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Letter from the publisher

Babies and beyond

This issue has a focus on two things in particular that tie into each other sooner than you'd think: babies and preschool, and there's no better time than July to be considering where you might elect to begin early childcare. It's a



great time to investigate and explore the possibilities as you perhaps think about fall and enrollments in programs.

You'd think that babies wouldn't necessarily conjure up preschool, but they do, and even if you're going to stay home and be the primary care giver (which is getting rarer and rarer an option for a lot of Moms), before you know it, the time will pass and you will be needing to find a

playgroup or a Mommy class or some kind of socializing program that begins the process of adjusting your child to the world at large.

I always say that perhaps the most important responsibility anyone will ever take on comes with no training

and we are expected somehow inherently to know how to be a good parent. No time in our parenting experience is more daunting in this regard and shocking than in those weeks after we bring home a new baby. This tiniest of creatures (more tiny than we could ever have imagined), who hardly sleeps and doesn't let us sleep either, can be more work and cause more feelings of inadequacy than you've ever experienced before.

In New York City, with so many of us not being near our parents or siblings, and possibly having moved here from other places, we are not able to rely on their experience and expertise, and support groups with other parents are not only helpful but rather essential. Forming bonds with others will not only help you determine your "new normal," but also be a great way of establishing early on playgroups for your baby and future friends and buddies.

I often miss having a baby and find myself continually melting when I see babies on the street or out shopping. Watching their personalities emerge after weeks of basic stuff like crying, sleeping and nursing is a gift and a privilege. Suddenly, there is a person, and that person comes with nuance and temper and all that goes into the formation of a whole

individual. What a miracle!

School's out and vacations are here and camp and summer programs. The days of summer pass all too quickly and suddenly we'll be getting ready for school again and all that fall schedules require, so we have to enjoy these weeks to the fullest. Make sure to put sunscreen on your kids and don't forget those sunglasses. Enjoy the beach or the country or whatever family outings/picnics you have planned.

Have a great 4th of July and thanks so much for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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Crybaby cafe

Advice for
breastfeeding
moms when
faced with
resistance

BY MALIA JACOBSON

More babies are starting life with nature's perfect food: breast milk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 75 percent of American newborns are now breastfed. That's good news. Breastfeeding has amazing benefits for both mom and baby. But when a happily breastfed baby starts putting up a fight at every feeding, it brings anxiety and drama into an otherwise peaceful relationship.

Nursing resistance and nursing strikes — brief periods when a baby resists or refuses breastfeeding — are frustrating, disheartening, and stressful.

Most babies will go through a phase of fussy nursing as some point, says Dr. Susan Rothenberg, associate director of Obstetrics at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York.

What's going on?

Nursing resistance is commonly misinterpreted, says Rothenberg. Moms often blame dwindling milk supply, but that's usually far from the truth.

"Once breastfeeding is well established, inadequate supply is rarely an issue, but a very common misconception," she explains.

It's also easy to assume that a baby is ready to give up nursing, but successfully breastfed babies

under 1 year old seldom self-wean. Instead, says Rothenberg, a baby who resists or refuses nursing may be reacting to common, treatable conditions: hyperlactation, a slow letdown reflex, discomfort, or changes in the mom's diet or hormone levels.

Hyperlactation: Too much of a good thing

Hyperlactation is the result of an overly strong milk letdown reflex that causes milk to flow too quickly and forcibly for a baby to comfortably swallow. According to lactation consultant and registered nurse Laura Burnett, nursing supervisor at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital, hyperlactation

can overwhelm a nursing infant, sending them into a sputtering, coughing tizzy.

How to help: Burnett suggests nursing in a reclined position to relax both mom and baby. If an oversupply of milk is contributing to the problem, she recommends nursing on one breast per feeding. After a few days, the body will reduce its milk production to a more manageable level.

Slow letdown: Going with the flow

A slow milk letdown reflex can frustrate babies, particularly those who receive bottles, which provide instant milk gratification.

Babies will latch on momentarily, only to dissolve into a teary tantrum if milk doesn't appear within seconds. A fussy baby contributes to mom's stress and intensifies the problem.

How to help: While tactics like gentle massage, heat, hand expression, or pumping can help get milk flowing before feedings, they won't resolve an underlying issue.

"It's important to explore reasons for a slow letdown," says Burnett. Returning to work, changing a nursing routine, or starting new medication are factors that can contribute, she says.

A slower-than-normal letdown reflex is often a sign of stress or distraction, notes Rothenberg. Her advice: "Take time to relax, ignore the chores piling up, and focus on your special bond with your baby."

Pain and suffering: Discomfort drama

You may not feel up to eating when you're experiencing pain or tummy troubles, and your baby is no different. Teething, earache, nasal congestion, or mouth pain caused by thrush can make nursing difficult.

Occasionally, a baby's dairy protein sensitivity can lead to uncomfortable gas and fussiness at the breast. This is not lactose intolerance, says Burnett, but a sensitivity to milk proteins in the mother's diet.

How to help: If you've ruled

out other causes and your little one is still unenthusiastic about nursing, see a pediatrician to check for pain or illness. A dairy elimination diet can help relieve symptoms of dairy protein sensitivity, says Burnett, but it may take several weeks to see an improvement.

New tastes: A changing menu

If you consume a varied, flavorful diet, your breastfed baby probably does, too. Breastmilk varies in taste depending on a nursing mom's diet. Hormonal changes resulting from birth control, a resumed menstrual cycle, or a new pregnancy can also affect milk's taste.

Most babies show no reaction to these changes.

A few will voice their displeasure if a new taste isn't to their liking, and temporarily resist nursing.

How to help: Taste variations in milk are generally temporary. If a baby has a strong reaction to a particular taste, eliminating the offending food should resolve the problem.

Feeding while baby is very sleepy, feeding in a warm bath, and skin-to-skin contact during nursing can help minimize resistance to breastfeeding during these changes.

Getting back to happy

Pump or hand-express to stay comfortable during nursing refusal. If you're worried that your baby isn't getting enough to drink, do a wet-diaper count. At least five to six wet diapers per day mean he's probably taking in enough fluid.

Like most babyhood phases, nursing resistance is usually short-lived. And it has a silver lining: once you weather this minor breastfeeding storm, you'll be rewarded with more confidence, patience, and a greater knowledge of your breastfeeding babe.

Malia Jacobson is a nationally published sleep and health journalist and author of "Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades."

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An ounce of prevention



Steps you
can take
now to avoid
postpartum
depression
later

BY OLIVIA BERGERON

Sitting in a circle, surrounded by other pregnant couples, Samantha and her husband sat quietly.

“Irritability, sadness, guilt, exhaustion,” a childbirth educator at their birthing class described the symptoms of postpartum depression. The list continued, but Samantha was only half listening.

“How could I ever get postpartum depression?” she asked herself. Samantha overcame a rough first trimester, but now in her seventh month, she felt great. “That won’t be me,” she thought confidently.

Unfortunately, many couples experience a kind of magical thinking when it comes to unpleasant possibilities following the birth of a child. They hope that by not thinking about it, postpartum depression won’t happen to them. And yet, one in five postpartum women experiences a mood disorder more serious than the baby blues, such as postpartum depression. The term “postpartum depression” is an umbrella term that includes depression, anxiety, panic disorder, and obsessive compulsive disorder following the birth of a child. Symptoms can be mild to severe. So, while it’s startling to hear how common these illnesses are, it’s more shocking to know how often they go undiagnosed. More than half of women suffering do not get treated. All too many women suffer in silence, either because of shame and stigma, or ignorance as to the symptoms and treatment available. So looking around her birthing class, Samantha was surely seeing one if not more future sufferers. Maybe it would even be her.

In her memoir of her experience with postpartum depression, “Down Came the Rain,” Brooke Shields wrote, “if I had been better

informed, I might not have considered myself candidate [for postpartum depression disorder], but at least I would have been armed with some important information. I recognized early on that something was wrong and that I was able to find help. I hate to think about the women who endure this type of depression for long periods of time without knowing that there is assistance available.”

The good news is that the disorder is extremely treatable, particularly when therapy or medication are started early. Therapists and doctors who specialize in working with new moms are well worth seeking out, as they understand the unique needs of postpartum women. Associations such as Postpartum Support International (www.postpartum.net), and the Postpartum Resource Center of New York (www.postpartumny.org), are excellent sources of information about where to go for help.

And yet, as a therapist who treats pregnant women, as well as new moms with the disorder, I’m sometimes asked if there are ways to prevent it. While I can offer no magic bullet, there are definitely ways to minimize the risk of experiencing it. And the best part about taking these steps? You’ll also be making the transition to parenthood much easier by preparing yourself and your partner for the huge changes ahead.

Here are six things you can do before and after baby arrives:

- Line up as much postpartum support as you need, and then

The best part about taking these steps? You'll also be making the transition to parenthood much easier by preparing yourself and your partner for the huge changes ahead.

some. I tell my pregnant clients to prepare as if they were having twins. Somehow the idea of having two babies really motivates parents! Get family, friends, neighbors, postpartum doulas — and anyone else you can think of — ready to help you with chores and caring for the baby in the first months. There is no such thing as too much help, and certainly no shame in accepting it.

•Schedule a mental health “check up.” If you have a history of depression or anxiety, schedule a session with a therapist or psychiatrist before the baby arrives to discuss a postpartum plan in case of a relapse. Talk about what worked best to overcome the depression or anxiety the last time you got treatment and look at ways to incorporate these tactics after you give birth. It can be a huge relief to know you have a plan prepared in advance, just in case. Early intervention also results in a faster recovery, should postpartum occur, so don't wait to get help.

•Don't isolate yourself. Many new parents are surprised at how lonely and isolating it can be when you have a baby. This is particularly true if you are the first among your friends to have a baby, or if you live far from family. The internet can be a real lifeline for new parents looking to avoid isolation. Sign up for one of the local Yahoo parenting groups in your neighborhood (groups.yahoo.com) to find out news and information about parent gatherings. Look for new parent support groups and “baby and me” classes at the library, religious center, or baby gym, all great places to meet other parents. The sooner you develop a network of other new

parents to commiserate with, the more connected you'll feel.

•Nurture yourself with quality, nutritious foods. New parents are sleep deprived as a rule, and most don't have time to cook or eat elaborate meals. Oftentimes, they end up relying on caffeine and unhealthy snacks as a crutch. Caffeine can seriously exacerbate anxious feelings and sharp spikes in blood sugar can contribute to moodiness. Make sure you have healthy, quick meals, and snacks on hand and minimize or avoid caffeine altogether.

•Begin gentle exercise once you get medical clearance. Exercise has been shown to be as effective as antidepressants in some studies. Once you get the green light from your healthcare provider, begin gentle exercises, outside if possible. Sunshine and fresh air are great mood boosters as well. Note: if you are prone to panic attacks, avoid strenuous exercise, which can trigger an attack.

•Put off big life changes. Stress is a postpartum risk factor, so try to avoid major life stressors, such as changing jobs or moving, until you get settled as a family, if at all possible.

