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Family February 2012

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Letter from the publisher

Good health is complex

This month is Children's Dental Health month and it's started my ranting and raving again about why Dental Care is not a part of everyone's Health Plan. Why not? We all know its imperative and an integral part of overall good health, as well as vision, and yet both of them are largely left out of most people's health coverage. They are enormously costly, but absolutely necessary for both children and adults, yet the vast majority of our citizens are left out on a limb on their own, to pay for this much needed wellness care and figure out how to do it.

We need to address this and many other issues as a society and pres-



sure the insurance companies as well as our employers to opt for plans that include this much needed benefit for the sake of our families. Without a doubt early dental attention is paramount for our children and part of it is regular visits to the dentist.

The other part is teaching good daily care early to our kids and making certain they develop early routines that included the brushing, flossing and rinsing known to be effective and essential.

I deemed it so important, that as our editor-in-chief, I decided to make sure we ran some good articles this month that pointed out this importance and emphasized the techniques we need to teach

our children. We also need to understand the role of diet and its place in our overall health, teeth included. Watching the sugar intake of our children and limiting things like soda drinking, or not getting it started in the first place is a good place to begin when it comes to cavities. Massaging the gums to make them strong is part of the routine we all need, but we also need the proper nutrients in our diet, including a decent amount of calcium to keep the bone strong and the roots intact.

Get your children off to the best start possible. Don't wait. Infant dental care is here to stay. You as a parent can start the brushing and the massaging until they're old enough to do it for themselves. I urge you to begin with them as babies and they will benefit from the attention for all

the years to come.

Good health is complex. It also involves love, loving and being loved. There are a myriad of ways we must love our children and be consistent in this love. In the final analysis, no one is really healthy who isn't loved. So in the month of February we also celebrate love. My message this month is that really loving our children means not only watching what they do and what they eat and drink, but who they know and what they dream of.

Happy Valentine's Day! Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher

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Affordable dental care

Don't let a tight budget keep you from the dentist's chair

BY CANDI SPARKS

Americans are consciously trimming the extras from their budgets, and, often, dental work is left off the list of necessities, because it is expensive. But proper oral care is more important than some may think. By age 74, roughly 78 million Americans lose

all of their permanent teeth. Sometimes tooth loss is due to a lack of personal oral hygiene, other times the cause is bone loss, gum disease or some other underlying medical issue.

Since 90 percent of systemic diseases have oral manifestations — for example a sore jaw, when combined with chest pain, especially in women, can signal a heart attack — dental visits should remain a priority.

Moreover, since one of the outward signs of success in America is having straight teeth and a glistening smile, bad teeth can be a source of stress.

On average, 44 percent of dental fees are paid out-of-pocket. Many Americans would like to visit the dentist more often but may be asking, is dental care affordable?

Insurance and flex

Dental insurance and health insurance are not the same. There are different fee and benefit structures for patients with these insurances. Dentists complain that health insurance makes dental work seem more expensive, when it is not. One big difference in dental insurance is that it typically covers 100 percent of preventive care, such as cleanings and X-rays, but does not cover the more expensive fees like bridges, caps and crowns. When patients need dental work and need to meet a deductible or price quota to receive benefits, they shy away from dental treatment and their problems undoubtedly worsen over time.

“Patients with dental insurance think that care should be free, because the insurance covers cleanings, which can cost between \$100 to \$300. They get used to not being charged, so when something happens, it feels like it is expensive, and the cost makes them angry at the dentist's office. Not fair,” said Betsy, a dental hygienist in Brooklyn.

To help pay these extra costs, patients with dental insurance can use their flex benefits — a plan that helps you pay certain specific expenses from your pre-tax, rather than your after-tax, income.

“Patients with dental insurance can combine it with their flex benefits to cover any out-of-pocket costs. We can charge the fees to their flex accounts on a monthly basis for the expensive procedures, if they want to handle the payments that way,” explains Peggy, a dental office manager on Staten Island. “Patients that use their flex dollars, and do not have to pay us directly, are very happy with the arrangement.”

Dental schools

Jonathan Zeichner, a Manhattan periodontist, lends patients a sympathetic ear, excellent periodontal

cleanings (according to his reviews) and practical advice. He recommends that patients without insurance get a cleaning every six months at a dental school, as the minimal front line of defense.

“Oral hygiene may not be as out of reach as you would expect,” says Zeichner. “Options for patients who cannot afford these fees are to get care from clinics at the major dental schools. While procedures are performed by dental students, all of these clinics are supervised by licensed dentists and are a backdoor for patients to obtain quality dental care for little or no cost.”

Because the focus of dental school is on education, services are offered at lower fees than the cost of comparable procedures at most private practices. The NYU College of Dentistry and the Columbia University College of Dental Medicine offer services at great reductions. In addition, dental hygienists in training at Hostos Community College and the New York City College of Technology offer free and reduced rate care to qualifying patients.

Dental tourism

More and more people are investigating tourism as the next best option for getting the treatment that they need. It appears that proper and high-quality dental treatments at low prices are available at beautiful destinations around the world. Clients can get dental work and then vacation before they return home, looking refreshed, not as if they have been under the knife.

“I'm an American living in the Yucatan of Mexico and have had several friends visit in part to get dental work done there,” says author and tattoo artist, Elaine. “They've found that they were able to make the trip (including the flight, plus taking a vacation) and get their dental work done for a cost that is significantly less than just the out-of-pocket dental work alone in the U.S.! One friend had work that had been estimated at USD \$12,000 and he got it here for literally one-10th of the price!”

Mindy, formerly of New York, agrees that leaving the country for dental care can make it more affordable.

“Go to Mexico. My whole family (parents, sister, her kids and my cousin) all go to a dentist in Tijuana. He recently did a crown for me for

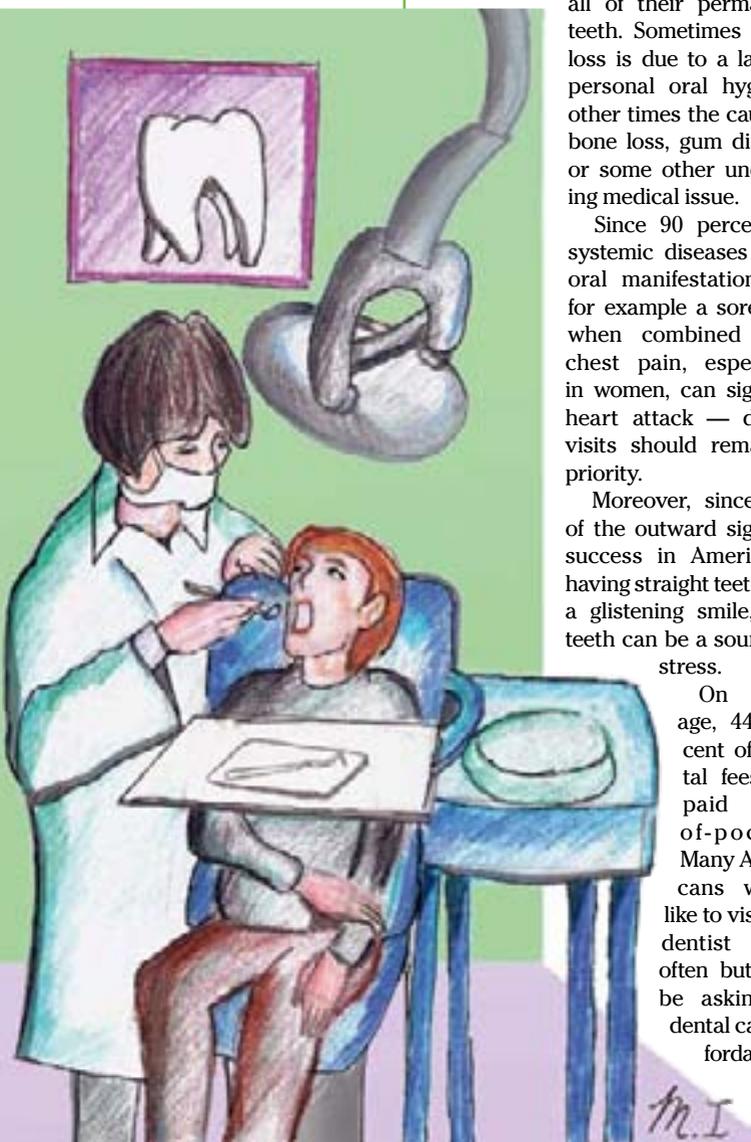


Illustration by Michelle Bayeva, 13, from Brooklyn

\$220. Most are educated in the U.S. and some market to U.S. clientele specifically.”

These gals both happened to mention Mexico from personal experience, but there are several tourism agencies promoting dental tourism destinations including Mexico, Australia, India, Budapest, Hungary and others.

If you're considering this, do your own research in advance. Research the dental provider and his credentials, references or reviews, and the destination itself, to avoid any potential problems or regrets.

In-office dental plan

Higher out-of-pocket costs cause many patients to delay treatment, which can often cause the problem to get more severe. Delayed dental care usually means more expensive care in the long run.

The truth is, many dentists are trying their best to accommodate rising costs (their own operating costs are rising dramatically, as well as costs from materials to information technology to infrastructure — though few give them credit for this) and employ various methods for taking care of their under-insured patients.

“My dentist has an in-office plan that includes two hygiene treatments, two exams, and any necessary X-rays each year. Plus, I get reduced fees on practically all other dental procedures. I pay an annual fee and discounted fees for additional family members,” says Ms. Kidd of Manhattan.

Discount dental plans

Dentists in upper middle-class and affluent neighborhoods with big and loyal followings of their practices often do not accept insurance, nor do they offer in-office plans to patients. As an alternative for patients who cannot afford a high-priced dentist, dental discount plans may be an option.

These plans provide access to a network of dental providers who are contracted to deliver services at fixed discounts. A dental plan is not insurance. There is no premium or co-pay collected and there is no maximum on usage. Members are charged a steady monthly or yearly rate, lowering the patient's out-of-pocket costs from the start.

Dental discount plans often include cosmetic and orthodontic treatments, and since no middleman is involved, the amount of paper-

work is reduced for the patient and the dental office. Some plans discount nearly everything except lab fees. Since it has no maximum usage, some people use a discount plan after their regular dental insurance plan has reached its yearly limit. The simple process has few restrictions and could be ideal for seniors.

Do-it-yourself dental

Some people are just plain old afraid to go to the dentist. The thought of going to the dentist conjures up images of a drill-bearing ogre who will chastise you for bad habits, strap you into the chair and cause you to endure excruciating pain the whole time. For those with dental phobias, there is good news: Patients can take responsibility for taking care of their own teeth with good results. Here are some suggestions:

People who drink three or more sugary sodas daily have 62 percent more dental decay, fillings and tooth loss. Drink more water, it's good for your teeth.

The average person only brushes for 45 to 70 seconds a day, while the recommended amount of time is two to three minutes. Set a timer and brush the four sides of each tooth.

Seventy-three percent of Americans say they would rather go grocery shopping than floss. Yet, flossing daily can extend life expectancy, a fact that is weird, but true. Flossing does two things: it prevents gum disease, and it (not so obvious) prevents heart disease. Preventing both of these together is what adds years to your life.

Thirty-two percent of Americans cite bad breath as the least attractive trait of their co-workers. If you want to have a better time at work, take care of your mouth and teeth.

How people take care of their mouths and teeth is often a reflection of how they feel about themselves. Everyone deserves to have a healthy mouth. It can change your life and be a reason to smile.

“Did the sun come out, or did you just smile at me?” still might be the greatest pick-up line of all times. Need I say more?

Candi Sparks is the author of children's books about money: "Can I Have Some Money?," "Educating Children About Money," "Max Gets It!" and "Nacho Money." She lives in Brooklyn, is a mother of two, and is on Facebook and Twitter. Her website is www.candisparks.com.

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Ready for summer?

Seven tips for choosing the right camp for your kid

When searching for a summer camp, you will soon discover that there are many to choose from. With so many options, how do you pick just one? The good news is that there is a camp for every child with any interest. For generations, camp has been providing children with the opportunity to learn life skills such as leadership and confidence, improve their self-esteem, and let them take part in new activities and participate in hands-on learning.

The American Camp Association, New York and New Jersey, recommends that families consider the following when sorting through the many summer camp choices:

- **Philosophy and program emphasis.** Each camp is unique, and provides unique programming and approaches. Families need to consider carefully whether or not the camp's philosophy matches their own. Asking questions about learning approaches, how behavioral and disciplinary problems are handled, and how adjustment issues are addressed will give you a better understanding of the camp's position. Don't be afraid to ask about policies regarding discipline and communication. The more open you are with camp directors, the better informed they will be when it comes to making a decision.

- There is a camp for every child,

but not every camp is for every child. Know your child's interests. There are many camps to choose from, but it is important to match your child with a camp that has programs that interest him.

