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# Letter from the publisher

## Another school year

September is the month of new beginnings. New temperatures, new clothes and shoes, new books for our kids, new teachers, new schools sometimes, new friends and new lessons to be learned.

Here in New York City all our kids are back in

school, whether private or public, and the summer is now officially at an end, in spite of days that often seem like beach days with clear blue skies, teasing us into thinking fall is not on its way. But it is.

This issue presents our ANNUAL FALL ACTIVITY GUIDE displaying great programs around our communities. There's a broad range of afterschool activities or weekend adventure/learning enrichment classes/



programs to enhance our children's academic and developmental progress. There are really talented and nurturing professionals who are running programs designed to expand our children's horizons and give us peace of mind and the opportunity to

be elsewhere when we need to be.

New York being what it is, there is no lack of possibilities, and many of them are comfortably affordable and/or are accepting vouchers. With so many Moms working outside of the home and many viable careers developed, there is enormous need for these activities. Signing up early will be the ideal, but many of them are accepting registration well into the weeks ahead.

Here in New York September will painfully continue to remind us of that fateful day 11 years ago when our city was in chaos. Personally, I don't think those of us who lived here through that day are likely to ever forget the memories that will long be with us. September 11th will always mark the day when we lost a kind of innocence and freedom from fear that we no longer have. Everything changed and nothing changed, we are the same, but we are also different.

September also marks many important holidays and historic rituals to many New Yorkers. Labor Day, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur are all important dates that close our schools. In my house, my daughter is beginning her senior year in college, which continues to amaze me. Just yesterday, it seems, I was taking her to preschool and in the speeded

up film that is much of life, as one grows older; she is now 21 and taller than me.

There are articles and columns in this issue we hope will make your life a bit easier. They cover babies, toddlers, school age kids and teens heading off to college, and are largely designed to help with the transition of this Back to School season.

Being a parent is a long pleasure with little training. It is up to each of us individually and as a community to rise to the occasion.

Thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
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# Wellness in the Schools

How these two parents turned ‘yucky’ into ‘yummy’ for 20,000 city school kids

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

**G**otham summer is fading into autumn, which means thoughts of going back to school loom for New York City’s one million-plus public school kids. But this fall, some of these lucky students have a reason to be excited because they will be participating in the Wellness in the Schools program, which is designed to teach school cooks how to plan and create tasty meals prepared from scratch.

The program — which has received a big thumbs up from parents who have written in to praise its efforts — has managed to transform outdated menus full of boring, energy-sucking grub into delightfully nutritious cafe-style cuisine in more than 40 school cafeterias in Manhattan, the Bronx, South Bronx, and Brooklyn since 2005.

## How it started

In 2005, Nancy Easton — a former city school teacher, principal, and Upper West Side mom — became increasingly concerned about what her 5-, 8-, and 11-year-old children were eating during lunch hour as she sat in on school meetings. In response to the issue, she created the Wellness in the Schools movement.

The uber-proactive alumni of PS 333 (now a “wellness” school), has said that when she was an educa-

## Nutrition in other schools

What does the lunch menu look like at the Obama girls’ private school, Sidwell Friends?

Kids there enjoy organic spinach, roasted local vegetable melts, and organic black bean nachos.

tor in the city’s school system, she couldn’t help but notice many students’ poor eating habits. She knew all too well how it adversely affected their ability to learn and perform in the classroom.

Easton’s friend, world-class chef, and four-star restaurant owner Bill Telepan joined Wellness in the Schools as its volunteer executive chef in 2008. As a dad and food expert who believes that “wellness is the way we live,” Telepan felt he needed to make a positive change after he noticed how wilted the salad bar was in his 11-year-old daughter Leah’s school cafeteria at PS 87. Employing his white-tablecloth skills, he carved time out of his busy schedule to train cafeteria staff. Before long, they learned how to make wraps filled with chicken or beans and added options like fresh romaine lettuce, cucumber, celery, corn, onions, cheddar — and even whole-wheat pasta salad — to the salad bar. The kids didn’t come back for just seconds — they came back for sevenths!

“I set up three days with the Department of Education in which I could cook in my daughter’s school. We were serving sandwiches and pasta sauces with pesto and chickpeas. On Pizza Fridays, we made whole-wheat flatbread pizzas.”

Working with other parents, public school officials, and the Department of Education’s food service, the two parents bravely moved forward with their health plan.

## What it does

Wellness in the Schools has partnered with top culinary schools in the city, which sends its graduates to school kitchens to demonstrate how U.S. Department of Agriculture-allotted and budgeted food can easily be transformed into appealing, wholesome fare. This includes vegetarian chili, which, when cooked in volume, can feed an army of hungry kindergarten through 12th graders.

The program also offers a quarterly plan called Cook for Kids that offers students hands-on classes, where they learn how to whip up yummy, nutritious dishes using preservative-free ingredients and produce from local green markets. This results in kids bringing home new recipes that they can prepare with their parents, advocating bonding and good eating habits for people of all ages.

Yet, despite all of Wellness in the School’s great intentions, a handful of public school cafeterias still have cooks who may still be mixing ketchup and grape jelly to make barbecue sauce. According to a recent study, more than 70 percent of public schools serve food that is high in fat and loaded with sugar and salt because, even though it’s unhealthy, the nutrient guidelines for vitamins, minerals, and protein are met. One can only hope that down the road, the “Top 10 bad foods” — which include peanut butter, jelly, breaded chicken products, cereals, French fries, burgers, meat sauces, Jamaican beef pat-

## Chef Telepan’s vision for the future

- A fresh salad bar with fruit compotes in every cafeteria.
- Roasted chicken instead of chicken patties.
- Replacing taco meat with veg-

etarian chili (in burritos or as a rice topping).

- Fitness and sports programs in every school.



Photo by John Kernick

Upper West Side parents Nancy Easton and Chef Bill Telepan serve as the executive leadership for Wellness in the Schools.

ties, canned ravioli, and cold cuts with nitrates — will gradually be replaced with healthier and fresher options.

Easton, whose family eats what she preaches, said she likes to food shop with her kids.

“We visit green markets as often as we can on weekends. [My kids] cook with me and I don’t make too many ‘forbidden fruits.’ We have

dessert, but I try to keep it wholesome. We avoid processed food and eat well-balanced meals.”

### **Healthy bodies, healthy minds**

Eating nutritious food that fuels the body isn’t the only ingredient necessary for a healthy lifestyle.

“We’re also a very active family,” says Easton. “We enjoy bike riding

along the river, museums, and exploring different foods and neighborhoods in the city.”

Due to this smart and activity-loving mentality, Wellness in the Schools also works closely with Asphalt Green — a recess enhancement program in the South Bronx — to create the Coach for Kids program. It provides fitness and sports instruction by sending coaches to

needy schools. And another organization, Partnering with SportmeNY, also partners with Wellness in the Schools in order to bring tennis to five schools on the Upper East Side.

### **Outlook for fall and beyond**

In a recent speech, Mayor Bloomberg noted that after decades of increases there was a surprising 5.5 percent drop in the amount of obese children in public school. This translates into roughly 6,500 fewer overweight kids. Easton and Telepan have been acknowledged as an inspirational force by the White House and First Lady Michelle Obama’s Chefs Move to Schools initiative, and recently spread their wellness-gospel on the Cooking Channel’s Game Changers segment.

And although Easton says that “there’s a lot of excitement and growth” in store for Wellness in the Schools, not every public school will be affected by this positive change. Despite the fact that Bloomberg mentioned in his speech that an overwhelming majority of parents think their children are fit and at a healthy weight, he also said that “the facts tell a different story.”

Parents and educators who are still frustrated by unhealthy food options in their children’s cafeterias can bring change to their own schools by reaching out to Wellness in the Schools or by working with their schools’ administrations — and fellow parents — to encourage their kitchens to cook from scratch. Parents should also do their part by cooking simple, fresh, nutritious, kid-friendly meals at home with their children — it teaches them healthy eating habits that will last them a lifetime.

Wellness in the Schools is on Facebook and Twitter.

*Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based writer and journalist who has interviewed and profiled many interesting people, including several celebrities. She has been covering arts and entertainment in New York City, but also enjoys sharing her insightful articles with NY Parenting readers. As a mom, she has lots of parenting experience under her belt, having raised a bright and independent teenage son (in college), and his older brother, who is a super-talented actor and comedian.*



## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

# Do children need a cholesterol check?

**W**hat is your child's cholesterol? How about his LDL? Or HDL? Do you know?

If you don't, relax, because most parents are in the same boat. But, new government guidelines endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics are encouraging pediatricians to test children's cholesterol level starting at age 9, and their reasons behind it make a lot of sense.

With the obesity rates steadily increasing, there is just cause to test when you consider that high cholesterol levels can cause heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that two-thirds of American adults and 15 percent of children are overweight or obese. Furthermore, in certain states, the numbers for children rise to more than 30 percent.

However, some doctors are claiming that we don't need to test every single child for high cholesterol. Instead, they feel that perhaps a more laid back approach should be utilized, and only children who are at high risk for high cholesterol should be tested.

There are others who also feel that doctors who have ties to drug companies will push medication on children, when they should really just encourage a better diet and more activity.

When a child is determined to be overweight or has an unhealthy diet, it might be easier to make the determination that a blood test is in order. But what about thin children who eat well?

My daughter, at age 9, endured a battery of blood tests to investigate why she had not been feeling well for a long time. One of the first things that came back was that she had high cholesterol. That was



strange to hear, because she was a very healthy eater, loved veggies and salads, barely ate meat or junk food, and was very thin. A couple of months later, we learned that she had Hashimoto's disease, which affects a person's thyroid — and her's was compromised.

