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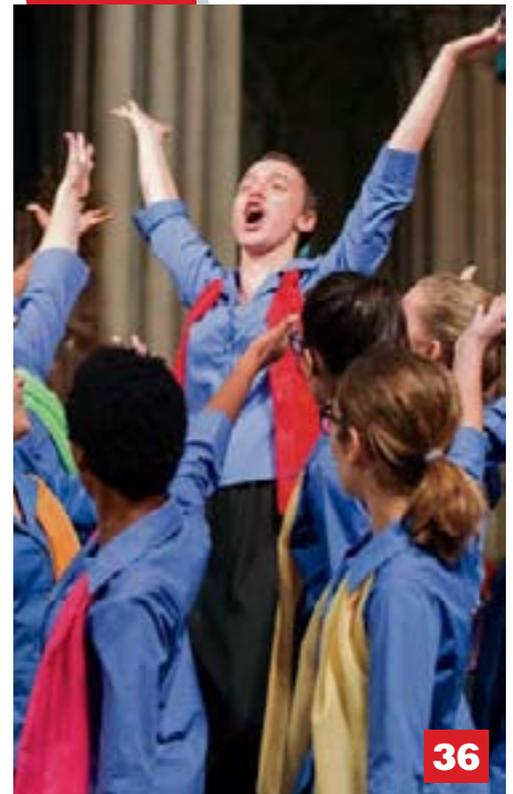
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Letter from the publisher

Happy holidays and more

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Parenting resolutions for the not-so-perfect parent

BY GAYLA GRACE

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

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

So, this year I commit to...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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This holiday, turn your child into a tradition tracker

BY SARA MARCHESSAULT

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

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

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

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

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

My great-grandmother is long

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

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

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

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

Questions to get your interviews started

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

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

you absolutely have to have around the holidays?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once the tools and method of

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

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

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

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

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

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A secret ingredient

How I got my picky kids to eat everything

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

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

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

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

The new diet worked, and the lit-

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

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

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

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

Here are four tips for dealing with extremely picky eaters:

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

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

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

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

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



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Treating dry winter skin

Tips for the
whole family

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

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

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

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

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

I spoke to Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SJ: How should parents treat these winter skin problems?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Arts get a boost



A program with
the goal of arts
education for all

BY ALLISON PLITT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ostroff explained the reason for the change.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Stress & the heart

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

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

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

a recipe for tension.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.



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Tiny babies, big love

Part 2: Two micro-preemie moms share their experiences

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maintaining normalcy at home with a baby in the NICU

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

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

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

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

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

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

TS: Neonatal intensive care units

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



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



Ayla in the neonatal intensive care unit.

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

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

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

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

micro-preemies have more services than Joy.

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

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

...

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

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

in case she died before I saw her.

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

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

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

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

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

Our daughter was way back in the

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

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

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

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

...

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

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

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Teens and holidays

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist and author of, "Lions And Tigers And Teens: Expert Advice and Support for the Conscientious Parent Just Like You" (Unlimited Publishing LLC, 2012). For details, visit www.myrna-haskell.com.

Tips and tales

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

Lisa Zarowitz, Woodstock, NY

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

Corinne Clerkin, Hyde Park, NY



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Holiday fun in NYC

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tickets \$40-160.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Photo by Ivo Vermeulen

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

DeLysscious gingerbread house recipe

INGREDIENTS:

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

DIRECTIONS:

GINGERBREAD HOUSE: In a large mixing bowl, cream the butter, brown sugar, molasses, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and baking soda together until the mixture is smooth. Blend in the flour and water to make a stiff dough. Chill at least 30 minutes or until firm. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Cut out the following paper patterns for the gingerbread house template:
Two rectangles, 3 by 5 inches, to make the front and back of the house. Two rectangles, 3 by 5 1/2 inches for the roof. Two pieces for the ends of the house, 3 inches wide at the base, 3 inches to the

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

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

Bake at 375 degrees F for about 15 minutes until dough feels firm.

Place patterns on top of the gingerbread again and trim shapes, cutting edges with a straight-edged sharp knife. Leave to cool on baking sheet.

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

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

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

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

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

Recipe courtesy of Food Network.

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

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

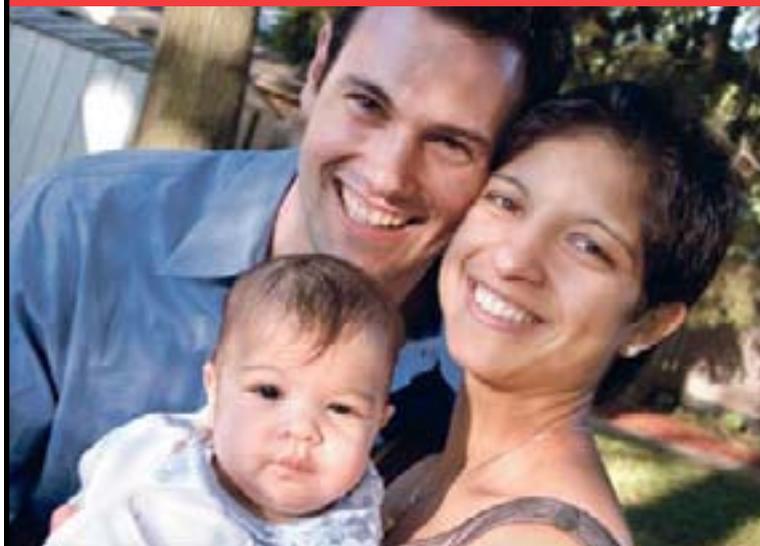
Michael Fredo at Beautique [8 W. 58th St. near Fifth Avenue in Midtown, (212) 753-1200]. Mondays, 7-11 pm. Reservations recommended but not required.

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

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

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

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Creating the new Cooper Hewitt

Pen helps
kids to script
their design
experience
at revamped
museum

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

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

States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design.

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

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

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

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

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

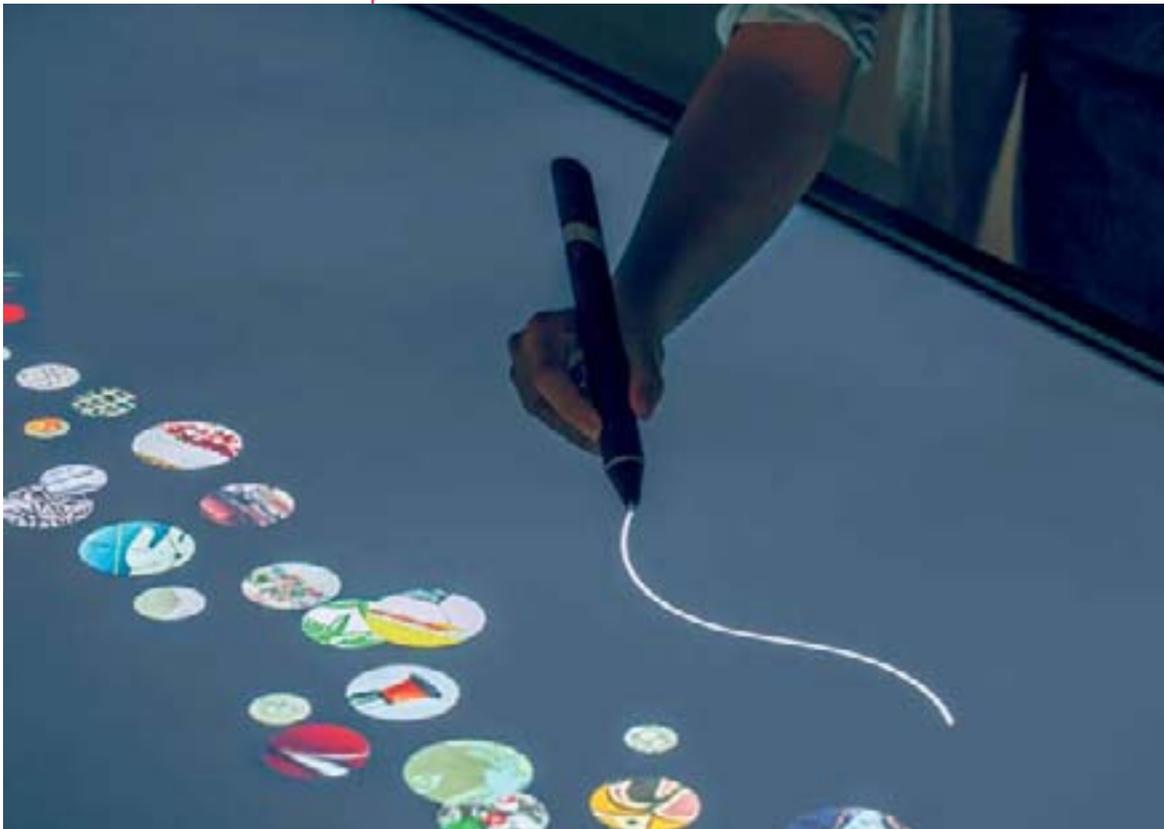
Sebastian Chan: When the museum reopens, it will have four floors dedicated to exhibitions and public programs, all connected by a new public staircase and elevator. These facilities include a versatile, new 6,000-square-foot gallery on the third floor, which has never been used for public exhibitions;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

