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Cherishing peace and freedom

I was reading an article the other day that I found very interesting, if not upsetting. How to discuss the news with your children, rather, how and when to talk to them about the violence happening around the world. I'm sure there was a time when one could perhaps escape from the barbarisms if one was lucky enough to live in a peaceful place, but these days, with the barrage of media blitz, it's almost impossible not to be caught up in it.



I used to be employed by a man who read the tabloids every day and was constantly trying to dis-

cuss with me the horror story of the moment. When I tried to escape, he accused me of hiding from the realities of the world. I believed I was protecting my sanity.

With our children it is recommended that we let them be innocent as long as possible. It is highly recommended that the local news not be our dinner table background music. It is also recommended that we don't bring up the massacres and tragedies until we absolutely have to because they are old enough to be aware of it themselves.

In this issue we touch on some

very serious topics in, I trust, an intelligent way. We have an article by Tammy Scileppi about a young 8-year-old writer who has written a book about child refugees from Syria. We have a passionate but intelligent essay from our resident attorney, Alison Arden Besunder, about GUNS and their legal and constitutional right in New York State. Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman talks about parallels between child rearing and governing. All interesting and important conversations.

The Fourth of July is Independence Day, as we all know. It is also a time to celebrate the freedoms we have and the relative peace we enjoy here in our nation. So much of the planet remains in turmoil. The conversation will go on and

on about immigrants and immigration. Personally, I am the product of four grandparents from four different countries who all found freedom in this nation. I also married a foreign national and I have lived in other places and visit other countries often. In my opinion, we must protect our own freedom by cherishing it for all and offering it to all comers.

Have a Happy Fourth! Be safe. Courage.

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New York Parenting can also be reached by calling (718) 260-4554, emailing Family@NYParenting.com or by visiting our website, NYParenting.com.

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New York Parenting has been recognized for editorial and design excellence by PMA.

New York Parenting is published monthly by New York Parenting Media/CNG. Subscription rate is \$35 annually. Reproduction of New York Parenting Media in whole or part without written permission from the publisher is prohibited. All rights reserved. Copyright©2016 Readership: 185,000. 2015 circulation audits by CVC.





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Freedom & parenting

Parallels between how we raise our children and govern our country

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

The wide stretch of beach is empty except for a small colony of seagulls. My 2-year-old son takes off after them as fast as his toddler legs will carry him. With dimpled, sun-kissed arms outstretched and damp, salty curls bouncing, he runs with total abandon, determined to catch one.

The embodiment of complete freedom. Is there such a thing?

Complete freedom implies the absence of constraints or consequences, an impossibility for any form of life on Earth. The apparent freedom reflected in the picture of my son running on the beach is merely an illusion.

This simple act is actually governed by multiple constraints. The law of gravity keeps his feet on the ground, laws of nature allow the seagulls to escape, physical limits allow him to run for only so long, local ordinances require him to stay on a public beach, and parental restrictions prevent him from getting too close to the water. Yet, he expresses utter delight in his quest.

Our country's founders, having been subject to oppression by a centuries-old monarchy, were anxious to establish freedom. So much so, they focused almost exclusively on outlining their rights. Yet, freedom without consequences does not exist. Perhaps they would have avoided confusion if they had written "The Bill of Rights and Responsibilities." The two go hand in hand.

The democracy they formed necessitates that both be accepted and protected, or freedom will be lost.

Democracy is a system of government by the whole population through elected representatives. A democratic government depends on the active, cooperative participation of its people and their ability to fully realize this responsibility. Searching online for the essential conditions of a successful democracy repeatedly gleaned these elements: an educated populace, vigilant protection of freedom, local self-government, civic-mindedness, tolerance, freedom of speech, a written constitution, and the absence of gross inequalities.

Since we are raising our children in a democracy, what are the implications of these conditions for our parenting?

Learning to think

Whereas monarchies and dictatorships thrive with a readily controlled, uneducated populace, democracies depend on people thinking for themselves.

Our children are living in an age of unprecedented access to information. As their first teachers, our role in guiding their informal education and overseeing their formal education is vital. In addition to nurturing their curiosity, we must teach them to distinguish between opinion and fact, and considering the credibility of sources. The ability to process information to formulate their own opinion is essential.

Protect and respect

As a cornerstone of democracy, freedom must be vigilantly protected. An effective method for protecting freedom is recognizing where my rights end and yours begin.

I have the right to drive, but I do

Democracies depend on people thinking for themselves. In addition to nurturing our children's curiosity, we must teach them to distinguish between opinion and fact, and considering the credibility of sources.

not have the right to jeopardize your safety.

If in the desire to protect my freedom, I neglect yours, freedom's future is compromised. Denial of freedom based on membership in a particular group, rather than behavior and actions, increases freedom's vulnerability. Who knows when the group in question may be mine?

Self-discipline

Before participating in the government of an entire population, one should first be capable of self-government. The way to avoid external constraints is to practice internal restraints.

By providing clearly stated, age-appropriate rules and expectations with reasonable consequences for failure to comply, parents assist children in acquiring self-discipline.

When participation in a rule or consequence setting and decision-making is increasingly allowed depending on age and maturity, children learn the skills necessary for taking on greater responsibility.

The inherent relationship between rights and responsibilities becomes apparent.

Social conscience

Empathy, the ability to imagine what life is like for others, is essential to developing civic-mindedness. Living by rules when expecting others to do so and considering the impact of personal decisions on others are practices that readily translate from an effective family to an effective society.

Tolerant spirit

Openly sharing ideas and participating in productive debate and discussion provides children the opportunity to practice expressing their thoughts while experiencing differences of opinion. Learning to maintain their integrity while accepting diversity is an invaluable accomplishment.

Free, not inflammatory, speech

Expressing one's ideas, beliefs, or complaints is possible without resorting to derogatory, maligning, character assassinations of others.

When we are confident of our position, we can accept the rights of others to hold different positions without feeling threatened or compelled to agree with, approve of, or adopt theirs.

Being able to respectfully disagree shows strength of character.

Written agreements

By creating and adopting a family constitution, we demonstrate to our children the value of establishing expectations for individual members that contribute to the well-being of the entire family.

Avoiding inequality

While there is clearly inequality between parents and children in terms of age, maturity, responsibility, and knowledge, they are equal in their fundamental value as human beings. Whenever access to rights or privileges is denied due to some arbitrary characteristic, the inevitable resentment threatens the viability of the whole group.

As a microcosm of society, the family provides an ideal place to learn the democratic process. Our children learn from us what it means to be conscientious citizens in a democracy.

Like a child chasing seagulls on the beach, the pursuit of happiness involves the freedom to make choices — hopefully responsible ones.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Ky, has been married for 29 years, and has two sons. 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, e-mail parent4life@yahoo.com.

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Her hope is contagious

An 8-year-old from California creates a book to inspire Syrian refugees

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

No matter who they are or what their circumstances might be, children are children. It doesn't take much to make them smile — and don't they all love to play and learn?

Child refugees from Syria are like our kids in many ways. For, despite their lost childhoods and the terrible upheaval, destruction, and despair they face, they are still children first, and having fun should be their number-one priority.

And each has a story to tell — of her journey, homeland, and hopes and wishes.

A compassionate, smart-beyond-her-years fourth-grader has penned a unique book, that is beautifully written and illustrated from the heart. The inspiring tale encourages young readers to believe in themselves now and forever, no matter what. Trisha Rao, now 9, wrote “Believe in Yourself” last year, because she felt sorry for refugee children around the world. Through the light-hearted story she tells, her wish is to remind them to be brave, to laugh and dream, but most of all to always have hope.

After all, children are the ones who suffer most from wars and conflicts.

Trisha's best friend, her smiling

golden retriever Sunshine, became the main character of this wonderful, must-read book, which is filled with her awesome paintings and illustrations. The young author intends to donate it to as many Syrian refugee kids as possible, while she shares her universal message of peace, love, strength, and courage with youngsters everywhere. Everybody can use a good dose of hope and happiness in their lives.

The worst humanitarian crisis of our lifetime

It's hard to believe there are more than 60 million refugees in the world today, of which more than half are innocent children. The Syrian refugee crisis, which began in May 2011, is the largest displacement of people of our time, and you can't turn on the news without hearing about the ongoing Syrian conflict — the topic of hotly debated conversations here in the U.S. and abroad.

Most Syrian refugees fleeing violence have found themselves in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, which is now the largest host of refugees in the region and also the largest host of refugees in the world. Turkey has taken a central role in the response to the Syria crisis, hosting close to 3 million Syrian refugees — more than

any other country. About half are children dealing with unimaginable turmoil and fear in their young lives.

Trisha feels their pain, and decided to give them a special story.

The start

An inquisitive student, she studied in a Montessori school in San Diego for the first six years of her life.

“My hobbies are painting, playing badminton, playing with my friends, reading books, listening to music, and dancing,” said Trisha. And her favorite subjects include English, matter and astronomy, science, and physical geography.

Her mother Sumana says her daughter has been painting since age 2 and remarkably, has made more than 300 acrylic paintings! And the San Diego Museum of Art exhibited Trisha's works when she was just 2-and-a-half! Her paintings were also used to raise money for flood victims in Karnool, India, in 2010.

Trisha's literary journey began last summer. On a tranquil, day-dreaming kind of afternoon, the aspiring 8-year-old poet scribbled some truly profound prose in her notebook as she gazed out her window. She called it “Believe in Yourself.” Her mom, who was surprised and deeply moved by what she wrote, already knew her daughter had a creative streak and that she was wise for her age.

“She has always been kind and compassionate,” she said lovingly.

So, while her peers were enjoying summer past times, Trisha's mind went to matters beyond her safe, comfy California home. Shocked by media headlines about the war- and terror-stricken Syrian refugees, she expressed her sadness and concern about their plight to family and friends, who then helped her transform that heartfelt poem into a great children's book that conveyed a universal message. One which seems to reverberate across oceans, deserts, and rough Middle Eastern terrains: Believe in yourselves! Don't give up hope! I'm here for you!

Describing her poems, Trisha said, “I write from my heart about things that touch my heart — I write about nature, my pet dog Sunshine, my mom, my school, my friends, animals, trees, etc.”

The story follows Sunshine the pup and Papa Dog, who travel through the jungles of the world learning valuable life lessons from their animal friends, like standing up for yourself and others, loving yourself deeply, attempting to over-

Syrian refugee kids in the news

If you want to get a glimpse of what life is like “over there,” you and your kids should read Ali, Mustafa, and Amira's journeys: “School in refuge: the stories of three Syrian children in Turkey”

<http://blog.concern.net/school-in-refuge-the-stories-of-three-syrian-children-in-turkey>

You can also read how others are using creativity to help the young refugees:

Khaldiya Jibawi. This creative teen took a workshop in making videos after her family fled to a refugee camp. Her film about day-to-day life is now making the festival rounds.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/06/05/480611303/syrian-teens-9-minute-doc-hits-cannes-sundance-1-a-film-fest>

UNICEF. Three “Unfair Tales” is the The United Nations Children's Fund's new project that takes real-

life stories of Syrian refugee kids and turns them into short — and really intense — animated videos.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/04/12/473007477/watch-these-3-unfair-1-0001>

Save the Children. This organization had Syrian refugee kids draw what they were feeling.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/03/17/470809097/syrian-refugee-kids-were-told-to-draw-whatever-they-wanted>



come challenges, creating your own opportunities, working hard to make your wishes come true, being grateful to God (or any higher power), being kind to others, and staying united with friends and loved ones.

The story concludes with wonderful symbolism as Papa Dog offers unconditional love to Sunshine, who finds it comforting to know that Papa Dog will always be there to love and support him.

Trisha's journey to Istanbul

The young author and her family traveled to Istanbul, Turkey, in December 2015, and you can imagine what a truly memorable, life-altering journey it was. So she could share her important inspirational message of hope with Syrian refugee children living there, Trisha launched "Believe in Yourself" while visiting. She read it to a bevy of curious kids

Trisha Rao's puppy Sunshine is the main character in her book. (Left) Trisha launched her book to a group of Syrian refugee children in Istanbul last December.

who had gathered around her. Sadly, they had lost their homes, and sometimes, their families.

Trisha said the children loved hearing the words to the story, and especially liked her colorful pictures. Apparently, they felt an instant bond to the long-haired American girl, despite the language barrier. What a thrill it must have been to make new friends!

Her experience turned out to be the most amazing family vacation she had ever had. Trisha says she wants to encourage ALL kids to stay hopeful, no matter what.

"I turned my poem into a children's book to show that we all have great power within ourselves to make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of other people, too," she said. "I felt bad for the Syrian refugee children

because they lost their homes, home lands, and families at a young age."

Trisha said most of the children were with their parents, who were trying to get adjusted to a new country. They did not know the local language, so it was difficult for them to get good jobs.

"We met around 30 children — most between the ages of 5 and 10 — at the Support to Life community center in Istanbul. The refugee families lived far from the center, but the children came there every day to spend their day at the center," Trisha recalled. (Support to Life is a humanitarian agency working with disaster-stricken communities.)

"The hardest part was when I learned that they did not have money to buy lunch," the young writer said. "I felt bad that they had to walk several miles from where they were living to come to the center where they spent the whole day."

The Support to Life team met Trisha and her family during their trip and in a letter, the director later thanked them for being part of their cause in improving the life of refugees in Turkey.

"By reading her book to the children, Trisha did not only give them support and inspiration, but also was able to touch them with her sincerity. Your thoughtful visit at the Istanbul Center Support to Life House made a great mark in the children's lives since it was also a pathway for children to reconnect with their childhood," the letter stated.

Trisha's ultimate wish with her book is to reach every single child on the planet with her positive vibe. For every book she sells in 2016, she has pledged to donate one copy to refugee children around the globe.

And since those kids in Turkey loved the book so much, it was translated into Arabic. The books that have been donated so far — more than 110 — are in English. Once the Arabic books are printed, more can be sent to Syrian children. More than 500 copies have been sold.

"Believe in Yourself" has received the 2016 Gold Medal from the Independent Publishers Book Awards in the category of Best Children's eBook. It is for sale on Amazon and through the United Nations Stores: https://www.amazon.com/Believe-Yourself-Trisha-Rao/dp/B01A4S1FQ0/ref=sr_1_1_twi_kin_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1465909533&sr=8-1&keywords=trisha-rao

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer and journalist, parent, and regular contributor to New York Parenting.



HEALTHY LIVING
DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Child Mind Institute

Triumphing over dyslexia

When most people hear the word “dyslexia,” they immediately associate it with a reading problem. The disorder does cause problems with reading from left to right, reversing letters and words, spelling words, reading quickly, writing words, “sounding out” words in the head, pronouncing words when reading aloud, and reading comprehension, but the issue involves much more than reading.

The brains of people with dyslexia are wired differently. The Dyslexia Association explains that the two most important contributors to dyslexia are an underutilized left hemisphere, and an out-of-whack central bridge of tissue in the brain, called the corpus callosum. According to the National Institutes of Health, up to 15 percent of the U.S. population has significant difficulty learning to read.

“People with a learning difference like dyslexia may have trouble with reading, writing, spelling, math, and sometimes, music,” says the institute.

Three times as many boys as girls

have dyslexia.

In preschool-aged children, symptoms include late talking, difficulty in learning nursery rhymes, and rhyming games. In school-aged children, a student may have difficulty following quick instructions, reading at age level, comprehending what is said to him, and problems remembering the sequence of things.

In teens, the symptoms may be the same as in younger children, and also include difficulty summarizing a story, learning a foreign language, memorizing, and understanding jokes and idioms.