We didn't understand why her cholesterol levels were high until we found a pediatric endocrinologist who explained to us that high cholesterol is a marker for a thyroid problem. In fact, if doctors see a thyroid problem, they should test for thyroid dysfunction. This would have saved my daughter many months of not being properly diagnosed. He also told us that she didn't need to be treated for the cholesterol itself because once her thyroid became under control, those levels would naturally dip to normal amounts. Like promised, as her thyroid levels regulate, her cholesterol levels continue to fall.

Still, I'm not sure every child needs a cholesterol test, unless a problem has been identified or they are high risk. Of course, this begs the question: what other blood tests should children regularly undergo in light of our obesity epidemic? Is diabetes the next blood test that kids might need in the future?

Has your child been tested for cholesterol? Would you want to test him? Are these guidelines too strict?

Go to our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/NYParenting](http://www.facebook.com/NYParenting), and share your thoughts on this subject.

*Danielle Sullivan, a Brooklyn-born mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find her on Facebook and Twitter @DanniSullWriter, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.*



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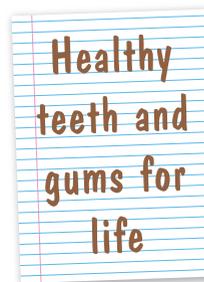
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# Head of the class

Helping your child excel — at every age and developmental stage from kindergarten through high school

BY SANDRA GORDON

**F**rom the crawling, walking, and babbling of infants to the angst and rebellion of tweens and teens, children constantly go through a predictable set of developmental stages physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially.

Of course, the age at which your child reaches these stages can differ from other children.

“Along the way, any of these [phases can be experienced] ahead or behind the others in their timing, then switch, which can be confusing for parents,” says Vivian Seltzer, PhD, professor of human development and behavior at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

You can start out with a precocious learner who is seemingly ahead of everyone else, only to find out two years later that her classmates have caught up and they’re speeding ahead. Not to worry. It’s all just part of growing up. But, as a parent, it helps to know these things.

“Knowing where your child is at developmentally can help you understand and support her,” Dr. Seltzer says. Most kids don’t need a lot of help navigating the landscape, especially as they grow older. But it helps to be aware of where they are so you can guide them along the way and step in if you feel its necessary.

Use our guide to help your child make the most of every age and stage — from kindergarten through high school.

## Elementary school: Milestone-mania

From kindergarten through fifth grade, kids make major strides. In kindergarten and first grade they learn how to transition to school by becoming comfortable with a classroom routine while learning how to read. By third grade and beyond they learn that they need to read in order to learn. Emotionally, they begin to develop their academic self-esteem based on feedback from you and their teachers. By the fourth and fifth grades they’re moving from concrete to abstract thinking.

“When concrete thinkers see the Statue of Liberty, they see it as a lady with a torch. An abstract thinker also sees it as a symbol of freedom and democracy,” says Rebecca Branstetter, an educational and clinical psychologist in Oakland, Calif. By the fifth grade, kids are also beginning to set goals, work independently, function better in groups, make more complex decisions, and become organized with their school and homework.

It’s wise to extend learning beyond school when your child is in elementary school. Reinforce what your child is learning in school with activities at home. For example, let your second grader count change at the checkout and help her learn fractions by allowing her to measure ingredients while you’re baking cookies together. Have her tell time. Talk about numbers while you’re driving, such as how fast you’re going, the distance you’ll travel, and how long it will take to get there. Play board games that involve money, time, logic, or vocabulary — such as the family editions of Monopoly, Scrabble, or Apples to Apples. On the weekends, take family outings to museums and zoos to visit exhibits that coincide with school subjects.

“If your child is learning about Egypt, take a trip to a local museum with an Egyptian exhibit,” says Branstetter. “It reinforces curiosity, sends the subtle message that school is important, and shows your child that school and home are connected.”

Develop a homework habit. Make doing homework automatic by coming up with a routine that fits your

child’s personality. Some kids like doing homework right after school. Others need to burn off steam by playing for half an hour (set a timer) before getting down to business. Whatever you choose, stick to the schedule you establish for your kids as much as possible. To minimize distractions, keep the TV off during homework time.

For younger kids, begin each homework session by asking your child to explain what she’s supposed to do, then gauge if she can do it alone or if she needs your help. If you’re not around when your child does her homework, let her know you’ll look at it when you get home, and be sure to follow through.

“Praise her when she completes her homework by emphasizing the process, such as ‘You worked really hard to learn your math facts,’ rather than the product ‘Good job on learning your math facts.’ Praising the process teaches persistence, which is a skill kids need for school success,” Branstetter advises.

## Middle school: Hormone havoc

In middle school — the sixth through eighth grades — kids are starting to go through puberty, and the physical changes can make them feel like they’re not in control of their bodies.

“It’s a complicated time physically, socially, and emotionally,” says Vicki Panaccione, PhD, a licensed psychologist and founder of the Better Parenting Institute in Melbourne, Fla. During this difficult age and stage, their sense of self is also developing. “There’s a lot of exclusion in middle school,” she says. Cliques can provide a safe haven as kids try to figure themselves out.

Parents should expect turmoil during this stage. Mood swings and over-reactions, such as total hysteria over whether or not a boy or girl looked at your child in the hallway, are a normal part of this phase of development.

“Don’t take it personally. Just understand that your child is going through a lot,” says Panaccione. Be supportive but don’t minimize the problem or try to fix it either. “Middle schoolers don’t want you to solve anything.”

Instead, use phrases like: “I’m sorry you feel that way,” or “Gosh, that must have been embarrassing for you,” rather than “Just ignore it,” or “Just get over it. It’s not a big deal.” It is a big



deal to your child. Placating doesn't help and can be harmful.

"They can push your child away because she'll feel like you just don't get it," Panaccione says.

Don't be too concerned if your child starts to hang with the wrong crowd.

"As kids develop and decide who they want to be, they need to decide who they don't want to be," says Seltzer. They may try on various groups, including one that's not your favorite, to see what feels right. All kids have friends their parents don't like. But kids are good self-barometers. "Don't butt in unless you think their friends are dangerous," Seltzer cautions.

Empathizing academically is also important. In middle school, the workload gets more difficult because kids have to meet the demands of up to seven different teachers instead of just one.

"It's a big challenge. The best thing you can do is allow your child to vent," Panaccione says. If your child complains that one of her teachers gives too much homework, for example, you might say, "Well, what

do you think you might need to do, given that he gives lots of homework?" rather than "He's only trying to teach you." The idea is to help your child solve the problem, find her own way, and keep the lines of communication open so your child will continue to feel comfortable talking to you about even bigger problems that might come along later.

### **High school: The "who-am-I?" years**

In high school, children forge their identities academically, socially, morally, sexually, and spiritually while trying to figure out who they are apart from you.

"High schoolers question everything and may even rebel against your opinions and beliefs," says Panaccione. If you're a Democrat, for example, your child might say she's a Republican. If you're a meat-and-potatoes family, she'll become a vegan. You get the idea.

Talking to you teen is the key to their success. Allow your child to question your opinions and values

and express herself. Ask questions such as, "Oh, why do you think so?" rather than lecturing or yelling.

"It's a great time to find out who your kids really are," Panaccione says.

Note dramatic changes. It's normal for high schoolers to be just as moody as middle schoolers. But if your teen shows a drastic change in personality or behavior; a significant drop in grades, study habits, or attitude; a dramatic shift in appearance, dress, or grooming; or interests, goals, or activities, know that something's up.

"Talk to your teen about your concerns," says Panaccione. Start by saying something like: "I'm concerned that you're spending time in bed when you used to be out with your friends."

Then listen to what your child has to say. If the behaviors are a sign of rebelling against a lack of freedom or privilege, be open to discussing and compromising. If you're concerned your child may be suffering from depression or another mental health

disorder, seek professional help.

"Your child's primary care provider or the school guidance counselor is a good resource for a referral to a qualified child or teen psychologists in your area," Panaccione says.

College pressure is another issue you have to consider when your child is in high school. By the 11th grade, it comes on strong. The earlier you discuss college with your child, the better. But only start talking about higher education when your child seems ready.

"Some kids are focused, but most have no idea what they want to do or major in," Panaccione says. To reduce anxiety, Panaccione tells her high school patients that they don't have to know what they want to do going into college. That's where they'll figure it out, which is something you could say at home, too. Also, listen to your child's wishes for college rather than pushing your agenda.

"To be successful, kids should end up going to a college that's right for them," she says.



# Back to school!

Some tips  
to keeping  
your kids  
interested in  
learning

BY DR. VALERIE ALLEN

**T**he sound of the pencil sharper, the smell of book print, and the sight of new clothes send a clear message — school is in full swing. A new school year brings with it the fun and excitement that comes with learning. School provides discovery, new friends, and personal growth for your child. You can set the stage for a successful school experience for your youngster by using a few common-sense strategies.

• **Have a positive attitude toward learning.** Encourage your child to do well and expect the best. Participate in educational opportunities together through the community or at the library. Make a commitment to purchase “educational” gifts and books for special occasions. Set a good example for your child by reading a book or taking a class.

• **Support the school.** Make a commitment to have one parent-teacher conference in person every month. Write, text, or e-mail your child’s teacher, and comment on specific classroom activities. Volunteer your time or resources to help at school. If you have items at home or at work that the school could use for projects,

donate them, because “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” Enforce the school’s rules and policies at home, and speak highly of the school, the teacher, education, and the joy of learning in front of your child.

