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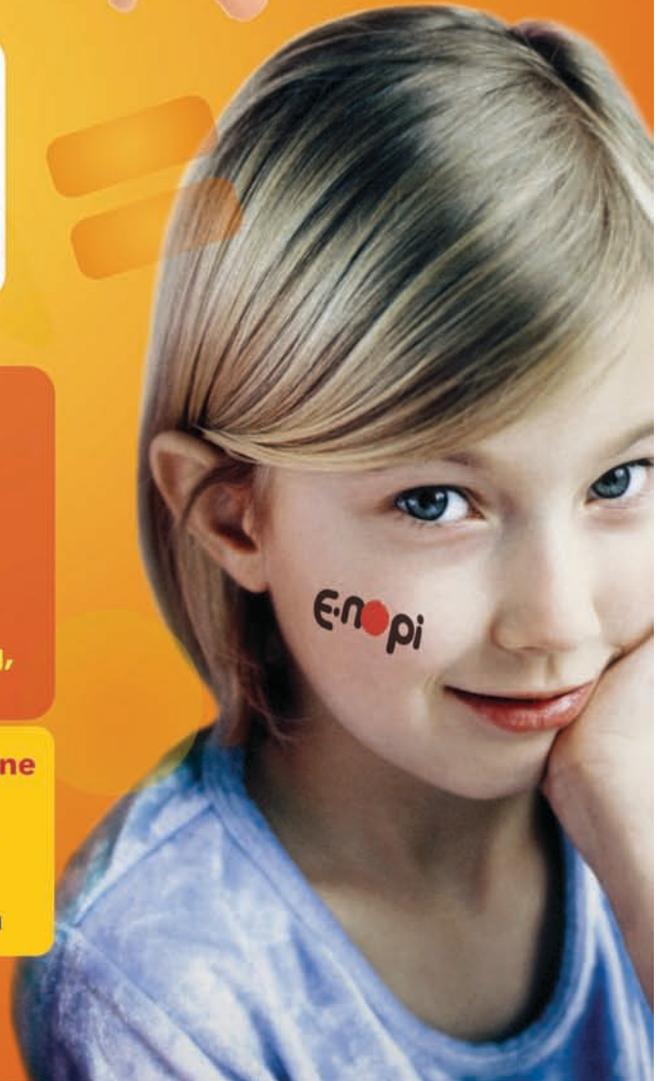


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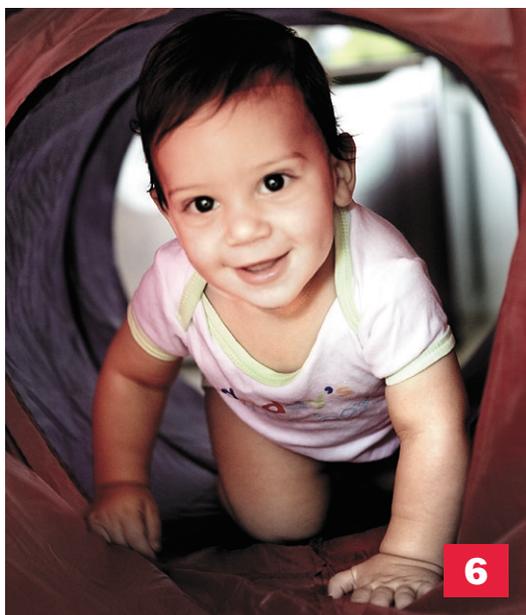
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# Family December 2011



20



6

## FEATURES

- 6 The cost of having a baby**  
How to manage a bundle of joy who costs a bundle  
BY CANDI SPARKS
- 8 Premature babies**  
Advances in medicine gave these infants a chance  
BY LAURA VAROSCAK-DEINNOCENTIIS
- 10 How to save on maternity wear**  
BY JENNIFER LACEY
- 12 Baby food for thought**  
Real answers to all your infant feeding questions  
BY SANDRA GORDON
- 18 Looking back at 2011**  
Taking a moment to accentuate the positive  
BY ROBERT TROTTA
- 20 Traditions behind holiday joy**  
Why you love Christmas — and what it means for your family  
BY MEAGAN J. MEEHAN
- 22 2011 Gift Guide**  
BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO
- 26 Book Gift Guide**  
BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER
- 28 Gifts that keep on giving**  
Shop where your money does the most good  
BY MARY TOMASULO
- 32 They're back!**  
Your kids have gone off to college. How do you manage them when they come home?  
BY RISA C. DOHERTY
- 38 Vegecontrarian!**  
A meat-loving dad tries to understand his son's selective vegetarianism  
BY CHRISTOPHER GARLINGTON



50



28

## COLUMNS

- 30 Healthy Living**  
BY DANIELLE SULLIVAN
- 34 Newbie Dad**  
BY BRIAN KANTZ
- 36 A Teen's Take**  
BY AGLAIA HO
- 40 Our Relationships**  
BY JOAN EMERSON, PHD
- 42 Good Sense Eating**  
BY CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD
- 50 New & Noteworthy**  
The hottest new products

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 44 Going Places**  
Take the family out and find out what's going on in your town

## SPECIAL SECTIONS

- 14 Education Directory**

# Letter from the publisher

## Our children's future

**M**y college student daughter recently asked me if I knew what she should do after she graduates. Her original plan to go to law school is being reexamined. The word is out that this career choice is not necessarily viable



any longer with a glut of law graduates and very few jobs for them. Outsourcing of this type of work is as prevalent as call centers, apparently. Who of us has made a call to a customer service center of any kind lately and spoken to someone in the 50 United States? Not many, I would imagine.

So what will our children do? How will they earn a living? What do they need to be studying to be ready

for the jobs of tomorrow? What will the jobs be? Who really knows? What we do know is that we are not properly preparing our children to be ready for tomorrow's work force and for the future. Our education systems are largely stuck in the past and

the preparedness is geared to yesterday's possibilities. The curriculums are based on a past economy that no longer exists or is fading fast.

What's a parent to do? What are the teachers to do? Who will provide the leadership and the new ideas, and when? We need to be asking these questions. Every parent needs to be asking and prodding the politicians, the corporate leaders and the educators so our children don't

come up empty-handed in the future; unprepared and unable to find security and fulfillment in their lives. Right now other governments are paying our universities to educate thousands of their children. They are getting the credentials and the training and then taking that expertise back home with them. Where is the investment for our kids? They will be competing against those same youngsters for jobs as the work force continues to go global.

The certainty of future joblessness for those without higher or specialized education would appear to be a given. As parents, this means it is our responsibility to make sure our children, from an early age, develop the kind of focus necessary to achieve, grow, and be competitive and adaptable as the new vocations unfold. We must steer them into

places we can't even see clearly ourselves — the unknown. This is an enormously important responsibility. This is pioneering. This is our century's "wagon train."

As we move into the New Year and the years ahead we will need to partner with each other more than we ever have before. Our children's futures will depend on it.

New York Parenting Media wishes your families happy holidays. My personal thanks go out to all our staff for their fine work, and especially to "our parents," Sharon, Tina and Lori, whose presence continues to make it all worthwhile.

Thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher

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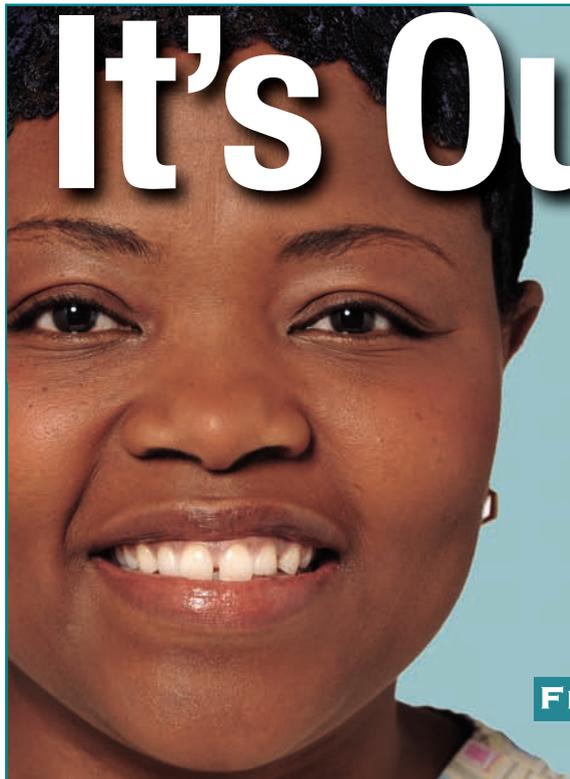


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# The cost of having a baby

How to manage a bundle of joy who costs a bundle

BY CANDI SPARKS

**P**arenthood is a transformative experience on many levels, and one that will surely affect a family's finances — because having a baby is expensive! The average cost for an in-hospital delivery and caring for a baby during the first few months of life falls somewhere between \$20,000 to \$30,000, with the costs largely dependent on the family's resources, lifestyle and finances. Many families plan the financial outlay in advance, but not everyone thinks that far ahead, or in comprehensive terms. There are, however, some ways to cut expenses and get the most for your money for you and your little bundle of joy.

Sharon, a Staten Island working mom, is happy to share financial information with mothers-to-be. She says that when she got pregnant, she sat and figured out the costs in advance; including missing time from work and having to go on disability during maternity leave. Despite her best guessing though, she exceeded the amount she calculated for the baby by about a third.

"Health insurance premiums are about \$1,000 a month or \$12,000 a year. The co-pays were another \$1,000 or so. I had a normal hospital delivery at \$12,000, but we live far away from my family, so when they came to visit, we got a hotel room for our relatives for about another \$400," explains Sharon. "When you add in all the baby equipment and items that you need to stock up on — like diapers, wipes, formula,



Photo by Ralph Renz

furniture and clothes — it's about another \$18,000.

"If you don't nurse, formula is pretty costly over the months until the baby is weaned. Away-from-home baby care is at least another \$25,000, and could be another \$10,000 on top of that, if you have someone caring for your baby in your home. That's not even for the first full year!"

## Expect the unexpected

Regardless of one's circumstances, pregnancy is risky — and financially risky as well. Health issues for mother and child can drive the costs even higher. Marie, a Bronx mother of two, received two gifts last year, one when her husband returned home safely from the military, and the other when she became pregnant shortly thereafter. Although the couple has a 13-year-old son, Marie said she felt like a first-time mom all over again. There were unexpected

medical issues for both mother and child, and there had been such a gap between children that she was at a loss as to what she would need and when she would need it.

Marie estimates the cost associated with her 6-month old was at \$25,000 so far. She did not anticipate having an emergency cesarean section or needing an extra epidural and anesthesia. It was a risky pregnancy, which drove the cost up.

Then, once Marie's baby was delivered, there were feeding issues. She hired a lactation specialist to help, which cost extra. Marie then discovered that due to an allergy, the baby needed a special formula, sold in a specialty shop. She said she did not expect the unexpected, which happened to her at every turn during this pregnancy.

Marie's advice to future mothers is simple: "Plan ahead." She was so excited about the pregnancy, that she had purchased the bare mini-

mum in baby essentials only, and little else.

## Stocking up

"Don't wait until the last minute and don't depend on getting gifts at the baby shower," she says. "Be prepared and save in advance for major items like the crib or changing table."

Since Marie will be heading back to work in the coming months, she suggests that mothers "figure in the cost of having a second playpen at the sitter's or a relative's home." This can really save a mom a lot of back pain resulting from toting baby items around.

For shoppers who don't know what to get, online baby registries can suggest what is needed for the baby and give the loved ones in your life a good idea of needed shower gifts (amazon.com, babiesrus.com, buybuybaby.com and others). Some retailers and registries also have great exchange programs in case of duplicate or unwanted baby items.

## Medical care

Having a baby is expensive, but there are ways to cut expenses and get the most for your money. A reliable health insurance plan is a key factor in keeping costs down. The mother will need to go for regular check-ups, ultrasounds, lab work and any other necessary doctor visits. If you are planning a hospital delivery, the mother may also want to attend childbirth classes and see what special amenities a particular hospital may offer, and at what expense. The delivery itself is an extra expense to be considered. A cesarean section will cost more than a vaginal delivery.

## Doctor vs. doula

Finding the right hospital or delivery room can also reduce costs. A future mother can call and ask questions in the early stages of the pregnancy to find out what is covered and what is not at a particular hospital. The doctor will have a fee, but the billing department will be the most familiar with the fees and coverage. Some options might include an at-home birth instead of a hospital delivery.

Jamie, a Brooklyn doula and mother of three, said she decided to do things differently with her third child. Her two boys were hospital deliveries, and she decided that her third child, a daughter, would be an at-home birth.

"The at-home birth was about one-third of the cost. Insurance covered the medical visits and the doula was a few thousand more, but my insurance also covered that," she says. "Having a doula and the at-home birth took a lot of the worry out of the equation. We did not have to think about when to transition to or from the hospital, or when the baby would be taken to the nursery. It was not an issue at home. I was comfortable and in one place the entire time."

Jamie had no medical issues and welcomed less medical supervision during this pregnancy. She recommends that a mom who is not having a high-risk pregnancy, or who is less risk averse, might actually prefer working with a doula at home.

## Know your benefits

"Parents-to-be should consult the job manual before a pregnancy. It is important to know the parameters for time off, sick days and childbirth," explains June, a human resources professional in New York. "Most women work too hard and too long into the pregnancy to really enjoy it. If they had read the book and asked a few questions, they might have been able to relax a little bit more."

For the working mother-to-be, unpaid time out of the office is a big consideration. Taking time off from work during the pregnancy to go to doctor and lab visits may be used as "sick time." Or, this time may be calculated as "time without pay." Check the employee manual and visit human resources to see how this time off will affect the salary.

Mothers who love to save can find ways to reduce costs. Some move to cloth diapers and save a bundle on the disposables. Many community parenting sites offer free advice and hand-me-downs on gently used baby items. Craigslist is also a place to find freebies and bargains. Online baby calculators can give a range of expenses for various items and help to soften the blow when your baby arrives (babycenter.com, babyzone.com, i-am-pregnant.com are among a few of them out there).

Having a baby can be very costly, but there is nothing like the joy of holding him in your arms.

*Candi Sparks is a Brooklyn mother of two and author of children's books about money, "Can I Have Some Money?" "Max Gets It!" and "Nacho Money." She is on Facebook (Candi Sparks Author) and on Twitter (Candi Sparks, New York).*

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# Premature birth

## You've come a long way, babies!

Advances in medicine gave these infants a chance

BY LAURA VAROSCAK-DEINNOCENTIIS

**I**n the United States, more than half a million infants are born premature each year. Many factors contribute to preterm delivery, including poor nutrition, drug and alcohol use, diabetes, hypertension, infections, heart and kidney problems, and abnormalities with the cervix or placenta.

Age is also a determinant. Women under the age of 19 or over the age of 40 have an increased risk of delivering prematurely. When carrying more than one fetus, it is common for the uterus to overstretch — leading to early labor.

Preterm delivery has risen 36 percent in the past 25 years largely due to more older mothers having babies, as well as the use of assisted reproductive technology, which increases the chance of multiple births.

Joanne Hayes conceived triplets through in vitro fertilization at 35 years old. Two years earlier, she and her husband welcomed their first child, Caitlyn, into the world. Caitlyn was born one week early at a healthy 8.5 pounds.

Hayes understood that her second pregnancy was considered high risk because she was older and carrying multiples. Common medical complications in premature babies include problems with the lungs, brain, heart, and gastrointestinal tract, as well as ineffective immune systems.

Hayes's obstetrician started her on corticosteroids, knowing that she went into early labor at 34 weeks with Caitlyn. (Steroids help to speed up the development of the lungs and other organs, which increase the infant's chance of survival.)

When her doctor asked if she wanted an amniocentesis (a medical procedure used to determine chromosomal abnormalities and

fetal infections), Hayes refused.

"It wouldn't have changed anything, and I wasn't willing to risk hurting the babies."

The first 23 weeks of Hayes's pregnancy were uneventful. Her regular check-ups were normal and, other than tired, she felt fine. At 23 ½ weeks, Hayes experienced false labor and knew she was in trouble. Most premature babies are born "late-preterm," between 34 and 36 weeks gestation. About 12 percent of preterm babies are born between 32 and 33 weeks, about 10

After three months, Christopher, Ryan and Tara were finally discharged from the hospital. They still weighed less than five pounds.

percent between 28 and 31 weeks, and about 6 percent at less than 28 weeks gestation. All premature babies are at risk for health problems, but the earlier a baby is born, the greater the risk for serious complications.