- **Involve the camper.** It's crucial for families to involve the camper in decisions about camp. Search camps online together and take a tour of the camp with your child. The more involved children are in the process, the more ownership they feel. This helps ease concerns about camp, and can help make a child's camp experience more successful.

- **Training and education.** Don't be shy about asking for the education and background for the camp director and staff. The American Camp Association recommends directors possess a bachelor's degree, have completed in-service training within the past three years, and have at least 16 weeks of camp administrative experience before assuming the responsibilities of director. At a minimum, camp staff should be trained in safety regulations, emergency procedures and communication, behavior management techniques, child abuse prevention, appropriate staff and camper behavior, and specific procedures for supervision. Families should ask about camper-to-staff ratios, and supervision in cabins and for various activities, like swimming

and athletics.

- **Day camp or resident camp?** Consider your child's age and if your child has had good overnight experiences away from home. This can help you make an informed decision.

- **Cost.** It's hard to put a price tag on children's learning and growth, but parents certainly have their family budgets to think about when considering camp. The good news is that there is a camp program to fit nearly every budget. Parents can search the American Camp Association, New York and New Jersey's camp database to search camps by cost. Families can also call for free, one-on-one advice in finding a camp that fits within their budget. Some camps also offer early-bird specials for registering early, as well as payment plans and sibling discounts.

- **References.** Parents shouldn't be afraid to ask for references. This is generally one of the best ways to check a camp's reputation and service record. Ask if the camp is accredited. If not, ask why. American Camp Association accreditation is the best evidence parents have of a camp's commitment to providing a safe and nurturing environment for their children.

For more, visit the American Camp Association, New York and New Jersey's camp database at www.searchforcamp.org, or call (212) 391-5208.

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Asians excelling in U.S. schools

What can be learned from their success?

BY ALLISON PLITT

This past fall, I enrolled my 5-year-old daughter in kindergarten at PS 196, an elementary school in our Forest Hills, Queens, neighborhood. It was in an area of Forest Hills that I wasn't well acquainted with. When I dropped my daughter off for her first day of school, I noticed that almost half of the students walking into the school were Asian-American. I heard a lot of kids speaking Chinese with their parents, and I also observed kids of other Asian nationalities, including Filipino, Indian, Pakistani, Korean, and Japanese.

At the end of the first week of school, one of the parents in my daughter's class invited all the students and their parents to her home for lunch. During lunch, I realized most of the parents were Asian-American, and they were discussing where they were sending their kids for Chinese and karate classes in Flushing on Saturdays.

By the second week of school, my daughter came home and told me she wanted me to make her rice for lunch. I asked her how she could eat just rice for lunch, but she insisted that all the kids at her lunch table at school were eating rice for lunch. I looked at her dubiously, but eventually compromised by throwing some protein into a rice bowl just to reassure myself she had enough energy to get through the day.

After the first month of school, my daughter came home with her class photo. As I looked at the photo of the teacher and the 24 students in the class, I realized that nearly 50 percent of the students looked like they had at least one parent of Asian descent.

When Halloween came around, I finally got to visit my daughter's classroom and help out at the class

party. Since the student-to-teacher ratio in the class was 24 to one, I was expecting to see kids running amok during the party. Instead, the students followed instruction so well that the teacher was able to sit at her desk and eat lunch while the kids ate at their own desks.

Asian pop increasing

Intrigued by this new-to-me culture, I started to research the most recent U.S. immigration data. According to the 2010 U.S. census statistics, Asians are the ethnic group with the largest population increase in the U.S. within the past decade.

From 2000 to 2010, Asian immigration has grown 43.3 percent in the U.S., and Asians now comprise 4.8 percent of the country's population. The greatest increase of Asian immigrants has been in U.S. cities, such as New York City, where various Asian communities now account for 13 percent of the city's total population. More specifically, the Asian population increased in Queens by 57.4 percent during this decade.

After analyzing the 2010 census results, the Asian American Federation determined that the largest Asian ethnicities in New York City are Chinese, Indian and Korean. For the first time ever, more Chinese, comprising 47 percent of the Asian population, live in Flushing than in Chinatown. Fifteen percent of Indians reside in South Ozone Park and Richmond Hill, while a fourth of the Koreans call Flushing, Bayside and Murray Hill their home.

Interestingly enough, when I researched the top public elementary schools in New York City that had the highest test scores on the 2011 New York State assessment tests,

I discovered that six of those in Queens are located in predominately Asian neighborhoods. One of these schools is located in Flushing, four are based in Bayside, and toward the top of the list was PS 196, with its own burgeoning Asian community.

Following the regulations of Congress's No Child Left Behind Act, each year, every public school must administer a state assessment test to ensure its pupils are performing at a certain academic level. At the elementary school level, students in grades three through five are tested in English language arts and mathematics. Children in the fourth grade are also tested in science.

More Asian students, better test scores

When I looked at PS 196's state assessment test scores from 2008 to 2010, I analyzed the data based on ethnicity. During those three school years, the student Asian population at PS 196 had slowly increased from 39 percent to 43 percent, and during this time, Asian-American students had scored higher in all three categories — English, mathematics and science — than any other ethnic group.

Looking at the data trends through the past three years, I also noticed that the scores of the Asian-American students had also slowly increased in most of the subjects. Thus, I easily made the correlation that as PS 196 admitted more Asian-American students each year, the school's test scores also increased.

From my conversations with the parents of these Asian-American students, I've been able to make some general observations about their views toward their children's

Focus
on Asia
PART 2



upbringing and education. Many of these Asian-American parents originally came to the U.S. to either study at universities or work at multinational companies. They were able to keep their residencies here either through their jobs or by marrying an American citizen.

The Asian perspective

I informed all of these Asian-American parents about the controversial publication of Amy Chua's controversial 2011 book, "The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother." Chua, a professor at Yale Law School, describes in her book how she raises her two daughters according to child-rearing philosophies of Chinese and other Asian cultures. Not only does she forbid her daughters to watch television or play computer games, she does not allow them to have playdates or sleepovers, receive any grade less than an A, or choose their own extracurricular activities.

All of the Asian-American parents at PS 196 expressed disapproval at some aspects of Chua's Eastern parenting philosophy, but they also admitted to disliking certain Western methods of raising children. For example, one Chinese father told me he

thought that Americans gave their children "too much praise," instead of providing them with honest, critical feedback that, in his opinion, would compel them to perform better.

Another Chinese mother told me she thought that Americans "complain too much" in public, as the Chinese must comply with the laws of their communist government and not outwardly emote their opposition to it. The same Chinese mother went further to say that she thought Americans can sometimes be too outspoken and "not think about other people's feelings" when they voice their opinions.

Since Chinese and Asian children are brought up to never publicly question authority figures, I thought that this could partly explain (besides PS 196 being a very good school) why my daughter's peers were so well-behaved in the classroom.

Despite their criticism of American culture, these Asian-American parents did not recount with fondness their own educational experiences growing up in their native countries. They complained that the competition in the schools was too fierce, educators placed too much emphasis on test scores, and students didn't have much freedom to

choose what they wanted to study.

A lot of these Asian-American parents said they preferred the more westernized U.S. educational system, because it looks at students' performances in a variety of classes — not just their test scores. One mother informed me that math in China is taught at more advanced levels than in the U.S., but she still thought the students there endure too much pressure to achieve high test scores and attend elite universities.

Reverse trend

Some of these Asian-American parents also observed a reverse trend between Eastern and Western teaching philosophies. One father told me that he thought that the Chinese were adopting a more "relaxed" attitude toward teaching, while the U.S. had recently been placing more importance on test scores.

Unlike their own upbringings, some of these Asian-American parents said they don't want to force their children to participate in activities they don't enjoy. One mother recounted to me that as a child, she and her siblings were obligated to take piano or violin lessons. However, she insisted that now, if her own children don't wish to study

music, she will not push them to take classes.

Tight-knit families

All of the Asian-American families admit to missing their families back in their native countries where most children live with their parents until they are married. The only exceptions to this tradition are when children need to leave home to study at a school or take a job. Because of this familial bond, it is not uncommon for grandparents to assist their children in raising their grandchildren.

In my own neighborhood in Forest Hills, I have seen many Chinese grandparents taking care of their grandchildren. Most of them come from China and stay with their children for months at a time until their visas expire. Some Asian-American parents have even made efforts to have their parents move to the U.S. to live with them permanently.

Under the Asian influence

As the U.S. economy has become more reliant upon Chinese investments to sustain itself, Asian immigration will undoubtedly be rising for years to come. If PS 196 and other New York City public schools are any indication of what the U.S. educational system will be like in the future, our schools will be challenged to perform to a higher standard.

Foreshadowing this future, one parent recounted to me that one morning a school bus was late picking up his daughter and other children to take them to PS 196. When the bus was 10 minutes late, the Asian-American parents started to walk with their children to school, so they would not arrive late.

The parent confided to me that he was planning on continuing to wait for the bus, but embarrassed by this decision, he decided to follow the Asian-American parents and walk his daughter to school, too. Soon, he saw all the other parents following the Asian-American parents in walking their children to school.

As the parent observed, "It was very telling."

Allison Plitt is a contributing writer for *New York Parenting Media* and a mother living in Queens with a 5-year-old daughter. If you have any ideas you'd like to share with her about topics for articles or resources for families, please contact her at allisonplitt@hotmail.com.



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Don't flake on winter safety

During the typical, cold New York winter, we tend to stay indoors more often, so many of the safety concerns that normally go along with our kids playing outside aren't in the forefront of our minds. Let's face it; our kids simply aren't outside all afternoon when the temps are below freezing. And when they do play outside, sledding and snowball fights can seem like harmless fun. Yet, there are still safety concerns that need to be addressed. In fact, some typical winter hazards can be deadly.

Dr. Robert van Amerongen, chief of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at New York Methodist Hospital and assistant professor of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine at Weill Medical College of Cornell University, warns parents to be aware of three hazards, in particular: head trauma, respiratory illnesses, and burns.

Head trauma

"I never thought to put a helmet on my daughter when she was sledding, but looking back, I know I should have," says mom of three, Susan Columbo of Park Slope. Columbo's 5-year-old daughter, Grace, was sledding last winter when the sled took a sharp turn, and she bumped into a tree headfirst.

"I ran over to her as fast as I could, and she seemed dazed, then she

started crying," explains Columbo. Grace was taken straight to the emergency room and doctors determined that she had a light concussion. "It could have been so much worse," says Columbo.

Dr. van Amerongen stresses that while most parents recognize the need for adequate head protection when their child is riding a bike at two miles-per-hour along a dirt park path in the summer, that same child may be rapidly skiing down a snowy slope without any more protection than a wool cap. He recommends helmet use during high-speed winter sports such as skiing, snow boarding, and sledding.

Respiratory illnesses

My eldest daughter contracted bronchiolitis when she was just 5 months old. The illness began in late December and she was admitted to the hospital on New Year's Day. Between older kids bringing home school germs and adults passing around illnesses at work (and from the bus and subway), the winter is an especially busy time for germs.

Of course, the winter months are when colds and viruses also peak.

"The common cold can lead to more severe illnesses, such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia, and can exacerbate chronic conditions like

asthma," says Dr. van Amerongen. He advises that children should be dressed properly, in several thin layers to keep them warm — but not overheated — and hats, gloves and boots are a must.

Space heaters

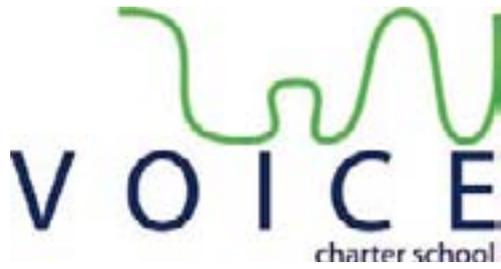
Adriana Clark was visiting friends when her 2-year-old son, Joshua, innocently touched a space heater just as Clark yelled out to him from across the room. Luckily, he only hurt the last three fingers of his left hand and suffered no further burns.

"I hadn't even known my friend had a space heater until I saw Josh going over toward it," recalls Clark. "If I didn't scream out 'no' at the same time, I'm sure he would have been further injured."

While they keep the home warm and cozy, space heaters can also cause direct burns to small children who may unwittingly touch them or even fall on them (not to mention house fires). Dr. van Amerongen says they should be avoided if at all possible. If you do choose to use them, make sure they are never left unattended or left on when your family goes to sleep.

In addition, we should all be checking our smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure that the batteries are in proper working order.

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 has been honored with Gold awards for her health column and editing work by the Parenting Media Association. Sullivan also writes for Babble.com.



