approximately 35 minutes. As you would expect, this tour is quite popular, so plan ahead.

Discovery Theater

www.discoverytheater.org, 1100 Jefferson Dr. SW, Washington, DC 20560, (202) 633-8700

A theater devoted to young audiences, it offers 300 programs a year exploring art, science, and global heritage.

International Spy Museum

www.spymuseum.org, 800 F St. NW, Washington, DC 20004, (202) 393-7798

This museum explains the art of espionage and displays cool gadgets. Please note that this museum is best for older kids and teens — strollers are not allowed in the museum.

Mount Vernon

www.mountvernon.org, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon, Va., 22121, (703) 780-2000

Visit George Washington's former home, which is now home to farm animals, a discovery center, and museum. This site is stroller friendly and dogs are welcome. Open all year.

National Air and Space Museum

www.airandspace.si.edu, Independence Avenue at Sixth Street, Southwest, Washington, DC 20560, (202) 633-2214

One of the most popular museums in Washington, it houses 23 galleries that illustrate the story

of aviation, space, and human attempts at flight.

National Museum of Natural History

www.mnh.si.edu, 10th Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest, Washington, DC 20560, (202) 633-1000

This huge museum is dedicated to natural wonders and boasts a great collection on dinosaurs. It also houses an "Insect Zoo," which is home to live insects and other critters.

National Zoo

www.nationalzoo.si.edu, 3001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008, (202) 633-4888

One of the world's most renowned zoos, it is family friendly and easily navigable with a stroller.

National Gallery of Art

www.nga.gov, Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest, Washington, DC 20565, (202) 737-4215

During the winter months, there is an outdoor ice skating rink in the sculpture garden. View sculptures while skating with your children.

Newseum

www.newseum.org, 555 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 292-6100

This museum houses seven floors of interactive exhibits covering the history of journalism. The exhibits are sure to engage kids of all ages.

United States Botanic Garden

www.usbg.gov, 100 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 225-8333

Located on the Capitol grounds, the garden has living exhibits in the conservatory, such as seasonal exhibits.

Other links:

Be a Junior Ranger: www.nps.gov/kids/jrRangers.cfm

NPS App: www.nps.gov/nama/photosmultimedia/app-page.htm

Washington DC Restaurant Week: www.ramw.org/restaurantweek

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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SHARON C. PETERS, MA

The birds & the bees

Tips for talking to your child about sexuality

Dear Sharon,

I am a single mom with a 12-year-old son who is on the path towards puberty. I recently purchased some illustrated books for him to read that explain sexuality. Is there anything else I should do besides just giving him the books?



Dear Mom,

I am glad to hear that you have some appropriate books to give your 12 year old. Sometimes schools hold health classes to discuss different aspects of sexuality for teens and tweens as well.

Whether a child is getting information from books, classes, or the most common sources of information and misinformation — peers and media — it is often good for parents to also spend some time talking about sexuality or related topics such as crushes, physical changes, and the reactions of friends and classmates to this phase of development.

As a single mother of a boy you might feel that any topics related to puberty are “off limits,” but for many teens and tweens, parental support, guidance, and understanding is much appreciated. Even when a child is resistant or embarrassed when

sensitive points are raised, it makes a difference to have adult care and company as thoughts, questions, and concerns associated with puberty or other issues are sorted through.

Parents often wonder what to explain or how to bring up the topic of sexuality. It is often helpful to begin by spending some extra quality time with a child in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. This kind of time can sometimes elicit meaningful conversations without too much strain. A child might start talking about his appearance during a slow-paced shopping excursion or comment on a “mushy” movie watched at home. Extended one-on-one time can also present opportunities for a parent to make gentle queries about subjects such as the health class at school, her son’s reaction to books she provided, or thoughts about friends who have started dating.

If parents decide to bring up a topic, it is important to do so in a respectful and relatively quiet tone. If moms or dads are too pushy or urgent, conversations often end too quickly. When and if a child begins

to ask questions or share ideas, it is usually important for parents to listen more than they talk. Letting a child express what is on his mind without too many adult opinions or interruptions increases the child’s ability to release any pent-up emotions and improves the likelihood of future conversations. Discussions with 12 year olds often take place over time, so keeping additional talks relatively stress-free and productive is important.

Even when specific circumstances or a child’s personality makes talking directly about personal issues unlikely, spending relaxed time together will make it easier to bring things up when and if an appropriate time ever surfaces. Also setting aside time to strengthen family connections improves a child’s self-esteem and builds a positive and hopeful attitude about relationships — vitally important aspects of life for a developing 12 year old.

Best wishes as you and your son continue to find ways to think through the many aspects of being 12 together.

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

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



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FABULYSS FINDS

LYSS STERN

New year, new you

There's always something new and #FabULyss happening in New York City. I wanted to bring you a few of my favorites for the moms and tots.

There's nothing more that I love than starting the new year off with a brand-new calendar. A new year means a fresh start! Are you ready to start 2015 fresh and organized — I wouldn't want it to start otherwise. I found the most amazing organizer, Jodi Starr from Clarity. Decluttering, organizing, and breathing is what the business is all about. Her job is to do one thing: simplify your overwhelming clutter one methodical step at a time. By tailoring her approach to your specific needs, she will create the ideal environment to satisfy your aesthetic while also producing a lasting functionality. Regardless of the project — your home office, bedroom, closets, children's room, kitchen, children's schoolwork, paper management or a pre- or post-move situation — she will initiate a plan to make day-to-day living manageable and productive. Let's face it, less mess is less stress! By taking simple steps created and taught by Jodi, you will feel like you can be organized once again. For more information about Clarity, visit www.claritynyc.com.

Now at the legendary FAO Schwarz is Hiho Batik, an experiential retail store and art studio.

The new shop on the second level of the famous toy store offers customers an opportunity to create one-of-a-kind pieces by participating in the batik process, which uses wax and dyes to create an image.

Shoppers will be able to hand-paint their own T-shirts and tote bags, personalizing each item.

The shop will also sell a special line of premade clothing and accessories, including T-shirts, sweatshirts, and tote bags, created exclu-

sively for FAO Schwarz. I took my younger son and niece to Batik and they had the best time. My son made a DJ T-shirt and my niece made a tote bag. If you are looking for something fun to do, make sure to visit the new shop. It's also #FabULyss for children's birthday parties.

Hiho Batik at FAO Schwarz [767 Fifth Ave. between E. 58th and E. 59th streets in Midtown, (212) 644-9400, www.fao.com/shop/index.jsp?categoryId=3810526, www.hihobatik.com]

"Oh, the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful, and since we've no place to go, let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!" Moms are always asking me about ways to keep their kids active and warm during the cold winter months. Fast Fundamentals, www.fastfundamentals.com, is a wonderful program that keeps the kids active all year long. The program's mission is to provide young and growing athletes with the opportunity to develop and strengthen a customized set of physical skills that will maximize their potential for a lifetime of activity. It prides itself on developing a proactively positive environment throughout all of its training sessions and promoting a philosophy of continual improvement rather than immediate performance when evaluating success. This type of environment is essential in motivating children to try new activities without a fear of failure. Your child will experience not only a noticeable improvement in his athletic performance, but also a huge boost in self-esteem and self-confidence. And besides training with the most wonderful coaches, you can also choose at which location your children will train. If you have a gym inside of your apartment building or belong to a gym, you can bring the coaches to your child. You can also have them meet you in a favorite park close to your apartment. They will work with your child's needs and goals directly.

Breakfast, Babes and Blowouts is a new trend that DivaMoms started at the Louis Licari salon. New York City DivaMoms — and especially working moms — come early to the salon to get their hair blown out while the babies are entertained. Everyone is happy, mom and baby. Louis and I

came up with this idea since I was bringing my baby to the salon since she was three months old. The salon is the most baby-friendly salon in the city. Everyone there loves babies. I felt so comfortable bringing my baby in tow that I of course started to tell all of my other mommy friends with babies to go. Most upscale salons tend to discourage clients from bringing their babies to appointments with them. We decided to embrace it! Make sure to visit www.divamoms.com for the next event. Happy moms equals happy children!

Breakfast, Babes and Blowouts at the Louis Licari Salon [693 Fifth Ave. between E. 55th and E. 54th streets Midtown, (212) 758-2090, www.louislicari.com]

Lastly, moms and dads, do I have a spa for you!

We all want to look and feel our best from the inside out. It's the new year and that means taking better care of yourself. DASHA, a luxury lifestyle brand and Manhattan-based wellness center created to offer a truly holistic approach to wellness, is just the spot. The core of this approach is an understanding that a healthy lifestyle is a result of making positive changes in all areas of life.

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DASHA [115 E. 57th St. #520 between Park and Lexington avenues in Midtown, (212) 755-5500, www.dashawellness.com]

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





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- FEB 12** **Parent Info Night: Preschool Spanish Immersion**
 Thursday, February 12th • 6:30pm
- FEB 26** **Preschool Admissions Information Session**
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- FEB 28** **Admissions Info Session for All Programs**
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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

The strange eating habits of your kids

When it comes down to it, every single thing that a parent does is a judgment call, from breastfeeding to braces, and beyond. Typically, when you think a particular action is wrong, you discourage your kids from doing it. But what about all those gray areas?