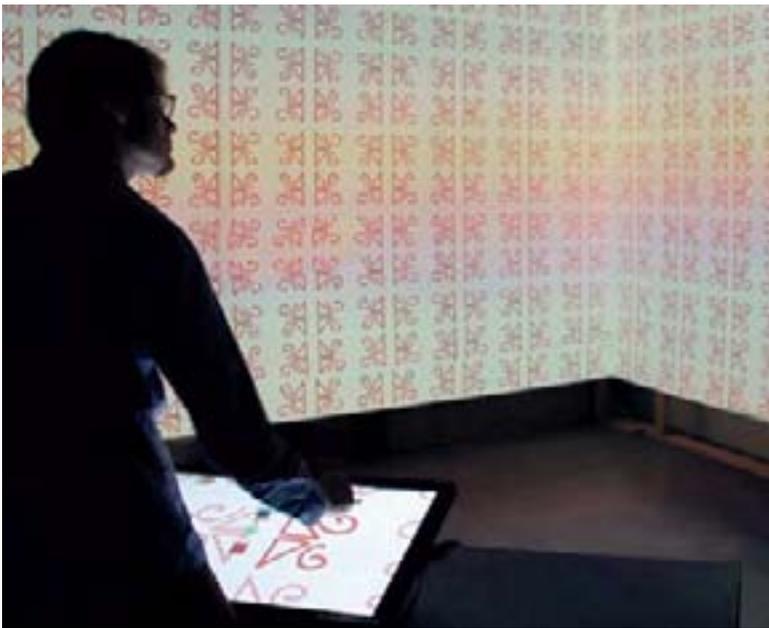
SJ: Why did the museum go in this direction?

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

SJ: Can you explain the "Immersion Room?"

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





2014 Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

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

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

SJ: What is the interactive “Pen?”

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

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

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

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

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

SJ: What age is appropriate for this component?

KR: Primary-school ages and up.

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

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

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

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

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



GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

The health benefits of fermented foods

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

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

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

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

treat diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome.

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

The real deal

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

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

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

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

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

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

Homemade sauerkraut

INGREDIENTS:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Skim off any foam.

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

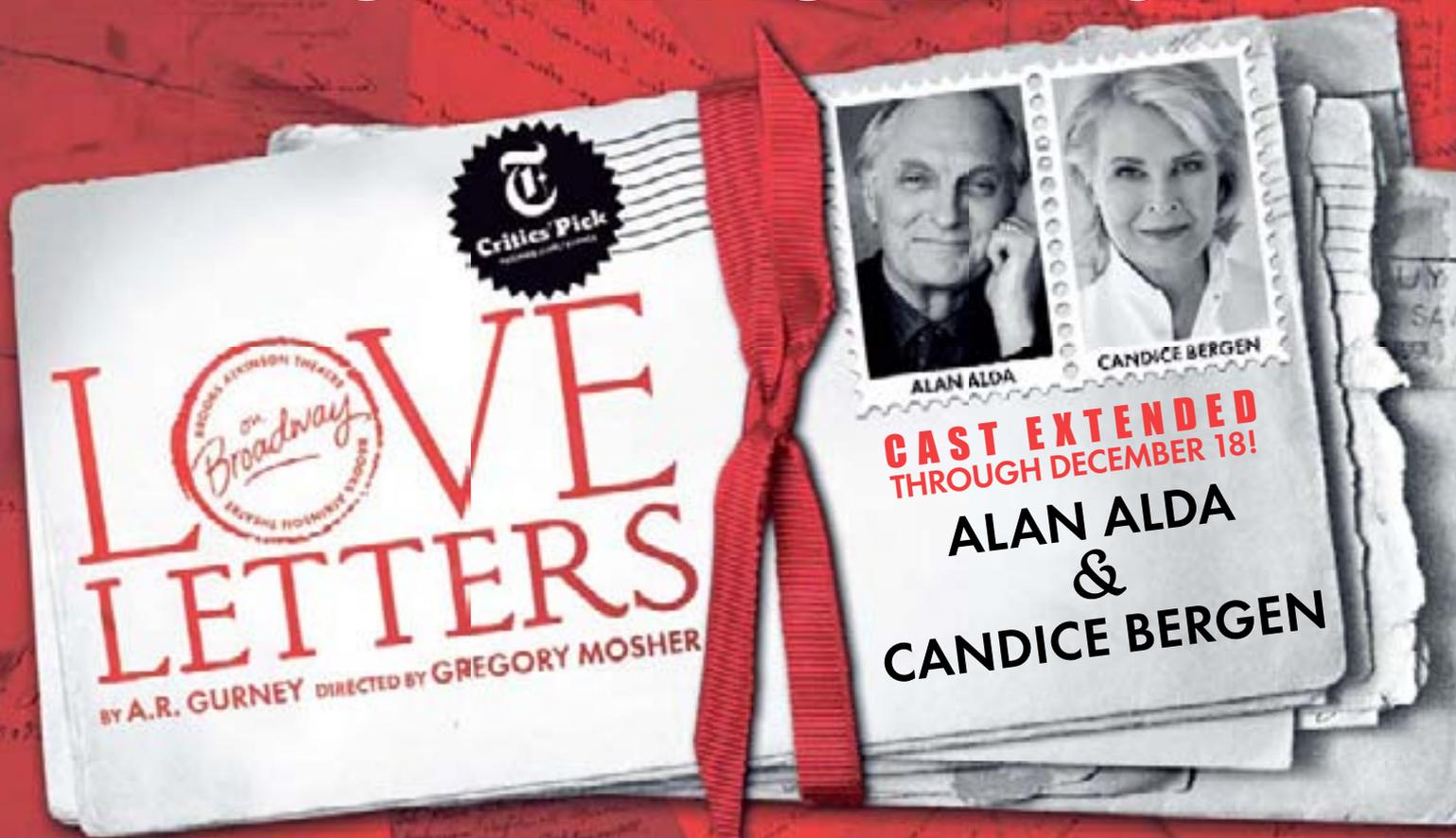
Used with permission by Wendy Jo Peterson, MS, RD, CSSD, culinary nutritionist

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

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Keeping the happy in the holidays

Celebrating
the season
should be
satisfying, not
stressful

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-
TIEMAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Put together a collection of holi-

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

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

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



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

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

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

Avoid taking your children

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A family favorite

Caribbean
Princess
delivers an
experience
worthy of
royalty

BY STACEY ZABLE

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Searching for Santa

Memories of tracking the sled in real time

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.