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MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SERADOVA

Stay at home or not, there's no easy route

I always knew that I would want to stay home with my baby. I remember — in my pre-baby days — wondering how my co-workers could spend so much time away from their young children? They'd check in every few hours with day care or, if they were lucky, a nanny, and rush home to at least try to spend a meal and some bedtime together with their kids.

I vowed (rather judgmentally) that I would never dump my child on someone else. Instead, I'd stay home with my child, maybe even take on some freelance work.

That would be ideal. I've always loved to write, so I imagined myself raising my baby while still being able to write from home and have an income. I'd finally have the time to do things I really wanted to do, too — like organizing my photos into scrapbooks, teaching myself how to bake and running with the dog in the mornings. My home would be immaculate, I'd make dinner every night and, most of all, I'd be the one caring for my child.

The only problem with this picture is that none of the above has happened (yet), aside from taking care of my child, of course. The other problem with this picture is that

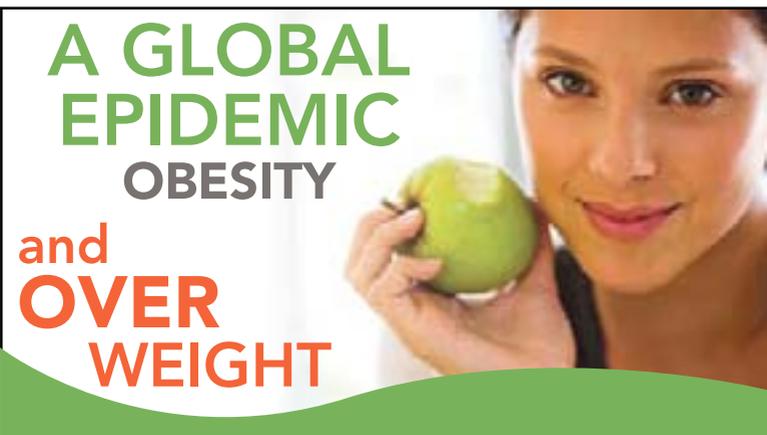
while I'm daydreaming of domestic bliss, there are bills to pay and a college education I must plan for (not to mention, I should pay mine off as well). Unfortunately, my financial responsibilities are not of the freelance variety. No, they're definitely full-time!

The truth is, in any capacity, all parents are "working." Nothing insults a stay-at-home parent more than assuming that she has all the time in the world to do whatever she wants, and I bet if you told a working parent that she has it easier (with catching a break from the kids and domestic chores and all) she would highly disagree. Being at home with a child is a lot of work. It has humbled me beyond my imagination. There are days when being at home really is blissful, and then the other half of the time I question myself, like any other parent. I find myself thinking, "Am I doing the right thing?" and, "Is it possible to ever have a clean house again?"

For me, the decision has not been easy. It's one I struggle with every day. Working from home seems to provide a balance, but it doesn't come without its own set of challenges. I understand now why so many parents, mothers especially, leave the workforce to raise their kids. It's a crucial time that you truly never get back. On the other hand, work gives us a chance to develop our skills and builds our confidence — and those are qualities any parent would want to exemplify for her children's benefit. So how do you decide what's right?

I can assure any parent that — no matter what you decide — you will always have doubts. In many cases, there are no clear answers. You do what's best for your family and trust in your decision. No one parent has it easier over the other.





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Toothy tips

From infants to teens: How to keep kids cavity-free

BY KATHY SENA

Tasty toothpastes, kid-friendly fluoride rinses, and even dinosaur-shaped “flossers” line nearly an entire aisle at many grocery stores and pharmacies these days. And yet, early-childhood cavities are on the rise, says Indru Punwani, DDS, MSD, professor and head of the department of pediatric dentistry at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Treating cavities in very young children comes with certain risks, Punwani says, because at this age, “we have to use drugs to sedate the child” before treatment can be performed. And at any age, cavities are just not fun. It’s much better to head off decay in the first place.

Fortunately, “caries [cavities] are totally preventable,” Punwani explains. But fighting cavities requires parents to start teaching good dental habits early — and to stay vigilant as kids get older. Here’s what you can do to help ensure a cavity-free future for your child.

Toddlers with cavities

Dentists are now seeing cavities in children as young as 15 to 18 months, Punwani says. And heavy decay and dental infections can have devastating effects on the quality of a child’s life, adds Neal G. Herman, DDS, clinical professor of pediatric dentistry at the New York University College of Dentistry.

“Pain, swelling and early tooth loss may result in eating and nutritional difficulties. These, in turn, can cause lethargy, impaired learning, poor behavior, moodiness and a general failure to thrive,” Herman says.

“It used to be that you didn’t really see caries until about 5 years of age,” Punwani notes. Why the change? “The use of the bottle is the number-one culprit,” he says, explaining that it’s not giving a baby or toddler a bottle, per se, that causes cavities, but “using it as a pacifier rather than as a way to give nutrition.”

When a child is allowed to have a bottle of formula or juice (or, worst-case scenario, a sugary drink) for an indefinite period of time, she will tend to use it as a pacifier, sucking on it throughout the day. The teeth are bathed in the sugars from the juice or formula for long periods of time, increasing the likelihood of tooth decay. That’s also the reason a baby or toddler should never be put to bed with a bottle, Punwani says.

It’s important to remember that breast milk, too, contains lactose, which is a sugar.

“So if the baby is allowed to fall asleep at the breast, the breast is being used as a pacifier of sorts,” Punwani says. While the problem is not of the same magnitude as that caused by unlimited access to a bottle, parents should be aware of the potential for decay when a baby is allowed to fall asleep at the breast, he adds.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry suggests avoiding nursing children to sleep or putting anything other than water in their bedtime bottle. Even if you use the bottle for regular feeding times only, try to switch to a sippy cup by your child’s first birthday, Punwani advises.

The first dental visit

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends scheduling a first dental visit when the first tooth erupts, or no later than the first birthday.

“The dentist will check to make sure the teeth are well-formed and that the enamel is not defective,” Punwani says. This is also a good time to ask questions about caring for your child’s teeth. If something sounds confusing, ask for a demonstration from the dentist or hygien-

ist, he suggests.

Be sure to ask your dentist about whether your local water is fluoridated. If it’s not, she may want to discuss topical-fluoride application during dental visits, the use of fluoride gel at home, or the use of prescription fluoride supplements. (These come in drops for younger children and in chewable tablets for older kids.)

From mom to baby

Researchers are now finding that mothers with active cavities in their own mouths can transmit the cavity-causing bacteria to their infants through kissing, eating from the same spoon, the baby putting fingers in mom’s mouth and then her own, etc., Punwani says.

Herman notes that one way to help combat this transmission of bacteria is for the mother to practice good oral hygiene during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

“For most people, brushing teeth twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste, flossing, and using an over-the-counter fluoride mouth rinse will maintain good oral health,” he says.

Start good dental habits early

Even before a baby cuts her first tooth, parents should be wiping the gums clean with a bit of moistened gauze wrapped around the finger or just a moistened, clean baby washcloth. When the teeth begin to erupt, continue this wiping process after meals and before bed.

According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, fluoridated toothpaste should be introduced when a child is 2 to 3 years old. Before that, parents should clean the child’s teeth with water and a soft-bristled toothbrush.

When toothpaste is introduced, parents should supervise brushing and make sure that the child uses no more than a pea-sized amount on the brush. Children should spit out and not swallow excess toothpaste after brushing.

For more information

To learn more about caring for your child’s teeth, visit the following:

- American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry: www.aapd.org (Click on “Parent Resource Center.”)
- American Dental Association: www.ada.org (Check out “Oral Health Topics A to Z.”)



Punwani stresses that fluoride is potentially harmful in large amounts and should be treated like a drug. Toothpaste — which, of course, comes in kid-friendly flavors to encourage its use — should not be left unattended where young children can reach it. Parents and caregivers should monitor all tooth brushing at this age. Swallowing too much toothpaste can make a child sick and can also lead to fluorosis, a condition in which the teeth can become damaged and discolored due to too much fluoride being ingested.

Up to ages 6 or 7, children need supervision when brushing, especially to help with blind spots, Punwani says. He recommends using disclosing tablets as part of a random check now and then to show the child where her brushing is missing.

While the novelty of using an inex-

pensive “kiddie” toothbrush, either battery-operated or plug-in, might make brushing more fun, studies have shown these brushes are no more effective than an old-fashioned manual toothbrush, Punwani says. Still, if a little fun gets kids to grab their toothbrush more often, that’s not all bad. Some of these brushes even include built-in timers.

Also, there are now more sophisticated (and more expensive) electric toothbrushes available, such as Sonicare, in which the movement of water and toothpaste in the mouth, created by the rapid movement of the bristle tips, helps to clean more thoroughly between teeth and under the gum line. However, the experts we spoke with said a good old-fashioned toothbrush — with soft bristles to prevent gum damage — will work just fine for kids.

Punwani recommends flossing between your child’s teeth daily as soon as the baby teeth come together — at about age 2 ½. Aggressive flossing isn’t necessary.

“You just want to disrupt the bacterial flora between the teeth,” he says.

By about kindergarten or first grade, you can start to teach kids how to floss on their own. Any earlier than that, and a child may do more harm than good and can hurt the gums, Punwani says.

“The training is not a one-shot deal,” he emphasizes. “It can take five to six training sessions for a child to learn how to do it right.” Asking your dentist or hygienist for a lesson (for both you and your child) on how to floss your child’s teeth can be helpful.

Dental sealants work by filling in

the crevasses on the chewing surfaces of the teeth. This shuts out food particles that could get caught in the teeth, causing cavities. The application is fast and comfortable and can effectively protect teeth for many years, according to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.

Punwani recommends sealants for the biting surfaces of high-risk permanent molars and wisdom teeth.

“There’s a 65-percent retention rate over a 5-year period,” he says, noting that even if the sealants eventually come out or simply wear away, the teeth will have likely benefited from the sealants “because the tooth is at its most vulnerable time (for decay) right after it comes into the mouth.”

Would you like some cavities with those fries?

One can of soda contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar. And many older kids and teens who frequent fast-food restaurants are super-sizing their sugar consumption with extra-large drinks that can contain up to a whopping 25 teaspoons of sugar, says Punwani. To make matters worse, they tend to sip these drinks over long periods of time while hanging out with friends, watching TV, or playing video games, so the sugar is in contact with the teeth even longer than usual.

Kids’ frequent snacking, too, can promote cavities.

“It’s better to have sugar as part of a meal than to do a lot of in-between snacking,” says Punwani, who adds that it takes about 45 minutes of “oral clearance time” for the acid balance in the mouth to return to normal after eating. Frequent snacking doesn’t allow that natural process to happen, contributing to a cavity-promoting environment.

When you add braces to the mix, fighting cavities becomes even more challenging. Kids with braces can often benefit from using fluoride gels or rinses, which can reach areas where brushing sometimes can’t, Punwani says.

“The fluoride can help remineralize the areas of the teeth around the brackets,” he explains.

Kathy Sena is a freelance medical writer and the mother of a 15-year-old son (with no cavities so far — knock on wood). Visit her blog at www.badballet.com.

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Dr. Milchman received his Doctor of Dental Medicine degree from the University of Pennsylvania where he graduated with Honors and received two additional awards in the specialty of Periodontics. He expanded on his training with a one year General Practice Residency at Montefiore Medical Center. Dr. Milchman went on to complete a dual degree Orthodontic Residency Program at Temple University. In addition to his certificate in Orthodontics, Dr. Milchman has also earned a Masters of Science in Dentistry. In pursuit of the highest standards in his specialty, Board Certification, Dr. Milchman has successfully passed the American Board of Orthodontics Written Board Exam and Clinical Case Exam. Dr. Milchman serves the needs of the pediatric, adolescent, and adult community in his two private offices in Queens, New York. In addition, he is currently an Attending Orthodontist at St. Barnabas Hospital and Wyckoff Heights Medical Center.