Eating is perhaps the one area that causes us great concern right from the start. Should I breastfeed? Should I let my kids eat cookies? How many? How often?

My firstborn had a seemingly normal appetite, but a really strange affinity for breadcrumbs and grated cheese. When I would take them out to make a meal, she would stick a spoon in them and eat them plain. It was cute yet weird at the same time. My husband and I joked that she thought she was a bird. Her odd affection for these two plain ingredients did wear off, but for a certain period, she asked for a spoonful of breadcrumbs or a spoonful of grated cheese and I indulged her. No harm done, I figured. She was a good eater otherwise.

Some moms allow far more than I did. It's been noted that Angelina Jolie lets her kids eat crickets — as in the actual bug — for a snack! She says they eat them “like Doritos,” and that sometimes they eat so many, she has to tell them to stop because she's afraid they'll get sick. You think? Apparently she also is said to have eaten cockroaches herself, so I guess her eating rules are a little broader than most.

I realize that people do, in fact, snack on insects in other countries, but there is no way I'd let my kids eat bugs anytime soon. And I know that many food colors have derivatives from insects, but somehow chomping down on a crunchy six-legged creature just doesn't seem the same as taking a spoonful of Jell-O.

Angelina Jolie's bug craving might be an extreme case in the kids and food department, but I have many friends whose kids will only eat the



pizza after wiping off all the cheese (my mother would have gone nuts over that one — wasting food!) or will only eat food if it is not touching any other food on their plate. Others go through a period of only consuming white food, or junk food. My childhood friend ate nothing but bologna sandwiches for months on end until she finally got sick of them and chose to consume a normal diet.

To a certain point, I really think most kids outgrow their strange eating behavior and I don't see it being a big deal, unless they're eating paint

or chalk, etc. Yet many moms believe it's important to be strict and deny these food preferences.

What do you think? What's the weirdest thing your child likes to eat? Do you let him or her, or are you strictly business when it comes to mealtime?

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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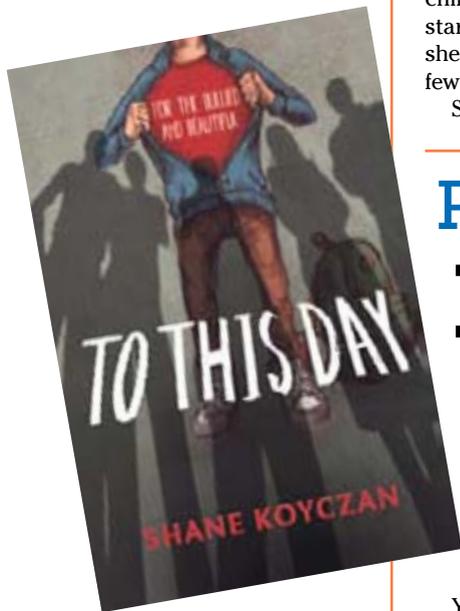


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TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER



Anything you can do

There are times when you hear the sentence “You can’t” and it makes you sad. In the new book “Firebird” by Misty Copeland, illustrated by Christopher Myers, a young girl learns to replace the word “can’t” with one that strengthens.

Once, there was a little girl who loved to watch ballet, but she knew she was nothing like the dancer on the stage. Yes, she loved to dance, but the ballerina was so much better and the little girl was told that she’d never be like that.

The ballerina leaped and spun and bent. Her legs stretched like the New York skyline, which was something the girl couldn’t do.

“I could never hope to leap the space between,” she said, and that made her “heavy” and heartsick.

But then, the most amazing thing happened! The ballerina came to the girl to tell her a story of a dancing child who wanted to fly among the stars, a child who wanted to soar but she saw “can’t” because there were few other dancers like her.

Still, the dancing child bent and

dipped at the barre, and leaped like her heart told her to. She spread her wings, changed her slippers, and practiced arabesque. The ballet positions were like “stair steps to the sky,” and she never listened to “can’t.”

The ballerina promised the girl that, if she believed, there would come a day when she would be just like the dancing child. She would “become a swan ... a firebird for sure.” She would be light and beautiful. Maybe she’d even dance on stage with the ballerina, jumping to the stars, and showing ballerinas not yet born that dreams come true and “can’t” can’t hold them on the ground.

I liked “Firebird” well enough the first time I ran through it. With their bold colors and scrapbook-mosaic edges, I was especially pleased with the illustrations by Christopher Myers, but there was something about the narrative that I felt I’d missed.

The second time around, there it was: the font between the charac-



ters is different, as if there’s a conversation on each page.

Now that you know that, you’ll be able to easier understand how author Misty Copeland tells her story — and, once you read her afterword, you’ll see that it really is her story. Copeland explains how she was that self-conscious girl once, and how she wants “to expand the idea of beauty and art” with this book.

That’s surely accomplished, but my recommendation would be to read through this tale once before you read it aloud, just so you know how it’s set up. Do that, and “Firebird” will be a story your child can’t help but love.

“Firebird,” by Misty Copeland [40 pages, 2014, \$17.99].

Powerful words for victims of bullying

For the rest of your life, you’ll always regret it.

There were two bigger boys standing over him, and a look of sadness on his face. You’ll regret forever that you never stuck up for him, because you’d been bullied, too, just like one out of every seven kids. And as you’ll see in the new book “To This Day” by Shane Koyczan, it’s never forgotten.

Yes, names are just sounds, but though adults say words will never hurt you, you know they do.

So you stay invisible, stay quiet, stay inside during recess, and “rehearse running away.” You find a friend who’s being bullied, too, because there’s safety together, but you’re still “outnumbered day after wretched day.” The years will pass, you’ll grow up, but, like the mom who found a sign taped to her desk that said “Beware of Dog” back in fifth grade, or the grown-up man who was once a boy fighting depression and

anger, the bad feelings will linger.

The thing to remember is, you might feel like an outcast, but you’re not alone. And someday, long after middle school or high school, long after you’ve looked in a “better mirror” to see a beautiful and accomplished person, you’ll understand that “all of this is just debris.” Maybe you aren’t a part of a clique today. Maybe you’re not on the team or in the club, you’re not popular, but those people who bullied you and said bad things were wrong — and you’ll know it.

Then you, and everyone like you, can say, “We made it.”

From its beginnings as a poem written from author Shane Koyczan’s experiences, to a song, then to a video created with the help of 86 animators, “To This Day” is filled with some of the most powerful words you may ever read.

Told from the point of view of a mature-beyond-his-years kid, this book tells a story of triumphant survival that contains just the right words of

comfort and support; indeed, in both his foreword and his afterword, Koyczan offers more of his personal story, and he includes voices from fans and readers who ruefully witnessed or memorably endured bullying.

But that’s only part of why you should want this book: illustrations from artists in several countries evoke the perfect mood to match Koyczan’s words, and a list of resources rounds out what bullied teens need.

Toward the end of his poem, Koyczan asks “... if a kid breaks in a school and no one around chooses to hear, do they make a sound?” If that doesn’t hurt your heart, then read this book again. Better yet, own it. “To This Day” is a purchase you won’t regret.

“To This Day,” by Shane Koyczan [70 pages, 2014, \$19.95].

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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Show time!

Kids Night on Broadway is a great intro for little folks

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

As a parent, you have to decide the right age for your child to experience his first live theater show. Kids Night on Broadway offers the perfect opportunity to see if your child is ready. Hosted by the Broadway League, the 19th annual Kids Night on Broadway provides parents a chance to expose their kids to this sector of the performing arts. It will take place between Friday, Jan. 9, and Thursday, Jan. 15, and kids between the ages of 6 and 18 can see Broadway shows for free when accompanied by a full-paying adult. As a bonus, a Kids Night On Broadway ticket includes restaurant discounts and educational programs for individual shows, such as activity and study guides.

This event was created in order to introduce young people to live theater and make Broadway accessible to young theater-goers. Kids Night on Broadway is not just happening in New York, but all over the country. Select shows currently touring the United States are offering nights in various cities to welcome young people to Broadway-style shows for free. Kids Night On Broadway is presented by The New York Times and is sponsored by WABC-TV with additional support from KidzVuz and Z100. Tony Award-winning actress Judith Light will serve as the National Ambassador for the 2015 Kids Night on Broadway.

Participating shows include:

“A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder”

<http://agentlemansguidebroadway.com>, Walter Kerr Theatre, 219 W. 48th St.

The 2014 Tony-winner for Best Musical, this uproarious comedy is set in England’s elegant Edwardian era, and shows just how low we’ll go to make it to the top.

“Aladdin”

www.aladdinthemusical.com, New Amsterdam Theatre, 214 W. 42nd St.

Adapted from the Disney film and centuries-old folktales including “One Thousand and One Nights,” the story of Aladdin is brought to fresh



Photo by Kristina Bumphey / Stampix

Actor Tony Danza, pint-sized theater critic Iain Armitage, and actress Judith Light celebrate the launch of Kids Night on Broadway.

theatrical life in this exuberant new musical comedy.

“Beautiful – The Carole King Musical”

<http://beautifulonbroadway.com>, Stephen Sondheim Theatre, 124 W. 43rd St.