Hayes's doctor admitted her to the hospital and put her on bed rest. She was carefully monitored and pumped with fluids to avoid dehydration. She went into true labor five weeks later. Within minutes, she had dilated from three to seven centimeters and one of her babies had already descended into the birth canal. Ryan (3.3 pounds), Christopher (2.3 pounds), and Tara (2.7 pounds) were delivered by Cesarean section in the neonatal intensive care unit at Long Island's Stonybrook Hospital the day before

Thanksgiving.

At such low birth weights, the babies lacked the fat necessary to maintain their body temperature and were immediately placed in incubators to keep them warm and protected from potential hypothermia and dehydration.

Hayes held Ryan right away, and says she remembers how tiny her largest baby felt in her arms. Christopher and Tara were immediately taken away before Hayes had a chance to see them. Ryan needed the support of continuous positive airway pressure, which delivered pressurized air to his lungs through small tubes to help him breathe. Christopher was able to breathe on his own with supplemental oxygen. Tara, the last one delivered, was immediately put on a respirator.

The lungs of preterm infants in respiratory distress are deficient in surfactant, a combination of fats and proteins that help to prevent the collapse of the air sacs in the lungs. By the second day, Tara had multiple complications. She suffered from pulmonary interstitial emphysema and was put on a jet ventilator, a loud, pounding machine, where she lay for almost a week, covered in sterile plastic resembling Saran Wrap. Finally, one of her lungs collapsed. The collapse closed up the air sacs that had been over-inflated and her condition gradually improved.

By the next week, however, Tara developed sepsis and was put on another respirator. Premies in the neonatal intensive care unit are particularly susceptible to this serious, potentially life-threatening blood infection. The invasive procedures (intravenous lines, catheters, and tubes) used to keep them alive can provide openings for dangerous bacteria, which their underdeveloped immune systems cannot handle. If left untreated, the toxins cause the immune system to



## The Hayes triplets



Joanne Hayes's son Christopher was delivered by cesarean section. He weighed 2.3 pounds at birth. Christopher is now an 11-year-old who enjoys cooking.



When Ryan Hayes was born he weighed 3.3 pounds. Ryan is now an 11-year-old who is in honors classes.



Tara Hayes was born weighing 2.7 pounds. She was the last of the triplets born, and was immediately put on a respirator. Tara is now a happy 11-year-old who is doing well in school.

attack the body's own organs and tissues. Tara recovered with antibiotics. Soon after she was treated for sepsis, Tara was diagnosed with a heart murmur. Fortunately, that was also corrected with medication.

The constant pressure from the jet ventilator that kept her alive is likely to have contributed to the hemorrhage the doctors spotted on an ultra sound when Tara was a month old. The bleeding caused the ventricles of her brain to rapidly expand. Some hemorrhages are mild, but severe bleeds cause pressure that can lead to brain damage, including cerebral palsy and learning and behavioral problems. Tara's doctors continued to monitor her closely.

At 3 months old, Tara and her brothers were finally discharged from the hospital. Hayes and her husband, Michael, were relieved, but the need for medical attention was far from over. Although they were now strong enough to survive outside of a protective environment, the three siblings, who each weighed less than five pounds when they went home, required special shots on a regular basis. These synergist shots protected them from respiratory syncytial virus, a common virus that produces cold-like symptoms but can be dangerous to premature infants. The virus was such a threat to Tara, Christopher and Ryan that they could only visit the doctor after office hours, when no other children were present.

Although the Hayes triplets developed more slowly than others their age, they made slow and steady progress. Ryan came home from the hospital on an apnea monitor, but he and his brother gradually became stronger.

Tara struggled with feeding issues and continued to have medical problems. She developed aspiration pneumonia, which was treated with IV antibiotics. Her doctors attributed it to hydrocephalus. She had been vomiting from the pressure on her brain, so doctors inserted a shunt to drain the fluid and reduce the risk of brain damage.

Since then, Tara has survived three shunt replacement surgeries. Her health improved and for years she had few additional complica-

tions. Then in second grade, she began complaining of headaches. The doctors determined that her head was too small (from the constant draining of fluid) and performed an operation to enlarge her skull. The surgery was a success.

Despite the shunt that remains in her head, Tara is a happy, healthy 11 year old who loves school. She doesn't talk much about her past trauma, but recently asked her mother about the scars that extend from ear to ear.

Both Tara and her brother Christopher were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in second grade, and are doing well in school with the help of special education classes. Ryan, the first born of the triplets, is in honors classes. The boys spend their free time playing video games, building with LEGOs and firing Nerf guns. Christopher has an affinity for cooking. Like most 11-year-old girls, Tara enjoys watching TV, shopping, and texting her friends.

Hayes describes caring for her infants as "a chaotic blur." Through it all, she clung to the positive and focused on the small changes that took place each day. She kept herself well educated so that she could be the best advocate possible for her children. The relatively recent advances in obstetrics and neonatology helped to give Ryan, Christopher and Tara life when they struggled for survival. Not so long ago, a premature baby was treated with no more than warm blankets and an oxygen mask. Today's specialized machines, procedures, and medications provide more hope for preterm babies. Although treatment also brings risks, the technology in the neonatal intensive care unit saves many preemies whose underdeveloped bodies are vulnerable to living outside of their mother's protective womb.

*Teacher and freelance writer Laura Varoscak-DeInnocenti is a regular contributor to New York Parenting Media. In this capacity she has won numerous editorial awards from the Parenting Media Association. She holds master's degrees in fiction writing, education and psychology. She lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, and is the proud mom of two sons, Henry and Charlie. Visit her webpage ([www.examiner.com/parenting-in-new-york/laura-varoscak](http://www.examiner.com/parenting-in-new-york/laura-varoscak)) for more articles on parenting.*

# How to save big on maternity wear



BY JENNIFER LACEY

**C**ongratulations! You've just discovered that you are pregnant, and the shopper in you can't wait to hit the stores to look for new clothes for your soon-to-be changing figure. But, even the most enthusiastic shopper can fret at the thought

of spending a fortune on clothes that are, let's face it, worn only for a short amount of time. Before you make your credit card balances blow up with new maternity outfits, here are some simple tips that will help you to become a penny-wise momma-to-be!

## Shop smart in the stores

Nationwide retailers from Macy's to JC Penney regularly place merchandise onto clearance racks in order to make room for new arrivals. Trips to clearance aisles are a wonderful way to start building up your maternity wardrobe. Clothes and accessories in clearance are typically marked down anywhere from 20 to 85 percent off the regular price. So, when you make

your next visit to your local dress store, resist temptation, and keep walking past the beautiful displays in the front and head straight to the back, where you will find the clearance section for the best sales.

Another good tip: sign up for your favorite store's mailing or e-mail list (or even become their fan on Facebook) to find out about weekly or monthly sales or to get coupons.

## Consignment shops

Say you have an invitation to your cousin's wedding. You're six months along, and although you know you will need to wear something special, you are hesitant about shelling out so much money for a dress that you are only going to wear for a few hours. Well-respected consignment shops may be a great place to find gently-used maternity clothes at a fraction of the cost. Consignment shopping provides you with several benefits, including:

- Finding better prices than at resale stores.
- The seller typically gets a better price than if he sold his items to a resale shop. The consignor (you) also typically gets a better price. For example, you might get 70 percent off your purchases.
- The variety and quality of items can be a lot better than those purchased at a garage sale.

## The World Wide Web of bargains

When I was pregnant with my first child, the very idea of waddling my way through crowds at my local mall was not my idea of a fun day out. If fighting the crowds at the mall is not your thing either, you can comparison shop and find some fantastic savings online! Kimberly Hines, a mother of two, saved money by searching online for sales on mater-

Even the most enthusiastic shopper can fret at the thought of spending a fortune on clothes that are worn only for a short amount of time.

nity clothes.

"I would just wait until I would see that something that I wanted was on sale, and then I'd buy it online. A lot of the websites that I shopped from home on often had free shipping or half-off shipping specials, so that was a huge plus for my budget."

Have you had your eye on a pair of Lavish by Heidi Klum capri leggings, but you just can't bear to pay the full price? Try eBay! You can bid on new and used clothes and you may get lucky and find a great deal.

After your pregnancy, you could consider selling your gently-used maternity clothes on the site to get a return on your investment! Craigslist is another site where you can find maternity clothes. You can search your area and contact most sellers through the e-mails provided. Many sellers are looking to sell entire wardrobes for very little. (For your personal safety, never meet up with any seller alone and do not give him any address or other personal security information.)

Rentmaternitywear.com allows you to rent a designer dress for one to two weeks. You choose the dress (or dresses) you want, and they will send your choices via FedEx for a 48-hour-try-on period. If the dress you chose does not fit, you can easily return it for a free second chance. If the dress fits you perfectly, all you have to do is show up at your holiday party looking fabulous. When the party's over, just send the dress back to them right in your mailbox. Rentmaternitywear.com also offers brand new dress rentals for a little bit more money.

### The power of frugal accessories can go a long way

Take a good look at your pregnancy clothes and chances are, you will notice that several items are capable of growing with

you for a portion of your pregnancy with a little help from some useful gadgets.

Belly Bands ([http://babybem.inematernity.3dcartstores.com/White-Maternity-Belly-Band\\_p\\_8.html](http://babybem.inematernity.3dcartstores.com/White-Maternity-Belly-Band_p_8.html)) consist of a stretchy band of fabric that is placed over your open jeans to create a new belted waistband. Belly Bands are available in several colors, and you can find them at many maternity stores and online.

Or, there are other types of fabric patches that conveniently insert into your jeans' fly to build a patch between an open zipper. No matter what type of band you choose, you will be able to wear pants that will fit well and stretch along with your expanding belly bump.

Not only is your belly expanding, but your breasts will change size and shape regularly throughout the next nine months. Every mom-to-be's body is different; however, if you have found that your cup size has remained almost the same and you are just not ready to shell out \$30 for a maternity bra, a bra back extender may become your new best friend. Bra back extenders ([www.kaboodle.com/reviews/-motherhood-maternity-bra-back-extender](http://www.kaboodle.com/reviews/-motherhood-maternity-bra-back-extender)) help you to continue to comfortably wear your pre-pregnancy bra longer. Working in tandem with a two- or three-hooked bra, an extender can allow you to increase your bra size between 1 1/4-inches to 3 1/4-inches. They do not require sewing and just connect to your current bra at the hook.

### Hip hand-me-downs

Michelle Salvo, a mom of four, found that the best thing to do during her pregnancies was, "to take any and all hand-me-downs from my friends and family. Maternity clothes are so expensive to only wear for nine months, and for me, it was really a lot less time than that, because I didn't wear maternity clothes until I was about six months along. So for me, I was only really wearing maternity clothes for three to four months."

And, let's face it; because of the short amount of time that a mom-to-be wears maternity clothing, it is generally in good condition, and can offer you an inexpensive alternative.

Jennifer Lacey is a freelance journalist, specializing in pregnancy and parenting issues, whose work has been featured in numerous national and regional publications and websites.



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# Baby food for thought

Real answers  
to all your  
infant feeding  
questions

BY SANDRA GORDON

**Y**ou've consulted books, logged onto websites, and asked your friends — but you've still got niggling questions about feeding your baby safely, and no one seems to know the answer — until now. To help you sort through the confusion, we rounded up top pediatricians and baby safety experts to answer some of your most burning baby food questions. Bonus: their answers might even save you money!

**Q:** Is it safe to put a partially-eaten jar of baby food back in the fridge for next time?

**A:** You can stash it in the fridge for later as long as you haven't fed your baby from the jar (or yogurt container). If that's the case, toss it. Harmful bacteria from your baby's mouth can grow and multiply in the jar. If your baby typically doesn't eat a full jar, spoon a portion into a bowl and put the jar in the refrigerator for later, but keep in mind that the clock is ticking.

Opened jars of fruits and vegetables will keep for up to three days in the fridge. Meats are good for one day. You've got two days, tops, for meat and vegetable combos. Put the date on open jars with a permanent marker so you'll know what went into the fridge when.

**Q:** How long can I leave infant formula or pumped breast milk out?

**A:** You can leave prepared infant formula or pumped breast milk out of the refrigerator (without a cold pack) for two hours. If it has been sitting out longer than that, you'll need to throw it out. That includes other perishable items, too, like baby food, dairy products, and meat. But play it safe and throw them out after an hour.

**Q:** Are there any special dietary recommendations for breast-feeding, like there are when you're pregnant (such as avoiding soft cheese and raw fish)?

**A:** There are, but not many. When you're breast-feeding, you'll need to continue avoiding fish high in mercury, just as you did during pregnancy, as per U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommendations. Don't eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury. And if there's a family history of serious food allergies, such as peanuts or shellfish, you may be advised to avoid both, even if it's your partner who is allergic.

"Otherwise, you can go ahead and eat your normal diet," says Jennifer Trachtenberg, MD, a New York City pediatrician and author of "Good Kids, Bad Habits." If you've heard that avoiding drinking milk yourself can prevent your baby from becoming gassy, or that sticking to a bland diet prevents colic, don't believe it. They're not true, Trachtenberg says.

Similarly, you don't need to avoid soft cheeses like feta, Brie, and Camembert, or sushi or sashimi like you did during pregnancy, because the bacterium that may be found in these foods that could cause infection, *Listeria monocytogenes*, doesn't transfer to breast milk.

Caffeine and alcohol also aren't off limits, if your baby is healthy and not preterm or past due, "but moderation is the best thing," she says. Ask your baby's pediatrician for advice if you want to consume either.

**Q:** Do I need to shell out money for a bottle sterilizer, or is the dishwasher good enough?

**A:** The dishwasher will do the job,

especially if you have city water (not well water), which is chlorinated, as chlorine kills harmful bacteria that may be present, says Charles Shubin, MD, director of pediatrics at Mercy Family Care in Baltimore. Just wash your bottles in the top rack of the dishwasher. Or, wash bottles in hot tap water with dish-washing detergent and then rinse them in hot tap water. If you have well water or nonchlorinated water that doesn't meet current safety levels, talk to your pediatrician. Instead of relying on the dishwasher, you'll probably be advised to use a sterilizer or boil bottles in water for five to 10 minutes before using them.

**Q:** When preparing infant formula, can I just use tap water or do I need to buy bottled water?

**A:** "You can use tap water to prepare infant formula unless you have your own well," Shubin says. (Yes, we're back to that pesky well issue again.) If you have well water, before making infant formula, have it tested. Contact your county health department, or the Department of Natural Resources' statewide office in your area. They should have a list of certified labs available from your state.

All babies under 6 months of age are at risk of nitrate poisoning, according to the EPA, which can cause a condition called methemoglobinemia, or "blue baby syndrome," which robs the blood of oxygen. Public water supplies are tested regularly for nitrates. If your water doesn't meet EPA's standard for nitrates, and your baby is less than 6 months old, talk to your pediatrician. You can't eliminate nitrates by boiling water. It actually concentrates the levels. So you'll probably need to use bottled water.

You'll also need to worry about lead. Whether you have city or well

water, your baby can still be exposed to lead from the pipes in your home. To avoid exposure to lead, as a general rule, use water from the cold tap for making baby formula, drinking, and cooking. Also, if you haven't turned the water on for six hours or more, the EPA advises letting it run for a minute or more first before filling your baby's bottle.

•••

**Q:** What's a great way to save money on baby food?

**A:** "Make your own," Shubin advises. The main difference between baby food and regular food is that it's pureed, but a small hand grinder or a blender can take care of that, he says. If you do buy jarred baby food, which is especially convenient when you're traveling, you'll save by choosing single-ingredient meats, vegetables and fruits, then mix them to your baby's liking instead of buying ready-made combos, like herbed chicken with pasta.

When your baby is ready for solid food (typically around 4 to 6 months), always introduce one food at a time and wait three days. Start with iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or formula. Then, slowly introduce pureed vegetables, fruits and meat according to your pediatrician's time table. If your baby doesn't get a reaction, such as diarrhea or rash, the coast is clear. Go ahead and add another food to your baby's menu.

Don't spike your baby's food with sugar or corn syrup, and no honey for the first year. Also, during your baby's first 12 months, steer clear of foods loaded with fat and sugar, such as bacon, lunch meat, hot dogs, French fries, creamed veggies, pudding, cookies, candy, cakes, and sweetened drinks such as iced tea and soda.

And don't give your baby hot dogs, peanuts, whole grapes, berries, raisins, hard candies and popcorn, as they are choking hazards.

•••

**Q:** Besides infant formula or breast milk, what else can my baby drink during his first year?

**A:** You'll need to keep feeding your baby formula or breast milk through the first year, even when your baby starts eating solid food. But when your baby is 6 months old, you can add 100 percent fruit juice (check the label to make sure) to your baby's repertoire.