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Calendar

DECEMBER



Photo by Richard Termine

A cat with Spanish flair

“El Gato Con Botas” (Puss in Boots) comes to El Museo del Barrio from Dec. 6 through Dec. 14.

The Gotham Chamber Opera revives the classic fairy tale with a 60-minute children’s production for children 5 years and older. Xavier Montsalvatge presents his take on the classic story of a miller who inherits a mangy cat from his father and soon discovers the cat’s magical talents. Amazing Bunraku

puppetry elevates the fairy tale into a mesmerizing experience.

“El Gato Con Botas” Dec. 6 through Dec. 14. Showtimes Tuesday through Friday at 7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 2 pm, and a special showing on Saturday, Dec. 13 at 7 pm. The museum is closed on Monday Dec. 8. Tickets begin at \$30.

El Museo del Barrio [1230 Fifth Ave. at E. 104th Street in East Harlem; (212) 831-7272; www.elmuseo.org]

Submit a listing

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

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

MON, DEC. 1

IN MANHATTAN

Tales for the Teeny Tiny: Bloomingdale Library, 150 W. 100th Street; (212) 222-8030; www.nypl.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Stories, interactive games, songs, and finger play. Presented by Getchie Argetsinger. For ages 12 months to 3 years old with parent or caregiver.

TUES, DEC. 2

IN MANHATTAN

"Chugga-Chugga Choo-Choo" by Kevin Lewis: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at W. 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

The event Celebrate Holiday Express: Toys and Trains from the Jerni Collection this month, starts off with this lovely colorful rhyming book about a special freight train. Children will then make their own paper freight train.

WED, DEC. 3

IN MANHATTAN

Bilingual Birdies: Battery Park City Library, 175 North End Ave.; (212) 790-3499; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

The Bilingual Birdies takes you on a journey to honor the changing colors of the leaves, celebrate different fruits for the harvest, explore the sun and the moon, and learn about various modes of transportation in Spanish, French or Mandarin. Bilingual musicians teach theme-related vocabulary through live music, dance, and engaging puppetry.

THURS, DEC. 4

IN MANHATTAN

Cross-Stitch Circle: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at W. 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 3:30 pm; Free with mu-



Science of the season

Dr. Kaboom takes on Christmas and the Jolly Old Elf on Dec. 20 in the Science of Santa at the NYU Skirball Center.

Everyone knows that Christmas-time is magical for kids of all ages. But did you ever care to know the actual science behind the magic that Santa brings each year?

The science is finally explained and families find out from Dr. Kaboom as he takes the audience on an interactive and thrilling scientific exploration into Santa's

secrets.

This hilarious show explains to the audience how Santa climbs down tight chimneys, makes reindeer fly and, most importantly, knows who has been bad or good.

The Science of Santa on Dec. 20 at 11 am. Tickets range from \$20 to \$28.

NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts [566 LaGuardia Pl. at W. Third Street in NoHo; (212) 992-8484; nyuskirball.org].

seum admission.

Beginning cross-stitchers and younger children learn the basic stitch and create a bookmark with their new skill. Seasoned stitchers and older children and adults can branch into more complicated designs.

"The Yorkville Nutcracker": The Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College, E. 68th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues; (212) 772-4448; www.dancespatrelle.org; 7 pm; \$45-\$85.

Set in 1895, the show includes lavish sets and costumes, which takes the audience on a tour through Olde New York's most beloved landmarks, including a holiday party at Gracie Mansion, dancing at the Crystal Palace in the New York Botanical Garden, and skating in Central Park.

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm to 5 pm; Free.

Enjoy the museum and have fun exploring.

FRI, DEC. 5

IN MANHATTAN

Shababa Bakery: 92Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 10:15 am; \$15 child, adults free.

Children of all ages squish, roll and braid their own challah to take home and bake.

"Chugga-Chugga Choo-Choo" by Kevin Lewis: 3:30 pm. New-York Historical Society. See Tuesday, Dec. 2.

Holiday Candlelight Tours: Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden, 421 E. 61st St. between First and York Avenues; (212) 838-6878; www.mvhm.org; 6 pm, 7 pm, 8 pm; \$20 adults, \$5 children under 12.

Step into the holiday season of 1830, take a tour by the warm glow of candlelight, and sample traditional confections. On Friday, listen to the PACC Recorder Consort perform holiday and period music. On Saturday, meet Flora, the kitchen help, and hear about her 19th-century holiday preparations.

"The Yorkville Nutcracker": 7 pm. The Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

SAT, DEC. 6

IN MANHATTAN

Baby Got Bach: String 'Stravaganza: 92Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500;

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Calendar

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

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www.92y.org; 10 am–6 pm; \$18 and up.

Children, ages 3-6, try out sound experiments, jam on real instruments and enjoy a live interactive classical concert with storytelling and more.

Tech For Tot: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sony-wondertechlab.com; Noon; Free.

Children explore shapes, colors, and letters in a fun and exciting way while being introduced to some of the basic functions of a computer.

"The Smurfs": SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sony-wondertechlab.com; 12:15 pm; Free.

When the evil wizard Gargamel (Hank Azaria) chases the tiny blue Smurfs out of their village, they tumble from their magical world into the middle of Central Park.

"The Yorkville Nutcracker": 2 and 7 pm. The Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

Holiday Candlelight Tours: 6pm, 7pm, 8pm. Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden. See Friday, Dec. 5.

FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

SUN, DEC. 7

IN MANHATTAN

Josh & The Jamtones: The Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd Street; (212) 423-3200; thejewishmuseum.org; 11:30 am; \$18 adults; \$13 children.

Fronted by singer and songwriter Josh Shriber and drummer and producer Patrick Hanlin, Josh & The Jamtones has taken the indie music scene by storm with rock-and-roll dance parties. Its roots, reggae and pop tunes, will bring the whole family to its feet.

Macy's Sunday Story Time: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.



Secrets of secret Santa

Don't miss "Jingle Bells, Batman Smells" with Junie B. at the BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center on Dec. 20.

Anyone who has ever chosen a Secret Santa knows the anguish of grabbing the name of someone you don't know, or even worse, don't like.

First-grader Junie B. Jones is having one such dilemma. She has drawn the name of her arch

nemesis, Tattletale May, and it's consuming her holiday spirit! Children 4 years and older find out how spunky Junie B. handles the problem.

"Jingle Bells, Batman Smells" on Dec. 20 at 1:30 pm. Tickets are \$25.

BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center [199 Chambers St. at West Street in Tribeca; (212) 220-1459; www.tribecapac.org].

Kick off a month of train stories with an epic battle between a shark and a train in "Shark vs. Train" by Chris Barton and Tom Lichtenheld.

Art Explore – Woven Tales: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Ave. at E. 82nd Street; (212) 570-7710; www.metmuseum.org; 1-3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Talk with other teens about works of art from around the world while traveling through the museum's galleries. This program is held in conjunction with the exhibition Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Renaissance Tapestry. For teens ages 11-14.

