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Family November 2010

Letter from the publisher

Every society has a designated day for giving thanks. Our day, in November, is perhaps my favorite holiday. It's truly a national holiday and, while celebrated on different days in different lands, an international holiday in spirit. It's a day on which we count our abundance, whatever that amounts to.



For many years of my life, Thanksgiving was a day I worked, and when I finally had the day off and was available, I found myself alone and uninvited to any banquet or celebration. I was alone in New York without family — and people without family nearby can often spend holidays on their own. It's a weird feeling and can easily lead to depression and feelings of isolation. So much expectation surrounds holidays and the marketing folks can make you feel even worse than you already feel.

Being the kind of gal I am, I decided to do something worthwhile on that holiday alone, and I found myself volunteering to serve meals to the homeless, ill and needy. It was a good day and I felt busy, vital and necessary. At the end of the day, the group of volunteers all sat down together and had our meal. I met some very nice people that day and I've always looked back on it as a day when I saved myself.

Anyway, not everyone's going to volunteer, or think about it. Some people are so alone they can't get past the solitary nature of their lives. As we're planning this year for our celebrations and our banquets, think of someone you may know who has nowhere to go on this day. Maybe it's someone from another country or someone like I was, living in New York, with family far away.

Share this invite idea with your children. It may be that they also know someone who is alone at the holidays. Holidays are more enriched when there are "new friends" at the table. Happy Thanksgiving!

Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher

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NEWBIE DAD

BRIAN KANTZ

Thankful (really) for my mother-in-law

One night, way back in the year 2 BC (before children), I found myself in the middle of an ugly scene in a graduate school class. What started out as an innocuous discussion about parental influence on education quickly turned into a mother-in-law bashing session.

One by one, venom-spitting students told their worst mother-in-law stories. A guy claimed his mother-in-law tried to sabotage his

Classics, I know.

Eventually, all eyes turned to me. The mob expected one more juicy story from a disgruntled son-in-law. Instead, I simply shrugged my shoulders and said, "I like my mother-in-law." Of course, I wasn't telling the class the whole truth. I didn't want to rub their faces in it. What I should have said was, "I love my mother-in-law."

You see, the older I get, the more I realize how fortunate I am. And one of the most fortunate aspects of my life: I have a wonderful mother-in-law. Really.

OK, OK, I know what you're thinking. What did I do wrong? What do I want? A man must have some ulterior motive for declaring his love for his mother-in-law — yes, his mother-in-law — in print, right? Wrong. There's no motive here other than it deserves to be said.

My mother-in-law is the best. My admiration for her has grown each day since we met, and especially since my wife and I became parents and my mother-in-law became a grandmother. As mother, mother-in-law and grandmother, she is always there for us. Always. She's the heart of the family. She proves this again and again.

Here's a quick example: recently, I was offered — and accepted — an interim job position. This decision shook up our family's routine — namely, we needed a new childcare arrangement during weekdays. The decision also shook me up. After nearly six years as a stay-at-home dad, I was pretty accustomed to taking care of things myself during the day. I rarely needed to ask for help. Now, I did. And I found it very difficult to give up control. Actually, I found it excruciating.

My wife brought up the idea.

"Let's ask my mom if she'll take the kids in the afternoons," she said. Despite the fact that my mother-in-law has never missed an opportunity to babysit the boys, I hesitated to ask for her help. This was different. This

would be a huge time commitment. I didn't want to burden anyone else with the care of our children.

As I wrestled with the situation, a friend of the family — a very wise woman and a grandmother herself — knocked some sense into my head, saying, "Did you ever consider that your mother-in-law might actually want to watch the kids? That she might consider it a gift, not a burden? Did you ever consider that she just might be waiting to be asked?"

No, I hadn't really considered that.

But as soon as I did, my thoughts immediately went back to my own childhood to a time when my brothers and I spent a few hours after school each day at my grandmother's house after my mom went back to work. There's no doubt in my mind that the time I spent there was the reason I always felt so close to my late grandmother. I still think of her most days and plan to write a book about her some day. That kind of bond is priceless.

And guess what? My mother-in-law happily accepted our invitation. Of course she did. And I couldn't be happier about it. Our younger son, who spends the most time with Grandma while his older brother is at school, is quickly becoming "Grandma's boy." You may have seen the couple around town on a lunch date.

My mother-in-law is truly one of the most selfless — and capable — people I know. There is no better role model for my two boys. There is no better role model for me.

It's November and that means Thanksgiving. I'm one son-in-law who is thankful to have a wonderful mother-in-law in my life. If you're lucky enough to have a mother-in-law you love, too, let her know it. Donna, thank you for everything you do.

Brian Kantz says his father-in-law is pretty terrific, too. OK, now he's rubbing it in. Visit Brian online at www.briankantz.com or drop him a note at theneubiedad@yahoo.com.



wedding. Even worse, one young woman countered, her mother-in-law had actually tried to help her plan her wedding. The horror. Classmates gasped.

Luckily, a few of the less emotionally scarred students lightened the conversation with a round of tasteless mother-in-law jokes:

- "I went to buy a car and the salesman asked if I needed an airbag. I said, 'No thanks, I already have a mother-in-law.'"

- "How do you stop your mother-in-law from drowning? Take your foot off her head."

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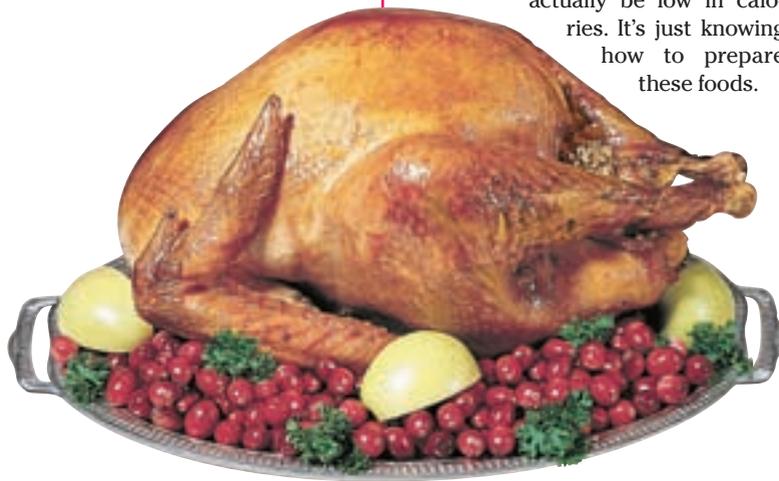


GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

The healthy side of Thanksgiving

The traditional Thanksgiving meal is considered laden with fatty foods and excess calories. Is there anyway to enjoy this time-honored dinner and still eat healthfully? Well, if you think about it, individual components of the meal score pretty high in nutrition and can actually be low in calories. It's just knowing how to prepare these foods.



Turkey: White meat sans skin provides more protein per calorie than almost any other meat. A three ounce serving — about the size of a deck of cards — provides just 120 calories and 26 grams of protein. Think dark meat is verboten? Think again. A three ounce serving of thigh meat provides just 135 calories. Either type is a source of iron, zinc, potassium, phosphorus and B vitamins.

Gravy: Depending on the skill of

the cook, homemade gravy can either be fatty or lean. But cooks who “cheat” by using jarred or canned gravy are actually doing you a favor since it’s virtually fat free.

Dressing: Make this healthier by sneaking in extra veggies such as chopped onions, celery, leeks, and shallots. Instead of sweating them in butter, use broth. Include whole wheat bread for at least half of the bread cubes.

Sweet potatoes: These tubers are loaded with beta-carotene, potassium, fiber and vitamin C and also provide magnesium, phosphorus, choline, iron and calcium for just 90 calories per half cup. Try scraping off the marshmallows and butter if they’re served that way.

Cranberries: These gorgeous red orbs contain anthocyanins, ellagic acid, quercetin, resveratrol, selenium and vitamins A, C and E.

Green beans: Prepared without soup mix or butter, they’re a good source of vitamin C at a calorie cost of just 22 per half cup.

Brussels sprouts: These little cabbages are high in vitamin C and are a good source of folate and beta carotene, as well as a myriad of phytochemicals.

Mixed nuts: Nuts contain protein, healthy fat and plenty of antioxidants, so crack away when the nut bowl gets passed. For example, walnuts are a particularly high source of melatonin, a compound linked to

good health.

Pie: Even dessert, such as pumpkin or apple pie can provide nutrients. Pumpkin provides beta carotene, while apple contains quercetin, both powerful antioxidants. To minimize calories, eat just the filling and skip the crust.

• • •

In general, nothing should be off limits. As you know, it’s all about portion size. Encourage children to sample whatever appeals to them and talk about how yummy the healthier foods are.

And keep them involved in the day, too.

“Have them draw what they are thankful for and incorporate the pictures into your table centerpiece,” says Diane Sowa, MS, RD, Assistant Director, Clinical Nutrition at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, and mother of two college-aged sons. “Create a family heirloom by having an empty album on hand for their works of art and pictures from the day. After dinner, share memories by watching family movies and looking at photo albums.”

Children can also make place-mats, napkin rings or place cards for the dinner table.

Sowa also suggests making Thanksgiving an active day, and encourages a family touch football game before dinner, followed by a light walk after the meal.

“Get the kids involved by making some homemade ‘hand turkey’ invitations with details about signing up for a Turkey Trot.”

With a little advance planning and tweaks in the usual schedule, Thanksgiving can be a day of healthful eating and activity to burn it off.

Christine M. Palumbo, RD is a Naperville, Illinois-based nutrition speaker and a mother of three. Her favorite part of the Thanksgiving meal is, well, all of it. Send your questions and column ideas to her at (630) 369-8495 or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

Cranberry Pear Tarts

Makes 30 tiny desserts.
Prep time: 10 min. Cook time: 15 min.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup fresh cranberries
1/4 cup honey
1/4 teaspoon allspice
1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
2 ripe pears, peeled, cored and chopped

2 (2.1-oz.) boxes mini phyllo shells, thawed

1/4 cup chopped walnuts
Finely grated orange zest

INSTRUCTIONS: Place cranberries, honey, allspice and cinnamon in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for five minutes. Stir in pears and simmer

for 10 minutes or until excess liquid has cooked off. Let cool, then spoon mixture into phyllo cups. Top with walnuts, then lightly grate orange zest over the top.

NUTRITION FACTS: 110 calories, 21 grams carbohydrate, 2 grams protein, 2.5 grams fat, 0 saturated fat and cholesterol, 60 milligrams sodium, 2 gram fiber and 12 grams sugar (per 3 tarts).

Recipe courtesy of Patty Mastracco of I Do Food

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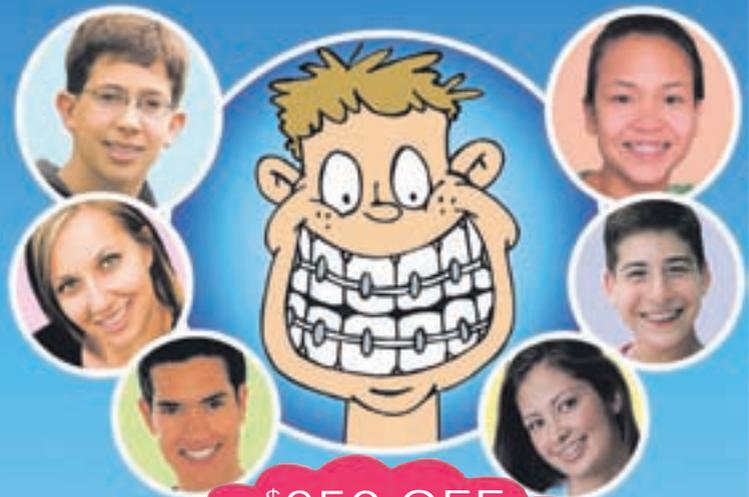
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Youth in revolt!

Realizing when your child is seeking her independence

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

From the time children are babies they are trying to break free. As soon as toddlers can stand and take their first wobbly steps, they start to run. Invariably, they run away, racing out into the world, arms outstretched — not to brace for the inevitable fall, but to grab the world in their hands.

Kids are like that: craving independence, every step of the way.

As parents, our job is to protect, guide and — eventually — let go, which can be challenging because there are times when we enjoy taking part in the activity.

The day came suddenly when my toddler, Melissa, was no longer content to be fed with a spoon. I knew I was way more adept at depositing the food into her mouth, but she flailed her arms and pushed me away, blocking all my attempts to feed her. I acquiesced, and relinquished the fork to her unsteady hand. I watched her feeble attempts as the orange mush landed on her right cheek, then her left, and, finally, in her hair. I had to let her try — not only did she give me no choice, stubborn as she has always been, but I knew that I couldn't feed her forever.

Letting go is also hard because we need to analyze some pretty

bizarre and sudden requests on the spot, like, "What is wrong with a coed sleeper? We are all friends." Or this doozie: "Mind if I go to a midnight show on Houston Street?"

I used to be challenged by seemingly simpler queries, such as my 11-year-old son's request to go to

the supermarket with his friends, unchaperoned. I couldn't understand the lore of the produce and frozen food aisles to a bunch of pre-pubescent males, but, to a great extent, this tween was asking for his freedom. He was asking me



The author's daughter, Melissa, back when she was trying to exert her independence by feeding herself.

to trust him, and not just asking to “hang” with his friends. It was up to me to determine whether or not these boys would be safe in a public supermarket, and whether they would become a nuisance to the other shoppers.