Go easy, though. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting 100 percent fruit juice to no more than 4 to 6 ounces per day from



6 months to 6 years of age, and making it part of a meal, not a snack.

Too much juice can cause diarrhea and gas, contribute to tooth decay, and fill your baby up so that he has less room for more nutritious foods. To limit juice, offer 1 to 2 ounces at a time in a sippy cup, not a bottle.

The juice should be pasteurized (flash-heated to kill pathogens). Fresh-squeezed juice isn't pasteurized. And keep in mind that juice fortified with calcium isn't a substitute for formula or cow's milk, which your baby can

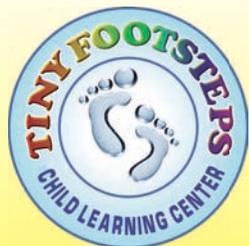
have after his first birthday.

•••

**Q:** How can I help my baby switch from infant formula to cow's milk?

**A:** After your baby's first birthday, it's safe to make the switch from infant formula or breast milk to whole cow's milk. But if your baby's not buying it, try introducing whole cow's milk gradually. Over several weeks and months, add a little whole milk to the formula you prepare and slowly increase the proportion of milk to formula until your baby is drinking straight cow's milk.

Don't buy low-fat milk, thinking it's healthier. A baby's rapidly-developing brain thrives on the high percentage of butterfat whole milk contains. Just think: a child's brain grows to 80 percent of its adult size by age 3 and much of that development happens by age 2. After your child's second birthday, brain growth begins to subside. That's when it's time to switch to foods low in artery-clogging trans and saturated fat, such as low-fat and nonfat milk and yogurt. For more on what to feed your baby, visit [www.kidseatright.org](http://www.kidseatright.org).



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# Education

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11372

33-50 82nd Ave, Jackson Heights NY  
11372

81-05 101st Ave, Ozone Park NY 1141  
43-42 47th St, Sunnyside NY 11104

*Continued on page 16*



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# Education

## DIRECTORY

Continued from page 14

**718-310-0910 for all locations**

**For Jackson Heights and Ozone Park location [jacksonheightselc@yahoo.com](mailto:jacksonheightselc@yahoo.com)**

**For Sunnyside location - [Littlefriendssunnyside@yahoo.com](mailto:Littlefriendssunnyside@yahoo.com)**

Jackson Heights Early Learning Center is a developmentally-appropriate play-based preschool and pre-k serving children ages 2 to 5. JHELC has two locations in the historical district of Jackson Heights, and has exclusive access to the playground/ gardens at St. Marks Church.

Jackson Heights ELC Ozone located in Ozone Park, Queens is a Universal Pre K program for a total of 60 children. Registration starts in March 2012 for school in Sept 2012.

\* UPK has extended the registration for UPK. We currently are enrolling in Ozone Park for children who are four years old.

Little Friends Sunnyside was established in the early 1900's as the first parent cooperative daycare in New York. Located in the historical district of Sunnyside, Little Friends Sunnyside is an Early Learning Center for children ages two to four providing Full time or Part Time care.

We offer Afterschool Care, Summer Camp and starting in September 2012 Universal Pre-Kindergarten for children born on 2008.

We are currently accepting new children in our newly opened two year old classroom and also have space in our three and four year old classrooms.

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**119-17 Union Turnpike in Forest Hills  
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**167-01 Union Turnpike  
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# Looking back at 2011

Taking a moment to accentuate the positive

BY ROBERT TROTTA

**I**n the world in which we live today, it is anywhere from difficult to impossible to not be affected by all of the negativity that we're exposed to. For example, turn on the news, and chances are you'll feel sick from some of the things that happen in our communities. My philosophy is to "look at the glass as half full." Therefore, in reflecting on the year 2011, I came up with some great moments and events that make me happy, grateful, and proud.

In 2011, I saw my 5-year-old son, Matthew, graduate from his Astoria preschool and move up to

kindergarten. Sure, he's gotten taller, but he's also become funnier, more outgoing, and...wiser. The other day, I said: "Matthew, you're a turkey. I'm going to eat you up for Thanksgiving."

"Papa, I'm not food. I'm family," he responded.

• • •

At a time when, in my view, teachers simply don't get the credit they deserve for all of the things they do, I received some of the most rewarding words I could ever hear from some of my students. A few pupils from the journalism class I teach at John Adams High School in Ozone Park — the same school

that I graduated from in the late 1980s — have expressed to me their desire to go to college to pursue a career in journalism. They credited my class as a big reason for the passion they developed for this field. The idea that my love of writing, creating headlines, interviewing people, taking photographs, and reporting information has had a direct impact on the career direction that any of my students are choosing is overwhelming.

It was very touching when student alumni came up to school during parent-teacher conferences and stopped by to give me a hug, or to tell me that they now understand what I was talking about when I spoke to them about life.

• • •

Years ago, I was a ring bearer at a wedding for a cousin on my father's side of the family. This September, Matthew took on the role, serving as a ring bearer at the wedding of my wife's cousin, Carmela. He was dressed in an elegant tuxedo, wore a boutonniere, and danced like a true gentleman as he held hands with one of the flower girls.

At the reception hall, the 6-year-old brother of the flower girl told



me that he didn't think Matthew wanted to play with him. I figured it was because he was tired.

"Matthew, are you tired?" I asked.

"No, Papa, I'm busy," replied Matthew, who was sitting on a bench next to the beautiful, 3-year-old flower girl.

• • •

I've seen many businesses and restaurants in Queens come and go over the years. But to step foot inside a brand new casino in Queens? I grew up buying merchandise at the Aqueduct Racetrack Fleamarket. Now, I get to play some slot machines at the same location, just 10 minutes from where I grew up. (I can only hope that this is the beginning of a very successful relationship.)

• • •

A few other memorable events:

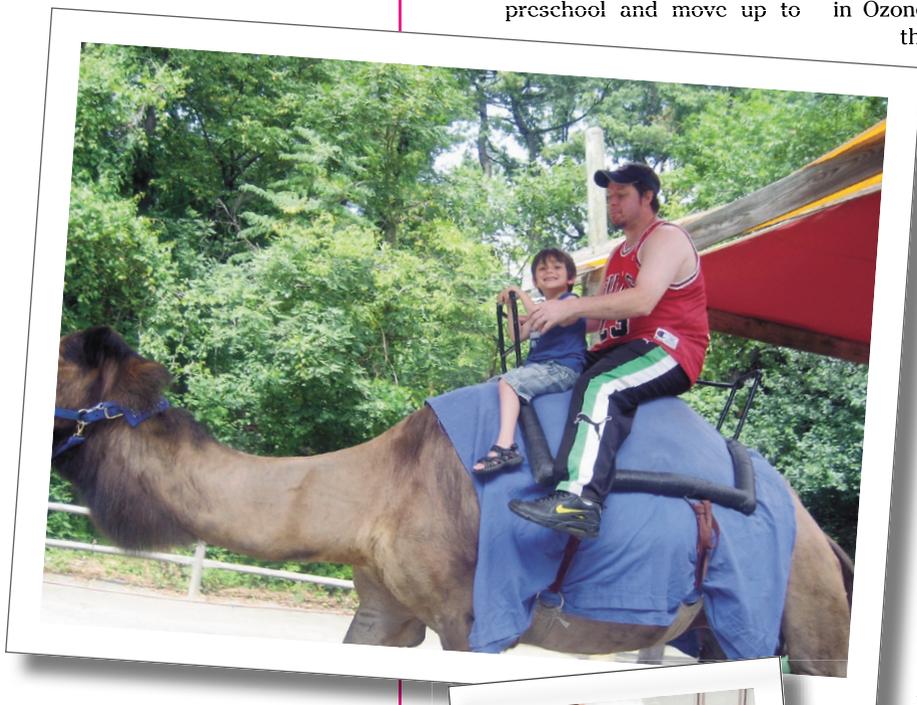
On a trip to the Bronx Zoo this summer, Matthew and I rode on a camel named Joshua. It wasn't as bumpy a ride as I had anticipated.

My wife, Giovanna, and I celebrated our eighth wedding anniversary this year.

I turned 41 in March, my grandmother turned 91 — also in March — and I began my 13th year as a teacher in New York City (not in March). Oh, and I've written a few articles for this wonderful magazine.

The highlight of my year? When Matthew walked up to me one day and said, "Papa, when I get bigger, I want to be like you."

Come to think of it, the glass is three-quarters full.



**SCENES FROM A YEAR:** (Above) Matthew and Robert riding the camel Joshua at the Bronx Zoo. (Right) Robert's grandmother, who turned 91 in March. (Inset) Matthew as a ring bearer.



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# The traditions behind holiday joy

Why you love  
Christmas  
— and what  
it means for  
your family

BY MEAGAN J. MEEHAN

**M**aking connections to each other is the core of human existence. Often, when these experiences are positive, bonds form. In most cases, the term “bonding” is applied to interactions between two or more people; however, “bonding” can also be applied to other circumstances and relationships. Children bond with toys, dogs bond with owners and, sometimes, people can bond with certain events which conjure up happy feelings, like the holidays and everything they symbolize.

People’s personalities are a result of various elements and life circumstances. There are numerous aspects to what makes us value the things we do. The human mind never stops growing and maintains the ability to be motivated, influenced, and expanded; however, unsurprisingly, studies have shown that most of our basic personalities form when we are small. And the earliest traditions we are taught to anticipate tend to be those we recall most frequently for the remainder of our lives.

Because holidays like Christmas are treated as a “special season” by adults, children get a sense of the goodwill and nearly “magical” optimism the time brings. As a result, holidays allow us to savor the things we overlook during other times of the year. For example, it has been proven that people who rarely give money to charity are still likely to donate a dollar to the Salvation Army members that stand on street corners throughout the month of December.

Now that the holiday season is upon us, traditions and bonding opportunities are fertile on both social and interpersonal levels. Decorating, cooking, listening to songs — and

even shopping — are all opportunities for family and friends to enjoy the season together. Thus, if your family is fortunate enough to have a stable relationship, it is especially important to rejoice and celebrate.

## Free to enjoy

In these trying economic times, many people find themselves short on cash, but that does not mean the season need be any less joyful. Singing Christmas songs, watching classic holiday films, and taking joy in the sight of pleasantly decorated establishments are seasonal delights which can be enjoyed for free.

On a social level, it is both kind and helpful to take some time to volunteer or donate to charities. Christmas is the season for giving, and there are many people in this world who are not as fortunate as others. The point of Christmas’ moral and ethical lessons is to think of those who are most vulnerable.

The basic messages behind both the biblical (religious) and fictional (Santa Claus) stories of Christmas are the virtuous elements of humanity: goodwill, kindness, caring, compassion, and giving. Thus, by learning to make more of an effort toward our fellow man during the holidays we — hopefully — retain some of that goodwill for the rest of the year. In this way, “being good” influences us to practice positive behaviors and rebuke those we know to be “naughty” or unsavory (hence Santa’s “naughty and nice” list). From earliest times, stories and character-driven legends (like Santa Claus) have been used to teach children, thus stimulating their cognitive capacity for behavior self-monitorization (“minding their manners”).

“Cognition” is the term we use to describe our mental processes; that

is our ability to maintain attention, retain information, solve problems, and make decisions. Parents can observe cognition in action as their children grow. Understanding how and why we learn the way we do allows adults to instill the historic lessons and values within their children.

## Keeping traditions

At the base of their purpose, traditions are a form of education about the past which lead to ensuring the future survival of a specific culture. For this reason, people feel compelled to pass on the traditions that they were taught in their families. Culture and traditions often hold special meaning for people because such events trigger memories and a sense of belonging within a certain society. Psychological research pertaining to bonding within interpersonal relationships suggests that reserving holidays has an overall positive impact on the human psyche. To put it in easy terms: if holidays are celebrated in a fun and positive way, they tend to be memorable.

Obviously, some traditions are cultural, such as decorating the tree or singing carols. However, some traditions are purely formed of family and, therefore, have individual value. Whereas traditions such as using firs as Christmas trees have gone back hundreds of years, every family has their own spin on the season.

On a personal note, I always enjoy going to Dyker Heights in Brooklyn to see the outlandish decorations. Likewise, my family always makes an effort to venture into Manhattan to see the tree at Rockefeller Center. As I got older, I started baking and handing out the treats to my family and friends. These small ceremonies are what make the season extra special since these are particular tra-



ditions, born of good experiences, which are special to me personally. Even in the scheme of widespread, group-like activities — such as holiday celebrations — there is always room for individual expression.

### **Why we exchange gifts**

Of course, gift-giving is an aspect of Christmastime which cannot be

ignored. Often, presents are a focal point of the season. Despite the increasing public outcry against aggressive marketing campaigns and over-commercialization of the season, getting presents is actually a very important part of the holiday.

For younger people especially, the experience of receiving presents is akin to developing a strong sense of worth, acceptance, and reaffirmation

of love. Giving gifts also delivers the power of possibility. Every person can make a difference in another's life, and by being taught to recognize the value of giving, people build a sense of social consciousness.

As a child, I enjoyed receiving gifts, but now I have more fun giving to others. I donate to charities, and I send gifts to my family overseas. I put a lot of thought into the presents

I get for my parents. Seeing the joy on other's faces, and knowing that I did something to improve their day, gives me a sense of delight. I contributed to making the world happier for those whom I most care for.

Furthermore, gifts serve as reminders of the people we love, since they are material symbols of the emotional bonds we have formed. Items and trinkets are like tiny shrines which we use to identify certain feelings. People put photos up in their homes for the same reason — the visuals allow us to reflect on the events or relationships which led to the acquiring of the image. Receiving gifts is actually important for children to feel that they are valued — a symbol of parental caring and affirmation that the child's likes, wants, and needs were considered (such as following a list to ensure the desired items are bought).

### **All I want for Christmas**

Interestingly, the legend of Santa Claus leads to a particular conundrum of idealisms within Western culture. In most cases, we teach our children to be humble. We teach them that it is inappropriate to ask for gifts from others. Yet, during the holidays, an exception is made, since during this time, gifts are expected. The story of Santa Claus reaffirms both the psychological and visual concept that making a list during the Christmas season is not only acceptable, but expected. The "time limit" of the season makes it especially exciting to children, because they know this difference to society's standards of acceptability only comes once a year. By allowing them to bond with the image of Santa — the portrait of a jovial kindness — children learn to bond with the holiday, and thus continue this strong sense of goodwill into adulthood.

Needless to say, Christmas is my favorite holiday. I get excited at its very prospect. I feel elated when I see the first signs of red-and-green decorations. I love Christmas for many reasons; mainly because it encompasses the best aspects of humanity, but also because I feel close to the season in general. I bonded with the traditions taught to me and therefore revel in the joys that the time of year has to offer. In conclusion, Santa Claus is very real, and alive and well, in the hearts of mankind. I hope that this is one tradition that shall never change.

Happy holidays!

*Meagan J. Meehan is a published author and modern artist.*

# Find something fun and educational in our 2011 Gift Guide

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

**Y**ou know the drill by now, moms and dads. Every year you promise to get an early start on your holiday gift shopping, but here you are again, just weeks away from Chanukah, Christmas and Kwanzaa,

and you haven't bought a thing for junior or any of the other pint-sized people in your life.

Worse yet, the vast selection of toys, games and gadgetry out there — a mind-boggling maze that seems to grow each year like a wired Chia Pet — has you baffled about where to even start!

We suggest that you get cracking right here and now with our fun-tastic 2011 Holiday Gift Guide, a jam-packed seasonal blockbuster that takes the guesswork out of gift-giving with smart and wallet-friendly items culled from the toy boxes of some of the most innovative manufacturers around. From

classic to cutting edge, our editor's selections are hand-picked for their educational value without skimping on the fun.

The best part?

All of them are under \$50 and can be bought online, which means you can enjoy a hassle-free holiday!

## My Keepsake Portfolio

(Ages 2+, \$19.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

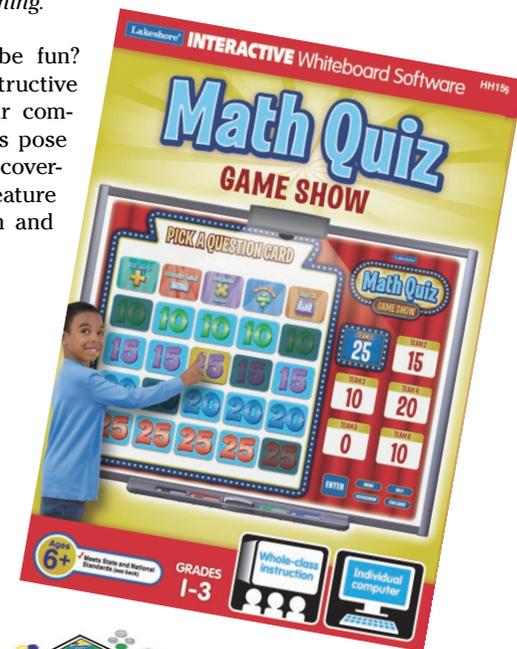
Preserve your pint-sized Picasso's paintings, drawings and other masterpieces in this super-sturdy, handy organizer. It comes with nine expandable storage pockets — large enough for even oversized works! Each has a nifty tab for easy labeling, and there's even room to label the cover!