• **Be prepared.** Make it easy for your child to handle all of the “nuts and bolts” of getting ready for school each day. Have adequate school supplies on hand, and buy items ahead of time for future use. Prepay for school lunches whenever possible. Select an outfit for each day at the beginning of the week and keep “school clothes” apart from casual clothes. Establish a drop-off spot for books, backpacks, lunch boxes, and so on. Use a large envelope with the child’s name on it to keep correspondence and school notices handy. Promptly respond to requests from the school or teacher for permission slips, field trip money, or similar items.

• **Have routines.** Set up a daily schedule for routines of bathing, eating, dressing, homework, and play time. Keep distractions to a minimum, and regulate and limit telephone, television, radio, and computer time.

• **Schedule learning time.** Set aside a minimum of 30 minutes each day for educational activities, including assigned homework or practice

skills that the teacher has sent home. Use workbooks or learning activities, such as crossword puzzles, cards, or board games to encourage logic, decision making, and problem solving. During learning time, do not allow phone calls, television, computers, or visits from friends.

• **Create a star!** Find something that your child likes and does well, and let him show off a bit. Encourage fun and the pleasure of having a good time in a positive way. Give your child the message that it is OK to read a book, draw funny pictures, play an instrument, plant a garden, groom a pet, collect stamps, or learn about motorcycles. Find a way to showcase his talents, perhaps at a nursing home or with an elderly relative or neighbor. Children need to sparkle and shine!

These are just a few things parents can do to help their youngsters enjoy and maintain an interest in school-related activities and learning in general.

*Dr. Valerie Allen is a child psychologist in private practice. She presents seminars for parents and professionals in the field of child development and has published two children’s books, “Summer School for Smarties” and “Bad Hair, Good Hat, New Friends.” Oh, yes, she has also raised six children!*

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# Don't miss your child's back-to-school physical

A primer so you and your child know exactly what to expect

BY JAMIE LOBER

**Y**our child's back-to-school physical is the most important task to check off of your list this fall, especially if your child is entering a new school. Here's a primer so you and your child know exactly what to expect in his back-to-school examination.

A physical normally involves seeing the doctor, who will ask how the child has been doing. If the doctor has not seen the child before, he will require a more extensive history.

"If it is someone they are seeing for the first time, most doctors will do an entire intake history where they find out whether or not this kid has always been healthy, where they received their previous healthcare, if they had any medical problems, what their birth history is, family history, and any sort of medical problems in the family, all of which are baseline areas that the doctor will cover because he wants background information," says Dr. Leslie Hayes, chief of adolescent medicine in the department of pediatrics at New York Methodist

Hospital in Brooklyn.

What the physical entails depends largely on the patient's age. A younger child will have his height, weight, blood pressure, temperature, and pulse taken, as well as a head-to-toe physical, in which the doctor looks at the child's general appearance to see if he looks well for his age. It's like an A through Z health inventory.

"We examine their eyes by looking with our ophthalmoscopes, look in their ears, their mouth, and assess their dentition to see if they have good dentition or a lot of cavities," says Hayes. "We listen to their heart, lungs, examine their abdomen, and check their extremities to make sure they are neurologically intact and growing properly."

Doctors will plot the child's height and weight on a growth chart to make sure the child is "reasonably adequate height and weight for their age and sex," she says.

"What we are seeing more commonly is overweight kids who are off the growth charts as far as weight is concerned," says Hayes. If this is the case, the doctor will mention the importance of exercise, eating a well-balanced diet, and choosing water over soda to prevent obesity. "If a child watches a lot of television, we talk to them about decreasing their screen time."

The pediatrician also touches on school performance, asking the child what classes he is taking and if he is not doing well. The doctor wants to find out if the cause of poor performance could be something medical or psychosocial.

And, much to most kids' disdain, the pediatrician will give the child scheduled boosters or vaccines to help prevent him from contracting any diseases he may be at risk of getting.

The physical is the perfect time and place for parents to ask pediatricians any questions they may have about their children's health, such as "my young kids don't like to eat vegetables or fruits, and won't drink water."

"As a child goes through certain developmental stages the parents may be concerned, but that is why it is important to come in for an annual physical exam, just to make sure that the doctor can confirm that everything is OK," advises Hayes.

It's also the perfect opportunity for kids to ask doctors any questions they may have. Younger kids do not tend to ask a lot of questions, but as children become teenagers, they tend to be more involved in their healthcare and sometimes come in with questions for their doctor.

As kids get older, their doctors may talk to them about personal safety, such as car safety for a teen who is starting to drive, or safe dating. The point is to tailor the advice to each child.

"The guidance is governed by the age, as well as cognitive developmental level of the patient, but most center around healthy lifestyles, safety prevention, smoking, safe-sex practices, and relationships," Hayes explains.

A back-to-school physical is without a doubt important for every child, no matter the age or school grade, and should become a yearly practice for parents and children.

"It is a good idea to have your child come on a yearly basis to be seen," says Hayes. "As they get older, normally the interval of time between visits is larger, but it is helpful to have them come in at least every two years to be reevaluated and to make sure their growth and development is normal and that they are not experiencing any sort of medical issues or problems."

*Jamie Lober, author of "Pink Power" (www.getpinkpower.com), is dedicated to providing information on women's and pediatric health topics. She can be reached at jamie@getpinkpower.com.*





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## Fall Activity

### GUIDE

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##### kimmyma-artstudio.com

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#### DANCE

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60-13 Myrtle Avenue, 2nd Floor,  
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[www.ridgewooddancestudio.com](http://www.ridgewooddancestudio.com)

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*Continued on page 18*

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# Fall Activity

## GUIDE

### Continued from page 16

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Continued on page 20

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# Fall Activity

## GUIDE

*Continued from page 18*

the arts in our students! All of our activities are designed to encourage performers at every skill level to grow. The students will increase flexibility, improve coordination, focus on muscle strengthening, build poise, and HAVE FUN! All of our instructors have the experience in both teaching and performing to teach students the skills needed to pursue a career as a true artist, as well as the compassion to help push them toward their goals and build their self-confidence.

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The academy is offering more of its most popular classes such as aerobic dance fusion, ballet, hip-hop, modern, liturgical, tap, jazz, evening adult classes including ballroom dancing and the popular 2-5 year old dance program. The academy has floor to ceiling mirrors and uses floating floors that absorb the impact of dancing, keep students energized and avoid injury.

Our Summer Arts Program includes music camp, audition workshop, musical theatre, music/audio production, dance and voice. Ask about birthday parties!

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USGF Teams. Register for fall programs and call for information about their birthday parties. Free parking is available.

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Our parties are great for any age from 1 till teens. Parties include invitations, bouncer, animal balloons, bubble machine, pizza & juice, all dancing and activities. Our great specialty parties include spa, zumba, yoga, capoeira, pajama, puppet & magic & star wars shows.

### Super Kickers

PS 69 77-02 37th Avenue Jackson Heights 11372, 718-350-1535 or [www.superkickers.com](http://www.superkickers.com)

Our kids are part of the laziness generation, where everything is at the reach of their finger tips and much has been made easier for them with technology. I remember growing up and looking forward to free time off from school so that I could spend most of it outdoors engaging with my friends and neighbors. Kids today are spending a huge chunk of their time playing video games, texting and sleeping rather than exercising; unfortunately Obesity rates in the United States have grown dramatically and will continue to grow if kids and adults are not educated about the consequences of the lack of exercise. A key to curbing obesity is participating in regular physical activity and by doing so other potentially risky health issues can be reduced.

As parents it is our responsibility to encourage our children to want to run, sweat, jump and interact with other children especially when all we hear from them is "this is boring", "I'm too tired to do this", "I don't want to go". As parents we have to be aware of the many facts this new generation has to overcome in order to be successful adults and great professionals.

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# A cooler lunch

How to pack  
a school  
lunch that  
stays a safe  
temperature

BY KIKI BOCCI

**P**acking school lunches can be a pain for parents, but at least you gain some peace of mind about what your kids are eating. It's a great way to help children maintain healthy, balanced diets — and save money, too.

But if parents don't take certain precautions, even the most well-meaning moms and dads could make their children sick.

A survey published last year by the American Academy of Pediatrics found that more than 90 percent of sack lunches were kept at unsafe temperatures, exposing children to foodborne illnesses. Even lunches that included ice packs reached unsafe temperatures if too few were included or if too much time passed before lunchtime.

In the study, sack lunches of more than 700 preschoolers were measured 1.5 hours before the food was served. About 45 percent of the 700 lunches tested had at least one ice pack. But despite parents' best efforts, more than 90 percent of the lunches were at dangerously warm temperatures. Of the 1,631 perishable food items in the lunches, only 22 items were found to be in an acceptable temperature range.

For parents, this study should serve as a wake-up call. Children are at particular risk for foodborne illnesses. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says compared with adults, children younger than 4 years have quadruple the number of bacterial infection incidents transmitted through food.

Symptoms of foodborne illness are unpleasant and debilitating. Severe cases, especially in young children whose immune systems are not fully developed, can lead to serious medical issues such as kidney problems, malnutrition, and even death, the Center noted.