The musical tells the inspiring, true story of Carole King’s remarkable rise to stardom, becoming one of the most successful solo acts in popular music history.

“Chicago”

<http://chicagothemusical.com>, Ambassador Theatre, 219 W. 49th St.

There’s never been a better time to experience “Chicago,” Broadway’s razzle-dazzle smash. A sensational tale of sin, corruption, and all that jazz, “Chicago” has everything you could want in a musical: knockout dancing, an edge-of-your-seat story, and one showstopper after another.

“The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time”

<http://curiousonbroadway.com>,

Ethel Barrymore Theatre, 243 W. 47th St.

Fifteen-year-old Christopher has an extraordinary brain; he is exceptionally intelligent but ill-equipped to interpret everyday life. When he falls under suspicion for killing his neighbor’s dog, he sets out to identify the true culprit, which leads to an earth-shattering discovery and a journey that will change his life forever.

“Honeymoon in Vegas”

www.honeymoonbroadway.com, Nederlander Theatre, 208 W. 41st St.

A regular guy with an extreme fear of marriage finally gets up the nerve to ask his girlfriend to marry him. But when they head to Las Vegas to get hitched, a smooth-talking gambler falls head-over-heels for his fiancée.

“If/Then”

www.ifthenmusical.com, Richard Rogers Theatre, 226 W. 46th St.

“If/Then” is a contemporary new musical that follows two distinct storylines in the life of Elizabeth



The genie is a crowd pleaser in "Aladdin," one of the featured shows.

(Idina Menzel), a city planner who moves back to New York to restart her life in this city of infinite possibilities. When her carefully designed plans collide with the whims of fate, Elizabeth's life splits into two parallel paths. "If/Then" follows both stories simultaneously as this modern woman faces the intersection of choice and chance.

"It's Only A Play"

<http://itsonlyaplay.com/>, Schoenfeld Theatre, 236 W. 45th St.

It's opening night of Peter Austin's (Matthew Broderick) new play as he anxiously awaits to see if his show is a hit. With his career on the line, he shares his big First Night with his best friend, a television star (Nathan Lane), his fledgling producer (Megan Mullally), his erratic leading lady (Stockard Channing), his wunderkind director (Rupert Grunt), an infamous drama critic (F. Murray Abraham), and a fresh-off-the-bus coat check attendant (Micah Stock) on his first night in Manhattan.

"Jersey Boys"

www.jerseyboysinfo.com/broadway

www.augustwilsontheatre.com, August Wilson Theatre, 245 W. 52nd St.

"Jersey Boys" is the Broadway musical based on the life story of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons.

"Kinky Boots"

<http://kinkybootsthemusical.com>, Al Hirschfeld Theatre, 302 W. 45th St.

Inspired by a true story and based on the film of the same title, "Kinky Boots" is a funny, heartwarming musical about being true to yourself.

"Les Misérables"

www.lesmis.com/broadway, Imperial Theatre, 249 W. 45th St.

Set against the backdrop of 19th-century France, "Les Misérables" tells an enthralling story of broken dreams and unrequited love, passion, sacrifice, and redemption — a timeless testament to the power of the human spirit.

"The Lion King"

www.lionking.com, Minskoff Theatre, 200 W. 45th St.

Giraffes strut, birds swoop, gazelles leap — the entire Serengeti is represented in this Disney production about the circle of life. And as

the music soars, Pride Rock slowly rises from the stage.

"Mamma Mia!"

<http://mammamianorthamerica.com/>, Broadhurst Theatre, 235 W. 44th St.

This sunny, funny tale of family and friendship unfolds on a tiny Greek island. On the eve of her wedding, a daughter's quest to discover the identity of her father brings three men from her mother's past back to the island they had last visited 20 years ago.

"Matilda The Musical"

<http://us.matildathemusical.com/>, Shubert Theatre, 225 W. 44th St.

It's the story of an extraordinary girl who dreams of a better life. Armed with a vivid imagination and a sharp mind, Matilda dares to take a stand and change her destiny.

"On the Town"

www.onthetownbroadway.com, Lyric Theatre, 213 W. 42nd St.

The Bronx is up, the Battery's down, and three sailors are hoping to get just a little bit lucky on their one day of leave in the Big Apple.

Three sailors and the high-spirited young women they meet chase love, dreams, and each other during an unforgettable day in the city that never sleeps.

"The Phantom of the Opera"

www.thephantomoftheopera.com/new-york, Majestic Theatre, 245 W. 44th St.

"The Phantom of the Opera" is based on the novel by Gaston Leroux. It tells the story of the hideously deformed Phantom who lurks beneath the stage of the Paris Opera, exercising a reign of terror over its occupants.

"Rock of Ages"

www.rockofagesmusical.com, Helen Hayes Theatre, 240 W. 44th St.

This explosive musical takes audiences on a joyride set to blazing hits from iconic 1980s rockers such as Journey, Bon Jovi, Styx, Reo Speedwagon, Pat Benatar, Twisted Sister, Poison, Asia, Whitesnake and many more.

"Wicked"

www.WickedTheMusical.com, George Gershwin Theatre, 222 W. 51st St.

Long before Dorothy drops in, two other girls meet in the land of Oz. One, born with emerald-green skin, is smart, fiery, and misunderstood. The other is beautiful, ambitious, and very popular.

"You Can't Take It With You"

<http://youcanttakeitwithyoubroadway.com>, Longacre Theatre, 220 W. 48th St.

James Earl Jones plays wily Grandpa Vanderhof, leader of a happily eccentric gang of snake collectors, cunning revolutionaries, ballet dancers, and skyrocket makers. But when the youngest daughter brings her fiancé and his buttoned-up parents over for dinner, that's when the real fireworks start to fly.

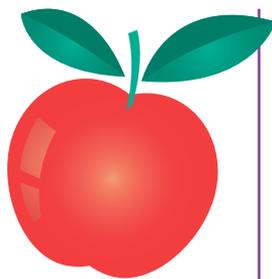
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For participating restaurants, visit www.kidsnightonbroadway.com/restaurants

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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.



DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND
MARGE EBERTS

Worries with writing

Signs your child is struggling with the written word

Dear teacher,

My kid does not like to write. How do I know if he has a problem with writing?

Dear parent,

The nature of writing is changing, with children texting and e-mailing friends throughout the day. Writing is a very important part of their lives.

Not liking to write does not necessarily mean that your son actually has a writing problem. By studying his written work and talking to his teachers, you can get a good idea of if he actually has a writing problem. If it appears that he does have a problem, it may be related to one of these causes:

- Reading and writing are tied closely together. Good readers are usually good writers, and vice versa. Is your child currently reading on grade level?
- Can he talk about what he knows but cannot express it well in writing? He is losing points on his work because of an inability to state what he knows in writing.
- His writing is unreasonably slow. He is writing a couple of sentences when other students are writing 10 times that number.
- He is trying to pack too much information in a single sentence.
- He is a perfectionist trying to write the perfect sentence or paragraph.

- He is easily distracted after writing for a short period of time.

- He avoids writing -- even using it in social media.

- He makes a lot of mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar in his writing.

Improving reading comprehension
Dear teacher,

My son, a fifth-grader, is a good reader; however, he does not comprehend what he has read. He cannot tell you what a story is about after he has finished reading it. How can I help him comprehend what he has just read? -- Needs to Understand

Dear parent,

Reading comprehension is the number one reading skill you want your children to have. Your son does not have this skill, so he cannot be considered a good reader. Here are some things that you can use to help him improve his reading comprehension:

- Preview a story and then read it to your son, or have him read it to you. Before reading the story or part of a story, ask him to find the answer to a question about the setting, characters or problems that the characters are facing. This will help him learn to focus more on the content.

- In order for him to learn how to read school textbooks, teach him the SQ4R study technique, which is explained in great detail under "SQ4R" on our website, www.dearteacher.com. It involves surveying what is to be read, writing questions to be answered, reading content, answering the questions aloud and then writing the answers and finally reviewing what has been read. Because this technique involves a lot of steps, your child will need to practice it many, many times to master it. If you use the technique with him, he will master it faster and quickly see the advantage of using SQ4R.

Handling a learning disability
Dear teacher,

What should you do if you sus-

pect that your child has a learning disability?

Dear parent,

First of all, keep in mind that children with learning disabilities usually have normal IQs; their problem lies in how their brains process and use information. They could have an auditory processing, visual perception, communication or other disorder. There is no one description that describes all children with learning disabilities.

If you suspect that your child could have a learning disability, your very first step is to find out as much as you can about what learning disabilities are. This is quite easy to do because many websites will give you good descriptions of learning disabilities. Two helpful sites are: LDonline at www.ldonline.org and the National Center for Learning Disabilities at www.ncl.org.

Your second step is to gather as much information as you can about your child that makes you think that he or she may have a learning disability. Then take your concerns to your child's teacher. If the teacher agrees with your concerns, the next step is to ask for a formal evaluation of the child. Should the teacher not agree, talk with the principal.