## Math Quiz Game Show

(Ages 6-8, for ages 9-11, \$14.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

Can homework really be fun? Count on it by holding instructive game nights right on your computer! Exciting game shows pose more than 200 questions, covering key math concepts. Feature totally awesome animation and sound effects!



## The Allowance Game

(Ages 5-9, \$16.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

It's never too early to begin teaching your munchkin about money management! This fun-fueled, fast-paced game for two-to-four players teaches kids how to handle money and make change as they save and spend their allowance.



## ← What's Inside? Soft Feely Box

(Infant to 3 years, \$39.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

Go on, feel away! Little ones won't be able to resist getting their mitts into this fleecy and adorable treasure trove — and find out what's inside! It's packed with 10 different objects for kids to touch and explore, including a pretty butterfly with crinkly wings and a cute lion with a corduroy coat. Soft and machine washable, too.



## ↑ Gathering A Garden Board Game

(Ages 5+, \$9); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

Hurry around to every vendor, so you can be a garden tender. Get your flower, herb and tree, vegetable and bird — they're free! Your garden is completely done? Get home first, and you have won!

## → Squinkies Surprise Inside Bubble Packs

(\$9.99); [www.squinkies.com/boys](http://www.squinkies.com/boys)

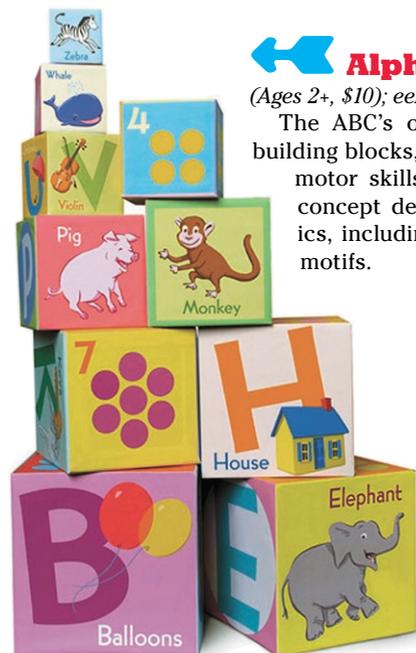
Each pack contains 16 collectibles Squinkies individually-packed in a toy bubble! Also includes four hidden "surprise" Squinkies to start or add to a collection!



## → Sunflower Growth Chart

(\$8.50); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

Your self-scrutinizing sprouters can gauge their gains as they inch towards new heights! Also available in baseball field, castle, firemen, musical fairy tree, solar system, and other eye-pleasing backgrounds. They come laminated with a gros-grain ribbon to hang, and stickers to mark special occasions!



## ← Alphabet Tower

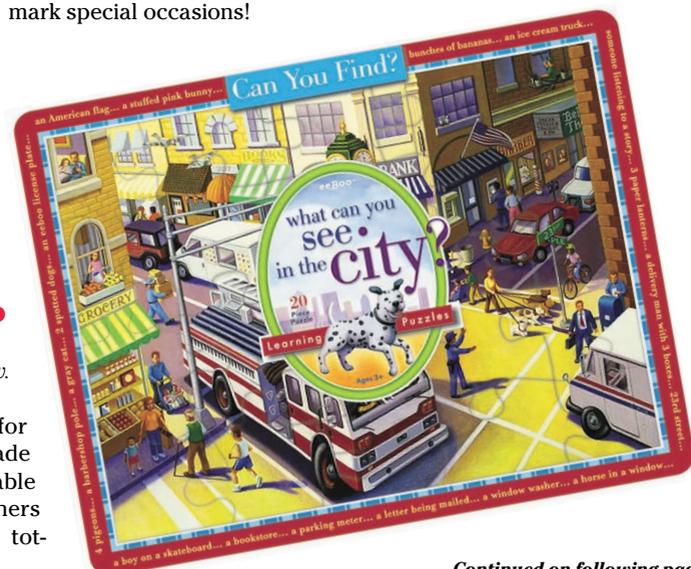
(Ages 2+, \$10); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

The ABC's of life begin with these colorful building blocks, designed to develop your child's motor skills while promoting language and concept development. Features cute graphics, including monkey, fireman and airplane motifs.

## → Friends Say Hello Tray Puzzle

(Ages 3+, \$4); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

Fun learning tray offers food for thought anytime! It's 15" x 11" and made from sturdy durable board. Also available in "Fruits and Vegetables," "Wild Mothers and Babies," "Alphabet," and other top-pleasing topics.



Continued on following page

# Gift Guide

continues...



## Soccer Girls

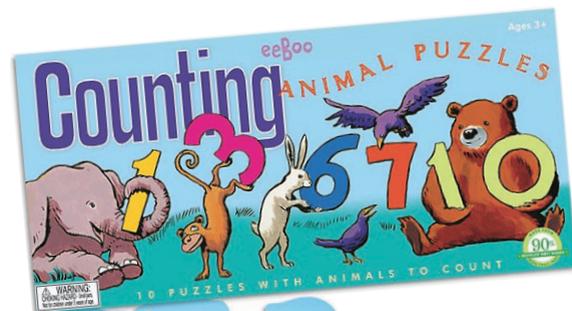
(Ages 3-9, \$24.99); KaskeyKids, (866) 527-5437, [www.kaskeykids.com](http://www.kaskeykids.com)

KaskeyKids is ahead of the rest with its first boxed set of sports action figures for girls! Each comes with up to 30 pieces, including two full teams, a washable felt field, accessories and a snazzy storage container, allowing young athletes to recreate games and enjoy imaginary play for hours! Also available in other sports (for the little guy), and don't forget to check out the Go-Go Sport Dolls, and Bop Bags!

## Magnetic Fishing Set

(Ages 3-5, \$29.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

Aspiring anglers can fish for the fun with sturdy poles baited with eye-catching magnetic "hooks" to reel in 18 colorful gilled beauties, and other sensational sea critters. They're weighted to float upright for a trouble-free trawl. Includes four adjustable poles.



## Counting Animal Puzzles

(Ages 3+, \$7.50); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eeboo.com](http://www.eeboo.com)

These fierce jigsaws add up to great downtime while honing vital math skills. Contains 10 three-piece puzzles with a divided tray for easy storage!



## Mini Playing Cards Classic Card Games

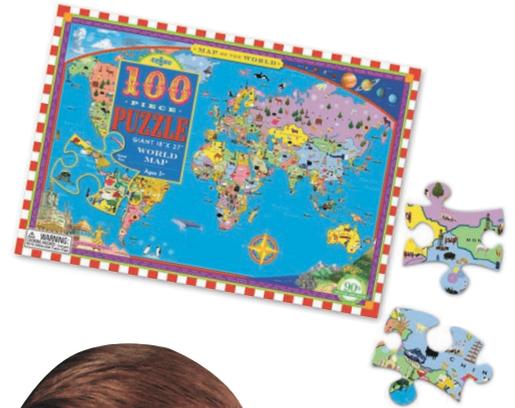
(Ages 5+, \$4-\$6); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eeboo.com](http://www.eeboo.com)

Raining outside? Deck the doldrums and stack up the good times with a few rounds of Animal Rummy, Hearts, Color Go Fish!, Old Maid, and Crazy Faces (plays like Crazy 8's).

## World Map Puzzle

(Ages 5+, \$7); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eeboo.com](http://www.eeboo.com)

Cultivate your child's world view with this colorful, 100-piece jigsaw — Legends of Icons included.



## Easy-View Microscope

(Ages 8-11, \$49.99); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

Maximize your budding Aristotle's potential for curiosity with this easy-to-use tool. Offers an exceptionally clear view with a total magnification of 640X, and comes with 19, super-cool accessories, including prepared and blank slides, a Petri dish, tweezers, and collecting vials.



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# Gifts to read

## Helping kids overcome fear

If you're near a beach, pool, water trough, garden hose, or fire hydrant, there's a good chance your child is going to get wet this summer. But before he does, you'll want to read Jennifer Sattler's new book, "Pig Kahuna," first.

The pig, Fergus, doesn't like water because of what's in it. But as you'll see in "Pig Kahuna," when a friend is in trouble, even the worst fears can be overcome.

It was a warm day at the beach and Fergus and his baby brother, Dink, were busy collecting treasures.

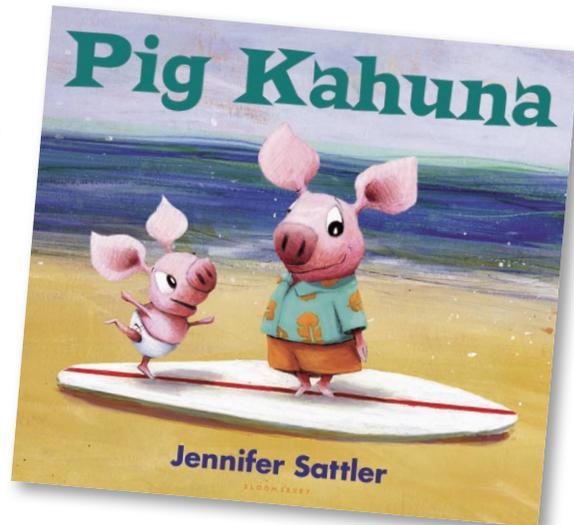
The ocean was behaving very well. Its waves rolled out, then rolled right back again, and each time, it brought more cool stuff for Fergus and Dink's collection. It laid them right on the beach, which was a very good thing. That meant that Fergus

didn't have to go into the water.

Fergus hated the water. It scared him, because he knew there was more than just his cherished items out there. He didn't even like to think about it.

Still, the ocean was good to Fergus and Dink. It gave them lots of awesome stuff: they found seaweed and shells, something that just might have been a real shark tooth, and a big, white surfboard that washed up on shore.

Since surfing was out of the question, Fergus and Dink dragged the surfboard out of the water. It was a



good board, perfect for all kinds of pretending. They named it Dave and played with it all afternoon.

But when Fergus left to get ice cream, Dink thought Dave looked kind of sad. He let Dave go wild and free, back to the ocean, but just seeing Dave floating away into the sea, well, that scared Fergus even more

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

than water did.

What if Dave was afraid of water, too?

Bravely, Fergus went out to rescue his new friend, but there was a gigantic surprise waiting for him in the water — that turned out to be the biggest treasure of all.

With a really cute story and two adorable characters, author Sattler shows kids that they can jump in, because the water's just fine. I loved how Fergus was whistle-in-the-dark, positively certain of the nasties that lurked in the drink, and I loved the subtle, soft humor in Sattler's illustrations.

Whether your 3- to 7-year-old is a tadpole at swimming lessons, or can hang 10 with the best of 'em and has just recently learned the meaning of "Cowabunga!," this is a great book to read aloud. Grab "Pig Kahuna" and dive right in.

"Pig Kahuna" by Jennifer Sattler [32 pages, Bloomsbury Kids, 2011, \$14.99] is recommended for children ages 3-7.

## A new Christmas tale for your family to love

Looking for a children's book to explore the true meaning of the holiday season? For something very different, grab "The Christmas Eve Ghost."

In the 2010 hardcover by author-illustrator Shirley Hughes, two young children know it's not Santa they hear at the back of their house. It's too scary to be Santa!

Bronwen and Dylan hadn't lived in Liverpool long; they moved there from Wales after their Da died and their Mam needed a job.

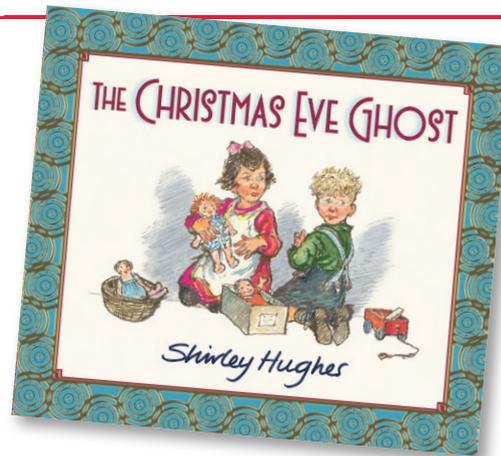
Every weekday morning, long before Bronwen and Dylan awoke, Mam, a laundress, left the children sleeping as she walked from house to house on her rounds. She hated leaving the children alone, but she

always returned in time to make porridge for breakfast. On Sundays, they went to chapel together.

In the house next door, lived Mr. and Mrs. O'Riley and their two sons. Mr. O'Riley and the boys worked at the docks in good times, and they stood on street corners in bad times.

There were no washing machines in those days, and well-off people were happy to have Mam do their washing. It was a hard job, and Mam was tired at the end of the long day. Most nights, though, she saved enough energy to spin ancient tales and legends of green valleys, dragons, and ghosties.

On the afternoon before Christmas, Mam left the children at home,



so she could finish shopping. She wanted to get them something special, so she warned them not to open the door and to stay quiet. All alone, Bronwen and Dylan were playing on the floor of their flat when they heard a noise. Plonk! Plonk!

That didn't sound like Santa! Could it be a ghost, like in one of Mam's stories?

The children ran outside as fast as they could, away from the ghost, and right into the nicest Christmas present anyone could have given them.

Based loosely on her Liverpoolian childhood, Hughes tells a tale of a Christmas that barely happens, and the gift of unlikely friendship. I loved the lesson in this book, subtle as it was, and I was absolutely smitten with the illustrations. This is the kind of book to read, savor, and discuss, particularly in this time when we gather our friends and family close.

If you plan on giving a book to your favorite kid this Christmas, here's one to find.

"The Christmas Eve Ghost" by Shirley Hughes [32 pages, Candlewick Press, 2010, \$15.99] is recommended for children ages 4 and older.

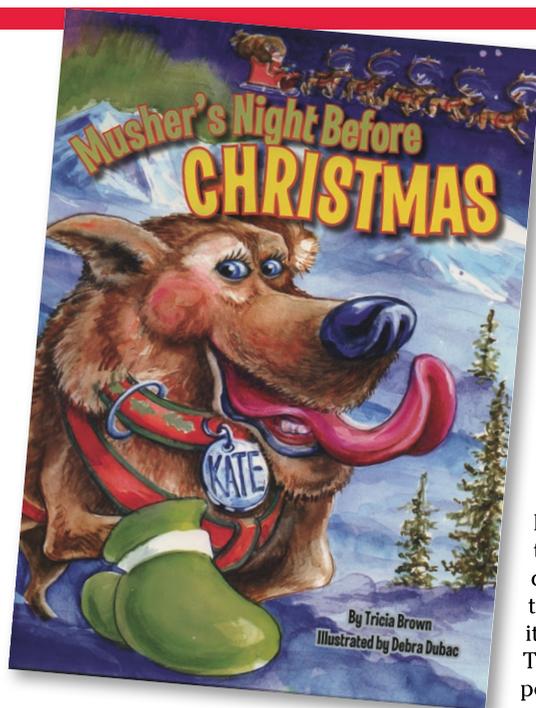
# A new holiday favorite

**S**anta brings joy to so many, but who helps Santa? As you'll see in "Musher's Night Before Christmas" by Tricia Brown, illustrated by Debra Dubac, you might be surprised at the answer.

It was Christmas Eve, and everyone at the North Pole was caught up in the excitement. All the elves were there, clapping for the guy in the red suit and listening to reindeer facts and weather reports.

As the reindeer lined up and prepared to go, Mrs. Claus reminded Santa that it was cold up in Alaska and snowing hard in Nome.

But Santa wasn't worried. He patted each of his teammates, checked his pockets for last-minute things, looked the sleigh over, and when he was satisfied that everything was A-OK, he jumped



aboard and the reindeer leaped into the sky.

At a faraway cabin way up north, a yard full of huskies were yapping at the snow. Fleece booties, meant to protect their paws, were hung by the fire and everyone — including the dogs' owner, Tom — settled down

to dream of winning big races.

Then, one by one, the huskies saw someone coming, and they started howling. When Tom heard the noise, he jumped from his bed and ran outside. It was Santa and his reindeer, and they were exhausted!

While Tom danced barefooted in the snow, Santa explained that he was nearly done delivering presents, but there was one place he didn't have the energy to reach: Nome, where it was snowing hard. The reindeer were out of power and Rudy's nose was fading to pink, but Santa knew who could help him get the gifts to Nome. He'd been following the news, and he knew all about Tom and his crew.