Recently, The Child Mind Institute hosted the 13th annual Adam Katz Memorial Conversation and featured a candid conversation between award-winning comedian, actress, and host of “The View” Whoopi Goldberg and Child Mind Institute President Dr. Harold Koplewicz at the Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College. They shared an in-depth discussion about Goldberg’s struggles and victories surrounding living with dyslexia.

“What I remember about being a

Whoopi Goldberg, award-winning comedian, actress, human rights advocate, and host of “The View,” spoke to president of the Child Mind Institute, Dr. Harold Koplewicz, about living and succeeding with dyslexia.

kid was that I felt pretty protected, I wasn’t afraid, and I had a mother who understood — after a while — that there was something different about the way I learned things,” she explained. “It takes people a little while to accept that something’s going on, and it’s not that you’re being lazy. It’s not that you’re not trying.”

Many people with dyslexia, like Goldberg, thrive as highly visual learners and creative thinkers who excel in the arts. She says she’s discovered along the way useful methods to overcome her dyslexia while learning scripts. Whenever she’s required to learn a new script, she enlists someone to read the lines out loud with her, so she can memorize them. Similarly, when she wrote her recent book, she dictated each word to an assistant and then afterward, had it read back to her for editing.

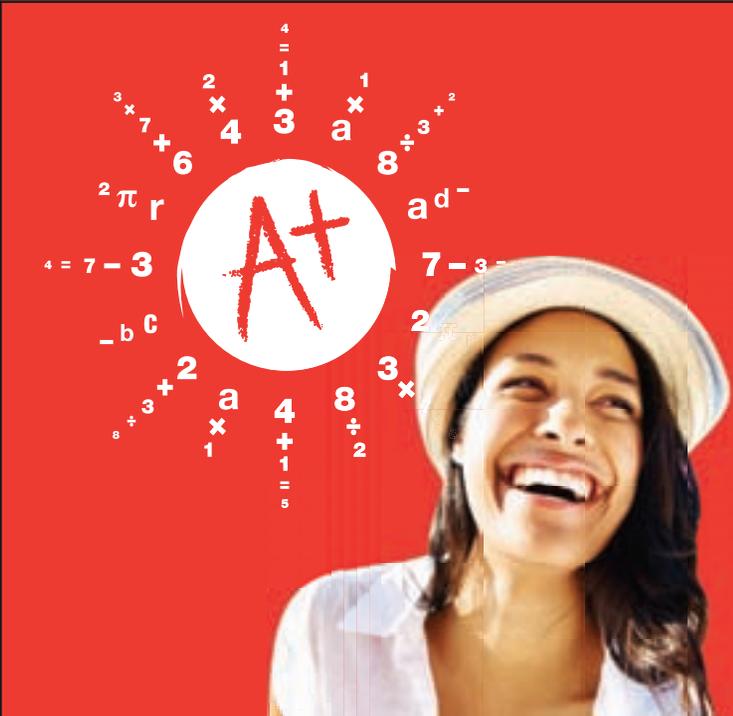
“The advantage of dyslexia is that my brain puts information in my head in a different way,” says Goldberg.

One website working to promote the positive aspects of the condition, *Dyslexia The Gift*, writes, “Our visual and holistic learning style means that we learn best through the creative process, with methods that focus on mastery of the meanings of words and symbols. The true gift of dyslexia is the gift of mastery.”

To learn more about dyslexia, visit:

- International Dyslexia Association, dyslexiaida.org
- The Dyslexia Foundation, dyslexiafoundation.org
- Everyone Reading, everyonereading.org
- National Center For Learning Disabilities, nclcd.org
- Decoding Dyslexia – NY, decodingdyslexiany.org

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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OUR GUNS

A closer look at NY State's gun laws

BY ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER

During the past several years, it has seemed that every day, week, and month there is another tragedy as a result of guns in the hands of individuals who use them as tools of murder and terrorism.

The most recent massacre at a gay club in Orlando was one of 43 shootings on June 12. In 2016 so far, there have been 6,131 gun-related deaths, 141 mass shootings, and 259 children under 11 killed or injured (www.gunviolencearchive.org). These events have become horrifically commonplace.

Rather than my usual “Q&A” column, I thought that readers would like to know more about the gun laws applicable in New York State, which in and of itself has vastly different “gun cultures” between Upstate and Downstate.

New York gun licensing

New York has no separate constitutional gun protection, but Article 2, Section 4 of the New York Civil Rights Law provides “a well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms cannot be infringed.” That law has not prevented the state from imposing some of the strictest handgun regulations in the nation. New York’s 1911 Sullivan Law was one of the first in the country requiring a permit to own a handgun.

New York’s gun control is essentially two-tiered between state and local law. All handguns must be licensed. Outside New York City,

rifles and shotguns need not be licensed.

At the state level, a license may be granted to an applicant who:

- Is of good moral character.
- Over 21 years of age.
- Has not been convicted of a serious offense.
- States if and when he has ever been treated for mental illness, is not subject to a protective court order.
- To whom no good cause exists for the denial of the license.

The age requirement does not apply to persons honorably discharged from the military. Anyone between 18 and 21 can use a handgun at an indoor or outdoor pistol range or at a target pistol shooting competition under the auspices of or approved by the National Rifle Association (not exactly my first choice for supervisory authority). New York State does not perform its own background check, but rather forwards fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a search of criminal records. The failure or refusal of the Bureau to complete the fingerprint check in six months cannot be the sole basis for refusing to issue the permit.

Gun purchase in New York requires a license for that particular make, model, caliber, and serial number, and possession requires a valid license for that particular registered gun. Licenses are not issued to non-New York residents or part-time residents; out-of-state handguns are not permitted.

There are two types of licenses: carry or premises-only. New York City rarely issues carry licenses

and only where self-defense is the proven primary reason for ownership (usually law enforcement and armed guards). A premises-only license does not permit carrying as a concealed weapon off-premises.

Oversight and enforcement

New York’s gun control and culture widely varies from county to county, especially between Downstate and Upstate.

Other than the city (three years) or Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester (five years), licenses in New York State are valid until revoked and need not be renewed. In other words, New York State — like most states — has no oversight of a gun owner after license.

Even with a permit, it is illegal to carry a weapon in schools (including child care), state parks, or mental health facilities. The penalty for carrying a concealed weapon without a permit is only a class A misdemeanor, carrying a penalty of a fine up to \$1,000 or up to 12 months in jail (or three years probation).

New York is a “May-Issue” state; the individual licensing official (a local police chief or sheriff) has discretion to issue a handgun license or concealed weapon permit and whether to impose conditions such as firearms training or education. The various licensing and permit authorities are not unified, the rules vary between counties, and the “gun laws” are therefore all over the map.

New York City, for example, is a “No Issue” jurisdiction. New York City is the only county where a



pistol licensee is restricted from carrying and must have an “uninterrupted trip” through the city with the ammunition and gun locked separately when traveling. Delaware County, on the other hand, is the only county to permit open carrying. The restrictions imposed on a carry license travel with the licensee as he or she travels from county to county within the state. Thus, a holder of a Delaware County license (unrestricted carry) can take his concealed handgun into Kotobuki, but his Suffolk County gun-licensee companion cannot.

New York State bans possession or sale of “assault weapons” or “large capacity ammunition feeding devices” manufactured after 1994. New York State law continues to enforce the same provisions as the (now expired) Federal Assault Weapons Ban, which bans rifle magazines in excess of 10 rounds in assault

weapons manufactured after 1994. This means that New York State bans as a felony the high capacity, quick-reload weapons such as the Sig Sauer MCX, which was reportedly used in the Orlando shooting.

However, the expiration of the federal ban undermined enforcement power, since the federal law had required that all “large capacity” magazine guns be stamped with the date of manufacture. That federal requirement is no longer in effect, hindering prosecutions of possession of post-2004 assault weapons. Gov. Cuomo’s 2013 proposals did not go as far as was originally hoped in reducing permitted magazines from 10 to seven rounds.

New York gun numbers

New York is sixth in the top 10 restrictive states on the purchase, possession, or carrying of handguns, and 48th in the “Gun Death

Rank” (in 2010 it was 24th). New York also elevated its rating to an A- from a B in 2010 from the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (smartgunlaws.org/new-york-state-law-summary/). In 2008 New York had the fifth lowest number of gun deaths. And in December 2012, then-mayor Bloomberg announced that the city’s murder rates were the lowest in 50 years.

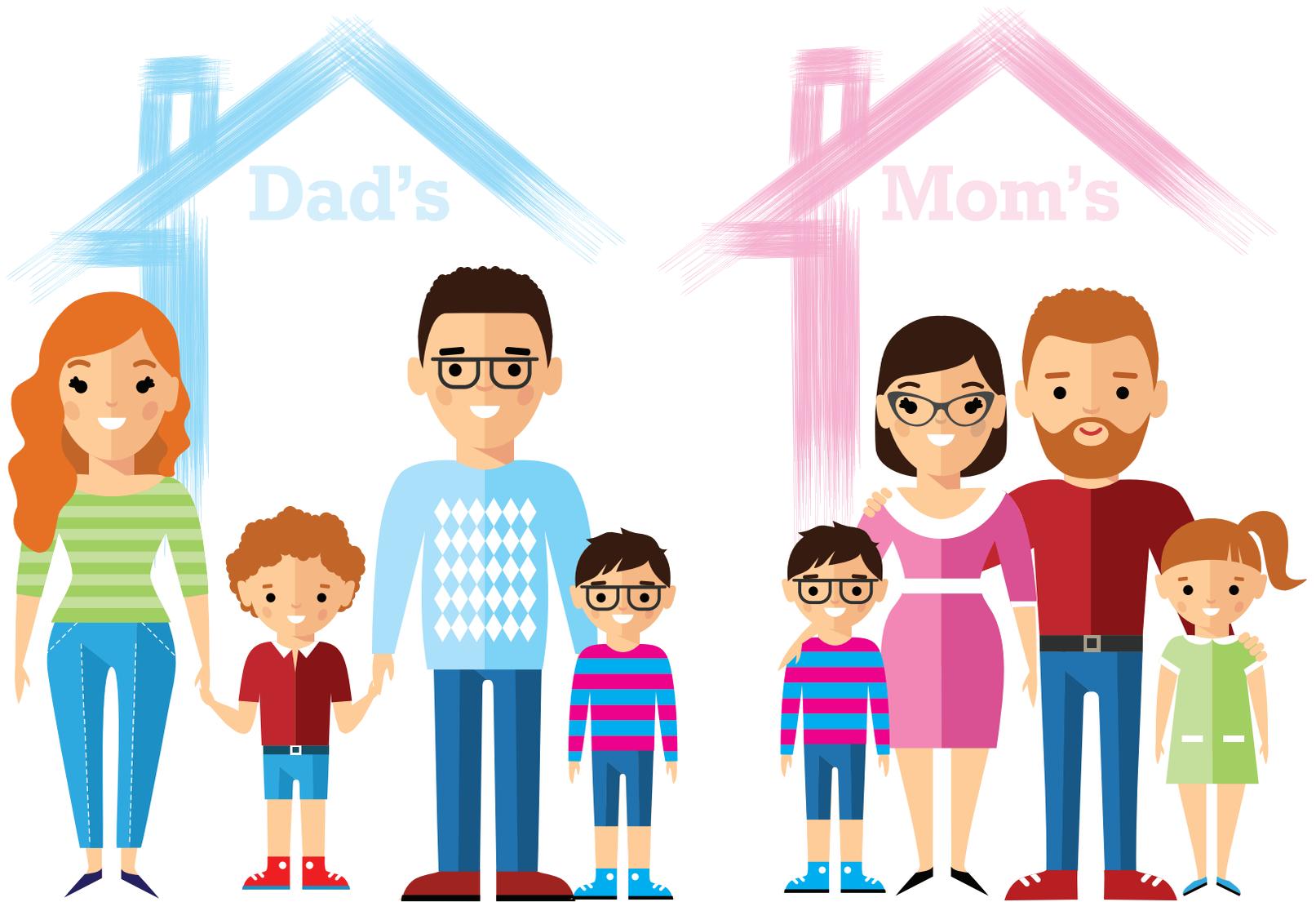
More gun-related deaths occur in states with less restrictive gun laws and a higher rate of gun ownership (smartgunlaws.org/gun-laws-matter-2012-understanding-the-link-between-weak-laws-and-gun-violence).

Although New York has some of the strictest gun laws in the country, we can still do better. The federal government and the state need to require federal background checks of all gun sales, including private ones; the ban of high-capacity magazines; keeping guns from people who are

mentally ill; banning the direct internet sale of ammunition purchases. There should also be re-certification for gun ownership (just like drivers’ license renewal!) and monitoring of gun owners, together with continuing safety education courses for gun owners. It is not acceptable that it is harder to buy certain over-the-counter drugs in this country than it is to purchase a deadly weapon.

For more information on how to take action, visit the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence and the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (www.bradycampaign.org).

Alison Arden Besunder is the founding attorney of the law firm of Arden Besunder P.C., where she assists new and not-so-new parents with their estate planning needs. Her firm assists clients in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. Follow her on Twitter @estatetrustplan and on her website at www.besunderlaw.com.



Team family

After a divorce, working together when you live apart

BY GAYLA GRACE

“Although we don’t like each other, we maintain a friendly demeanor for the sake of our children.”

My friend’s comments confirmed what I already knew — her kids benefitted from her efforts toward a cordial relationship with her ex-spouse.

Children with a mom and dad in different homes often experience confusion, anxiety, and turmoil. They need a stable home environment, free of tension and chaos, to develop a healthy self-image and succeed in school. If you spend time

Seven tips to help:

- Don’t meddle in the affairs of the other home.
- Maintain a cooperative and flexible attitude with your ex when discussing the kids’ schedules.
- Keep conflict with your ex-spouse away from the ears of your children.
- Encourage your children to

be responsible with their belongings.

- As a stepparent, offer grace and understanding to your stepchildren.
- Consider the needs of your children and stepchildren as they transition.
- Commit to a new tomorrow when you fail.

at your child’s school, particularly middle and high schools, you’ll notice the pressure and demands they face. Minefields at home only create

more stress.

As parents and stepparents, what can we do to promote healthy interactions and positive self-esteem?

As parents and stepparents, one of the best ways to promote success is to commit to do your part in maintaining a friendly relationship with your ex.

One of the best ways to promote success is to commit to do your part in maintaining a friendly relationship with your ex.

I know you'd rather run a marathon than talk about how to live in harmony with your ex or your spouse's ex, but it's vital to the well-being of your children and stepchildren. That doesn't mean you have to be best friends with your ex-husband, or your stepson's mom, but you do have to commit to having a cordial relationship.

I will be the first to admit this hasn't come naturally. I maintained a contentious relationship with my ex too long after our divorce. Although I tried hard to not speak badly of him to our girls, I'm sure they could sense my disapproval of his lifestyle and critical spirit toward him when we negotiated visitation. It's important to remember that our children are half of their other parent, and when we speak badly of that parent, they turn the negative remarks inward, leading to a negative self-image.

As your children move between homes, help them learn responsibility by reminding them to stop and think about what they need to pack when they leave one home and move to the other. As a stepfamily coach, I often hear stepparents complain about their stepkids making multiple trips to their house on the off week because they left supplies, a uniform, a project, etc. Don't enable irresponsibility by allowing them to return multiple times to the other home for items they forgot.

As a stepparent, recognize the adjustment your stepchildren go through when they travel between homes. Allow extra time on transition days for kids to settle in, focus, and adjust to the routine of your home. Give them space if you sense they're struggling emotionally.

Don't maintain an overly am-

bitious schedule on weeks your stepchildren are there. Allow time to help with homework, run kids to ball practice, or sit down for a home-cooked meal. Stepfamily relationships are strengthened as family members spend time together in a relaxed environment.