The next step is an observation of your child in the classroom. On the basis of this report, a decision will be made on whether or not the school will have a psychometrist test your child for a learning disability. When the testing has been completed, you will receive a copy of the results and a meeting will be scheduled to completely go over everything in the written report. At this meeting, you will find out whether or not your son has a learning disability and if the child qualifies to receive special education services.

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com.

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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Mediators versus divorce attorneys

I'm talking with someone at a networking event, and he asks about the work I do. "I'm a mediator," I say. "I help people — often people who are getting divorced — resolve their conflicts without going to court." He responds, "I wish I had known about you when I was going through my divorce. It was horrible."

How many times has someone said this to me? Many times.

I'll often ask, "Did you have a lawyer for your divorce?" Almost everyone answers "yes."

"Did your lawyer tell you about mediation?" Almost always, the answer is "no."

Some mediation clients tell a similar story. They started with a divorce lawyer, didn't like where it was going, and then learned about mediation, but not from the lawyer. The attorney didn't say anything about the process.

Mediator colleagues have told me of similar experiences. The stories are anecdotal, but I believe that they are indicative of a widespread problem; namely, that when potential clients consult with lawyers, the lawyers fail to provide them with information that they might find important and helpful.

I want to acknowledge the lawyers who do share such information, and I think that there are more than a few matrimonial attorneys who tell a potential client about mediation, even at the risk of "losing" (not being retained) by that person.

Should all divorce lawyers tell those coming to them about something mediation, when doing so might cost them business?

David Saxe apparently thinks so. Saxe, an associate justice at the Appellate Division, wrote an article for the *New York Law Journal* (read primarily by lawyers) in 2011, entitled "Encourage Divorce Clients to Mediate". In it, he pointed out that the litigation process often extended into years, exacerbating conflicts instead of resolving them amicably, and that legal fees can often be enormous,



sometimes well into the six figures, for the more contentious cases.

Saxe wrote that mediation was "more focused on the needs of the parties [than litigation]," and that in mediation "the majority of the expended time is devoted to exploring disputes, proposals, suggestions and possible solutions."

Are many more matrimonial attorneys informing (let alone 'encouraging') those who come into their offices about mediation since the Saxe article was published? Who are giving a brief overview of how it works and saying that the process might save time and money? That spouses who mediate reach their own agreements on how to spend time with their children, how to divide property, and on all their other questions? I doubt it.

Informed decision-making is at the very heart of mediation. That is, parties in mediation are required to gather and share information so that they can make the important decisions that they need to.

Imagine a wife saying in regard to her husband, "I don't need to know anything. What's his is his and I don't care." Imagine that same wife learning that her husband is holding a winning lottery ticket worth \$5 million, and that she may be entitled to a share of the proceeds. Might this

hypothetical wife make a different decision, knowing about the lottery ticket and its value, than she would if she were ignorant of it?

While the example seems far-fetched, I think that the point is clear. Having information may impact our choices.

According to the New York Rules of Professional Conduct <https://www.nycourts.gov/rules/jointappellate/NY-Rules-Prof-Conduct-1200.pdf>, communication is rule number one: A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

I don't believe, as some do, that everyone should have to try mediation, but everyone getting divorced should at least know that it is an option. Then that person can decide what to do. In my view keeping such information from a potential client is downright unethical.

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.

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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

Age & social media

No one under 13 allowed. That's been the rule on most social media sites since 1998 when Congress passed the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. The thinking behind the law was that children under 13 aren't developmentally ready to handle all the complexities of social networking and other online activities. They can't anticipate the consequences of what they post. They're more vulnerable to harassment from peers or strangers. And they shouldn't have their data vacuumed up by marketers. The law is supposed to give kids under 13 time to grow up by requiring websites that want to interact with them to follow strict rules and get permission from parents.

Even though there are good reasons to postpone networking on grown-up sites, kids have figured out that it's very easy to lie about age online. Also, many parents regard the under 13 rule as a guideline, more like the ratings associated with movies, rather than the law of the land. As a result, millions of children have signed up for accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media sites.

When kids clamor for an account "because everyone else is doing it," they aren't wrong. A 2012 study by MinorMonitor found that 38 percent of minors on Facebook are now under 13.

Age restrictions are, of course, arbitrary. Some 16 year olds are informed enough to vote and some 25 year olds aren't, but the law doesn't

allow anyone to cast a ballot unless they are 18. Same for driving. Even if you're capable of handling a vehicle at 14, you can't get a license. Admittedly, there are other areas in which age restrictions are taken less seriously. Very few young people wait until 21 to take their first sip of alcohol. And some parents reason that, if they are going to drink anyway, they might as well do it at home where they can be supervised and won't be tempted to drive.

Similar logic seems to govern attitudes toward social media. Parents figure that, if they help a child set up a social media account, they can at least keep track of what he is doing. In some families, that may be true. And, yet, there are still compelling reasons to hold the line on the Under 13 rule. Parents should consider all of them before letting a child sign up for Facebook, Instagram, Vine, Tumblr, Twitter, Snapchat, or any other social media site designed for adults.

Lying. Fudging your age may not seem like a big deal. Most adults eventually decide that it's OK to deviate from the truth now and then, especially to spare another person's feelings. Children, however, need a great deal of experience with telling the truth if honesty is to become their default position. Allowing — or encouraging — a young child to lie about age opens up questions about truth and trust long before children are ready to think clearly about them. If you don't want your child to regard truth as optional, it may be unwise to make exceptions too early.

Laws. The Under 13 rule brings websites into compliance with laws to protect children from predators. Some people believe the law could be improved, but that's not necessarily a justification for breaking it, especially since you probably want your child to comply with other protective laws such as those that prohibit the sale of cigarettes or liquor to minors. If a child has permission to disregard age rules about social networking, will he feel free to click through other legal barriers such as the "you must be 21 to enter" warning on sites that feature pornography?

Risks now. Research suggests younger social media users are more

vulnerable to harassment in part because they have fewer tools to cope with online aggression. In addition, kids may see content, including advertisements, that parents would rather they not see. Because they are curious and less guarded, younger children are also more likely to click on malware, malicious software that takes control of a social media account to collect data or send spam.

Alternatives. They do exist. A number of engaging social networking sites have been designed specifically for children. Yousphere, Kidz-vuz, Frankentown, Fanlala, and Fantage are just some of the websites that offer children under 13 a safe place where they can experiment with sharing, chatting, and blogging. All of these sites require verifiable parental consent, and many have monitors or filters that keep kids from saying and doing things they might regret later. Kids who learn the basics on these sites will be better prepared when they enter the rough-and-tumble world of adolescent social networking (if you decide that a child under 13 would be better off on one of these sites, Facebook makes it easy to deactivate an underage account at www.facebook.com/help/contact/209046679279097).

The world of social media changes fast, and there are rumors that Facebook is considering a "with parental permission" category for its users. Until that happens, parents of children under 13 need to think carefully about whether early social networking supports or undermines their values. Kids, of course, will often push to do things before they are ready. And it's easy for parents to feel pride when a child seems precocious. The truth, however, is that childhood is not a race. There's no prize for finishing first, and social media may be one of those places where just a little more maturity can make a very big difference.

Carolyn Jabs raised three computer-savvy kids, including one with special needs. She has been writing Growing Up Online for 10 years and is working on a book about constructive responses to conflict. Visit www.growing-up-online.com to read other columns.

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Family Camp

BY STACEY ZABLE

Head for the Green Mountains of Vermont this summer for a chance to combine the best of the camaraderie of summer camp — time shared with your kids and other families, and the comfort levels we grown-ups like for our vacation accommodations and amenities.

At Mount Snow Family Camp, only a four-hour drive from New York City, families can do as little or as much as they want of the offered group activities, with simply spending time together as the most important part of the trip. Electronic devices take a back seat to the traditional joys of

outdoor activities and games, eating meals family-style at long tables and making s'mores around a camp fire each night. Plus, mom and dad can lock their wallets away in the hotel safe at the beginning of their stay and simply focus on the fun because the all-inclusive rate includes everything.

My family and I were lucky enough to have a preview of the new program last summer before it officially rolls-out this year with three-, four- or seven-night all-inclusive packages available from July 12 to Aug. 9. One single rate includes accommodations, three meals, wine, beer, snacks, and all activities (except spa treatments), offering exceptional

value. The age range for kids during our week started at 18 months and went up until 19, with the 10 to 12 range being the most dominant.

Our home for the week was a three-bedroom/three-bathroom duplex in Seasons Condominiums with full kitchen, dining room, balcony and living room with a fireplace; not that we spent a lot of time besides sleeping there. All family condos were located walking distance to the large Sundance Base Lodge, which served as Family Camp's home base/dining hall/game central. It housed the family camp office, long tables for dining that turned into craft centers in between meals, ping pong





The author's daughters at the Mount Snow Family Camp.

tables and a pool table. A separate lounge area was set up for watching videos and the kid's talent show at the end of the week.