Could Tom and his huskies save Christmas morning?

Every year, it seems, someone comes out with another take on

Clement Moore's classic. Many of them have the barest relationship to the Yuletide, but this book is set practically in Santa's backyard.

With just a hint of Moore's "The Night Before Christmas," Brown tells the story of a string of unlikely heroes who thunder through the snow to give St. Nick a hand with his annual job. I especially enjoyed how Brown adds a touch of humanity to Santa's superhuman abilities, making the Big Guy even more huggable.

What kids will love, though, are the illustrations by Dubac. Her bold colors are holiday-perfect, and the facial expressions she gives each character are deliciously funny.

If reading a holiday book has become a beloved tradition in your family, reach for this one.

"Musher's Night Before Christmas" by Tricia Brown, illustrated by Debra Dubac [32 pages, Pelican Publishing Company, 2011, \$16.99] is recommended for children ages 3-5.

• • •

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

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A Happy & Healthy Holiday Season.

# Gifts that keep on giving

Shop where your money does the most good

BY MARY TOMASULO

**T**his holiday season, why not shop for gifts that give back to charity, or help the environment? There are so many websites and catalogs that can add a ray of hope to those in need.

There are many options when it comes to how to spread your goodwill — from proceeds for holiday greeting cards that can save a child's life to donating at your local pet store that can aid animal

shelters. Here is our list of suggestions:

## Cards and gifts

You can buy finely-crafted holiday cards with the option to add your own photos and holiday greetings. Each purchase brings clean water, basic medical care, and education for children in 150 countries. To find out which cards can help, visit [www.unicefusa.org/shop](http://www.unicefusa.org/shop).

## For moms

Why not buy a fabric bracelet with a nice print or a tie-dye scarf from Kenya? These gifts are fair trade products that play a role in poverty reduction and empowering female artisans in the poorest of countries. For more, visit [www.GlobalGoodsPartners.org](http://www.GlobalGoodsPartners.org).

From candles to ornaments, each item purchased from Susan G. Komen For the Cure goes to breast cancer research and education. There's also a beautiful tie for Dad. To shop, visit [www.shopkomen.org](http://www.shopkomen.org).

Buying from Women's Peace Collection helps women rebuilding their lives in the shadow of war, civil strife, or crippling poverty. The gifts purchased from this fair trade website celebrate women, peace, and enterprise around the world. For info, visit [www.womenspeacecollection.com](http://www.womenspeacecollection.com).

## For dads

The wines at Charity wines benefit celebrities' charities. That's something to toast to. To see a selection, visit [www.charitywines.com](http://www.charitywines.com).

With every rugged Malpai

shirt purchased, Orvis Company will make a donation to the non-profit Malpai Borderlands Group, which protects the land and wildlife of the Arizona-New Mexico border. For info, visit [http://www.orvis.com/store/product.aspx?pf\\_id=160G](http://www.orvis.com/store/product.aspx?pf_id=160G).

## For kids

St. Jude Doctor Dolls and "Mommy and Me" aprons make wonderful holiday gifts for your little ones. All proceeds benefit St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, which treats children with life-threatening illnesses. For more, visit [shop.stjude.org](http://shop.stjude.org).

Buy your child a new pair of shoes and TOMS Shoes gives a matching pair to a child who would otherwise go barefoot. Find a pair at [www.tomsshoes.com](http://www.tomsshoes.com).

## For pets

Why not buy your cat or dog a first aid kit, animal tag, or toy from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals? All proceeds fight cruelty to animals. Visit [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org).

## For anyone

If you don't have time to bake for Santa this year, you can purchase chocolate chip cookies and brownies from Dancing Deer Baking Company — 35 percent of all proceeds go toward scholarships to help homeless families establish stable lives and move into homes of their own. For info, visit [www.dancingdeer.com](http://www.dancingdeer.com).

• • •

So check your list for who has been naughty or nice, and shop where the gifts keep giving long after the holiday season has ended. Happy shopping, and happy holidays!

*Mary Tomasulo is a freelance writer from Brooklyn. She has four daughters and a cat named Max.*



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## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

# Fight holiday stress

**“I** hate to admit it, but I almost can’t wait until the holidays are over,” says Anna Rosario, a mom of two from Fort Greene in Brooklyn. “I am already stressed out!” Rosario feels the way many moms do at this time of year. She says the thought of having to get all the various tasks done — like decorating, shopping, cooking, wrapping, writing cards, and visiting extended family — is overwhelming. When you throw in the demands of raising kids, running a household, and working, it’s a sure-fire recipe for stress. But don’t throw in the towel just yet, because there are some practical tips to relieve holiday stress.

### Maintain healthy habits

By keeping healthy eating habits, you will be better equipped to deal with stress, so make sure you are eating healthfully, as well as exercising and getting a good night’s sleep. Sleep is often an underrated component of our health and one of the first things to go when stress hits. Likewise, skipping meals will make you more likely to overindulge later and will leave you feeling worse.

### Ask for help

Enlist your spouse and kids to help plan the holiday gatherings, gifts and menus. Maybe your spouse can take over kitchen clean-up duties if you cook the meal. Maybe you can split the shopping down the middle, instead of you doing it all yourself. Make decisions together about who will accomplish each task, so there are no last-minute hassles. Kids can help address cards, wrap presents, and decorate. Online shopping with your spouse (after the kids have gone to bed) can be a lifesaver, and most stores



offer free shipping during the holidays,” she advises.

Bartell also suggests taking small steps to make the day more pleasant. Maybe you can visit difficult in-laws but only stay for an hour or show up an hour late. She also says whatever you can do to dilute a tense situation helps, such as helping out in the kitchen or keeping the kids busy with things to do.

### Make a shopping list before you go to the store

Identifying what gifts you want to purchase is the hard part. If you walk into the store with a list, it will enable you to get the shopping done fast. If you don’t, you might spend hours walking round aimlessly, feeling pressured to pick the right gift, and then end up choosing something you don’t really want.

### Create a budget and stick to it!

If you spend too much, not only will it stress you out now, but it may cause long-term tension if you accumulate debt. Don’t think you have to get the most

extravagant gift for everyone on your list. A recent survey conducted by research firm Toluna said that nearly half of respondents said a phone call to catch up is the best present a distant friend or family member could give them during the holiday season.

### Make a plan for dealing with extended family

Let’s face it, for many people, visiting extended family and in-laws are a large component of the holiday stress. Dr. Susan Bartell, a nationally recognized psychologist, and author of “The Top 50 Questions Kids Ask,” says maintaining a positive attitude is vital.

“The first thing you have to do before you go to a family gathering is focus on the positive and don’t obsess on what you hate and rehash old wounds. If you do, you’ll go in with a really negative attitude and look for stuff to complain

about,” she advises.

The holidays are about showing the people who are important to you that you care — and that is absolutely free.

*Danielle Sullivan, a Brooklyn-born mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years, and was recently honored with a Gold award for her health column by the Parenting Media Association. Sullivan also writes for Babble. You can find her on her blog, Just Write Mom.*

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# They're back!

Your kids  
have gone off  
to college.  
How do you  
manage them  
when they  
come home?

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

**W**hen the kids are in high school, some have curfews, some are limited in their nocturnal Manhattan maneuverings, some have parental driving restrictions, and some are involuntarily homebound on weeknights because they have homework and school the next morning. Concerned parents know the deadlines for papers and the dates of upcoming tests. They set limits on television and Facebook time, and help their students set priorities. Their children are still young and need the guidance. But, what happens when these “children” have already left for college, are 18 or older, and come home on vacation? It seems as if all bets are off!

There are helicopter parents who continue to be acutely aware of all college papers, tests and assignments, although many of us are happy to relinquish all of that control to our young adults, hoping they will learn to manage independently.

Most of us allow our students, while at school, to wake themselves up for class and manage their own social schedule.

But then winter break arrives, and home they come, many for weeks at a time. These students have experienced a very big bump up in independence by going away to college, and both parents and children are somewhat confused about what rules, if any, should apply. After all, they left as children, and in their minds, they have come back as self-sufficient young men and women. Conversely, it is very hard for parents to acknowledge a total transformation in just a few months.

Truth be told, as parents, my husband and I have seen signs of new-found maturity in both of our children after the first time they returned from college. There is definite growth that differs from the kind of small step toward independence we had seen after sleepaway camp or a pre-college program. And yet, as other parents agree, children do not

return as our peers after only a short time away at college.

These weary warriors arrive home after exams, ready to sleep, blow off steam, and have some fun. Theoretically, they were having some fun while away at school, but I have heard that it does not take the place of visiting with their hometown friends. So, they arrive home eager to sleep and see their old friends, while their loving parents await them anxiously, looking forward to their time together. Parents often have plans for them to go shopping together, see movies, get check-ups, and visit with relatives. Hence, there is a clash of expectations.

“Communication is the foundation for the next step of student-parent relationships,” says Linda Bips, director of counseling and faculty at Muhlenberg College, and author of “Parenting College Freshmen: Consulting For Adulthood.” She specializes in the transition issues of college students and their families. She advises parents to set aside a time as soon as practicable after the student returns home, to come up with a game plan to satisfy both the student and the parent.

Lori Hiller, a Brooklyn social worker, agrees, recognizing the need for negotiation and compromise. Hiller recommends that parents give their re-

turning students advance notice of family plans to take place “during daytime hours.” I myself prefer to tell my college students about important family plans even before they come home, out of consideration for them and just in case they actually plan something in advance.

Of course, others disagree.

“If you plan two weeks ahead and constantly remind them... they will feel like you are cramping their style and nagging them to do things they do not want to do,” says Mary Spohn, in her book “What To Expect When Your Child Leaves For College, A Complete Guide For Parents Only.” She recommends keeping to your own plan to visit the relatives and casually inviting your son or daughter to join you. I agree that nagging is not the answer, but I do believe that college students sometimes lose sight of how long it has been between visits and might need to be reminded of how much their visit could mean to an elderly grandparent. I think the key is to discuss it with them, trying to avoid making demands, and keeping the visits short.

There are some family obligations which would have been obligatory when my kids were younger, which I now leave for them to decide. When our son was a college freshman, my husband and I allowed him to skip our family trip. As much as we would have loved his company, he does not enjoy a fun-in-the-sun vacation. We knew we would still have ample time to see him during the remainder of his time home, and he had been miserable the year before when we dragged him along. So, unhappy as we were, we agreed to his request. Still, certain family events are non-negotiable.

Experts seem to agree that teens might be more amenable to family time if it does not encroach on their nights out with their friends. Maura Condon Umble, director of Parent Relations at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa., suggests that parents spend afternoons and early evenings with their students, if they are able, and make a concerted effort to have dinner together as a family, as often as possible. She also suggests that parents invite some of their student’s high school friends over to dinner.

As to curfews, opinions vary. Hiller recalled that her parents imposed a “curfew on the car,” but not on her. She needed to return the car to the family’s driveway

by 1 am, and after that, she was free to stay home or go out again. Hiller believes in encouraging independence and not interrogating the students about who they were with, if a parent was present, and who was driving.

One friend confided that as long as she knows where her daughter is and that she is safe, she will not quibble with her as to the gender or identity of her companions. Another allows her college sophomore to stay out as late as he wishes, as long as he is in his bed at home when she wakes up. Condon recommends a late curfew, allowing for plenty of time with friends, while providing parents some reassurance that their student is home safe. Although, she says, “not many good things happen after 2 am.”

Condon agrees that these young scholars should be allowed to catch up on their sleep, while cautioning that “sleeping in has a limit, as well.” I have observed that college students could sleep until 1, 2 or even 3 pm. After all, they have a lot of sleep to catch up on, and they are tired from their late nights out socializing. Still, their social schedules conflict with the normal rhythms in the house, as their arrival home in the dead of night disrupts much-needed sleep for other family members, and their sleeping in eats away at any communal daytime family activities. So it is essential that parents and college-age children come to an agreement, and be as accommodating as possible.

Even though it is their vacation time at home, these young adults need to remember they are still part of a family unit. At the same time, their parents need to recognize their young adult’s growing need for independence, and should give him some space. Some parents even admit that they are relieved when their kids returns to college, and everyone is back to their normal routine.

Nonetheless, most every parent will acknowledge that they look forward to each and every time their college student walks through the door after months away. Despite all the drama, there is nothing like getting that long-awaited hug and the chance to catch up, face to face.

*Risa C. Doherty is an attorney, freelance writer, and the mother of two college students. She was honored this year with a Silver Investigatory Award from Parenting Publications of America (now known as Parenting Media Association).*



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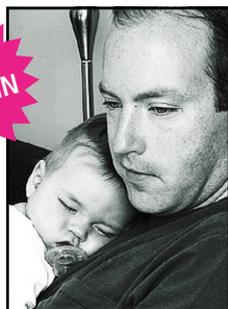
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## NEWBIE DAD

BRIAN KANTZ

# Time flies...

## Columnist a 'Newbie' no more

**C**an it be possible that our oldest son — our baby — is already 7 years old, and that our younger son will soon turn 5? Can it be possible, dear reader, that your child is now 7 weeks old, or 7 months, or 7, 17, or 37 years old?

It seems like they were born just yesterday, doesn't it?

It's true, time flies when you're having fun. And that's why time really flies once you become a parent. I've found that there is no greater

fun in life — no greater joy — than being a parent. I hope you agree.

I became a parent seven years ago and, oh, how my life has changed. Our first son came into this world and immediately demanded my time and attention. He demanded that I not just be his father, he demanded that I be his dad. And that title comes with a lot of responsibility. It means being wise even when I don't have a clue what I'm doing, being encouraging even when I have

doubts, being adventurous even though I'm not necessarily built that way, and being loving at all times.

Speaking of being adventurous, our first son was the reason for the greatest adventure of my life. After logging regular nine-to-five office hours for almost a decade, I quit my day job back in 2004 to become a stay-at-home dad. For nearly six years, I cared for the daily needs of one, then two, little boys. By "daily needs," I'm talking about feeding, dressing, burping, entertaining, transporting, teaching, and wiping

— in short, everything that a guy who had babysat only once before in his life probably should not have been trusted to do. Luckily, my lovely wife did trust me, and I thank her for that vote of confidence. Learning on the fly, I actually became pretty good at my new job.

As a dad making his way around town with a couple of kids in tow, hardly a day went by without an older woman or man stopping me on the street to say, "Enjoy every minute. It goes so fast. Those were some of the best years of my life."

I completely understand that sentiment. The years when your children are still young and full of wonder should be some of the best years of a parent's life. And they do go fast. To be sure, there are challenges that

go along with raising small children (darn, why didn't I think of writing that bestseller called "Go the F\*\*\* to Sleep"?), but most of the problems are insignificant and quickly forgotten. Mostly, having little kids is all about the joy and the giggling and the horsing around.

I certainly consider my stay-at-home dad years to be the best years of my life so far. That's probably because I woke up every single morning knowing that I was doing something meaningful and worthwhile. To me, that old saying, "Time spent with children is never wasted," rings true. I may not have been climbing the corporate ladder, but I never wasted one moment of my life when I was at home with the boys.

But time does fly and, last year, an opportunity came up for me to re-enter the office workforce. I have to admit that I found it a bit difficult to go back, not because I didn't want to work (heck, working normal business hours now is less tiring than staying home and freelance-writing until 3 am), but because I realized how much I loved my "work" of staying home with the boys. There's no better job — I highly recommend it to both new moms and dads.

Both of our kids are in school now, though, and the transition back to a two-working-parent home has happened. It's a new phase for our family. At the same time, I've decided that this is a good point for me to shift gears a bit with my writing. For the past few years, I've had the pleasure of sharing my "dad perspective" with you in this wonderful magazine. I want to thank you so much for reading my columns and for writing back. I really appreciate it. I know that all of you feel the same way about your kids as I do about mine. They're the lights of our lives.