I don’t appreciate it when my children present me with a new challenging request, expecting an instantaneous answer. Sometimes I feel like I’m in the hot seat, as a teen hastily presses me for approval of the newly revealed evening agenda, one foot out the door, telling me that someone’s mother is already waiting outside.

“Teens need to learn to wait for results, just like adults do,” says Lori Hiller,

a school social worker in Brooklyn. She suggests parents tell teens that failure to ask for permission early enough might result in denial of their request. After all, she says, in making these tough decisions, parents walk a tight-rope between too strict and too lenient.

“Safety” is usually my first line of defense.

When my then-fourth grader stubbornly insisted that she was old enough to walk the four blocks home from school by herself, I finally gave in and permitted it, shadowing her with my SUV. She trod down the street, chest puffed out, blatantly proud of her newfound independence. That is, until an unidentified white car pulled up just ahead of her. I lowered my window, and in my most authoritative tone, yelled “Melissa, get in this car this minute!” That put an end to the “walking home alone” discussion for quite a while.

But children need to subconsciously push the envelope both to see how far they can go and to see you put up a boundary for them, so that they feel safe, says Hiller.

My second line of defense is

“intel.” Knowing full well that my children will be telling me that I am the last parent holdout to reserve my approval of their group plans, I try to foresee their upcoming requests and I confer secretly with my peers. I’ll inquire of parents who have traditionally shown themselves to be like-minded in their standards and values.

By seventh grade, Melissa asked to be allowed to be dropped off at the mall with her friends. They wanted to shop together without any adult in tow. I needed to be weaned from the protective mother mode slowly, so at first, a parent was nearby, checking in every half hour or so. As

the girls got older and proved to be

more responsible, and since they had cellphones, a mother was in the mall and on call for a crisis, but was not stationed within viewing distance. Then, sometime near the end of eighth grade, I finally gave in and actually dropped the girls off at the mall, sans chaperone.

I believe a parent’s instinct is often accurate. If a

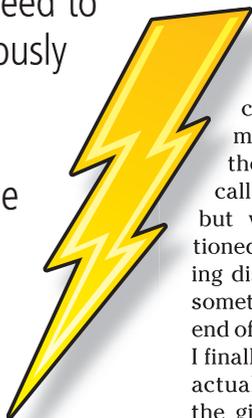
child’s proposed plans seem inappropriate or make a parent feel particularly uncomfortable, then the plans probably require more analysis and discussion.

Whenever my children were prohibited from going where they wanted, exactly when they wanted, I was labeled as “the strictest, most overprotective mom” in the neighborhood. My guess is there were plenty of other parents hearing those same exact words.

Independence is a process, but it takes baby steps and basic goals at each stage along the way, with the ultimate goal being an independent adulthood.

Risa C. Doherty is a freelance writer and attorney from East Hills, NY, and mother of an independent college student and almost-independent high school senior.

Children need to subconsciously push the envelope both to see how far they can go and to see you put up a boundary for them.

A large, decorated Christmas tree is the central focus. A girl in a blue dress sits on a balcony-like structure on the left side of the tree. The tree is adorned with lights and garlands. At the base of the tree, several nutcracker figures are visible. The title "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker" is written in a stylized, glowing font across the middle of the tree. The background is a dark, starry night sky.

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FAMILY HEALTH

IVAN HAND, MD, FAAP
 Director of Neonatology,
 Queens Hospital Center

Kids, substance abuse & the media

Although parents, schools and the federal government are telling children and teenagers to “just say no” to drugs, billions of dollars in cigarette, alcohol and prescription drug advertising are effectively working to get them to “just say yes.”

The result? Young people are receiving mixed messages about smoking, drinking and drug use, and movies and television contribute significantly to the risk that they will engage in substance abuse.

Although illegal drugs take their toll on American society, two legal drugs — tobacco and alcohol — pose perhaps the greatest danger to children and teenagers. Both serve as significant gateway drugs and are among the earliest drugs used by children or teenagers. A preadolescent or adolescent who smokes tobacco or drinks alcohol is 65 times more likely to use marijuana than someone who abstains.

Every year more than 400,000 Americans die from illnesses directly related to cigarette use — more than from AIDS, car crashes, murder and suicide, combined. More than 100,000 annual deaths can be attributed to excessive alcohol consumption, including the death of 5,000 people younger than 21 years.

Advertising plays a strong role in the influence on children and adolescents. And it works, otherwise, companies would not spend billions of dollars on it. Many ads use celebrity endorsers, humor, rock music, or attractive models, all of which have been shown to be effective with children and teenagers. Advertising makes smoking and drinking seem like normative activities and may function as a “superpeer” in subtly pressuring teenagers to experiment.

Cigarettes

Scenes with smoking remain common in movies and, to a lesser extent, on prime-time television. Recent studies have shown that exposure to TV and movie smoking is one of the



key factors that prompt teenagers to smoke. According to a new analysis, it may account for nearly half of smoking initiation in young teenagers. In fact, exposure to movie smoking may even be more significant than parents' smoking status as being the key factor of teenagers lighting up.

Alcohol

Alcohol remains the number one drug portrayed on American television — one drinking scene is shown every 22 minutes, compared with one smoking scene every 57 minutes and one illicit drug use scene every 112 minutes. On MTV, teenagers can see alcohol use every 14 minutes. An analysis revealed that drugs were present in nearly half of 359 music videos — alcohol in 35 percent, tobacco in 10 percent, and illicit drugs in 13 percent. On prime time television, 70 percent of programs depict alcohol use, and more than one-third of the drinking scenes are humorous, while negative consequences are shown in only 23 percent.

What you can do for your child:

1. Limit unsupervised media use

and especially encourage removal of TVs from children's bedrooms. Research has revealed that having a TV in the bedroom is associated with greater substance use and sexual activity in teenagers.

2. Limit access by children and young adolescents to television venues with excessive substance use depictions.

3. Limit younger children's exposure to PG-13 movies and avoid R-rated movies.

4. Parents should co-view movies and TV shows with their children and teenagers and discuss the content being viewed.

5. Parents should turn off the TV during evening meals.

The so-called war on drugs has been waged for decades, yet teenagers continue to use, and abuse, a variety of substances, especially tobacco and alcohol. The contribution of the media to adolescent substance use is only recently becoming fully recognized and appreciated.

Source: “Children, Adolescents, Substance Abuse, and the Media,” Victor C. Strasburger, MD and “The Council on Communications and Media,” PEDIATRICS Vol. 126 No. 4 October 2010, pp. 791-799.

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Speak UP!

Teaching presentation skills now can give kids the edge they need

BY MONICA BROWN

Over the summer, my 16-year-old niece interviewed for a job. Afterward, she decided to call to thank the interviewer, but was absolutely panic-stricken at the thought of what to say, and how to say it.

When I asked her mother why Katie, who is extremely bright, was so tongue-tied, she replied, "All she does is text. She doesn't know how to talk anymore."

It's no secret that today's teens and tweens are the "text generation." They pride themselves on how quickly they can type and send a text. But how will they fare in job interviews as they get older? Teaching your texting kids presentation skills now can give them the edge they'll need in the business world later.

Make no mistake: this technologically advanced generation has unique challenges to face.

How do you compete in the business world when all your interaction takes place through symbols and abbreviations on a screen? When you text, tweet and e-mail all day, how can you possibly feel comfortable when it's time to give a presentation, explain a coherent thought to your boss, or ace a job interview?

Communications experts say kids who learn how to present themselves professionally may not only have a competitive edge over their peers, but may also start to experience increased levels of confidence and self-esteem.

With just a little coaching — and a whole lot of fun — even very young children can be taught eloquence and articulation, and that's a very powerful weapon in the competitive world beyond the classroom.



How to help

Here are some of the ways you can practice with your child, teaching her to feel more comfortable when she has to spend a moment in the spotlight:

- Ask your child to act like her favorite TV or movie character for a few minutes. Have her recite some lines from this show or movie, and ask her to do it several times. The child may be able to imitate several different characters, or even perform dialogue with friends or siblings (this is a great way to get all your children into the act, and teach them all at the same time!)

- Videotape this. Watch carefully for certain repetitive mannerisms that seem like nervous habits, or just absent-minded fidgeting — things like certain hand motions, or constantly saying, “you know.”

- Coach the child to move around comfortably when speaking, so she doesn't appear stiff.

- Teach her to make eye contact with different people in the room (perhaps other family members can help).

- Have her practice projecting her voice with strength and authority.

Some of the techniques listed above may indeed work best when preparing the child for a specific presentation, such as a school project. But there are other ways to continue to develop speaking skills while going through your busy day:

- Watch the news or sports with your child, pointing out the mannerisms of the anchors and reporters. They appear authoritative, and sometimes friendly. Reporters and anchors are taught to deliver the news as if they are telling a story to a friend, which is why television news writing seems conversational.

- Teach introverted children to order their own meals at a restaurant. This is a fun and simple way to teach a child to find her own voice, and to articulate her exact

needs in a “professional” manner. It's also something the child can master somewhat easily — it becomes a milestone accomplishment for her and continues to build confidence.

- Teach your child to approach adults she knows — for example, her teacher or principal — and say, “good morning.” By practicing a friendly greeting that's more than just a wave and a “hi,” kids will start to develop a habit of engaging others in “professional” communication.

- Have your child talk about a photo of a birthday party, family vacation or school activity — something that she remembers vividly. Have her write down the details on a note card, using key ideas instead of full sentences, and then ask her to present the “photo talk” to you and other members of the family. This is another fun way for her to practice articulating her thoughts and ideas without memorizing every word.

Let's face it: Technology continues to evolve everyday, and it has made our lives easier, more fun, more connected and streamlined. But our children face an uphill battle in the corporate world if they can't conduct themselves properly during a face-to-face job interview. If they can't present their thoughts and ideas verbally, how can they expect to convince a hiring manager that they are the best, most qualified applicant for the job?

Helping them improve their communication skills is something that should start now. Who knows, by breaking up all the texting with some real conversation, you might even become their new “BFF.”

Monica Brown is a cable television anchor and a mother of two, who is currently launching a public speaking program for children, teens and adults.

For more information, and more tips, she can be reached at monicaldbrown@gmail.com.

This technologically advanced generation has unique challenges to face. How do you compete in the business world when all your interaction takes place through symbols on a screen?

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The perfect fit

Finding the right NYC school for your child

BY NATANIA BLUMENKEHL

Very few parents have any idea what their options are when it comes time to start planning for their child's enrollment in school, which is why many look at school zoning when house hunting. A school like PS 321 in Park Slope, Brooklyn, can be a huge draw in a real estate ad, as the reputation and test scores of such a school act as a boon to the value of the home.

But in New York City, your zoned

on their behalf for application and acceptance.

I have been researching my options for a few years now and, as a result, my daughter attends first grade at Brooklyn School of Inquiry — the city's newest "gifted and talented" school, which opened to kindergarten and first grade students in 2009.

I had originally wanted my daughter to go to the local Sigma program, but when her test scores came back too high, I learned that there were other options I hadn't considered.

As a teacher for the Department of Education since 2001, I had no clue as to how the non-zoned public schools worked. I knew there was something more to public school options than just attending the one in my zone, but I knew no more than that. I worked down the block from the Mark Twain Middle School, another gifted and talented school in Brooklyn, but I never thought much about its admissions. Why should I? I wasn't looking for my child. But as I began to instruct in private tutoring, I soon became aware of a gifted and talented exam for middle school, and then another one for special-

ized high schools. I know this may equate to a lot of testing and a lot of pressure for kids, but isn't that just preparation for life?

Last year, I taught at a Charter School. When I told my friends and family, they all asked, "What is that?"

There are 54 Charter Schools in Brooklyn, and many more throughout the city. They are public, therefore, they are free, but they march to the beat of their own drum. Seventy five percent of their students

are funded publicly and the rest through grants and donations. They are held to stricter standards, their test scores must be higher, and their calendar year is usually longer. Their programs may be different — no gym, but, perhaps, dance, Hebrew instead of Spanish classes, and other variables. Longer days, shorter summers, more rigorous curriculum — this is all typical of a charter school. How do you get in? Lottery, not tests.

My search for options continues as my son finishes up his last year of kindergarten at a three-year Montessori school. Unfortunately, most parents stay uninformed or are too busy to do the leg work that is required when it comes time to research and advocate on behalf of their children in such a scenario. It's a good excuse, but not good enough. Because we parents don't get any guide to city schools, and the city's website doesn't give much insight into our choices, it's our obligation and privilege to be our child's academic life coach and guidance counselor. It's our job to ask and find out what lies beyond our borough's zoned school, and that doesn't mean using our cousin's best friend's address to get our child into the better neighborhood-zoned school.

Our public schools have to work for us. They can't always be the scapegoat of our children's short comings. Instead, our public schools need to be the reason why we didn't need a private school, and a consequence of our children's progress. Search your options. What Charter Schools are in your area? Is there an Eagle, Delta or Sigma program at any of your district schools? Consider signing your child up for the gifted and talented test (The deadline to apply is Nov. 17).