Also, consider what it feels like to a biological parent to have someone else take part in raising her child. And be sensitive to how your stepchildren feel toward you and whether they want you at every back-to-school function or whether you should bow out and let the biological parents take the lead.

As a mom and stepmom to five children, I understand the challenges that accompany kids moving between homes. My husband and I spent years negotiating schedules and seeking to provide a safe environment in which our kids could thrive throughout the school year.

My stepchildren and two of my children have now completed school and exited the nest, leaving my husband and I with only an "ours" child left at home. Some days I think about what I would do differently if all of our kids were at home again.

I think I would offer a softer side toward my stepchildren when they've had a bad day at school. I'd be more understanding on transition days when they've just come back from their mom's house and need some time alone. I'd extend grace more freely when my own kids didn't do their chores to my satisfaction. And I would insist on fewer extracurricular activities to allow more time at home for relationships to grow and bond.

Our child-rearing season passes quickly and we're left with fond memories. Seek to enjoy the back-to-school hassles! Step back, take a deep breath, and snap a few pictures of your growing child as you head to meet-the-teacher night. Consider what you can do to sow peace. Will you commit to take the high road as often as possible? Will you do your part to co-parent in harmony?

Your children and stepchildren deserve a fresh beginning at school, with minimal conflict at home. Yes, it's harder when kids move between homes, but it's not impossible to find peace.

Gayla Grace is an author and stepfamily coach with a his, hers, and ours family. She enjoys helping non-traditional families learn to thrive in their relationships.

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Shaky ground

Tracing the links between a family's stability and a child's success

BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL

The bonding process begins in the womb. Once born, infants thrive on the voice and touch of a consistent caregiver. So, from the start, stability and security provide an anchor for human growth and development.

As a child, I instinctively knew that if something bad happened — anything from catching chicken pox to navigating a personality clash with a classroom teacher — my parents would always be there to support me. I always had family to lean on and a home to escape to when the going got rough. At the time, I had no clue that this stable and loving environment would help shape me into a confident and grounded adult. However, I realize now that I subconsciously paid it forward when it came to raising my own children, providing a cushion when they stumbled and a safe haven filled with unconditional acceptance.

A stable environment provides nurturing caregivers, unconditional love, consistent discipline, and a dependable and safe living space. This secure and protective environment shapes a child's perspective of himself and the world around him. It is the springboard that sets in motion a path to hap-

piness and overall well-being. It is the bedrock to a child's future success.

Family stability in the new millennium

Family life throughout the decades has changed dramatically. Entertainment mimics culture, so we can see how the family has changed over the years just by examining family structures on television. Snapshots of the lives of the Cleavers, Bradys, Cosbys, and the Bravermans from NBC's "Parenthood," provide a good comparison.

Dr. Susan Kuczarski, a family expert and author of several books including the award-winning "Becoming A Happy Family: Pathways to the Family Soul" (Book Ends Publishing, 2015), points to a 2014 Pew Research report that analyzed the state of the American family. The research showed that American families today are more complex and less traditional — fewer than 50 percent of American children live in a traditional family structure.

"It was this new model of the American family that I had in mind as I wrote my new book," she reports.

Family stability is not inherent in the number of family members or its various structures (i.e. traditional, single parent, blended family, foster family, etc.). Instead, it's about providing a consistent, safe, and loving environment for children, one in which they can lean on family members under all circumstances. Strong family bonds, unconditional support, and predictable safety nets are the keys to a stable upbringing.

According to an article written by Shannon Rudisill, associate deputy assistant secretary for early childhood development at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "The quality and stability of a child's relationships are the most critical factors in whether a child thrives developmentally and goes on to have success in school. Nurturing, long-lasting relationships are important for all children — but especially

for the youngest children — who are learning to form secure attachments that will be the foundation for future relationships."

Strong family bonds are crucial. "Bonding is the central component to a healthy child. A well-bonded child is secure and does better at everything," explains Dr. Gail Gross, a nationally recognized family and child development expert, author, and educator. If a child forms strong bonds, she "will have less anxiety and a higher threshold of security," Gross adds.

The child who has been raised in a secure and reliable environment has been given the tools for success.

"Your child will approach everything with a stronger sense of self and a strong central core," Gross says. "As a result, he will learn to depend on his own resources and capacities, which allows him to be independent and self-actualized."

Children should know that their accomplishments will be celebrated, but they should not be afraid to make mistakes, because they understand that they will learn from them and be accepted anyway. Encouragement and acceptance breed a positive self-esteem, a healthy outlook on future relationships, and confidence in oneself.

"Family protects from the noise of the outer world. It is here where we first discover and experience who we are and what we might become," Kuczarski stresses. "It is where we learn to work with weakness, inadequacy, deficiency, inability, and even failure."

Kuczarski explains that flaws and insecurity are the heart of the individual, but can also point the way to learning and growth if a child is raised in a stable and safe environment.

"Family can serve as a refuge for self-acceptance," she asserts.

The effects of growing up with instability

Instability can affect a child's self-worth and ability to achieve his greatest potential. It manifests in various situations. Frequent changes to the family structure and relation-

Additional help and resources for families

Military families:

- Information about Military Family Stability Act of 2015: www.militaryfamily.org/featured-news/the-military-family-stability.html

Stability when moving with kids:

- <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/move.html>
- <http://psychcentral.com/lib/moving-with-kids/>

Helping your child through divorce:

- <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/help-child-divorce.html>
- www.helpguide.org/articles/family-divorce/children-and-divorce.htm

Helping children and families with separation and loss:

- Multiple resources available at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/casework/helping/



Family stability is not inherent in the number of family members or its various structures. Instead, it's about providing a consistent, safe, and loving environment for children, one in which they can lean on family members under all circumstances.

ration due to military service, or frequent career relocations can be disruptive to everyone, but especially to children, who sometimes feel the turmoil more deeply because they have no control.

Kuczarski recommends that families seek help from friends during difficult times.

"Friends extend the family boundary outward. When we are stuck in old patterns and habits, friends can help us climb out."

Divorced parents should not allow anger toward each other to overshadow the love that each of them has for their children. Instead, parents should try to create an amicable tone and remind their children that their unconditional love will not waiver during difficult times. Kuczarski advises parents to find it within themselves to forgive.

"Forgiving opens the door to positive energy and intention."

When family life is disrupted due to relocation, separation, or death, Kuczarski suggests finding activities that allow for renewal.

"Celebrations, getaways, and community service create occasions for renewal."

She also encourages finding silver linings during times of struggle.

"Struggle can strengthen or weaken a family soul. It can be episodic or enduring. Almost always, though, struggle can provide insight."

Myrna Beth Haskell is an award-winning author, columnist, and feature writer (www.myrnahaskell.com). She is also cofounder and senior editor of SANCTUARY Magazine (www.sanctuary-magazine.com).

ships, frequent changes to the physical environment (excessive relocations, etc.), a caregiver's unpredictable, emotional dysfunction or maltreatment of a child in the form of physical or emotional care, can all be catalysts to the decline of a child's socio-emotional and physical health. Family instability is often the result of emotionally absent, distant, or abusive caregivers, or when a child is insecure about her physical care (where she'll spend the night, for instance).

"A child who experiences instability at an early age of development is under stress," Gross explains. "Neuroscience tells us that when a child is stressed from consistent poverty, abuse, divorce, or insecurity that he overproduces cortisol. Cortisol changes brain architecture and impulse control. These stressors in a child's life can lead to unintended consequences, including behavior problems, loss of impulse control, academic problems, social problems, and problems with substance abuse."

Gross warns that a child under severe stress will present with changes in eating, sleeping, school performance, relationships, and motivation.

Instability can also cause health problems.

"Stress can be directly correlated to the onset of illness, not only the anxiety type of illnesses, such as stomach aches, headaches, nail biting and bed wetting, but also frequent colds and viruses," Gross points out. "Stress impacts immunities in the body, including lowering antigen levels and lymphocytes."

She says that children are more vulnerable to compromised immunity when they lack coping skills to deal with erratic pressures and behaviors at home.

How parents and caregivers can ensure stability

Parents can ensure stability by providing strong bonds, consistent discipline, unconditional love, and a safe environment.

"Bonding is the central component to a healthy child," Gross states. She also advocates consistent discipline. "You must work together with your mate as a team, rather than allowing yourself to be split by your partner or your child."

Kuczarski believes that family rituals and events provide a strong family foundation.

"Rituals act like glue that holds the family together. Any event the family enjoys and does regularly can be a ritual, such as a fancy Friday dinner or a Saturday morning walk. Events that feel special serve to provide stability and bring the group closer together." She suggests that children be allowed to have input on establishing family rituals because this helps them feel like their role in the family dynamic is important.

Kuczarski also counsels parents to be good communicators.

"Selfless, compassionate listening is a prerequisite for sharing ideas, feelings, and values and is critical to developing meaningful relationships. Close and healthy families are built through frequent, honest, two-way talk with one another."

Gross agrees.

"Making your child feel part of a family team, valued, and validated goes a long way to building self-esteem." She suggests that parents create a "safe space in which your child can express himself without defense."

Finding stability in tumultuous situations

There are times when instability is unavoidable. Divorce, death, separa-



BEHAVIOR & BEYOND

DR. MARCIE BEIGEL

Teamwork the key to a summer of fun

Summer fun is in full swing. Trips to the park, family vacations, and other adventures are a weekly, if not daily, occurrence. You're probably spending a lot more time with your small beings than usual, creating many cherished memories.

And you're also dealing with moments that make you feel like you're in a war zone. Have you ever felt like you're battling against your children? Like your kids need to be taught a lesson? Many families are experiencing this right now, so you wouldn't be alone.

Here is a potential — and common — scenario: You are at a family barbecue with cousins who you have not seen since last summer. All the kids are running around in the grass except for your child. She is sitting on the sidelines yelling and pulling food off the picnic table.

You are mortified! You go into sergeant mode and attempt to teach your daughter that this is not how to behave. (A piece of you knows this is simply to show your relatives that you have not completely lost control of your family, even though deep down that is how you feel.)

So, you march up to your child and threaten her with no dessert. You make a bargain: one more hour of good behavior for a new toy truck. All of your attempts make things worse. Eventually you give up, pick her up, and head home.

Once home, the princess you love dearly returns. You are defeated, confused, and exhausted. You swear never to attend a family function again ... or at least not till next summer.

If this happens to you just once a summer, then consider yourself blessed. If this happens to you on a weekly basis, then let's talk! There is one secret that changes this dynamic, ensuring that you and your daughter will enjoy the rest of the summer with more ease.

Simply remember that you and



your child are on the same team. When you go into warlord mode against your own child, you are dividing your family unit. You and your child should always be on the same side, even when you don't agree.

Let me repeat: You are on the same team as your child!

This means that you set up this dynamic starting with the trip to the family gathering. Let your child know that if something is hard or overwhelming to come talk with you about it before she acts up. When she knows that she can ask to go for a walk or she can sit inside in a quiet place, this will improve her behavior, as she won't feel trapped.

Another option is to take breaks throughout the event. Most children do not know how to pace themselves and your small being is no exception. Taking periodic walks, just you and your daughter, may increase her stamina. It will also give you a chance to point out how well she is doing and to remind her to keep her behavior moving in the

right direction.

This adjustment requires you to shift your expectations. If your child has had her limit of socialization and a pause in activity doesn't restore her, then you probably need to leave the gathering, as much as you don't want to. Yes, this is unfair to you as the parent, but it is part of your role. There are many times that you need to put your child's needs ahead of your own, and this is one of them.

Remember, you are a family. No matter what behavior you face, do know that you are part of the solution.

For a special gift especially for New York Parenting readers please visit: <https://drmarcie.leadpages.co/quick-video-for-ny-parenting>

Dr. Marcie Beigel is a behavioral therapist based in Brooklyn. She has worked with thousands of families for more than 15 years and has condensed her observations into her practice and programs. For more on her, visit www.BehaviorAndBeyond.net.



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BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

School's out and summer is officially here! Historically, family vacations and summer are a perfect pairing, but sometimes getaways can be hard to schedule around work demands or budget constraints. As a result, more families are seeking alternatives to the traditional road trip, and are vacationing locally. With New York at your fingertips, the “staycation” (a stay-at-home vacation) is a wonderful option. Millions of tourists visit the New York metro area annually, and you're already here — so start planning!

Take advantage of access to world-renowned sights and attractions. Whether it is art, science, or New York history that interests your family, go visit a local museum. Seek-

ing an indoor escape from the summer heat? Consider local attractions, architectural gems, shopping, or a Broadway show.

Or, for some fresh air, visit a botanical garden, aquarium, or zoo. Governors Island is the perfect place to spend the day. Just take the ferry to the 172-acre island where you can ride bikes and have a picnic. On July 19, the newest development on the island, “The Hills,” will open for exploration and play.

Sporting events are always a fun activity to enjoy with kids. The summer offers professional baseball games by four teams: Major League Baseball's New York Mets and New York Yankees, and the NY-Penn League's Brooklyn Cyclones and the Staten Island Yankees. Take in a game played by the Women's National Basketball Association's

New York Liberty, or a match at the United States Tennis Association's grand-slam tournament, the U.S. Open (including Arthur Ashe Kids Day on Aug. 27).

A cost-effective way to see attractions in the city is to purchase a CityPass, which boasts a 40 percent discount on standard ticket prices. This is the perfect way to make the most of your staycation. You could even take it a step further by staying at a hotel overnight, where you can swim in the pool and order room service with the kiddos!

Here are a few of the city's most popular museums and attractions. Pretend you're a tourist and go visit!

Museums

9-11 Memorial and Museum [180 Greenwich St. between Fulton and Liberty streets at World Trade Cen-

ter, (212) 266-5211, 911memorial.org]

Pay your respects to the victims of the 9-11 attacks and observe a moment of silence at the twin reflecting pools, where the names of every person who died are inscribed. Hours are Sunday through Thursday, 9 am-8 pm; Friday through Saturday, 9 am-9 pm. Last entry two hours prior to close. Not valid on 9-11. Memorial hours are daily from 7:30 am to 9 pm.

American Museum of Natural History [Central Park West at 79th Street on the Upper West Side, (212) 769-5100, amnh.org]

Explore human cultures, the natural world, and the universe, world-renowned dioramas, the 94-foot-long blue whale, and incredible dinosaur halls. Don't miss Hayden Planetarium's Space Show. Open daily, 10 am-5:45 pm. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum [1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 423-3500, Guggenheim.org]

See Frank Lloyd Wright's modern architecture and enjoy one of the world's finest collections of 20th century art. Open Sunday through Wednesday and Fridays, 10 am-5:45 pm; Saturdays, 10 am-7:45 pm. Closed Thursdays, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum [Pier 86 at W. 46th Street and 12th Avenue in Hell's Kitchen, (877) 957-SHIP, intrepidmuseum.org]

Explore history, science, and service aboard the former aircraft carrier USS Intrepid, a National Historic Landmark. Open Nov. 1 through March 31, daily 10 am-5 pm; April 1 through Oct. 31: Monday through Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-6 pm; holidays 10 am-6 pm. Last entry one hour prior to close. Closed Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Metropolitan Museum [1000 Fifth Ave. at 82nd Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 535-7710, metmuseum.org]

One of the most visited museums and attractions in the city, admission includes same-day admission to The Met Breuer and The Met Cloisters. Sunday

through Thursday 10 am-5:30 pm; Friday through Saturday, 10 am-9 pm. Galleries are cleared 15 minutes before closing. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and the first Monday in May.