Winter Family Day: The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Ave. between W. 36th and W. 37th streets; (212) 685-0008; www.themorgan.org; 2-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

This year's annual Winter Family Day celebrates the Morgan's unique collection of medieval illuminated images and Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." Scrooge, Cratchit, and the

Ghost of Christmas Present will sweep families into a whirlwind of exuberant fun. Come join this merry bunch and enjoy a creative craft workshop, strolling characters, and our exclusive collection of literary costumes for children to model.

Pinocchio in Manhattan: Italian American Museum, 155 Mulberry St. at Grand Street; (212) 860-2983; 2-4 pm; \$15 adults; \$5 for children.

Teatromania-italytime presents a workshop where children 8-11 years old get to improvise with professional actors.

Reading into History: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Author Barbara Wright discusses her book "Crow," which tells the story of a young African-American boy living in Reconstruction Era in Wilmington, NC. Families see objects and artifacts that were useful in the research and writing of the book.

Sunday Storytime: The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Ave. between W. 36th and W. 37th streets; (212) 685-0008; www.themorgan.org; 3-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Knights in armor, fearless horses, princesses, and kings carry families back to medieval times, and introduce them to the Morgan's glorious collection of medieval manuscripts in this drop-in program, appropriate for ages 2 and up.

FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

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

MetLife presents this musical story of the classic tale.

MON, DEC. 8

IN MANHATTAN

Masterpiece Mondays: The Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd Street; (212) 423-3200; thejewishmuseum.org; 3:30-4:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children ages 4-7 explore the museum's galleries with sketching and art activities in this after-school series. Today's theme is Animals All Around.

TUES, DEC. 9

IN MANHATTAN

"Rush Hour" by Christine Loomis: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children explore the different ways that people travel around the city, from historical modes of transport to modern-day wonders, and then make their own paper boat.

THURS, DEC. 11

IN MANHATTAN

Cross-Stitch Circle: 3:30 pm. New-York Historical Society. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: 3 pm to 5 pm.

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Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FRI, DEC. 12

IN MANHATTAN

Christmas and Commercialism in 1830: Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden, 421 E. 61st St. between First and York Avenues; (212) 838-6878; www.mvhm.org; 12:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Step into the holiday season of 1830, take a tour by the warm glow of candlelight, and sample traditional confections. On Friday, listen to the PACC Recorder Consort perform holiday and period music. On Saturday, meet Flora the kitchen help, and hear about her 19th-century holiday preparations.

"Rush Hour" by Christine Loomis: 3:30 pm. New-York Historical Society. See Tuesday, Dec. 9.

Caroling At The Morgan: The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Ave. between W. 36th and W. 37th streets; (212) 685-0008; www.themorgan.org; 6:30-8:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Traditional and popular holiday music will be performed throughout the Morgan by singers from Mannes College The New School for Music.

"The Knickerbocker Suite": Manhattan Movement & Arts Center, 248 W. 60th St. between Amsterdam and West End Avenues; (212) 787-1178; www.manhattanmovement.com; 7 pm; \$30 adults; \$20 students.

Features New York City landmarks, such as The Statue of Liberty, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the city's sports teams, weaved into the time-honored holiday tale of "The Nutcracker." Classic Nutcracker scenes like "The Land of the Snow" are transformed into a snowy frenzy of shoppers dancing in and out of stores like Macy's and Bloomingdale's for last-minute gifts.

"Soul Nativity": Harlem School of the Arts, 645 St. Nicholas Ave. and W. 141st Street; (212) 802-8200; hsanyc.org/soul-nativity; 7 pm; \$20 (\$25 at the door); \$15 students and seniors).

A holiday pageant for all ages. The story is told in an innovative way with music heavily charged with R&B and soul.

SAT, DEC. 13

IN MANHATTAN

Family Saturdays: French Institute Alliance Française, 22 E. 60th St. between Park and Madison Avenue; (212) 355-6160; fiaf.org.

FIAF celebrates the holidays à la française. Armelle will lead a festive



Photo by Justina Wong

A 'beary' jolly bash

Enjoy a "beary" jolly celebration at the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre with the Three Bears now through Dec. 30.

Get into the holiday spirit with a fun-filled variety show featuring a group of lovable bears. "The Three Bears Holiday Bash" celebrates the season in song, dance, and puppetry. However, this production quickly becomes a comedy of errors when Baby Bear invites Santa to star in Mama and Papa Bear's annual holiday show. Audience participation is encour-

aged with a rousing sing-along of "12 days of Christmas."

"The Three Bears Holiday Bash" now through Dec. 30. Performances are on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30 am and noon, Wednesdays, 10:30 am, noon, and 2:30 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays at 1 pm. Tickets are \$10 and \$7 children under 12.

Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre [W. 79th Street and West Drive at Central Park West; (212) 988-9093; www.cityparksfoundation.org]

Enchanted Hour full of holiday stories, games, and songs. Then, kids and their families join French pastry chef Sylvie Berger for a Holiday Cooking Workshop, where they will bake and decorate French holiday treats. Time and prices vary by workshop.

Shadow Puppetry: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; \$10.

Children use light, shadow, and imagination to create shadow puppets and create a story, then watch their creations come to life using stop-motion animation.

All Aboard! Historic Train Weekend: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th

Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 1-3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Bring the family to hunt through the toys and trains of the Holiday Express exhibition, decorate a car for the Transcontinental Railroad and move and giggle with Conductor Abe. Ages 3-6.

Push Physical Theatre: Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 2 pm; \$14 to \$26.

This kinetic troupe specializes in acrobatic and theatrical storytelling for all ages.

"Annie": SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 3 pm; Free.

Annie, a red-haired girl who dreams of life outside her dreary orphanage, is chosen to stay for one week with famous billionaire "Daddy" Warbucks.

"The Knickerbocker Suite": 3 pm and 7 pm. Manhattan Movement & Arts Center. See Friday, Dec. 12.

"Soul Nativity": 3 pm and 7 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

SUN, DEC. 14

IN MANHATTAN

Children's Concert: Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Pl. at First Place; (646) 437-4202; www.mjhnyc.org; 10:30 am; \$10, \$7 for children 10 and under.

Brooklyn band Yellow Sneaker and its puppet pals nurture family bonds and bridge connections to Jewish life and traditions through their performance.

Second Sunday Family Tours: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street; (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org; 10:30 am-noon; \$15 per family (includes museum admission and tour for two adults and up to four children).

In today's theme, In Sight On-Site, families with kids ages 5-10 explore site-specific art by learning the stories behind such works on view.

"Latkes & Applesauce": Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Music Center, 129 W. 67th St.; (212) 501-3330; www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org; 11 am; \$20.

This rollicking Hanukkah musical revue features songs and scenes by some of New York's funniest writers, including a Hanukkah version of "A Christmas Carol" and the story of "Thomas, the Shammus" and the rousing klezmer-inspired title tune.

Macy's Sunday Story Time: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Kids enjoy a reading of "The Rain Train," written by Elena de Roo and illustrated by Brian Lovelock, and listen for all the special sounds one can hear on a rainy night.

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Calendar

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

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Hanukkah Family Day: The Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd Street; (212) 423-3200; thejewishmuseum.org; Noon-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children, ages 3 and up, construct a sculptural Hanukkah menorah with funky found objects, dance to the music of Shirlala, see the Hanukkah story brought to life through a drawing performance with Jeff Hopkins, and explore the museum's world-famous collection of Hanukkah lamps.

Christmakwanzukah: Gotham Comedy Club, 208 W. 23rd St.; (212) 877-6115; www.kidsncomedy.com; 1 pm; \$15 plus a one item minimum (food or drink).