Resources:

nyccharterschools.org/schools.nyc.gov/Academics/GiftedandTalented/ParentResources/default.htm

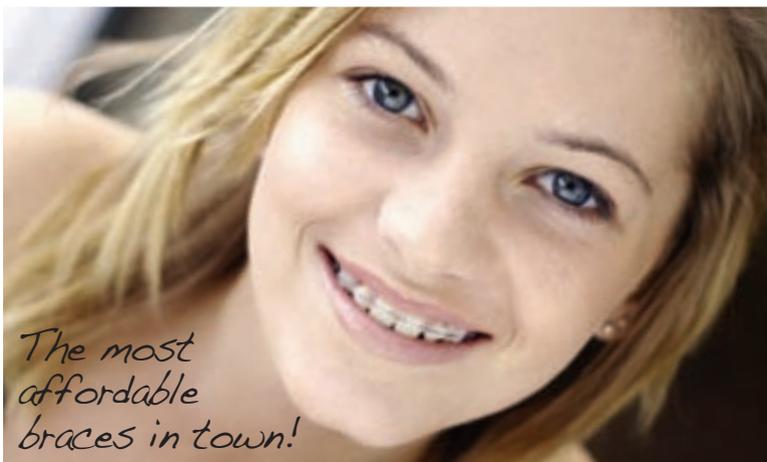
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school is one of many public school options and, unlike in suburban communities, parents in the five boroughs can choose a public school in any borough for their child to attend — even if it's not the one zoned for them.

So, you know your child, but do you know your options?

We, as parents, must make the time to explore all the public school options and deem which school will best fit our child's personality and learning style, and then advocate



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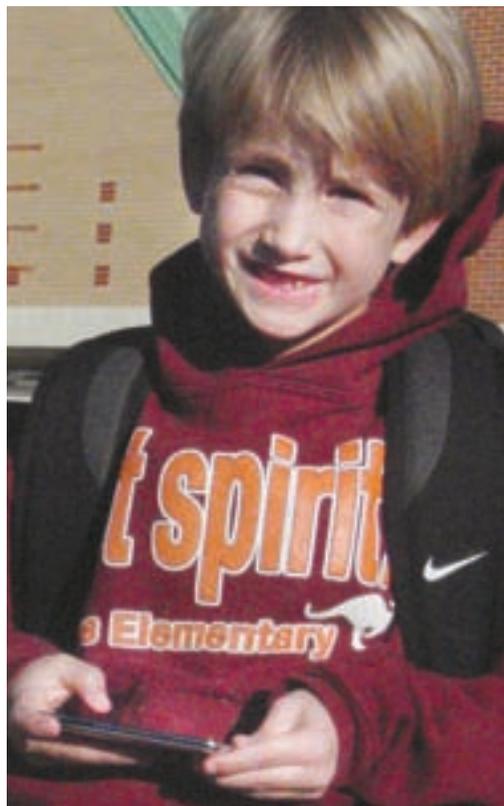
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The apps making learning easier for kids with special needs, like the developer's daughter, Mary (above).

New way to learn

A mother creates iPod apps to help her daughter learn

BY ALLISON PLITT

As the world becomes increasingly dependent on technology for day-to-day living, it is only logical that educators and parents are using computers and handheld devices to teach children. Enter a mother who aims to use technology specifically to help teach children with special needs.

Last year Margaret Ellis, a mother of two who lives in Blacksburg, Va. started her own company and created four different types of Apple iTunes applications, which include interactive books and a communication program that translates words into different languages, including sign language.

The company, called DevelopEase, is focused on using technology to help children with disabilities overcome the challenges of learning. Ellis has firsthand knowledge about the usefulness of the applications from raising her daughter, Mary, who

has disabilities resulting from a brain infection. In Aug. 2009 Mary, who is deaf and can barely communicate through speech and sign language, started using the iPod apps, which aid her verbal communication skills, giving her a sense of achievement, self-confidence and independence.

"Mary doesn't need a lot of assistance to interact with the apps," says Ellis. "If you get into an app and you make a mistake, it's really safe. The usability is really good because you can always press the home screen and go back and start over. She has a lot of success with it. Whereas, if you've experienced a game on a desktop, it's like you have to arrow out and arrow out and arrow out and you get in somewhere that you didn't mean to go and it's likely that she would enter into the wrong zone and then give up."

Anyone who owns an iPhone, iPad or iPod touch can use DevelopEase's software, which can be purchased through Apple's App Store or iTunes.

Ellis was amazed by the global response she received when she first marketed her product on the online store.

"There's people actually all over the world who are buying DevelopEase's apps. I can't see who has bought them, but I can see ... somebody just bought my app in Israel or in England or in Japan. I've even seen someone in Australia purchase one."

Although DevelopEase software is geared toward special needs children, any child can use it. At Mary's elementary school, the software has proven useful, since children with special needs are in classrooms with children who don't have disabilities. In the fall of 2009, her school, Kips Elementary School in Blacksburg, was the first school to use iPods with DevelopEase apps.

With both a B.S. in Mathematics Education and an M.S. in Computer Science from Virginia Tech, Ellis has the technological expertise to de-

velop the apps. She also taught computerscience in high school, an experience that has allowed her to creatively design software programs that teach students with a wide range of aptitudes.

“My concept is technology for differentiation. People say now more ‘UDL’ (universal design learning) and that’s saying we should have a classroom that truly represents our community,” she explained. “We should use approaches that reach all different children. There are three demographics within those classrooms that we can especially reach with technology — which are children with special needs, children who speak English as a second language and children who are gifted — because they are going to stand out as needing some extra services.”

Not only does DevelopEase create the applications, but the company also visits the classrooms and assists teachers with installing their software on iPods and implementing them into students’ curriculums.

“We go to the school and tell them how we can help them,” explains Ellis. “Then we help the teachers set-up their accounts and the iPods. Then they’ll manage them and it’s a school account.”

To teach educators and families how to use Apple’s different handheld devices, DevelopEase offers workshops that explain equipment and custom software installation.

“The bulk of DevelopEase’s work is really providing workshops and training for schools,” Ellis says. “A lot of school systems have purchased iPods or they know that they’re useful, but then the reality of the classroom teacher, of the special teacher or of the technology resource teacher, is that it’s a lot of work to get them set-up for a whole class of students to use. We essentially serve as a consultant to the schools.”

DevelopEase also designs



Apps that aid verbal communication skills and give a sense of achievement, self-confidence and independence.

case management websites where school professionals, doctors, families and other caregivers can access information about a child’s develop-

mental growth. To ensure that the information on the website is kept confidential, the company provides a password to all its users. DevelopEase can also update information on the website or train the customer to post news to the site.

Ellis observed that the portable devices seldom break in the hands of the students. One of her long-term goals is to make iPod training more accessible to communities so more people are aware of its usefulness in teaching special needs children. Currently, she lacks the funding to financially back her vision. She hopes, however, that schools will be able to receive grants and partner with her to support her research activity.

As for the future, Ellis sees the possibility of her business expanding nationally. If more people contact DevelopEase for business proposals, she envisions herself traveling more often to implement software, provide workshops to customers and create more customized applications for specific client needs.

Describing the teaching potential of iPods, Ellis believes these portable devices will profoundly change the way children learn.

“For a long time, programmers like myself, we would work on software programs, but it’s not like you could walk down the street and have it make a difference to a family. Now you know it can. It’s a real revolution in computing.”

Margaret Ellis can be contacted by e-mail at support@developease.com or by phone at (540) 552-2232. For more about DevelopEase, visit www.developease.com.



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Time: 9:45am to 12:00pm

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Time 9:30 to 12:30

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Location: 144-61 Roosevelt Ave. Flushing, NY 11354 Time: 9:45am to 12:00pm

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These workshops are made possible by a grant provided by the New York City Council, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



Special holidays

How families with special needs can have stress-free holidays

BY JULIA GARSTECKI

Tis the season of holly jolly parties and extended family visits.

Calm? Not a chance! For families that have children with a disability — however mild or severe — there is more planning that goes into a fun, peaceful holiday season. Unfamiliar cousins, culturally diverse foods, and adapting to time zones can be a challenge. The following tips just might help.

explain what they can expect to see. Answer any questions and offer any support websites if people ask.

Be sure to clear gifts ahead of time — gifts that may be inappropriate are clear to you, but may not be to the aunt who has never met your child.

Schedule

If there are medications that need to be given on schedule, make it clear to the host ahead of time so she can

be prepared. Know what routines work for your child — and stick to them as much as possible.

If your child is overactive, make sure there are places you can take her to to burn off energy. If an overtired child is prone to becoming angry and easily agitated, stick to bedtimes and routines as much as possible.

Because family at the gathering may have different bedtimes, consider keeping “quiet hours” that benefit those who are late nighters and early birds.

Then, provide quiet activities, such as coloring books, crafts, or designated favorite videos only to be watched during these hours.

Plan for success

There are some activities in which a child with a disability may not be able to participate. Always have an equally enticing option available. For example, if the disability is physical and some children are going sledding, perhaps take a trip to an aquarium or a movie, and recruit some family members to come along. If

lack of rules will keep your child feeling insecure, choose games with specific instructions that everybody will enjoy. Kids won't know what they couldn't or didn't get to do unless you make it a point to tell them. Maybe a favorite cousin or grandpa can think of something special to do with your child, like a trip to a favorite restaurant or store. One-on-one time might be just what your child needs.

Food

If your child has a severe food allergy (such as nuts), make it clear there will be no chestnut roasting. It needs to be clear to the host prior to accepting the invitation, especially if the smell of certain foods can set off a severe reaction. It is necessary to have this conversation — prior to driving 12 hours for a visit — so that everybody can agree on the menu. Offering to bring snacks you know your child can eat is a great opportunity to be a hospitable guest — and is the safest bet for your child.

• • •

Here are a few last minute tips that may help keep the holiday merry and bright:

- Bring toys and videos you know are slam dunks. If your child gets anxious, familiar objects can bring comfort.

- Ease up on rules — if possible. It is vacation!

- Don't be afraid to say no if things get stressful. With so many different families expecting to create the perfect Christmas, you might have to be Scrooge. As hard as that may be, stick with the big picture.

- Finally, accept the help other people may offer. One of the best gifts you can give and get is help. While it is easy to believe moms know best, you might be pleasantly surprised by your friends and family. This means you may have to give up control, hold your breath a little, and just see what happens. You just never know when a Christmas miracle may present itself.

Julia is a freelance writer living in western New York. Contact her at julia-garstecki@gmail.com.



Educate

You know how a change in routine or certain behaviors can act as triggers for your child. Inform relatives about your child's disability before the trip. Consider the most important information you want to share, including possible safety concerns and how the disability may affect the trip. It can be a low-key conversation with or without the child with the disability present.

Also offer age-appropriate information to the other children, and

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Continued on page 19

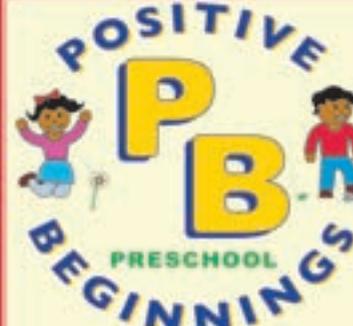


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BY DR. MARIE SURPRIS

You may have noticed that your child's grades are inconsistent, and after the usual nightly conflict, his homework is only partially done. Everyone is frustrated and you're convinced he's lazy and not meeting his full potential.

This scenario is common of a child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, one of the most common childhood

behavioral disorders, affecting the lives of nearly eight percent of school-age children and many adults. It is not a result of poor parenting, divorce or other environmental factors.

The disorder is constantly being studied and has been speculated to be a form of illness of the nervous system.

Research shows that there is some genetic predisposition, as ADHD tends to run in families.

The core symptoms of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, but not all children dis-

play all of the symptoms or to the same degree.

Gender differences

Boys, particularly, have more of the hyperactive, impulsive symptoms of ADHD. They may: interrupt, frequently call out, act without thinking, be constantly on the go, be easily frustrated, be uncooperative, not finish what they start, be disorganized, have some temper outbursts due to their unpredictable behavior, and at times, be quarrelsome.

Girls frequently have inattentive symptoms. Since they have fewer behavioral difficulties, they tend to be less recognized as a child with ADHD. Girls may: daydream and appear not to listen, be more forgetful, not meet their potential, forget homework, not follow through with tasks in a timely manner, and, at times, procrastinate or avoid tasks that require sustained mental effort.

Evaluation

Only medical doctors can diagnose and prescribe medication for your child. Clinicians and educators can help you find a doctor to do so. A comprehensive evaluation must consider the child's difficulties, prior history of treatment, medical history, academic history, family history, environment and temperament. It is also important to note the child's strengths and how he deals with his difficulties. Once the physician has completed the evaluation, he is better prepared to discuss with

the family an individualized treatment plan.

Treatment

Effective treatment may require medical, psychological and educational initiatives. It may involve a team of professionals, such as your child's teacher, a therapist, a physician and possibly others.

Medication

Some medications used to treat ADHD include: Strattera, Adderall, Ritalin, Dexedrine, Focalin — and the newest medication, which has just been FDA approved, Vyvanse.

Many risks associated with medications can be lessened by proper monitoring. It is important to discuss the risks and benefits of your child taking medication with your doctor. It is equally important to discuss the risks of your child not being treated.

Risks of untreated ADHD

If a child is not treated for ADHD, he may have continued behavioral difficulties, be rejected by peers, have poor self-esteem, fail academically, and take dangerous risks.

Teenagers may dropout of high school and have trouble furthering their education or attending college.

There is also more risk of car accidents, teenage pregnancy and criminal activity due to impulsive behaviors — and poor quality of life when risky behaviors involve drugs or alcohol.

...

On a final note, it has been my experience over the last 15 years that many children and adolescents who suffer and struggle with ADHD are pleased and relieved to finally be receiving the help that they needed in order to reach their full potential in every area of their lives.