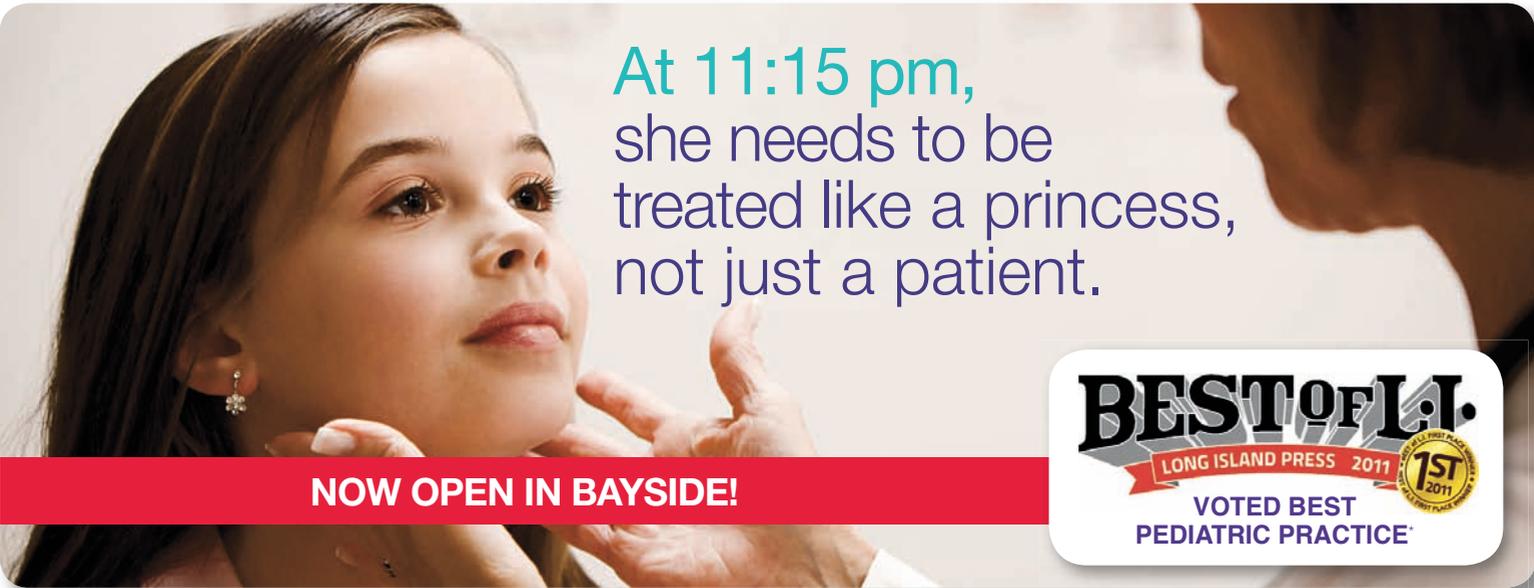
Of course, it's impossible to fully explain the love that I have for my two boys, but I suppose this column has been my attempt to explain that love through stories that other parents can relate to, too. No matter what age our kids are, we love them, support them, and constantly let them know that they're loved. That's what counts the most.

*Brian Kantz hopes you'll follow his next writing adventure. This spring, he'll be releasing the first book from his Opening Day Press ([www.openingdaypress.com](http://www.openingdaypress.com)), a new, independent publisher of baseball books for kids.*



(Above) The author with his newborn son, Brendan, in 2004. (At right) With his two sons, Brendan and Patrick, on vacation in 2011.





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## A TEEN'S TAKE

AGLAIA HO

# Why I love winter in New York City

**W**ith winter in full swing, the cold weather might tempt us to remain in the sanctuary of our warm houses. For me, winter in New York City means picking my way through slushy streets, avoiding catching a cold at school, and bundling up in scarves, down jackets, and bulky mittens. It's no surprise that at times I envy Fuzzy-Wuzzy, who hibernates until spring! Nevertheless, I've learned that wintertime has its own joys. The snow doesn't have to keep us inside. I've enjoyed many, fun-filled activities when I've braved the cold with my family.

## Get inspired

Winter transforms our city into a pure white land of glistening icicles and snow-capped buildings. As an avid artist, I've been truly inspired by the way winter transforms the landscapes and scenes of the city. I find myself looking outside my window and being awe-struck by the breathtaking view of newly fallen snow, gently illuminated by morning light. This wondrous image soon translates into a poem. Sometimes, I rush outside in the bitter cold and whip out my digital camera to capture stills of my neighborhood.

One winter, a huge snowstorm hit New York City. Two feet of snow piled up in front of our house, locking us inside. My family and I were watching the snow come down, and we were inspired to create our own winter wonderland indoors. Together, we cut out at least a hundred, unique snowflakes out of recycled paper and hung them up all around our dining room.

Let the snow and wintery weather inspire you to release your inner creativity. Draw a picture, write a story, or create a song. Gather the family together and share your winter-themed creations.

## Challenge yourself

With a world filled with progressive technology, it's not too hard to



occupy ourselves during a snowstorm. Yet, one of our family traditions is to dig out old-fashioned jigsaw puzzles. We sit around our coffee table cooperating to finish a 1,000-piece puzzle!

My dad's technique consists of dividing the pieces by shape, while my mom generally separates everything by color. I just use the common and very-effective method of plug and chug, otherwise known as "just guess!" We chat about life in general, tell jokes, and tease each other. Sometimes, I even serenade my parents with a song or two, mostly about nonsense, but it cheers us all up. It's an invigorating challenge that brings us together and also helps to pass time as the wind howls violently outside. Of course, puzzles can be extremely addictive (and frustrating, too).

Find your old puzzles and redo them during a frosty day. Perhaps challenge your family with a crossword puzzle or some brainteasers. It's bound to keep your mind churning and be enjoyable for everyone.

## See the sights

Almost every year, for as long as I can remember, my mom and I would

take the subway into Manhattan to experience the holiday magic. We'd visit the magnificent tree at Rockefeller Center and stand under its gigantic boughs, smelling the distinct scent of the evergreen. Although I was never a huge fan of this towering tree, I loved to watch the ice skaters in the plaza below. I was even able to convince my mom to let me join them gliding by the golden, radiant beauty of the Prometheus statue.

However, the best part of our excursion was seeing the Christmas windows. Each year, Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Henri Bendel's (which this year has a spectacular Lady Liberty decked in jelly-bean garb), and other department stores fill their windows with holiday and winter-inspired decor.

Saks Fifth Avenue windows are definitely the most memorable for me. Every year, they tell a different, adorable children's story. To this day, I find myself reliving my childhood as I watch the characters play out scenes from the stories. Afterwards, we'd treat ourselves to the warm, tantalizing taste of steamy pretzels, roasted nuts, and hot chocolate. Snacks in hand, we'd proceed through the city, drooling over the jewelry in the Tiffany's windows, marveling at the Gothic designs of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and greeting the Santas that line the street.

The city is always decked out for any approaching holidays. Experiencing the atmosphere is definitely enough to make an incredible memory.

Winter doesn't have to be a tiring season, waiting out the snow and longing for the warmth of spring. With innovation and fun, you can enjoy tried-and-true experiences or make new traditions that are the key to having a fulfilling winter.

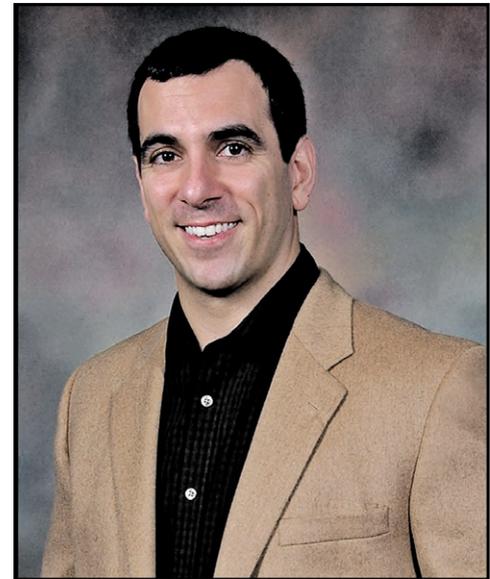
*Aglaia Ho is a 16-year-old student from Queens who enjoys writing. Her work has been published in Creative Kids, Skipping Stones, Daily News/Children's Pressline, and The State of the Wild.*

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# Vegecontrarian!

A meat-loving dad tries to understand his son's selective vegetarianism

BY CHRISTOPHER GARLINGTON

**A**s I write this, I am covered in blood and barbecue sauce. My keyboard is a Pollock painting of reds and browns, with tacky bits of bone and sinew clinging to my QWERTY row. I tell you this for full disclosure, so you can understand, perhaps sympathize, perhaps lend a commiserate ear (or trotter, or snout) to my dilemma: Despite my best efforts in parenting, despite my fiery discourses at the backyard grill, despite a sink regularly full of well-gnawed chicken bones, I have managed to raise my son with the terrible flaw of rebellion. My boy, my former brother in bacony goodness, is a...

Vegecontrarian!

As much as I applaud the anti-cruelty philosophy behind my son's vegetarianism, I'm beginning to suspect that he doesn't entirely get that being a vegetarian means you have to eventually eat some vegetables.

I was thrilled when he told me he was a vegetarian. Ok, I was bemused when... Look: I was holding a pork shoulder I'd slow roasted all day. I put the pork

down, looked him in the eye, and said, "You know this means you have to eat zucchini, right?"

It hasn't happened yet. So far my vegetarian's diet is ramen noodles, grilled cheese sandwiches, pizza, and cuisine d'microwave. I haven't seen a single green vegetable enter his mouth since he declared his unmeatfulness, and I hold little hope that I will.

It's not like I don't try. Witness our regular conversation. And by regular, I mean every seven minutes:

"Dad, I'm hungry."

"Awesome, how about some Brussels sprouts?"

"Dad, please be serious. I'm starving."

"Zucchini?"

"Yeah...no."

"Asparagus?"

"Dad."

"Spinach?"

"I had spinach last year."

He's a vegecontrarian! And he's definitely mature for his 14 years. Most vegetarians don't get all political until they can drive, because they need that first car for all the bumper stickers. Mine is constantly bringing up meat processing horror stories and asking me if I like the spleen bits in my hot dog. (They're the best part, dammit.)

Currently, we're in a standoff.

"Hey kid, I made instant Udon noodles."

"Can't. They use fish products."

"Hot fries?"

"Fried in beef tallow."

"Wheat grass?"

"Buffalo walked through it."

"Gravel?"

"You scooped that out of the fish tank. I'm not stupid."

I've handed him tabbouleh ("Ew!"), hummus ("Isn't that Latin for dirt?"), falafel ("Papier mache meatballs") and tofu ("Who sneezed in my stir fry?"). For a veggie, he's a tad particular.

Maybe I have little room to complain, as he's lost 12 pounds, his acne has cleared up, and he's spending a lot more time outside (probably foraging). Even our grill time is not entirely lost. I buy him "smeat" (soy-based fake meat — as if Willy Wonka worked in produce), sign an affidavit that I scoured the grill of all meat remnants, then grill it right alongside my rib-eyes.

And I taunt. I taunt mercilessly, because I hate that he's a vegetarian. I don't care if you think it's un-supportive. We're talking U.S.D.A. here, people. We're talking bacon. We took some visiting relatives to Gene & Georgetti's. I ordered a lightly seared, full-grown steer. As I looked across the expanse of burnt flesh before me, I watched my son pick at a wan pasta-based afterthought and look wistfully askance.

Is it mean? Look, I don't know. Maybe. But there are two ways this can go: I can taunt him into giving up his hippy stance, wherein he will actually eat broccoli as an accompaniment to a New York strip, or he will get fed up and start shoveling green things into his mouth just to show me he means business. Everybody wins.

*Christopher Garlington lives in a standard two kids, wife, dog, corner-lot, two car, small business owner American dream package. He drives a 2003 Camry, sports a considerable notebook fetish, and smokes Arturo Fuente Partaga Maduros at the Cigar King as often as possible. His stories have appeared in Atlanta Parenting, Florida, Orlando, Orlando Weekly, Catholic Digest, Retort, Another Realm, The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, South Lit, and other magazines. His short story collection, "King of the Road," is available on Amazon.*



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## OUR RELATIONSHIPS

JOAN EMERSON, PhD

# The power of touch

**T**he fact that gentle, non-erotic touch is a vital ingredient in a relationship is nothing new. However, since couplehood has its ups and downs, all partners may notice that, sometimes, they're not touching each other as usual. This physical isolation is almost always a reflection of emotional distance.

If we are noticing its absence, we can be sure that our partner is also noticing it. Yet, at times, although we want to, we both resist reaching out, because we're too angry, hurt, scared, or upset in some way. The power of touch has been on my mind these days because of some recent, very dramatic scenes in two couples' therapy sessions.

When partners reach out appreciatively to touch each other in the sessions, it's always moving and emotional. But the two couples I'm thinking about were having trouble figuring out if they even wanted to stay married, so obviously, touch didn't come as easily. That's why, when it happened with them, it was even more dramatic and emotional. One couple had come for a few sessions and they were both seeing

that the changes they needed were indeed possible.

But one day, they had slipped back into old, painful communication patterns and came in to the next session very hurt, angry, and guarded — to the point that she decided to move off the couch and sit in a chair on the other side of the room. As we tried to figure out what might repair the break and let them reconnect, she took the risk of expressing what he could do to make it better for her. She talked of a goal they both had already set for themselves, and he reaffirmed that he would remember better and try harder. She felt appreciative, reaffirmed that she would do her part, and calmed down.

But him! Although he had just heard a reminder that she wanted to give him more of what he needed, emotionally, he couldn't figure out how to let go of the fear in his head and the tension and anger in his body. We were stuck and just sat there. Finally, I asked if a physical connection might help, and he shrugged and said "maybe."

His partner was willing and went to sit next to him, and he allowed her to hold him for a few moments. Almost immediately, a dramatic change occurred in the room. All the tension and discomfort was gone! His body was visibly calm and relaxed. She and I saw it immediately. He, too, acknowledged how her holding him had allowed him to physically let go of his anger.

The next day, I saw another variation on this theme. A new couple who had recently started counseling hadn't yet seen any hopeful changes; indeed, they weren't yet sure that change was possible. She didn't even know if she wanted to work on change since she wasn't sure she still wanted the marriage; but he did.

During their conversation, as he was explaining how much he wanted to help improve things, he held the tip of his finger against her leg. Given the hopelessness she

was expressing, even this very tentative touch was a brave, reaching-out act on his part.

Afterward, when I asked how that physical connection felt, limited though it was, she responded that it felt good and calming. So, even with all that emotional and physical distance, that tiny physical contact had a positive effect on creating a bonding feeling.

Can touch really be that powerful? My experience is that it's one of the most powerful tools a couple has. We know that being touched releases hormones that give us a feeling of safety and comfort. Adding touch to gentle talk while looking in the other's eyes is a connection triumvirate that can't fail to improve things. When partners talk to each other like that, it creates the safety to drop their guards and become truly available.

This kind of gentle, non-erotic touch, by definition, is a loving act. When one of us reaches out affectionately, even with a tip of a finger, it feels nothing but good. We all know this works, since touch is one of the reasons we were able to get close enough to our partner in the first place. So, when things are going well, touch is an integral part of the interaction; when touch is gone, something in the relationship is going badly.

Yet, from the two couples above, I was reminded how being willing to risk responding to an outreach or reaching out with gentle words and just the barest minimum of touch still seemed the way to begin the repair process in a deeply emotional way. Saying, "I'm sorry," or "I really want this to work," while looking elsewhere with hands folded, doesn't compare to the experience of saying the same words while looking at and touching our partner.

Looking into your partner's eyes and saying, or hearing, "I miss you," along with a gentle touch, is guaranteed to bridge the distance and bring some loving feelings back between the two of you.

*Joan Emerson is a New York psychologist who specializes in couple's therapy. Visit her website at [www.JoanEmerson.com](http://www.JoanEmerson.com).*



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## GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

# Sugarplum madness

## Help your family handle holiday temptations

**C**ookies, candy canes, fudge and egg nog, oh my! Everywhere we turn this time of year, we're faced with temptations galore. As if we need reminding, the media dishes up plenty of advice on how to avoid holiday weight gain.

As every parent knows, it's a more indulgent time for children, as well. While they have more caloric leeway than we do — and more opportunity to burn it off — some children gain weight during the holiday period.

Research published last year in the *Journal of Clinical Medical Research* suggests that elementary school-aged children can gain weight over the six-week holiday period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Not surprisingly, those who are already overweight are more susceptible to this gain.

A 2000 study on adults published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* came to a similar conclusion. It found that they gained an average of 0.8 pounds during the holiday period of mid-November through mid-January. Those who were overweight gained significantly more weight, with 14 percent gaining more than five pounds.

Realistically, the "eating season" stretches much longer than six weeks. It starts in mid-October when people start stockpiling candy for trick-or-treaters, and usually ends when the kids head back to school in early January.



"Anyone is susceptible to weight gain and, even more importantly, to developing unhealthy eating habits if they allow the holidays to bleed into one another," explains Sally Kuzemchak, MS, RD, a dietitian and mother of two in Columbus, OH, who blogs at [www.realmomnutrition.com](http://www.realmomnutrition.com). "After weeks of having treats around, kids and grown-ups expect these kinds of foods daily. Instead of being 'sometimes foods' they become 'all the time foods.'"