We started each day at Sundance Lodge with a delicious breakfast buffet, before heading out for an action-packed day of adventures on and off the mountain. A boxed lunch was provided, and anytime snacks and drinks were also available at the lodge. Each morning was divided into kids programs and adult programs, which differed each day but included mountain biking (everyone is fitted for their own bike to use for the week), craft time, guided hiking, chairlift rides, shopping excursions and yoga or aqua aerobics classes. Most days had at least two choices each for kids and adults, and the incredible staff was always available to tweak any options or come up with new ones on the spot for anyone not interested in the offered activities. Shuttle service to the nearby golf course was also available each morning, and my husband was able to join other dads to either hit balls at the driving range or play a round — also included in the rate.

Most afternoons were dedicated to family together time activities, often off-property. We would climb into vans and away we'd go to the nearby Lake Whitingham for an afternoon of kayaking and paddleboarding one day, a boat ride another day that included tubing, and an afternoon of swimming, games and t-shirt tie-dyeing another day. The kids loved the short drives where they would pile into their own vans and sing top 40 tunes as loud as they could. Some afternoons, we just hung out at the condominium's outdoor pool, relaxing, or popping into the condo clubhouse for our own family epic foosball games. The condos also had tennis courts, a basketball court,

a full exercise room and an indoor pool and hot tub for our use.

The highlight of the week for most of the families was the full-day included excursion to Ramblewild, an aerial adventure course featuring ziplines and rope climbing in Massachusetts. Alternate activities were arranged for families with children too young to participate.

At night, the families would meet up again before dinner for a cocktail or two for parents and volleyball or backyard games for the kids. One night, the head chef at Mount Snow gave a wine and cheese "party" for parents in the bar on the second floor of the Sundance Lodge, while our children played gleefully with the counselors below and outdoors. Dinners were served family style, with two or three entrée and side dish options, including kid-friendly favorites, plus salad and desserts. After dinner, we had our choice of games and movies, or just enjoyed the time to relax by the outdoor fire pit toasting marshmallows and making s'mores.

As with most camp experiences, it is the energy and spirit of the counselors that can make a fun time exceptional. The Mount Snow Family Camp staff went above and beyond to keep the fun on high and to mold the group into one big happy family. We can't wait to return for more adventures this summer.

For additional information or to book your Family Camp stay, visit www.mountsnow.com/the-mountain/family-camp or call 800-290-1823 or 800-245-7669.

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@staceyable.com.

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Kid movie critics review 'Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb'

KIDS FIRST! FILM CRITIC

This latest installment to the Night at the Museum series finds Ben Stiller returning as Larry who spans the globe, uniting favorite and new characters while embarking on an epic quest to save the magic before it is gone forever. Rebel Wilson joins the cast as a security guard, Robin Williams makes his final portrayal as Teddy Roosevelt, and Owen Wilson plays Jedediah.

This is a wild, adventurous and funny film. This last installment of the Night at the Museum trilogy takes you on an adventurous journey and is definitely a must-see. Robin Williams' final on-screen portrayal of Teddy Roosevelt is amazing. He has a great sense of humor and is in tune with his character, completely. The magic that brought the characters to life in Night



at the Museum 1 and 2 is in danger. Larry Daley (Ben Stiller) must go on an adventure to unite and save them all. Will he be able to do it?

I really enjoy seeing this film. It has excitement and is bigger and better than before. Everyone is back, Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, and Steve Coogan. They are joined by some electrifying new characters. A lot of attention to detail is paid to the wardrobe, set locations and the historical time pieces. The special effects are big and bold and definitely complement the film in every way. It looks so real. My favorite character is newcomer Tilly (Rebel Wilson, Pitch Perfect). She is funny, talks a lot, and says whatever is on her mind. She goes on funny tangents and her appearance is simply amusing. The cast also includes Dick Van Dyke and Rick Gervais.

Shawn Levy directs this film and brings his skill to making it artistic and funny from pulling together a great cast, production designers, and all the creative people involved in this film. Although the film has a number of characters, jokes and situations, it also has a simple message of teamwork. Sometimes, you need a good team of people working together to get the job done.

I recommend this film for ages 8 to 18. However, adults will enjoy it as well, especially if they have seen the previous two films. It's rated PG for mild action and some rude humor. I give it 4 out of 5 stars. It's a good adventure that will keep you entertained.

Join the wildest night yet and see Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb, it's in theaters on Dec. 19. Please check it out.

— Brianna Hope B., age 15

Hilarious, exciting and imaginative is how I would describe Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb. I enjoy the Night at the Museum movies because I love anything to do with history. This movie brings some of history's greatest characters to life in a fun and entertaining way.

Director Shawn Levy brings back

the incredibly talented cast and adds a few new faces. Larry Daley (Ben Stiller) returns as head of the museum's "special effects." Larry begins noticing some strange behavior by the museum's residents. He suspects the ancient Tablet of Akmenrah, the



source that causes the museum's exhibits to come to life, is somehow losing its powers. Larry decides that he must travel to the British Museum in London to find Akmenrah's parents. He hopes the parents can help him solve the mystery of why the tablet is losing its magical powers. Larry's plan does not turn out as smoothly as he hoped. Some of the residents of the New York museum secretly follow Larry to Britain. That's when things go hysterically wrong.

Ben Kingsley (Akmenrah's Dad) and Dan Stevens (Sir Lancelot) are wonderful newcomers to the cast but, Rebel Wilson shines as the weird and wonderful security guard Tilly. Her one-liners are a little puzzling at times, but I loved them. The original cast is just as great as they were in the last two movies. I laughed out loud at Owen Wilson's Jedediah and Steve Coogan's Octavius as they go through their adventure.

My favorite part of the movie is when the exhibits in the British Museum come to life for the first time. The visual effects' team does an excellent job in creating images that are realistic. The story has many sub plots so it may be difficult for a younger audience to keep up with how each part connects to the big picture.

The message of this film is that parents cannot hold onto their children forever. I recommend Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb for ages 8 to 15 and give it 4 out of 5 stars. Please be sure to check out Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb when it comes to theaters on Dec. 19.

— Simone S., age 14





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ness. Annie really teaches Mr. Stacks how to live and be happy.

Annie is an amazing movie for the entire family. I recommend this movie for boys and girls ages 5 to 18 and give it five out of five stars. It is in theaters now, so go check it out!

—Kendyl P., age 12

See her video review at: http://youtu.be/NP_fFnIwTQg

The movie “Annie” is fantastic. It is one of my favorite movies of all time. This modern-day remake of the old classic is about Annie (Quvenzhané Wallis), a young foster girl who is trying to find her parents. One day she is chasing after a group of kids who are trying to harm a dog. She trips and falls in the middle of the street. Williams Stacks (Jamie Foxx), who is running for mayor, grabs her before a truck hits her. The rescue goes viral and Mr. Stacks begins to show favorable ratings in the polls. As a result, Mr. Stacks’ campaign manager thinks Mr. Stacks should spend more time with Annie to continue to increase his poll ratings. Mr. Stacks’ team believes this would surely be his ticket to becoming mayor. During their time together, both Mr. Stacks and Annie learn a lot about each other and themselves.



The message of this film is you can be and do anything you can dream of. During the movie, Mr. Stacks encourages Annie to work hard, because “the world is yours, if you dare to work at it.” Annie finds herself in a tough situation and she remembers what Mr. Stacks shared with her about working hard.

My favorite character is Annie because she is very outgoing, not afraid to face challenges, and she is a very optimistic young girl. Quvenzhané also sings very well.

The actors are perfect. They sing, dance, and do a marvelous job bringing a modern-day twist to this old classic.

This film is perfect for the entire family. I recommend it for boys and girls ages 5 to adults and give it five out of five stars. Annie is a must see this holiday season. It is playing in theaters now, so don’t miss it.

—Kayla P., age 12

See her video review at: <http://youtu.be/e3G5PQtKpso>

‘Annie’ for today’s kids

Kid movie critics review ‘Annie’

KIDS FIRST! FILM CRITIC

Now open, “Annie” offers an updated version of the classic tale about a foster kid, who lives with her mean foster mom, and sees her life change when business tycoon and New York mayoral candidate Will Stacks makes a thinly-veiled campaign move and takes her in. With a stellar cast and fabulous music, this is a lovely film to share with your children and grandchildren this holiday season.

The movie “Annie” is a phenomenal one! This is a modern-day version of the original classic about a young foster girl who is very hopeful that her parents are coming back for her one day. Annie (played by Quvenzhané Wallis) almost gets run over by a van as she is running through the streets of New York, trying to stop a group of boys from harming a dog. Then Mr. Will Stacks (Jamie Foxx) saves her life. Someone records the rescue, and it



is immediately posted all over the news and social media. Mr. Stacks is a businessman running for mayor of New York, and sees this positive publicity as a way to increase his chances of becoming mayor. He and his team decide to bring Annie over for lunch to take pictures of the two of them together. It turns out Annie ends up staying a little longer than they originally anticipate.

Annie is my favorite character because she is a young girl with great character and an infectious personality. She believes a “No, is just a yes that people don’t know yet.” She has a big heart. When she is given the opportunity of a lifetime, she shares her experiences with her friends.

I really enjoyed watching Annie and her friends clean and sing, “It’s a Hard-Knock Life.” Even though they are cleaning a very dirty foster home where the caregiver is not very nice to them, they continue to joyfully sing and dance while they clean. This is a perfect example of making the best of a not-so-good situation.