"Christmakwanzukah" is a made-up name for the holiday season (so is the show). Wait, do you hear that? Is that church bells in the distance? Oh, wait. No. It's just a bunch of teenagers making fun of the worst gifts they ever received in the winter holiday season.

Menorah Madness: Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Pl. at First Place; (646) 437-4202; www.mjhnyc.org; 1-4 pm; \$10, \$7 for children 10 and under.

Join popular kiddie rockers Joanie Leeds and the Nightlights for a family-friendly concert at 2 pm. The day, which is geared toward children ages 3 to 10, also includes crafts and a mini-tour of the galleries, free with the purchase of concert tickets. Crafts take place from 1 to 4 pm; tour at 1:30 pm.

All Aboard! Historic Train Weekend: 1-3 pm. New-York Historical Society. See Saturday, Dec. 13.

Holiday Brass: Avery Fisher Hall, Broadway at 65th Street; (212) 875-5030; lincolncenter.org; 3 pm; \$49 and up.

This festive program showcases the brilliance and virtuosity of the New York Philharmonic Brass and Percussion in spectacular arrangements of symphonic and seasonal favorites.

"The Knickerbocker Suite": 3pm. Manhattan Movement & Arts Center. See Friday, Dec. 12.

Caroling At The Morgan: 3-5 pm. The Morgan Library & Museum. See Friday, Dec. 12.

Sunday Storytime: 3-4 pm. The Morgan Library & Museum. See Sunday, Dec. 7.

"Soul Nativity": 3 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

FURTHER AFIELD

House Tour: Lefferts Historic Home-



Hop aboard this train

All aboard for the Holiday Express at the New York Historical Society on Dec. 13 and 14.

The historic train weekend invites families to hunt through the toys and trains of the Holiday Express: Toys and Trains from the Jerni Collection. Participants are welcomed to decorate a car for the Transcontinental Railroad,

and move and giggle with Conductor Abe. Suitable for children 3 to 6 years old.

Holiday Express, Dec. 13 and Dec. 14, from 1 to 3 pm. Free with museum admission.

New-York Historical Society [170 Central Park West at W. 77th Street on the Upper West Side; (212) 873-3400; www.nyhistory.org]

stead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Noon-1 pm; \$10.

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

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

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

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

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

MON, DEC. 15

IN MANHATTAN

"Not The Messiah": Carnegie Hall, 881 7th Ave; (212) 247-7800; www.carnegiehall.org; 8 pm; \$30 and up.

Based on Monty Python's movie "The Life of Brian," the show features a lively pastiche of musical styles ranging from pop, country, and Broadway to doo-wop, hip-hop, and Greek chorus.

TUES, DEC. 16

IN MANHATTAN

Stroller Tours: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street; (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org; 3-4 pm; \$20 per stroller (includes museum admission).

Led by a museum educator, one-hour tours of the Guggenheim's fall exhibitions are given for caregivers and their babies.

"12 Days of New York" by Tonya Bolden: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Get into the festive spirit with this twist on an old classic and count down the wonders of New York while travelling through the city in various types of transport. Children then make little clothes-peg airplanes.

Handel's "Messiah": Avery Fisher Hall, Broadway at 65th Street; (212) 875-5030; lincolncenter.org; 7:30 pm; \$33 and up.

The "Messiah"'s dazzling solos, fireworks instrumental passages, and some of the most glorious choral writing of all time have given it nearly ritual status and made it the undisputed favorite of the holidays throughout the world.

"Not The Messiah": 8 pm. Carnegie Hall. See Monday, Dec. 15.

WED, DEC. 17

IN MANHATTAN

"Shalom Sesame Hanukkah": SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free.

It's time to celebrate Hanukkah in Israel! Grover's bringing the latkes and all is well until Anneliese gets caught in a game of tag with a chicken and loses her special menorah right before Hanukkah is about to begin! Can her friends help her find the missing menorah in time?

Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon; \$6.

Using kid-friendly clay, markers and other materials, kids sculpt and decorate their very own colorful dreidel to take home. Spin the dreidel and see where it lands as you learn the rules of the game and play along with others.

Handel's Messiah: 7:30 pm. Avery Fisher Hall. See Tuesday, Dec. 16.

THURS, DEC. 18

IN MANHATTAN

Cross-Stitch Circle: 3:30 pm. New-York Historical Society. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

35th Annual "A City Singing at Christmas": St. Patrick's Cathedral, 14 E. 51st St. at Fifth Avenue; (212) 753-2261; www.saintpatrickscathedral.org; 7 pm; Free.

St. Patrick's Cathedral once again welcomes the Young People's Chorus of New York City conducted by Artistic Director Francisco J. Núñez to sing in its FREE annual "A City Singing at Christmas" celebration of this joyful time of year.

"The New Standards Holiday

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Show™: Lincoln Center, Lincoln Center Plaza; (212) 875-5030; lincolncenter.org; 7:30 pm; Free.

This Minneapolis-based trio features piano, stand-up bass, and vibraphone and produces music that is a little punk, a little rock, and "a whole lot of cool." The show combines swinging renditions of holiday tunes with a smattering of irreverence, spectacle, dance, humor, and film projections.

Handel's "Messiah": 7:30 pm. Avery Fisher Hall. See Tuesday, Dec. 16.

FURTHER AFIELD

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

FRI, DEC. 19

IN MANHATTAN

Handel's "Messiah": 11 am. Avery Fisher Hall. See Tuesday, Dec. 16.

Keith Michael's "The Nutcracker": Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St.; (212) 355-6160; nytb.org; 1 pm and 6 pm; \$40 adults, \$35 children.

From clockwork imps to mice dressed in polka dots and dancers dancing with huge chopsticks, this timeless, re-imagined classic bursts with energy and excitement.

"12 Days of New York" by Tonya Bolden: 3:30 pm. New-York Historical Society. See Tuesday, Dec. 16.

Family Hanukkah Dinner: 92Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 6-7:30 pm; \$30 adult; \$15 children.

Practice lighting the menorah and lights the Shabbat candles, eat latkes and challah, and celebrate Hanukkah and Shabbat at the same time.

Caroling At The Morgan: 6:30-8:30 pm. The Morgan Library & Museum. See Friday, Dec. 12.

"The Knickerbocker Suite": 7 pm. Manhattan Movement & Arts Center. See Friday, Dec. 12.

"Soul Nativity": 7 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

Holidays At The Philharmonic: Avery Fisher Hall, Broadway at 65th Street; (212) 875-5030; lincolncenter.org; 8 pm; \$35 and up.

The repertoire includes Mozart's German Dance (featuring its famous sleigh ride) and Leroy Anderson's "Suite of the Carols." The audience will be invited to join a carol sing-along.



Kwanzaa celebration

Kwanzaa celebration at the American Museum of Natural History on Dec. 27.

This family-friendly cultural event includes African dance, spoken word, live musical performances, and traditional crafts.

The Kwanzaa Marketplace features vendors, visual artists, and crafts people and special

Kwanzaa foods will be available in the Museum Food Court.

Kwanzaa on Dec. 27 at noon and 3 pm. Free with suggested admission of \$22 adults, \$17 students and seniors, and \$12.50 children.

American Museum of Natural History [Central Park West at W. 79th Street on the Upper West Side (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org].

SAT, DEC. 20

IN MANHATTAN

"Doktor Kaboom - The Science of Santa": NYU Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. between W. Third Street and Washington Square South; (212) 998-4941; www.nyuskirball.org; 11 am; \$20-\$28.

Audiences embark on an interactive scientific exploration into Santa's secrets as Doktor Kabooms attempts to discover how Santa climbs down tight chimneys, makes reindeer fly and knows who's been bad or good.