Burning those extra sugar plum calories is also important. Enjoy physical activities with your children, such as snowball fights, sledging, building snowmen, as well as walks during a snowfall. Even shoveling can be fun if you make it so.

Kuzemchak shares her tradition:

"My family is pretty active on the holidays. Between me and my brother, we have four little boys — so staying inside isn't really an option! After the big holiday meal, we often end up going outside to play football or taking a walk through the woods.

"Yes, it's cold and every fiber of my being wants to stay inside and eat cookies, but once we're out, I'm always glad we did it," continues Kuzemchak. "It's good for everyone's mental health, too. Kids like to be active and outside, even in the cold."

Here are some tips for keeping your child's (and your) weight under control:

- Remember, you are a role model, so make good food choices yourself.
- Keep healthful food choices front and center in the fridge and on the kitchen counter.
- Encourage small samples of rich holiday treats. Eat slowly and savor those tiny bites.
- Emphasize what celebrating the holidays are about: family, friends and its religious aspects.
- If hosting a get together, include beautifully displayed low-calorie foods, such as a tossed green salad with pomegranate arils, or an artfully assembled crudite platter.

Holidays are about making memories, which include enjoying the special foods we hold dear to our hearts. So make the traditional, once-a-year dishes. Bake the pies and cookies. Use butter and cream and other ingredients that make those once-a-year foods so special.

As Kuzemchak admits, "I actually let my kids have free reign on those days. We have family parties with tons of food, and I'm not about to police them at the buffet table. But that's ONE day. I try my very hardest to get everyone back on track the next day."

*Christine M. Palumbo, RD, is a dietitian in Naperville, IL. Her three children are hoping she'll host a cookie exchange this year. She can be reached at [Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com](mailto:Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com) or at (630) 369-8495.*

## Poached pears in purple grape juice



Makes four servings

### INGREDIENTS:

1½ cups Welch's® 100 percent Grape Juice made with Concord grapes  
2 cinnamon sticks  
Rind of orange, 2 strips  
4 pears (Bosc or Bartlett), peeled

**DIRECTIONS:** In a medium saucepan, bring grape juice, cinnamon and orange rind to a boil. Peel the pears, leaving the stem. Place pears standing in saucepan and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Turn or spoon juice over

pears as they simmer. Remove pears and let cool. Reduce sauce by boiling down to about 1/3 cup. Spoon sauce over pears and keep chilled. Serve pears by themselves or with whipped cream or vanilla pudding.

**NUTRITION:** 150 calories, 0 g fat, cholesterol and sodium, 1 gram protein, 39 grams carbohydrate, 6 grams dietary fiber.

Used with permission from Welch's. Featured in Welch's "Taste the Harvest Guide: Where and How to Eat Fresh, Local and Seasonal." Visit [welchs.com/zagat](http://welchs.com/zagat) to check out the guide and more recipes.



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# Going Places

## LONG-RUNNING

**Fledglings:** Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd.; (718) 229-4000; [www.alleypond.com](http://www.alleypond.com); Mondays, 9:30–11 am, Tuesdays, 11:15 am–12:15 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 19; \$221 (\$247 for non-members; for full series).

Children 3-4 years old take nature walks, create craft projects and pet APEC's animals. Snack included; must be toilet trained. Pre-registration required.

**Christmas Spectacular:** Radio City Music Hall, 1260 Ave. of the Americas between 50th and 51st streets in Manhattan; (212) 247-4777; [www.radiocity.com](http://www.radiocity.com); Daily, check for times, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; \$45-\$125.

The world famous Rockettes, new music, dazzling costumes and state-of-the-art 3D technology make this year's show the greatest ever. And of course a visit from the jolly old elf himself, Saint Nick.

**Sunny Bunnies:** Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd.; (718) 229-4000; [www.alleypond.com](http://www.alleypond.com); Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9:45 am–noon, Now – Wed, Dec. 21; \$702 (\$780 for non-members; for full series).

Children, 3-4 years old, have a hands-on opportunity to meet with animals, explore the nature trails, discuss nature topics, crafts, free play and music. Snack included, bring a bag lunch; participants must be toilet trained. Pre-registration required.

**Dinosaur display:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street in Manhattan; (212) 769-5000; [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10 am–5:30 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; \$24 (\$18 students, \$14 children).

Children learn about the largest dinos, the long-tailed sauropods by examining the innovative model.

**Big Apple Circus:** Lincoln Center, 62nd Street between Amsterdam and Columbus avenues in Manhattan; (888) 541-3750; [www.bigapplecircus.org](http://www.bigapplecircus.org); Sundays and Mondays, 10 am–6 pm, Tuesdays – Saturdays, 10 am–8 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 8, 2012; \$15-\$95.

The Big Top returns featuring the Flying Cortes, magician Scott Nelson and Muriel Brugman, aerialist Anna Volodko and the mistress of the horses Jenny Vidbel on her fiery Arabian.

**Gingerbread Adventure:** New York



## Time to get 'cracking

**P**yoer Tchaikovsky's delightful ballet, based on E.T.A. Hoffman's tale of the Nutcracker and the Mouse King is a holiday favorite fit for the whole family.

Take a magical journey with Clara and meet the Sugar Plum Fairy, the Mouse King, and of course, the Nutcracker, who turns into a prince. Performed by the Brighton Ballet Theater Com-

pany, the classic comes to the stage at the Colden Auditorium, Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College on Dec. 18 at 3 pm. Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$12 for children under 12.

*"The Nutcracker" [Colden Auditorium, Kupferberg Center for the Arts, Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd in Flushing, (718) 544-2996]. For more info, visit [www.kupferberg-center.org](http://www.kupferberg-center.org).*

Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Boulevard in the Bronx; (718) 817-8700; [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org); Daily, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16, 2012; \$20 (\$18 seniors and students; \$10 children).

Children explore the spices that make up a classic gingerbread recipe.

**Open mic:** Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; Mondays, 10:30 am, Now – Thurs, Dec. 1; Free.

Come and share your original works or listen to others.

### "The Three Bears Holiday Bash":

Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, 81st Street and Central Park West in Manhattan; (212) 988-9093; [www.cityparksfoundation.org](http://www.cityparksfoundation.org); Weekdays, 10:30 am and noon, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now – Fri., Dec. 30; \$5 (\$8 adults; group rates available).

Celebrate Hanukkah, The Night Before Christmas, and Kwanzaa with song, dance and puppetry. Reservations required. There are no performances on Dec. 25 and 26.

**Penguin encounter:** Long Island

## 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](mailto: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!

Aquarium & Exhibition Center, 431 E. Main St. at Ostrander Avenue in Riverhead, NY; (631) 208-9200; [ndamico@amwny.com](mailto:ndamico@amwny.com); [www.longislandaquarium.com](http://www.longislandaquarium.com); Daily, 11 am, 1:30 and 3:30 pm; Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$50 (\$45 members) plus museum admission.

A 45-minute interactive program allowing visitors to get up close and personal with an African penguin.

**Toddler time:** Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd.; (718) 229-4000; [www.alleypond.com](http://www.alleypond.com); Mondays, 11:30 am–12:45 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 19; \$208 (\$234 for non-members; for full series).

Children, 24-35 months old, explore the world of nature, listen to stories and take short walks. Snack included. Pre-registration required.

**Homework help:** Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); Weekdays, 3 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; Free.

Teens get assistance with school work.

**Tutoring:** Queens Library at Bayside, 2124-20 Northern Blvd.; (718) 229-1834; [www.queenspubliclibrary.org](http://www.queenspubliclibrary.org); Mondays, 3:30 pm, Saturdays, 10 am, Now – Sun, Dec. 18; Free.

Teen volunteers offer homework help.

**Knit and crochet:** Douglaston/Little Neck Public Library, 249-01 Northern Blvd. at 249th Street; (718) 225-8414; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); Mondays, 4 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 19.

Helen Bodner helps adults, teens and children learn new stitches. Pre-registration required.

**Holiday train show:** New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Boulevard in the Bronx; (718) 817-8700; [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org); Tuesdays

# Going Places

– Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16, 2012; \$20 (\$18 seniors and students; \$10 children).

The annual event features model trains that zip over bridges and past replicas of New York landmarks. (Closed on Dec. 25).

**Story time:** Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; Tuesdays, 10:30 am, Now – Tues, Dec. 13; Free.

Listen to a new author each week with a suitable craft project.

**Career and college workshops:** Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd.; (718) 990-0700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3–5 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 8; Free.

Teens get information on how to succeed in high school, prepare for college, obtain financial aid, get a part-time job and explore career options.

**The Yak Packers:** Rubin Museum of Art, 150 West 17th St., between Sixth and Seventh avenues in Manhattan; (212) 620-5000 X 344; [www.rmany.org](http://www.rmany.org); Thursdays, 10:30–11:30 am, Now – Thurs, Dec. 29; \$10 child and parent (\$5 members).

Children, ages 2-4, accompanied by an adult touch, explore and create projects inspired by Himalayan art.

**"Atlas":** Dixon Place, 161A Chrystie St. in Manhattan; [www.dixonplace.org](http://www.dixonplace.org); Tuesdays – Fridays, 7:30 pm, Saturdays, 3 and 7:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 11; \$10-\$18.

Lava's newest show featuring acrobatics and dance set to live and sampled music.

**Mini-golf:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Fridays, 2–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$6 (\$5 children and seniors plus museum admission).

Putt your way through a nine-hole course and learn about spaceflight along the way. Weather permitting.

**Science playground:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Fridays, 2–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$4 (plus museum admission).

The nation's largest playground, featuring 60,000 square feet of exhibits, with slides, seesaws, climbing webs, drums, mirrors, sand boxes and more, weather permitting.

**Girl and boy scouts:** Laurelton Public Library, 134-26 225th St. at Merrick Boulevard; (718) 528-2822; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); Fridays, 3 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; Free.

Through scouting, teens have an opportunity to build courage, confidence, and character in this weekly program.

## Harvest holiday spirit!

**W**hether you make a wreath, buy a plant or visit the museum during its open house, you'll catch the holiday spirit at the festive Queens County Farm Museum this month.

Make a one-of-a-kind wreath at a craft workshop using evergreen fronds from the grounds on Dec. 3, from 1 to 4 pm. All materials will be provided, but participants must bring their own shears. The cost of the class is \$20.

Plants, plants and more plants are available for purchase, just in time to decorate your home with the winter varieties that signal the season — poinsettias, evergreen trees and paper whites. The proceeds of sales between Dec. 3-24 benefit the museum.

Don't forget your camera when you visit the Farm Museum, festooned in all its gilded glory, on Dec. 26, 27 and 28 from Noon to 4 pm. While there, enjoy a mulled



cider as you sit by the fire and warm your toes. Children can also make a decoration to take home.

The Museum is open every day, from 10 am to 5 pm. On Saturdays and Sundays, tours of the farmhouse and hayrides are available from 11 am to 4 pm (weather permitting). General admission is free, except where otherwise noted.

*The Queens County Farm Museum [73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. in Floral Park, (718) 347-3276]. For more info, visit [www.queensfarm.org](http://www.queensfarm.org).*

Pre-registration required.

**Wild Ocean:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Fridays, 3:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 and 3:30 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$6, (\$5 children, students and seniors, plus museum admission).

Science themed 3-D show about the ocean and ecosystem. The movie is approximately 30-minutes long and is suitable for children 6 years and older.

**Plant sale:** Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy.; (718) 347-3276; [www.queensfarm.org](http://www.queensfarm.org); Daily, 10 am–5 pm, Sat, Dec. 3 – Sat, Dec. 24; Free.

Popular varieties and sizes of trees, evergreens, poinsettias, and paper whites will be on sale. Proceeds benefit the museum.

**Story time:** Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; Saturdays, 10:30 am, Now – Tues, Dec. 6; Free.

Listen to a new author each week

with a suitable craft project.

**Arts and crafts:** Lakeshore Learning Store, 2079 Hillside Ave. at Marcus Avenue; (516) 616-9360; [mgermain@lakeshorelearning.com](mailto:mgermain@lakeshorelearning.com); [www.lakeshorelearning.com](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com); Saturdays, 11 am – 3 pm, Free.

Children, ages 3 and up, create fun projects.

**"Peter Pan":** The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza in Manhattan; (866) 858-0008; [www.theateratmsg.com](http://www.theateratmsg.com); Daily, check for times, Wed, Dec. 14 – Fri, Dec. 30; \$35-\$99.

Pixie dust, Captain Hook and Wendy. Cathy Rigby plays the boy that doesn't want to grow up, flying through the air and creating magical moments that delight young and old.

**Erth Dinosaur Petting Zoo:** Eisner & Lubin Auditorium of the Kimmel Center, 60 Washington Square South, 4th floor; (212) 352-3101; [www.skirballcenter.nyu.edu](http://www.skirballcenter.nyu.edu); Wednesday, Jan. 4, 7 pm; Thursday, Jan. 5, 4:30 pm; Friday, Jan.

6, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 7, 11 am; Sunday, Jan. 8, 11 am; Wednesday, Jan. 11, 4:30 pm; Thursday, Jan. 12, 4:30 pm; Friday, Jan. 13, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 14, 11 am; Sunday, Jan. 15, 11 am; \$20-\$30.

Interactive puppet performance. Recommended for children ages 6 and up.

## SUN, DEC. 4

**Holiday fair:** St. Raphael's Rectory, 35-20 Greenpoint Ave. at Hunter's Point Avenue; (718) 729-8957; 9 am–3 pm; Free.

Brand new items and decorating needs.

**The Okee Dokee Brothers:** 92Y Tribeca, 200 Hudson St. at Vestry Street in Manhattan; (212) 601-1000; 11 am; \$15.

Original music that makes you feel good.

**Santa & Holiday Boutique:** St. Raphael School Auditorium, 48-25 37th St. between Greenpoint and 48th avenues; (718) 784-0482; [www.straphaelschool-lic.org](http://www.straphaelschool-lic.org); noon–5 pm; Free.

St. Raphael School in Long Island City is hosting their second Sunday with Santa and Holiday Boutique, an indoor fair featuring baked goods, freshly cut Christmas trees, gift boutiques, raffles, holiday music, and — for the kids — Santa Claus himself. For information, contact Sr. Maureen Ahlemeyer, principal.

**Chris Van Allsburg:** Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at West 94th Street in Manhattan; (212) 316-4962; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 1 pm; \$15 (\$12 members).

Author of "The Polar Express" talks about his new short story collection, "The Chronicles of Harris Burdick."

**Moving with Mike family day:** Walt Whitman Birthplace Historic Site, 246 Old Walt Whitman Rd.; (631) 427-5240; 1 pm; \$7 per child (Free for chaperones).

Children up to 10 years old enjoy an interactive program presented by Mike and Santa, have their faces painted by Miss Sue, make an ornament to take home, and have a jolly good time.

**Winter festival:** The Morgan Library and Museum, 225 Madison Ave. between East 36th and East 37th streets in Manhattan; (212) 685-0008; [www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org); 2–5 pm; \$15 (\$10 for children).

Featuring ballet, crafts and more!

**Holiday Tree Lighting:** Poppenhusen Institute, 114-04 14th Rd.; (718) 358-0067; 5 pm; Free.

Vintage trolley with holiday songs and caroling included. RSVP for caroling.

*Continued on page 46*

# Going Places

Continued from page 45

## MON, DEC. 5

**Yoga:** Cambria Heights Public Library, 218-13 Linden Blvd. between 218th and 219th streets; (718) 528-3535; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Teens learn the basics with Damita Carmichael.

**Employment workshop:** Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd.; (718) 990-0700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 6 pm; Free.

Learn how to safely find and apply for jobs on line and how to e-mail a resume.

## TUES, DEC. 6

**Going green with Leap:** Woodside Library, 54-22 Skillman Ave.; (718) 429-4700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 3 pm; Free.

Students create and play games regarding ecology and the environment. For children 11 to 14 years old.

**Book club:** Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Pick a title and then discuss it with your friends.

## WED, DEC. 7

**Teen hour:** Steinway Public Library, 21-45 31 St. at 21st Avenue; (718) 728-1965; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Play games, do an art project and relax with friends.

## THURS, DEC. 8

**EE JazzKids:** 4 pm. East Elmhurst Public Library. See Thursday, Dec. 1.

## FRI, DEC. 9

**Shababa Bakery:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at East 91st Street in Manhattan; (212) 415-5500; [www.92y.org](http://www.92y.org); 10:15-11 am; \$15. Children squish, roll and braid their very own dough to make a challah loaf to take home.

**Arts and crafts:** Bellerose Public Library, 250-06 Hillside Ave. at 249th Street; (718) 831-8644; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free. Young adults make door chimes. Pre-registration required.