But even with all the preparation possible, some women will still fall victim to postpartum depression through absolutely no fault of their own. Stress, isolation, and fatigue are all contributing factors, but so is biology or a family history of depression and anxiety, which is completely out of our control. However, armed with the knowledge of where to go and what to do, new parents can get treated and go on to experience the joy they always hoped a child would bring. By seeking help early, new moms can give themselves and their new baby the best gift of all: a happy, healthy parent.

Olivia Bergeron, is a licensed clinical social worker and the founder of Mommy Groove Therapy & Support (MommyGroove.com). She is a psychotherapist who specializes in helping parents — particularly moms — to become less anxious and depressed, and more confident, so that they can best enjoy their children and families. She has an office in Park Slope, Brooklyn, and makes home visits for clients in Manhattan and Brooklyn. She lives in New York City with her husband, daughter, and twin sons. She can be reached at (917) 397-0323 or at Olivia@mommygroove.com.

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Made in the shade

Sunglasses
are very
important at
every age

BY KIKI BOCHI

Sunglasses are more than just a fashion statement. Especially in the summer, they are protection for your child's precious peepers. The sun's rays don't just damage the skin, they can harm the eyes, as well. As you apply sunscreen to protect your children's skin, don't forget to protect their eyes. Studies show that exposure to bright sunlight may increase the risk of developing cataracts, age-related macular degeneration, and growths on the eye, including cancer.

Kids are particularly vulnerable, and the sooner they begin to protect their eyes, the better. Many experts believe our eyes get 80 percent of their total lifetime exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays by age 18. Especially during the summer, when the level of radiation is at least three times higher than during the winter, sunglasses are an important part of everyone's wardrobe.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology offers these tips to protect the whole family's eyes from the sun:

- Don't focus on color or darkness of sunglass lenses. Select sunglasses that block ultraviolet rays. Don't be deceived by color or cost. The ability to block light is not dependent on the price tag or how dark the lenses are.
- Check for the level of protection. Make sure your sunglasses block 99 to 100 percent of all dangerous rays.
- Choose wrap-around styles. Ideally, your sunglasses

should wrap all the way around to your temples, so the sun's rays can't enter from the side. Wrap-around sunglasses offer five-percent more protection than regular shades and can reduce sun-induced cataracts if used regularly.

- Tie one on. Protect your kids'

peepers — and your investment — by fastening shades to a strap so they stay on your child and don't get lost.

- Wear a hat. In addition to your sunglasses, wear a broad-brimmed hat to protect your eyes.

- Don't be fooled by clouds. The sun's rays can pass through haze and thin clouds. Just because you don't see the sun shining brightly, it doesn't mean it can't damage your family's eyes.

- Protect your eyes during peak sun times. Sunglasses should be worn whenever you're outside, but it's especially important to wear sunglasses in the early afternoon, when light is more intense.

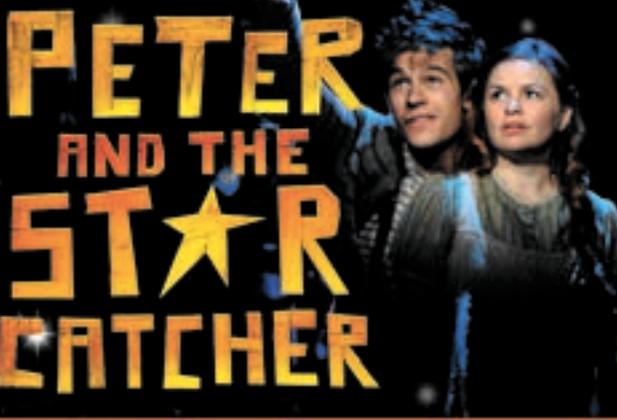
- Consider how much you want to invest. Many inexpensive children's sunglasses provide excellent protection. This is especially true if they include polycarbonate lenses, because polycarbonate lens material blocks 100 percent of rays without the need for added lens filters or coatings. However, if you are willing to invest more, desirable features include impact resistant lenses, unbreakable frame material, and spring hinges.

- Be patient. Start as young as you can, and don't get frustrated if children want to push their sunglasses off.

Just be consistent. Eventually, wearing sunglasses will become a habit — one that will serve your child well throughout his life. Luckily, getting children to wear sunglasses is not that tough, especially if you allow them to select their shades. To them, sunglasses are a fashion statement, but you know they are so much more.



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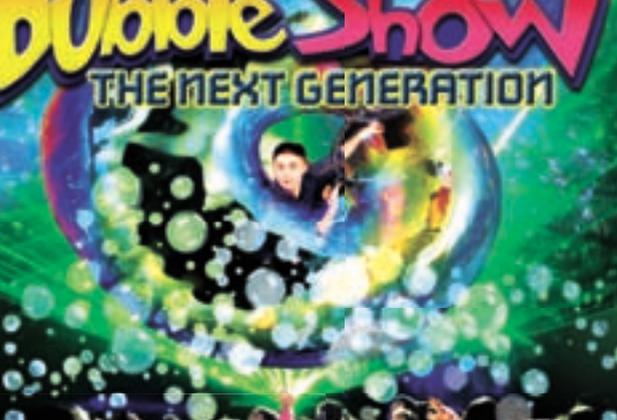
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Parting with the pacifier

How to help your child give up his pacifier

BY MALIA JACOBSON

Ready to help your child give up a pacifier? Here are some tips for navigating the tricky transition.

Whether they're crystal clear, neon-bright, or covered in rhinestones, pacifiers are the modern baby's accessory of choice. Thanks to studies showing that they reduce the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, most pediatricians have given pacifiers the green light. A study in *Pediatrics* found that a whopping 68 percent of parents give them to their babies before six weeks of age.

Babies aren't the only ones who love them; parents quickly become addicted to the pacifier's soothing effects on their offspring. Unfortunately, it often becomes a habit that overstays its welcome.

Why wean?

Some children give up non-nutritive or comfort sucking on their own, but others cling to the habit well into the preschool years. According to Dr. Lotus Su, of Pediatric Dental Associates, using a pacifier too much or for too long can contribute to dental problems, including deformation of the palate and shifting of the teeth, as well as mouth breathing and dry mouth, which may increase susceptibility to tooth decay.

Many doctors and dentists recommend ending the habit before permanent front teeth begin to emerge, which can happen before kindergarten.

"I recommend stopping pacifier use by age 3," says Dr. Su. "The earlier a pacifier habit is stopped, the less likely that there will be any den-

tal problems."

Potential problems extend beyond the teeth. Pacifier use is associated with otitis media, or middle ear infections. Minor health upsets like gastrointestinal infections and oral thrush are also more commonly seen in pacifier users.

Parents may be swayed by medical data and dentists' recommendations, but kids often need some coaxing to give up the long-held habit. Guilt-inducing lectures about dental problems or germs may be counterproductive, causing them to dig in their heels. Instead, help them become confidently pacifier-free with these tactics.

Literary lesson: Before embarking on a pacifier-purge, check out some

children's books on the topic. After listening to stories like "The Last Noo-Noo" by Jill Murphy or "Pacifiers Are Not Forever" by Elizabeth Verdick, your child may be more receptive to the idea.

Pacifier bear: When 3-year-old Violet was ready to give up her pacifier, mom Bec Langham took her to a popular build-your-own-stuffed-animal store. Violet deposited her last pacifier safely inside the teddy bear before it was sewn up. The bear now serves as both a cuddly friend and a unique reminder of Violet's younger days.

Baby charity: Your child may be willing to donate her pacifiers to a good cause. Gather up the pacifiers, and pay a visit to a friend with a young baby. Have your child "gift" the baby with the pacifier collection, and shower her with praise for her generosity.

The Paci Fairy: Steal this idea from Supernanny Jo Frost: have your child place her pacifiers in a large envelope to mail to the "Pacifier Fairy." Put the envelope in the mailbox together before bed. Once she's asleep, swap the envelope for a new toy. When she wakes up, excitedly take her to the mailbox to find her new treasures.

Make the cut: Snipping a small hole in a pacifier can help it lose its appeal quickly, encouraging a child to give it up on her own. Be sure to dispose of a broken pacifier promptly, because it can harbor bacteria or become a choking hazard if a child continues to use it.

Out of sight, out of mind: Parents seeking the quickest route to pacifier-freedom can simply throw them all away. Kelly Stallings opted for the cold-turkey approach with daughter Taylor.

"The first night was rough, but after that, she didn't care," she says. Just make sure to get rid of each and every one, so your child isn't tempted to relapse (and you're not tempted to cave in).

No matter how stubbornly your child clings to a beloved binky, eventually it will be a thing of the past. Once your child is free of the pacifier habit, you're free as well — from relentlessly searching for them, washing them, and buying them. Enjoy your well-earned liberation. At least, until the next must-have item comes along.

Malia Jacobson is a nationally published sleep expert, health journalist, and mom. She blogs about sleep and family health at www.thewellrestedfamily.com.





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Chew on this

How to care for baby's teeth

BY MONICA DICLERICO BROWN

It's a milestone that lots of parents love, and they like to document it with lots of cute pictures.

Baby's new teeth are adorable, but their care and maintenance routine can be confusing for many new parents. Here's the scoop on the best way to properly clean those little pearly whites and the right time for that first visit to the dentist.

Dr. Frederick Stange, of City Dentist, says the perfect age for a child's first visit can depend on how much room they have between their teeth.

"Children have spaces between their baby teeth — and that's supposed to be the case," says Dr. Stange.

"That's what makes those teeth 'self-cleaning.' Minimal care from the caretaker will keep the teeth healthy. Start with a flexible finger cot that is sold in most pharmacies — it helps keep the hands close to the child and offers more control. As the infant grows accustomed to this habit, you can switch to the brush."

A toddler with spaces in between his teeth usually has his molars by the

time he's 2 years old, and that's when Dr. Stange recommends bringing the child in for the first professional evaluation.

But children who don't have spaces in between their teeth should be seen by a dentist much earlier — usually around his first birthday, or when you can see eight to 12 teeth in his mouth.

"Just like an adult, the touching teeth allow plaque and bacteria to grow in between. The children I see with little to no space between their teeth are usually the ones with decay."

For all children, wiping the teeth clean before bedtime is important, even if you're not comfortable using toothpaste right away.

"Start one thing at a time: finger cot, toothbrush, then toothbrush and paste. And never allow a child with teeth to fall asleep with a milk or juice bottle in their mouth. Sugar that will remain in the mouth overnight will cause decay. This usually starts in the front teeth and turns the teeth dark, but it's so easily prevented."

And the Midtown Manhattan dentist says parents can make it easier for children who may be anxious or uneasy about visiting the dentist for the first time.

"Preparation for a toddler's first dental visit starts at home," he says. "If this is the first time anyone is looking in the child's mouth, the new experience with a stranger will most likely not be received well. I have my 4-month-old daughter hold and explore her little toothbrush, even at this young age. This way, she's somewhat familiar with it, and it doesn't become something that's forced into her mouth. Rather, the experience of the toothbrush is almost akin to her pacifier, in that it's accepted as normal."