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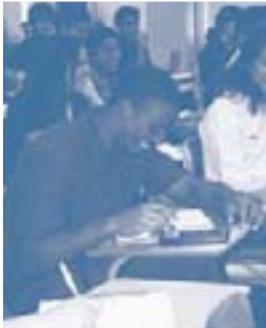
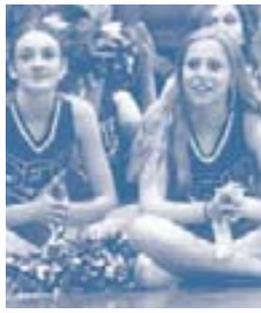
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Continued on page 22



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718-641-6990

Catholic Schools

DIRECTORY

Continued from page 20

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St. Joseph Catholic Academy

Formerly known as St. Joseph School

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Monday through Friday

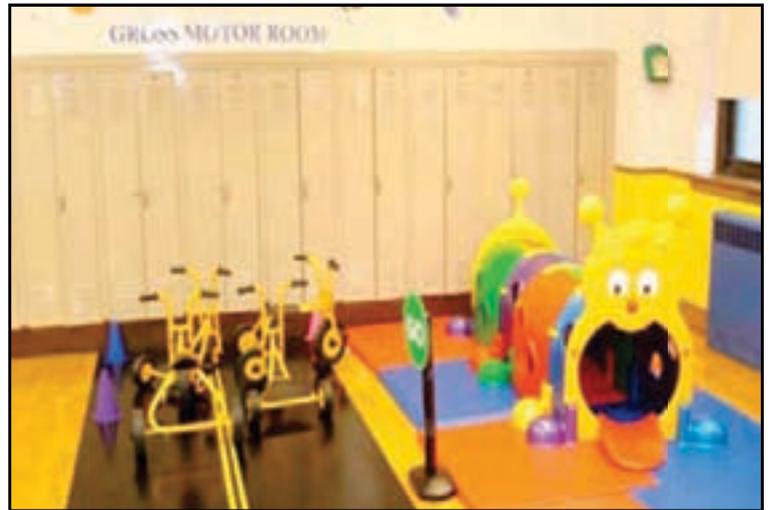
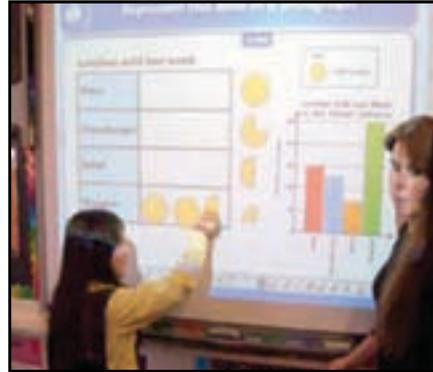
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Catholic Schools

DIRECTORY

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A TEEN'S TAKE

AGLAIA HO

The story of how I became a writer

Schools and educators try to motivate kids to become proficient writers; however, getting young people interested in writing is not a simple feat. Having them sit down (and stay seated) for 30 minutes to write a page-long paper is definitely unappealing to those who would prefer to be out playing.

What I found, though, was that — with my parents help — writing let me capture my fantasy adventures down on paper, so I could relive them at a later time. This fostered

both the heroes and the villains. I found my voice through storytelling.

My parents were always supportive and fostered my creativity. They also encouraged writing, even when I was very young. My mother would sit by my side and translate my stories into written words. I would draw illustrations to accompany the stories with my markers, crayons, and colored pencils, and my dad would help me bind the papers together with pieces of string or yarn.

Seeing the finished product made me feel proud, and inspired me to continue bookmaking. Before long, I had created a tiny library of my fiction.

These early experiences motivated me to write as soon as I was able to. I wanted the independence to create a book all on my own. One Christmas, I surprised my parents with my very own picture book about a reindeer who wanted to go to the moon. My parents were so delighted

have confidence in my voice.

Nevertheless, as I grew older, my writing grew into essays, memoirs, poems, plays, and articles inspired by my own life experiences. The practice I got from writing stories years earlier prepared me for more mature genres. I began to submit my works for publication, hoping that my voice would be heard by others. It didn't take long for me to realize that writing is a powerful tool with many benefits.

Undoubtedly, writing is beneficial for achieving success in school. All essays, even those on the most boring topics, have room for creativity. Trying my luck with writing competitions, I realized that my work could bring in some monetary prizes. A bit of extra pocket cash makes any teenager happy! I also noticed that a writer can make a difference and change people's minds. I could entertain, yet, also inform people about my world, opinions, hopes and dreams.

Creating books and stories was a great way to get me interested in writing. Just letting my imagination run wild empowered the little dreamer in me. I'm grateful for my family helping me to make books and listening to my ideas. They instilled in me confidence and pride — no matter what I wrote. However, the most important thing is that my writing has provided me with keepsakes of so many memories.

Occasionally, I return to my adventures. I relive every exhilarating moment and smile as I'm transformed once again into that little girl, who could never stay still. It was through writing that I was able to channel my imagination. I'm glad that I have these stories, so the magic can live again.

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.



in me a life-long love of the written word.

When I was little, I was not much different from other free-spirited children. I wanted nothing more than to climb trees and pretend to be a damsel in distress. There was never a time when I wasn't an imaginative child. Maybe it was because I was an only child, and I didn't have the blessing (or curse) of siblings to entertain me (or drive me nuts). I was always filled with bizarre and novel ideas that would take me to new heights. I would act out the entire adventure for my family, playing

by my initiative that they shared my story with family and friends. They even entered it into a competition. I didn't win, but I gained a much greater reward: a love for writing.

All the encouragement and early support from my parents opened up the world of writing for me. I sought out every opportunity to learn from teachers and other writers. I was always open for feedback. I would beg my parents for advice on my characters, storylines, and themes. They were always willing to share their insight, and they taught me to take control of my own originality and

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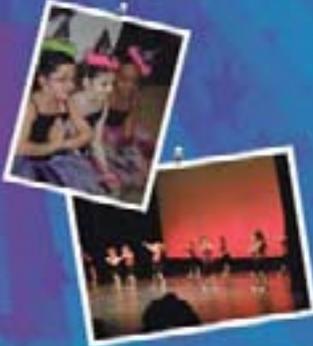
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"THE PLACE THAT EVERYONE RAVES ABOUT"

Talk about sex

It might feel awkward, but this is a conversation you *must* have with your kids

BY LAURA VAROSCAK-DEINNOCENTIIS

It's never too early to talk to your kids about sex. Young children are curious about their bodies and look to their parents for answers. First conversations about sexuality usually occur at bath time or during toilet training. As children mature, their questions become more complicated and dialogue can become increasingly uncomfortable for those parents who are not well prepared.

In today's world, children are bombarded with sexual images and content. It is almost impossible to turn on the television, radio or computer without coming across a reference to sex. Pop culture shapes the way young people view sex and themselves. Combined with peer pressure, kids are faced with many conflicted messages. Parents are the most influential sex educators for their children.

"If parents don't supply children with the information they need, they will acquire it from their peers, the media, or other potentially misinformed, misleading, or biased sources," stresses Dr. Logan Levkoff, sexologist, relationship expert and author of "Third Base Ain't What It Used To Be: What Your Kids Are Learning About Sex Today and How to Teach Them to Become Sexually Healthy Adults."

Never too young to talk

Healthy family communication plays a key role in helping preteens and teens make responsible decisions. If parents practice talking about sex as their children develop, they will establish a strong foundation on which to base future conversations. Sexuality includes a wide range of topics which can be dis-



cussed at different times. A young child is likely to wonder where babies come from if there is a pregnancy in the family. Adolescents may have questions about relationships after they develop their first crush. Preteens may start to experiment with sexual behavior, while teenagers want to know the different ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.

Rosie, a single mother from Brooklyn, began speaking about sex with her two children at a young age.

"I was always very open about sex with them. It came very natural to me. If we saw something on TV, I'd use it as an opportunity to talk to them," she says. Finding the right moments to address age-appropriate issues can help alleviate the stress or embarrassment (of parents and children) of having "the talk." In fact, one serious conversation about the subject is not sufficient. All humans, regardless of age, are sexual beings and need to find appropriate outlets for expression. Open parent commu-

nication helps young people develop a healthy sense of self.

In recent studies on parent-child talk about sex, researchers found that more than 40 percent of adolescents had had intercourse before they spoke with their parents about birth control, safe sex or sexually transmitted diseases. Teens who had ongoing conversations about sexuality were more likely to delay their first sexual encounter, have fewer partners, and practice safe sex when they did become active.

Brianna, Rosie's 15-year-old daughter, says that she is going to wait until she is married before she has sex.

"In junior high, there was a girl who got pregnant and had to get an abortion. Sex is no good until you're married!"

Rosie stresses that she doesn't tell her kids that sex is wrong.

"I don't teach my kids that sex is bad," she says. "Nothing is wrong with it. It's a beautiful thing to share with someone you truly love, but it

shouldn't be taken lightly. There are serious repercussions that I want them to be aware of."

Rosie's 16-year-old son, Eli, appreciates his mother's perspective. Like his sister, he believes sex should wait until marriage, but also admits that "anything can happen with teens." Eli understands that a sexual relationship can be beautiful and fun as long as it's with the right person.

"It's definitely something that can be enjoyed, but you must be smart about it," he says. "There are a lot of diseases out there, so you really have to be cautious in what you are doing when you open yourself up in that way."

Sex Ed 101

Without education, many young people do not consider the potentially life-changing outcomes sex can bring. Most schools teach an abstinence-only curriculum. The truth is, sex feels good and kids will continue to experiment because of the pleasure it brings. They learn about pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases but do not hear enough on prevention or alternate means of sexual expression. Sex education in school also does not usually include a moral discussion, which is why parents have the responsibility to share their values about sexuality and relationships with their children.

Successful communication stems from open, honest and non-judgmental talk. Parents should look for "teachable moments" when the conversation can unfold naturally — in response to a news story, television program, music video, etc. The dialogue does not have to be heavy. Sometimes a short, meaningful exchange can be most effective, especially when delivered at the right moment.

Play it cool

Children most likely feel just as awkward as their parents when broaching the subject of sex. If they perceive that their parents are as afraid or embarrassed by the topic, they are less likely to reach out and initiate conversation. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging the awkwardness before starting to talk. Another way to break the ice is with a sense of humor.

Parents should express their thoughts and feelings, but should also be prepared to listen and ask

questions. While it is critical to provide children with the information they need to understand the physical aspects of sex, it is just as important to address the social, emotional and spiritual impact. Here are a few questions a parent might want to discuss with a child who is interested in becoming sexually active:

- Are you aware of different kinds of birth control? Do you and your partner know how to properly put on and take off a condom? Do you realize the importance of two forms of birth control to ensure maximum protection?

- Have you and your partner thought about what would happen if a pregnancy occurred?

- Do you know about sexually transmitted diseases? Do you understand how they are transmitted and how to protect yourself from them? Are you prepared to ask your partner about previous sexual partners and be willing to get tested?

- Why do you want to have sex now? Are you feeling pressured? How do you feel sex will change your relationship?

- How will you feel about yourself as a sexually active person — physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually?

- Do you know that there are other things (besides intercourse) that you and your partner can do to experience sexual pleasure without the risk of pregnancy or STDs?

When parents let children know they care about their sexual well being, they are also empowering them. Education from home provides young people with the information necessary to make the right choices for themselves. When children are raised with positive messages about sexuality from a young age, they learn to embrace themselves as healthy sexual beings as they develop. And when the time comes, sex is likely to be approached responsibly and respectfully.

Teacher and freelance writer Laura Varoscak-DelInnocenti is a regular contributor to New York Parenting Media. 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 Brooklyn and is the proud mom of two sons, Henry and Charlie. Visit her webpage (www.examiner.com/parenting-in-new-york/laura-varoscak) for more articles.

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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Courtship to court

Divorce by litigation is expensive, heart-rending

Every divorcing couple has a choice to make: how will we dissolve the marriage? What process shall we use? The answer can have tremendous repercussions — emotionally, as well as financially — for yourselves and your children.

Litigation — or going to court — is usually the most expensive, antagonistic and emotionally difficult process for ending a marriage. I'm firmly convinced that many couples go this route when they don't need to — and that they would choose otherwise if they fully understood what litigation involves, as well as the alternatives, which I will address in future columns.

Be aware that litigation can mean the following:

•**Diminished power to decide:** If no settlement is reached, a judge

will decide matters for you. Because judges have very large caseloads, they rarely have time to learn a lot about you and your family, to consider many options, and tailor solutions that best serve your needs. After the divorce, at least one party is often disappointed and bitter about the judge's determinations.

In most cases, actually, a judge does not make the final decisions; the parties settle before it comes to this. Yet, the emotional and financial costs remain enormous.

•**Other professionals:** The court often appoints a psychologist to interview parents and children and to report findings to the judge; and, a "lawyer for the child" to represent the children — just as you may have a lawyer representing you. Each of you may decide to hire experts, often to value a business, house, or other asset.

•**Time:** A litigated divorce is likely to take at least nine months. If any or all of the "other professionals" get involved, expect it to take longer. My own divorce, which (thankfully!) had a small cast and never reached the trial stage, lasted more than two years.

•**Money:** The costs can be staggering. Your lawyer will probably cost \$200 to \$600 per hour; your spouse, the same. Additionally, your lawyer may charge you for phone calls, travel time to the courthouse or meetings, time waiting in court, as well as research, motions written and filed, depositions, preparation of witnesses, etc. The court-appointed psychologist and lawyer for the child, along with other experts, all come with a fee.