Other sights

Empire State Building [350 Fifth Ave. at 34th Street in Midtown, (877) 692-8439, esbnyc.com]

Enjoy 360-degree open-air views during the day or a late-night view of the world's most dazzling city skyline. Open daily 8 am-2 am. Last elevator leaves 45 minutes before close. Special holiday hours apply.

Top of the Rock Observation Deck [30 Rockefeller Pl. between Fifth and Sixth avenues, (877) 692-7625, topoftherocknyc.com]

Experience panoramic views from interior and exterior decks on the top three floors of this legendary art deco skyscraper. Open daily, 8 am-midnight. Last elevator ascends at 11 pm. Hours may vary on holidays.

Tours

Circle Line (Pier 83, West 42nd Street at 12th Avenue in Midtown, circleline42.com)

Experience magnificent views of the Statue of Liberty, Wall Street, The United Nations, and much more. The Beast speedboat ride available May through September. Special schedule Thanksgiving, New Year's Day and July 4. Closed Christmas Day.

Other links:

Arthur Ashe Kids Day: Arthurashekidsday.com

Brooklyn Cyclones: www.brooklyncyclones.com

CityPass: Citypass.com

Governors Island: Govisland.com

New York Liberty: Liberty.wnba.com

New York Mets: NewYork.Mets.mlb.com

New York Yankees: Yankees.mlb.com

Staten Island Yankees: www.siyanks.com

U.S. Open: Usta.usopen.org

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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Become a great parent

New book
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BY ALLISON PLITT

As a parent, have you ever wished for a training manual about raising kids — a book that would tell you what page to find information about disciplining your child or on which page there's advice on how to praise your child? Dr. Erica Reischer, a clinical psychologist and parent educator, has written just such a manual called, "What Great Parents Do: 75 Simple Strategies for Raising Fantastic Kids."

This manual of invaluable advice is broken down into 75 approaches to help parents work with their children and their behavior. Each strategy is contained in a two- to four-page chapter that can be skipped or skimmed over if you feel you've already grasped the concept. The book can be read in a day or two and can be referred to in any situation in which parents may not know how to handle their children.

"Underlying the parenting practices described in this book are three key principles that I call the ABCs of great parenting," explains Reischer. The A stands for Acceptance, which is about accepting your child for himself. For example, an athletic father may have trouble accepting his son is quiet and musically inclined. The child's self is separated from that of his behavior, which can be modified by parents by following the steps that Reischer provides.

The B stands for Boundaries.

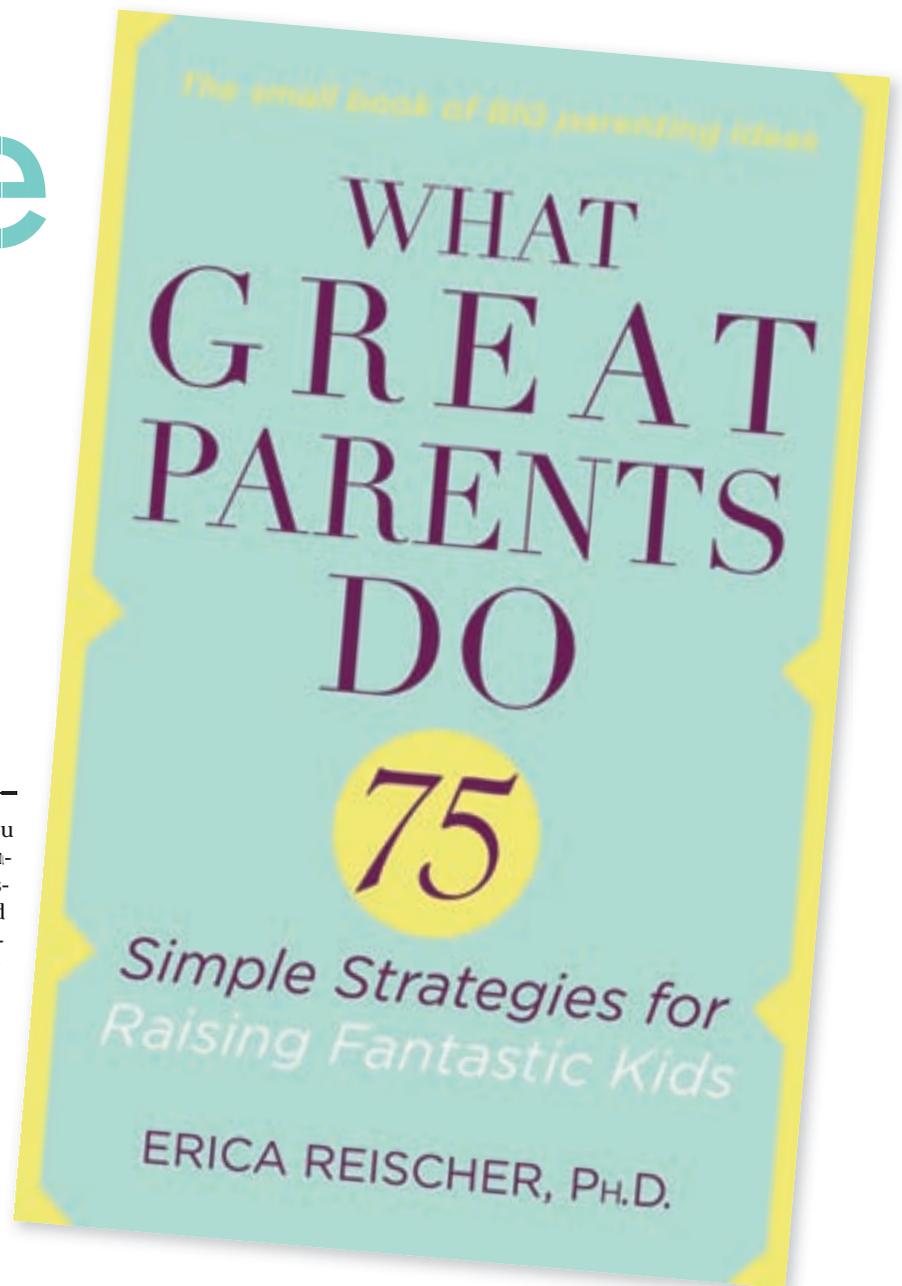
When parents communicate limits to their children, kids "ultimately feel safest in a family environment where expectations and rules are clear and reasonable." And C stands for Consistency, which means parents must follow through on what they say they will do. Parents are role models for children, who will copy their behavior, especially if the parents act in the same positive manner repeatedly.

Reischer devotes a lot of her book to discussing D for Discipline, and how to properly do it. She says it is not about punishing children, but rather teaching them to behave appropriately. Any form of physical punishment, including spanking or even holding a child's arm tightly, teaches children to handle problems with aggression and violence. Yelling at children is also portrayed as detrimental to a child's development.

"Research has also shown that yelling can have harmful effects on children comparable to physical punishment, such as hitting," Reischer observes. "Children whose parents are verbally aggressive also exhibit lower self-esteem, higher aggressiveness, and increased rates of depression."

Reischer advises disciplining children in private so as not to embarrass them in front of their peers. She also advises against disciplining children at inappropriate times, such as when the parents or children are tired and hungry.

One of the strategies for correcting children's behavior is to show empathy and assist him in identifying how he is feeling. For example, if a 6-year-old boy hits his 4-year-old brother for taking away his toy train, parents can say, "Son, I know how





Dr. Erica Reischer

frustrating and angry it can be to see your brother taking away your toy from you without asking, but hitting your brother is not going to solve the problem.”

Next, Reischer advises, you should talk to your son about other ways to teach his brother to respect his toys. You could give your older son different options to solve the problem, so he feels a sense of self-control and autonomy.

The most obvious option would be for the older brother to tell his younger brother that he must ask permission before playing with his toys. If the younger son still doesn't ask permission before using the toys, the older child can choose to get a parent involved.

Once both sons know the appropriate behavior for resolving the problem, those actions should be repeated if the dilemma should appear again. If you find the boys sharing the toys cooperatively, take the opportunity to praise them. Praise reinforces positive behavior.

But be careful how you bestow praise.

Reischer suggests that parents not label their children by saying, “You're so smart.” If a child believes he is smart, she says, he may do everything possible to look smart and not take risks at things that would be mentally challenging.

Praise should be given when children put forth effort. Parents are encouraged to give kids positive feedback for their hard work. For example, when a child's grade in math improves from a C to an A, it's better to say: “I saw how long you spent every day on your math homework, and I saw you study a lot for your math tests. Your hard

work in math has really paid off. I'm very proud of you.”

In addition, Reischer says, teach your children habits for being happy. According to the author, there are three types of happiness: pleasure, engagement, and meaning.

“The focus of pleasure,” the author writes, “is gratifying desires and preferences — for example, having delicious food, fun experiences, and beautiful things.”

Pleasure provides instant gratification for kids; however, it is really engagement and meaning that emotionally fulfill children. Engagement means that kids apply their skills to meet challenges. When these activities become complex, children learn to develop their “skills through practice and persistence.” This again reinforces the idea that through consistent effort and hard work, children can achieve goals that give them self-confidence and self-esteem.

Meaning is defined as “service” to contribute to the greater good. Great parents teach their children to be charitable. Acting charitably is not for putting on the college application but for kids to build self-confidence by using their skills to help others. When kids learn to be caring and compassionate, they learn about empathy, which will help them in their interpersonal relationships with other people.

Another key to happiness that great parents impart to their children is gratitude, the importance of being thankful for what they have. According to Robert Emmons, a prominent gratitude researcher, “Practicing gratitude alleviates anxiety and depression and improves mental, emotional, and physical health.”

Being a great parent all boils down to having a strong relationship with your children and treating them with respect. In reciprocity, kids should treat their parents in the same manner, which also means using the words “please” and “thank you.”

If you are reading her manual and feel overwhelmed by all of the advice, Reischer reminds parents that being great is not about being perfect, because no parent can do everything perfectly. When they make errors, great parents admit their mistakes to their kids and apologize for their behavior.

Allison Plitt is a frequent contributor to NY Parenting and lives in Queens with her 10-year-old daughter.

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Day care 101

Choosing a place that works for your child and you

BY JUDY M. MILLER

One of the toughest first decisions I had to make as a new parent-to-be was finding exceptional day care for my newborn. I had to go back to work six weeks after giving birth, so I began my day-care search long before my son was born.

I was thankful I did. Many day cares were full and had waiting lists. A number were simply not in our budget. Others did not take such a young infant.

Here's how to find the best day care for your family:

Begin early

Begin your quest for a day care as soon as you realize that you will need it. Many day cares require a deposit to hold a place for your child.

If your child has special needs that will need to be addressed, inquire if the day care can support you in this and whether you will be comfortable. You may want to explore hiring a nanny or an in-home provider.

Ask those who know

I asked day-care-seasoned parents about the day cares they used before I began exploring options. Their input helped me to decide the environment I wanted my child to be in.

Determine what your parame-

ters are: location, cost, hours, and days needed, and in-home versus a church-based or commercial day-care center. Schedule a tour of any day care that has made it on to your final list of options. Be sure to bring your list of questions with you.

Look for a nurturing environment

Children require nurturing to grow healthy minds and bodies. Observe the environment as you tour the home or facility.

What is the daily schedule? How are children treated? What is the caregiver-to-child ratio? How does the day care feel? How do the employees transition children into new rooms?

Be comfortable with the method of discipline

Ask how the day care disciplines a child. If you are not comfortable with its methods, walk.

I did not think about asking about discipline until my son, an only child at that time, was kicked out of day care at the ripe age of 12 months for biting. I found another in-home day care for him and tearfully told the caregiver the truth. She gave me a big hug and said, "Well, that's normal!"

My son's aggression and biting disappeared within days, because he was receiving more nurturing.

She also had him potty trained at 14 months. He stayed with her until he began kindergarten.

Pay attention to safety and cleanliness

What are the security procedures? Does the day care follow them?

Check out the bathrooms. Ask to see the kitchen. Check if the caregivers and other staff members wear gloves when cleaning up bodily fluids. How are the rooms that your child will be in cleaned? Are cots disinfected? Is bedding washed or sent home with you on a consistent basis? Are the tables and other furniture appropriately child-sized? Are the toilets and sinks? What is the outdoor play area like?

Assess the communication style

How proactive is the day care with communication? Will you get a summary of your child's day, down to the number of dirty diapers and time and length of her nap? Will you be called immediately if there is a concern? Is the caregiver approachable for questions and discussion?

Understand expectations

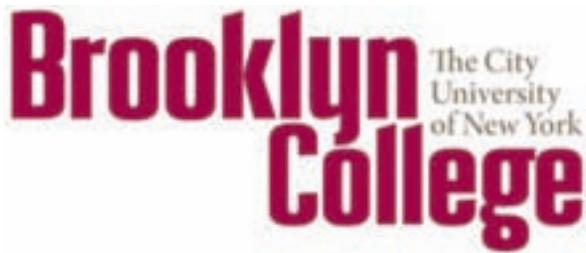
Are you expected to pay for a full-time week over a certain number of days? How do vacations and holidays work? What hours is the day care open? Will the day care be able to take your child early or keep her late if necessary? If so, what is the charge of doing so?

Understand the sick policy

Most day cares are specific about what constitutes a sick child or an infection that will not be allowed to be in day care. A child in my son's day care came down with the highly contagious conjunctivitis (also known as pinkeye). I was relieved the affected child was sent home immediately and could not return until a doctor said he was no longer contagious.

As a parent, you hope the day care will follow the policies it has in place. Understand that adhering to the policy is important not only for your child, but others as well.

Judy M. Miller is a freelance writer living in the Midwest and a mom to four children, all of whom have spent time in day care when young. She is a Gottman Institute educator and the author of "What To Expect From Your Adopted Tween" and "Writing to Heal Adoption Grief: Making Connections & Moving Forward."



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DADDY DIARIES

DIMITRI EHRlich

Our long-awaited stranger arrives

About 11 hours ago, my son was born. His name is Lev. Lev Sonam Ehrlich.

We had, of course, been warned that giving birth can be an ordeal, but my partner Michelle was weirdly serene, and the whole thing happened in a blur. The baby emerged after 30 minutes of pushing. He has a thick head of wavy golden hair. Lev means “heart” in Hebrew, and Sonam means “merit” or “golden” in Tibetan. So his name means “golden heart” or “fearless merit.”

When Michelle was pregnant, friends kept asking me how I felt about impending fatherhood. I always said the same thing: I feel like I’m sitting at the top of a roller coaster. I don’t exactly know what’s going to happen, but I know it will be a fast, scary, thrilling ride.

Even when you know a baby is going to be born, nothing can prepare you for the gut punch, the way you see stars, the rush of blood. The nurse handed my son to me, and tears popped out of my eyes, because this small, purplish-yellow little gerbil covered in goo was staring at me with a look in his eyes that said: “Don’t just stand there you idiot, do something.”

It was a moment of thunderous intimacy. I had never before been so needed by another human being. He wasn’t asking me to feed and protect him, I just understood that it was now my job, my calling, my pleasure. I was now completely responsible. My childhood and adolescence — which had already been extended several ridiculous decades too long — was over, and something new and uncharted was beginning.

Fatherhood.

It was like stepping into my father’s suit, and seeing how it fit and how it didn’t. Or getting behind the wheel of a car for the first time and wondering whether your feet will really reach the gas pedal, and then, in that instant your sneaker makes contact with the pedal, the question is gone: you are in motion,



the world around you is a blur.

When it came to becoming a father, in my circle of friends I was the last man standing. At age 49, I feel ancient, far too old to be starting the journey of fatherhood. Why did I wait so long? A therapist, my mother, and several exes might say “fear of intimacy,” and maybe there’s some truth to that, but several other factors are at play.