You can also prepare them at home by going through some of the same motions the dentist will go through: have your child open his mouth wide, so you can make a game of counting his teeth. Let him do the same for you. Give him a flashlight, if it makes the "game" more fun.

"If they are in control and understand the situation, you have removed the fear," says Dr. Stange.

Going a step further, Dr. Stange recommends bringing your child with you when you see the den-

tist, so that he can see the dentist or hygienist is working on mom or dad, and that it's ok.

"Start as young as you can. If they see that it's easy with you, then it will be easier to relate to the dentist," he adds.

At the very least, Dr. Stange urges parents NOT to threaten their children with a trip to the dentist.

"Children have excellent memories — if you tell them, 'Brush your teeth or you will have cavities and then the dentist will have to pull out all of your teeth,' they'll remember that! Make it a positive experience and use positive reinforcement when your child is brushing correctly. You don't want anything negative attached to the dental visit."

If your child is using a toothbrush and is actually learning how to brush, Dr. Stange says it's a good idea to do it while he is in a playful and inquisitive mood.

"Right before bed while your child is tired and fussy is probably not the time to try to brush the teeth. It's best after dinner and after breakfast. Remember that the cavity and odor-causing bacteria are always growing in our mouth. We are controlling their population by brushing them away. It is not as much about brushing at 9:04 pm and again at 7:56 am as it is about removing bacteria twice a day.

"It is okay to brush and have one more bottle as long as — again — we don't fall asleep with that bottle. Brushing effectively while a child is accepting is much better than fighting that cranky child at 11 pm. Ultimately, it is best to brush, then go off to bed, and in the morning after breakfast would be best as well."

Bottom line? Make oral hygiene an important part of your child's daily routine, and you'll never go wrong.

"We find ways to have our children enjoy reading or coloring daily, so we should be doing the same with our oral health routine," says Dr. Stange. "But timing is very important. We usually don't ask them to wait till bedtime to start reading, playing, or learning, so we should take care of their teeth throughout the day as well."

Monica DiClerico Brown is a television news anchor and freelance writer who lives in Pearl River, NY, with her husband and two children.

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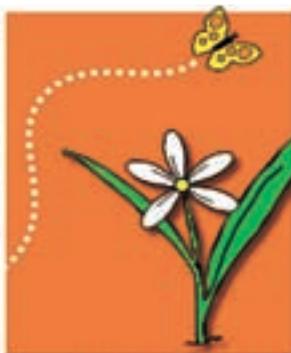
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Continued on page 18

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Preschool

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Continued from page 16

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Riverside Montessori

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nity of lifelong learners using proven Montessori methodology. Problem solving and creativity are emphasized along with age-appropriate academic subjects. TPMS are among Manhattan's most spacious preschools, offering rich and varied environments— from individual activity tables to open floor areas promoting group interaction, from the quiet areas for independent interests to the abundance of the Schools' glorious backyards: Central and Riverside Parks. Each of these environments invites exploration, discovery and fully meets the developmental needs of young children.

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96th and Columbus
866-812-5554 www.upperwestsideplaygroup.org

Upper West Side Playgroup has a versatile atmosphere - structured yet relaxed and feels very different from New York City's corporate child care offerings. It's a concept almost unheard of in NYC, but Founder and Director Maria Dantos had a dream to build a positive early-education community for working families. The classrooms are categorized into age groups from 3 months to 5 years. While UWSP seeks to be the antithesis of high-pressure preschools so prevalent in the city, the curriculum is extremely advanced. UWSP is structured as a cooperative and largely funnels tuition back into the organization for educational programs and better teacher salaries. Their new "Green" location is located on 96th & Columbus and will open September 2013. To learn more visit our website.

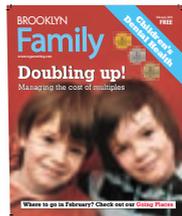
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490 Riverside Drive
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The Weekday School is a diverse community based on sharing, understanding, and respect. Offering compelling learning opportunities based on a curriculum that draws from both progressive and traditional approaches for children ages two through kindergarten. The school features bright, spacious classrooms overlooking the Hudson River and upper Manhattan. "Side by Side at Riverside" is a new program providing an introduction to the preschool experience for very young children accompanied by an adult. Skilled Early Childhood educators guide the children through many activities and circle time with songs and stories. The program is specially designed for families who want to remain with their children while providing a social and experiential foundation in a school setting. Classes are scheduled on either Tuesday/Thursday mornings or Wednesday afternoons.

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The backstory on **Operation Backpack**

Volunteer drive
collects brand-
new bags and
school supplies

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

As a surge of grassroots volunteering sweeps the country, more and more folks are choosing to devote their time and energy to help those in need, as evidenced by the thousands who stepped forward after Hurricane Sandy's devastation and, more recently, after the Oklahoma tornadoes.

Giving back to those less fortunate can also benefit children by helping them to appreciate what they have. So, if you're dealing with "bored kids syndrome" this summer, how about getting them involved in some community work? After all, charity begins at home. Through participating, parents can find a fun and fulfilling summer activity for the whole family.

Operation Backpack: A great family project

Fast forward to September, and before you know it, it's back-to-school time. As a parent, can you imagine sending your child or teen off to school without a backpack, filled with the essential supplies they need to help them get off to a good start?

This summer there are more than 20,000 children living in homeless shelters, and every year, thousands of homeless students in the city face a new school year without those basic supplies.

Volunteers of America's Operation Backpack helps close this gap by collecting and distributing thousands of new backpacks full of grade-specific and essential school supplies to those kids. Last year, more than 13,500 backpacks were distributed!

And volunteering at Operation Backpack has become an annual back-to-school tradition for many

children over the years.

Spear-headed by Rachel Weinstein, Operation Backpack came to be when she decided to re-brand the small effort, back-to-school drive 10 years ago.

Rajani's story

Rajani was a high school junior when she and her family fell on hard times, and the only way they could remain together was to enter a shelter. The shelter was not a Volunteers of America shelter, but while there, the children were instructed to get their backpacks for school. Rajani didn't want to go, thinking she was going to be given a "shelter backpack," but her mother insisted she take her little brother to get his.

Rajani says the quality of the backpack she received was totally unexpected, and to this day she has the dictionary and thesaurus.

"I couldn't believe someone cared about me enough to do this for me — give me a backpack that had everything I needed to go to school," she said. "It gave me the incentive to go to school and I decided that even though I was sitting in a shelter, I could still have a good time ... and that year, I excelled. It propelled me to apply for the scholarship I received."

Rajani has since graduated from Fordham University.

"The success of Operation Backpack lies with the generosity of the New York City community," says Weinstein, Vice-President and Chief Development and Communications Officer at Volunteers of America-Greater New York. "I don't necessarily think of community service as 'giving back,' so much as I just see it as good citizenship — the right thing

to do; helping to make the world a better place."

The backstory

Weinstein says she was working as a consultant 11 years ago when her daughter Madeline attended school at Metropolitan Montessori, across the street from Volunteer of America's headquarters on W. 85th Street in Manhattan. One of the moms who happened to work at there asked Weinstein if she would plan an employee recognition event. Then, when she joined full-time, she had responsibility for the volunteer function — and the project going on at the time was the back-to-school drive.

One summer, while shopping for young Maddie's school supplies, Weinstein noticed "the difference between what my daughter would be taking to school and what our kids in shelter would have — a plastic bag with perhaps some pencils — was a huge disparity, and I vowed to develop a more targeted and comprehensive approach the following year. This was 2003."

Her goal was an ambitious one: a backpack filled with a specific list of supplies recommended by public school teachers, for every one of the 11,000 children served by Volunteers of America-Greater New York.

"We would ask the general public to donate their gently used backpacks (and ask the corporate community to donate supplies)," she said.

"Well, as I learned, no child's used backpack is in any shape to recycle for another child, and next year I established a new standard — we would only accept new backpacks that we would put on our own kids' backs," said Weinstein, adding, "We also wouldn't accept branded backpacks (backpacks emblazoned with a company's name). For that same reason we didn't indicate on or inside the backpack that it was donated by Volunteers of America, or otherwise associated with Operation Backpack. We rebranded the campaign that year, Operation Backpack."

Then, Weinstein says, she got Madie involved with Operation Backpack.

"Not to expose her to volunteerism, initially — but because I was desperate for help and had already worn out all my adult volunteers, after three days of sorting supplies into backpacks. The public's response was so much greater than anticipated, that I wasn't prepared for the hundreds of backpacks that had continued to come in, even after the drive officially ended," Weinstein recalled.



(Clockwise from top right) Rachel Weinstein and her daughter Maddie. Maddie sits amongst hundreds of donated backpacks. The proud owner of a brand-new backpack.



So, she called Maddie and asked her if she could come in next morning to help, and to see if she could enlist any friends. “The only person she could rustle up quickly was Julian, a friend from the Metropolitan Opera Children’s Chorus, who lived in New Jersey. Well, Julian and Maddie worked a good eight hours straight; quality controlled, labeled and sorted every backpack (about 300). By the end of that day they were nearly too exhausted to walk to dinner. Seeing how quickly and conscientiously they had worked, I realized kids were a good source of help for Operation Backpack, and it reinforced for me the appropriateness of engaging kids in this particular volunteer effort,” Weinstein said. “After seeing what an incredible job Maddie and Julian did, an annual tradition was born: one day during sort week each year would be dedicated to youth volunteers.

Leveling the playing field

“The point after all, was for these [homeless] children to go to school that all-important first day, looking

and feeling more like their housed classmates,” Weinstein explained. “We had to educate the public not only about the needs of homeless families and the devastating impact it has on a child’s education, but the concept of ‘normalizing’ life for these kids; helping them look and feel like other kids.”

And most people got it. She said they understood and supported the objective to help these children fit in; to level the playing field.

“What was most important was that the children arrive at school with their new backpack full of new supplies.”

Weinstein says seeing the children open their backpacks is heartwarming, and Volunteers of America is grateful for the generosity of the New York City community.

“One of my mantras is: ‘It’s never too early to begin a tradition of giving.’ For it to really stick though, philanthropy — in whatever form it takes — needs to be part of the fabric of the family,” says Weinstein.

“Parents need to model kindness

City Department of Homeless Service Commissioner. “Operation Backpack helps ensure that homeless children have the best possible start to their school year by making certain they have the proper supplies, and we are grateful to [Volunteers of America] for that.”

According to Weinstein, who juggles her super-busy personal life with her important role with the organization, a number of families said they take their children back-to-school shopping for their own school supplies and have them select and fill a backpack for a child who might otherwise go without.

“A family can hold a party or other event, and ask everyone to bring specific school supplies then hold a mini-sort day, resulting in a number of filled backpacks (which they can then bring to our office),” she suggests. “Kids have raised money and donated it to Operation Backpack, which is very helpful during sort week, so we can replenish supplies we run out of.”

Students at Hunter College High School formed a club, Hunter Backpack Organization, and for several years raised close to \$2,000 each year, through raffles and other creative methods. Some of those kids have volunteered for years but are about to leave for college this year.