Everyone needs somebody. Will Stacks thinks money, wealth, and his successful business is all he needs. He realizes that there is more to life than money and a successful busi-



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A magical experience

Kid movie critics review 'Into the Woods' musical

KIDS FIRST! FILM CRITIC

"Into the Woods" gives a modern twist to the beloved Brothers Grimm fairy tales — "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "Rapunzel" — in a musical format tied together by an original story about a baker and his wife who are under the influence of a witch's curse that prevents them from having a child. The 1987 Broadway play of the same name earned Tony Awards for Best Original Score (Stephen Sondheim) and Best Book of a Musical (James Lapine).

I confess that I binge-listened to the soundtrack before seeing this film and was thoroughly impressed with the vocals. It got me excited going to the screening. I also admit that I am a fan of the Broadway musical. I've seen the play starring Bernadette Peters, Vanessa Williams, and Phylicia Rashad. All three have played The Witch. I have watched Johanna Gleeson as the Baker's Wife light up the stage with energy, charm, and humor. I noticed every change, subtraction, and addition in the cinematic adaptation and I must say, this film is a triumph. It has wit, humor, emotion, magic and music — all the makings of a great musical.

The first 15 minutes, the prologue, is edited with such vivacity and rhythm that you are immediately engulfed into the stories and the action. Then, director Rob Marshall slowly starts to focus on the rhythms and details of each individual story. From the Baker and his Wife to Little Red Riding Hood, to Jack, to the Witch, and Cinderella. All their sto-



ries are told with the same passion and intent as the others, each with their individual flair. Yet, somehow, Marshall is able to have each story fit perfectly into the grand puzzle that is "Into the Woods."

I could rave on and on about Sondheim's score. His scores always have a sort of, inside joke sound to them. It's as if Sondheim knows something we don't know when he composes. There is an obvious humor and wit in his score of "Into the Woods," but it is the lyrics that tell the story. James Lapine, who wrote the screenplay and the libretto for the Broadway musical, makes some interesting changes for the film version. Fans of the musical will recognize the changes immediately and they may or may not like them. I, personally, liked them. For those who've never seen or even heard the Broadway version, this film will entertain and even touch them.

Meryl Streep is the best Witch I've seen. The finest actress of all-time gives The Witch a portrayal big enough to fit Rob Marshall's theatrical style, but is subtle enough for us to understand her. Her solo "Stay With Me" is one of the best scenes in the whole movie and one of the best acted scenes this year. But, it is the show-stopping number of "Last Midnight" that will leave a lasting impression on you. I haven't been able to stop listening to it since I saw it. I was in jaw-dropping awe in the theater watching that number. It's because Meryl Streep doesn't just sing a song (she has a beautiful voice and can surprisingly belt very well), she acts it. She feels each word and doesn't waste them. She's able to find the subtext in every song, every line of dialogue, every lyric. She will definitely be a presence this awards season and rightfully so.

Speaking of showstoppers, I must mention the funniest duet in any musical from any time, "Agony." Sung by Chris Pine and Billy Magnussen,

who play Cinderella and Rapunzel's princes respectively, the number is beautifully staged and timed hilariously. Everyone in my theater roared with laughter and I was a part of it. That may actually be the best musical number in the whole movie.

I'd also like to point out James Corden, who really surprised me. I knew he'd do the comedic portrayal of The Baker well, but it is the dramatic parts that had me apprehensive. He killed them. His chemistry with Emily Blunt is very believable. They work well together and they both have fantastic voices as well.

I think Blunt is one of the most underrated actresses today and I'm confident this film will put her on the map. She is a grand talent. The million-dollar question fans of the musical may have, "Does she live up to Johanna Gleeson?" My answer is, I don't know. They approach The Baker's Wife differently. Their choices completely differ and therefore they cannot be compared.

The last standout I want to mention is young Lilla Crawford, who some may know as Annie in the 2012 Broadway revival. She has impeccable timing and a great voice. It is a great feature film debut for the young star.

The ensemble overall is fantastic and work extremely well together. Of course, the costume and production design are top-notch, but I don't think anyone expected anything less. Rob Marshall and company have made the best American youth musical in more than 10 years. Ironically enough, Rob Marshall's "Into the Woods" is the best musical since Rob Marshall's "Chicago." I give it four and a half out of five stars and recommend it for ages 10 to 18.

— Willie J., age 15

See his video review at: <http://youtu.be/OhamWpAPOog>

“Into The Woods” is a brilliant new film adapted from the award-winning Broadway musical.

This lively tale tells the story of some of the most well-known Brothers Grimm fairy tales, but with an unexpected twist. In the film we see the stories The Baker and his Wife, Cinderella, Rapunzel, Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk. All of their lives





intertwine and it makes for a wild journey full of song, humor, heart-break and wonderful lessons.

"Into The Woods" is a must-see this season, and I am so pleased with how it turned out. Being a theater junky, I heard news that this musical was going to be made into a film and the anticipation began to grow. The execution of this film is flawless. It captures the feel of seeing a musical live, with the over-the-top theatrics and set design. It translates so well to the screen and allows the audience to fully immerse themselves into this incredible story. The costumes and locations for this film are beautiful and the music is excellent. I caught myself singing along with the movie more than once.

Something that I love about this film is that it isn't the "classic" Disney version of these fairytales that most of us grew up with. It goes back to the authentic stories from the Grimm brothers themselves, with the obvious twist here and there. In this film, the bad stuff that tends to be cut out of modern fairytales actually happens. For example, Cinderella's step-sisters cut off bits of their feet to fit into the golden slipper, Rapunzel's prince is blinded by blackberry thorns, and there are no fairy godmothers. Rest assured, all of these misfortunes are done in very humorous ways. I also love that it takes all of these different fables

and weaves them together so that everyone has a part in each others' story. The final thing that really makes "Into The Woods" stand apart from other fairy tales is that not everyone gets a happy ending. You have to work with what you're given and make the best of the situation.

The entire cast is wonderful and so talented. Meryl Streep plays The Witch, Anna Kendrick plays Cinderella, Emily Blunt The Baker's Wife, Johnny Depp The Wolf, and Chris Pine Cinderella's Prince. Every character has a solo and I'm so impressed with all of these actors' amazing voices. I had no idea they could sing. This film brings in names and faces that are very recognizable and also incorporates actors that most of us have probably never seen. So, it's a really nice mix of people that make up this cast.

My favorite scene is when the two Princes sing "Agony." It is the most hilarious scene in the film and I laughed so hard I cried. Prince Charming and his brother are lamenting over their princesses, Cinderella and Rapunzel, and it is the cheesiest, funniest thing I have seen in a long time. The Princes are the most melodramatic people, making everything a big deal and this song highlights just how over-the-top they are. The entire audience was cracking up and after the film was over I could not stop singing "Agony" and

laughing about how ridiculous the musical number is.

"Into The Woods" is a film that all ages will enjoy. I cannot wait to see it again. Every aspect of it is so well done — the cast, the visuals, the music and even though a few moments could maybe be a bit scary for younger children, it is something for the whole family. I recommend it for ages 5 to 18 and give this film five out of five stars. Be sure not to miss it.

— Raven D.

“**I**nto the Woods” is a musical comedy about a journey The Baker and his Wife must take in order to reverse the curse

The Witch put on their house and have the child they always wanted. They must go into the woods and get four things — a slipper as pure as gold, hair as yellow as corn, cape as red as blood, and a cow as white as snow — all before the blue moon rises. The most interesting thing about this film is how the merges the stories of Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel and Little Red Riding Hood into this fairytale based on the Broadway mu-



sical of the same name.

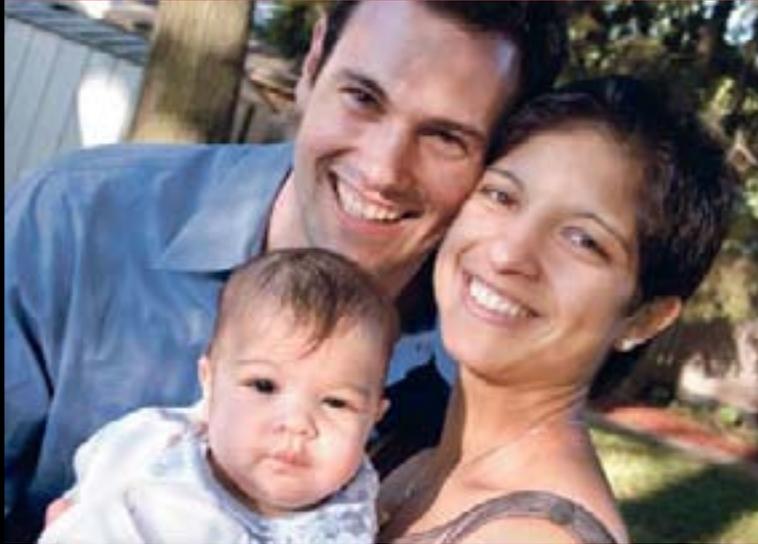
Cinematographer Dion Beebe has created incredible fairytale-like scenes that are just outstanding. I loved the scene when Cinderella goes to her mother's grave and tells her that she wishes to go to the ball. All of a sudden, the tree and the leaves twirl her around to dress her in a beautiful golden dress and slippers. It's fascinating how the camera moves around her to make the scene magical.