For more information, contact Dr. Marie Surpris, a child and adolescent psychiatrist [148 Nichols Road in Nesconset, NY, (631) 467-0867]. Or visit www.drmariesurpris.com.



Special Needs

DIRECTORY

Continued from page 17

New York State Licensed Creative Arts Therapist. There are groups and classes for all children which run throughout the entire year, including summers. Mommy and Me, for newborns to 4 years old, and Creative Movement Classes for 3 to 5 years old are offered to all children. For special needs children, there are several classes, including: Movement/Play-Based Social Groups for children 3 years and older, as well as — Individual, Dyad (two children), Sibling, Parent(s) and Child Sessions. Social groups are kept small to accommodate the needs of each child. A variety of gross motor play, movement exploration, rhythmic interaction, social, sensory stimulation and relaxation activities are utilized to work on improving social interaction skills and separation anxiety, and to increase self-expression, focus, impulse control, body and self-awareness, eye contact, and self-esteem — just to name a few — all while having fun playing with friends. Call and inquire about the trial.

Life's WORC

516-741-9000 exts. 271 or 470 or www.lifesworc.org

Life's WORC is a not for profit agency that provides comprehensive services to people with developmental disabilities. Life's WORC manages 36 group homes and numerous community based programs throughout Nassau, Suffolk and Queens Counties providing much needed services to over 1,500 individuals and their families. Life's WORC mission is to provide services that facilitate an independent and productive life experience for individuals with developmental disabilities and autism. Life's WORC offers an array of supports that include Medicaid service coordination, day habilitation, recreation to include creative arts and music therapy, at home residential habilitation, school district clinical services as well as residential services. Life's WORC also provides a Community Trust that can be an effective estate planning tool for families with young or adult children with disabilities.

You can learn more about Life's WORC by visiting us on the web. You can also follow us daily on Facebook and Twitter. Please contact Life's WORC Admissions Department should you be interested in any of the services or supports Life's WORC has to offer.

New York League for Early Learning's Forest Hills West School

A Member of the YAI Network
Amanda O'Brien Principal
63-25 Dry Harbor Road
718-639-9750

NYL's Forest Hills West School provides

special education and therapeutic services to children ages 2.5-5 with special needs. Services are tailored to meet the unique needs of each child within the context of a developmentally appropriate early childhood program. A warm and nurturing atmosphere sets the stage for learning through play activities, which are incorporated into the daily routine. The goal is provide enough support so each child can reach his or her full potential. Activities that help in the development of independence and self-confidence are built into the curriculum. Each child's expanding sense of self is supported beyond the walls of the school community through neighborhood walks and field trips. Parents and family members are an integral part of the process. Parent workshops are held monthly. Support groups provide space for parents and caregivers to meet and share their experiences and concerns. The school's open door policy encourages active involvement, along with ongoing dialogue to ensure effective communication between school and home.

Positive Beginnings Preschool

71-25 Main Street, Flushing
718-261-0211
72-52 Metropolitan Avenue, Middle Village
718-326-0055
Evaluation Site: 72-60 Metropolitan Avenue, Middle Village
718-894-8400

We are preschools servicing typically developing and special education children ages 3-5. Bilingual Spanish and Hebrew classes are available.

The nurturing environment caters to children with special needs and their families to provide quality educational programs tailored to enhance the child's developmental levels.

Evaluations, Special Ed classes, Art Education; Music, Occupational, Speech, Language and Physical Therapies, are all accredited professional departments. Their commitment is to provide a safe, caring and stimulating environment, with respect for each child's culture, language, religion, and learning style.

The schools and evaluation site are centrally located and convenient to mass transit and major highways.

The Shield Institute

144-61 Roosevelt Avenue
718-939-8700 ext 1167 or www.shield.org

The Shield Institute is a longtime leader in the field of autism and other developmental disabilities. A non-sectarian agency established in 1921, it provides wide-ranging educational and sup-

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Special Needs

DIRECTORY

Continued from page 19

port services to children, adults and families of all backgrounds throughout New York. By working with families and communities, the Institute helps enable children and adults with developmental challenges to lead full, meaningful lives that include a chance to work and contribute. The Shield seeks to transform the way communities and societies understand, relate to and support citizens with developmental disabilities. By honoring diversity in values, heritages, abilities and interests, the facility helps ensure that people with disabilities enjoy the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. By working cooperatively with organized labor, they operate fair and dignified workplaces that bring added value to its mission as a human-service agency. Staff is comprised of certified licensed professionals and other expert staff offer quality educational, clinical and family support services to more than 1,600 infants, children, adults and their families throughout New York City. In the year 2000, the agency embarked on a five-year plan to establish structured teaching through The Education of Autistic and Communication

Handicapped Children (TEACCH), which incorporates the best practices in order to meet the need of each child. For further information on The Shield Institute and the TEACCH method please call or visit our website.

YAI/NYL Clearview School
123-07 22nd Avenue, College Point
16-50 Utopia Parkway, Whitestone
718-352-0104 or bcruz@yai.org and
htischenkel@yai.org

YAI/NYL Clearview School offers early childhood classes in a safe and nurturing environment. In their preschool classes, for children from age 2.6 to 4 years old, you have the flexibility of enrolling your child for 3 days or 5 days. They also have Universal Preschool Classes. Beautiful new classroom are equipped with developmentally appropriate learning materials and computers to promote proper educational and emotional development. Both schools have outdoor playgrounds. Their professional staff is always available to work with families and offer parent training and support. They also offer evaluations and services for eligible children between the ages 2.6 to 5 years old at no cost to the families.

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You say it's your birthday?

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American parents are the biggest spenders in North America when it comes to their children. It costs one third more to bring up a child in the United States than in Europe.

Italian families spend more on food and clothes but American parents top the lot on luxuries like birthday parties and holidays. I don't think this is because we're indulgent. It's no coincidence that we also work the longest hours. We have less free time to spend with our children so we make the most of it.

A whole industry has sprung up to cater for special times like birthdays, and there's no shame in using it. Whether you're a fan of small home gatherings or you're thinking of recreating Moulin Rouge in a marquee on Broadway — read our dos and don'ts of children's parties and give your child a birthday to remember.

Party pitfalls

One of the headaches is trying to anticipate what could possibly go wrong. These parents speak from experience:

- Give a child a sword and I'll show you an assassin: "I had a pirate party for Josh. One child got hit over the back of the head with a sword. I saw red pouring out and shouted, 'What are you doing with the tomato ketchup?' then realized it was blood. I spent the rest of the party at the doctor's office. The very nice parent didn't mind too much and actually apologized for ruining my son's birthday." — *Elle, mom of three*

- What time did I say it would start?: "Not once but twice I have forgotten what I put on the invitation and who I sent them to. Both times

I had to phone a mom and ask her. Now I always keep one invitation back for myself and write the guests' names on the back."

— *Jane, mom of three*

- How many guests?: "Don't invite too many children. Use your child's age as a rule of thumb; one other child at the first birthday, two friends at the second, and so on. It works well up until they're about 10."

— *Chris, mom of two*

- Be allergy aware: "I once held a party and ordered the optional extra helium balloons. As she was dropping her child off, almost as an afterthought, this mom announced her son was allergic to balloons. I wasn't sure how serious it was so I just left them at one end of the room and tried to keep the child away. It was going quite well until some bright spark started tying chocolate fingers onto the balloon strings and eating them as they bobbed about the room. Then they were all at it. I spent the rest of the party on the brink of hysteria. Ask about special diets or allergies on the invitation!"

— *Jen, mom of three*

- Don't go mad catering for the grown ups: "For Alexandra's first birthday I spent three days making yummy adult food and bought loads of booze and barbecue stuff. On the day half the people I invited didn't come with their other halves, weren't drinking and those with kids only stayed for a few hours. First timer at the children's party game—I will know better this year!"

— *Janneke, mom of one*

- Beware the party bag trap: "I must have spent a fortune on Day-glo pencils, crummy junk shop toys and penny sweets over the years.

They're a total waste of time and money. I have a new policy: one nice present for each child."

— *Sarah, mom of four*

Party food

They say you can tell what children have eaten by the way they behave. You can get away with healthy fare at a party when they're too little to argue but older children tend to be harder to tempt with anything unfried. Don't make too much food, sheer excitement means they don't actually eat much.

Don't put out the food until it's time for tea and keep sweet stuff hidden until they've eaten the meal, otherwise they fill up on sugar and go bonkers.

One mom told me that now that her children are older, they have forced her to cave on her no-sweeties rule but she draws the line at Smarties, Skittles and ice lollies. "Have you seen the stains they leave on clothing? And that would be in their tummies!" If you want to be ultra-careful, buy naturally-colored sweets from health food shops. A surprising number of children are vegetarian or aren't allowed non-organic meat. It's worth keeping most things veggie just to be on the safe side.

Main food ideas

- Pizza Muffins: English muffins split and topped with grilled tomato and cheese

- Salad Boats: Fill celery with cream cheese for the boat, place a carrot stick into the cream cheese for the mast, use half a cucumber slice for the sail.

- Quesadillas: Sandwich together two tortillas with grated cheese,

finely chopped tomato and onion and zero percent fat yogurt. Fry quickly on both sides and cut into strips.

- **Smoked Salmon Pinwheels:** Butter two slices of bread, cut crusts off, fill with cream cheese and smoked salmon. Roll up like a Swiss roll. Wrap in clingfilm and cut into rounds when the children arrive.

- **Risotto Cakes:** Take teaspoons of cooked risotto rice, roll in slices of mozzarella (rice on the inside), roll in breadcrumbs. Shallow fry, deep fry, or bake in the oven.

- **Diddy Bean Patties:** Can of kidney beans puréed, mix with chopped spring onions, grated cheese, chopped coriander and a dash of chili sauce. Form into little cakes, fry or bake, serve with sour cream, salsa or guacamole.

Sweet food ideas

You're probably not short of ideas but just in case...

- **Hot Fruit Kebabs:** pineapple, kiwi and strawberries on skewers. Whack under the grill and serve with frozen yogurt or a yogurt dipping sauce.

- **Orange Flapjacks:** Use your standard recipe but add orange zest and juice.

- **The Cake:** Avoid artificial preservatives and colorings by making your own cake. If the kitchen is not your natural stomping ground, here's a simple recipe. Tray bakes are easiest, there's only one layer, or you can make two and build a train or a castle or something if you're feeling fabulous. If the party is away from home, bake it in a tin foil tray so you can throw it away afterwards.

Entertainers

Check with parents of classmates who have a birthday around the same time. If there's a clash with another child's party the playground politics can be ugly.

- Book your entertainer 10 weeks ahead. Some people leave it four to six weeks but you might not be able to book the particular performer you want.

- 2-4 p.m. is a terrible time for a party. It swallows up the day and falls between two mealtimes. For little children 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 12-2 p.m. are best. Most of them have been up since 6 and they're too tired by the afternoon. For older children a lunchtime slot or a 3:30 or 4 p.m. start is best.

- Let the entertainer know what to expect. If there are 50 children with

accompanying parents it's not a problem but he will want to bring a PA system. Do they want a disco? Will older children want magic lessons?

- Read the confirmation letter when you receive it.

You'd be amazed how many people forget to tell their entertainer they've changed the date or venue.

- Put away all the toys. Otherwise guests think it's an Aladdin's cave.

- Remove any breakables.

- Have the games first so they work off some energy. Avoid games where lots of them will be 'out' all at once.

- Have lots of prizes for joining in. Make sure the birthday child is a winner.

- Two is too young for an entertainer. But you could have music, soft play equipment or a face painter. 3 year olds like a bit of dancing; just jumping up and down. When they're 5 and 6 they want to invite the whole class. They want more sophisticated entertainment. They're used to sitting down and listening so they can concentrate but if they've been locked up in school all day they'll be desperate to let off steam. You've got to accommodate that.

- Try to avoid mixing home and school friends. If you have lots of friends outside school, have a separate family party for them.

- You don't need chairs. Furniture is for grown ups, children sit on the floor. If you don't have enough chairs you can always have a picnic in the kitchen with a pizza delivery and juice boxes, not cups.

- Decide ahead where you will put bags and coats. Shoes on or off?

- Have a glass of wine with your girlfriends. Relax and enjoy watching the children—they can be so funny. If there are lots of adults, stay in another room.



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The Birthday Zone

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they have a jungle gym, an arcade and all kinds of theme parties too. They only do one party at a time and have a full catering menu for your adult guests. Just sit back and relax and let them do all the work for you. Call now to reserve your party.

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Continued on page 26



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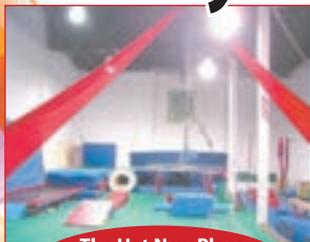
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Party

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www.kidsshape.com

Kids 'N Shape is located in a brand new facility with an air conditioned gym and provides a recreational program that emphasizes fun and fitness for campers ages 3-11. Classes include soccer, basketball, gymnastics, baseball, arts & crafts, karate, music, lacrosse and special events. Equipment such as moonwalk, ball pit, cable ride and air hockey are provided. Licensed teachers and experienced counselors provide a safe environment. Daily snacks and t-shirts are provided.