Operation Backpack, which began as a project to outfit only Volunteers of America children, has expanded to include nearly every homeless or domestic violence shelter in the city — about 150 shelters in total.

Duane Reade stores operate as official drop locations and post signs inviting the public to drop off their donations of backpacks and school supplies. For grade-appropriate supplies and drop locations, visit www.OperationBackpacknyc.org. Donations can be made from July 15 through Aug. 9. Financial donations can still be made after Aug. 5.

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer and parent who loves New York City. She has been a contributing writer for several community newspapers and writes book cover copy for a well-know publishing company. Her consumer-focused articles appear on the AngiesList website, and other stories by her have been published in the New York Daily News and the New York Post.

and volunteerism, starting at home: phone calls to grandparents just to say ‘hi’ or giving one’s seat on the bus to an elderly passenger; offering to stop by a neighbor’s apartment to play with their pet. These are all simple activities that can generate good discussions about the value of kindness, caring for others and putting that caring into action. Volunteering outside of one’s home, takes it a step further,” she says.

How you can help

Volunteering begins when individuals, families, and various groups shop for and donate backpacks and school supplies, organize drives, hold fund-raising events, and take it upon themselves to spread the word about the needs of homeless children.

“The key to a good education is showing up and showing up prepared,” says Seth Diamond, New York

Afraid of the 4th

Strategies for helping special needs kids cope with fear of fireworks

BY REBECCA MCKEE

Happy Fourth of July! Picnics, cookouts, baseball ... all of these contribute to wonderful summer celebrations. Who could forget about time at the beach, boat rides, and of course, the fireworks! For most people, envisioning these experiences and conversing about it with our friends and family immediately evokes smiles and jubilation. But for those who live with autism spectrum disorder, or other sensitivities, occasions containing overflows of sounds, sights, smells, and static become bombardments to their outer shells.

Among these festive surroundings, angst and anxiety may quickly set in for these unique individuals. Containing these fears is an important talent and survival skill to learn.

To do so, let's focus on one fear ... the fear of fireworks. Imagine that your loved one is so intimidated by fireworks that she screams for the duration of a pyrotechnics show. Simultaneously, she runs back and forth in an unsafe manner that may cause damage to property and possible danger to others. Therefore, her fear is causing problems for others within her living environment. She needs to learn how to contain this fear.

When we think of tackling the task of containing this trepidation, we should not feel overwhelmed as if we need to squash her stress completely. Containment simply means corralling or tunneling; as if to keep it isolated. It is okay to have fears. It is okay for this girl or young woman to feel afraid of fireworks. What is wrong is when her behaviors affect other people, places, and events around her in an antisocial manner.

Sample solution

- Create a social story about fireworks with this individual.
- Read the social story once per week for a month before the fireworks occur.
- De-sensitize her to fireworks through spurts of exposure in a safe space — watch fireworks on YouTube with the volume OFF for less



then one minute; build up to watching fireworks on YouTube with the sound on for five minutes.

- Provide her with a safe space that she can retreat to when her anxiety is reaching an intense level, such as the quiet basement (somewhere away from the noise coming from the sky).
- On the night of the fireworks, pair the event with reinforcing items and activities that she adores; for ex-

ample, if she loves pepperoni pizza, Snapple, and Elton John music, then make sure that during the fireworks, you have plenty of pepperoni pizza, Snapple, and Elton John loaded on her iPod with her headphones on!

Always remember, our successful social experiences will not always match with those we love. Being sensitive and aware will always lead to more harmony in the home. Cheers to fun summer memories!



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Learning history through

Art

An exhibit details ‘The Civil War and American Art’ at the Metropolitan Museum

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

What better way for your children to learn about America’s past than through the work of 19th-century artists and early photographers, who interpreted and captured historic events for future generations?

This summer, you and your family should experience the special exhibition “The Civil War and American Art” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, until Sept. 2, 2013.

A rare collection of some 60 paintings and 18 photographs, created between 1852 and 1877, tell fascinating and profound stories that no textbook or classroom lesson can ever match.

According to museum sources, “Some of the most important and powerful examples of 19th-century American art were made in the years surrounding and during the Civil War. And yet, very few of these works actually depict battle scenes.”

Through creating works that embraced everyday life — such as families on the home front and brave soldiers going off to war — famous artists illuminated a pivotal time in the nation’s history and brought it to life on canvas.

“Teaching art in an historic context enhances our understanding of art, and teaching history through art enhances our understanding of the past. However, we know that artists — even the most devout documentarians — are selective when they choose their subjects and the means by which to portray them,” said H. Barbara Weinberg, Alice Pratt Brown Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Met.

“In turn, viewers bring their personal experiences and feelings to bear when they interpret works of



(Above) Winslow Homer’s “Home, Sweet Home” depicts the physical and psychological plight of ordinary soldiers. (At right) “A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves.”

art. Great works of art invite us to return to them again and again to try and discover how they reflect the times in which they were created, and to appreciate — and enjoy — the many ways in which they still speak to us.”

Art is powerful!

This summer, turn one day into a really cool adventure for your kids and teens. Here’s a great plan of action:

Step 1: Coax them away from computers and video games with hints about a mystery trip: tell them they’re going somewhere different and special, but you can’t reveal where.

Step 2: Promise them lunch or dinner out afterward.

Step 3: It can’t hurt to do a little research about the Civil War,

beforehand.

Step 4: Then take the subway or bus and spend a day at the museum.

So, how can viewing this exhibition help youngsters learn about the Civil War (1861–1865)?

“By looking very closely at the paintings and gathering information of what they observe, young people can learn what the American landscape looked like, what Americans were concerned about, how people responded to wartime, and what a soldier on the battlefield had to endure,” said museum educator Alice W. Schwarz. “Remember that all works of art are primary resources. Looking at the date of when the work of art was made gives you a lens into an historic time period — what subjects and styles were popular, what tools and techniques the



artists were using, and sometimes why the works of art were created and for whom.”

Detailing daily life of American children

Those children were different from your kids, but in many ways the same. They went to school, helped with chores during the war, and wrote in journals and sent letters to friends. They all had stories to tell.

What was it like to be a kid or teen during the Civil War? To watch your dad or brother go off to war and join the Union (the North’s army) or Confederate (the South’s army)?

Recommended reading:

“The Boys’ War: Confederate and Union soldiers talk about the Civil War” by Jim Murphy (includes diary entries, personal letters, archival photographs describing experiences of boys, 16 or younger, who fought in the Civil War).

Did you know that African Americans fought in the Union army?

The author writes: “Generally, boys from the North did not join the army because they had a burning desire to stamp out slavery.

“One boy wrote in a letter, ‘I do not know anything about it, whether it’s a good thing or a bad thing.’

“Many joined because they wanted to take the defiant South and ‘set them straight.’ But most signed up for a simpler reason — to escape the boring routine of farm life and take part in an exciting adventure. Many boys from the South just wanted to defend their homes from a large invading army.”

How did the Civil War impact the lives of families and the American psyche?

It’s hard to believe that at times, neighbors fought against neighbors, and even brothers against brothers. In the exhibition, artists’ masterful brush strokes captured family life. Families who were, in many ways, like yours:

The Blodgett Family — “Christmas-Time, the Blodgett Family,” 1864 (oil on canvas) — was plagued by uncertainty, separation, and loss.

The wall text reads, “William Tilden Blodgett (1823–1875), an art collector and a member of the Union League Club, appears with his family in the serene Renaissance Revival parlor of their house at 27 W. 25th St. in Manhattan.”

The children’s activities allude to the ongoing war and the conflicting attitudes toward African Americans that prevailed, even among support-

ers of the Union cause. Blodgett’s son plays with a wooden jig doll, painted as a black man wearing a Union Army uniform. The older daughter seems merely curious, but the younger daughter — dressed like Little Eva in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” (1852) — observes the toy with anxiety and grave concern.

The North vs. the South

Spring, 1861: the tension in the country was like a cinder box ready to ignite, resulting in the Civil War!

Things came to a head after decades of bad blood between the North and South over issues like states’ rights versus federal authority (sound familiar?), westward expansion and, especially, slavery.

And when the anti-slavery Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, was elected in 1860, it caused quite a stir — seven southern states seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America; and as the country went to battle, four more joined them.

As war raged, families were torn apart, homes were destroyed, and towns became bloody battlefields.

Lincoln’s eldest son, Robert Todd

Lincoln, 22, was finally given permission by his dad and mom to join General Grant’s army toward the end of the war. He always wanted to join, but they feared for his safety.

Do your kids know that slaves were an integral part of Virginia economy? That some toiled on tobacco farms, or were employed in light industry, and others were actually rented out to companies building railroads and mines? Virginians made much of their money buying and selling slaves, exporting them from the state to the cotton fields of the Deep South.

One work on display — “The Cotton Pickers” by Winslow Homer, 1876 (oil on canvas) — depicts young slave girls picking cotton.

Did your kids know that slaves were thought of as property and often took on their masters’ last names? That in the years following the war, some former slaves became authors and businessmen?

The work, “A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves,” March 2, 1862 (oil on board) depicts their journey.

The accompanying wall text reads, “Before the Civil War, depictions of black Americans were most often caricatures or stereotypes. Growing racial awareness is reflected in works such as this one, which shows a black family hoping to gain freedom by fleeing to the Union lines.”

Against a chilly predawn glow, the father leans forward, urging on his horse, fearing a bullet, and yet focused on liberating himself and his family. His young son, sitting in front of him, echoes the father’s resolve. The man’s wife sits behind him, clasping an infant to her chest. She looks back, half in fear and watchfulness, half in sorrow for what she might have left behind, however dismal it might have been.

This family symbolizes all who are displaced in an effort to make a better life. Yet, by showing black Americans squarely in the foreground, Johnson elevated them in the national debate.

“The works of art in this exhibition were not intended to document the war,” said Thomas P. Campbell, museum director. “Rather, they chronicle how genre painters, landscape painters, and photographers responded to the coming of the war, the fact of the war, and its aftermath,

Continued on following page

Continued from previous page

and how the war changed American art.”

Those who stayed behind

War took a toll on women.

Just like today, for those who remained at home, the end of the war represented a different kind of battleground. Women assumed new roles as they became the heads of households, some temporarily, others permanently. Many soldiers came home injured and emotionally broken; no one knew about post-traumatic stress disorder.

Did you know that wives, daughters, sisters, and other female kin assumed much of the work normally pursued by men — managing plantations, harvesting crops, running businesses — while confronting inflation and slave resistance?

“We felt like clinging to Walter and holding him back,” wrote one Virginia woman, in reaction to a family member’s enlistment. “I was sick of war, sick of the butchery, the anguish.”

The message of unavoidable change and pervasive uncertainty as the war ended infuses the haunting oil-on-canvas work, “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” 1870–75 (ca.1872, Smithsonian American Art Museum).