Of course, music plays a huge role in the film thanks to the brilliant work of Stephen Sondheim, who has written perfect lyrics that capture the emotions of every scene. Meryl Streep's character, The Witch, is the most memorable character. Her voice is powerful and beautiful. When she discovers that Rapunzel has fallen in love with a prince, she begs Rapunzel to stay with her. When The Witch sings "Stay with Me," you realize that she isn't as cold-hearted as everyone thinks. She locks Rapunzel in a tower because she is protecting her from the world.

The message of the film is that you should be careful of what you wish for. Sometimes what you wish for isn't exactly what you really want. A secondary message is when you love something, you should set it free. I recommend this film for ages 10 to 18 and give it four out five stars.

— Shelby R., age 14

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JANUARY



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The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company comes to the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts on Jan. 25.

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Photo by Carol Rossegg

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FRI, JAN. 2

IN BROOKLYN

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

Stomp your feet and count the beats — learn about traditional dances.

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

Many holiday traditions use light in this dark time of year. Come learn the science behind light bulbs, and safely experiment with electricity using common objects in strange and fun ways.

SAT, JAN. 3

IN BROOKLYN

Lloyd H Miller: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepoint 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.

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 discover snow.

Subway Safari: New York Transit



Photo by Mike Ratliff

Spying on our feathered friends

Enjoy First Sunday programming at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden with a Bird Stroll and Nestfest on Jan. 4.

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Children discover how garden animals build their homes out of plant parts, craft their very own nest, make a nest field guide to bring outdoors, and cozy up with

books and puppets!

Winter Bird Stroll at 10 am and Nestfest from 1 to 3 pm on Jan. 4. Free with garden admission.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden [1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org].

Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 11:30 am–noon; Free with museum admission.

The Sleepy Subway covers the many animals that sleep underground in the winter to keep warm. Games and hands-on activities.

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

After reading the Inside-Outside book children 5 years and older create unique picture book featuring the interiors of subway cars through time.

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

Urban Park Rangers will be your guides to the solar system. Children use telescopes and binoculars to observe specific astronomical events. All equipment is provided. The Quadrantids

makes its appearance each time of year.

SUN, JAN. 4

IN BROOKLYN

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

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

Blooming Babies: 11:30 am–12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

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

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

olden-day toys.

Winter Bird Stroll: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 10 am; Free with Garden admission.

Spot birds around the park.

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

Winter is the best time to look for nests trees. Discover how garden animals build their homes out of plant parts; try crafting your very own nest; make a nest field guide to bring outdoors; and cozy up with books and puppets!

Inside Outside: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Continued on page 56

Calendar

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

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FRI, JAN. 9

IN BROOKLYN

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

Children to age 5 experience Shabbat with storytelling and song.

SAT, JAN. 10

IN BROOKLYN

Junior Congregation: Bay Ridge Jewish Center, 8025 Fourth Ave. between 80th and 81st Streets; (718) 836-3103; www.brjc.org; 10 am; Free.

Children of all ages experience an interactive service led by Rabbi Rosenberg.

"Please Mr. Panda": Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Join in for special feature reading with activities.

"Please Mr. Panda": Barnes and Noble, 106 Court Street and Schermerhorn Street; (718) 246-4996; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Special reading presentation with hands-on activity.

Handmade History: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; 11:30 am; Free.

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

Subway Safari: 11:30 am-noon. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

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

Use your imagination and some wacky materials to build, a pint sized bus, subway or elevated train car.

SUN, JAN. 11

IN BROOKLYN

Build a bird feeder: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 1 pm; Free.

Urban Park Rangers lead a hands-on series where children develop various skills and indulge their curiosity. All supplies provided. Learn about winter birds, what they like to eat, then build a feeder from recycled materials. Registration required.

Winter Wheels: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday,



Photo by N. Razina

'Cinderella' at BAM

The classic ballet "Cinderella" comes to the BAM Howard Gilman Opera House on Jan. 17, 18, and 20.

Presented by the Mariinsky Ballet, featuring the music of Sergei Prokofiev, and choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky, this updated, hip version is perfect for

teens and tweens.

Cinderella on Jan. 17 at 7:30 pm, Jan. 18 at 3 pm and Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$30.

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House [30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street in Ft. Greene (718) 636-4100; www.bam.org].

Jan. 10.

FURTHER AFIELD

Gingerbread Lane Giveaway: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; Noon; Free with museum admission.

Take a piece of the Gingerbread Lane home with you Houses will be given away on a first-come-first served basis until the last square of real-estate is gone. Limit one house per person.

FRI, JAN. 16

IN BROOKLYN

Storytime with Madeline: Barnes and Noble, 106 Court Street and Schermerhorn Street; (718) 246-4996; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Everyone's favorite school girl.

SAT, JAN. 17

IN BROOKLYN

"Hug Machine": Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Humorous illustrations and fun reading.

"Hug Machine": Barnes and Noble, 106 Court Street and Schermerhorn Street; (718) 246-4996; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Humorous book with a feel good theme. Featuring hands-on activity.

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

Learn all about the civil rights leader.

Handmade History: 11:30 am. Brooklyn Historical Society. See Saturday, Jan. 10.

Subway Safari: 11:30 am-noon. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

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

"Our Friend, Martin" animated film uses historical footage of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.

Winter Wheels: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 10.

Destiny: Kumble Theater at Long Island University, DeKalb and Flatbush

avenues; (718) 488-1624; www.brooklyn.liu.edu/kumbletheater; 7 pm; \$15 and \$20.

The Restoration Dance Theatre dance company celebrates the life and times of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Cinderella": BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street; www.bam.org; 7:30 pm; Start-up at \$30.

This updated modern version of the classic ballet performed by the Mariinsky Ballet is perfect for teens and tweens.

SUN, JAN. 18

IN BROOKLYN

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

Film Screening: 12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 17.

Winter Wheels: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 10.

"Cinderella": 3 pm. BAM Howard Gilman Opera House. See Saturday, Jan. 17.

MON, JAN. 19

IN BROOKLYN

Tennis workshop: Prospect Park Picnic House, Prospect Park West and Fifth Street; www.prospectpark.org; 1-4 pm; Free.

Teens and juniors have fun in this popular clinic featuring fast-paced station drills, ground strokes, approach shots and strategies. Registration required. Tennis Center.

Civil Rights: Kumble Theater at Long Island University, DeKalb and Flatbush avenues; (718) 488-1624; www.brooklyn.liu.edu/kumbletheater; 2 pm; \$10.

Moving Mountains Theatre Company presents the Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement Through the Arts. For children 11 to 21 years old.

Martin Luther King Jr: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; 2-3 pm. Free.

Celebrate the civil rights leader with Tammy Hall as she weaves together tales from around the world.

TUES, JAN. 20

IN BROOKLYN

"Cinderella": 7:30 pm. BAM How-
Continued on page 58

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Continued from page 56

ard Gilman Opera House. See Saturday, Jan. 17.

SAT, JAN. 24

IN BROOKLYN

"I Love You Night and Day":

Barnes and Noble, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Children will love this beautiful book that explores the boundlessness of love.

"I Love You Night and Day":

Barnes and Noble, 106 Court St. at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 246-4996; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Children will enjoy this fun book that teaches there are no bounds when it comes to someone you love. Hands-on Activity.

Subway Safari: 11:30 am-noon. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

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

Stephen Savage reads from his book *Supertruck*. For children 4 years and older.

SUN, JAN. 25

IN BROOKLYN

Inside Outside: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 3 pm; \$25 (\$12.50 children under 12).

Usher in the Year of the Sheep with a world class presentation by Company dancers dressed in colorful costumes, performing ancient melodies on traditional instruments, all the while doing feats of awe-inspiring acrobats and lion dancers. Suitable for children of all ages.

TUES, JAN. 27

IN BROOKLYN

Bug Out: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3:30 pm; Free with Museum Admission.

Meet grasshoppers, worms, stick bugs and cockroaches - eeeek!

Greenlight Young Readers

Book Group: Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration, 1368 Fulton Street; (718) 246-0200; greenlightbookstore.com;



Photo by Paul Martinika

Ice skating in the park

Come on down to the LeFrak Center at Lake Side Ice Rink now through March 31, 2016, and enjoy family skating. Add a little winter cheer, and you can twirl, jump, and skate to your heart's content at this new ice-spectacle. Lakeside is the perfect way to spend the day. One rink is covered and the other is outside amid the beauty of Prospect Park.

Ice skating, Tuesdays through Thursdays, 11 am to 6 pm; Fridays 11 am to 8 pm; Saturdays 10 am to 9 pm and Sundays 10 am to 6 pm. Admission is \$6 on Mondays through Thursdays, and \$8 on Saturday and Sunday. Skate rentals are \$6.

LeFrak Center in Prospect Park [Parkside and Ocean avenues; (718) 594-7439; lakesidebrooklyn.com].

6:30 pm; Free.

Aimed at children aged eight to 14, the group reads and discusses John Coyne's novel "The Terrible Thing That Happened to Barnaby Rocket," illustrated by Oliver Jeffers.