•**Emotions:** Stress and anger usually grow greatly during litigation, which is an adversarial process. It is about winning and losing; and even the "winner" is usually a "loser" as well. Heightened emotions can cause once loving spouses to say and do things to one another that may never be forgiven.

Plus, there are worries about money, children, moving on, moving out and much more. The longer the

process takes, the greater the strain — and not only on the adults.

•**Impact on children:** The more stressed, worried and angry you are, the less support you can give them. If you're yelling and bad-mouthing the other parent, the kids can't help but suffer. Children have their own fears and anxieties, and may withdraw, act out, or hurt without your even being aware of it.

• • •

With these considerations in mind, why do many of us choose litigation? One answer is a lack of information and not knowing the alternatives. During separation or divorce, when life is so difficult, it can be hard to learn more and think about which option will best serve you and your family.

Another explanation is the "chorus effect" — what opinions we hear from others. Well-intentioned family members and friends often know less than we do — certainly about our needs and situations. They may give poor advice that makes us more fearful and angry. We may then act hastily.

While going to court may be necessary for some people — for example, where one spouse refuses to consider mediation or collaborative divorce — is it necessary for you? For most readers, I doubt it — particularly if having a respectful and civil relationship after the divorce is important, as it is when there are children involved. Or, even if you just want to save time, money and aggravation.

Disclaimer: All material in this column is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Discussing your particular case and circumstances with a legal professional before making important decisions is strongly encouraged to safeguard your rights.

New York City- and Long Island-based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin, Esq. helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without litigation. Contact him at lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com or (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/home>.



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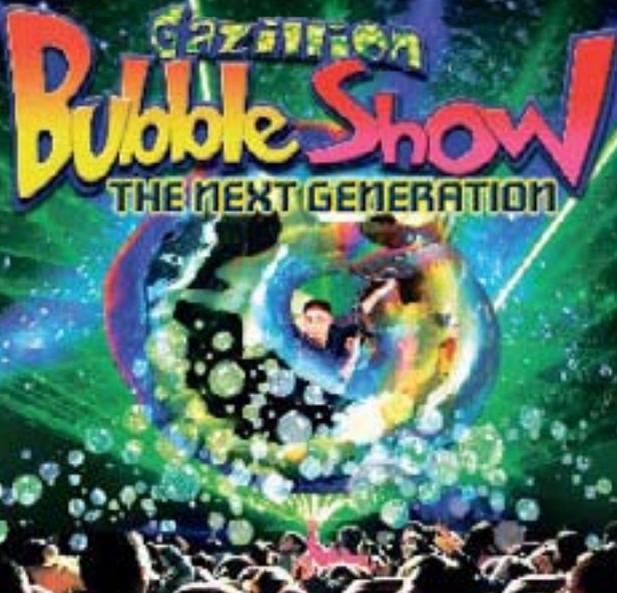


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Daily deal — or

Ten smart tips for online shoppers

BY LISA A. CRAYTON

Daily deal vouchers offer some of the highest discounts on entertainment, personal care and household goods. But if you don't take the time to know what's not included in your deal, it could end up being a dud.

On a recent Thursday evening, I wanted to use my daily deal voucher that I had purchased a year before for \$25. The deal would allow me to eat \$50 at a southern cuisine restaurant. I had less than seven hours to redeem the coupon that was set to expire, but I made it just in time. And was I ever glad that I did not forfeit my deal — or money.

Twenty-five dollars may not seem a lot of money, but I hate when a

dud?

deal becomes a dud. And, while I am not an extreme couponer, I frequently use coupons, and have found daily deals to offer some of the highest discounts on things for myself and my family.

Here are some money-saving strategies to consider before buying — or using — any daily deal.

• **Know your savings threshold.** I like a bargain, and I want a deep discount. So, for me, getting offered

10 percent off is a deal breaker — it's not enough savings to justify the purchase. Now, offer me 30 percent off or more, and I may agree that the "deal" is worth having. Recent offers I spotted included a discount of 51 percent off on an item — now that's a deal.

• **Keep your head.** For some, daily deals are the epitome of impulse shopping, an activity that can wreak havoc on a family's budget. So, consider your budget when taking advantage of any deal. The more you save, the better the chance your budget will be able to stand the purchase.

• **Know what's not covered.** Despite the heat of the moment, take time to read all details to avoid buying something with more restrictions than you anticipated. For instance, I purchased my recent restaurant daily deal in hopes of enjoying a workday lunch, only to discover once the coupon arrived via e-mail that it only covered dinner. How disappointing. Some restaurant daily deals exclude tip and beverages (especially alcoholic beverages), while some travel deals exclude taxes and resort fees. If you anticipate not having money for the extras, consider passing on that deal.

• **Stick to preferences.** I love dining out, and getting a good deal on a nice restaurant. Since the



For some, daily deals are the epitome of impulse shopping, an activity that can wreak havoc on a family's budget. So, consider your budget when taking advantage of any deal.

economy slumped, I've been able to continue doing so — sporadically — by getting deals at upscale restaurants. You, too, will enjoy a deal more when it offers savings on something you and your family really needs — or wants — such as family entertainment daily deals to local restaurants, attractions, or events.

• **Comparison shop.** For restaurants, it is important to know how much a regular meal costs. For products, knowing the regular price helps ascertain if you're being offered a deal or dud. When I saw an offer for a George Foreman grill, I immediately surfed online to see if it was a good deal. It was so-so; I could get it for the same price in some venues, and slightly higher in others. I skipped the deal, but was able to shop later that month with confidence at my local Walmart, which had the same item for the same price of the supposed deal.

• **Know the locale.** I haven't purchased a deal for a vacation yet, but I hope to. What's stopped me? One of my preferred destinations is New York City. Because I'm a native New Yorker, I can easily ascertain whether a "quaint hotel" is really a gussied-up dump, and whether the transportation (air or rail) is really a deal or dud. For any deal, do the math to see if you will actually save money by visiting websites like Travelocity.com, or bing.com, or ground transportation providers like Amtrak or Greyhound.

Also, consider the reputation of any seller or provider. When in doubt, ask family, friends or co-workers about their experiences with that seller or provider, or check out any print or online product or service reviews.

• **Buy now ... or later?** Ascertain how many hours or days you have to act on an offer. I've noticed that some daily deals repeat themselves, especially hot deals for popular restaurants, beauty packages, and last-minute vacation packages. So, you may have another opportunity even if you miss a deal.

• **Stick to deal limits.** I confess, I went over budget and actually ended up paying another \$28 for food the night I redeemed my restaurant daily deal. But, here's why: I bought a \$21 ribs dinner to take home to my son, and spent another \$7 on two coffees. Since I hadn't checked out the menu before arriving, I had no clue that a cup of coffee would cost \$3.50! The good news? Without my son's meal and the coffee, my meal would have been just \$49, a dollar shy of the \$50 daily deal limit.

• **Stay informed.** These days, there are more daily deal options than ever. I've found daily deals online (my recent restaurant purchase was from Groupon.com), in my local commuter paper, and from recommendations from family and friends. Where possible, sign up for email alerts.

• **Split the costs.** Save even more on a daily deal by sharing the costs. For example, had I originally split the cost of my restaurant daily deal with someone else, we each would have only paid \$12.50 — way below the average cost of that restaurant's dinner entrees. Keep in mind that only one card (some vendors allow debit card purchases) can be charged at the time of purchase, so determine whose card will be used.

My recent experience was clearly a deal — not a dud — despite the nice, but slow, wait service. I enjoyed scrumptious, succulent catfish with a side of macaroni and cheese and sweet potato fries. My sister, Carla, munched on succulent, "to-die-for" lamb chops with a side of potatoes and kale. My son, too, raved about his ribs meal — while complaining between bites that it did not fit with his wrestling team dietary restrictions. A few days later, when Carla asked, "So where are we going next?" I quipped, "Wherever you find a deal!"

Lisa A. Crayton is a freelance writer who can be reached at lacrayton@yahoo.com, or through her website, www.LisaCrayton.com.



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THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Some sweet lessons of self-confidence

Imagine being back in preschool and noticing that all of your friends are different.

The one who sits next to you in school has brown eyes, while your neighbor's eyes are blue. One friend might be very tall, while the other might be very short. Their hair and their skin might be lighter, darker, or another color altogether. Your friends are all ages and sizes, and there are boys and girls.

They are different, and you love them all.

And in the new book, "Chocolate Me!" by Taye Diggs, illustrated by his friend, Shane W. Evans, a little boy learns to love himself, too.

Timmy, Johnny and Mark have everyday names, just like everybody else — except for the little boy on the step. His name is unique, and he longs for a common name.

Timmy, Johnny and Mark have different skin colors, too, and they wonder if the little boy's dark skin hurt when he washed off the dirt. Why was his skin darker, anyway?

Timmy, Johnny and Mark sometimes tease the little boy about his hair. It's curly and poufy, like a wig. Doesn't it tangle and hurt to brush it?

And then there was the little boy's nose. It was HUGE! It was nothing like Timmy's nose. The little boy's hair was not like Mark's hair. His skin didn't look like Johnny's skin. And his super-white teeth weren't like anybody's!

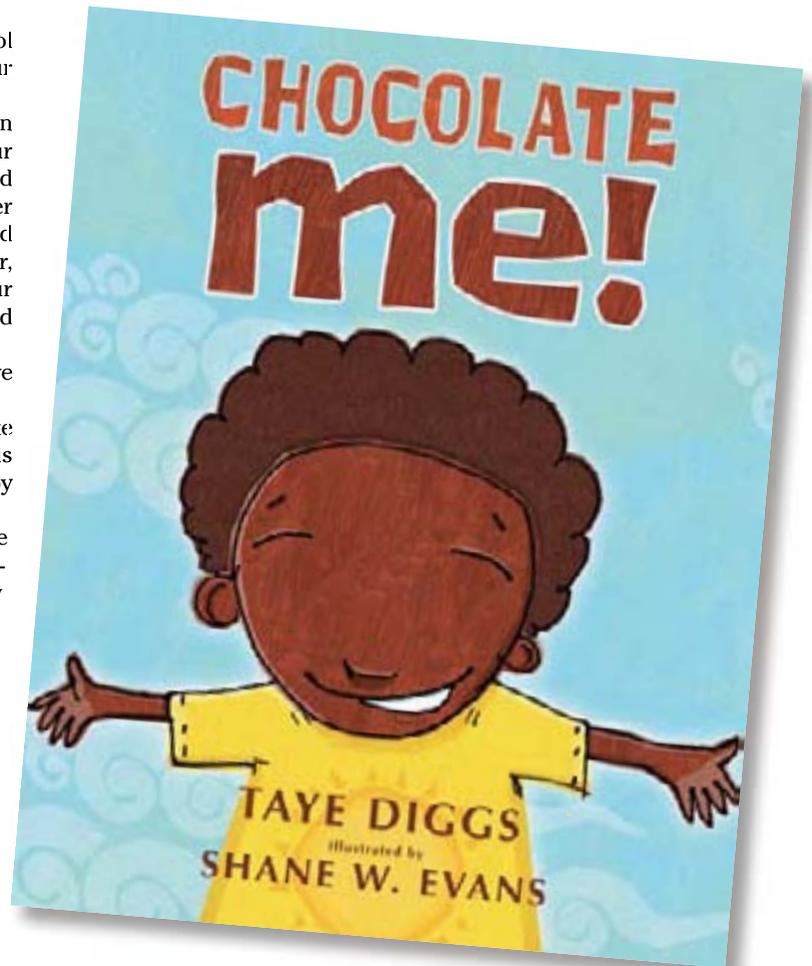
It made him sad. It made him cry.

But when he told his mother why he was so sad, she said something important: his skin wasn't just dark, it was like "velvet fudge frosting mixed in a bowl."

His hair was like cotton candy or rows of tall corn. And just seeing his white, white teeth made her smile, too.

She showed the little boy a mirror. For real, he was just perfect.

Suddenly, Johnny, Timmy and Mark didn't seem so special. They



were his friends, that's true, but they were missing something that was too sweet not to notice.

Wanting to be like everybody else is a big thing when you're a little person. But then again, so is self-acceptance, and "Chocolate Me!" can help.

With a charming, not-quite-rhyming story, author and actor Diggs — who used his own childhood as the basis for this book — tells the tale of a boy who isn't at all like his friends and hates it.

Anybody who has stood out from the crowd can identify with the child in this story, but kids who are keenly aware of differences will find it even more personal. I liked the good-naturedness of Diggs's main character, despite that he's heartbroken for

being singled out. For her wisdom, I liked his mother even more.

Add Evans's illustrations — pictures kids will want to look at again and again and again — and you've got a winner of a book.

Meant for preschoolers, I think this book is also good for both bully and bullied, because it could change their lives. For them, and for any child who's different, "Chocolate Me!" is yummy.