A partial wall text reads, “A girl stands on a promontory, the horizon obscured by fog. Her fingers hold her place in a small stack of books. The wedding ring on her hand suggests her commitment to her union — but is that a reference to her personal life or to the Union as the nation? She appears to be waiting for a break in the clouds, for some sign of what to expect next in Reconstruction-era America.”

Although buffeted by the wind, she appears determined to stand firm, but she has no clear path forward.

(Watch “Cold Mountain,” a story of women taking over manly roles during the Civil War).

Suggested reading:

• Mary Chesnut’s “Civil War”

Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut; C Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, ©1981).

A first-person account of the war from the diaries of a Southern aristocrat (1823–1886), who experienced the disintegration and final destruction of the Confederacy. Writing probably helped her deal with fairly severe poverty.

• “The Diary of Susie King Taylor, Civil War nurse”

Susie King Taylor; Margaret Gay



“Christmas-Time, the Blodgett Family”

Malone (elementary-junior high school).

Excerpts from diary of a nurse with a regiment of black soldiers fighting for the Union, including her observations on the treatment of “coloreds” after the war.

•Optional: Did your kids know that the Civil War is described as the costliest war ever fought on American soil? Some 620,000 of 2.4 million soldiers were killed, millions more injured and the population and territory of the South was devastated, by the time it ended in Confederate surrender in 1865.

You’ll find symbolic elements imbedded here and there, if you look closely at the paintings — Sanford Gifford’s “A Coming Storm,” 1863, retouched and re-dated in 1880 (oil on canvas), and Frederic E. Church’s “Our Banner in the Sky,” 1861 (oil on paper).

According to Museum sources: “Because the conflict so deeply affected America’s character and visual culture, artists encoded its significance and implications in their works.”

On May 19, 1861, the New York Daily Tribune noted, “Mr. Church

has been painting a symbolical landscape embodying the Stars and Stripes. It is an evening scene, with long lines of red and gold typifying the stripes, and a patch of blue sky with the dimly twinkling stars in a corner for the Union.

“The landscape appears to symbolically mourn the dissolution of the Union and the nation — like the edges of the flag — in tatters. It did not appear to address the war directly.”

The painting may give your kids the creeps because it’s linked to Lincoln’s assassination: it was owned by the actor Edwin Booth, the assassin John Wilkes Booth’s brother.

Do you know that during the war, some artists like Homer followed Union and Confederate armies, sketching scenes depicting the physical and psychological plight of ordinary soldiers, and daring commanders and generals, which they turned into oil paintings afterwards?

Winslow Homer’s “Home, Sweet Home,” 1863 (oil on canvas) captures the moment.

It was always a time of uncertainty. Men died for their beliefs, even if they were wrong in the eyes of others. Emancipation came at a

great cost, but one man, Abe Lincoln, was destined to set things right.

African Americans who were slaves eventually reunited with their families.

“A direct experience of art can bring history alive, sharpen one’s sense of beauty, and awaken one’s own artistic talent,” said museum educator Mike Norris. “When the whole family experiences art together, even though members may be at developmentally different stages, everyone can discuss the same focus from differing points of view. In that way, family members learn more about each other, while gaining more knowledge about art.”

Teens may want to check out the museum’s Teen Blog and Facebook page and comment on the posts. The show was previously displayed at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

•Optional: “Photography and the American Civil War”

Keep in mind that there are some gory images here — of violence and death — that aren’t suitable for children.

“The Civil War and American Art” exhibition complements this show: an amazing collection of vintage prints, stereographs, ambrotypes, and tintypes.

“Many of the images will be familiar: from Ken Burns’s TV miniseries ‘The Civil War.’ The most unforgettable shots survey corpse-strewn battlefields,” said a museum source.

There are many things kids and teens can get involved with at the museum to keep them occupied, entertained, and informed.

“The Met Museum offers young visitors something onsite every day, whether it is a picture-book reading for toddlers (Toddler Storytime), creating art for two minutes or two hours, inspired by the surrounding works of art (Sunday Studio), or a How Did They Do That? program in the galleries, on how to make arms and armor, taught by Museum specialists,” said Norris.

The 11-to-18-year-old set can enjoy free weekend classes and events that are all about understanding art and exploring the museum through sketching classes, gallery conversations, and art-making studio classes.

Tammy Scleppi is a Queens-based freelance writer and parent who loves New York City. She has been a contributing writer for several community newspapers and writes book-cover copy for a well-know publishing company. Her consumer-focused articles appear on the AngiesList website, and other stories of hers have been published in the New York Daily News and the New York Post.

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**DOWNTOWN
MOMMY**
NOTOYA GREEN

Learning to accept help from others

One mom can't do it all, especially with triplets

I was one of those moms who never had much luck with nannies. They were either too rigid, or too aloof, or too old school, or too something.

While my concerns about each of my nannies were legitimate, I realize now that I had decided long before they walked through the door that they wouldn't be a good fit for my family.

Growing up, I always thought I would like a life of having nannies and housekeepers to help me. As an adult and as a new mom, I didn't. I didn't like having to move out the way so the cleaning lady could clean, and I

certainly didn't like being told by my nanny how other families were doing it. Despite my frustration, I continued having a nanny and a housekeeper, and at one point had two full-time nannies. After all, I was not just a new mom, but I was a new mom of triplets. So I needed help — and lots of it.

It quickly became clear to me that having three babies was overwhelming and I couldn't do it all by myself. I was fortunate to have people in my home to help me, but I never really let them. Like a lot of new moms, I wasn't ready to trust others with my children. I also didn't believe that good moms delegated. I grew up in a family where

women took care of their homes and their children themselves. So I followed that model and did my best to do everything for my children. I did my best to change all their diapers, prepare their meals, gave them their baths, and would not miss a feeding even if my life depended on it.

For a long time, being this hands on was incredibly rewarding, and it sometimes still is. I went from a mom who knew nothing to super mom in just a few months, and I felt good about that. Over time I realized that my decision to not accept help was taking a toll on me. Two years later and with almost no hair left on my head, I came to terms with the fact that I needed help — or at least that I needed to allow others to help me.

So I made some adjustments. First, I enrolled my children in an hour-and-a-half, Spanish, drop-off playgroup, and it was one of the scariest decisions I ever made. I worried that my children weren't ready for a drop-off, and my mind raced about all the terrible things that could happen to them with me not around. To my surprise, though, nothing bad happened. In fact, they loved the class.

Then, I started allowing others to do more with my kids without me. That gave me the break I needed to take walks, exercise, and go to dinner with my husband and my friends. It also gave me children the chance to bond with other people, which I think made them happier as well.

I'm still very much a hands-on mom, but I'm not super mom anymore and I don't want to be. I'm a person with limits, and I understand that now. I'm also a happier and healthier mom, and now I'm starting to look a little better, too.

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





DEATH BY CHILDREN

CHRIS GARLINGTON

My own gun control

I don't own a gun. Never have. Not because of any overt political or personal views, but for the simple reason that I am a goofball and I would most likely use that weapon to shoot my own feet, an ineptitude I've passed on to my son.

We were visiting family; it was a father-and-son vacation to the motherland, the red dirt state of my birth, Alabama, where sons are born with a gun in one hand and a football in the other. We arrived on my nephew's birthday. My nephew was getting a gun.

Not a real gun: he was buying an airsoft pistol — it shoots tiny little plastic beads that couldn't hurt a fly.

My sister loaded her van full of boys and we went to the local fake arms dealer, a sports store, where my son found himself standing before a wall of fake firearms.

"Can I have a gun? Everyone else has one."

Kid logic. It seems stupid in retrospect, but something about the lure of fake weaponry and the realization that without a fake gun my son would be fake unarmed alarmed me in the dark recesses of my cowboy brain. Plus, my wife wasn't there. So I got two.

Back at the party, the adults were drinking sweet iced tea in the kitchen while the boys slaughtered each other in the basement. My son showed up.

"They're shooting me!"

"Well, shoot back."

"I am!"

"What's the problem?"

"They're good!"

"Welcome to Alabama, kid."

Ten minutes later, two cousins appeared.

"We think Connor should sit this one out."

"Why?"

"He's crazy."

"He's shooting us while we reload."

"Welcome to Chicago, kid."

I went in the basement. There was my son, eyes wild, a gun in both hands, laughing maniacally, shooting neon green plastic balls in every direction while my nephews hid behind a couch and tried to ignore him. I dragged him upstairs for a talk.

"I think it's time to put the gun away."

He waved the gun around like a drunken Nicaraguan dictator.

"Dad, it's totally saf—"

He's cut off by a loud click — the only sound these guns make — and remained silent for a split second, as his eyes widened and we both looked down at his index finger, wrapped snugly over the barrel of the fake gun, a finger rapidly turning crimson. The scream came from deep within him, where it had been wrapped around his spleen, patiently waiting to deploy; now it uncurled and filled the house with a splenetic wail of oh-my-god-I-shot-myself.

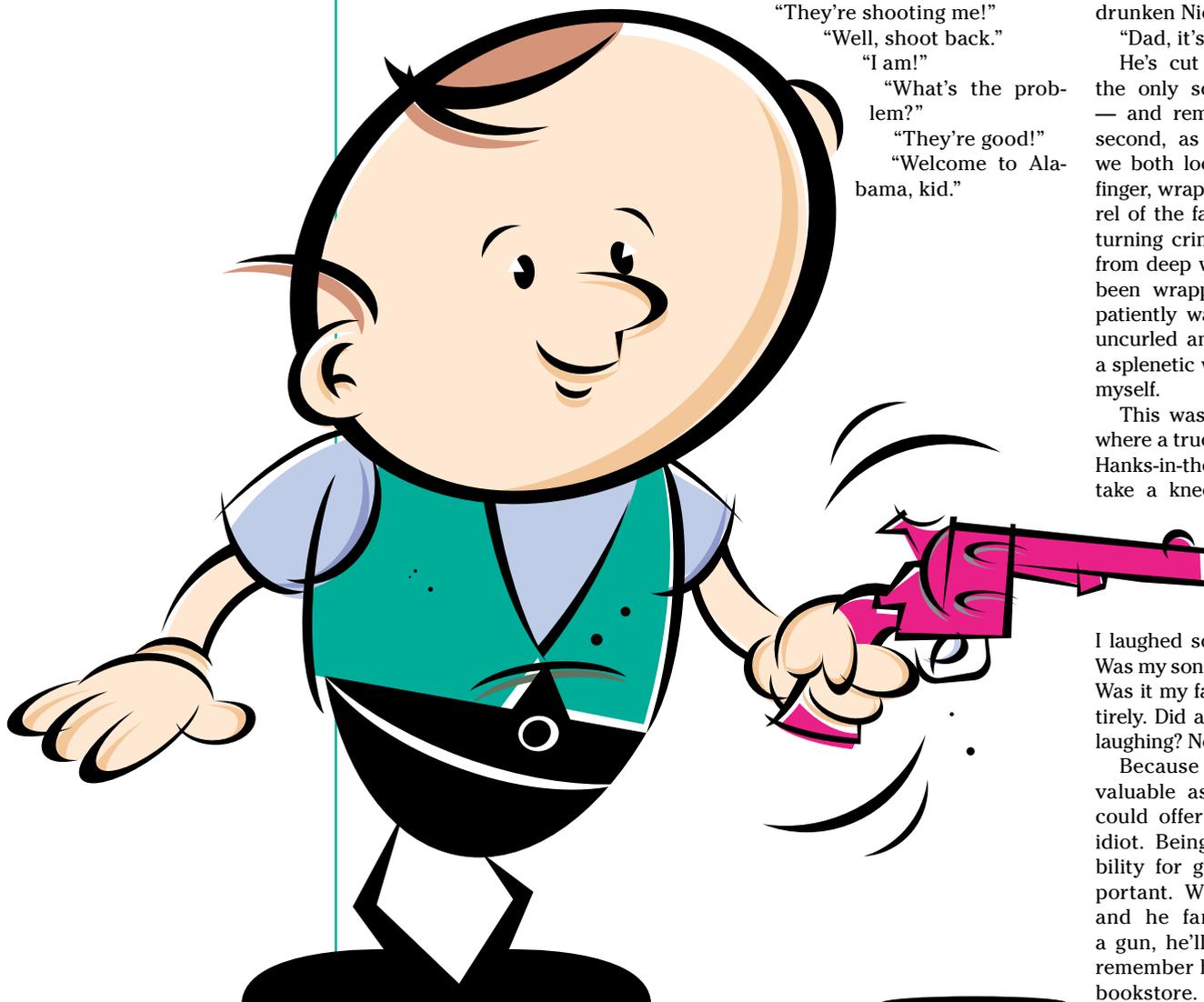
This was one of those moments where a true dad, a good dad, a Tom Hanks-in-the-role-of-dad dad, would take a knee, soothe the boy's affliction, and teach a life lesson.