For one thing, throughout my 20s, 30s, and 40s, when pretty much all

of my friends got married and had kids, I was busy doing something else, which you could call running away from adult responsibilities, but I like to call “having fun.” Perhaps the truth is somewhere in between. Maybe my manic flitting around the world and intense fixation on mastering martial arts, the extreme adventures and extreme workouts, were a search for meaning, or an attempt to fill a void.

A partial list of things I did in-

It was like getting behind the wheel of a car for the first time and wondering whether your feet will really reach the gas pedal, and then, in that instant your sneaker makes contact with the pedal, the question is gone: you are in motion, the world around you is a blur.

stead of changing diapers and raising a child during the three decades of my extended adolescence: I jammed with Prince and The Beastie Boys; got drunk with Keith Richards; became a video jockey for MTV; took long trips to Tibet, India, China, Nepal, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Cuba; Thai boxed my way across Thailand; got caught up in riots in Ecuador and fled into the Amazon rainforest; a magazine actually paid me to go to Jamaica, combat glaucoma, and write about Jamaican go-go dancers; my music publisher sent me on songwriting trips to Nashville, London, Berlin, Stockholm, and Sydney; and I attended 34 Buddhist meditation retreats.

When I wasn't traveling (and often when I was) I was spending two to three hours a day practicing martial arts. And then there was my romantic life. To summarize: there's a book called "The Tyranny of Choice." And while I am a short, chubby nerd with no redeeming qualities, for some reason I managed to get lucky when I was 11 years old and Deirdre Williams kissed me on the cheek. And then even more inexplicably, my luck with the ladies kept going for four decades, an unlikely run culminating with Michelle, who is a woman of stunning brilliance and crushing beauty, and apparently also someone with poor eyesight and no sense of smell.

Anyway, nothing about this lifestyle as a globetrotting songwriter and kung-fu obsessed idiot is impossible once you have a baby. But as anyone who has a kid knows, the life I was living becomes more tricky once there's a newborn in the picture.

Within a few seconds of being born, Lev awoke me from this life-flashing-before-my-eyes reverie when he yelled a clearly articulated and deliberate affirmation that he was psyched to be alive. He looked at me and

shouted, "YEAH!" and I had my first thought as a parent: this goniff just said his first word, and he isn't even a minute old. We have a word in Yiddish that describes the particular pride a parent feels when your child achieves something: nachas. I was only 45 seconds into parenthood, and already I felt like bragging because my boy learned to speak at age zero.

A few other things I noticed about this newly arrived stranger:

- He has stunning blue eyes like Steve McQueen.
- He smells like a croissant and sunlight.
- And he has a giant set of balls.

Michelle and I took Lev home from the hospital and showed him around the apartment; I explained how to use the toaster and gave him the wifi password. Then came that awkward moment when you've been really looking forward to seeing someone, and then you're like, "OK, what do we talk about now?" But the truth is, we were all a little too tired for chit-chat, and other than saying "Yeah," his vocabulary was kinda s-----.

The next morning, I sat and said Buddhist prayers, staring into my infant son's steel-blue eyes, and I thought of the exhibit at the planetarium: the one where they show you how big the universe is, and how small we are. I looked into the charcoal tips of his pupils and wondered about the edges of space and time, where he came from before he was born, where we go after we die, and how I couldn't remember who I was before this riptide of love changed me forever.

Dimitri Ehrlich is a songwriter and author. His writing has been featured in the New York Times, Rolling Stone, Spin, Details, and the Huffington Post, where "the Daddy Diaries" originally appeared.

Online Activity Guide
on www.NYParenting.com



FAMILY HEALTH

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



Caring for a colicky baby

I know that all infants are prone to crying, but I feel like my newborn has been crying excessively. Sometimes it just means he's hungry, tired, or needs his diaper changed, but there are other times when he seems inconsolable, no matter what I do. I've read that this may be a sign of colic. How can I know for sure, and what should I do?

It is normal for infants to cry and fuss somewhat, but excessive crying from a healthy, well-fed baby for more than three hours at a time may be a sign of infantile colic. Colic in infants typically begins at two to three weeks of age and lasts anywhere from 3 to 4 months.

Currently, the exact causes of colic remain unknown, but there are several strong "suspects." Some doctors believe that colic occurs when food passes too quickly

through the baby's digestive tract. Others theorize that some babies have gastroesophageal reflux disease, which causes stomach acid to make its way into the esophagus, and can be extremely uncomfortable.

While its causes remain somewhat of a mystery, if you suspect your baby of being colicky, there is a concrete course of action you should certainly take: make an appointment with your pediatrician! There are no specific tests for colic, but it is important to rule out several other causes of sudden-onset screaming in infants such as a hernia, ear infection, or abdominal infection. There is no proven single treatment to make colic disappear, but there are ways to soothe your baby until his colic goes away.

Avoid overfeeding by nursing or giving the baby a bottle when he

or she is colicky. Keep in mind that colicky babies do not cry because they are hungry. It is better to adhere to your baby's regular feeding schedule.

Breastfeeding mothers should avoid consuming milk products and other gas producing, irritating foods. For formula-fed babies, it may be helpful to switch to a low-allergy formula such as Alimentum or Nutramigen.

Other helpful measures include walking with your baby, wrapping him snugly in a blanket (swaddling), playing music, or burping your baby more often during feedings.

If at any time you begin to feel overwhelmed or frustrated by the baby's crying, ask a family member or friend to watch your child. It is also okay to put your baby down in the crib if no one is readily available. Taking a break is a good way to help you relax, which may also improve your baby's disposition.

The good news is there are no long-term effects associated with colic, and the condition is temporary. After 3 or 4 months, all symptoms should cease, and both you and your baby will be much happier.

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TIPS FOR FEEDING KIDS

CHEF JOANNA DEVITA

Summer meal plans

As the summer heats up and the days are stretched, finding the time or motivation to enter the hot kitchen to prepare a meal gets harder. I like to do my summer cooking in blocks of time, once or twice a week. This way, when it comes time to eat or pack a meal, I have prepared food items to repurpose into flavorful, healthful meals. This is a great way to cook if you have a community-supported agriculture share, or if you pick up a beautiful bounty of produce at the farmers' market.

Another bonus for July: batch cooking is a great way to cook if you are sharing space on vacation with other families. Put the work in, and you can enjoy the freedom of no-cook dinners throughout the week.

Break down all of your veggies in one shot. This is the only way I make it through my weekly community-supported agriculture share. I devote an hour or two to cleaning and prepping my veggies. Wash greens in deep water and spin dry. Store clean salad or sauté-ready greens in Ziploc bags with a paper towel inside. Greens will last longer this way, plus they are ready to use on a whim.

Cook pasta, grains, and legumes in a big batch and use for simple assembled dishes throughout the week. Some examples of dishes you can assemble using pre-cooked grains and legumes are: quinoa lentil salad, baked ziti, couscous salad, and Thai rice salad. These pack well for a picnic, or you can add a piece of grilled meat, fish, or soft-boiled, pasture-raised eggs to



make an elegant weeknight supper in minutes.

Cook extra meat on the grill when you have it going for meals later on. Chicken salad, steak tacos, and sausage-topped flatbread pizza are great meals that are easy to throw together with pre-cooked meats. Just make sure the meats are cooled properly after cooking and wrapped tightly in the fridge.

Stock the freezer with wholesome, nutritious snacks and side dishes for dinners on the go. Frozen cheese sticks, individual thaw-and-serve edamame packets, and yogurt squeezers all can help keep the cooler bag cold and are great for a Fourth of July fireworks picnic. Freeze single-serve homemade salad dressings in bags or contain-

ers, too, for a quick flavor boost on your picnic salad.

Don't forget dessert! While you are busy in the kitchen on your cooking day, make sure to blend up some fresh fruit and simple flavorings for homemade ice pops. Ice pop molds are widely available online and at various retailers. No time to blend fruit? Simply freeze your family's favorite juice or coconut water in the molds for a refreshing summer cooler!

Joanna DeVita is executive chef at Léman Manhattan Preparatory School, and she's the mother of two (ages 5 and 2). DeVita loves nothing more than spending time outdoors with her children, and sharing with them her love and respect for nature, good ingredients, and the joy of cooking.

Sour cherry ice pops

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS:

2 pints sour cherries, sweet cherries, or a mix of both, cleaned and pitted

¼ cup sugar

¼ cup water

Small pinch of salt

¼ tsp vanilla extract

Sanitized ice pop molds

DIRECTIONS: Heat water and sugar in a small saucepan until sugar dissolves and liquid is clear. This is simple syrup. Add the vanilla and let cool. Puree the pitted cherries in a blender or food processor until desired consistency. (I like chunks, my kids do not!) Mix cherry puree with simple syrup. Pour into ice pop molds and freeze. Enjoy when frozen solid!

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FABULYSS FINDS

LYSS STERN

Fun summer ideas

Don't know what to do with the kids July 4 weekend? I found some fabuLyss activities you will all enjoy! A diva must-see is obviously the fireworks. The Macy's Fourth of July Fireworks are over the East River starting around 9:20 pm, while the Jersey City and Statue of Liberty show starts at 9:30 pm. Hopefully, your little ones can stay awake long enough to watch! A fun place to enjoy the fireworks? Brooklyn Bridge Park. Right along the East River, you and your family will enjoy the perfect view of the pyrotechnics.

If your family is more into amusement parks, check out Coney Island on July 3 and 4 for fireworks and karaoke over the beach.

I wanted to share my summer FabuLyssFinds. As you probably already know, I spend a lot of my time at the beach during the summer. I always have a million things to carry between my stuff and the kids' gear, and I found the perfect beach bag to tote it all around. The Haute Shore monogram Bali straw basket tote is what you will see me using all summer.

The tote comes in three colors: natural, brown, or black. You can then pick from more than 10 embroidery colors to monogram your bag. I love my black tote with my initials in bright pink. The bag is super light, and the wooden handles add a little bit of elegance.

Another item you'll see me in all summer? The Charlotte Olympia Havaiianas (pictured). The two teams combined forces to bring you a collection of fun flip-flop styles.

Find the totes at <https://haute-shore.myshopify.com/products/bali-basket-tote>

Find the flip-flops at <http://us.charlotteolympia.com/>

A few weeks ago, I took my son to the must-see new off-Broadway



show, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown." The York Theatre presented the classic with young stars of Broadway. My 8-year-old son absolutely loved the show, which ran until June 26.

The York Theatre also has a fabuLyss youth acting camp that is perfect for your teens and tweens. This program will help your child strengthen their skills and creativity while boosting their self-esteem. There are two programs: The middle school program is for sixth to eighth graders, and auditions are not required. These classes are for all levels of experience.

The high school program is for ninth to 12th graders who have a passion for theater. Auditions are required by a video submission, and if your child is admitted, the program will help him take his skills to the next level while following the path of a real professional rehearsal schedule, working on a variety of materials, and preparing him for perform-

ing arts college auditions.

To read more about the camp and to sign up, check it out at <http://www.yorktheatre.org/summer-intensive.html>.

Looking for a summer laugh? We have you covered. Make sure to see "One Funny Mother" <http://onefunnymother.com>.

Dena Blizzard makes motherhood even more fabuLyssly funny. Make it a diva moms' night out, and don't forget to have a glass of wine before the show. The laughter is endless!

If you haven't gotten around to reading a book yet, now is your time to turn the pages of a summer book. Set up your lounge chair and relax with these fabuLyss reads: "Modern Loves" by Emma Straub is on my to-read list. This book has wisdom and humor about two old college friends living their lives as adults. Be sure to also check out "The Girls" by Emma Cline, "You Know Me Well" by Nina LaCour and David Levithan, and "The Nest" by Cynthia D'Apris Sweeney.

Mark your calendars! July 30 we will be setting up Camp Divalysscious at Super Saturday in the Hamptons.

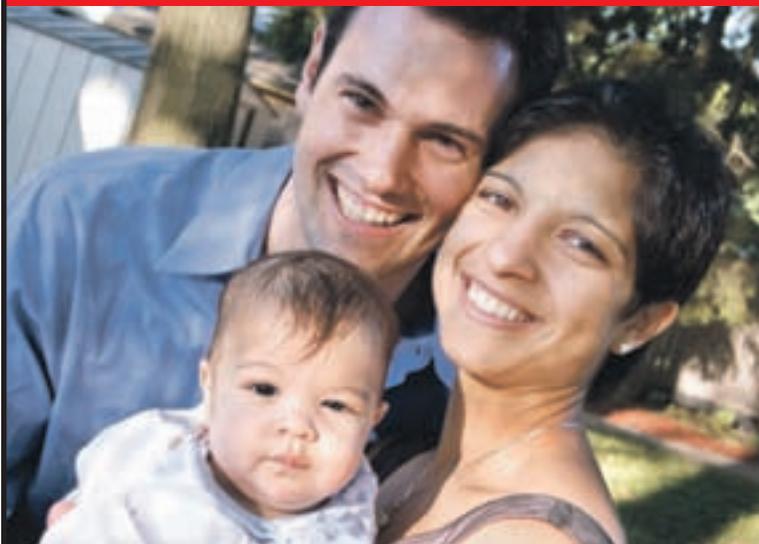
We're calling all kids, diva moms, and tots, too. We've planned a FabuLyss Super Saturday just for you! There will be special performances from Wendy The Pipe Cleaner Lady, puppet shows, dance parties, Bella Face Painting, glitter tattoos, balloon artistry, caricatures, deLysscious s'mores-making, and so much more.

Capture the day with a portrait from our super children's photographer Heidi Green. Plus, you can design your very own Camp Divalysscious tote bag and hat, and decorate deLysscious cupcakes and cookies with Cakes Jagla.

I cannot wait to spend the afternoon with you!

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

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An advertisement for the Gazillion Bubble Show. The background is a vibrant blue and purple sky with stars and a large, colorful bubble being blown by a man in a white shirt. The text "Gazillion Bubble Show" is written in a stylized, colorful font at the top. Below it, a quote reads "INGENIOUS BUBBLE WIZARDRY." -THE NEW YORKER. A green starburst graphic says "10th ANNIVERSARY YEAR!". At the bottom, contact information is provided: "Telecharge.com or 212.239.6200", "For groups or birthdays call 866.642.9849", "New World Stages 340 W 50th St.", and "GazillionBubbleShow.com".

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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

On trying too hard

Taking a moment to see if you're overextended

It had been a long day. I had several meetings in various parts of the city. Getting to the Upper East Side from my section of Brooklyn can easily take an hour and a half. It wasn't a terrible commute that morning, but I saw a few snowflakes on my way in. One meeting uptown ran late, which made me hustle to my midtown appointment at noon. By then, a thin sheet of snow had blanketed the city streets, and I had left my boots at home.

When I was done for the day and ready to come home, the train was not coming. Signals had rendered the B train frozen, and I stood along with several hundred other tired commuters for 45 minutes until we squeezed our way into the metal cars to head very slowly back to Brooklyn. Then, I had to wait for the bus to take me to my house. The bus had no intention of arriving on time, either.

Waiting at home for me was grocery shopping, planning a family get-together, taking my son to music practice, my dog to the vet, laundry, and a couple of deadlines.

While waiting for the bus, I saw an older woman walking with three large bags, slushing her way through the snow. She looked at the bus schedule and then shouted out to no one in particular, "Does the B2 stop here?" I answered, "No, it doesn't. It stops across the street," and I pointed to the opposite corner. She then told me where she had to go, and how she didn't know how to get there and in that short time, I realized she wasn't exactly coherent. But I tried to help her get where she was going. Then she proceeded to pace around and talk to herself as I remembered a faster way for her to reach her destination and walked over to tell her.