"Chocolate Me!" by Taye Diggs [40 pages, *Feiwei and Friends*, 2011, \$16.99] is recommended for preschoolers.

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

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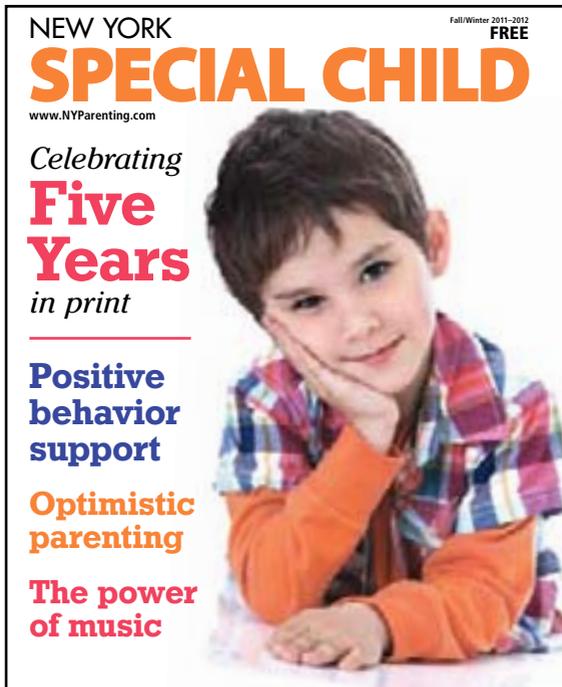
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Going Places

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Spies! Three Village Historical Society, 93 N. Country Rd. (631) 751-3730; www.tvhs.org; Sundays, 1–4 pm, \$5 (\$3 children and members).

Docent led, interactive exhibit with hands-on activities and computer games about the Revolutionary War.

“Little Miss Muffet’s Monster Sitting Service”: The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, West Dr. at 79th Street Transverse; (212) 988-9093; cityparksfoundation.org/swedishcottage.html; Tuesdays, 10:30 am and Noon, Wednesdays, 10:30 am, noon and 2:30 pm, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30 am and noon, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now – Sun, Feb. 19; \$8 (\$5 children under 12).

The story of Molly Muffet, the descendant of the original Miss Muffet. Suitable for children 3–9.

Wild Ocean: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.ny-science.org; Fridays, 3:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 and 3:30 pm, Now – Sat, March 31; \$6, (\$5 children, students and seniors, plus museum admission).

Science-themed 3D show about the ocean and ecosystem. Suitable for children 6 and up.

Sunny Bunnies Nature Education: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd. (718) 229-4000.

Ages 3–4. Explore nature trails, music time, free play and more. Pre-register. Bring a bag lunch.

Fledglings Nature Programs: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd. (718) 229-4000; Mondays, 9:30 am, Tuesdays, 11:15 am, Thursdays, 1:30 pm, Now – Mon, March 19; \$228 per child.

Ages 3–4. Twelve sessions. Crate crafts, pet animals, take nature walks.

Story time: Barnes and Noble, 23-80 Bell Blvd. (718) 224-1083; www.barnesandnoble.com; Mondays, 11 am, Now – Wed, March 28; Free.

Children enjoy a different story and activity each week.

Toddler Time Nature Programs: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd. (718) 229-4000; Mondays, 11:30 am, Wednesdays, 11:15 am, Thursdays and Fridays, 11 am, Now – Fri, March 30.

Ages 24–35 months. Parental par-



Africa in Queens!

Africa comes to Queens on Feb. 1 and 2 when the York College Performing Arts Center presents “The African Drum,” when kids aged 3–7 sing and dance and dance their way on a trip through the grasslands.

Kijana and her animal friends, including talking leopards, a wise old loon and a turtle, teach life’s lessons as they lead the children on a wondrous adventure through storytelling and traditional African folk tales, including “How the Animals got their Colors,” “How the Turtle Got its Shell” and “Why

the Egret Flies Free.”

The fables are accompanied by original and traditional African music performed on the “talking drum” and other authentic African instruments.

Tickets are \$10 for the hour-long show and can be purchased by calling the box office at (212) 724-0677; performance dates are Feb. 1 and 2; with two performances each day at 10 and 11:30 am.

York College Performing Arts Center, 94-20 Guy Brewer Blvd. between Liberty and Jamaica avenues in Jamaica, (212) 724-0677. For more visit www.shadowboxtheatre.org.

participation required. Pre-register. Create crafts, read stories, take nature walks.

Poetry workshop: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke. (718) 380-7077; Mondays, 7:30 pm, Free.

Budding poets perfect the craft with Bob Trabold and Amanda Konstantine Perlmutter.

Storytime: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke. (718) 380-7077; Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 am, Free.

Children listen to a different author and theme each week.

Craft day: Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, Central Park; (212) 860-1370; www.nycgovparks.org; Fridays, 3–4:30 pm, Now – Fri, March 30; Free.

Create a different nature inspired masterpiece every week. Families only, no groups.

Toddler Time on the Weekend: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-

Submit a listing

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

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

06 Northern Blvd. (718) 229-4000; Saturday, Jan. 21, 10:30 am; Saturday, Jan. 28, 10:30 am; Saturday, Feb. 4, 10:30 am; Saturday, Feb. 11, 10:30 am; Saturday, Feb. 18, 10:30 am; \$176 (\$198 non-members).

Create crafts, read stories and take nature walks. Snack included. Eight participants. Infants must be in seats. Pre-register.

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

Children three and up create fun projects.

College workshop: Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd. (718) 990-0700; www.queenslibrary.org; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3 pm, Now – Thurs, March 1; Free.

Teens get information on how to prepare for college, fill out entry applications, apply for financial aid or get part-time jobs.

Share your dreams: Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; www.queenslibrary.org; Mondays – Saturdays, 1 pm, Wed, Feb. 1 – Wed, Feb. 29; Free.

Post aspirations on the Dream Wall.

Homework help: Lefrak City Library, 98-30 57th Ave. (718) 592-7677; www.queenslibrary.org; Wednesday, Feb. 1, 4 pm; Thursday, Feb. 2, 4 pm; Monday, Feb. 6, 4 pm; Tuesday, Feb. 7, 4 pm; Wednesday, Feb. 8, 4 pm; Thursday, Feb. 9, 4 pm; Monday, Feb. 13, 4 pm; Tuesday, Feb. 14, 4 pm; Wednesday, Feb. 15, 4 pm; Thursday, Feb. 16, 4 pm; Monday, Feb. 20, 4 pm; Tuesday,

Going Places

Feb. 21, 4 pm; Wednesday, Feb. 22, 4 pm; Thursday, Feb. 23, 4 pm; Monday, Feb. 27, 4 pm; Tuesday, Feb. 28, 4 pm; Wednesday, Feb. 29, 4 pm; Free.

Teens help one-another with school projects.

Gaelic classes: Ancient Order of Hibernians Hall, 27 Locust Ave. www.scoilgaeilge.org; Wednesdays, 7–10 pm, beginning Wed, Feb. 1; Free.

For beginners (8–9 pm), novices (7:15–8 pm); Grammar 8–9 pm and advanced workshops (8–10 pm).

Discover nature hour: Caleb Smith State Park Preserve, 581 W. Jericho Tpke. (631) 265-1054; Thursday, Feb. 2, 10 am; Thursday, Feb. 16, 10 am; \$4 (\$5 per child; free for children under 3).

For children 3–5 and their parents. Learn about the natural world with hands-on activities and stories. Reservations required.

“Little Miss Muffet’s Monster Sitting Service”: The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, West Dr. at 79th Street Transverse; (212) 988-9093; cityparksfoundation.org/swedishcottage.html; Tuesdays – Fridays, 10:30 am and noon, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Sat, Feb. 25 – Sun, April 8; \$8 (\$5 children under 12).

The story of Molly Muffet, the descendant of the original Miss Muffet. Suitable for children 3–9.

WED, FEB. 1

“The African Drum”: York College Performing Arts Center, 94-20 Guy Brewer Blvd. between Liberty and Jamaica avenues; (212) 724-0677; www.shadowboxtheatre.org; 10 and 11:30 am; \$10.

Children in pre-K to fifth grade will enjoy this shadow puppet show.

Knit and crochet: South Ozone Park Library, 128-16 Rockaway Blvd. at 128th Street; (718) 529-1660; www.queenslibrary.org; 1 pm; Free.

For beginners. Bring your own needles and one skein of yarn.

Arts and crafts: Long Island Children’s Museum, 11 Davis Avenue; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; 2:30–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Learn how to make heart-filled decorations by making sun catchers.

Art workshop: Maspeth Public Library, 69-70 Grand Ave. (718) 639-5228; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children 8 and older create an environmentally themed painting with tree branches. Pre-registration required.

THURS, FEB. 2

“The African Drum”: 10 and 11:30 am. York College Performing Arts Cen-



A worm welcome

Worms may be gross, but they’re also pretty darn interesting.

What other creature has five pairs of hearts, no eyes, and is capable of regenerating parts of its squiggly, slime-covered body? Learn all about these fascinating, dirt-loving creatures at “I Love Worms for Kids,” featuring ac-

ter. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

“Hatched”: Long Island Children’s Museum, 11 Davis Avenue; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; 11 am; Free with museum admission.

Play tells the story of baby animals in a barnyard. For all ages.

Arts and crafts: 2:30–4 pm. Long Island Children’s Museum. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

Arts and crafts: Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Celebrate the Year of the Dragon by making an origami.

Art workshop: Steinway Public Library, 21-45 31 St. at 21st Avenue; (718) 728-1965; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children 8 and older create an environmentally themed painting with tree branches. Pre-registration required.

FRI, FEB. 3

Twin zone: Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; www.queenslibrary.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

— such as making heart-shaped compost cookies — that are tailored to put you and your kids in touch with your inner creeping invertebrate.

Queens Botanical Garden [43-50 Main St. between Dahlia and Elder avenues in Flushing, (914) 923-4837] Feb. 16 at 2 pm; \$5. For info, visit www.queensbotanical.org

Children in grades five through eight join in for books, games and art along with scavenger hunts and activities.

Arts and crafts: 2:30–4 pm. Long Island Children’s Museum. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

Comic workshop: Woodside Library, 54-22 Skillman Ave. (718) 429-4700; www.queenslibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Award winning professional Ivan Velez helps children make a green comicbook.

Chinese new year: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Celebrate the Year of the Dragon with crafts, paper cutting and bead making.

Arts and crafts: Briarwood Public Library, 85-12 Main St. at Village Road; (718) 658-1680; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children and teens make crafts.

Happy hour: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Teens meet with friends and play games, listen to music and hang out.

America’s Young Reformers Group: Laurelton Public Library, 134-26 225th St. at Merrick Boulevard; (718) 528-2822; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm.

Discuss bullying, violence, cheating, and relationships. Pre-register.

SAT, FEB. 4

Pinkalicious: BayWay Arts Center, 265 E. Main St. at Yockel Place; (631) 581-2700; www.broadhollow.org; 2 pm; \$10 (\$22 tea party package).

Pinkalicious loves pink; children follow the beloved character through a musical romp of adventures. The Princes Tea Party, at 3:30 pm after the show offers juice, cake, and tea sandwiches for the very pink at heart.

Jewish New Year for the Trees: U.U.C.Q. Corner of 149th Street and Ash Avenue; (718) 380-5326; 2:30–4 pm; \$5, first-time visitors free.

Tu B’Shevat Seder with three fruits. Schmooze over light refreshments.

All that Jazz”: Long Island Children’s Museum, 11 Davis Avenue; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; 3 pm; \$3 with museum admission.

Celebrate black history month by exploring the life of Louis Armstrong and others. For children 5 and up.

“The Amazing Max and the Box of Interesting Things”: The MMAC Theater, 248 W. 60th St. between Amsterdam and West End avenues; (212) 239-6200; www.telecharge.com; 4:30 pm; \$29.50 (\$49.50 VIP seating).

The magic show with a mind of its own. Magician Max Darwin makes objects appear out of thin air.

SUN, FEB. 5

“Pinkalicious”: John H Hessel Hall, 336 Woodmere Blvd. at W. Broadway; (516) 374-5559; 1 pm; \$10.

See Saturday, Feb. 4.

Art workshop: Caleb Smith State Park Preserve, 581 W. Jericho Tpke. (631) 265-1054; 1:30–2:30pm; \$4 (\$5 per child; free for children under 3).

Children 5 and up construct a sun craft. Reservations required.

MON, FEB. 6

“Sojourner’s Truth”: Laurelton Public Library, 134-26 225th St. at Merrick Boulevard; (718) 528-2822; www.queenslibrary.org; 6 pm.

Children learn about this ex-freed slave, abolitionist, and women’s rights activist.

Henna painting: Astoria Public Library, 14-01 Astoria Blvd. at 14th Street; (718) 278-2220; www.queenslibrary.org; 6 pm; Free.