Keith Michael's "The Nutcracker": 11 am, 1 pm and 3:30 pm. Florence Gould Hall. See Friday, Dec. 19.

"Junie B. in Jingle Bells, Batman Smells!": BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St.; (212) 220-1459; tribecapac.org; 1:30 pm; \$25.

It's holiday time, and everyone's favorite first-grader is back to celebrate. All of the students in Room One are happily creating the perfect holiday party. Except how is Junie B. supposed to enjoy anything when she has drawn

the name of her arch nemesis, Tattle-tale May, for her Secret Santa Gift. For ages 4 and up.

Holidays At The Philharmonic: 2 pm. Avery Fisher Hall. See Friday, Dec. 19.

"Arthur Christmas": SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 3 pm; Free.

With an army of one million combat-style elves and a vast, state-of-the-art control center under the ice of the North Pole, Santa is able to deliver billions of presents to the whole world in one night! But when one child's present is accidentally not delivered, Santa's young son, Arthur, realizes it could spell the end of Christmas.

"The Knickerbocker Suite": 3 pm and 7 pm. Manhattan Movement & Arts Center. See Friday, Dec. 12.

"Soul Nativity": 3 pm and 7 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

Father Goose: Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 4 pm; \$12 to \$21.

pace.org; 4 pm; \$12 to \$21.

Longtime Dan Zanes friend and collaborator Father Goose makes his triumphant return to Just Kidding with his unique, high-energy mix of hip-hop, calypso, and reggae.

Handel's "Messiah": 7:30 pm. Avery Fisher Hall. See Tuesday, Dec. 16.

SUN, DEC. 21

IN MANHATTAN

Delancey to Doughnuts - A Hanukkah Walking Tour: Stanton Street Synagogue, 180 Stanton St. (between Clinton and Attorney Streets); (212) 374-4100; www.nycjewishtour.org; 10:45 am; \$23 adults; \$21 seniors and students.

The tour starts at Congregation Bnai Jacob Anshe Brzezan (Stanton Street Shul) a site of old-world warmth and tradition. Shul "elder" and board member Elyssa Sampson will be on hand to share the history of this charming site.

Keith Michael's "The Nutcracker": 11 am, 1 pm and 3:30 pm. Florence Gould Hall. See Friday, Dec. 19.

Sunday Art Discoveries: The Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd Street; (212) 423-3200; thejewishmuseum.org; 11:30 am-12:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children ages 4-10 engage with works of art through activities and gallery tours that focus on themes related to special exhibitions. Today's theme is Patterns, Designs, and Symbols, with a tour of A Russian-American Quilt.

Hot Peas 'N Butter: The Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd Street; (212) 423-3200; thejewishmuseum.org; 11:30 am; \$18 adults; \$13 children.

To celebrate Hanukkah, the band performs songs that offer a unique twist, such as the Ladino sounds of "Ocho Kandelikas."

Macy's Sunday Story Time: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Get ready to board the Polar Express and go on a truly magical North Pole adventure in the beloved Christmas story, "The Polar Express," written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg.

"Weave a Tale": Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Ave. at E. 82nd Street; (212) 570-7710; www.metmuseum.org; 1-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Join a shadow puppet artist for a

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Calendar

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performance that animates characters and stories from the exhibition Grand Design: Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Renaissance Tapestry. Take part in a family tour or art activity before or after the performance.

Pinocchio in Manhattan: 2–4 pm. Italian American Museum. See Sunday, Dec. 7.

“The Knickerbocker Suite”: 3pm. Manhattan Movement & Arts Center. See Friday, Dec. 12.

Caroling At The Morgan: 3–5 pm. The Morgan Library & Museum. See Friday, Dec. 12.

Sunday Storytime: 3–4 pm. The Morgan Library & Museum. See Sunday, Dec. 7.

“Soul Nativity”: 3 pm. Harlem School of the Arts. See Friday, Dec. 12.

MON, DEC. 22

IN MANHATTAN

Masterpiece Mondays: The Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.; (212) 423–3200; thejewishmuseum.org; 3:30–4:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children ages 4–7 explore the museum’s galleries with sketching and art activities in this after-school series. Today’s theme is Art of Light.

TUES, DEC. 23

IN MANHATTAN

Winter Break Family Program: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Ave. at E. 82nd Street; (212) 570–7710; www.metmuseum.org; 11am–noon and 1–2pm; Free with museum admission.

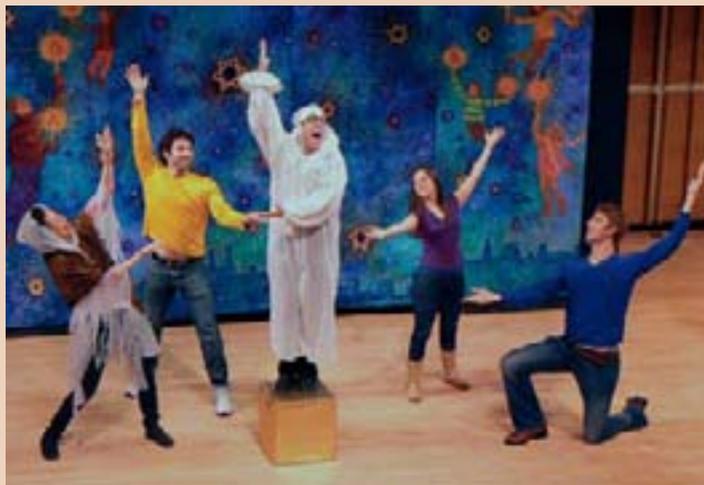
Day off from school? Families with children ages 3–11 travel the world at the Met.

“My Taxi Ride” by Paul Dubois Jacobs and Jennifer Swender: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873–3400; nyhistory.org; 3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

There are many ways to travel around the city, but this week children celebrating the one and only yellow taxi in this fast-paced rhyming book, and then make a flying taxi.

Jazz for Young People presents “Swingin’ In The Holiday”: Lincoln Center, Lincoln Center Plaza; (212) 875–5030; lincolncenter.org; 7:30 pm; Free.

This free jazz concert, suitable for all ages, will ring in the holidays with a swinging collection of the best loved songs of the season.



Hanukkah family fun

It’s a hilarious Hanukkah take-off in “Latkes and Applesauce” on Dec. 14 at the Merkin Concert Hall.

Just in time, the Poppy Seed Players perform this fun take on the holiday. “Latkes and Applesauce” is on the table and features songs and scenes including a Hanukkah version of “A Christmas Carol” and the story of

“Thomas the Shamus,” as well as a Klezmer-inspired tune that families just don’t want to miss.

“Latkes and Applesauce: A Hanukkah Musical Revue” on Dec. 14 at 11 am. Tickets are \$20.

Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Music Center [129 W. 67th St. at Broadway on the Upper West Side; (212) 501–3330; www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org]

surprising treats in this musical world party.

FRI, DEC. 26

IN MANHATTAN

Winter Break Family Program: 11am–noon and 1–2pm. Metropolitan Museum of Art. See Tuesday, Dec. 23.

Vacation Week Drop-in Workshop: The Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.; (212) 423–3200; thejewishmuseum.org; 1–4 pm; \$20 adults; \$15 children.

Kids, ages 3 and up, create playful abstract works of art using stamp-making and painting techniques inspired by the vibrant worlds of painters Lee Krasner and Norman Lewis.

SAT, DEC. 27

IN MANHATTAN

Kwanzaa Celebration: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at W. 79th Street; (212) 769–5200; www.amnh.org; Suggested admission \$22 adults, \$17 students/seniors, \$12.50 children.