And that's when she screamed, "Honey, you're trying too hard. Just stop."

Startled, I didn't respond. She shuffled away. My bus finally came, and eventually I got home. As New Yorkers, we encounter all sorts of people every day and, unfortunately,



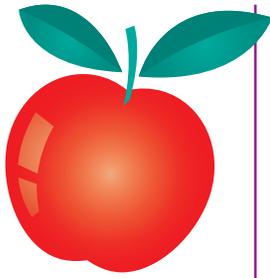
many of them are not exactly lucid, some are terribly obnoxious, just plain mean, or otherwise intoxicated. It's nothing new. But this lady's words stayed with me ... because they hit home.

I had been trying to do everything all at the same time, not let anything slip through the cracks, and control it all. Only, I couldn't. No one can. None of us can do it by ourselves, but I was one not accustomed to asking for help. And each "yes" I agreed to only stirred my anxiety. This lady was like the angels in the movies that only the lead character can see, although I'm fairly sure she was real. We all get signs, whether they are directly from friends and family, or an animal, or song, or even a word we keep encountering over and over again. When we see or hear something that makes us stop in our tracks, that's a good indication that it's something we need to give our attention to.

I'd like to say that since that day,

I completely put an end to overextending myself, accepting every invitation, and volunteering to help out whoever needs help. I have become better at saying "no." Every now and then I hear that woman whisper, "You're trying too hard," particularly when I find myself too busy and stressed. I silently agree and then practice saying "no." We all should try our best to help our loved ones, and even those we don't know but can help, but not at our own expense. Only when we take care of ourselves can we truly impact others, and to do that, we must put ourselves on our own priority list.

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, is a writer and editor living in New York City. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blog, Some Puppy To Love.



DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND
MARGE EBERTS

Summer is the time for social studies fun

Dear parents,

Summer is increasingly becoming a more academic time. Many students are now assigned homework over the summer. This is largely happening because teachers know that young children may forget as much as 25 percent of what they learned during the school year.

This summer, we have selected a number of social studies activities that should make that subject come alive and will be fun for your children to do. They can find even more activities on the Dear Teacher website under "Social Studies Activities."

Social studies online

Since today's children spend so much time online, have your children visit outstanding social studies websites and choose several activities to do. Besides being able to make virtual visits to historic spots, from the White House to Mount Vernon, they will find endless games that will increase their knowledge. Here are two excellent free websites to visit (you can easily use search engines to find others):

Exploring Government for Kids (kids.gov) should be first. Besides being a safe site for kids to visit, it offers content on government, history, and social studies, as well as games and videos. Plus, from there you can go to your state's website and usually find many state-related activities in the social studies arena.

Since schools often provide limited instruction in geography, visit the student pages on Education. NationalGeographic.com for many map, weather and other activities.

Learn about presidents

Most children like to watch movies. This is an easy and enjoyable way to help them learn about the people who have led our country. The majority of these movies are best for children in middle school and beyond. Avoid showing your children movies about the presidents that are largely fictional.

You may wish to preview or read



reviews of the movies before showing any of them to your children. Here are a few suggestions of movies that will acquaint your children with our presidents:

- Dwight Eisenhower: "Ike: Countdown to D-Day."
- John F. Kennedy: "Thirteen Days," "PT 109."
- Abraham Lincoln: "Lincoln."
- Richard Nixon: "Nixon," "Frost/Nixon."
- Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Sunrise at Campobello," "Warm Springs."

Several television series have documentaries of our presidents that you can find online, such as the American Experience series "The Presidents," on pbs.org.

You can also let them watch virtual tours of presidents' homes and sites related to their lives. More can be learned about every president, from Washington through Bush, on the National Park Service's website at www.nps.gov/nr/travel/presidents. Click on "List of Sites" to enjoy tours related to presidents as well as stories about these places.

Making a time capsule

A time capsule is a way to give people in the future an idea of what life was like when the capsule was made. It can be opened in a year or hundreds of years later. Today, more than 10,000 time capsules exist, excluding personal ones. Most are in the cornerstones of new buildings.

Explain to your children that they will fill a container with things that

are important to them right now. The container can be placed somewhere in your home, such as a closet or filing cabinet. If buried somewhere, the container should be so tight that it will not let in either air or moisture. Point out that these capsules will be a lot of fun for them to open as adults. For example, it would give their children an idea of what their parents' lives were like. They could even open the time capsule next summer to see what they thought was truly important this year. It might not be so next year.

Here are some suggestions of things that children might want to put into a time capsule: newspapers, books, toys, clothing, personal notes about their current activities, predictions about the future, pictures, a video, or anything that the children currently use or is of value to them.

Learn about the census

Fact Finder at factfinder.census.gov (community facts) and Wikipedia.org (2010 census) are both good online sources for census information. Children can begin learning about the census by finding out how many children between 5 and 9 and 10 and 14 lived in their zip code in 2010. Then they should break this information down into the number of boys and girls in each age group. Next, they should determine what age group has the most people in their zip code. Before they start, have them guess whether there will be more people over or under 21.

Older children can look at the census figures for 2000 and 2010 to determine if their state's population is increasing or decreasing.

They can also expand their investigation of census reports to earlier censuses to see how the population of our nation changed between 1900 and 2000.

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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THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Just an everyday kid — with a difference

In her new book “Being Jazz,” Jazz Jennings writes about being an everyday kid with a difference.

As a very small child, Jazz Jennings knew that something was wrong with the way adults were acting toward her. Her parents dressed her in boy clothes, gave her trucks, and said things like “Good boy!” But Jennings knew that they were wrong. She was a girl, though her body said otherwise.

For most of her toddlerhood, Jennings (known then as Jaron) fought against anything that was remotely masculine. At 2 years of age, she asked her mother when the “Good Fairy” was coming to change her into a girl; Jennings’s mother then realized that this “probably wasn’t a phase.”

As Jennings grew up, she became an inspiration for many with gender dysphoria. She and her father fought for her right to play soccer with other girls. She was up-front with friends, Barbara Walters, and others about being a girl in a boy’s body, and she had plenty of haters, but she learned who her friends really were.

Who’d ever have thought that

bathrooms would be such a hot-button issue in 2016? Jennings has, perhaps; she’s been dealing with potty parity nearly all her life, which is just one of the topics she tackles in “Being Jazz.”

It’s obvious that this is one exceptionally upbeat book. There’s almost no poor-me-ing here; even when she writes about struggles and occasional anger, Jennings’s cheery optimism is front-and-center. She gives props to her family for this, praising their easy acceptance and unconditional support, and acknowledging that many trans teens don’t enjoy the same familial benefits.

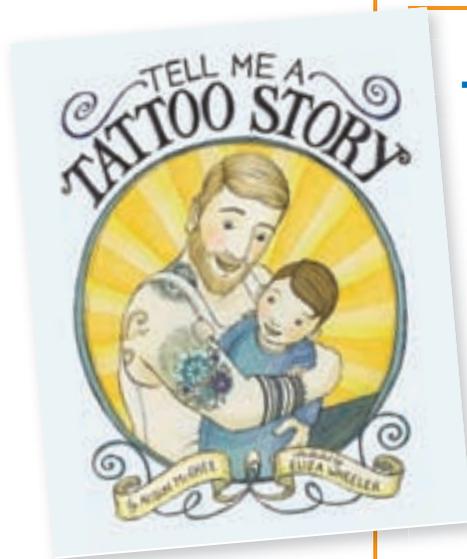
That praise can almost be expected, but I noticed one refreshingly unexpected thing: because of her honesty and openness, Jennings has become a role model, a status of which she seems nonchalantly abashed but secretly delighted, with a tone of pride there, too. (She was one of the grand marshals of last



month’s Pride Parade in Manhattan, and she is the star of TLC’s docuseries, “I Am Jazz.”) Who could fail to be charmed by such straightforward authenticity?

While this book is supposedly for teens ages 12-and-up, I think a transitioning 20-something could certainly benefit from what’s inside this book. For sure, its buoyancy and optimism makes “Being Jazz” all kinds of special.

“Being Jazz,” by Jazz Jennings [272 pages, 2016, \$17.99].



A tat is worth a thousand words

Daddy’s arms are good for hugs.

They’re big and strong and colorful, too. They look kind of like one of your favorite picture books; in fact, Daddy says the drawings on his arms are just like a story to him. In the new book “Tell Me a Tattoo Story” by Alison McGhee, illustrated by Eliza Wheeler, each picture says something important.

Not a day goes by that the little boy doesn’t want to see his Daddy’s tattoos.

Yes, he’s seen them before, many times, and he knows exactly why they’re there. He never gets tired of hearing about them.

The one on Daddy’s shoulder is a picture from a book that his mother used to read to him when he was a little boy, a long time ago. She read that book “over and over and over,”

and Daddy remembered it well.

The tattoo under Daddy’s wrist is a reminder of something that his Daddy used to say. Daddy has great memories of his father, the kindness he showed, and the lessons he taught. The tattoo is just two words, but it helps keep those words fresh.

The big colorful tattoo on Daddy’s arm? Oh, that reminds him of a very good day when he met the most beautiful girl in the world and saw her dazzling smile.

But the “dinky little heart” tattoo on Daddy’s chest — the one with the numbers inside it — that’s the little boy’s favorite one of all. There’s something very special about it, and its story is very meaningful.

It might, in fact, be the most important tattoo of all.

With a different spin on the classic tell-me-about-the-day-I-was-born preschooler favorite, McGhee brings a dad’s version of a child’s life to

the page. It’s lovingly obvious that the dad has told this story many times, because he only hints at certain parts; still, it’s familiar and comforting to the boy, who’s heard it all before. I loved the implied intimacy of that family tale, and the way it’s told.

No children’s picture book is complete without pictures, of course, and Wheeler does an exceptional job in this one. Look closely at the dad, at what he’s doing and what he remembers. You’ll be charmed.

This is a sweet book for kids ages 3 to 6, especially if you’ve got a tat tale to tell. In that case, your child will naturally want “Tell Me a Tattoo Story” in his arms tonight.

“Tell Me a Tattoo Story,” by Alison McGhee [32 pages, 2016, \$16.99].

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

It's dino-myte fun!

'Dino Babies'
is funny and
educational

KIDS FIRST! FILM CRITICS

If your kids love dinosaurs, "Dino Dan: Dino Babies" is a must watch! Outstanding!

In this DVD collection, we join junior dinosaur expert Trek Henderson as he imagines dinosaurs in the real world, especially baby dinosaurs. I enjoyed the way this DVD uses computer-generated imagery of dinosaurs. This show is truly entertaining and educational.

It is very colorful and teaches a great deal about dinosaurs and how they lived. We learn all about several species of dinosaurs: Edmontosaurus, Triceratops, Brachiosaurus, and Spinosaurus. Trek teaches us about what they ate, how they cared for their babies, how their footprints give paleontologists information about how they lived, and more.

There are a bunch of dinosaur movies, TV shows, and cartoons, but it is rare to see life-like dinosaurs. Each episode of "Dino Dan" features a different dinosaur, and you get to see what a real one would look like and learn about their different traits.

The dinosaurs are fascinating. Adult dinosaurs would be very expensive to feed and way too hard to keep confined so they roam the neighborhood. Oh, don't worry, they are friendly.

Trek only keeps adorable baby dinosaurs in his backyard. His mom tries to always have dino treats on hand, so Trek can use the food to figure out different things about dinosaurs. Can they fly? Do they eat eggs? What is their favorite thing to eat? What do their footprints look like?

Getting footprints from a dinosaur takes a lot of hard work and "Dino Footprints" was my favorite episode. I watched the various ways Trek used to get the prints and found them very humorous. Hanna and her dad help him look like a dinosaur that is a predator. The predator then gives chase and tricks the other dinosaurs into stepping into the clay and thereby mak-



ing a footprint.

My favorite character is Trek because he is hilarious. He is also kind, smart, and curious. He has all the traits that everyone should have. I also love that he cares about the different dinosaurs and their families. He has the cutest backpack that looks just like a dinosaur. (This backpack will be on my birthday list this year!) Trek is very creative. When he doesn't have dino bait, he finds a way to make some.

My favorite dinosaur is the baby Plesiosaur. Plesiosaur dinosaurs swim in cold water. It's an adorable baby, and I wish I could have one as a pet. I already have a fish tank that she could live in. This dinosaur is also my favorite color — blue. It is just meant to be, and I would name her Annalisa.

I recommend this DVD for ages 4 to 11. It is easy to watch, although older kids might want more factual content and drama to keep them interested. I give this 4.5 out of 5 "roaring dino egg" stars.

— *By Morgan B., age 11*

See her video review at: <https://youtu.be/uZdyi9xFnCM>

• • •

Dino Babies uses great story lines in each episode. I enjoyed the way each episode has a real-life familiarity. For exam-

ple, "Switched at Nest" tells us how dinos care for their young as well as other species' young. "Dino Tooth Fairy" examines the various species' teeth.

The vocabulary and material are very well suited for the intended age group, and they do a great job explaining terms and answering why dinosaurs did the things they did. I enjoyed the introduction of each episode with a situation that causes Trek to work on the solution, and in the process, uncovers information about dinosaurs that he shares with the audience.

We see many positive role models. Trek and his friends demonstrate a friendship and willingness to work together on their school project. They all recognize Trek's expertise when it comes to dinosaurs.

This is exceptionally well produced. It has excellent options on the menu that are easy to use, allowing you to view all episodes or select a specific chapter.

I definitely give this 5 out of 5 stars and recommend it for ages 5 to 12.

— *Juanita S., KIDS FIRST! adult juror*



Calendar

JULY



Photo by Julie Larsen Maher

Getting wild on stage

It's going to be wild times at Maria Hernandez Park when the Wildlife Theater from the Central Park Zoo comes a-calling on July 19.

The Wildlife Theater troupe is an outreach group that presents an educational and entertaining performance for children, explaining the importance of ecology. From penguins to polar bears, dinosaurs to butterflies, children leave with a new-found wonder for the world

around them and the creatures that share our planet.

Wildlife Theater from the Central Park Zoo on July 19 at 10:30 am. Free admission, thanks to SummerStage Kids and City Parks Foundation.

Maria Hernandez Park (Knickerbocker Avenue and Willoughby Avenue in Bushwick, www.cityparksfoundation.org; www.wcs.org/wildlifetheater)

Never miss a great event!

Sign up for our FREE newsletter and get twice-a-week ideas for you and your family right in your mailbox. NYParenting.com

Calendar

Submit a listing

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

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

SAT, JULY 2

IN BROOKLYN

Colonial Life: Fort Greene Park Visitor Center, enter park at Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park; (718) 722-3218; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Fort Greene holds an important place in the history of the colonies and the American Revolution. Learn about the traditions, dress, and games of the colonial people and Native Americans who lived in this area of Brooklyn centuries ago.

Summer Celebration: Cornerstone Church Park, Shore Road and 83rd Street; (347) 668-7384; Lesley@cornerstonebayridge.org; www.cornerstonebayridge.org; 4 pm; Free.

Volunteers will be hosting their sixth annual celebration which features music, snacks, games, sports, free raffles, prizes, and more. It's a fun and safe environment for families and friends to kick off the summer.

Celebrate Independence Day: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; information@brooklynmuseum.org; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 5 pm to 11 pm; Free.

Target First Saturday celebrates Independence Day with programming inspired by the exhibition *Agitprop!* and our refreshed American Art collection. Programming will expand ideas about Independence Day to question what it means to be American and celebrate art and activism that call for more freedom. Highlights include music by Pablo Helguera and DJ Chela, performances by Dennis Redmoon Darkeem and Bread and Puppet Theater, and a screening of the documentary *Keepers of the Game*.