Artist Farzana Fatema paints par-

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Going Places

Continued from page 37

Participants with henna, a natural powder mixed with lemon juice. Materials limited, first come first served.

TUES, FEB. 7

Nature Discoveries: 10–11 am and 11:30 am–12:30 pm. Connetquot River State Park.

Parents and children discover the natural world around through short walks, activities and crafts. Suitable for children 3-6. Registration required.

Bingo: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Teens have fun with friends and play games.

Plastic bag crafts: Astoria Public Library, 14-01 Astoria Blvd. at 14th Street; (718) 278-2220; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Find a use for all those supermarket bags and create something beautiful.

Open auditions: 7:30 pm. Haughton Hall Theater - Trinity Episcopal Church.

Casting for a production of Larry Shue's "The Nerd" presented by the Minstrel Players of Northport (show performed in April and May). Female, mid 40s to early 50's; and a boy between the ages of 6-12. Bring resume and headshot.

WED, FEB. 8

Knit and crochet: 1 pm. South Ozone Park Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

Art workshop: Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Artist Vincent Smythe helps children 8 and older create an environmentally themed painting that incorporates tree branches. Pre-registration required.

THURS, FEB. 9

Acting workshop: 3:30 pm. See Thursday, Feb. 2.

Art workshop: 4 pm. Steinway Public Library. See Thursday, Feb. 2.

Karaoke nights: Arverne Public Library, 312 Bch. 54th St. at Rockaway Beach Boulevard; (718) 634-4784; www.queenslibrary.org; 5:30 pm; Free.

Teens show off their lip synching skills.

FRI, FEB. 10

Arts and crafts: 4 pm. Briarwood Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

Happy hour: 4 pm. Flushing Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

America's Young Reformers



'Amaze' and delight

Kids' magician Amazing Max has a saying: If you enjoy his show, he's the Amazing Max. If you don't, he's David Blaine!

But toddlers to grandparents usually exit "The Amazing Max and his Box of Interesting Things" with smiles on their faces, because that box of his is filled with family fun, and this month, Max comes to the Manhattan Movements and Art Center Theater.

Sure, he's not a "mindfreak" like Criss Angel, and he doesn't rock uber-defined pecs like the aforementioned Blaine (and he doesn't wear a rainbow jumpsuit

like Doug Henning!), but he's got more than a few tricks that other illusionists can't beat — namely, how to make the whole family feel like they're part of the magic.

And Max's magic is peppered with comedy that will have mom and dad laughing along with every trick.

"The Amazing Max and His Box of Interesting Things," at the Manhattan Movements and Art Center Theater [248 W. 60th St. between Amsterdam and West End avenues; (212) 239-6200]. Tickets are \$29.50 (\$49.50 VIP seating) for performances on Feb. 4, 11 and 18; 4:30 pm. For info visit www.theamazingmaxlive.com.

Group: 4 pm. Laurelton Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

Gaming: Astoria Public Library, 14-01 Astoria Blvd. at 14th Street; (718) 278-2220; www.queenslibrary.org; 4:30 pm; Free.

Teens and tweens play video games.

Habitat for Humanity pasta dinner party: Queens High School of Teaching, 74-20 Commonwealth Blvd. (631) 766-0601; gvalenze@schools.nyc.gov; www.theaccardos.com/qhst/habitat.htm; 7 pm; \$10, \$5 students.

Queens High School of Teaching Emerson presents fourth annual Pasta and Prizes event. The borough Habitat for Humanity group hopes to travel to Binghamton to help with recovery from the September 2011 flooding. Prize baskets,

music, magic, face painting and family fun for everyone.

SAT, FEB. 11

Gustafer Yellowgold: Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. at West End Avenue; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am; \$25 (\$21 members; \$15 children; \$13 member).

Creative combination of catchy original songs and animated on-screen animations.

"Storytelling": Forest Park Visitor Center, Woodhaven Blvd. at Forst Park Drive; 718-846-2731; www.nycgov-parks.org; 1 pm; Free.

Children join with Urban Park Rangers and read stories and make fun projects.

Concert: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 2 pm; Free.

Lunar New Year 2012 with traditional folk songs, Italian opera arias.

"The Amazing Max and the Box of Interesting Things": 4:30 pm. The MIMAC Theater. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

"Dreamgirls" - Saturday Night Movie Singalongs: Queensborough Performing Arts Center, 222-05 56th Ave. 718-631-6311; VTicali@qcc.cuny.edu; www.visitqpac.org; 7:30 pm; \$5.

One of the best movie musicals of all time, shown as part of QPAC's one-of-a-kind interactive family-oriented film series. Here, the crowd sings and dances along with their favorites characters without an ounce of apprehension. Lyrics and other fun props/activities will be supplied. The most enthusiastic participant from each showing will be awarded a \$100 cash prize.

SUN, FEB. 12

Darwin's birthday: Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island, 38 Old Country Rd. (516) 741-7304; www.ehsl.org; 11 am to 2 pm; Donations.

Celebrate the life and times of Charles Darwin by watching a presentation of "How Science Works" by Dr. Victor Schuster and arts, crafts and a survival game for children.

"Survival Workshop": Forest Park Visitor Center, Woodhaven Blvd. at Forst Park Drive; 718-846-2731; www.ny-cgovparks.org; 1 pm; Free.

Learn the tools you need to survive out in the wilderness.

Feeling ducky: Connetquot River State Park, Sunrise Hwy at S. County Rd. (631) 581-1072; 1:30–3 pm; \$4 (\$3 child; free for children under 3).

Children 5 and older learn about the different ducks on the main pond. Registration required.

"The African Drum": The National Black Theater, 2031-33 Ave. between 125th and 126 streets; (212) 724-0677; www.shadowboxtheatre.org; 3 pm; \$10.

Children in pre-K to fifth grade will enjoy this shadow puppet show of Kijana and her animal friends and listen to the African folk tale, "How the Turtle Got Its Shell."

Gustafer Yellowgold: 4 pm. Peter Jay Sharp Theatre. See Saturday, Feb. 11.

MON, FEB. 13

Dance performance: Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Boulevard; (718) 463-7700; www.flushingtownhall.org;

Going Places

10 and 11:45 am; \$6.50.

DJing and beatboxing. I&PP perform.

"The African Drum": 10 and 11:30 am. The National Black Theater. See Sunday, Feb. 12.

Craft hour: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Teens make Valentine's Day inspired greeting cards.

TUES, FEB. 14

"The African Drum": 10 and 11:30 am. The National Black Theater. See Sunday, Feb. 12.

"Up and Up: The Mae C. Jamison Story": South Ozone Park Library, 128-16 Rockaway Blvd. at 128th Street; (718) 529-1660; www.queenslibrary.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Play about the first African-American female astronaut.

"Love Stories from Beyond": Maspeth Public Library, 69-70 Grand Ave. at 69th Lane; 718-639-3623; www.queenslibrary.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Ghost hunters tell stories of "real life" paranormal.

"Book Buddies": Broadway Public Library, 40-20 Broadway at Steinway Street; (718) 721-2462; www.queenslibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Preschoolers and their caregivers get together to share books and have fun!

WED, FEB. 15

"The African Drum": 10 and 11:30 am. The National Black Theater. See Sunday, Feb. 12.

Knit and crochet: 1 pm. South Ozone Park Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

"All About the Blues": Auburndale Public Library, 24-55 Francis Lewis Blvd. at 24th Road; (718) 352-2027; www.queenslibrary.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

The 405 Blues Band performs Chicago, Delta, Texas and even the British Blues.

"Knights of Queens": Queens Village Public Library, 94-11 217 St. at 94th Avenue; (718) 776-6800; www.queenslibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Kids ages 6-16 will learn chess basics, or sharpen their skills and strategies.

Movie Maker's club: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Do you want to be the next YouTube sensation? Join the club and create your own mini-movie.

Art workshop: 4 pm. Long Island City Public Library. See Wednesday,



Engineering is fun!

If your little experimenter loves LEGO and Lincoln Logs, you'll want to check out the New York Hall of Science for Engineering Day its special, all-day event where kids can construct and test their own engineering marvels.

Tabletop experiments include the Gumdrop Dome, where kids guess how much weight a dome can support, a Topples-A-Tug, which lets figure out how many

coins an aluminum boat can hold before it capsizes, and much more, including games using Jenga blocks.

The day is hosted by the American Society of Civil Engineers, and all activities are free with admission to the Hall.

New York Hall of Science [47-01 111th St. near Fourth Avenue in Corona Park, (718) 699-0005] Feb. 20, 9:30 am - 5 pm. For info, visit www.nysci.org.

Feb. 8.

"Sojourner's Truth": Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 6 pm; Free.

Children learn about this fascinating woman who was an ex-free salve, abolitionist, and women's right activist.

THURS, FEB. 16

"The African Drum": 10 and 11:30 am. The National Black Theater. See Sunday, Feb. 12.

"Introduction to Excel": Pomonok Public Library, 158-21 Jewel Ave. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 591-4343; www.queenslibrary.org; 1 pm; Free.

Learn the basics at this free Excel workshop.

Acting workshop: 3:30 pm. See Thursday, Feb. 2.

African dance: Astoria Public Library, 14-01 Astoria Blvd. at 14th Street; (718) 278-2220; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Christine Campbell performs a fun filled program of traditional African standards.

"Meditation for Teens": Broadway Public Library, 40-20 Broadway at Steinway Street; (718) 721-2462; www.queenslibrary.org; 4:30 pm; Free.

Join meditation instructor Naini Nakagawa for a brief introduction to meditation just for teens.

FRI, FEB. 17

"Chess Club": Auburndale Public Library, 24-55 Francis Lewis Blvd. at 24th Road; (718) 352-2027; www.queenslibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Learn skills and make friends at the club with chess master Paul.

"Talent Show for Kids and Teens": Peninsula Public Library, 92-25 Rockaway Beach Blvd. (718) 634-1110; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Showcase your talent — Prizes and treats will be available for participants.

"Celebrate International Mother Language Day": Hollis Library, 202-05 Hillside Ave. at 202nd Street; (718) 352-2027; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Kids will read poetry in their mother tongue and will explain the poems to others (in English).

Arts and crafts: 4 pm. Briarwood Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

Happy hour: 4 pm. Flushing Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

America's Young Reformers Group: 4 pm. Laurelton Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

Gaming: 4:30 pm. Astoria Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 10.

"Toddler Time": Langston Hughes Public Library, 100-01 Northern Blvd. at 216th Street; (718) 651-1100; www.queenslibrary.org; 10:30 pm; Free.

Children ages 1-3 years and their caregivers. Songs, picture books, fingerplays, rhymes and crafts make this program fun!

SAT, FEB. 18

Discovery day: Caleb Smith State Park Preserve, 581 W. Jericho Tpke. (631) 265-1054; 10-11:30 am; \$4 (\$3 per child; free for children under 3).

Children 5 and up learn about the different ways that animals survive in extremely cold weather. Reservations required.

Job search: 10:30 am. Central Library. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

Concert: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 2 pm; Free.

Featuring modern Japanese music.

All that Jazz": 3 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

"The Amazing Max and the Box of Interesting Things": 4:30 pm. The MMAC Theater. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

MON, FEB. 20

"Engineering Day": New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; Free with admission.

Build, test and construct with tabletop activities that explore engineering.

Engineering day: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; 9:30 am-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Hands-on Activities that explore engineering.

"Presidents' Day Trivia Contest for Teens": Far Rockaway Public Library, 1637 Central Ave. at Mott Avenue; (718) 327-2549; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

On Presidents' Day, you'll have a chance to compete for prizes in a Presidents' Day trivia contest.

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Going Places

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TUES, FEB. 21

Nature Discoveries: 10–11 am and 11:30 am–12:30 pm. Connetquot River State Park. See Tuesday, Feb. 7.

“Up and Up: The Mae C. Jamison Story”: St. Albans Library, 191-05 Linden Blvd. (718) 528-8196; www.queenslibrary.org; 2 pm; Free.

Play about the first African-American female astronaut.

“Twinkle Twonkle”: Jack H Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 566 LaGuardia Pl. at Washington Square; (212) 352-3101; www.skirballcenter.nyu.edu; 3 pm; \$15.

Tall stories inspired by some of Mother Goose’s nursery rhymes. For children four and up.

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

Compete in a game just for teens.

“Chess Club”: Windsor Park Public Library, 79-50 Bell Blvd. at 73rd Avenue; (718) 468-8300; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Learn how to improve your chess skills. All ages are welcome to come and join the fun.

“Pinocchio”: John H Hessel Hall, 336 Woodmere Blvd. at W. Broadway; (516) 374-5559; 7 pm; \$15 (\$12 children).

Presented by Plaza Theatrical.