Control of the temperature of food

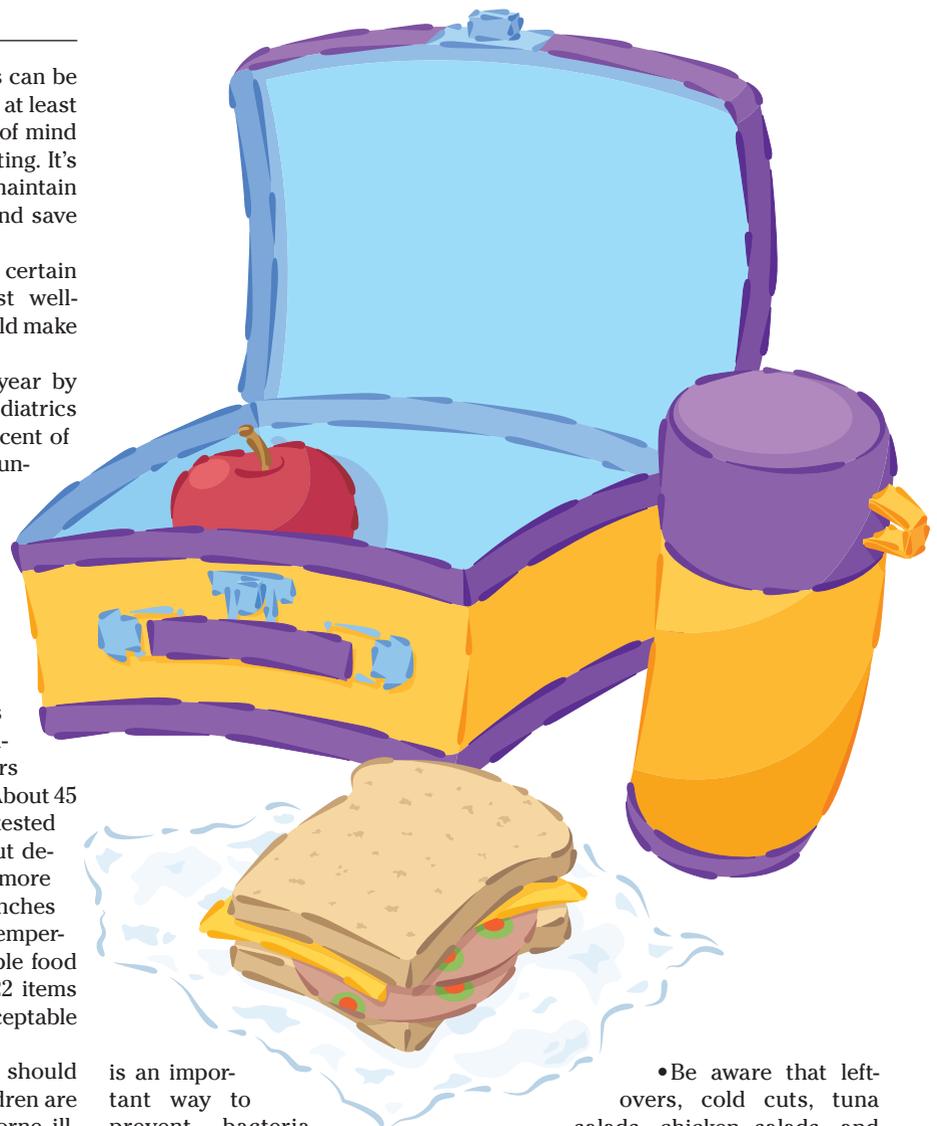
is an important way to prevent bacteria from growing and making kids sick. Some tips for parents:

- Start with an insulated lunch bag or box. Soft, insulated lunch bags or boxes are the best choice. Avoid paper lunch bags.
- Include small, frozen gel packs. Have extras in the freezer in case you forgot to put yesterday's in the icebox to refreeze.
- Consider freezing a juice box or water bottle and including it in the lunch. By lunchtime it will melt, providing a cool refreshing drink.

• Be aware that leftovers, cold cuts, tuna salads, chicken salads, and egg salads all must be kept cold to avoid the growth of bacteria that can make kids sick. Even store-bought, packaged lunch combos containing lunchmeats, crackers, and cheese need to be kept cold.

• Don't re-use foil, plastic wrap, or Baggies, even if it seems environmentally friendly to recycle. After a day in a lunch bag, they have become incubators for bacteria. The safest thing to do is to discard them.

• If you have reusable containers, be sure to wash them out thoroughly with soap and hot water.



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DEAR  
DR. KARYN  
DR. KARYN GORDON

# Teaching your kids gratitude & empathy

Dear Dr. Karyn,

I'm becoming increasingly frustrated with how my kids seem entitled. They keep wanting more and more and my husband and I don't know what to do to kick this attitude of entitlement. Not only do they seem ungrateful, but they also seem to lack empathy toward each other. Can you give some ideas on how parents can teach kids these two important qualities?

on all that is positive in his life. Research tells us that people who have gratitude benefit from personal happiness, optimism, lack of stress, and tend to be more satisfied with their lives. They take better care of themselves by doing things such as eating well and exercising and are professionally better strategic thinkers (Emmons and McCullough).

Empathy (which is other-centered) is when a person tries to see life through the lens of another and puts himself in another person's shoes. Empathy is a cornerstone of EQ and people who are empathetic benefit from having the essential skill necessary for healthy relationships and an increased desire to help and share. They also lack of aggressive and violent behavior (Universities of Missouri, Toronto, Harvard and Illinois).

These two separate skills complement each other, since, when people are grateful they tend to want to help others. And when people are empathetic toward others it reminds them of all that they can be grateful for in their own lives.

## Model It

The best way for kids to learn these skills is for parents to model it for them. Just like kids can pick up languages more easily at a young age, the sooner they can experience and observe gratefulness and empathy from their parents, the sooner they start learning it.

## Teach It

There are many ways to teach these skills, but let me highlight eight small steps to get you started.

### To teach gratitude:

- Get yourself and your kids to keep a gratitude journal (recording every day the small and big things you are grateful for). I've had clients as young as 8 do this, in addition to my adult clients. It's a very easy step to help train your brain to focus on the simple and positive things in your life.

- After you have modeled saying

"thank you" to your kids, teach them that you also expect a thank you after meals or drives to schools.

- Have your kids make and give thank you cards after they have received gifts. (For example, in my home, after our twins' 5th birthday party, we had them make individual thank you cards for all their friends. Although this took more than five hours, it was well worth it!)

### To teach empathy:

- When your kids seem upset, ask them the question, "How are you feeling?"

- If they say nothing or "I don't know," try my technique called "Give A Menu," in which you provide options. For example, you can say, "Are you feeling angry, upset, or frustrated?" By providing some options (like a drop down menu), you can help your kids to be more effective at articulating how they feel.

- After they have stated the emotion, empathize with that emotion by saying something like, "I can understand why you are angry — I would be, too."

- Allow them to vent about the situation and be careful NOT to dive into solution mode too quickly. Kids need to experience empathy from us before they are able to see it from the other person's lens. And if we start providing the fix-it plan, kids will zone out and have a difficult time seeing it from another person's perspective.

- After they have finished venting, and you have empathized with how they feel, only then should you ask them how they think the other person felt in the situation. If they have a difficult time thinking about this, you could ask them, "Imagine that the roles were reversed. How do you think you would feel in his shoes?"

Remember that learning these skills is a life-long process (not a quick fix), so be patient with yourself and your kids as they learn them!

*Do you have a question for Dr. Karyn? She would love to hear from you! E-mail her at [karyn@drkaryn.com](mailto:karyn@drkaryn.com).*



Dear Parent,

Great question! In fact, when I speak across the country at various parenting conferences, one of the most common questions parents ask me is exactly what you are asking — how can parents teach gratitude and empathy to their kids? These two characteristics are not just a good parenting idea, but research also tells us that these skills (which are components of EQ, aka "Emotional Intelligence") are some of the greatest predictors for how successful a child will be in the 21st century. So how can parents teach these essential skills (which are 100 percent learned)? Here are three tips:

## Understand It

Gratitude (which is self-focused) is when a person chooses to focus

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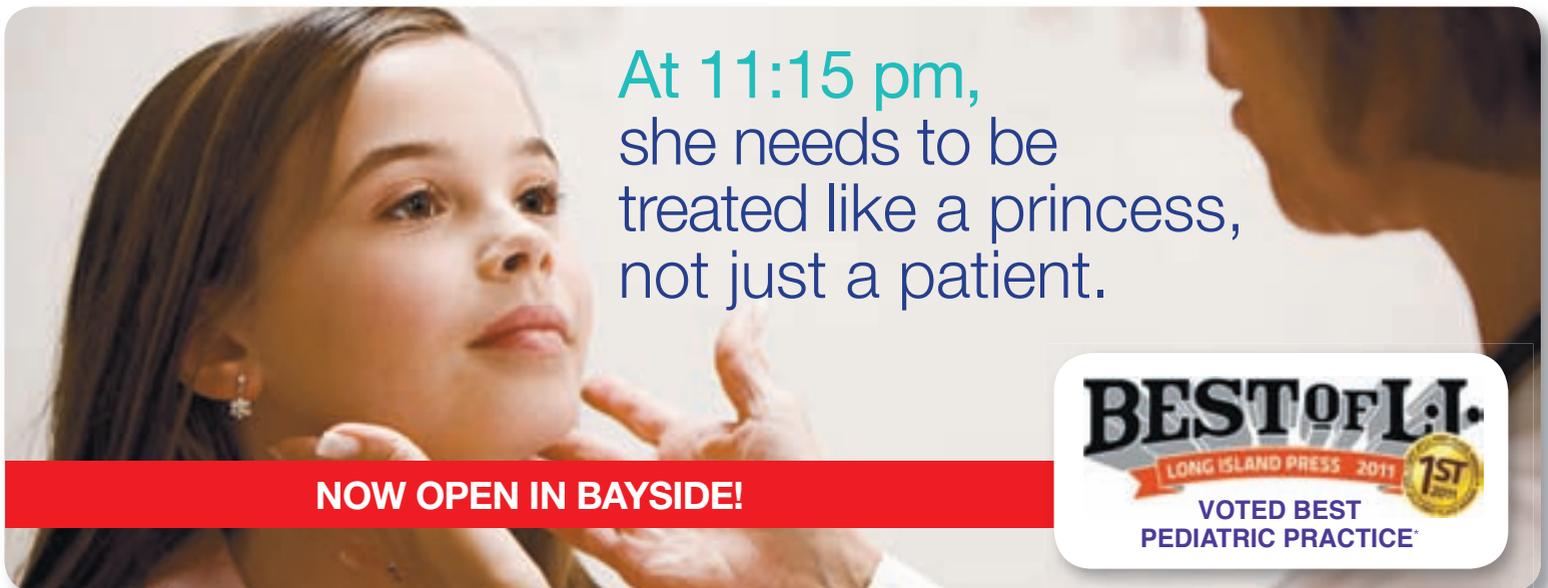
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# Calendar