You know where this is going, right?

I fell out of my chair.

I laughed so hard I almost choked. Was my son crying? Yes, yes, he was. Was it my fault? Yes. Absolutely. Entirely. Did any of that stop me from laughing? No. It. Did. Not.

Because that's a life lesson as valuable as anything Tom Hanks could offer: sometimes, you're an idiot. Being aware of one's capability for genuine stupidity is important. When my son is a man and he fantasizes about buying a gun, he'll look at his finger and remember he's an idiot and go to a bookstore.



Calendar

JULY



Milo and friends save their park

“My City Park,” comes to New York Public Library on July 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 22.

Puppet masters from Making Books Sing present the endearing tale of Milo and his friends, and what happens when they find out that their favorite park is going to close.

Perfect for children 3 to 10 years old, who will learn the value of working together to accomplish a common goal.

Enjoy “My City Park” at: Hudson Park Library, 66 Leroy St., (212) 243-6876, on July 8 at 4 pm; Morningside Heights Library, 2900

Broadway, (212) 864-2530, on July 11 at 4 pm; George Bruce Library, 518 W. 125th St., (212) 662-9272, on July 15 at 4 pm; Chatham Square Library, 33 E. Broadway, (212) 964-6598, on July 16 at 11 am; Battery Park City Library, 175 North End Ave. (212) 790-3499, on July 17 at 4 pm; Harlem Library, 9 W. 124th St., (212) 348-5620, on July 18 at 4 pm; Children’s Center at Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Fifth Ave. at 42nd Street, (212) 621-0208, on July 20 at 3 pm; and Webster Library, 1465 York Ave., (212) 288-5049, on July 22, at 4 pm. Free.

New York Public Library, (www.nypl.org).

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TUES, JULY 2

Chalkboard Ninjas: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112th St. at corner of 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 678-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 3:30–6 pm; Free.

The Chalkboard Ninjas appear on your sidewalk every Tuesday afternoon with contests and prizes, face-painting — and ninjatude for ages 5–18.

THURS, JULY 4

Independence Day Scavenger

Hunt: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 10 am – 6 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Hunt high and low in this scavenger hunt celebrating our nation's independence. Families search for the horse tail from King George's statue, George Washington's cot, and other Fourth of July treasures.

History of Ice Cream: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; Noon – 4 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Experience popular flavors of the past and help crank up batches of 18th- and 19th-century ice cream recipes. Families will experience both familiar flavors like mint, and unfamiliar flavors like orange flower water; use a historic ice cream crank, and then taste test the results!

Macy's Fourth of July Fireworks Viewing Celebration: Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum, Pier 86 at 46th Street and 12th Avenue; (212) 245-0072; www.intrepidmuseum.org; 7pm; \$175+.

Festivities include prime viewing location of the Macy's Fourth of July Fireworks celebration overlooking the Hudson River, and an opportunity to tour the Intrepid Museum, and a simulcast of Macy's Fourth of July Fireworks Musical Score.



Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum / Kathy Lloyd Boehm

SpaceFest! blasts off

Blast off into fun! The second annual SpaceFest! returns to earth with a four-day run at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum, from July 25 to 28. Budding astronomers and trekkies can enjoy a galaxy of activities, interactive experiences, hands-on

experiments, live presentations, roving costumed characters, and more. The weekend also includes a free screening of “Star Trek: The Motion Picture” (1979), while Astronomy Night (check website for time) allows visitors to view the stars, planets and constella-

tions through eight different telescopes.

SpaceFest! on July 25, 26, 27, and 28, from 10 am to 5 pm. Free.

Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum [Pier 86, W. 46th St. and 12th Avenue in Hell's Kitchen, (212) 245-0072, www.intrepidmuseum.org].

SAT, JULY 6

“Elmo’s World: Summer Vacation”: SONY Wonder Technology Lab., 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free with admission.

Join Elmo and his pet goldfish Dorothy as he explores beaches, skin and cameras. Elmo spent a lot of time on the beach and he wants to tell you all about it.

Beach Blanket Bingo: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon–1 pm; \$5 per participant.

Grab a beach blanket and get ready to play. Identify different summertime objects and colors while learning how to play with others. Spell out BINGO and win a prize.

Families and Folk Art: Ameri-

can Folk Art Museum, 2 Lincoln Sq. between Columbus Avenue and 66th Street; (212) 265-1040; www.folkartmuseum.org; 1–2 pm; Free.

The program introduces children ages 4 to 12 and their accompanying adults to folk art through discussion-based tours in the galleries followed by hands-on, art-making activities inspired by objects in the museum. July's program, Magic with Materials, explores works from Traylor in Motion: Wonders from New York Collections.

Fractured Fables Puppet Theatre: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112th St. at corner of 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 678-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 1–2 pm; Free.

Come to an improvisational audience-participation puppet show with live music, where you choose which classic tales are retold with a twist of comedy, for ages 2–6.

SUN, JULY 7

Summer Sunday Family Tour: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street; (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org; 10:30 am–noon; \$15 per family, \$10 members.

Families with children ages 5-12 explore the Guggenheim's summer exhibitions through family-oriented tours that incorporate conversation and creative hands-on gallery activities.

Tar Beach Lullabies: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Children ages 4-7 explore 20th-century Harlem with Cassie Louise Lightfoot while she flies through the city and dreams about her family and her

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future. Featured story: "Tar Beach" by Faith Ringgold.

Save The Planet Brigade: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112th St. at corner of 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 678-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2 pm; Free.

Kids, ages 5-18 save the planet the fun way by participating in arts and crafts projects enriched by a world of books.

MON, JULY 8

Making Books Sing: Hudson Park Library, 66 Leroy St. off Seventh Avenue South; (212) 243-6876; 4 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

TUES, JULY 9

Alastair Mook and Friends: Madison Square Park, 24th Street and Madison Avenue entrance; www.madisonsquarepark.org; 10:30-11:30 am; Free.

Celebrate summer with award winning singer, Alastair Mook's rompin' family music concert.

Chalkboard Ninjas: 3:30-6 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Tuesday, July 2.

WED, JULY 10

Space Shuttle Pavilion Reopens: Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum, Pier 86 at 46th Street and 12th Avenue; (212) 245-0072; www.intrepidmuseum.org; 10 am-5 pm; Admission price \$24; ages 7-17, \$19, ages 3-6, \$12; under age 3 free.

The Museum celebrates the Pavilion's reopening, reintroducing New York City to Enterprise, the first space shuttle orbiter — an engineering marvel and shining example of American ingenuity that inspired a generation of dreamers and doers.

FIRST Robotics Presentation: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am-2 pm; Free.

The FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition is multinational competition that teams professionals and young people to solve an engi-



Afternoon of fun with 'Chalkboard Ninjas'

Get out your chalk-chucks, the Chalkboard Ninjas are coming to the Bank Street Bookstore on July 2 for "Pirate Day." Count on plenty of "ninjatude" and a hardy "ahoy" mateys, as the Chalkboard Ninjas bring merriment and mayhem to the Bank Street Bookstore with an afternoon of face paint-

ing, contests, prizes, and lots of buccaneer-inspired fun. Great for children age 5 and older.

Chalkboard Ninjas Pirate Day on July 2, from 3:30 pm to 6 pm. Free.

Bank Street Bookstore [610 W. 112th St. at Broadway in Morningside Heights, (212) 678-1654; <http://bankstreetbooks.com>].

neering design problem in an intense and competitive way. Interact with these one of a kind robots and learn about the strategies and challenges students face in their annual robotic competitions.

THURS, JULY 11

Making Books Sing: Morningside Heights Library, 2900 Broadway at W. 113th Street; (212) 864-2530; 4 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

FRI, JULY 12

Stroller Tours: Whitney Museum of American Art, 945 Madison Ave. between E. 74th and 74th streets; (212) 671-1846; whitney.org; Noon; \$20; children free.

Parents explore the museum with their babies in tow.

SAT, JULY 13

Sketching Tours: Whitney Museum of American Art, 945 Madison Ave. between E. 74th and 74th streets; (212) 671-1846; whitney.org; 10 am; \$20; children free.

Families with kids ages 6-10, engage with Edward Hopper's drawings and paintings and experiment with different drawing techniques.

Whitney Wees: Whitney Museum of American Art, 945 Madison Ave. between E. 74th and 74th streets; (212) 671-1846; whitney.org; 10:30am-11:30am; \$10 per family.

Participants learn how artists such as Stuart Davis and Joseph Stella used

bold shapes, vivid colors, and dynamic lines as they explore work on view in American Legends: From Calder to O'Keeffe.

Rhythms and Tones Special Sing-A-Long Storyhour: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112th St. at corner of 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 678-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 10:30 am; Free.

Pauline Huang mixes Chinese (mainly) and English (as supplementary) to tell interesting stories. Children, ages 3-10, will be entertained by some singing and playing, and will also learn a couple of Chinese words.

Wonder Pets Double Feature: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free with admission.

In "Save the Beetles: Three Wonder Pets and a Baby," the Wonder Pets journey to Liverpool, England to save four beetles trapped in a yellowish submarine. In "Save the Duckling, Save the Kitten," Ming-Ming tries a rescue on her own, and then the Wonder Pets travel to Venice to help save a kitten floating down the canal.

Hands-On Nano Demos: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 1-3 pm; Free with admission.