The Kids Fun House

62-73 Fresh Pond Rd, Ridgewood
718-418-KIDS (5437) or www.kidsfunhouse.com

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Kidz Yoga

27-14 23rd Avenue, Astoria
347-455-3661 or www.kidzyoga.com

Kidz Yoga is designed to help young peo-

ple counter pressures, release stress, pay attention to how they feel, and build focus and concentration. Children are learning techniques to help their bodies become stronger, healthier, and more relaxed. Starting a healthy lifestyle early will help benefit their future. We also offer a variety of birthday parties, tutoring, Mommy, Music & Me classes, Capoeira, Zumba, and various adult classes! Come see our beautiful, brand new facility!!

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108-10 72nd Ave. 2nd Floor, Forest Hills
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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

Websites that help save on holidays

Every family has to figure out a holiday spending strategy. Negotiate a price limit on gifts, or max out credit cards to be sure everyone's wish comes true? Make creative homemade gifts, or give open-ended gift cards? Cover holiday costs with a year-end bonus check, or put a little in a savings account each month? Give modestly to family and generously to charity, or vice versa?

No matter how you answer these

sources. The great thing about this website is that it includes taxes and shipping so there are no surprises at checkout.

Get gift cards at a discount

Sites like Giftcardrescue.com offer discounts of up to 30 percent on gift cards other people didn't want. Even if you don't want to re-gift these cards, you can use them for your own shopping. The site also buys unwanted gift cards which might come in handy after the holidays.

Find a coupon

The number of websites offering coupons has exploded — and so has the number of ways to use them. Look for print-and-clip coupons at Coupon.com and check Couponcabin.com for website discount codes. Try Cellfire.com to retrieve on-the-go coupons with your cellphone.

Find local deals

Sign up at Groupon.com to get regular e-mails about discounts available from businesses in your community — everything from laser tag to clothing stores, cupcakes to sushi. The catch is that deals are only activated when a certain number of people sign up, so you may want to share this site with friends. Groupons can also be given as gifts.

Stay loyal

Many stores offer discounts to people who register for a customer card. Shortcuts.com allows you to load coupons directly onto the card. Then, when you're at the store, you don't have to search frantically for the diaper coupon that you know you had when you left the house. Discounts appear as soon as you swipe your card.

Sell old to buy new

If the latest tech gadget is the most important thing on your child's list, consider selling tech gadgets

that were the must-have last year or the year before. Wireflytradeins.com tells you exactly how much you can get for old video games, cellphones and other electronic paraphernalia.

Make it your treat

Taking friends and family out for holiday meals is expensive — unless you know about Restaurant.com, a website that offers substantial discounts on restaurant cards. Find local eateries with a zip code search. Cards are discounted as much as 60 percent, though you should read the fine print. Some restaurants have a minimum order. Some exclude specific days or times, and most include a gratuity of 18 percent.

Consider rentals

Whether you are throwing a special party or attending one, you may save if you rent instead of buying what you need. Wearthodaygonetomorrow.com rents designer dresses for a fraction of what they cost. Partypop.com has a comprehensive state-by-state directory of rental services — as well as anything else you might need to make a party memorable.

Keep a clear head

One last tip: don't obsess about getting rock bottom prices on everything. With all the websites offering last chance deals, that's a sure way to make a crazy season even crazier. Instead, remember that the spending you do at the holidays is never an end in itself. It's simply one — of many — ways to celebrate a special time of year. Sing your favorite songs. Share your favorite stories. Hug your favorite people. At this time of year, the best things in life really can be free.

Carolyn Jabs, MA, has been writing about families and the Internet for over 15 years. She is the mother of three computer-savvy kids. Other Growing Up Online columns appear on her website www.growing-up-online.com.

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questions, one thing is certain — everyone is happy about making the holiday budget stretch a little further. Knowing you got the most out of every dollar is a little gift for yourself in December — and in January when the bills come due. Here are nine websites that will help you spend less on making merry — plus a bonus website that will help you keep your budget intact.

Compare prices

You know what you want to buy, but what should it cost? Put any product into Google.com/products and you'll get a list of how much things cost at local, as well as online,



Dating and the single parent

Romance is complicated — especially with kids at home

BY CANDI SPARKS

Dating can be complicated — singles often need the help of friends, family, and, perhaps, a professional to help sort things out. Dating can be even more complicated when you or your potential dates have children.

For just one moment, forget that you're a parent and think about yourself. This can be hard, especially for a custodial parent, since so much time and energy goes into raising kids.

If you are thinking about getting back on the dating scene, it helps to use your free

 time during the week to go out and meet people. Think about what it is you want out of life, and then go out and get it.

They say that misery loves company — but no one really wants to date or even befriend a miserable person, so do the things that make you happy.

Here's how single parents can keep their priorities straight while navigating the tricky world of dating:

Make time for yourself

The kids may keep you busy, but make sure to remember that you need some “me” time.

“You have to remember to make time for yourself; to be around other adults and to do adult things,” says Mario, a widower raising kids in Astoria.

He says his schedule is so jam-packed sometimes that all he can do is meet his love interests for coffee and conversation, but says that most of the women he dates are understanding.

“But I also let them know that I am ready for a serious relationship, if the right one comes along.”

Good for Mario — he is meeting potential mates, knows what he wants and has a plan that doesn't interfere with his parenting to make it happen.



Have fun

What do you want out of life this week — to make it to the gym? It could be that your true love is waiting for you there. Keeping your commitments to do things for yourself will help you to find a relationship that might work for you. Even better if you are doing things that you love, because it gives that special someone a chance to meet you when you are happy. Things are likely to go better when you are enjoying life, because the law of attraction is working in your favor. People that are happy attract more happy people to themselves.



Keeping your commitments to do things for yourself will help you to find a relationship that might work for you.

Volunteer

If you are looking for a friendship based on mutual interests that might go somewhere, a connection through a group activity or volunteering might work.

Bronx resident Linda says she met her husband at the perfect time.

"When I wasn't looking. It was the furthest thing from my mind," she says. The couple met doing volunteer work for an environmental organization in New York and has been married for what Linda calls, "The best 12 years of my life."



Online dating

According to statistics, about 20 million people have been to a dating site at least once. In looking for love, it can be nerve-racking to create a profile, but it is an important piece of getting people to react and want to meet you in person.

Dating sites like SingleParent.com are specifically for single parents.

A positive attitude, intelligence and high self-esteem are key in getting dates.

The online dating site eHarmony celebrated its 10 year anniversary in 2010 and reported on average, 540 eHarmony couples get married every day, up from 90 couples per day in 2006.

Most men using the site say that they are looking for a woman who appreciates them "for who they are and who's not going to try to change them," says Greg Waldorf, the company's CEO.

Women, apparently, are looking to find men who are dependable, reliable and good communicators — someone who tells the truth.

"You tend to find those things, interestingly, no matter where you travel, no matter where you go...I can say this based on [research from] Asian countries, North America, South America... these are really universal qualities," says Waldorf.

However, there is always a risk in meeting someone in person when the relationship started online. Be on the lookout for scam artists and people that want to meet offline too quickly. It is better to use the dating site as a buffer to keep from giving out your personal information too soon. According to OKCupid — Google of online dating — height is one of the top three things American men lie about on online dating sites, while women are more likely to lie about their weight and build.

Ultimately, dating is not up to the children and is not about the children. But, if you are a single parent looking for long-term love, it may be better to mingle with people who have kids, want kids, or don't mind if you have kids. Kids can be a deal breaker, even for those skilled in the art of finding love.

Candi Sparks is the author of the "Can I Have Some Money?" book series. You can follow her on Twitter and Facebook as Candi Sparks (writer).

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Consider foster care adoption

Give a child
a safe and
loving home

BY RITA SORONEN

Adoption: More than half of all Americans have been touched by it and 30 percent have considered it as a way to create or expand their families.

Inter-country adoption and domestic infant adoption are two typical ways for families to move from consideration of adoption to action. Yet for many, the notion of foster care adoption can feel too difficult with many unknowns and continues to be burdened by negative myths and misconceptions.

When Dave Thomas, the iconic founder of Wendy's, created the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption in 1992, he insisted that we generate a laser-like focus on the most special of children — children in the foster care system who are waiting for adoptive homes. As an adoptee, he understood the complexities of the systems and, most important, the needs of children waiting to be adopted in the United States.

"These children are not someone else's responsibility," he often said, "they are our responsibility."

During the past 18 years, the foundation has successfully increased both the awareness of this cause and the need for qualified, well-sup-

ported foster and adoptive parents. We know that there are children who need families and that there are families who want to adopt. It is our job to bring the two together.

Misconceptions about adoption:

- It is too expensive to adopt. In reality, foster care adoption is not expensive, typically averaging nothing to \$1,500, and financial support is available to families who adopt from foster care. Subsidies follow most of the children in foster care until they are 18 years old, many employers provide adoption benefits, federal and state tax credits are available and assistance for college expenses of older youth is increasingly available.

- Children in foster care are juvenile delinquents. Nothing could be further from the truth. Children enter the foster care system through no fault of their own, and as a result of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. More than half of the children waiting in foster care for adoptive homes are age 8 or older, and nearly 30 percent are age 12 or older. Unfortunately, each year about 20 percent of the children waiting to be adopted turn age 18 and leave the system without families. These are the children who may fall back into the system without the supports needed to grow and thrive. These children deserve our best efforts to find them the families we promised when they were permanently separated from their families of birth.

- The biological parents can try to have the children returned. Once a child has been made legally free for adoption, birth parents cannot claim a child or petition for his or her return. Foster care adoption is permanent.

The adoptive parents may decide to maintain contact with the child's extended biological family, based on what is best for the child, but that is a choice of the adoptive family.

- Single individuals cannot adopt. Unmarried individuals are legally able to adopt in all 50 states. Nearly 30 percent of the children adopted from foster care last year were adopted by single parents.

Additionally, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption provides free resources to help families navigate the foster care adoption process and assure that every child can have their birthright — a family of their own.

True stories

"I dreamed and hoped for a mommy and a daddy, and a good mommy and daddy, too."

— Tyler, age 6

"There are so many children whose lives are broken when they are born, so we looked into adoption. All of our girls have been the biggest joys in our life. In a grander way than we imagined possible. It is our greatest hope that they will grow up knowing they are loved and have opportunities."

— Cecilia B.

"The plan was to get married and have a family, but everything didn't happen that way. We considered foster care adoption but we were afraid, afraid of the process and how difficult it might be. After meeting a family who adopted four siblings, we realized a large family is what we hoped for someday, too. Once we were certified to adopt, we received a call about two sisters who were at risk for being separated and needed a permanent home. We said, 'There is a reason they have been

Facts at a glance

- 463,000: Children are in US foster care as a result of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment
- 114,000: Children in foster care waiting to be adopted
- Eight: The average age of a child waiting to be adopted
- Four and a half: The number of years a child waits to be adopted
- 30,000: Annually, the number of children who turn 18 and leave the foster care system without a family



together through everything and we are going to keep them together.' They called us Mom and Dad from the very first meeting. It was just the confirmation that they were going to be our family. It was love at first sight for us. It was a miracle for them to come and be a part of our lives."

— *Charlie and Robin R.*

"After adopting our 10-year-old daughter from foster care, I remember the first time I ever received a gift as a mom. It was a locket that said 'Mom' on it. When I opened the card, it said, 'I am so happy I finally have a forever mother.' And she signed it, 'Love, your daughter.' It was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. We now have two beautiful daughters and it is the best thing that ever happened. I couldn't ask for anything more." — *Sheri M.*

Ten steps to adopt

"A Child is Waiting: A Step By Step Guide to Adoption," a free handbook provided by the foundation, helps to clarify the terminology, responds to frequently asked questions, and

guides potential adoptive parents through 10 steps to adopt, including:

- Decide what type of adoption to pursue: do some self-research and understand adoption and your willingness to accept, love and commit unconditionally and permanently to a child.

- Learn about the cost to adopt and the resources available to assist with the expenses, including adoption subsidies, tax credits and employer benefits; adopting from foster care costs very little.

- Investigate and select an adoption agency: research public and private agencies to understand their processes, policies and practices.

- Work with the adoption agency to complete an application and any required paperwork, attend meetings and orientation sessions, network with other adoptive parents and ask questions.

- Complete a home study and any required adoption preparation classes; learn as much as you can about the dynamics of adoption, childhood development and the spe-

cial issues and experiences of children in foster care.

- Begin the matching process with a child or sibling group of children, determine what age child you are looking for and how flexible you are in growing your family, learn as much as you can about the child and background of the children with whom you are matched.

- Prepare for the child's arrival: amend health insurance policies, obtain original birth certificates, secure new Social Security numbers, finalize school enrollment, negotiate adoption subsidies, make your home child-friendly and support children already in the home.

- Bring the child home: petition the court to adopt, understand the legal process and work with the adoption agency.

- Finalize the adoption in court: adoption is a legal process and the beginning of your new family — celebrate!

- Take advantage of post-adoption services and resources, from parent support groups and professional ser-

vices to employer-based benefits.



We remain committed to three core beliefs: That every child deserves to live in a safe, loving and permanent home; no child should linger in foster care or leave the system at age 18 without a permanent family; and every child is adoptable.

Most important, we believe that these children are not someone else's responsibility. They are our responsibility.

Rita Soronen is the executive director of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. The Foundation is a national nonprofit public charity dedicated to dramatically increasing the adoptions of the more than 150,000 children waiting in North America's foster care systems. Created by Wendy's® founder Dave Thomas, who was adopted, the foundation implements results-driven national signature programs, foster care adoption awareness initiatives and research-based advocacy efforts. As the only foundation dedicated exclusively to foster care adoption, we are driven by Dave's simple value: Do what's best for the child.



LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Can you be seen with your teen?

OK, maybe we're not quite as cool as Robert Pattinson or Beyoncé, but most of us think we're pretty with it — until our teens tell us otherwise. So, we start to doubt our level of “cool.” It's hard not to when you're told you are completely out of touch several times a week. Apparently, we're not “all that,” and to be seen with the likes of one of us is a horror. Should we take this personally? What is it about teens that makes them pretend they don't have parents when other teens are around?

The public scene

Your teen is trying to assert his independence.

“Most adolescents are busy negotiating their own autonomy,” explains Josh Kellman, MD, a clinical associate with the University of

Chicago Medical Center. “However, this is not done in isolation. Autonomy from parents is developed in the world of peer relations. Teens tend to safeguard their peer world from invasion by their parents.”

In other words, your teen's attempts to become independent from you, including wanting to go solo in public, are part of a typical stage in his social-emotional development.

Teens strive to become independent from their parents in every possible way. They become acutely aware of how others, especially their peers, perceive them as they desperately try to fit in. They want to be sure their peers deem them “grown-up,” because this is the ultimate goal. So, it is natural for them to want to keep their peer environment separate from their family life, where parents most likely still view them as young people who have an awful lot to learn.

Keep your cool

For many parents, it is sometimes difficult to realize that their teens don't want them around all the time — particularly in public! Just recently, an acquaintance told me that her teen pretended she did not see her in the mall. She told her daughter afterward that she had planned to give her some extra money, hoping this would encourage her daughter to acknowledge her in the future.

Should parents feel slighted if their teen doesn't want to go to the mall or to the movies with them anymore?

“Parents should not feel slighted,” says Kellman. “It is typical and developmentally appropriate for teens to be embarrassed of their parents.”

Kellman encourages parents to strike a balance. He suggests that parents try not to be too invasive.

“On the other hand, parents must be themselves, and need not bend over backwards to accommodate their teen's wish for them to disappear,” he cautions.

Try to remember what it was like

when you were a teenager. You felt a little awkward bumping into a group of your peers if you had your parents in tow, even if you weren't adverse to going places with them.

They'll get over it!

You may have noticed your friend's or neighbor's college-age kids come around — proof positive that this will be a transient phase.

“As autonomy becomes more secure in late adolescence and early adulthood, kids usually settle into a more comfortable tolerance — even sometimes enjoyment of their parents in public situations,” Kellman explains.

He gives the example of parent weekend at college. He says parents often take kids out to dinner with their friends and that this is “secretly, or even openly, welcomed by the child.”

Your teens will be welcoming you into their public life again soon. In the meantime, find a way to enjoy their activities and interests without being too overbearing. Just chalk it up to another tightrope walk in this daunting task of parenting a teenager!

Tips and tales

“Even if they say you don't need to go to an event, go anyway. They will know that you care about what they are doing.”

Barbara Marrine, FDR High School Principal, Hyde Park, NY

“Send them with their friend's parents!”

Michelle Mills Boye, Woodstock, NY

Share your ideas

Upcoming topic:

How do you handle your teen's mood swings?

Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to: myrnahaskell@gmail.com, or visit <http://home.roadrunner.com/~haskellfamily/myrna/>

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer and columnist specializing in parenting issues and children's development. She is the mother of two teenagers.



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NEW WORLD STAGES

Yoga for children

Yoga can help your child in more ways than you think

BY MARY CARROLL WININGER

If your little tot is too rambunctious, suffering from low self-esteem, or stressed out, she could benefit from yoga.

Today, yoga has become so widespread that children as young as 3 are enjoying the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of yoga — whether in group sessions at a local training center or in their very own gym class.

Some adults, however, are some-

never-ending roster of after-school activities, endlessly chirping electronic devices and overextended parents all add up to stressed out young people. More and more, even the littlest kids are turning to yoga as a way to relax and look inward. With one of the main tenets of yoga being “let it go,” children gradually learn, both by focusing on various poses and concentrating on their breathing, they can remain calm and centered in difficult situations throughout the day. Yoga allows children to be radiant beings in a hurry-up world.

Yoga has also been shown to slow down the hyperactive and attention-deficit child. By satisfying their craving for movement, yoga helps children burn through their excess energy in a positive way. Yoga classes for any child do not tend to revolve exclusively around sitting still and breathing deeply.

“Kids’ yoga is totally different from a traditional yoga class,” says Kaity Moreira, co-owner of Bamboomoves, a yoga center for children and adults in Forest Hills, Queens. “Sometimes we don’t even stay on our yoga mats!”

Most yoga teachers for this age group mix the venerable practice of yoga with a combination of games and

songs that teach kids about the natural world around them.

“We are always in a circle and we’ll do multiple activities in the time we are together,” says Moreira. “Sometimes we go on a yoga adventure traveling all over the world using our imaginations and poses to express different places, animals, or ideas.”

Yoga does not try to squash children’s silly side: little yogis are encouraged to hiss while in the cobra pose, and moo and meow in the cow and cat poses. Moreira also sometimes has her students try to balance peacock feathers on their fingers and noses in order to develop focus — with varying degrees of success.

Yoga does, however, breed some stillness. Instructors report that certain poses cause children to feel empowered and in control — the tree and warrior poses, in particular, build a child’s confidence when instructors remind children of what the poses mean: “still and strong like a tree” or “open and fearless like a warrior.”

“To be honest, we were not sure that kids could really have the attention span,” said Andrew Tanner, co-owner of Bamboomoves. “Our youngest students quickly proved us wrong.”

Of course, yoga helps improve strength and flexibility. Children become more aware of their own bodies, have better self-control, and develop coordination through yoga, and many instructors have witnessed first-hand that children’s motor skills, balance, posture and concentration improved as they practiced yoga.

One mother noticed her young son doing the downward facing dog position around their house after taking classes at a local center. Both his flexibility and self-esteem had improved.

Teachers report that students get most excited when they finally master a difficult pose, noting that the kids will run out of class to tell their parents that they did their first headstand.

Best of all, this newfound sense of strength and coordination comes from a non-stressful, non-competitive physical activity.

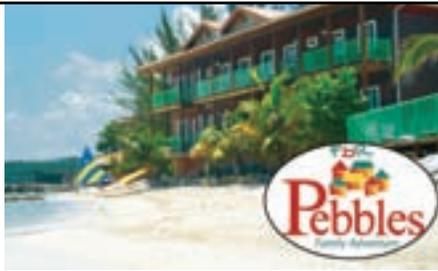
With some encouragement and patience on the part of instructors, yoga can help children to trust in their inner-selves, and bring their inner light to the surface.



what wary: isn’t the idea of a group of kindergartners in the lotus position a bit precocious? Isn’t a practice as complex and profoundly spiritual as yoga a little ... advanced for wee ones?

Not at all, say some experts. The modern world is filled with pressures and constraints on children: the nightly grind of homework, a

Cedarwood cottages with delightful junior suites on 600' of white sand beach only 30 minutes from Montego Bay airport. Pebbles is the perfect choice for a family holiday spiced with adventure. For the small ones a full time Vacation Nanny is assigned to take care of everything from diapers to shell hunts. Full games center with Xbox and GameCube for teens. For adults, all inclusive means sailing, camping out, tennis, soccer, scuba; reggae music, Jamaican, Italian and Continental Cuisine; all drinks; complete kids, teens & preteens program, native shows, free WiFi property wide.



For the small ones a full time Vacation Nanny is assigned to take care of everything from diapers to shell hunts. Full games center with Xbox and GameCube for teens. For adults, all inclusive means sailing, camping out, tennis, soccer, scuba; reggae music, Jamaican, Italian and Continental Cuisine; all drinks; complete kids, teens & preteens program, native shows, free WiFi property wide.



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Going Places

LONG-RUNNING

Support Group: Mid-Island Y JCC, 45 Manetto Hill Road; 516-822-3535 X 326; www.miyjcc.org; Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 am – 2 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 24.

Shabbat Respite program provides a supportive and nurturing environment for your loved one who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease or early onset dementia including socialization, cognitive stimulation activities, art therapy and more. Led by licensed social workers, coffee tea and a nutritious kosher lunch provided. To schedule an appointment or additional information call Doreen.

Support Group: Central Queens YM&WYHA, 67-09 108th St. at 67th Road; (718) 268-5011 X500; Dstar @ cqjcc.org. www.cqjcc.org.

Cancer survivors discuss exercise, movement limitation issues, core strengthening, resistance training and aerobic activity. Pre-registration required.

Race to the End of the Earth:

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5100; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–5:45 pm; Now – Sun, Jan. 2, 2011; Donations suggested.

The exhibit recounts the most stirring tales of Antarctic exploration: the contest to reach the South Pole in 1911-1912. Highlights include photographs, paintings, and rare historical artifacts as well as actual items of clothing and tools; life-sized models of portions of Amundsen's and Scott's base camps; and a diorama featuring the largest of all penguin species alive today, the emperor penguin. There are also interactive and hands-on activities for all ages.

Friendship Group: Friedberg JCC, 15 Neil Ct. at Fireman's Memorial Drive; (516) 766-4341; www.friedberg.org; Daily, 2–3 pm; Now – Thurs, Dec. 30; Call for Fees.

Middle school students with disabilities swim in the indoor pool, hang out in the renovated teen lounge and participate in exciting art projects.

Fear Fest: 1303 Round Swamp Rd. (646) 896-9071; Fridays – Sundays, 7 pm–midnight, Now – Sun, Oct. 31; \$12 (\$20 RIP).

Experience fear like never before. Wander through halls of desire, hear the sounds on the wind, fevered moans, and plaintive cries in the night. Come and visit if you dare. Not recommended for



Red, rhythm & rhyme

November is a great month to see "Red," as "Little Red Riding Hood" gets re-imagined like never before by the World Dance Theatre.

"Little Red: A Fairy Tale in Rhythm and Rhyme," comes to Queens Theatre in the Park on Nov. 13.

The dance troupe brings the classic fairy tale to new life through international dances from Ireland, Canada, Argentina

and the United States. The show will also feature live musical accompaniment.

It promises to be an engaging experience for all ages.

"Little Red: A Fairy Tale in Rhythm and Rhyme" at Queens Theatre in the Park [Flushing Meadows Corona Park, entrance at 56th Avenue and 111st Street in Flushing, (718) 760-0064], Nov. 13 at 11 am and 1 pm. Tickets \$12. For info, visit www.queens theatre.org.

young children.

Haunted Firehouse: Valley Stream Fire Department, Brooklyn Ave. (516) 56101777; Fridays and Saturdays, 7–11 pm, Now – Sun, Oct. 31; \$10 (\$5 for children under 12).

Fireman and community volunteers get together to scare your pants off.

"Dracula the Musical": Theater Three, 412 Main Street; 631-928-9100; Thursday, Oct. 28, 8 pm; Friday, Oct. 29, 8 pm; Saturday, Oct. 30, 8 pm; \$15–\$28.

For mature audiences.

"One Ride": Queens Theatre in the

Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; Box Office 718-760-0064; Administration 718-760-0686; www.queens theatre.org; Friday, Oct. 29, 8 pm; Saturday, Oct. 30, 2 pm; Sunday, Oct. 31, 2 pm; Wednesday, Nov. 3, 8 pm; Thursday, Nov. 4, 2 pm; Friday, Nov. 5, 2 pm; Saturday, Nov. 6, 8 pm; Sunday, Nov. 7, 2 pm; \$34 - \$40.

Dance musical from the creators of Swango.

Sleeping Beauty: The John W. Engeman Theater, 250 Main Street; (631) 261-2900; www.engeman theater.com; Saturdays, 11 am, Sundays, 10 am, Now

Submit a listing

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

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

– Sun, Oct. 31; \$15.

Children's classic Grimm's fairy tale.

Pumpkin pickin': Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. 718-347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am–4 pm, Now – Sun, Oct. 31; \$4 (\$5, Maze for adults; \$3 children).

Pumpkins priced according to size.

The Amazing Maize Maze: Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. 718-347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am–4 pm, Now – Mon, Nov. 1; \$8 (\$5, children and group rates).

"Little Red Riding Hood": Galli Theater, 38 West 38th St. between Fifth and Sixth avenues; (212) 810-6485; newyork@galli-group.com; www.gallitheaterny.com; Saturdays and Sundays, 3 pm, Now – Sun, Oct. 31; \$20 (\$15 children 2-17).

Children three and up will enjoy the classic Grimm's fairytale. Workshop to follow performance.

Training Group: The Animal Medical Center, 510 East 62nd St. (854)-230-6406; rsilverman@guidingeyes.org; www.volunteer.guidingeyes.org; Free.

Guiding Eyes for the Blind seeks volunteers to foster future guide dog puppies. All training, support and veterinary expenses are provided free of charge. Pre-placement classes are held at the Dog Spa in Chelsea at 32 West 25th Street. Required weekly raiser classes are held on Sunday evenings at the Center. Call for specific location & time.

Storytime: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpk at Utopia Parkway; (718) 380-7077; www.bn.com; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 am & 7 pm, Now – Thurs,

Going Places

Dec. 30; Free.

Children enjoy stories and a cookie break.

Support Group: Parkway Community Church, 95 Stewart Ave.; (516)-395-8303; Wednesdays, 7:30 pm, Now – Wed, Dec. 29; \$7.