SEPTEMBER



Photo by Julie Larsen Maher

## Queens Zoo is the place to be

**T**he Queens Zoo is a spectacular way to spend the day — with daily activities and even overnight adventures.

Children 4 and 5 years old, accompanied by a parent or caregiver, can enjoy hands-on activities, visits with animal guests, and scavenger hunts in the Kinder Kritters workshop on Sept. 22 and 29; Oct. 13 and 20; and Nov. 3 and 10, from 2 to 3 pm.

Tiny toddlers 2 to 3 years old with an adult can meet the furry, scaly, and feathery denizens of the zoo at two separate workshop series: on Sept. 22 and 29; Oct. 13 and 20; and Nov. 3 and 10, from noon to 1 pm; and on Sept. 14, 21,

and 28; and Oct. 5, 12, and 19, from 10:30 to 11:30 am. Each series is \$125 for members and \$150 for non-members.

Adventurous kids ages 5 and older with an adult can explore the zoo after hours and stay for the night on Sept. 15 and 16 from 5 pm to 10 am. Bring your own tent, sleeping bags, and a picnic dinner. The zoo provides the rest: beverages, dessert, a late night snack, breakfast, and of course, all the adventure you can handle. Admission for members is \$85 per person, and \$100 for non-members.

*The Queens Zoo [53-51 111th St. in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, (718) 271-1500, [www.queenszoo.com](http://www.queenszoo.com)].*

## 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 [queens-calendar@cnglocal.com](mailto:queens-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!

## SAT, SEPT. 1

**Drop-in workshop:** Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave. (718) 777-6888; [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us); Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 years and older engage in hands-on activities making projects ranging from flipbooks and thaumatropes to stop-motion and computer animations.

**Moving Image workshop:** Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave. (718) 777-6888; [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us); Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (aged 12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

**Hunt for plums:** Sunken Meadow Park bathhouse, State Highway 25A; (914) 835-2153; [www.wildmanstevebrill.com](http://www.wildmanstevebrill.com); 12:30 pm; \$20 (\$10 children under 12).

Wildman Steve Brill will be hunting for edible beach plants on a three-hour walking tour. RSVP required.

**Archery:** Fort Totten, Fort Totten; (718) 352-1769; 1 pm; Free.

Rangers demonstrate the safe and proper way to draw a bow and shoot an arrow. For children 8 years old and older.

## SUN, SEPT. 2

**Studio Sunday:** Museum of Arts and Design, 2 Columbus Circle at Eighth Avenue; (212) 299-7777; [www.madmuseum.org](http://www.madmuseum.org); 2 pm; \$10.

Children 6 years old and up get the 411 from a professional artist on how to explore the galleries and then a hands-on workshop to create works inspired by the selections. RSVP required.

## WED, SEPT. 5

**Computer 101:** Woodside Library, 54-22 Skillman Ave. (718) 429-4700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 10:30 am; Free.

All ages benefit from learning the 411 on computers.



## Setting sail with Dora

**Y**o, ho, ho and a bottle of apple juice! Dora and her friends land at the Long Island Children's Museum on Sept. 22, 23, 29, and 30 for a fun time of treasure hunting. Join Dora as she and her best buddy Boots the Mon-

key embark on a trip to Treasure Island in "Dora's Pirate Adventure." Along the way, Dora invites the audience to help her find the pirate booty using map-reading, counting, and language skills.

"Dora's Pirate Adventure" at the

Long Island Children's Museum [11 Davis Ave. at West Road in Garden City, (516) 599-6870, <http://plazatheatrical.com>, [www.licm.org](http://www.licm.org)]. Sept. 22, 23, 29, and 30. All performances at 11 am, 1, and 3 pm. Tickets are \$12 (\$10 for members).

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

Club for beginners and advanced. Bring a skein of yarn and needles. Volunteers on hand to provide assistance.

**Game day:** Howard Beach Public Library, 92-06 156 Ave. at 92nd Street; (718) 641-7086; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Teens and tweens partake in friendly competition on Nintendo Wii, checkers, chess, and other board games.

## THURS, SEPT. 6

**Back to School festival:** Victory Field in Forest Park, Myrtle Avenue at Woodhaven Blvd. (718) 235-4100; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 3:30-5:30 pm; Free.

Games, crafts, music and more. Spon-

sored by Astoria Federal Savings Bank.

**Chess club:** East Flushing Public Library, 196-36 Northern Blvd. at Francis Lewis Boulevard; (718) 357-6643; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 5 pm; Free.

Teens and adults are invited to hone up on skills.

**Open mic:** Flushing Public Library, 41-17 Main St. at Parsons Boulevard; (718) 661-1200; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 6:30 pm; Free.

Share your talents in poetry, the written word, music or comedy and get your five minutes of fame on stage.

## FRI, SEPT. 7

**Arts and crafts:** East Flushing Public Library, 196-36 Northern Blvd. at Francis Lewis Boulevard; (718) 357-6643; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Children 4 years old and up make fun

projects. Limited to 15 children. Pre-registration required.

**Dancing under the stars:** Elmhurst Park, Grand Avenue at 80th Street; (718) 520-5919; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 5:30-7:30 pm; Free.

Mom and dad learn Latin dances while children have their faces painted, play games and listen to music.

## SAT, SEPT. 8

**Walk and fair:** Rainey Park, Vernon Blvd. and 33 Road; (718) 784-2112; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 10 am-noon; Free.

Join participants for a back to school literacy walk and fair. Enjoy music, games and food The fair follows in Socrates Sculpture Park (32-05 Vernon Blvd.)

**Discovery day:** Central Library, 89-11

*Continued on page 28*

# Calendar

## Continued from page 27

Merrick Blvd. (718) 990-0700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 11 am; Free.

Explore the Children's Library Discovery Center and enjoy activities.

**Sailing on Meadow Lake:** Flushing Meadows Corona Park, 30 Meadow Lake Road; (646) 957-0085; 11 am-3 pm.

Learn about sailing on Meadow Lake. The youth and adult programs are offered by The American Small Craft Association. Get a tour of the newly refurbished boathouse at 30 Meadow Lake Rd.

**Moving Image workshop:** Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave. (718) 777-6888; [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us); Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (aged 12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

**All About Armstrong:** Peninsula Public Library, 92-25 Rockaway Beach Blvd. (718) 634-1110; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 2:30 pm; Free.

Join jazz historian Loren Schoenberg and his musicians for a journey through the tunes of the great trumpeter Louis Armstrong. Presented by Lincoln Center.

**Camping:** Fort Totten, Fort Totten; (718) 352-1769; 6 pm; Free.

Celebrate and eat s'mores with the Urban Park Rangers under the stars. Families chosen by lottery. Dinners supplied.

## SUN, SEPT. 9

**Fleamarket:** St. Raphael's church, 35-20 Greenpoint Ave. (718) 729-8957; 9 am-4 pm; Free.

Outdoor event, new and used items.

**School festival:** Little Bay Park, Bell Blvd. (718) 352-4793; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Noon-3 pm; Free.

Celebrate back to school with rides, arts and crafts along with free giveaways.

**Scavenger Hunt:** Forest Park Visitor Center, Woodhaven Blvd. and Forest Park Drive; (718) 846-2731; 1 pm; Free.

Hunt for clues with the rangers.

**Motorcycle show:** Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. (718) 347-3276; [www.queensfarm.org](http://www.queensfarm.org); 11 am-4 pm; \$5.

Antique bikes will be on display along with a tour of the farmhouse, petting zoo, and food.

## MON, SEPT. 10

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

Naturalist Steve Fratello shares his knowledge of Rainforest butterflies and moths from Central and South America.



## Simply a-Maize-ing

**T**he Amazing Maize Maze is back at the Queens County Farm Museum in Floral Park. Every Saturday and Sunday from Sept. 15 through Oct. 28, at 11 am, your family can have fun getting lost in the museum's three-acre interactive corn maze.

The fun begins with a "stalk talk" to help prepare you and your family for the challenge of finding clues and solving puzzles as you make your way from the beginning of the maze to the end.

After wandering through the maze, you can really get into

the harvest season by strolling through the pumpkin patch and picking out a pumpkin of your own. It's a family tradition that never gets old.