This family-friendly all-day event offers African dance, spoken word, live

musical performances, and traditional crafts. A bustling Kwanzaa Marketplace will feature vendors, visual artists, and craftspeople as well as representatives from major community cultural institutions.

Kwanzaa Celebration: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at W. 79th Street; (212) 769–5200; www.amnh.org; Noon and 3 pm; Free with suggested admission \$22 adults, \$17 students/seniors, \$12.50 children.

A feast for the soul and senses, this family-friendly all-day event offers African dance, spoken word, live musical performances, and traditional crafts.

New Year’s Celebration: SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; (212) 833–8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon; \$6.

Get ready to celebrate with handmade party hats, calendars, and festival blowouts.

A Classical Holiday – Piano Recital by Katya Grineva: Carnegie Hall, 57th Street and Seventh Avenue; (212) 247–7800; carnegiehall.org; 8 pm; \$30 and up.

Performing works from her latest album A Classical Holiday, Katya showcases new arrangements of holiday classics including “Silent Night,” “I’ll Be Home for Christmas,” and “My Favorite Things,” as well as traditional carols and pieces from “The Nutcracker.”

FURTHER AFIELD

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

SUN, DEC. 28

IN MANHATTAN

Macy’s Sunday Story Time: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873–3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Kids climb aboard a toy train as it goes on an epic journey through book tunnels, around fish bowls, under chairs, and over pillow mountains with a reading of “My Little Train” by Satomi Ichikawa.

Vacation Week Drop-in Workshop: 1–4 pm. The Jewish Museum. See Friday, Dec. 26.

Sunday Storytime: 3–4 pm. The Morgan Library & Museum. See Sunday, Dec. 7.

MON, DEC. 29

IN MANHATTAN

Vacation Week Drop-in Work-

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shop: 1–4 pm. The Jewish Museum. See Friday, Dec. 26.

TUES, DEC. 30

IN MANHATTAN

Drop-in Days: Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden, 421 E. 61st St. between First and York Avenues; (212) 838–6878; www.mvhm.org; 11 am to 4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Drop in any time during regular museum hours for a family-friendly tour, featuring A Visit from St. Nicholas-inspired museum hunt.

Winter Break Family Program: 11am–noon and 1–2pm. Metropolitan Museum of Art. See Tuesday, Dec. 23.

Vacation Week Drop-in Workshop: 1–4 pm. The Jewish Museum. See Friday, Dec. 26.

WED, DEC. 31

IN MANHATTAN

Drop-in Days: 11 am to 4 pm. Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden. See Tuesday, Dec. 30.

“The Merry Widow”: Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center Plaza; (212) 362–6000; www.metop-era.org; 8 pm; \$25 and up.

Celebrate the start of 2014 with a New Year’s Eve gala performance, followed by dinner and dancing. Jeremy Sams directs a new English-language production of Johann Strauss’s beloved operatic confection, with a revised libretto by acclaimed playwright Douglas Carter Beane.

FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

LONG-RUNNING

IN MANHATTAN

Drawn to Language: Children’s Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274–0986; www.cmany.org; \$11.

In this new exhibition, words are given visual form. Letters, words, or phrases are transcribed, visualized, verbalized, symbolized, morphed into patterns, scrambled, or even erased.

Holiday Express from the Jerni Train Collection: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West



Photo by Christopher Hall

Christmas in the city

The Young People’s Chorus of New York will perform “A City Singing at Christmas” at the annual holiday concert at St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Dec. 18.

The heartwarming tradition is conducted by Francisco Núñez and features a blend of traditional and contemporary Christmas hymns and carols. The St. Patrick’s Cathedral Choir, which joins in the celebration, is con-

ducted by Dr. Jennifer Pascual.

Adding to the musical delight will be the New York City Master Chorale and the New York Symphonic Brass.

“A City Singing at Christmas” on Dec. 18 at 7 pm. Admission is free but it is recommended to arrive early for best seats.

St. Patrick’s Cathedral (Fifth Avenue and 51st Street in Midtown; www.saintpatrickscathedral.org).

at W. 77th Street; (212) 873–3400; nyhistory.org; \$19 adults, \$6 children ages 5–12.

Witness the holiday transformation with the installation of a spectacular exhibit of treasures from the renowned Jerni Collection of model trains, scenic elements and toys. The display appeals to all ages, showcasing the beauty and allure of toys from a bygone era.

George Balanchine’s “The Nutcracker”: David H. Koch Theater, Josie Robertson Plaza at Columbus Avenue and 63rd Street; (212) 496–0600; nycballet.com; Start at \$35.

Highlights of this world-renowned holiday production include a one-ton Christmas tree that grows from 12 to 40 feet, an onstage snowstorm, and hundreds of elaborate costumes, including one for Mother Ginger that measures nine feet wide and weighs 85 pounds. The production’s grand finale involves one million watts of lighting, the most used in any New York City Ballet production.

Handmade: Artists’ Holiday Cards: The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Ave. between W. 36th and

W. 37th streets; (212) 685–0008; www.themorgan.org; \$18 adults; \$12 students; free for children under 12.

Exhibition of rarely-seen handmade cards created by 20th-century artists for their friends and family. Drawn from the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Art, the exhibition includes nearly 60 seasonal cards made by such important artists as Helen Frankenthaler, Milton Avery, Alexander Calder, Ad Reinhardt, Philip Guston, and Saul Steinberg.

Origami Holiday Tree: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at W. 79th Street; (212) 769–5200; www.amnh.org; Suggested admission \$22 adults, \$17 students/seniors, \$12.50 children.

An annual tradition, the delightfully decorated Origami Holiday Tree has marked the start of the holiday season at the museum for decades. The theme of this year’s 13-foot-tree is “Night at the Museum,” inspired by American Museum of Natural History sleepovers and tours featuring places, artifacts, characters, and real exhibits behind the delightful movies of the same name.

The Butterfly Conservatory: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at W. 79th Street; (212) 769–5200; www.amnh.org; Suggested admission \$22 adults, \$17 students/seniors, \$12.50 children.

In the annual favorite, Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter, up to 500 live, free-flying tropical butterflies from the Americas, Africa, and Asia are housed in a vivarium that approximates their natural habitat, includes live flowering plants that serve as nectar sources, and features controlled artificial light, temperature, and humidity.

“Metamorphosis!”: Damrosch Park, W. 62nd Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues; (888) 541–3750; bigapplecircus.org; Start at \$25.

The celebrated Big Apple Circus Band, under the baton of maestro Rob Slowik, provides the lively musical soundtrack, and magnificent Ringmaster John Kennedy Kane will summon the spirits of the circus universe to immerse the audience in the wonder, the joy and the astounding magic of “Metamorphosis!”

Moleskine & (RED) World AIDS Day Exhibit: Park Hyatt New York, 153 W. 57th St. between Sixth and Seventh avenues; www.oneredday.com; Free.

Harnessing the power of creativity to help win the AIDS fight, this new exhibition showcases sketches by leading thinkers, entertainers, and creative minds sharing what they would do if they had one day to raise awareness of and rally people around the fight against AIDS. The collection of sketches include the work of Ryan Lewis, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Biz Stone, OK Go’s Damian Kulash, Dr. Robert Gallo, Mario Batali, Charlotte Ronson and more.

Marvel’s AVENGERS S.T.A.T.I.O.N.: Discovery Times Square, 226 W. 44th St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues; (866) 987–9692; www.discoverytsx.com/exhibitions/avengers; Sundays – Tuesdays, 10 am–7 pm, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10 am–8 pm, Fridays and Saturdays, 10 am–9 pm, Now – Wed, Dec. 31; \$19.50–\$27.