A dynamic discussion and support group for 40 plus individuals, who are widowed, divorced or single.

“The Bikinis”: Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; Box Office 718-760-0064; Administration 718-760-0686; www.queenstheatre.org; Thursday, Dec. 2, 2 pm; Friday, Dec. 3, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 4, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 5, 3 pm; Friday, Dec. 10, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 11, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 12, 3 pm; \$34-\$40.

A musical beach party.

SUN, OCT. 31

Halloween festival: Bowne Park, 32nd Ave. and 155th Street; (718) 932-0800; 11 am–4 pm; Free.

Candy, face painting, pony rides and music.

Boo at the Zoo: Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; queenszoo.com; 11 am–4 pm; \$6 (\$2 children).

Children enjoy face-painting, trick or treating, pumpkin-decorating, and a haunted habitat.

Pumpkin Chucking: Noon–4 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Oct. 30.

Pumpkin Patch: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 1–3 pm; \$10.

Activities for the kids and pumpkin painting.

Haunted Halloween: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtownhall.org; 2 pm; \$8 (\$6, \$4 children).

Celebrate the traditions of Day of the Dead, Halloween, and All Saints Day with arts and crafts and treats.

Ghost Night at Louis Armstrong House: Louis Armstrong House Museum, 34-56 107th Street; (718) 478-8274; 4–7 pm; Free with museum admission.

Kids and families enjoy face painting, collage-making, and house tours conducted by costumed tour guides. If your kids dresses up as Louis Armstrong, there's a chance to win the book “A Good Night for Ghosts.”

Fright flight: Alley Pond Park Adventure Center, Winchester Blvd. and Grand Central Parkway; (718) 217-4685; www.nycgovparks.org; 4–6 pm; Free.

Children 8 and up enjoy a spooktacular evening. Registration required.



Sing along with Auntie

“Life is a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death,” says Auntie Mame in the classic Broadway musical that bears her name, coming to the Bay Terrace Jewish Center just in time for the holidays.

The musical, based on the book by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee [no, not that Robert E. Lee!], with music and lyrics by Jerry Herman, features over 30 actors, with

Jean Ann Kump in the lead as the irrepressible Auntie Mame and Isabel Robin as young Patrick.

Come sing along with favorites “Open A New Window,” “It’s Today” and “Mame.”

Showtimes are Nov. 6, 13 and 20 at 8 pm and on Nov. 7, 14 and 21 at 3 pm.

Bay Terrace Jewish Center [13-00 209th St. in Bayside, (718) 428-6363], Saturday-Sunday, Nov. 6–21. Tickets, \$18 (\$16 for seniors and kids).

Haunted House: Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. 718-347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; 4–7 pm; \$4 (\$2 hayrides).

For children four to 12.

Halloween Tour: 6:30 pm. Fort Totten. See Saturday, Oct. 30.

MON, NOV. 1

Boo at the Zoo: 11 am–4 pm. Queens Zoo. See Sunday, Oct. 31.

SAT, NOV. 6

“Mame”: Bay Terrace Jewish Center, 13-00 209th Street; (718) 428-6363;

8 pm; \$18 (\$16 seniors and children 12 and under).

Sing along to “Open A New Window,” “It’s Today,” “Mame” and “We need a Little Christmas.”

“Dances with Dinosaurs”: Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; Box Office 718-760-0064; Administration 718-760-0686; www.queenstheatre.org; 8 pm; Free.

Wacky farce about the worst Thanksgiving ever.

SUN, NOV. 7

“Mame”: 3 pm. Bay Terrace Jewish Center. See Saturday, Nov. 6.

Nature Know-it-all: Fort Totten, Fort Totten; (718) 352-1769; 11 am; Free.

Children enjoy a game show-style trivia. For children five and older.

Classical Concert: Lefrak Concert Hall at Queens College, Exits 23 and 24 eastbound service road of LIÉ; www.kupferbergCenterArts.org. 2 pm; \$15-\$36.

Chamber orchestra performs Handel’s Concerto Gross Op. 6, No. 11; Bartok’s Divertimento for String Orchestra and Barber’s Adagio for Strings.

MON, NOV. 8

Open Mic: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpk. at Utopia Turnpike; (718) 380-7077; 7:30 pm; Free.

Share your original works and listen to aspiring poets with Susan Yang.

FRI, NOV. 12

Book reading: Nassau County Museum of Art, One Museum Dr. at Northern Blvd. Route 25A; (516) 484-9337; www.nassaumuseum.org. 4 pm; \$10 (\$8 seniors and \$4 students and children 4-12).

“Beastly Feasts” by author Robert Forbes is on the menu.

SAT, NOV. 13

“Mame”: 8 pm. Bay Terrace Jewish Center. See Saturday, Nov. 6.

“Little Red” A Fairy Tale in Rhythm and Rhyme”: Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; Box Office 718-760-0064; Administration 718-760-0686; www.queenstheatre.org; 11 am and 1 pm; \$12.

World Dance Theatre revives the classic with a new twist.

“Little Red-A Fairy Tale in Rhythm and Rhyme”: Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; Box Office 718-760-0064; Administration 718-760-0686; www.queenstheatre.org; 11 am and 1 pm; \$12.

Classic tale with modern twist.

Concert: Tsidii: Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; Box Office 718-760-0064; Administration 718-760-0686; www.queenstheatre.org; 2 pm; Free.

Features the music of Odetta, Nina Simone and Miriam Makeba.

Tsidii: To the Rising Sun: Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; Box Office 718-760-0064; Administration 718-760-0686; www.queenstheatre.org; 2 pm; Free.

Tony Award-nominee for “The Lion King,” and the voice of “Circle of Life,” Tsidii performs a dazzling concert.

Continued on page 40

Going Places

Continued from page 39

"Postmortem": Houghton Hall Theater at Trinity Episcopal Church, 130 Main St. (631) 732-2926; www.minstrel-players.org; 8 pm; \$15 (\$12 children and seniors).

Whodunnit mystery.

SUN, NOV. 14

"Mame": 3 pm. Bay Terrace Jewish Center. See Saturday, Nov. 6.

David Gonzalez: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtowhall.org; 1 pm; \$6 (non-members) \$3 children.

"Stories Are Gifts".

"Postmortem": 3 pm. Houghton Hall Theater at Trinity Episcopal Church. See Saturday, Nov. 13.

SAT, NOV. 20

"Mame": 8 pm. Bay Terrace Jewish Center. See Saturday, Nov. 6.

Thanksgiving stories: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpk. at Utopia Turnpike; (718) 380-7077; 11 am; Free. Themed holiday activities.

Composting: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 11 am-1 pm; \$5.

Learn the ins and outs of indoor worm composting. Registration required.

Origami Zoo with Dr. Chou: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern

Reach the roach

Martina the Little Roach is coming to the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater for a holiday visit on Nov. 20 and 21 at 3 pm.

La Cucarachita Martina (Martina, the Little Roach) comes to life through the use of colorful bunraku puppetry designed by Puerto Rican master puppeteer Jose Lopez and tells the story of a the little roach who, in her journey towards finding love, finds happiness and friendship. In English and Spanish.

Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, [304 W 47th St. in Manhattan, (212)-529-1545]. Tickets are \$12.50 for children; \$15 for adults. For further information visit their website at www.teatrosea.org.



Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtowhall.org; 11 am; \$7 (children non-members/ \$5 member children).

Make frogs, cranes, and other creatures using the ancient art of paper folding. Materials included.

Scavenger hunt: Forest Park Visitor's Center, Woodhaven Blvd. and Forest Park Drive; (718) 846-2731; www.nycgovparks.org; Noon; Free.

For children of all ages, prizes awarded.

"La Cucarachita Martina": Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, 304 W. 47th Street; (212) 529-1545; <http://www.teatrosea.org>; 3 pm; \$15 (\$12.50 children).

Teatro Se presents the classic children's fable in English and Spanish.

"Postmortem": 8 pm. Houghton Hall Theater at Trinity Episcopal Church. See Saturday, Nov. 13.

SUN, NOV. 21

"Mame": 3 pm. Bay Terrace Jewish Center. See Saturday, Nov. 6.

"Postmortem": 3 pm. Houghton Hall Theater at Trinity Episcopal Church. See Saturday, Nov. 13.

"La Cucarachita Martina": 3 pm. Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. See Saturday, Nov. 20.

SAT, DEC. 4

Taylor 101: Flushing Town Hall, 137-

35 Northern Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtowhall.org; 1 pm; \$6 (\$3 children).

Learn the basics of Paul Taylor's movement and choreography. Wear comfortable clothing, all levels of dance experience welcome.

SUN, DEC. 5

Klezmer Hanukkah party: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtowhall.org; 2 pm; \$16; \$12 members (\$12 children; \$10 member children).

The Alicia Svigals Trio perform holiday favorites.

November events at Queens Libraries

Tots and teens can enjoy exciting and educational events all month long at the Queens Library, and — best

of all — it's all free.

For additional information visit a branch near you or online at www.queenslibrary.org.

Fri, Dec. 17; Free.

Play a round of Chutes and Ladders, chess and other board games.

MON, NOV. 1

Creative writing and dance:

Queens Library at South Ozone Park, 128-16 Rockaway Blvd. between 128th and 130th streets; (718) 529-1660; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children 10 to 14 get tips from the Dance Theater of Harlem. Preregistration required.

College club 2010: Queens Public Library at Pomonok, 158-21 Jewel Ave. between 13st Street and Parsons Boulevard; (718) 591-4343; www.kaptest.com/College/Home/index.html; 5 pm; Free.

Teens get a heads up on applying for financial aid, and the college admission process. pre-registration required.

LONG-RUNNING

Laptop technology: Queens Public Library at Hollis, 202-05 Hillside Ave. between 201st and 202nd streets; (718) 465-7355; Monday, Nov. 1, 4:30 pm; Tuesday, Nov. 2, 4:30 pm; Wednesday, Nov. 3, 4:30 pm; Thursday, Nov. 4, 4:30 pm; Monday, Nov. 8, 4:30 pm; Tuesday, Nov. 9, 4:30 pm; Wednesday, Nov. 10, 4:30 pm; Monday, Nov. 15, 4:30 pm; Tuesday, Nov. 16, 4:30 pm; Wednesday, Nov. 17, 4:30 pm; Thursday, Nov. 18, 4:30 pm; Monday, Nov. 22, 4:30 pm; Tuesday, Nov. 23, 4:30 pm; Wednesday, Nov. 24, 4:30 pm; Monday, Nov. 29, 4:30 pm; Tuesday, Nov. 30, 4:30 pm; Free.

Teens in grades 7 to 12 learn the basics. Program limited to nine people.

Girl Scouts: Queens Library at Queens Village, 94-11 217 St. at 94th Road; (718) 776-6800; Thursdays, 4 pm, Nov – Thurs, Nov. 18; Free.

Informational meeting.

Teen Night: Queens Library at Arverne, 312 Beach 54th St. (718) 634-4784; Thursdays, 5:15 pm, Nov – Thurs, Dec. 23; Free.

Meet up with friends for crafts and activities. For ages 12 to 18.

Game Players Club: Queens Library at Hillcrest, 187-05 Union Turnpike; (718) 454-2786; Fridays, 4 pm, Nov –

TUES, NOV. 2

Internet safety: Queens Public Library at Forest Hills, 108-19 71st Ave. between 70th and 71st roads; (718) 268-7934; Free; 4 pm.

Henry Smart leads a workshop providing tips on how to protect yourself from cyber-bullying, threats and suspicious online communications. Preregistration required.

Jewelry design: Queens Public Library at St. Albans, 191-05 Linden Blvd. at 192nd Street; (718) 528-8196; 4 pm; Free.

Tees create their own wearable art.

Writing workshop: Queens Public Library at South Ozone Park, 128-16 Rockaway Blvd. (718) 529-1660; 4 pm; Free.

Teens build their vocabulary and hone up on writing. Preregistration required.

Continued on page 41



Going Places

WED, NOV. 3

Paper cup turkeys: Queens Public Library at Bay Terrace, 18-36 Bell Blvd. at 23rd Avenue; (718) 423-7004; 3 pm; Free.

Celebrate the season with a fun craft.

Stained glass workshop: Queens Public Library at Long Island City, 37-44 21st St. between 47th Road and 49th Avenue; (718) 752-3700; 4 pm; Free.

A professional artist instructs students 11 to 14. Space is limited, preregistration required.

Caribbean crafts: Queens Public Library at Pomonok, 158-21 Jewel Ave. at Parsons Blvd. (718) 591-4343; 4:30 pm; Free.

Children 11 to 14 explore Island culture and art including Taino jewelry and textiles, reggae, rhythms and music. Preregistration required.

THURS, NOV. 4

Crazy crochet: Queens Public Library at Laruelton, 134-26 225th St. between Merrick Boulevard and 135th Avenue; (718) 528-2822; 3:45 pm; Free.

Teens learn the basics and create their own designs.

Caribbean crafts: 4:30 pm. Queens Public Library at Pomonok. See Wednesday, Nov. 3.

FRI, NOV. 5

Rain Forest butterflies: Queens Public Library at Woodside, 54-22 Skillman Ave. between 54th and 55th streets; (718) 429-4700; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children 8 to 14 discover the wide array of species in the Amazon. Preregistration required.

Improvisation workshop: Queens Public Library at Corona, 38-23 104th St. (718) 426-2844; 4 pm; Free.