*Amazing Maize Maze at the Queens County Farm Museum [73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. near 74th Avenue in Floral Park, (718) 347-3276, [www.queensfarm.org](http://www.queensfarm.org)]. Open every Saturday and Sunday from Sept. 15 through Oct. 28, and Monday Oct. 8, 11 am to 4:30 pm. Special Moonlight Maze on Oct. 6 and 13 until 9 pm. Tickets are \$9 for adults, \$5 for children 4 to 11, free for children 3 and younger.*

**Honey bees:** Broadway Library, 40-20 Broadway; (718) 721-2462; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

The Queens Farm Museum comes to the library and presents a program for children in grades one to five covering the life cycle of the bee and their importance to our environment.

**Stop the bullying:** St. Albans Library, 191-05 Linden Blvd. (718) 528-8196; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Teens are invited to join members from King of Kings Foundation on their anti-drug, anti-gang warriors tour and help end bullying in the community.

## TUES, SEPT. 11

**Support group:** Howard Beach Public Library, 92-06 156th Ave. at 92nd Street; (718) 641-7086; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 1 pm; Free.

For those suffering from multiple sclerosis and their family members.

## WED, SEPT. 12

**Knit and crochet:** 1 pm. South Ozone Park Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

**SAT Practice test:** Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd. (718) 990-0700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Teens take a half-length practice exam in preparation for the big day.

**Clay creations:** Windsor Park Public Library, 79-50 Bell Blvd. at 73rd Avenue; (718) 468-8300; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 4 pm; Free.

Teens make a unique project.

**Game day:** 4 pm. Howard Beach Public Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

## THURS, SEPT. 13

**Nature workshop:** Astoria Public Library, 14-01 Astoria Blvd. at 14th Street; (718) 278-2220; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 3 pm; Free.

Naturalist Steve Fratello shares his knowledge of Rainforest butterflies and moths from Central and South America.

**Chess club:** 5 pm. East Flushing Public Library. See Thursday, Sept. 6.

**Special needs workshops:** South Hampton Rogers Memorial Library, 91 Coopers Farm Rd. (631) 238-0774; 5:30-6:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children with special needs generally require care and supervision throughout their lives. This workshop helps families, parents and caregivers with helpful tips.

**Jewelry workshop:** Woodside Library, 54-22 Skillman Ave. (718) 429-4700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 6 pm; Free.

Educator Stephanie Huffaker teaches participants how to make eco-earrings out of plastic bags and umbrella frames. Materials provided. Pre-registration required.

## FRI, SEPT. 14

**Toddler time:** Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; [queenszoo.com](http://queenszoo.com); 10:30-11:30 am; \$125 (\$150 non-members) for all six classes.

Children 2 to 3 years old meet the furry, scaly, and feathery denizens of the zoo. Must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration required.

**Arts and crafts:** 4 pm. East Flushing Public Library. See Friday, Sept. 7.

## SAT, SEPT. 15

**Honey festival:** Rockaway Beach, Beach 97th St. and Boardwalk; (718) 318-4000; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 11 am-6 pm; Free.

Learn all about the tasty treat and the busy bees that make it.

**Moving Image workshop:** Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave. (718) 777-6888; [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us); Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (aged 12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

**Saltwater fishing:** Bayswater Park, Beach 32nd St. and Beach Channel Drive; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Noon-2 pm; Free.

Children 8 years old and older learn from the rangers how to fish. First come-first served basis.

**History workshop:** King Manor Museum in Rufus King Park, 150th Street

# Calendar

and Jamaica Avenue; (718) 206-0545 X 13; [www.nygovparks.org](http://www.nygovparks.org); Noon-3 pm; Free.

Learn all about our Constitution, enjoy cake and freedom.

**Music in the Garden:** Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; [www.queensbotanical.org](http://www.queensbotanical.org); 2 pm; Free with Garden admission.

"Locating the Sacred Performance" is produced by the Asian American Arts Alliance and features traditional artists from Asia and Africa. Performers include Desai Mala, Alhaji Pappa Susso, Doo-Yi Park and Hussain Ikhlqa.

**Anson Li:** Forest Hills Public Library, 108-19 71st Ave. (718) 268-7934; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 2:30 pm; Free.

Pop-rock Queens singer concert.

**Overnight adventure:** Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; [queenszoo.com](http://queenszoo.com); 5 pm; \$100 (\$85 members) per person.

Families can explore the zoo after hours and learn all about the animals. Recommended for children 5 years old and older. Bring your own tent, sleeping bags and picnic dinner. Beverages, dessert, late-night snack and breakfast provided. Pre-registration required.

## SUN, SEPT. 16

**Overnight adventure:** 10 am. Queens Zoo. See Saturday, Sept. 15.

**Garden in the fall:** Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; [www.queensbotanical.org](http://www.queensbotanical.org); 2-4 pm; \$15 (\$12 members) per session.

Children enjoy the changing seasons in four separate workshops. Go to one or all four, the choice is yours. Events include making a scarecrow friend, learning about healthy snacks, learning about birds and their nests and how to reap the veggies from the garden and get the earth ready for spring.

**Garden fall sessions:** Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 539-5296; [www.queensbotanical.org](http://www.queensbotanical.org); 2-4 pm; \$15 per session (12 members).

Children learn all about the changing seasons and make scarecrows, plant seeds, make snacks, create bird houses and then put the veggies to bed.

## TUES, SEPT. 18

**Hands-on farming:** Sunnyside Library, 43-06 Greenpoint Ave.; 3:30 pm; Free.

Members from the Queens County Farm Museum teach children in grades one through five about sustainable agriculture with hands-on demonstrations.

## WED, SEPT. 19

**Knit and crochet:** 1 pm. South



## Abracadabra, it's Elmo!

Calling all super singers! When Elmo gets his furry red fingers on Abby Cadabby's wand the magic begins in a new "Sesame Street Live" musical production at the Nassau Coliseum from Sept. 21 through Sept. 23.

Families won't be able to stop singing with Elmo, Abby, and Cookie Monster.

There's plenty of songs for all to sing along to, with a conga line to keep you up. And like television's "Sesame Street," each "Sesame Street Live" production wouldn't

be complete without a lesson for all. In this case, kids learn why it feels good to sing a song, but why it feels good to stop, too. Elmo also learns his lesson about the power of musical magic.

"Sesame Street Live: Can't Stop Singing" at Nassau Coliseum [1255 Hempstead Tpke. near Glenn Curtiss Boulevard in Uniondale, (516) 794-9300, <http://nassaucoliseum.com>, [www.sesamestreetlive.com](http://www.sesamestreetlive.com)]. Sept. 21 at 10:30 am and 7 pm. Sept. 22 at 10:30 am, 2, and 5:30 pm. Sept. 23 at 1 and 4:30 pm. Tickets \$21.50 to \$108.50.

Ozone Park Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

**Hands-on farming:** Woodside Library, 54-22 Skillman Ave. (718) 429-4700; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

Members from the Queens County Farm Museum teach children in grades one through five about sustainable agriculture with hands-on demonstrations.

**Game day:** 4 pm. Howard Beach Public Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

## THURS, SEPT. 20

**Rap sessions:** Laurelton Public Library, 134-26 225th St. at Merrick Boulevard; (718) 528-2822; [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org); 5 pm; Free.

Teens get together and discuss topical matters.

**Chess club:** 5 pm. East Flushing Public Library. See Thursday, Sept. 6.

## FRI, SEPT. 21

**Toddler time:** 10:30-11:30 am. Queens Zoo. See Friday, Sept. 14.

**Arts and crafts:** 4 pm. East Flushing Public Library. See Friday, Sept. 7.

**"Can't Stop Singing":** Nassau Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Turnpike; (800) 745-3000; [www.nassaucoliseum.com](http://www.nassaucoliseum.com); 7 pm; \$21.50-\$108.50.

Join in with Big Bird, Elmo, and the whole "Sesame Street" gang.

## SAT, SEPT. 22

**"Can't Stop Singing":** 10:30 am, 2 and 5:30 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Friday, Sept. 21.

**"Dora's Pirate Adventure":** Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road; (516) 599-6870; [www.licm.org](http://www.licm.org); 11 am and 1 and 3 pm; \$12 (\$10 for members).

Dora the Explorer joins her best friend Boots the Monkey and embarks on a trip to Treasure Island. Along the way she learns how to count, read maps, and hones her language skills. Suitable for children 4 years old and older.

**Queens County fair:** Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. (718) 347-3276; [www.queensfarm.org](http://www.queensfarm.org); 11 am-6 pm; \$8 (\$5 children 12 and under).

Blue Ribbon competitions in produce, livestock, arts and crafts, food, fun music and more.

**Moving Image workshop:** Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave. (718) 777-6888; [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us); Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (aged 12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

**Toddler time:** Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; [queenszoo.com](http://queenszoo.com); Noon-1 pm; \$125 (\$150 non-members) for all six classes.

Children 2 to 3 years old meet the furry, scaly and feathery denizens of the zoo. Must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration required.

**Cheer Day at Citi Field:** Citi Field, 126th St. and Roosevelt Avenue; (718) 507-6387; 1 pm; \$45.

The girls will be invited to join the NY Jets Flight Crew cheerleaders, along with other schools, to take the field and partake in a special Mets cheer.

**Kinder kitters:** Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; [queenszoo.com](http://queenszoo.com); 2-3 pm; \$125 (\$150 non-members) for all six classes.

For children 4 and 5 years old with an adult. Hands-on activities, animal guests and scavenger hunts. Pre-registration required.

**Kinder Kitters:** Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; [queenszoo.com](http://queenszoo.com); 2-3 pm; \$125 members, \$150 non-members.

Preschoolers will enjoy this fun-filled six-session program that will include animal guest, keeper chats, and a scavenger hunt. Ages 4 to 5 with adult.

**Construction junction:** Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at W. Road; (516) 224-5800; [www.licm.org](http://www.licm.org); 2:30-4:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages will enjoy this program where they can build bridges, towers, houses and more with a variety of recycled cardboard.