Swinging celebration: On Stage at Kingsborough, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org; 8 pm; Free.

Come on down for Hot Summer Night's outdoor concert celebrating the country's independence. Grab a pic-



Photo by Stefano Giovannini

Don't miss the Giglio

Celebrate the 129th Giglio Italian Festival beginning July 6 and running through July 17 at Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in Williamsburg.

The traditional community feast honors Saint Paolino and features faith, food, music, neighborhood pride, history, colorful cultural celebrations, and international visitors. The festival is capped with 112 men lifting a four-ton tower during the "Dance of the Giglio."

A special children's lift is scheduled for July 7 at 6 pm (rain date is July 8). Fun for all ages.

The Giglio Festival, July 6 through July 17, Monday to Friday, 6 to 11 pm; Saturdays 6 pm to midnight; and Sundays noon to 11 pm. The event is free, but food, rides, artwork and activities have separate fees.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel [275 N. Eighth St. at Havemeyer Street in Williamsburg, (718) 384-0223].

nic basket and enjoy the sounds of the Glenn Crytzer Orchestra with special guest Lindy Hoppers from the Syncopated City Dance company.

SUN, JULY 3

IN BROOKLYN

A Royal Shindig & Brooklyn Beanstalk: Brooklyn Bridge Park at Pier 6, Joralemon Street; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Private Picassos and the Uni Project will offer fun, family-friendly activities followed by interactive reading with A Royal Shindig and circus interactive activities with Brooklyn Beanstalk. A Royal Shindig guides interactive storytelling with your favorite fairy tale characters. Brooklyn Beanstalk will offer Circus in the Park, an introduction to circus activities for children and their families that teaches juggling, flower sticks, spinning plates, hula hoops, physical comedy, mime, and acrobatics under the supervision of trained professionals!

Basic Canoeing: Prospect Park Audubon Center, enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Trained Urban Park Rangers will lead you on a canoe adventure on the gentle waters of Prospect Park Lake. Program is first come, first served, for ages 8 years and older. All minors must be accompanied by an adult.

Checkmate 101: Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Joralemon Street; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Come learn how to take your chess game to the next level with Zeebedee Collins! Best for beginners; limited boards available.

Youth volleyball clinic: Pier 5 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Grace Court; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Learn how to play volleyball at our open clinics for kids! Recommended for ages 4 to 10.

TUES, JULY 5

IN BROOKLYN

Story time: Pier 3 Greenway Terrace, Pierrepont Street and the water; www.brooklynbridgepark.org; 10:30 am to 11 am; Free.

Listen to Brooklyn Heights librarians read stories from the Brooklyn Public Library's reading list and have a rollicking good time listening to stories, singing songs, and enjoying the breeze from the water.

WED, JULY 6

IN BROOKLYN

Double Dutch: Pier 2, Clarke Street at the Roller Rink; www.nycgovparks.com.

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Calendar

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

Continued from page 43

org; 7 pm to 9 pm; Free.

Learn to jump with experienced Double Dutch Empire instructors. For all abilities and recommended for children older than 15 years old.

FRI, JULY 8

IN BROOKLYN

"Puss in Boots": Brewer Park (Basketball Courts), Brooklyn Avenue and Prospect Place; www.cityparksfoundation.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Presented by CityParks PuppetMobile, this is the old tale — with a twist. Once upon a time there lived a young man named Ferguson Mundingle. Ferguson has just the bare essentials in life — a roof over his head, the clothes on his back, and his ever faithful pet cat. One day when lamenting his poor lifestyle, Ferguson is astounded when his cat stands up, begins talking and introduces himself as Puss.

SAT, JULY 9

IN BROOKLYN

Street Fair: Parkside Avenue and Church Avenue; (718) 282-2500, X 79234.; www.flatbushavebid.com; Noon to 6 pm; Free.

The Flatbush Business Improvement District is hosting the feast with a Caribbean flair. Come and enjoy colorful music, exhilarating rides, exotic foods, and great shopping. DJs, carnival rides, and inflatable climbing wall — the fair stretches 12 blocks from Parkside Avenue to Cortelyou Road.

Family Camping: Marine Park, Avenue U and E. 33rd Street; (718) 421-2021; www.nycgovparks.org; 6 pm to 8 am; Free.

We camp to create lasting memories, connect with the natural world, and bond with our families. Camping affords us the opportunity to unplug from the diversions of everyday life and to laugh and play with our families. The Urban Park Rangers celebrate the tradition of camping and we look forward to welcoming your family. Space is limited and families are chosen by lottery.

Davina and the Vagabonds: On Stage at Kingsborough, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org; 8 pm; Free.

Come on down for the Hot Summer Night's outdoor concert to swing and sway — and don't forget your picnic basket and blankets. Sandwiches, chips, ice cream, and beverages will be available for sale.

SUN, JULY 10

IN BROOKLYN

Foraging in the Park: Grand Army



Friday night lights

When the sun goes down, the lights come up — with Friday Night Fireworks over Coney Island.

Families will enjoy this borough tradition that can be seen from miles around. Beautiful sprays of light bath Luna Park, the Parachute Jump, the Thunderbolt, and the sandy shores of the People's Playground. Before and after the display Luna Park is

open with rides for every age.

But the best place to see the display is on the Boardwalk in Luna Park.

Friday Night Fireworks now through Aug. 27, beginning at 9:30 pm. Free, but admission to Luna Park, amusement rides, and attractions is extra.

Luna Park (W. 10th Street and the Boardwalk in Coney Island; <http://lunaparknyc.com>).

Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; (914) 835-2153; www.wildmanstevebrill.com; 9 am; \$20 (\$10 children under 12).

Come with "Wildman" Steve Brill and hunt for wild wineberries. Early summer is the time for these delectables and many other plants. Approximately four hours. Reservations in advance requested.

"Hook, Line and Sinker": Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, 334 Forman St.; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

This is Arm of the Sea's newest production that tells the tale of fishing in the Hudson River. Uni Project and Private Picasso will also provide family activities.

Checkmate 101: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

Youth volleyball clinci: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 5 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

MON, JULY 11

IN BROOKLYN

Padre Pio mass: St Finbar Church, Bay 20th Street between Bath and Benson avenues; (718) 236-3312; 7 pm; Free.

The relic will be available after Mass for each person to touch.

TUES, JULY 12

IN BROOKLYN

Story time: 10:30 am to 11 am. Pier 3 Greenway Terrace. See Tuesday, July 5.

THURS, JULY 14

IN BROOKLYN

Back to the Block: Maria Hernandez Park, Knickerbocker and Willoughby avenues; www.cityparksfoundation.org; 5 pm to 7 pm; Free.

Teen artists and up-and-coming local musicians perform. The concert and exhibit will feature three local bands as well as a showcase of socially engaged artworks created by More Art's men-

torship program, Arts Ambassadors. Please RSVP to hold your spot at info@moreart.org.

FRI, JULY 15

IN BROOKLYN

"Puss in Boots": Maria Hernandez Park, Knickerbocker and Willoughby avenues; www.cityparksfoundation.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Presented by CityParks PuppetMobile, this is the old tale — with a twist.

Rashida Bumbrey: Brewer Park (Basketball Courts), Brooklyn Ave. and Prospect Place; 311; www.cityparksfoundation.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Her performance is inspired by African-American vernacular and folk forms including ring shouts, hoofing, and blues improvisation.

FDNY Appreciation Night: MCU Park, 1904 Surf Ave. at W. 17th Street; (718) 449-8497; CCoughlin@brooklyncyclones.com; www.brooklyncyclones.com; 6 pm; \$15.

Enjoy a game along with Fire Safety and Education table, bagpipers, mascots Hot Dog and Siren; and ceremonial hot pitch as the Clones face off against Lowell Spinners. Suitable for children 6 to 12 years old — wear fire department apparel or a Little League uniform. Children will get a Cyclones cap and proceeds will go to the FDNY Foundation (fdnyfoundation.org).

SAT, JULY 16

IN BROOKLYN

Field Day: Pier 2 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Clark Street; www.ycgvoparks.org; 10 am to 2 pm; Free.

Enjoy obstacle courses on the play turf, bocce games, four square, shuffleboard, basketball clinics, handball, and fitness classes! Games and races guarantee fun for all ages and abilities.

Build a Birdhouse: Know Waste Lands Community Garden, 1278 Myrtle Ave. and Central Avenue; (212) 602-5300; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Interested in building a birdhouse? Come and learn how to build a birdhouse to invite our feathery friends to the garden.

Felting Workshop: The Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, 5816 Clarendon Rd.; (718) 629-5400; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 3 pm; \$8.

Attendees learn the the process of cloth-making from raw fleece and roving (cleaned, carded fleece) to yarn and felted fabrics. We will be spinning — both with a drop spindle as well as with a spinning wheel — and needle felting and water felting. We will be creating beads, patches, paintings, and creatures. For older teens.

Calendar

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

SUN, JULY 17

IN BROOKLYN

Hot Peas 'N Butter: Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Joralemon Street; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Music for Every Nation and Generation performed in English and Spanish. There will be family-friendly activities with the Uni Project and Private Picasos from 11 am to noon, followed by performances from noon to 1 pm.

Checkmate 101: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

Youth volleyball clinic: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 5 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

Orienteering & compasses: Fort Greene Park Visitor Center, enter park at Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park; (718) 722-3218; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Older children will learn from Urban Rangers all the hidden gems that are in the park.

Story Time: Fort Greene Park Visitor Center, enter park at Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park; (718) 722-3218; 3 pm to 4 pm; Free.

Greenlight Bookstore and the Fort Greene Conservancy are offering a program for children to hear stories in the outdoors. Giada Crispiels presents her coloring book "Wildlife of New York: A Five Borough Coloring Book," featuring intricate images and playful details that celebrate the city's landscape and animal life, from parks to brownstones to skyscrapers and beaches. Giada talks about her work, then offers a guided coloring workshop of her beautiful city scenes for children and adults. Crafting workshop follows the event. In the Fort Putnam Program Redoubt area.

FURTHER AFIELD

"The Quest for the Seven Teeth": Central Park (Call for exact location), Central Park, Manhattan; (347) 559-6223; www.Accomplicetheshow.com/kids; Call for times; \$40 per child (Adults free).

Presented by Accomplice the Show, this fun interactive scavenger hunt will ignite children's imaginations as they embark on a quest to assist the Tooth Fairy's cousin, Franklin, in finding some teeth to replace those that he lost. The event lasts approximately two hours, rain or shine, and is suitable for children 6 to 11 years old. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Reservations in advance required.

MON, JULY 18

IN BROOKLYN

Gardening workshop: E. 43rd St. Block Association Community Garden,



Photo by Aehlee Kang Asano

Fitness in the parks

Get up and go this summer thanks to the City Parks Foundation. This educational, multi-sport fitness program, Get Up & Go, is designed for children 6 to 10 years old to remain active and have fun in their local parks. Youngsters learn about health, nutrition, and fitness while having a blast with friends. Instructors motivate kids to increase their core skills through running, throwing, and strength training.

Get up and Go runs July 12 through Aug. 19 and is offered

1087 E. 43rd Street; www.nycgovparks.org; 2 pm to 2:45 pm; Free.

At this workshop, we will learn how soil impacts plant growth. We will use hands-on explanations to explore soil health, while using our five senses. This is a kid-friendly event and it will include interactive components.

TUES, JULY 19

IN BROOKLYN

Central Park Wildlife Theater: Maria Hernandez Park, Knickerbocker Avenue and Willoughby Avenue; 311; www.cityparksfoundation.org; 10:30 am; Free.

The Wildlife Theater troupe is an outreach group that presents an educational and entertaining performance for children, explaining the importance of ecology. From penguins to polar bears, dinosaurs to butterflies, children leave with a new wonder for the world

two days per week. Get Up and Go is free.

Children may register for Kaiser Park, offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 1 to 4 pm, or Seth Low Playground, offered on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:30 am to noon.

Get Up and Go at Kaiser Park (Neptune Avenue and Bayview Avenue in Coney Island) at Seth Low Playground (W. 12th Street between Bay Parkway and Avenue P in Bensonhurst, <http://www.cityparksfoundation.org/sports/kids-fitness>).

around them and the creatures that share our planet.

Story time: 10:30 am to 11 am. Pier 3 Greenway Terrace. See Tuesday, July 5.

WED, JULY 20

IN BROOKLYN

Rolie Polie Guacamole: The Old Stone House, 336 Third St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues; (718) 768-3195; theoldstonehouse.org; 5:30 pm; Free.

The kids' band kicks off the summer playground season with its family-friendly hits.

SUN, JULY 24

IN BROOKLYN

Checkmate 101: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

Youth volleyball clinic: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 5 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

Family Camping: Marine Park, Avenue U and E. 33rd Street; (718) 421-2021; www.nycgovparks.org; 6 pm to 8 am; Free.

We camp to create lasting memories, connect with the natural world, and bond with our families. Space is limited and families are chosen by lottery.

TUES, JULY 26

IN BROOKLYN

Story time: 10:30 am to 11 am. Pier 3 Greenway Terrace. See Tuesday, July 5.

MCU Youth Baseball and Softball Clinic: MCU Park, 1904 Surf Ave. at W. 17th Street; (718) 449-8497; mmattone@nymcu.org; www.brooklyncyclones.com; 5:30 pm; Free.

Open to children 7-14 years old. Brooklyn Cyclones players lead the participants in on-field, hands-on exercises. Each participant will also receive four tickets to that night's game. Pre-registration required at www.nymcu.org/baseballclinics.

SUN, JULY 31

IN BROOKLYN

Meet the animals: Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Atlantic Avenue at Furman Street; (718) 222-9939; www.brooklynbridgepark.org; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Join Volunteers for Wildlife for a chance to meet the animals.

Exhibit and Workshop: J-Collabo, 300 Seventh St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues; (347)-987-3217; 11 am to 8 pm; Free.

All ages are invited to view the current art work in The Flying Seed Over the Sea—Journey to Unknown, where artists display their works, then have a fun workshop (2 pm). No experience necessary.

Checkmate 101: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

Youth volleyball clinic: 11 am to 1 pm. Pier 5 at Brooklyn Bridge Park. See Sunday, July 3.

FURTHER AFIELD

"The Quest for the Seven Teeth": Central Park (Call for exact location), Central Park, Manhattan; (347) 559-6223; www.Accomplicetheshow.com/kids; Call for Times; \$40 per child (Adults free).

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Calendar

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

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LONG-RUNNING IN BROOKLYN

Block lab and Studio: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Thursdays – Sundays, 10 am, Fri, July 1 – Mon, Aug. 1; Free with museum admission.

Visitors will explore the many facets of what it means to live with others and contribute to the communities they call home. In the new second-floor studio, which focuses on art and architecture, artist James Paulius's Sky Village installation invites visitors to use their building skills by creating communities in the sky with wood blocks and pegs.

Sensory Room: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Thursdays – Sundays, 11:30 am, Now – Sun, July 31.

Inclusive space where children of all abilities can explore their senses. Welcoming environment for children with autism spectrum disorder.

Friday Night Fireworks!: Luna Park, W. 10th Street and the Boardwalk; lunaparknyc.com; Fridays, 9:30 pm, Now – Sat, Aug. 27; Free (rides, entertainment extra).

When the sun goes down, the lights come up with fireworks, painting the skyline with vivid color seen from miles away in the darkest of nights.

Totally Tots art studio: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am, Now – Sun, July 31; Free with museum admission.

Children lead the way in this sensory paradise of materials. They are invited to build and refine their fine-motor skills, learn about colors, and learn how to share with others in this open art studio. There is no such thing as a bad mess in this space, which is tailored to children 5 years and younger.