Children, ages 7 and up, uncover the fascinating world of nanoscience and nanotechnology and participate in hands-on activities that explore the properties, structures, materials and scale of this field of science.

Kids' Dance!: Damrosch Park, W. 62nd St. between Columbus and Amsterdam avenues; (212) 721-6500; www.midsummernightsswing.org; 3-4:30 pm; Free.

As part of Lincoln Center's outdoor dance festival, Midsummer Night Swing, kids enjoy a special afternoon session (ideal for the entire family) with teacher Rodney Lopez teaching them the basics of ballroom, tango and swing. Best suited for ages 5-12, all are welcome.

SUN, JULY 14

Summer Sunday Family Tour: 10:30 am-noon. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. See Sunday, July 7.

Neighborhoods: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Children ages 4-7 share what they love about their neighborhood after reading El Barrio and learning what makes Spanish Harlem special. Featured story: El Barrio by Debbi Chocolate.

Calendar

"A League of Their Own": New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 2 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Enjoy this family classic while you kick back and with some popcorn. After the film, learn more about other baseball firsts in the DiMenna Children's History Museum, like Esteban Bellán, the first Latin American to play professional baseball in the United States.

Save The Planet Brigade: 2 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Sunday, July 7.

MON, JULY 15

Making Books Sing: George Bruce Library, 518 W. 125th St. at Amsterdam Avenue; (212) 662-9727; 4 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

TUES, JULY 16

Making Books Sing: Chatham Square Library, 33 E. Broadway near Catherine Street; (212) 964-6598; 11 am; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

Chalkboard Ninjas: 3:30-6 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Tuesday, July 2.

WED, JULY 17

Making Books Sing: Battery Park City Library, 175 N. End Avenue at Murray St.; (212) 790-3499; 4 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.



Dancing in the park

Put your best foot forward, and one-step, two-step your way over to Dancing Classrooms at Damrosch Park on July 13. Children ages 5-12 can enjoy a special lesson with teacher Rod-

ney Lopez, who will attune them to ballroom, tango, swing, and other popular dances, to cultivate essential life skills in them through the practice of social dance.

Dancing Classrooms on July 13,

from 3-4:30 pm. Free.

Damrosch Park [W. 62nd St. between Columbus and Amsterdam avenues in Central Park West, (212) 721-6500, www.midsummernight-swing.org].

ute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

Parent Workshop: All Soul's Church, 1157 Lexington Ave. off 79th Street; (212) 535-5530; www.allsoulsnyc.org; 7 pm; Free.

Dr. Levy, Founder and Director of EBL Coaching presents a free parent workshop on Reading, Writing, Note Taking, and Organizational Skills. Parents will learn hands-on strategies for helping students in elementary, middle, and high school excel in school!

THURS, JULY 18

Making Books Sing: Harlem Library, 9 W. 124th St. between Lenox and Fifth

Avenues; (212) 348-5620; 4 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

FRI, JULY 19

Young Dancemakers Company Free Performance: Summer on the Hudson, West Harlem Piers Park at 125th Street; (718) 329-7300, X 3358;

aliceteirstein@gmail.com; 6 pm; Free.

A company of 18 exuberant, ethnically diverse high school dancers and choreographers, under the watchful eye of director Alice Teirstein, gather for the 18th year of Young Dancemakers Company, and perform their own works.

SAT, JULY 20

Rhythms and Tones Special Sing-A-Long Storyhour: 10:30 am. Bank Street Bookstore. See Saturday, July 13.

Making Books Sing: Children's Center at Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Fifth Avenue at 42nd St.; (212)

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Calendar

Continued from page 33

621-0208; 3 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

Making Books Sing: Children's Center at Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street; (212) 621-0208; 3 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

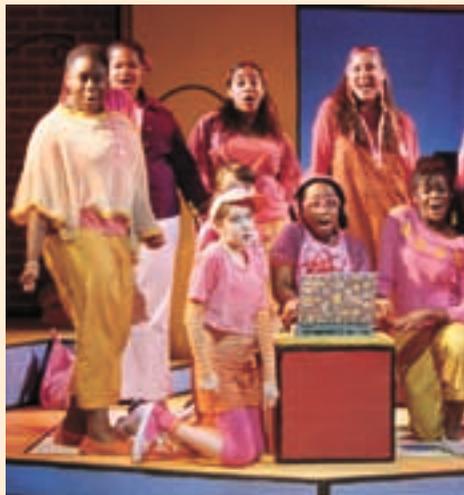
SUN, JULY 21

Summer Sunday Family Tour: 10:30 am-noon. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. See Sunday, July 7.

Extra! Extra! Read All About It! New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Children ages 4-7 relive the summer of 1899 through the eyes of the New York Newsies and read all about how they managed to beat The World by sticking together. Featured story: "Kid Blink Beats The World" by Don Brown.

"Ghostbusters" Screening: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park



West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 2 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Come see the "Ghostbusters" save New York City in this classic family comedy. After the film, discover photographs of the five boroughs from the 19th and 20th centuries in the DiMenna Children's History Museum Historical Viewfinder.

Save The Planet Brigade: 2 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Sunday, July 7.

MON, JULY 22

Making Books Sing: Webster Library, 1465 York Ave. near E. 78th Street; (212) 288-5049; 4 pm; Free.

The New York Public Library presents Making Books Sing's new touring production "My City Park," for children ages 3-10. When Milo finds out that his favorite city park is going to be torn down and replaced with a shopping mall, he seeks out the help of

his two best friends, Odessa the Owl and Bucky the Squirrel. This 45-minute educational performance features puppetry, original songs, and audience participation.

TUES, JULY 23

Summer Arts Institute: Middle School and High School Choir: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon-1 pm; Free.

Enjoy an afternoon of musical entertainment by middle school and high school students from the NYC Summer Arts Institute in the Sony Plaza Public Arcade.

Stroller Tours: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street; (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org; 3-4 pm; \$15.

Led by museum educator and new mom Jackie Delamatre, one-hour tours of the Guggenheim's spring exhibi-

tions are given for caregivers and their babies.

Chalkboard Ninjas: 3:30-6 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Tuesday, July 2.

WED, JULY 24

Summer Arts Institute: Middle School and High School Choir: Noon-1 pm. SONY Wonder Technology Lab. See Tuesday, July 23.

Reading Into History: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 3:30 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Alan Gratz's "Brooklyn Nine" takes us through nine generations, or "innings" of one Brooklyn family. After a reading and discussion, we'll play game and toss the ball around like they did 100 years ago — no gloves allowed.

Sleepover at TADA

There's no snoozing on the playbill, when TADA! Youth Theater presents a fun-filled performance "Sleepover," from July 12 through Aug. 3.

Pre-teen angst is the star of the show, as tweens Simone and Mia worry about time-honored pre-teen frets about fitting in, boys, and of course who to invite and leave out of the sleepover of the century. Original music features songs about sleepwalkers and cute pizza delivery boys.

"Sleepover" is great for children 3 years and older. Pillows and pajamas are optional, but songs and snacks a must!

"Sleepover," July 12 through Aug. 3. Tuesdays to Fridays at noon and 2 pm, and Saturdays at 2 pm and 4 pm. Tickets are \$8 for children and \$20 for adults.

TADA! Youth Theater [15 W. 28th St., second floor, (212) 252-1619 X 04, www.tadatheater.com].



Young dancers offer free concerts

Young Dancemakers presents free concerts across Manhattan, from July 19 through Aug. 3.

The company of 18 exuberant, ethnically diverse high school dancers and choreographers celebrates its 18th anniversary with a performance of original works, under the direction of Alice Teirstein.

Acclaimed choreographer Doug Elkins will teach one of his dances, and all performances end with the lively and popular "Dance With Us," inviting audience members on stage for some exhilarating post-concert improvisation.

Take in a performance at: Summer on the

Hudson, at the West Harlem Piers Park, 125th St., on July 19 at 6 pm; 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave., on July 26 at 7:30 pm; Bruno Walter Auditorium, NY Public Library at Lincoln Center, 40 Lincoln Center Plaza (at 65th Street), on July 27 at 2 pm; Symphony Space, at 2537 Broadway at 95th Street, on July 31 at 2 pm; Ailey Camp at 21 Jumel Pl., on Aug. 1 at 1 pm; and a final concert and reception at Ailey Citigroup Theater, 405 W. 55 St., on Aug. 3 at 7:30 pm.

Performances are free, but seating is limited. Reservations are suggested.

Young Dancemakers Company [(718) 329-7300 X 3358 or e-mail aliceteirstein@gmail.com].

THURS, JULY 25

SpaceFest: Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum, Pier 86 at 46th Street and 12th Avenue; (212) 245-0072; www.intrepidmuseum.org; 10 am-5 pm; Free.

Enjoy dynamic activities, interactive experiences, hands-on experiments, live presentations, roving costumed characters and more during the four-day festival on Intrepid's Pier 86. Weekend includes free screening of "Star Trek: The Motion Picture" (1979) and an Astronomy Night where visitors can get an up-close view of the stars, planets and constellations through 8 different telescopes.

Key Wilde and Mr. Clarke Concert: Union Square, South Plaza stage; unionsquarenyc.org/park/seasonal/291; 11 am; Free.

With original, interactive songs ranging in style from bluegrass to '80s punk rock, Key Wilde and Mr. Clarke debut new songs from their new spring 2013 release, "Pleased To Meet You."

FRI, JULY 26

SpaceFest: 10 am-5 pm. Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum. See Thursday, July 25.

Stroller Tours: Noon. Whitney Museum of American Art. See Friday, July 12.

Intrepid Free Summer Movie Series: Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum, Pier 86 at 46th Street and 12th Avenue; (212) 245-0072; www.intrepidmuseum.org; 7:30 pm; Free.

The Intrepid Summer Movie Series, presented by Dr. Pepper, returns this summer with a selection of entertaining and family-friendly films. Members of the public are invited to bring lawn chairs, picnic baskets and blankets to the Intrepid Museum to view a popular movie outdoors, free of charge, on a huge inflatable screen on the Flight Deck of the aircraft carrier. Tonight's showing is "Star Trek: The Motion Picture."

Young Dancemakers Company Free Performance: 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; aliceteirstein@gmail.com; www.92y.org; 7:30 pm; Free.

A company of 18 exuberant, ethnically diverse high school dancers and choreographers, under the watchful eye of director Alice Teirstein, gather for the 18th year of Young Dancemakers Company, and perform their own works.

SAT, JULY 27

Tech for Tots: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th



Photo by Colin Hattersley

Muggles & wizards come to Broadway

Muggles beware! "Potted Potter" and the Wizards Clarkson and Turner are swooping into the Little Shubert Theatre, now through Sept. 1.

"Potted Potter" takes on the ultimate challenge of condensing, or "potting," all seven Harry Potter books into 70 madcap minutes, featuring multiple costume changes, brilliant songs, zany props, and a generous helping of Hogwarts' magic.

Audiences can also duke it out in a real game of Quidditch.