## SUN, SEPT. 23

**"Dora's Pirate Adventure":** 11 am and 1 and 3 pm. Long Island Children's

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Continued from page 29

Museum. See Saturday, Sept. 22.

**Queens County fair:** 11 am–6 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Saturday, Sept. 22.

**Archery:** Fort Totten, Fort Totten; (718) 352-1769; 1 pm; Free.

Rangers demonstrate the safe and proper way to draw a bow and shoot an arrow. Suitable for children 8 years old and older.

**"Can't Stop Singing":** 1 and 4:30 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Friday, Sept. 21.

## MON, SEPT. 24

**Art and ecology:** Woodside Library, 54-22 Skillman Ave. (718) 429-4700; www.queenslibrary.org; 3 pm; Free.

Children learn how famous artists like Picasso used throwaway things and turned them into masterpieces. Then children use buttons, beads and recycled toys to make their own creation.

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

Members from the Queens County Farm Museum teach children in grades one through five about sustainable agriculture with hands-on demonstrations.

## TUES, SEPT. 25

**Support group:** Howard Beach Public Library, 92-06 156th Ave. at 92nd Street; (718) 641-7086; www.queenslibrary.org; 1 pm; Free.

For those suffering from multiple sclerosis and their family members.

## WED, SEPT. 26

**Knit and crochet:** 1 pm. South Ozone Park Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

**Game day:** 4 pm. Howard Beach Public Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

## THURS, SEPT. 27

**Drop-in Art:** Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at W. Road; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; 2:30–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Calling all artists — stop by the inner lobby and use your imagination and create your own masterpiece with a variety of fun materials.

**Art and ecology:** Astoria Public Library, 14-01 Astoria Blvd. at 14th Street; (718) 278-2220; www.queenslibrary.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children learn how famous artists like Picasso used throwaway things and turned them into masterpieces. Then children can use buttons, beads and recycled

toys to make their own fun art creations.

**Chess club:** 5 pm. East Flushing Public Library. See Thursday, Sept. 6.

**Open mic:** East Elmhurst Public Library, 95-06 Astoria Blvd. at 95th Street; (718) 424-2619; www.queenslibrary.org; 6 pm; Free.

Writers, musicians, comedians and orators are invited to share the stage.

**Open mic:** East Elmhurst Public Library, 95-06 Astoria Blvd. at 95th Street; (718) 424-2619; www.queenslibrary.org; 6 pm; Free.

Writers, musicians, comedians and orators are invited to share the stage.

## FRI, SEPT. 28

**Toddler time:** 10:30–11:30 am. Queens Zoo. See Friday, Sept. 14.

**Drop-in Art:** 2:30–4 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Thursday, Sept. 27.

**Arts and crafts:** 4 pm. East Flushing Public Library. See Friday, Sept. 7.

## SAT, SEPT. 29

**Bug Superheroes!:** Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; queenszoo.com; 10–11:30 am; \$35 members, \$40 non-members.

Children will go on an insect hunt with staff urban ecologists to learn about many super-powered insects. Ages 7 to 10.

**Invention convention:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; info@makerfaire.com; www.nyscience.org; 10 am–6 pm; \$5–\$25.

The World Maker Faire is an all-ages gathering of tech enthusiasts, crafters, educators, tinkerers, hobbyists, engineers, science clubs, authors, artists, students, and commercial exhibitors gather to show what they have made and share what they have learned.

**Fall festival:** Wildwood State Park, Hulse Landing Rd. (631) 929-4262; www.nysparks.com; 11 am–4 pm; Free.

Enjoy a fun day out in the country.

**"Dora's Pirate Adventure":** 11 am and 1 and 3 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, Sept. 22.

**Moving Image workshop:** Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave. (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon–5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (aged 12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

**Toddler time:** Noon–1 pm. Queens Zoo. See Saturday, Sept. 22.

**Garden in the fall:** 2–4 pm. Queens

Botanical Garden. See Sunday, Sept. 16.

**Kinder krittters:** 2–3 pm. Queens Zoo. See Saturday, Sept. 22.

**Garden fall sessions:** 2–4 pm. Queens Botanical Garden. See Sunday, Sept. 16.

**Kinder Krittters:** 2–3 pm. Queens Zoo. See Saturday, Sept. 22.

## SUN, SEPT. 30

**Invention convention:** 10 am–6 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Sept. 29.

**"Dora's Pirate Adventure":** 11 am and 1 and 3 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, Sept. 22.

**Autumn Moon festival:** Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 4–6 pm; Free with Garden admission.

Celebrate the ancient holiday of bounty, harvest and the fullness of the moon and learn all about the myth of the immortal moon Goddess. Bring picnic blankets and summer chairs; enjoy moon cakes, arts, crafts and activities.

**Moon festival:** Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 4–6 pm; Free with garden admission.

Celebrate the ancient holiday that reflects upon the bounty of summer harvest and the full moon.

## FRI, OCT. 5

**Toddler time:** 10:30–11:30 am. Queens Zoo. See Friday, Sept. 14.

## LONG-RUNNING

**Science Playground:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; \$4 per person, plus general NYSCI admission.

Weather permitting. The nation's largest science playground features 60,000 square feet of exhibits for children of all ages. Slides, seesaws, climbing webs, a water play area, drums, mirrors, sand boxes and more allow kids to explore science by playing.

**Legends of Flight:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Daily, 9:30 am–5 pm; Now – Sun, Sept. 2; \$6 (\$5 children, students and seniors).

Get an insider's view of modern aircraft building practices. See the first public flights of the Airbus A380 and the 787.

**Cartoon exhibit:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am–5

pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sun, Sept. 2; \$11 (\$8 children 2-17, college students and seniors).

A 6,000 square-foot exhibit features characters from the Cartoon Network, including larger than life graphics, animation from concept to finished product, storyboarding, character design and drawing.

**Intrepid Air and Space Museum:** Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum at Pier 86, 12th Avenue at 46th Street; www.intrepidmuseum.org; Weekdays, 10 am–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Wed, Oct. 31; \$30 general admission (\$26 seniors and college students; \$23 children 7-17 and veterans; \$16 children 3-6; Free for active and retired military and children under 3).

Come aboard and explore the 12,240 square foot interactive Explorem, featuring a variety of hands on exhibits as well as the Space Shuttle Enterprise, which now has a permanent home in the museum.

**"The Adoration of the Magi":** Museum of Biblical Art, 1865 Broadway between W. 61st and W. 62nd streets; (212) 408-1500; www.mobia.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sun, Sept. 9; Free.

The beautiful early Italian Renaissance alterpiece by Bartolo di Fredi, (1330-1410), will be displayed in its entirety.

**Fair:** Soho, 100 Varick St. (914) 295-4794; varicksflea@gmail.com; www.meetup.com/varicks; Daily, 10 am–4 pm; \$55/Space.

Enjoy shopping and schmoozing in the all day market.

**Creatures of Light:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; awang@amnh.org; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–8 pm; \$24(\$14 children, \$18 seniors and students).

This interactive exhibit explores organisms that produce light, from the flickering fireflies to alien deep-sea fishes.

**Portrait Of A King Michael Jackson:** Langston Hughes Public Library, 100-01 Northern Blvd. (718) 651-1100; info@libraryactioncommittee.org; www.queenslibrary.org; Daily, 10 am–5 pm; Now – Fri, Aug. 31; Free.

Tribute to the "Gloved One" as the King of Pop.

**Le Carrousel:** Bryant Park, W. 40th St. between Fifth and Sixth avenues; www.nycgovparks.org; Daily, 11 am–8 pm; Now – Wed, Oct. 31; \$2 per ride.

Fashioned to complement the park's French style, this classic ride features brightly colored animals and French cabaret music.

**Ping Pong:** Bryant Park, Sixth Avenue and W. 42nd Street; www.nycgovparks.

org; Daily, 11 am–7 pm; Now – Sun, Sept. 30; Free.

Paddles and balls provided and all skill levels welcome.

**Muttville Comix:** Long Island Game Farm, 638 Chapman Blvd. at; (631) 878-6644; www.longislandgamefarm.com; Weekdays, Noon and 3 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, Noon, 2 and 4 pm, Now – Mon, Sept. 3; \$16.95 (\$14.95 seniors and children and \$Free for children under 2).

Canine comedy with Johnny Peers and his canine crew.

**Drop-in Art:** Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at W. Road; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; Tuesdays – Fridays, 2:30–4 pm, Now – Tues, Sept. 25; Free with museum admission.

Calling all artists — stop by the inner lobby and use your imagination and create your own masterpiece with a variety of fun materials.

**Storytime:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Ave. at E. 82nd Street; (212) 570-3894; metmuseum.org; Tuesdays – Fridays, 3–3:30 pm, Now – Thurs, Aug. 30; Free with Museum Admission.

Children 3 to 7 years old listen to a story then go and find the art on a treasure hunt in the galleries.

**Orbis Pictus:** The Gallery of the Czech Center New York, 321 E. 73rd St. (646) 422-3399; info@czechcenter.com; www.czechcenter.com; Daily, 6:30–8:30 pm; Now – Wed, Oct. 17; Free.

Play Well is a series of site-specific installations in which artists and children collaborate to create experiences in visuals, sound and motion.

**Farmer's market:** Roy Wilkins Family Center, Baisley Blvd and 177th St. Saturdays, 10:00am, Now – Sat, Nov. 17; Free.

Fresh fruits and veggies along with health screenings.