SAT, JAN. 31

IN BROOKLYN

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

Discover the art of quilts and share stories, and decorate a quilt square to take home.

Subway Safari: 11:30 am-noon. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

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

Children discover why some traditions are based on the moon and touch a real rock from outer space.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Cam-

pus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 8 pm; \$30- \$40.

Superstar group continues to thrill the audience with its rich a cappella arrangements and energetic performances. Suitable for teens and older.

LONG-RUNNING

IN BROOKLYN

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; \$9 general admission (children under one free).

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

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, Feb. 1. Free with museum admission.

For children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families. Space lim-

ited, first come first served.

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.

Needlework and games: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Daily, 1-3 pm, Now - Thurs, Jan. 1; \$3.

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

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.

Special needs workshop:

Kings County Hospital, 385 Lenox Rd. between New York Avenue and East 34th Street; (718) 512-5269; namieastflatbush@aol.com; Thursdays, 6-8 pm, Now - Thurs, Jan. 8. Free.

Six session course for parents and family caregivers of children and teens living with mental illness. Trained parent/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.

Ice skating: LeFrak Center in Prospect Park, Parkside and Ocean avenues; (718) 594-7439; info@brooklynice.org; www.brooklynice.org; Tuesdays - Thursdays, 11 am-6 pm, Fridays, 11 am-8 pm, Saturdays, 10 am-9 pm, Sundays, 10 am-6 pm; now - Tues, March 31; \$6 (\$8 on Sat. and Sun) plus \$6 skate rental.

Families have a great time twirling and skating and enjoying the rink.

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

Calendar

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

and 2:30 pm, Fri, Jan. 2 – Fri, March 6; Free with museum admission.

Children explore a new style of art and discover the artistic process while developing artistic skills.

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; \$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.

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, 10:45 am–12:15 pm, Now – Sat, Jan. 24; \$160.

8-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.

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. Free with museum admission.

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

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; \$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; \$3.

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

Nature playtime: Prospect Park Zoo, 450 Flatbush Ave. at Ocean Avenue; (718) 399-7339; www.prospectpark.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.

Craft room: Jewish Children Museum, 792 Eastern Parkway; (718) 907-8833; www.jcm.museum; Sundays – Thursdays, noon–5 pm, Fri, Jan. 2 – Thurs, Jan. 29. Free with museum admission.

Get creative with a variety of Jewish themed crafts to choose from!

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. Free.

Instructions, fitness, homework help and lots more. Requirements - students in grades first through 8th must live in Brooklyn or go to school in Brooklyn, be eligible for free/reduced lunch program. Preregistration required.

FURTHER AFIELD

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; \$20 (\$8 children, free for children under 2).

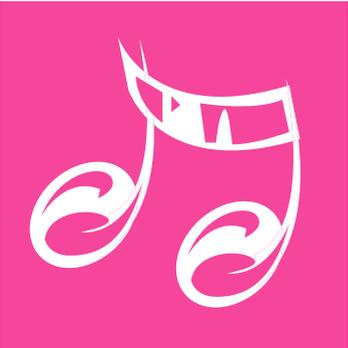
The annual tradition is open again. Model trains are enlivened amid the glow of twinkling lights in Victorian-style glasshouses featuring replicas of New York landmarks crafted of natural materials by designer Paul Busse's team.

Gingerbread Lane Exhibit: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; Daily, 10 am–4 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 11; Free with museum admission.

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




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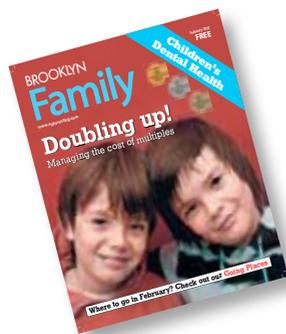
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New & Noteworthy

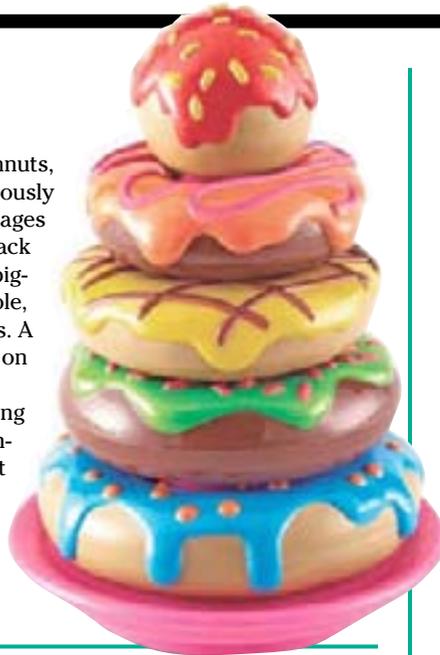
BY LISA J. CURTIS

Tasty tower

The stack of four plastic doughnuts, by Learning Resources, are deliciously decorated for hours of fun for kids ages 2 and older. As they attempt to stack the faux frosted confections from biggest to smallest on the tapered pole, they will hone their fine-motor skills. A sprinkle-covered doughnut hole fits on top of the tower of treats.

Outside of the box, this stacking game would be a delightful table centerpiece at a baby shower. When it comes to fun, these doughnuts are stacked in baby's favor.

Stack 'Em Up Doughnuts by Learning Resources, \$14.99, www.toysrus.com.



Get a Clue

Some of the most fun moments of parenting come from recreating the joyful moments from our own childhoods, like time spent playing a favorite board game. Enjoy some of those wintry, house-bound days a whole lot more by solving the mystery of whodunnit with the



Clue Luxury Edition Board Game.

A memorable gift for a child ages 8 and older, this edition of the classic game features a three-dimensional game board housed in a wood case with a tempered glass lid. The tokens and game pieces are hewn from wood and die-cast metal, and stowed in a faux leather storage box.

In Clue, budding Sherlocks move from room to room in a mansion to solve the mystery of who committed the murder, with what tool, and in which room. It's elementary, my dear reader, that the only mystery left to solve is what snacks you're going to serve on game night.

Clue Luxury Edition Board Game, \$199.99, www.brookstone.com.

Score points for creativity

On a frigid January day, this ceramic bowl with an attached basketball hoop is perfect for tossing marshmallows into cocoa, or oyster crackers into soup, or blueberries into cereal. Designed by 8-year-old maker Sam Ash, the Mug with a Hoop will delight little diners, whether they are sitting down for an after-school mug of hot chocolate or need an incentive



to come to the table for breakfast. The mug-bowl combo is 5.25 inches wide and 4.5-inches high.

With two bowls, kids can attempt to make baskets in their opponent's hoop, and then, well, what's more fun than a food fight? Swish!

Mug with a Hoop by Max's Creations, \$24, www.thegrommet.com.

This house is just right

With Storytime Toys' "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" playset, the included classic tale is "just right" for helping your child's imagination take wing. Little hands set to work building the doll house inspired by the classic story. The bears' home fits together like a 3-D puzzle, which hones kids' fine motor skills and provides a place to enjoy imaginative play with the four characters and furniture.

The home's exterior has lovely details such as window boxes bursting with red geraniums and an owl peeking out from the hollow of a tree. The house and furnishings are made of lightweight ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) foam — commonly used to make flip flops — and card stock that can be enjoyed again and again.

Recommended for children ages



3 to 6, the toy house can be disassembled and stored, along with the furniture, book, and dolls in the carrying case.

Hitting the books has never been so much fun.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Storytime Toys, \$30, <https://theautism-site.greatergood.com>.

Quench thirst for science

The new Edible Chemistry Kit by Copernicus makes science lessons so much more palatable — literally. Although my son is only 7 (and the kit is recommended for ages 10 and older), we were quickly making soda pop and learning about acids, bases, and pH levels. Older children can use the kit independently as long as they carefully follow the directions for the 16 experiments.

Right before my little Louis Pasteur's eyes, a chemi-

cal reaction took place. The carbon dioxide he was blowing into a solution — er, bubbles he was blowing in a soft drink we made with the kit — changed the color of the fluid. The kit includes "magic color crystals," calcium acetate, citric acid, sodium alginate, sodium bicarbonate, cups, stirrers, plastic bags, pipette, and an instruction book.

Making discoveries together was an enormously rewarding and messy way to spend an afternoon. Quality time = love squared.

Edible Chemistry Kit by Copernicus, \$18, www.uncommon-goods.com.





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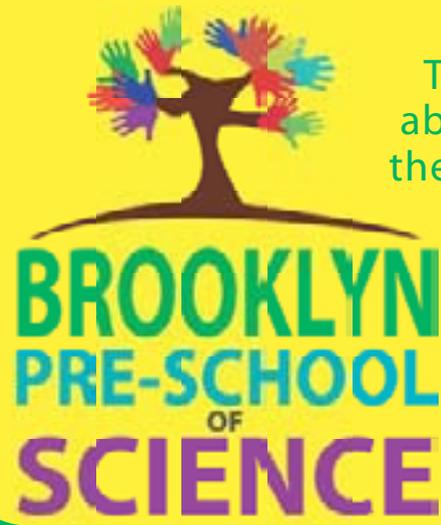
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