Budding thespians, 11 to 14, learn to work on their acting skills. Pre-registration required.

Caribbean crafts: 4:30 pm. Queens Public Library at Pomonok. See Wednesday, Nov. 3.

SAT, NOV. 6

Writing workshop: Queens Public Library at Steinway, 21-45 31st St. at Ditmars Boulevard; (718) 728-1965; 11 am; Free.

Teens learn how to improve their writing skills.

Deepavali, Indian Festival of Lights: Queens Public Library at Jackson Heights, 35-51 81st St. between 35th and 37th avenues; (718) 899-2500; 12:30 pm; Free.

Crafts featuring Mehendi (Henna Hand Painting), folk and contemporary

music performed live.

MON, NOV. 8

Teen advisory board: Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd. (718) 990-0700; 4 pm; Free.

Air your suggestions and concerns.

Wet-N-Wild Edventures: Queens Public Library at South Jamaica, 108-41 Guy R. Brewer Blvd. between 108th and 109th avenue; (718) 739-4088; 4:30 pm; Free.

Erik's Reptile Edventures featuring live aquatic amphibians. For ages 11 to 14. Preregistration required.

College club 2010: 5 pm. Queens Public Library at Pomonok. See Monday, Nov. 1.

TUES, NOV. 9

Dark Fairy Tales: Queens Public Library at Broadway, 40-20 Broadway at 41st Street; (718) 721-2462; 4 pm; Free.

Novelist Adam Gidwitz.

Writing workshop: 4 pm. Queens Public Library at South Ozone Park. See Tuesday, Nov. 2.

Action Racket Theater: Queens Public Library at Pomonok, 158-21 Jewel Ave. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 591-4343; 4:30 pm; Free.

Learn how to move, project, improvise, and create.

WED, NOV. 10

Graphic novel workshop: Queens Public Library at East Elmhurst, 95-06 Astoria Blvd. at 104th Street; (718) 424-2619; 4 pm; Free.

Professional writer/illustrator Neil Numberman provides helpful tips.

Immigrant rights: Queens Public Library at Langston Hughes, 100-01 Northern Blvd. (New York 25A); (718) 651-1100; 4 pm; Free.

Teens tackle immigration issues.

Poetry club: Queens Public Library at Langston Hughes, 100-01 Northern Blvd (New York 25A) at; (718) 651-1100; 4 pm; Free.

Teen girls explore current issues in poetry.

Sock dolls: Queens Public Library at Queens Village, 94-11 217 St. at 94th Road; (718) 776-6800; 4 pm; Free.

Fun craft for teens 11-17.

"Newspaper Blackout": Queens Public Library at Steinway, 21-45 31st St; (718) 728-1965; 4 pm; Free.

a newspaper and marker will be used to create poetry. For children 12 to 18. Materials and snacks provided.

SUN, NOV. 14

Open Mic: Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd. (718) 990-0700; 2 pm; Free.

All are invited to participate.

MON, NOV. 15

Wet-N-Wild Edventures: Queens Public Library at Long Island City, 37-44 21st St. at 47th Road; (718) 752-3700; 4 pm; Free.

Erik's Reptile Edventures featuring live aquatic amphibians. For ages 11 to 14. Preregistration required.

College club: Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd. (718) 990-0700; 4 pm; Free.

Learn the ins and outs of the application process.

College club 2010: 5 pm. Queens Public Library at Pomonok. See Monday, Nov. 1.

TUES, NOV. 16

Thanksgiving craft: Queens Public Library at Bay Terrace, 18-36 Bell Blvd. at 23rd Avenue; (718) 423-7004; 3:30 pm; Free.

Enter a turkey-pumpkin coloring contest and find out the winner on Dec. 9.

Action Racket Theater: Queens Public Library at Lefrak City, 98-30 57th Ave. at 98th Place; (718) 592-7677; 4 pm; Free.

Learn how to move, project, improvise, and create.

WED, NOV. 17

Immigrant rights: Queens Public Library at Cambria Heights, 218-13 Linden Blvd. at 219th Street; (718) 528-3535; 4 pm; Free.

Teens tackle immigration issues.

THURS, NOV. 18

Intro to Excel: Queens Public Library at Pomonok, 158-21 Jewel Ave. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 591-4343; 10 am; Free.

Learn the basics. Preregistration required.

Parrot care: Queens Public Library at Maspeth, 69-70 Grand Ave. at 69th Lane; (718) 639-5228; 6:30 pm; Free.

Learn about our fine feathered friends.

FRI, NOV. 19

Balloon crafts: Queens Public Library at Corona, 38-23 104th St. at 39th Avenue; (718) 426-2844; 4 pm; Free.

Marianella Lazo leads class in unique decorating technique. Preregistration required.

Design a T-shirt: Queens Public Li-

brary at St. Albans, 191-05 Linden Blvd. at 191st Street; (718) 528-8196; 4 pm; Free.

Teens and tweens create their own wearable art. Preregistration required.

SAT, NOV. 20

Book signing: Queens Public Library at Langston Hughes, 100-01 Northern Blvd. (718) 651-1100; 1 pm; Free.

Author Andrew Jackson and his book "Queens Notes: Facts About the Forgotten Borough of Queens."

MON, NOV. 22

College club 2010: 5 pm. Queens Public Library at Pomonok. See Monday, Nov. 1.

TUES, NOV. 23

Thanksgiving craft: Queens Public Library at Hillcrest, 187-05 Union T'pk. (718) 454-2786; 4 pm; Free.

Create a holiday decoration. Ages six to 14. Crafts and decorations for the holiday.

Thanksgiving craft: Queens Public Library at Queens Village, 94-11 217 St. at 94th Road; (718) 776-6800; 4:30 pm; Free.

Create a holiday decoration.

FRI, NOV. 26

TGIF Game Day: Queens Public Library at Bellerose, 250-06 Hillside Ave. between 250th and 251st streets; (718) 831-8644; 4 pm; Free.

Teens enjoy electronic games.

MON, NOV. 29

Book clique: Queens Public Library at Queens Village, 94-11 217 St. at 94th Road; (718) 776-6800; 4 pm; Free.

Discuss this month's selection. Ask Miss Euni for details.

Sewing club: Queens Public Library at Long Island City, 37-44 21st St. at 47th Road; (718) 752-3700; 4 pm; Free.

Children 8 to 14 use a sewing machine and make an ugly doll, cuddly pillow. Preregistration required.

Open Mic: Queens Public Library at East Elmhurst, 95-06 Astoria Blvd. between 95th and 96th streets; (718) 424-2619; 6 pm; Free.

Read, recite, play an instrument -the choice is yours.

TUES, NOV. 30

Grammar workshop: Queens Public Library at Hollis, 202-05 Hillside Ave. between 201st and 202nd streets; (718) 465-7355; 3:30 pm; Free.

Students learn the basic rules of the English language.

It figures

BY CYNTHIA WASHAM

NOVEMBER NUMBERS

25,000 Number of children adopted in the United States between 2000 and 2009 as part of National Adoption Day, to be held Nov. 21.

8 Average age of children awaiting adoption.

19 Percent who spend more than five years waiting to be adopted.

26 Percent of adults who, given the choice of having Thanksgiving dinner with any celebrity, would choose Jennifer Anniston.



322 B.C. Approximate year the Etruscans started the custom of pulling and wishing on the wishbone from chicken or turkey.

86 Weight, in pounds, of the world-record stuffed turkey, recorded in London in 1989.

1947 Year Harry Truman started the annual White House tradition of pardoning a turkey.

Nov. 1 Date Sears traditionally puts out holiday decorations and wrappings.



372 Number of Sears stores that opened their Christmas Lane holiday section this year in early July.

More than 40 million

Number of green-bean casseroles served on Thanksgiving.



20 Percent of cranberries that are eaten on Thanksgiving.

44 Percent of people who keep and eat leftovers.

30 Percent of adults who said they fell asleep after Thanksgiving dinner.



Sources: Nationaladoptionday.org, UPI News Track, Thaindian.com, Coolest-holiday-parties.com, About.com, Healthdiaries.com, Notmuch.com, Lazylightning.org

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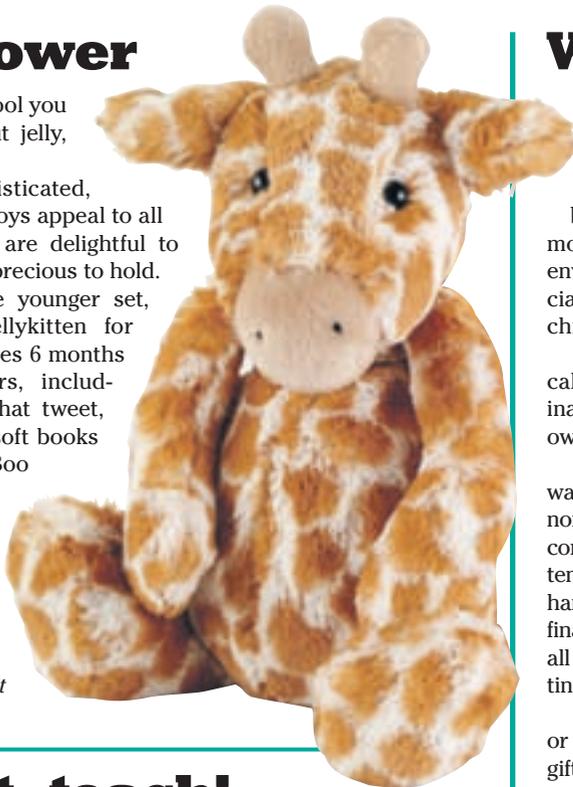
Don't let the name fool you — Jellycat isn't about jelly, or cats.

These sophisticated, quirky soft toys appeal to all ages, and are delightful to give and precious to hold.

For the younger set, there's Jellykitten for children ages 6 months to 4 years, including toys that tweet, chirp and jingle, as well as soft books that play a variety of Peek a Boo games.

With over 180 designs to choose from between both Jellies, from cuddly elephants to plush pigs, the hard part is choosing which one to get.

For more information, visit www.jellycat.com.



Woodland friends

This bookend is wildly cute.

Woodland Hedgehog Bookends from Graphic Spaces bring a richness, warmth and modern playful style to any environment, though especially to a baby nursery or children's room.

Hazel the Hedge, as she's called, is full of charming originality, handmade in a family-owned wood shop.

Each body is laser cut from walnut and attached to thick northern hard maple with rounded corners and no exposed metal fasteners. Multiple coats of shellac, hand sanding, more shellac and a final beeswax buffing after assembly all combine to achieve a level of distinct smoothness and softness.

And they're a perfect baby shower or holiday gift and arrives ready for gifting in eco-friendly packaging, as each Bookend is snuggled in a comfy



burlap drawstring bag with a matching name tag and neatly tucked in a kraft gift box tied simply with twine for a fitting rustic look.

Other woodland friends come in 10 different designs, including an owl, fox, squirrel, bunny, and bird, so you can mix and match the combination for your own friendly forest.

For more info, visit www.graphicspaces.com.

Ready, set, teach!

As your child grows, Teach My Toddler's products grows with him.

These all-in-one learning kits teach age-appropriate skills to infants, toddlers and preschoolers. There are no "bells and whistles" or lights and sounds in the Teach My items, just good, old-fashioned, traditional learning. Teach My items also save busy moms and dads the time of shopping for different learning tools for their children.

Teach My Baby is geared toward 6–18-month-olds, focusing on first words, first numbers, sound and touch. Each section contains modern and multicultural coordinated teaching tools that encourage natural repetition for fun, educational play: nesting blocks, finger puppets, books, textured and mirrored flashcards, a story board, and one and two piece puzzles.

For children ages 18 months to 3, there's Teach My Toddler, which

helps toddlers master the basics: the alphabet, numbers, shapes and colors. Each section is fully coordinated with a total of five puzzles, four board books, four posters and four sets of flashcards, all designed to give toddlers a head start and encourage one-on-one time between toddlers and their caregivers.

Lastly, Teach My Preschooler helps prepare kids three and older for kindergarten. The kit is divided into four sections — Ready to Read, Ready to Print, Ready for 1-100, and Ready for Math. Each section is fully coordinated with books, flashcards, posters, a print guide and magic drawing board, designed to give preschoolers a head start, develop fine motor skills, encourage parent-child interaction and increase school readiness skills.

For more information, visit www.teachmy.com.



Walk this way

This winter, warm up those little toes with socks from Trumpette.

These clever designs are fun new additions to your little one's wardrobe, with socks featuring little shoes, sneakers and even bows on them for the look of shoes, even if your baby isn't quite walking yet.

And even if she can't walk, your little one will be getting around in style, with dozens of designs to choose from to fit her personality. For the little balle-

rina, there's ballet slippers. A budding fashionista in the works? Try the leopard print shoes.

When your child is walking, graduate to soft shoes, with designs including boat shoes and even Converse look-a-likes that are as comfortable as they are adorable.

For more info, visit www.trumpette.com.



Chew on this

This little guy — well, girl — is hardly new, but for brand new mothers, she's a must-have.

Sophie the Giraffe is a time-tested teething toy developed nearly 50 years ago. Often baby's first toy, this cheerful,

adorable giraffe does more than just help a teething baby make it through the day. It also stimulates all five senses: the contrasting spots on the body are for the eyes; the squeaker is for the ears; the soft feel for touch; and, as it's made from 100 percent natural rubber from the Hevea tree, it has a unique scent for the nose.

For more info, visit www.sophiegiraffeusa.com.





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