WED, FEB. 22

Midwinter Day Camp: YWCA of Queens. See Tuesday, Feb. 21.

“Little Miss Muffet’s Monster Sitting Service”: 11 am and 1 pm. The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre. See Tuesday, Feb. 21.

Knit and crochet: 1 pm. South Ozone Park Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

Game time: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 2 pm; Free.

Meet others who are into Yu-Gi-Oh-Compete in a game just for teens.

“Resume-Writing Workshop”: Arverne Public Library, 312 Bch. 54th St. at Rockaway Beach Boulevard; (718) 634-4784; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Resume workshop for young adults (ages 16-24).

“Book Discussion Club”: Pomonok Public Library, 158-21 Jewel Ave. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 591-4343; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Read and discuss “The Wild Rose,” by Jennifer Donnelly.

THURS, FEB. 23

Midwinter Day Camp: YWCA of Queens. See Tuesday, Feb. 21.

Composting for kids: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 10:30–11:30 am; \$5.

Children are introduced to composting with hands-on activities.

“I Worms For Kids”: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 10:30 am; \$5.

This unique hands-on workshop introduces kids to the life of indoor composting (red wiggler) worms!

Wildlife detectives: Nissequogue River State Park, 799 St. Johnland Rd. at Old Dock Road; (531) 581-1072; 1:30–3 pm; \$4 (\$3 child; free for children under 3).

Discover the clues left behind by hibernating animals. Reservations required.

“Meditation for Teens”: Broadway Library, 40-20 Broadway; (718) 721-2462; www.queenslibrary.org; 4:30 pm; Free.

Introduction to meditation.

Motivational workshop: Laurelton Public Library, 134-26 225th St. at Merrick Boulevard; (718) 528-2822; www.queenslibrary.org; 5 pm.

Teens learn to deal with the everyday issues that people are confronted with. Dr. Hall will present various topics for discussion.

FRI, FEB. 24

Midwinter Day Camp: YWCA of Queens. See Tuesday, Feb. 21.

“Little Miss Muffet’s Monster Sitting Service”: 11 am and 1 pm. The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre. See Tuesday, Feb. 21.

“Young Adult Book Talk”: Broadway Public Library, 40-20 Broadway at Steinway Street; (718) 721-2462; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Come discuss “Warriors Don’t Cry,” by Melba Matillo Beals.

Arts and crafts: 4 pm. Briarwood Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

Happy hour: 4 pm. Flushing Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 3.

Gaming: 4:30 pm. Astoria Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 10.

SAT, FEB. 25

“Birds, Bugs, and Buds”: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 11:30 am; \$5.

Join Naturalists to connect with the environment around you, and help crea-

tures in your community.

“Música Andina”: Broadway Public Library, 40-20 Broadway at Steinway Street; (718) 721-2462; www.queenslibrary.org; 3 pm; Free.

Songs and Sounds of the Colombian Andes Experience music from the mountainous regions of Colombia.

“The Amazing Max and the Box of Interesting Things”: 4:30 pm. The MIMAC Theater. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

Open mic: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union TPKE. (718) 380-7077; 7:30 pm; Free.

Share your original works and listen to fellow writers.

SUN, FEB. 26

Scavenger hunt: Connetquot River State Park, Sunrise Hwy at S. County Rd. (631) 581-1072; 1:30–3 pm; \$4 (\$3 child; free for children under 3).

Search for items in the hunt list. Registration required.

Great Grandma’s kitchen: Connetquot River State Park, Sunrise Hwy at S. County Rd. (631) 581-1072; 1:30–3 pm; \$4 (\$3 child; free for children under 3).

Children explore life in the 1800’s with hands on demos. Registration required.

MON, FEB. 27

“Crochet for Beginners”: Baisley Park Public Library, 117-11 Sutphin Blvd. at Foch Boulevard; (718) 529-1590; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Learn to crochet. Pros are welcome.

“African American Dance”: Rosedale Public Library, 144-20 243rd St. at 145th Avenue; (718) 723-4440; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Traditional African American Dances.

“Up and Up: The Mae C. Jamison Story”: Rosedale Public Library, 144-20 243rd St. at 145th Avenue; (718) 723-4440; www.queenslibrary.org; 6 pm; Free.

Play about the first African-American female astronaut.

Motivational workshop: 6 pm. Laurelton Public Library. See Thursday, Feb. 23.

“Love Stories from Beyond”: Pomonok Public Library, 158-21 Jewel Ave. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 591-4343; www.queenslibrary.org; 6:30 pm; Free.

Ghost hunters tell stories of the paranormal.

TUES, FEB. 28

“Practice Labs”: Arverne Public Library, 312 Bch. 54th St. at Rockaway

Beach Boulevard; (718) 634-4784; www.queenslibrary.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Use library computers to practice a variety of Microsoft applications.

“Music from Around the World”: Briarwood Public Library, 85-12 Main St. at Village Road; (718) 658-1680; www.queenslibrary.org; 2 pm; Free.

A Concert Featuring Peter J. LaRosa. The diversity of New York is reflected in this program’s international mix of songs.

“Book Buddies”: Briarwood Public Library, 85-12 Main St. at Village Road; (718) 658-1680; www.queenslibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Preschoolers and their caregivers get together to share books and have fun!

“Chess Club”: Long Island City Public Library, 37-44 21 St. at 43rd Avenue; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Learn how to improve your chess skills. All ages are welcome to come and join the fun.

Advisory board: Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; www.queenslibrary.org; 5 pm; Free.

Teens provide input to local matters. Club hours count as community service.

WED, FEB. 29

“Susan’s Fab 14th Birthday Bash”: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 11:30 am; \$30.

Celebrate Susan’s (QBG Executive Director) 14th Leap Year Birthday and help fulfill her “Wish List” for more Interns & Plants for the Garden.

Knit and crochet: 1 pm. South Ozone Park Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

“Knights of Queens”: Queens Village Public Library, 94-11 217 St. at 94th Avenue; (718) 776-6800; www.queenslibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Kids ages 6-16 will learn chess basics or sharpen their skills and strategies.

“Up and Up: The Mae C. Jamison Story”: Queens Village Public Library, 94-11 217 St. at 94th Avenue; (718) 776-6800; www.queenslibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Play about the first African-American female astronaut.

FRI, MARCH 2

Spirit of Uganda: Jack H Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 566 LaGuardia Pl. at Washington Square; (212) 352-3101; www.skirballcenter.nyu.edu; 8 pm; \$20-\$32.

Dance extravaganza, features a cast of performers eight to eighteen years old. Appropriate for children eight and older.

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New & Noteworthy

Tech-savvy tots

It's no secret that our world is advancing — technologically speaking — faster than you can say iPad. That's why it's a good idea to get your tot comfortable with electronic gadgets and doodads at a young age. But playing with remote controls and expensive smartphones is not only dangerous for your stuff, it can be hazardous for your tot, too. Instead, try this technology trio from the Discovery Kids store, which includes a pretend smartphone, camera and remote control, each of which light up, play songs, and make a range of sounds, so your child can have fun

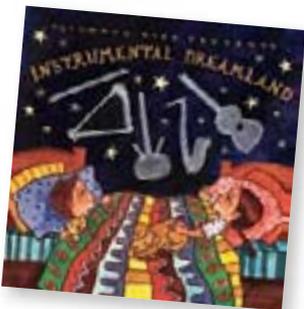


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Discovery Tech Set Trio, \$19.99. To order, visit www.store.discovery.com.

Songs for sleeping

Spice up your lullaby routine with the new music compilation from Putumayo Kids, “Instrumental Dreamland,” which hits stores on Feb. 28! This disc is designed to delight your tot, while also broadening her musical horizons with instrumental renditions of classic bedtime songs like “Brahms’ Lullaby,” “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” and “What a Wonderful

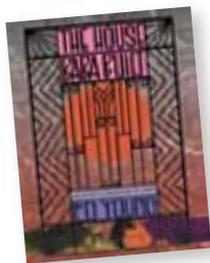


World,” with a world-music twist. Featuring instruments such as the Hawaiian ukulele, Brazilian guitar, kora and harp, this disc is chock-full of songs that will relax your child and lull her to sleep — while introducing her to musical styles she's never heard before.

“Putumayo Kids Presents: Instrumental Dreamland,” \$12. To order, visit www.putumayokids.com.

‘House’ of imagination

The latest book from beloved children's author and illustrator Ed Young, “The House That Baba Built” (*Little, Brown Books for Young Readers*) whisks children away to Shanghai. While World War II was raging outside the walls of the author's childhood home, inside, he was busy using his imagination to turn his surroundings into the stuff magical realism is made of: “a rocking chair became a horse; a roof be-



came a roller rink; an empty swimming pool became a place for riding scooters and bikes.” The stunning illustrations make this story — about war, but also about childhood and creativity — accessible for kids of all ages. (And recommended for children ages 4–8.)

“The House That Baba Built: An Artist's Childhood in China” by Ed Young, \$17.99. For info, visit www.edyoungart.com.



Heart-felted gift

When something's as close to your baby as the mobile that hangs above her crib, you want it to be special. That's why the Rock-a-Bye-Baby-Elephant mobile from etsy shop, Drops of Color, is a soft, beautiful option. Four blue, big-eared elephants made of pieces of hand-stitched, eco-friendly felt are adorned with cyan, green and pearl-colored buttons. Along with lightly stuffed stars and

moons, the adorable pachyderms are hung from hand-carved wooden hangers. Plus, the sewing mistress behind these mobiles, Gladys, can match any color scheme. The best part? Each mobile is individually approved by her grandchildren!

Rock-a-Bye-Elephant mobile from Drops of Color etsy shop, \$90. For info, www.etsy.com/shop/dropsofcolorshop.

Mo to love

“The Pigeon Finds A Hot Dog” — a lighthearted book by author-illustrator Mo Willems — has finally been adapted for DVD by Scholastic Storybook Treasures. Here, the story of the salivating pigeon who wants to indulge in his newly found street food but is frustrated by an equally hungry duckling, is brought to life through wonderful animation and is set to lively music. The pigeon discovers that its far better to share his delicious treasure, and the tickle fight that ensues between the birds will leave a grin on your child's face, too. In addition to “The Pigeon,” which is narrated by Willems and his talented daughter Trixie, the hour-long DVD also includes “Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity” and “Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed.” For those



who want to know more about the kid-lit superstar, the DVD's bonus features include “Getting to Know Mo Willems,” an interview with the creative genius, and more.

“The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog...And More Stories by Mo Willems” DVD, \$14.95. For info, visit www.amazon.com.

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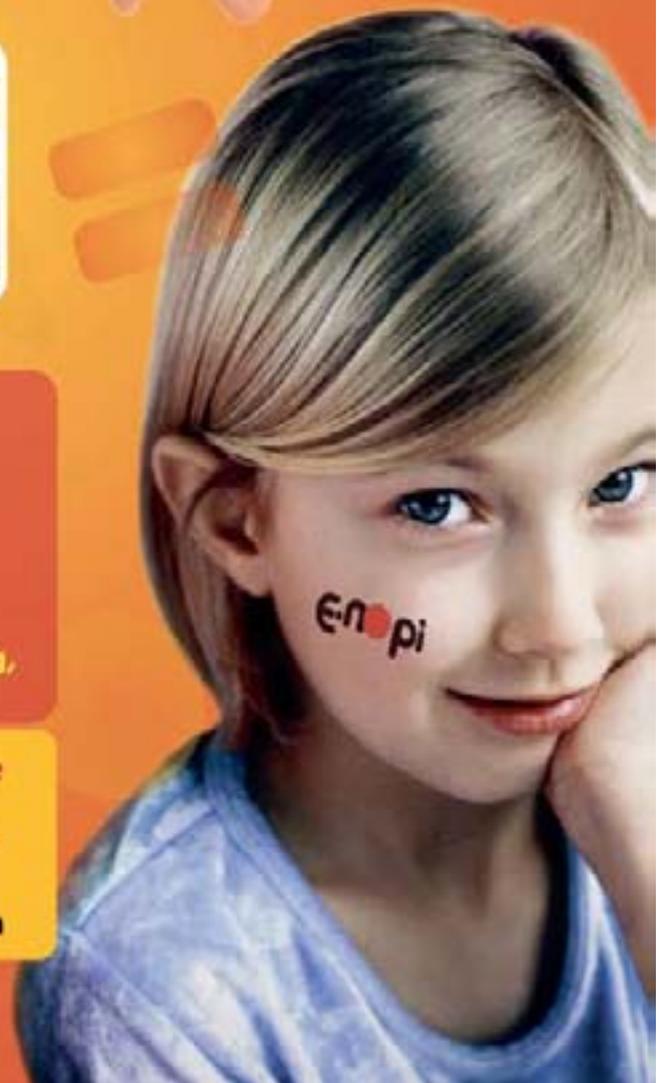
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