"The Wizard of Oz": Puppetworks,



Summertime science

Summer Science Academy workshops begins on July 11 at St. Francis College.

Now in its 16th year, the workshop offers dozens of New York City high school students an opportunity to discover and get real-world experience in the sciences. The program runs Monday to Friday and teaches topics such as DNA barcoding and forensics. Students will also be taken out of the classroom on three field trips.

Rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high school may apply to the program. Candidates for the Summer Science Academy should email knolan@sfc.edu

338 Sixth Ave. at Fourth Street; (718) 965-3391; www.puppetworks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 pm and 2:30 pm, Now – Sun, Aug. 21; \$9 (\$10 adults; \$8 for group rates).

Put on your ruby red slippers, Dorothy has returned to Oz. Through the wizardry of puppetry, artistic director Nicolas Coppola has adapted it to the marionette stage, featuring an original country-Western score for the famous Oz characters to sing and dance to.

with their name, address, phone number, name of school, graduation date, and one-page essay about why they would like to be in the program.

The program is first-come, first-served and there are still a few spots left. Students are required to provide their own MetroCard and lunch, but all other expenses, including field trips and lab materials, are covered.

Summer Academy, Monday through Friday, July 11 through July 22, at 9 am. Free

St. Francis College [180 Remsen St. between Court and Clinton streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 489-5200; www.sfc.edu]

Great for children 4 years and older.

Educational Center: Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Atlantic Avenue at Furman Street; (718) 222-9939; www.brooklynbridgepark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm to 5 pm; Free.

Get to know Brooklyn Bridge Park and visit the giant aquarium filled with East River critters, the reading corner, and so much more. Open hours.

Fishing Fun: North end of Esplanade,

East Drive and Ocean Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 2 pm and 3 to 4 pm, Now – Tues, July 26; Free.

Families with children 15 and younger learn about aquatic ecology, fishing safety, and can collect their own bait.

Bird Watching: North end of Esplanade, East Drive and Ocean Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 2 pm and 3 to 4 pm, Now – Tues, Aug. 30; Free.

Families with children 15 and younger join a ranger and identify the more than 250 species of birds in the park.

Educational Center drop-in hours: Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Atlantic Avenue at Furman Street; (718) 222-9939; www.brooklynbridgepark.org; Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 3 pm to 5 pm; Free.

Get to know Brooklyn Bridge Park and visit the giant aquarium filled with East River critters, the reading corner, and so much more. Open hours.

Touch Tank: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Now – Sun, July 31; Free with museum admission.

Meet and touch real, live sea creatures like starfish and sea urchins.

Bargemusic Concert: Bargemusic, Fulton Ferry Landing, Old Fulton Street and Furman Street; (718) 624-2083; www.bargemusic.org; Saturdays, 4 pm to 5 pm, Sat, July 2 – Sat, Sept. 24; Free.

Walk across the gangplank of a renovated coffee barge for a one-hour, family-friendly concert. This one-hour performance includes a question-and-answer session with the musicians. Doors open 15 minutes before the performance; no reserved seating is available.

Magic at Coney: Sideshows by the Seashore, 1208 Surf Ave. between W. 12th Street and Stillwell Avenue; (718) 372-5159; www.coneyisland.com; Sundays, noon, Sun, July 3 – Sun, Sept. 4; \$10 (\$5 kids).

A magical variety show featuring illusionists, escape artists, mentalists, and close-up magicians.

Basketball Clinic: Pier 2, Pier 2 walkway; Sundays, Noon to 2 pm, Sun, July 3 – Sun, Aug. 28; Free.

Improve basic basketball skills with the Big and Little Skills Academy. Each clinic will include either yoga to enhance flexibility or flag football for agility training. Join Big and Little Skills Academy for dynamic basketball clinics for ages 8 to 17.

Play Streets: Playstreet at 61st Street and Fourth Avenue; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

It's story time in Fort Greene Park

Come and enjoy the great outdoors, a story, and a craft at Fort Greene Park on July 17. The Summer Story Time Series, a joint effort between Greenlight Bookstore and Fort Greene Park Conservancy, brings literary programming for kids. Noted authors and artists Fran Manushkin, Julia Sarcone-Roach, and Giada Crispiels present their

books followed by interactive activities for kids and families. The selections feature images of public parks in a celebration of Fort Greene's own beloved public green space.

July's author is Giada Crispiels with her coloring book "Wildlife of New York: A Five Borough Coloring Book," featuring intricate images and playful details that celebrate

the city's landscape and animal life, from parks to brownstones to skyscrapers and beaches. Giada talks about her work, then offers a guided coloring workshop.

Story Time, July 17 from 3 to 4 pm; free.

Fort Greene Park Visitor Center [Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park; (718) 722-3218].

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

The Police Athletic League is again hosting Play Streets, offering a safe environment for children to play sidewalk games, be creative and just have fun.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Boulevard Houses, Stanley and Wortman avenues; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Brownsville Houses, Rockaway Avenue and Osborn Street; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Coffey Park, Richards and Dwight streets; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Fox Playground, E. 55th and E. 54th streets; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Glenwood Shelter, 4612 Glenwood Rd.; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Junius Street Family Residence, 25 Junius St.; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Kelly Playground, E. 14th and E. 15th streets; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Liberty Avenue Family Residence, 51 Junius St.; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Linden Houses, Between Stanley and Wortman avenues; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Marlboro Houses, between W. Eighth and W. 11th streets; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Renaldo Salgado Park, between Monroe and Madison streets; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Play Streets: Playstreet at Tompkins Houses, between Tompkins and Throop avenues; www.palnyc.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

Summer Sports: Sunset Park Recreation Center, 43rd Street and Seventh Avenue; (718) 972-2135; www.nycgovparks.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 4:30 pm, Tues, July 5 – Sat, Sept. 17; Free.

Tots program for children 2 to 5 years old.

Summer Sports: Sunset Park Recreation Center, 43rd Street and Seventh



Photo by Garrett Born

New Orleans sounds

Cool off those hot summer nights at an outdoor concert presented by On Stage at Kingsborough when Davina and the Vagabonds hit the shore on July 9.

The group's music is a New Orleans sound featuring blues, jazz, soul, gospel and a bit of R&B thrown in.

The high-energy concert will have you swinging and swaying and heating up the night. Don't forget to bring a picnic basket,

blanket, and come early to get that perfect spot. Sandwiches, chips, ice cream, and beverages will be on sale. The music starts at 8 pm, but you can enjoy the cool ocean breeze and come at 7 pm.

Davina and the Vagabonds, July 9, 8 pm. Free

On Stage at Kingsborough [2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street in Manhattan Beach, (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org]

Avenue; (718) 972-2135; www.nycgovparks.org; Weekdays, 9 am to 4:30 pm, Tues, July 5 – Sat, Sept. 17; Free.

Tots program for children 8 months old to 3 years old.

First Discoveries: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; Tuesdays, 9:30 am, Tues, July 5 – Tues, Aug. 23; Free with garden admission.

Calling all explorers 2 to 4 years old to plant a seed, touch a wriggly worm, and hear a story by the meadow nook.

Kids' Discovery Stations: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10:15 am to 12:15 pm, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:15 am, Tues, July 5 – Fri, Aug. 26; Free with garden admission.

Dig in and get your hands dirty, investigate and classify plants, learn how a carnivorous plant eats, and explore the meadow.

Tinybop Kid's Playgroup: Tinybop Inc., 540 Atlantic Ave. between Third and Fourth avenues; (516) 500-1967; playtesting@tinybop.com; tinybop.com; Wednesdays, 4-5 pm, Now –

Wed, Aug. 17; Free.

Kids will get the chance to play with new educational apps and enjoy hands-on science activities, led by staff from the app-making creative studio. Light snacks will be provided.

129th Giglio Italian Festival: Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 275 N. Eighth St. at Havemeyer Street; (718) 384-0223; Weekdays, 6 pm to 11 pm, Saturdays, 6 pm to midnight, Sundays, Noon to 11 pm, Wed, July 6 – Sun, July 17; Free.

The traditional community feast honors Saint Paolino and features faith, food, music, neighborhood pride, history, colorful cultural celebrations, and international visitors, along with parades, artwork, children's rides, masses, and a wide array of activities for all ages, as well as the procession with custom-made Giglio tower. A children's lift for July 7 at 6 pm is also scheduled (Rain date is July 8).

African Dance: Target Brooklyn Community Garden, 933 Bedford Ave. at Dekalb Avenue; (212) 333-2552; www.nycgovparks.org; Wednesdays, 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm, Now – Wed, Aug. 24; Free.

Each session will feature an African dance-based workout. No partner or

prior experience required. For older teens.

Transit Tots: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; Thursdays, 10:15 am, Now – Thurs, July 28; Free with museum admission.

Stories, games and surprises for the youngest transportation fan. For ages 2-5 and adult companions. No class 4/28 and 5/26.

Summer Science Academy: St. Francis College, 180 Remsen St. between Court and Clinton streets; (718) 489-5200; www.sfc.edu; Weekdays, 9 am, Mon, July 11 – Fri, July 22; Free.

In its 16th year, the workshop offers dozens of city high school students an opportunity to discover and get real-world experience in the sciences. The program runs Monday to Friday and teaches topics such as DNA barcoding and forensics. Rising sophomores, juniors and seniors in high school may apply to the program.

Get up and go! Kaiser Park, Neptune Ave. and Bayview Avenue; www.cityparksfoundation.org/sports/kids-fitness; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 pm to 4 pm, Tues, July 12 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

This educational, multi-sport fitness program is designed to get children ages 6 to 10 to be active in their local parks. Instructors help youngsters increase skills such as running, throwing, and strength training, while motivating them through contests, races, and obstacle courses. Registration required.

Get up and go! Seth Low Playground, W. 12th Street between Avenue P and Bay Parkway; www.cityparksfoundation.org/sports/kids-fitness; Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30 am to noon, Tues, July 12 – Fri, Aug. 19; Free.

"Psycho Beach" Party: The Old Stone House, 336 Third St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues; (718) 768-3195; theoldstonehouse.org; Thursdays – Sundays, 8 pm, Thurs, July 14 – Sat, July 23; Free.

Watch Pipe Theater Company perform Charles Busch's classic comedy that parodies the 1960s beach films. Join the Old Stone House for a luau with food, beer, wine, and soft drinks.

Free Family Day at Wyckoff Farmhouse: Wyckoff House Museum, 5816 Clarendon Rd. at E. 59th Street; (718) 629-5400; Saturday, July 16, 1 pm; Saturday, Aug. 20, 1 pm; Free.

Wyckoff Farmhouse hosts a day of kid-friendly tours, hands-on activities, scavenger hunts, and more. Special activities for kids younger than 10 before 2 pm.

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New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

Sounds like America!

“Hello Friend” — the fourth album of children’s music from The Hollow Trees — is quintessential Americana and the perfect soundtrack for your Fourth of July BBQ. It is a rip-roaring hoote-nanny with a mix of original tunes and covers that span an array of high-energy red-white-and-blue genres: folk, bluegrass, country, and jug band. “I Can’t Dance (I’ve Got Ants in My



Pants) is a rollicking, kazoo-y song that will get everyone laughing and singing along with its repeat-after-me style of lyrics, while “The Whole Thing,” a call-and-response song, delighted me with its variety of words employed to describe just how much is wanted.

“Hello Friend” will bring a smile to your face.

“Hello Friend” CD by The Hollow Trees, \$11.99, iTunes.com.

Breast friends

United Kingdom-based company Tommee Tippee boasts that its new Ultra bottle has a breast-like, flexible, silicone nipple that allows for a natural latch that makes it easier for baby to switch between breastfeeding and bottle feedings. The design also minimizes air intake (which means less tears for baby, because gulping air can lead to uncomfortable gas).

The Ultra has secure seals between the nipple and screw ring and ring and bottle base, so milk goes into baby’s mouth and doesn’t leak out.



Ultra bottle 5 or 9 oz. by Tommee Tippee, \$10.99, or the Ultra bottle by Tommee Tippee 3-pack, \$26.99, www.BabiesRUs.com.

Not easy being Greene

“Kelly Greene and the Green Hats” is a suspenseful page-turner about a chapeau-loving tween with a mystery to solve. In this first, self-published chapter book from DM Dondero, Kelly grapples with the idea that her bedroom closet may be haunted. And she considers the alternative — that she may be plagued with an overactive imagination. Either way, she’s nervous, but she’s not alone. She has doting Uncle Jed, a visit-



ing archaeologist, and her friends and sisters to help her solve the riddles.

As the creepy sounds pile up, Dondero depicts tween life with humor and empathy. For thoughtful readers ages 9 and older, there are lessons to be learned about working out differences, caring for the Earth; and more.

“Kelly Greene and the Green Hats” book by DM Dondero, \$9.37, www.amazon.com.

Pieces of family history

Our NYC Floor Puzzle, illustrated by Jane Archer, is a colorful map of all five boroughs and features landmarks, museums, and points of interest to discover with the whole family.

Assembling the 100-piece puzzle is a wonderful pastime for everyone ages 4 and older. Manufactured by Brooklyn-based company Cardborders, the finished map measures 18-inches by 24-inches. The large size of the pieces (3-inches by 2-inches) ensures that they aren’t easily lost, and it maximizes the opportunity for success for kids who are just honing their puzzle-assembling chops.

Piecing it together was a sweet experience for our whole family as we recalled happy memories of places we have visited (wandering the halls of the Natural History Museum! Thrilling rides in Coney Island! Taking an Eco Cruise!). And we shouted out in disbelief over all of the fantastic sites we have yet to explore.



And the piece de resistance is that after the puzzle is assembled, kids get to put their house on the map with the enclosed sticker.

Our NYC Floor Puzzle by Cardborders, \$24, www.barneys.com.

One-horned dream team

Zoonicorns are small, whimsical, plush amalgams of zebras and unicorns (with troll hair for manes) that are a perfectly portable size (6-inches by 6-inches) — just right for a small child to bring on vacation. Little

hands will love clutching their 3-D Zoonicorn while they play with the new, interactive Zoonicorn app “Ene’s Matching Game”; read the digital picture books “To Catch a Fish” and “The Tag Along” on Zoonicorn.com; or read Mark Lubratt’s “Buffy Meets the Zoonicorn” hardcover book, about a restless bison in a zoo who learns to manage her emotions while dreaming of her herdful of friends, the Zoonicorn.

Available in four colors, the Zoonicorn plush include peaceful Promitheia (white with purple stripes), carefree Aliel has pink stripes, cheerful Ene has green stripes, and brave Valeo has blue stripes. The stories and app entertain while helping children acknowledge and understand their emotions and improve their relationships with friends and siblings. These mythical creatures inspire kids to navigate real world challenges.

Zoonicorn plush, \$13.95, “Buffy Meets the Zoonicorn” book by Mark Lubratt, \$16.95, www.amazon.com.



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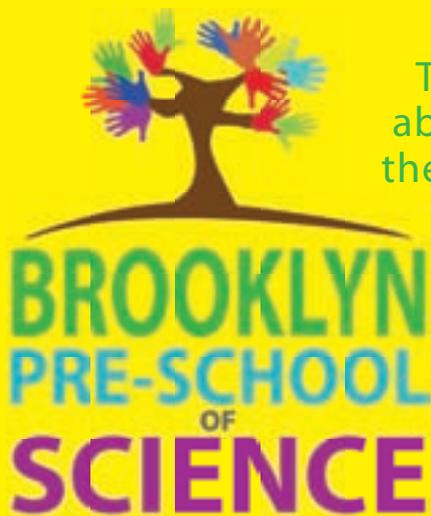
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