This is the ultimate show for Potter fans who camped outside a bookstore for three days

awaiting the release of the last book, or know the difference between a horcrux and a hufflepuff — or a muggle from a wizard. Everyone from age 6 to Dumbledore's age — really old! — will be spellbound.

"Potted Potter," now through Sept. 1. Showtimes are Mondays at 7:30 pm, Tuesdays at 7:30 pm, Thursdays at 2 pm and 7:30 pm, Fridays at 8 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm, 5 pm, and 8 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm and 5 pm. Tickets start at \$39.99.

Little Shubert Theatre [422 W. 42nd St. between Ninth and 10th avenues, (212) 239-2656, www.pottedpotter.com/nyc].

Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 10 am-noon and 3-5 pm; \$5 per participant.

Team up and get smurfing to create your very own Smurfs digital animation. Using stop motion animation techniques, special Smurfs props, and your imagination, you and your team can produce a short animated Smurfs movie to take home.

SpaceFest: 10 am-5 pm. Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum. See Thursday, July 25.

Sketching Tours: 10 am. Whitney Museum of American Art. See Saturday, July 13.

Whitney Wees: 10:30am-11:30am. Whitney Museum of American Art. See Saturday, July 13.

Rhythms and Tones Special Sing-A-Long Storyhour: 10:30 am. Bank Street Bookstore. See Saturday, July 13.

Ni Hao, Kai-Lan: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free with admission.

Double feature of "The Ant Playground" and "Kai-Lan's Campout."

Young Dancemakers Company Free Performance: NY Public Library at Lincoln Center, 40 Lincoln Center Plaza at 65th Street; (718) 329-7300, ext. 3358; aliceteirstein@gmail.com; 2 pm; Free.

A company of 18 exuberant, ethnically diverse high school dancers and choreographers, under the watchful eye of director Alice Teirstein, gather for the 18th year of Young Dancemakers Company, and perform their own works.

"Tim Hartwell and The Death of Ages": Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112 St. at corner of 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 678-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2:30-3:30pm; Free.

Join author, director, and multi-platinum producer of animated wonders Aeneas Middleton for a reading and signing of his middle school fantasy novel "Tim Hartwell and The Death of Ages."

SUN, JULY 28

SpaceFest: 10 am-5 pm. Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum. See Thursday, July 25.

Summer Sunday Family Tour: 10:30 am-noon. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. See Sunday, July 7.

Do You Have Pancakes?: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400;

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Calendar

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nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Children ages 4-7 join American folk heroes Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox as they embark on a great pancake adventure across the country, changing its landscape forever! Featured story: "Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox" by Matt Luckhurst.

City Sundays: New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 2 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

Watch as the characters in "Newsies" sing and dance their way through the famous New York City newsboy strike of 1899, then visit the newsies exhibit in the DiMenna Children's History Museum to learn more about what life would have really been like for these young lads and lasses.

Save The Planet Brigade: 2 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Sunday, July 7.

TUES, JULY 30

Chalkboard Ninjas: 3:30-6 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Tuesday, July 2.

WED, JULY 31

Young Dancemakers Company

Free Performance: Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; aliceteirstein@gmail.com; www.symphonyspace.org; 2 pm; Free.

A company of 18 exuberant, ethnically diverse high school dancers and choreographers, under the watchful eye of director Alice Teirstein, gather for the 18th year of Young Dancemakers Company, and perform their own works.

THURS, AUG. 1

Young Dancemakers Company

Free Performance: Ailey Camp, 21 Jumel Pl. between 168th Street and Amsterdam Avenue; (718) 329-7300, X 3358; aliceteirstein@gmail.com; www.symphonyspace.org; 1 pm; Free.

A company of 18 exuberant, ethnically diverse high school dancers and choreographers, under the watchful eye of director Alice Teirstein, gather for the 18th year of Young Dancemakers Company, and perform their own works.

FRI, AUG. 2

Intrepid Free Summer Movie

Series: Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum, Pier 86 at 46th Street and 12th Avenue; (212) 245-0072; www.intrepidmuseum.org; 7:30 pm; Free.

The Intrepid Summer Movie Series,



Red Grooms' pop-art exhibit

Whimsical conceptual artist Red Grooms comes to the Children's Museum of Manhattan for an extended stay, through Jan. 2014.

Kids and adults can get a behind-the-scenes peek at the artist planning and developing his work, while

select pieces — including Pop-Art Construction, Double Decker New York: Above and Below, and Get Groomed — help art buffs see their world in a whole new way.

The museum will host daily hands-on art workshops and programs based on Groom's artwork.

Red Grooms exhibit on display now through Jan. 2014. Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 am to 5 pm. General admission is \$11.

Children's Museum of Manhattan [The Tisch Building, 212 W. 83rd St. Central Park West, (212) 721-1223, www.cmom.org].

presented by Dr. Pepper, returns this summer with a selection of entertaining and family-friendly films. Members of the public are invited to bring lawn chairs, picnic baskets and blankets to the Intrepid Museum to view a popular movie outdoors, free of charge, on a huge inflatable screen on the Flight Deck of the aircraft carrier. Tonight's showing is "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

LONG-RUNNING

Red Grooms Exhibit: Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; \$11 admission fee.

Thought-provoking and whimsical for adults and children alike, the exhibition reflects the city's frenetic energy and exuberance. Collateral material provides children and families with a

behind-the-scenes look at the artist's planning and conceptualization of his work. The specially selected pieces for this exhibit help children understand the many different ways of seeing their world and environment.

Frogs — A Chorus of Colors:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; awang@amnh.org; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; Suggested admission \$19, \$10.50 children, \$14.50 seniors and students.

Back by popular demand, this exhibition features more than 150 live frogs, including ten species of colorful dart-poison frogs, and explores the diverse world of these complex amphibians by introducing visitors to their biology and evolution, their importance to ecosystems, and the threats they face in the wild.

"Potted Potter": Little Shubert Theatre, 422 W. 42nd St. between Ninth

and 10th avenues; www.pottedpotter.com/nyc; Mondays and Tuesdays, 7:30 pm, Thursdays, 2 and 7:30 pm, Fridays, 8 pm, Saturdays, 2, 5, and 8 pm, Now - Sun, Sept. 1; \$39.99 and up.

This show takes on the ultimate challenge of condensing, or "potting" all seven Harry Potter books into 70 mad-cap minutes, aided only by multiple costume changes, brilliant songs, ridiculous props and a generous helping of Hogwarts magic. The show also invites audiences to engage with a real life game of Quidditch.

"Sleepover": TADA! Youth Theater, 15 W. 28th St. between Broadway and Fifth Avenue; (212) 252-1619 X 4; www.tadatheater.com; Tuesdays - Fridays, Noon and 2 pm, Saturdays, 2 and 4 pm, Fri, July 12 - Sat, Aug. 3; \$20; \$8 children.

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My healthy break

Wow, I am back from Hippocrates Health Institute and I feel great. I actually did it! Can you believe it?

The first thing that has come to mind each and every time someone asks me about the retreat is that the program is truly a blueprint for mothers. I am an official Hippocrates graduate, which essentially means that I have received a certificate saying that I finished week number one, and am equipped to be back in New York City and make use of all the incredible tools I now possess and lessons I have learned.

I want to share with all of you the awesome history behind the Hippocrates Health Institute.

A visit to the Hippocrates provides a truly life-changing experience — as with education comes empowerment. The Life Transformation Program provides the fundamental training and a definitive blueprint for transitioning to a healthier lifestyle. Resting amongst 50 acres of tropical woodlands in Southern Florida, Hippocrates offers a serene setting in which to heal, nurture, and develop into one's fullest potential.

From luxury villas to cozy cottages to quaint homes, the campus can house 100-plus guests. I stayed in one of the beautiful villas that overlooked the water (so peaceful). Guests may also stay off-campus, although this is not recommended for first-time visitors.

According to the Institute's website, the story of Hippocrates began in 1908, when Ann Wigmore was born in Lithuania. At the age of 13, she sailed to the U.S. to reunite with her parents, who were already living in Massachusetts. She eventually married, had a daughter, and lived a simple, humble life in Stoughton, Mass., about 10 miles south of Boston.

Years later, Ann, in poor health and suffering from colon cancer, began to incorporate the lessons she recalled learning as a child in Lithuania from her grandmother, the village doctor, who treated wounded soldiers with herbs during WWI. Using weeds and wheatgrass, she also healed her



body and reversed the cancer. Witnessing the powerful healing properties of wheatgrass juice and other vitamin and enzyme-rich foods firsthand inspired her to spend the next 35 years of her life studying and educating others about natural healing and optimum nutrition. Initially, the diet at the Institute was vegetarian, which transitioned into vegan. But after noticing the positive changes that occurred from eating only living foods, the permanent diet of raw, life-giving foods was incorporated.

Her first foray into helping others was through the "Red Schoolhouse," which she founded at her farm in Stoneham in 1956. A fellow Lithuanian by the name of Viktoras Klaviniskas became aware of Ann's work. He was also sick and dying from an auto-immune collapse when he came to the Red Schoolhouse to recover. After three weeks, he experienced a personal revelation, and so when Ann offered him the opportunity to stay, he gave up his high-profile career and joined her to become the science and the brains behind the operation which, together, they renamed and co-founded as Hippocrates Health Institute.

Today, Drs. Brian and Anna Maria Clement carry on Ann Wigmore's mission to help people radically change their health by trading nutrient-deficient "dead" foods for a diet rich in antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and plant-based proteins. In addition to expanding and fine-tuning the Institute's curriculum over the years to include seminars on such topics as meditation, colon-

ics and homeopathy, they have also expanded its offerings by adding a chef's kitchen for raw cooking lessons, cutting-edge spa and therapy treatments, exercise equipment and classes, ozonated pools (my favorites), nature-trail walks, and behavioral health practitioner services.

I have never been happier to live right upstairs from Whole Foods and Organic Avenue. I have been able to have my daily shot of wheatgrass, my green juices, coconut water, etc. I am officially off caffeine and sugar. The detox was hard the first two days with bad headaches, however, it was well worth it. I have never felt so healthy and full of energy.

My boys told me that I look young, and while I'm not sure about that, I definitely feel that for the first time in an extremely long time, I feel absolutely great and healthy in my mind, body, and attitude. I feel more open, for sure. I really cannot be near toxic people and need to focus on the good and positive people in my life. I feel amazing after going on this trip.

One of the best parts was coming home to my boys. I was greeted with the biggest hug and lots of DeLyss-cious kisses. The hug lasted for almost five minutes and I have never felt such gratitude in my life. The institute has a wonderful children's program and I am definitely going to go back with my older son next winter.

Once adult guests realize the health benefits of the Hippocrates life-style for themselves, they become curious about whether it is possible to raise children healthfully using the Hippocrates' principles. The answer is emphatically "yes!" I know I will personally be incorporating a lot of what I learned into my children's lives. I even have my husband drinking green juice (never thought I would see that)!

While the break was great, there is nothing like being back to the hustle and bustle of New York City.

Visit www.hippocratesinst.org for more information on the wonderful retreat for moms and dads.

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