Fans of all ages will be immersed in this experience that brings them deep into the world of Marvel’s “The Avengers.”

13th Annual Holiday Train Show: New York Transit Museum Gallery Annex and Store at Grand Central Terminal, 89 E. 42nd St. between Madison and Lexington avenues; (212) 340–2583; www.grandcentralterminal.com; Weekdays, 8 am–8 pm, Saturdays, 10 am–8 pm, Sundays, 10 am–7 pm, Now – Sun,

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Feb. 22, 2015; Free.

Lionel continues its tradition of capturing hearts and imaginations this holiday season, with Metro-North, New York Central and subway trains departing from a miniature Grand Central Terminal on a 34-foot long two level "O" gauge model train layout. Vintage Lionel trains from the Museum's collection and 1930s Lionel advertisements will also be on display.

"The Amazing Adventures of Harvey and the Princess": Theater 3, 311 W. 43rd St. at Eighth Avenue; www.nycchildrenstheater.org; Wednesdays and Thursdays, 11 am, Fridays, 11 am and 5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am and 2 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 7; \$25.

Harvey is an amazing kid who does not need much to be happy — just his family and his imagination. When he accidentally gets shipped to Pink Mountain Island, he meets a princess whose royal family needs a lesson in fun and togetherness. This upbeat musical 50-minute musical, celebrates what happiness is really all about. Best for ages 3-8.

"The Three Bears Holiday

Bash": Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater, West 79th and West Drive; (212) 988-9093; Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30 am and noon, Wednesdays, 10:30 am, noon, and 2:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 30; \$10; \$7 children under 12.

This variety show that celebrates the holiday season in song, dance and puppetry. This production quickly becomes a comedy of errors when Baby Bear invites Santa to star in Mama and Papa Bear's annual holiday show.

Jazz For Kids: Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. at Park Avenue South; (212) 576-2232; www.jazzstandard.com; Sundays, 2-3 pm; Free, guests may give a \$5 donation that benefits the Jazz Standard Discovery Program.

The talented children's musicians of the The Jazz Standard Youth Orchestra perform every Sunday (except for Dec. 21, Dec. 28 and Feb. 1).

45 Years of "Sesame Street" Helping Kids Grow Smarter, Stronger, and Kinder:

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, 40 Lincoln Center Plaza; (212) 875-5030; lincolncenter.org; Free.

This exhibition gives "Sesame Street" fans of all ages the opportunity to experience what it's like to create an episode of the show and get close to their fuzzy and furry friends from the street. See behind the scenes footage, animation cells, blueprints, and an architectural model of the set from the early 1990s.

Free Baby-Toddler Class: Franciscan Community Center, 214 W. 97th St. between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue; (212) 932-8040 X 38; blewis@fccnyc.org; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 am-noon; Free.

Socialization, early literacy, singing, movement and explorative play.

Storytime: Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Place at First Place; (646) 437-4202; www.mjhnyc.org; Wednesday, Dec. 3, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 17, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, Jan. 7, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, Jan. 21, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, Feb. 4, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, Feb. 18, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, March 4, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, March 18, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, April 1, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, April 15, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, May 6, 3:30 pm; Wednesday, May 20, 3:30 pm; Free.

Drop-in program warm, whimsical tales about traditions, holidays, and families from some of today's best storybooks for children ages 0-4.

Shababa Fridays: 92Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; Fridays, 9:30-10:15 am OR 10:45-11:30 am, Now – Wed, Dec. 31; \$10 adults.

Enjoy a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and give your toddler an opportunity to embrace the festive feeling of Shabbat with songs, stories, challah and snacks.

"Cirque Ziva": The New Victory Theater, 209 W. 42nd St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues; (646) 223-3010; www.newvictory.org; Tuesdays, 2 pm, Fridays and Saturdays, 2 and 7 pm, Sundays, Noon and 5 pm, Fri, Dec. 5 – Sun, Jan. 4, 2015; \$19 and up.

Ensemble performances like acrobatic hoop diving and the whizzing diabolo are punctuated by awe-inspiring solo acts of unparalleled precision. An acrobat of incomparable strength winks at balcony patrons as his chair stack teeters over 30 feet high. A gifted contortionist balances over 60 wine glasses while her body bends impossibly backwards, and much more.

Shababa Saturday Experiences: 92Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; Saturdays, 10:30 am-noon, Now – Wed, Dec. 31; Free.

Newborn-10 year olds join the Shababa community on Saturday for singing, art projects, playground visits, holiday-themed celebrations and much more.

"El Gato Con Botas": El Teatro at El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave. at 104th Street; (212) 279-4200; www.gothamchamberopera.org; Saturday, Dec. 6, 7 pm; Sunday, Dec. 7, 2 pm; Tuesday, Dec. 9, 7 pm; Thursday, Dec.

11, 7 pm; Friday, Dec. 12, 7 pm; Saturday, Dec. 13, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 14, 2 pm; \$30 and up.

When Gotham Chamber Opera and Tectonic Theater Project revive their production of "El Gato Con Botas" (Puss in Boots), Xavier Montsalvatge's take on the classic story of a mangy feline with magical talents.

"Hansel and Gretel": Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center Plaza; (212) 362-6000; www.metopera.org; Thursday, Dec. 18, 12 am; Tuesday, Dec. 23, 12 am; Saturday, Dec. 27, 12 am; Tuesday, Dec. 30, 12 am; Thursday, Jan. 1, 12 am; Saturday, Jan. 3, 12 am; Thursday, Jan. 8, 12 am; \$25 and up.

Richard Jones's production of this fairy-tale opera tells the tale of two children who face off against a wicked witch, in a lush setting of giant chefs, suit-clad trees, and an industrial kitchen where the Witch gets what's coming to her.

Holiday Express: New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; Daily, 10 am-6 pm; Sat, Dec. 27 – Sun, Jan. 4, 2015; Free with museum admission.

Stop by the New-York Historical Society this week to marvel at the toys and trains of the Jerni Collection, go on a Holiday Express I Spy Scavenger Hunt. At 2 pm, hear beloved train tales and make a train-themed craft to take home as a souvenir from the day.

FURTHER AFIELD

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

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

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

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

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

The new exhibit at the museum provides young scientists the opportu-

nity to explore innovations in biology, health, robotics, and technology.

Gingerbread Lane Exhibit: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Daily, 10 am-4 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

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

Touch tank: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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— Pamela M. - Battery Park mom

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THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Sweet treat for little writers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

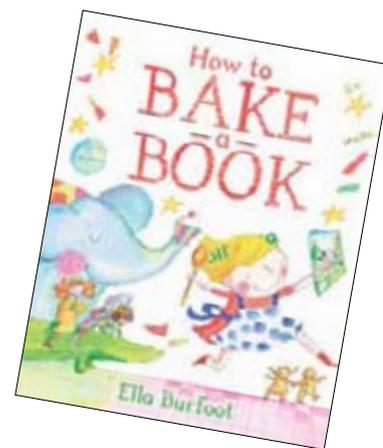
Now cover it all up and wait.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fascinating story, both for kids and for adults.

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

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

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

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

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

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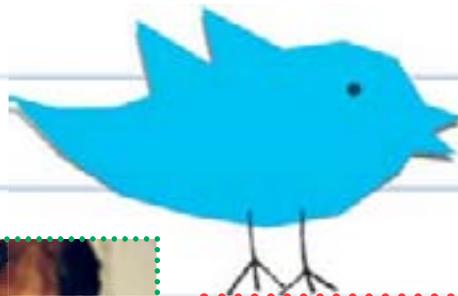


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