**"A Christmas Carol":** Houghton Hall at Trinity Episcopal Church, 130 Main St.; (631) 732-2926; [www.minstrelplayers.org](http://www.minstrelplayers.org); 8 pm; \$15 (\$12 seniors and children).

The Charles Dickens holiday classic performed by the Minstrel Players of Northport.

**"A Christmas Carol":** Houghton Hall at Trinity Episcopal Church, 130



## Spreading the gelt

**D**reidel, dreidel, dreidel... Come celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights, at the Friedberg JCC on Dec. 18, from 11 am to 1 pm, with a holiday boutique, craft workshop, menorah lighting, a few spins of the dreidel, and of course, Hanukkah gelt.

Admission is \$18 for up to four people.

You can also help the needy

by watching the Hanukkah telethon, sponsored by Chabad of Mineola, on Dec. 18 from 7 to 11 pm on Channel WINY-TV 10/55. This year's goal is to raise \$500,000 to be used for various outreach programs, including helping the unemployed and homeless.

*Friedberg JCC [15 Neil Court in Oceanside, (516) 766-4341]. For more info, visit [www.friedbergjcc.org](http://www.friedbergjcc.org).*

Main St.; (631) 732-2926; [www.minstrelplayers.org](http://www.minstrelplayers.org); 8 pm; \$15 (\$12 seniors and children under 12).

Bah Humbug and a ho, ho, ho. The classic holiday story comes to life along with the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future.

## SAT, DEC. 10

**Jingle Bell walk:** Long Island Maritime Museum, 86 W. Ave.; (631) 494-9888; [www.limaritime.org](http://www.limaritime.org); 9 am - noon; \$8 (Free for children under 5).

Fun for the whole family, this second annual walk has the children marching through the grounds with bells on their toes along with their four-pawed friends. And of course, a visit from Santa on his

boat. Proceeds from the walk benefit the Shelter Link and the museum.

**History workshop:** King Manor Museum, Jamaica Avenue at 150th Street; (718) 206-0545; Noon-3 pm; Free.

Make a winter ornament, a pomander of citrus fruit, cloves and ribbon.

**Holiday concert:** Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 2 pm; Free.

Haiyun chorus performs Chinese folk songs and traditional Christmas songs.

**Night sky watch:** Fort Totten; (718) 352-1769; 6 pm; Free.

Join fellow astronomers and view the heavens. Pending weather conditions.

**"A Christmas Carol":** 8 pm. Houghton Hall at Trinity Episcopal Church. See Friday, Dec. 9.

## SUN, DEC. 11

**Hanukkah festival:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at East 91st Street in Manhattan; (212) 415-5500; [www.92y.org](http://www.92y.org); 10:30 am-1:30 pm; \$10 (\$15 children).

Children celebrate the holiday by making their own menorah, dressing up as a Maccabee and making olive oil. Author Norton Juster and illustrator Jules Feiffer visit with the children.

**David Weinstone:** 92Y Tribeca, 200 Hudson St. at Vestry Street in Manhattan; (212) 601-1000; 11 am; \$15.

The fab performer just right for toddlers.

**"A Christmas Carol":** 3 pm. Houghton Hall at Trinity Episcopal Church. See Friday, Dec. 9.

**Folk concert:** Tilles Center for the Performing Arts, Route 25 A (CW Post Campus); (516) 299-3100; [www.tillescenter.org](http://www.tillescenter.org); 7 pm; \$92, \$62, \$42.

Judy Collins and Arlo Guthrie perform holiday classics.

## MON, DEC. 12

**Employment workshop:** Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd.; (718) 990-0700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 6 pm; Free.

Learn how to ace interviews, what to wear, frequently asked questions and guidelines for success.

**Baking workshop:** Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 6 pm; Free.

Make a holiday cake the no-bake way.

## TUES, DEC. 13

**Going green with Leap:** 3 pm. Woodside Library. See Tuesday, Dec. 6.

**Jeopardy challenge:** Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Teens test their trivia against other teens.

**Debate club:** Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Share your opinions with friends and listen to music.

## WED, DEC. 14

**Movie Day:** Baisley Park Public Library, 117-11 Sutphin Blvd. at Foch Boulevard; (718) 529-1590; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

A flick for all ages.

# Going Places

**Teen hour:** 4 pm. Steinway Public Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 7.

## THURS, DEC. 15

**EE JazzKids:** 4 pm. East Elmhurst Public Library. See Thursday, Dec. 1.

**Gift craft workshop:** Hillcrest Public Library, 187-05 Union Tpke at 188th Street; (718) 454-2786; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4:30 pm; Free.

Make original projects to give away. For children 6 to 14 years old.

## FRI, DEC. 16

**Teen crafts:** Bellerose Public Library, 250-06 Hillside Ave. at 249th Street; (718) 831-8644; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Join this reading/craft program. Pre-registration required.

## SAT, DEC. 17

**Job boot camp:** Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd.; (718) 990-0700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 10:30 am–4:30 pm; Free.

Learn the best strategies to finding a job.

**Folk rock concert:** Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. at West End Avenue; (212) 864-5400; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 11 am; \$25 (\$21 members; \$15 children; \$13 members).

Joined by her husband Daniel and daughter Storey, Elizabeth Mitchell brings back the great songs of Woodie Guthrie, Bob Marley, The Velvet Underground and Vashti Bunyan.

**Discovery days:** Voelker Orth Museum, 149-19 38th Ave.; (718) 359-6227; [www.vomuseum.org](http://www.vomuseum.org); 11 am–noon; Free.

Children 6 years and younger enjoy a story, craft or outdoor activity.

**Survival workshop:** Forest Park Visitor's Center, Woodhaven Boulevard at Brooklyn Queens Greenway; (718) 846-2731; 1 pm; Free.

Class provides hands-on activities in an outdoor setting along with emergency preparedness tips. For children 8 and older.

## SUN, DEC. 18

**Chip Taylor & The Grandkids:** 92Y Tribeca, 200 Hudson St. at Vestry Street in Manhattan; (212) 601-1000; 11 am; \$15.

Children's concert.

**Hanukkah party:** Friedberg JCC, 15 Neil Ct.; (516) 766-4341; [www.friedbergjcc.org](http://www.friedbergjcc.org); 11 am–1 pm; \$18 (up to 4 people).

Crafts, holiday boutique, DJ and menorah lighting.



## Get a kick out of the Rockettes

**T**he world-famous Rockettes are back in high-kick mode for the annual “Christmas Spectacular” at Radio City Music Hall. With dazzling new costumes, new music and state-of-the-art,

3-D technology, this year's show promises to be the greatest ever. And of course what would the holidays be without a visit from the Jolly Old Elf himself, Santa?

The show runs daily through

Jan. 2, 2012. Check for times. Tickets are \$45–\$125.

*Radio City Music Hall [1260 Sixth Ave. between 50th and 51st streets in Manhattan, (212) 247-4777]. For more info, visit [www.radiocity.com](http://www.radiocity.com).*

**“The Legend of the Giant Caterpillar”:** Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at West 94th Street in Manhattan; (212) 316-4962; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 1 and 3 pm; Free.

Presented by the Thalia Teen Theatre Project, the story is from the Ivory Coast of Africa and involves interactive theatre for children of all ages.

**“The Nutcracker”:** Colden Auditorium, Kupferberg Center for the Arts, Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd.; (718) 544-2996; [www.kupferberg-center.org](http://www.kupferberg-center.org); 3 pm; \$18 (\$12 for children under 12).

The perennial holiday favorite performed by the Brighton Ballet Theater Company.

**Hanukkah telethon:** wlny-tv 10/55; (516) 739-3636; 7–11 pm; Free.

Presented by the Chabad of Mineola, the show hopes to raise \$500,000 for various outreach programs.

## MON, DEC. 19

**Workplace etiquette:** Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd.; (718) 990-0700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 6 pm; Free.

Teens learn how to keep the job by appropriate dress, punctuality, and face-to-face, phone and email communication.

**Book club:** Far Rockaway Public Library, 1637 Central Ave. at Mott Avenue; (718) 327-2549; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 6:30 pm; Free.

Conversation, reading and e-book

demos. “A Christmas Carol.” Light refreshments served.

## TUES, DEC. 20

**Going green with Leap:** 3 pm. Woodside Library. See Tuesday, Dec. 6.

**Book club:** Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Pick a title and then discuss it with your friends.

## WED, DEC. 21

**Teen hour:** 4 pm. Steinway Public Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 7.

## FRI, DEC. 23

**Shababa Bakery:** 10:15–11 am. 92nd Street Y. See Friday, Dec. 9.

## MON, DEC. 26

**Holiday open house:** Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy.; (718) 347-3276; [www.queensfarm.org](http://www.queensfarm.org); Noon–4 pm; Free.

Come and visit the decorated farmhouse and have a mulled cider. Children can make a craft.

## TUES, DEC. 27

**Holiday celebration:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); 9:30 am–2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Re-make the holidays by bending, twisting, sculpting and tasting.

**Holiday open house:** Noon–4 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Monday, Dec. 26.

## WED, DEC. 28

**Holiday celebration:** 9:30 am–2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

**Holiday open house:** Noon–4 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Monday, Dec. 26.

## THURS, DEC. 29

**Holiday celebration:** 9:30 am–2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

## FRI, DEC. 30

**Holiday celebration:** 9:30 am–2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

## SAT, DEC. 31

**Tim and the Space Cadets:** Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at West 94th Street in Manhattan; (212) 316-4962; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 11 am; \$20 (\$17 members; \$13 children; \$11 member).

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# www.NYParenting.com

The screenshot shows the NYParenting.com website. At the top, the logo "NYParenting" is displayed in a large, stylized font, with the tagline "Where every Family matters!" below it. To the right, it says "2011 Gold Award Winner" from the Parenting Media Association. Navigation links for Contact, Twitter, Facebook, and Feeds are visible, along with a search bar. The main content area is divided into several sections: a "Home" sidebar with links to various family groups; a "Calendar" section with a "Calendar: Tomorrow" widget showing events like "Bounce-night" and "Life in the 19th Century"; a "Directory" section with categories like Education, Activities, and Dentistry; a featured article titled "When should I feed my baby solid foods?" by Kerry and Jacqueline Donelli; a newsletter sign-up form; and a "Popular stories" list. On the right side, there are promotional banners for "MONSTER MASH Halloween Party" and "WIN TICKETS for you & your family (4) to local family-friendly shows". At the bottom right, there is a logo for "Parenthood.com GO LOCAL partner!" and a small advertisement for karting.

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# New & Noteworthy



## Match game

Who needs plastic, mass produced dolls, when you could have something unique and handcrafted?

Perfect for littles ones just learning how to count, the Monster Match-Up Learning Game Peg Doll Set from the etsy shop, Pegged, is a set of educational dolls in an array of colors, designed to help your tot identify colors and numbers. The set comes with five figures — each in two removable parts — to encourage your child to match shapes and colors. Each doll is hand-painted, and has varying numbers of eyes painted on its face, to aid in number recognition. Plus: they're adorable. This shop will be open through Dec.9.

*Pegged Monster Match-Up Learning Game Peg Doll Set, \$25. For info, visit [www.etsy.com/shop/Pegged](http://www.etsy.com/shop/Pegged).*

## New and old classic tales

The latest edition of Scholastic's DVD collection of adapted-for-film Caldecott Award-winning storybooks features an array of 20 phenomenal stories for tots, from classic tales such as "Make Way for Ducklings" and "The Ugly Duckling" to modern favorites "The Bear Snores On" and "Antarctic Adventures." Each adaptation upholds the integrity of the origi-

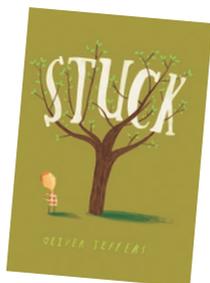


nal piece of literature, while delighting your child with different styles of animation. This collection includes three DVDs: "The Ezra Jack Collection," "Antarctic Antics — and More Hilarious Animal Stories!" and "Make Way For Ducklings — and More Hilarious Duck Stories!"

*Scholastic Storybook Treasures Caldecott Favorites DVD collection, \$24.95. Order online at [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com).*

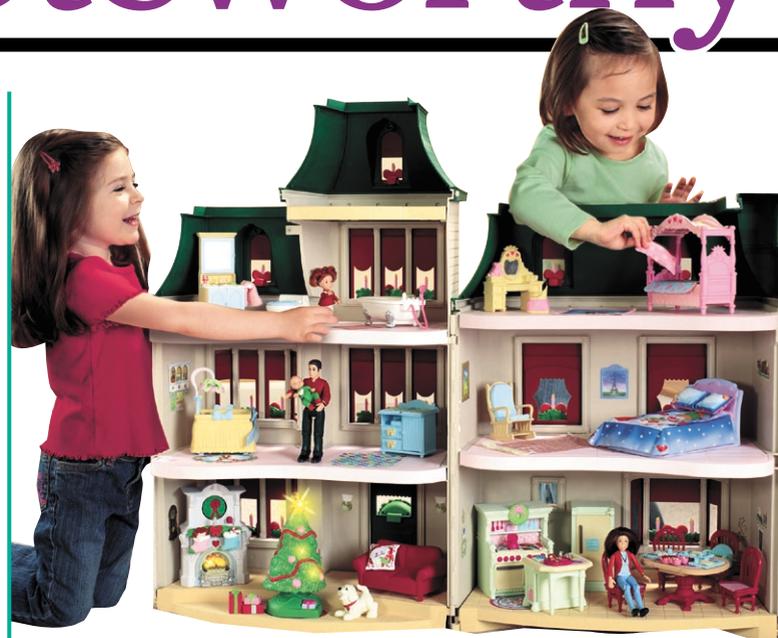
## Laugh between the lines

You'll have more luck encouraging your tot to sit still for storytime if you read him Oliver Jeffers' hilarious new picture book, "Stuck" (Philomel Books). Recommended for children ages 3-7, this is the tale of Floyd, whose kite gets stuck in a tree.



never what the reader expects. Instead of climbing the ladder to retrieve the kite, Floyd hurls it into the tree, hoping to knock down the pinned toy! And this is just one of his many creative — and foiled — ideas to free the kite — each one, ramping up the suspense and teasing yelps of laughter from young and old readers alike.

*Stuck by Oliver Jeffers, \$16.99.*



## Deck these halls

It's the ultimate, seasonally appropriate dollhouse!

Fisher Price's new Loving Family Home for the Holidays House has six rooms to decorate, with a stash of seasonal accessories including a Christmas tree, wreaths, candles for the window, a fireplace that glows, and holiday lights.

The house also makes sounds of its own — the stovetop sizzles, the tea kettle whistles, and

the Christmas tree plays holiday music. The best part? The house easily transforms from a holiday abode to an all-year-round toy. In fact, each room is reversible — one side features seasonal decor, and the other side is decorated for everyday play. Perfect for kids ages 3 and up.

*The Fisher-Price Loving Family Home for the Holidays House, \$200, available at [www.fisher-price.com](http://www.fisher-price.com).*

## Set the stage for play

If reading "Where the Wild Things Are" isn't experiential enough for your tot, now you can literally transform his bedroom into a jungle or a pre-historic forest — complete with birds, volcanoes and dinosaurs — using Smiley Walls Art Studio removable wall decals.



With several designs to choose from — including a blossoming cherry tree, replete with butterflies; a dinosaur land set with volcanoes, birds, clouds and rocks; and an owl-and-bird set.

The best part? You can even pick your own colors, so these stickers will match any nursery's

color scheme and design concept. And they come off as easily as they can be stuck on. Can you think of an easier way to decorate?

*Smiley Walls Art Studio on Etsy.com, \$147 a set. Contact them at [www.etsy.com/shop/smileywalls](http://www.etsy.com/shop/smileywalls) and via [smileywalls@gmail.com](mailto:smileywalls@gmail.com).*

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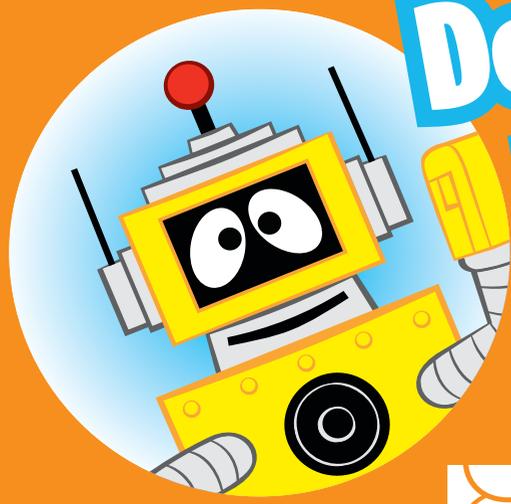
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