**Beginners trainer program:** Long Island Aquarium & Exhibition Center, 431 E. Main St. (631) 208-9200, X H20; reservations@amvny.com; www.longislandaquarium.com; Saturdays, 10:15 am & 2:00 pm, Now – Sat, Sept. 29; \$150 (Members: \$125).

Children 10 years old and above have an opportunity to learn how to be a trainer and work with seals and sea lions.

**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 ages 3 and up create fun projects.

**Storytime:** Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union TPKE. (718) 380-7077; Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 am, Now – Wed, Sept. 19; Free.

Children listen to a different author



## Explore technology

**S**eptember is back-to-school month, and Sony's Wonder Technology Lab has fun, entertaining, hands-on — and let's not forget — educational activities to get kids back into the swing of things.

Children ages 7 and up can explore the little world of nanotechnology on Sept. 1 from 1 to 3 pm with hands-on activities just suited for wee fingers.

Ever wanted a robot of your own? On Sept. 8 Sony provides the motors, screws, and recycled materials, and budding builders provide the imagination to create a robot to take home. The workshop is 11 am to 1 pm, for children 8 and up, and admission is \$10 per child.

Tech fun continues on Sept. 22, when children learn the basics of stop-motion filming by making their own animated monster mash — editing, tweaking, and

and theme, then make a fun project.

**Basketball clinics:** North Meadow Recreation Center, 97th St. Transverse Rd. (212) 348-4867; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays, Noon–2 pm, Now – Sat, Oct. 27; Free.

Children ages 9 to 17 get help with the B-ball game.

**Start with Art:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Ave. at E. 82nd Street; (212) 570-3894; metmuseum.org; Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 3:30–4:30 pm, Now – Thurs,

burning a copy to take home. Admission is \$6 per child. Event runs from 11 am to 1 pm, is for children 8 years and older, and requires reservations.

Don't miss a Dora the Explorer movie on Sept. 15 from 11 am to noon. After the flick, moms, dads, and the whole gang can learn to salsa from trained professionals from noon to 1 pm. On Sept. 29 there's another Dora movie, followed by craft time when kids can make their own star pillows. Admission for both events is \$5 per person. Reservations are not required, but are strongly recommended, especially for younger ones.

*Sony Wonder Technology Lab [550 Madison Ave. between 55th and 56th streets in Midtown, (212) 833-8100, www.sonywonderteclab.com]. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9:30 am to 5:30 pm; closed Mondays and Sundays. Admission free, unless otherwise noted.*

Aug. 30; Free with museum admission.

Children ages 3 to 7 sketch, explore and listen to stories.

**Activity table:** Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; Sundays, 1–4 pm, Now – Sun, Sept. 2; Free with museum admission.

Bring the children over to the TD Bank table for fun crafts and children-friendly activities.

**Family Sundays:** Nassau County Museum of Art, One Museum Drive; (516)

484-9337; www.nassaumuseum.org; Sunday, Sept. 2, 1 pm; Sunday, Sept. 9, 1 pm; Sunday, Sept. 16, 1 pm; Sunday, Sept. 23, 1 pm; Sunday, Sept. 30, 1 pm; Sunday, Oct. 7, 1 pm; Sunday, Oct. 14, 1 pm; Sunday, Oct. 21, 1 pm; Sunday, Oct. 28, 1 pm; Sunday, Nov. 4, 12 pm; Free (\$2 parking fee).

Take a docent led tour of the museum and then be creative and make fun art projects.

**Children's activity table:** Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 886-3800; www.queensbotanical.org; Sundays, 1–4pm, Now – Sun, Sept. 2; Free with admission to the gardens.

Children have a great time with hands-on crafts and activities.

**Poetry workshop:** Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union TPKE. (718) 380-7077; Mondays, 7:30 pm, Now – Mon, Nov. 26; Free.

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

**Wild Wednesdays:** The High Line, W. 14th Street and 10th Avenue; (212) 206-9922; www.nycgovparks.org; Free.

Children watch a butterfly grow, touch a wriggle worm, or watch seeds fly.

**Yak Packers:** Rubin Museum of Art, 150 W. 17 Street, between Sixth and Seventh avenues; (212) 620-5000 X 344. www.rmanyc.org; Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 –11:30 am, Now – Thurs, Oct. 25; \$10 (\$5 seniors and students; Free for children under 12 and members).

Children 2 to 4 years old explore the exhibits and collections, play, listen to stories, and crafts.

**Rocket mini-golf:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, beginning Sat, Sept. 1; \$6 (\$5 children and seniors) plus museum admission.

Putt your way through a nine-hole course and learn all about spaceflight.

**Computer assistance:** Far Rockaway Public Library, 1637 Central Ave. at Mott Avenue; (718) 327-2549; www.queenslibrary.org; Weekdays, 1 pm, Mon, Sept. 3 – Fri, Sept. 28; Free for everyone.

Teens and adults get help in formatting resumes, preparing cover letters and learning how to navigate the internet.

**The Amazing Maize Maze:** Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. (718) 347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am, Sat, Sept. 15 – Sun, Oct. 28; \$9 (\$5 children ages 4 to 11, under 3 free).

Enjoy getting lost in our three-acre interactive corn maze.

# Raising your kids to be politically savvy

How to engage your children with the world around them

BY DENISE YEARIAN

**E**lection year presents an opportunity for children to learn about and develop an interest in politics. But it shouldn't be confined to the classroom. Experts suggest that when political issues are addressed in both the academic and domestic arenas, it has a lasting impact on future voters. To begin cultivating an interest in political affairs, parents should encourage family dialogue and take advantage of resources.

"Start with simple concepts children can understand," says Fran O'Malley, curriculum specialist for the Democracy Project at the University of Delaware. "Ask, 'who are the

leaders or authority figures in our home? Our community? What kinds of jobs do they do?' As children enter school, initiate conversations based on what they are learning in history or government class and go from there."

This, he says, is all part of a scaffolding process that instills concepts and can be built upon over time. Richard Coe, representative for Kids Voting U.S.A., agrees.

"Talk with children about how government affects them right now through everyday things like safety regulations on water, mattresses, and toys. Or, money needed to make libraries and parks better," says Coe, whose nonpartisan organization works to educate and engage future

voters. "If you find that point of relevance and are consistent with these type conversations, most kids will take an interest."

That's how Jeffery Sullivan became engaged in politics. When he was still in elementary school, he developed a mentoring relationship with a family friend and local politician. Through their conversations, he learned about issues being addressed on the state and local level and how some of them directly affected his life.

"This roused his curiosity in political affairs, and by fourth grade he wanted to know more about local government, then county, then state, and eventually national administration," says Linda Sullivan of her now 16-year-old son.

## Everyday politics

- Ignite their interest. Most children have an interest in politics but it must be consistently nurtured through family dialogue and various resources.

- Start simple. Talk about leaders and authority figures in your home and community. Discuss the concept of responsibility. Show your child pictures of those in the political spotlight and discuss what form of leadership he holds. Discuss what they are learning in government or history class. This is all part of a scaffolding process that introduces concepts and can be built upon over time.

- Reason with relevance. Talk about how government affects your child's life right now through everyday things — regulations on items he uses or money needed for places

he frequents, such as parks and libraries.

- Lean on literature. Use juvenile literature such as biographies, historical, and fiction works as springboards for discussions and to hone his understanding of governmental affairs.

- Utilize worthwhile websites. Political and civic-oriented websites designed for children have information and activities to teach kids about government and current affairs.

- Network with the news. Watch the news and political debates and read the newspaper aloud, then discuss it together. Explain political cartoons and encourage your child to create his own cartoons based on issues important to him.

- Motion for movies. Teens can develop some political concepts

through movies, such as "All the President's Men" or "1776."

- Challenge to change. Teach your child that when things happen he has the ability to affect change. Identify neighborhood problems, such as a littered park, and talk about what he can do to change it.

- Rally with letter writing. Encourage your child to write letters to local, state, and national politicians about issues of concern. Children usually receive a letter in return — particularly from local and state officials — and this will encourage them to continue their efforts.

- Make a mock event. Encourage school and extracurricular groups to organize mock elections and hold mini debates, as this introduces political concepts.

- Design day trips. Take trips to state and national historical and governmental sites. If possible, make prior arrangements to meet with representatives. Have your child make a list of questions to ask officials before leaving home.

- Practice at the polls. Take your child with you to vote. This will familiarize him with voting processes.

- Value volunteering. Participate in community family volunteer opportunities throughout the year and during campaign time. Parents and children can help with neighborhood mailings, drop off literature, distribute buttons, or put up campaign signs.

- Early election encounters. Encourage your child to run for school or class office. This will give him a jump start on leadership roles and is a tangible way to teach him about the campaigning process.

- Be consistent. Studies show that parents who regularly discuss political issues with their kids have a better chance of raising politically minded children.

- Mentor and model. Let your child see you reading the newspaper, watching the news, being active in civic volunteering, and voting. Unspoken modeling has a lasting effect.

Top Tips



Jeffery was also an avid reader and with his collection of politically based children's books, he honed his understanding of history and governmental affairs.

"There are so many good books out there that can be used as springboards for introducing kids of all ages to politics and elections," says O'Malley. "One of my favorite is 'Duck for President.'"

Dominique Downs likes that book, too.

"About a month ago my teacher read 'Duck for President' and afterward asked who would like to run for [class] president, so I raised my hand. So did others," says the third-grade student. "We each picked a vice president, then drew pictures, came up with a slogan, and gave speeches to get people to vote for us."

Political- and civic-oriented websites designed for children are good resources, too, as are newspapers and television shows that keep kids abreast of current events.

"I regularly read portions of the newspaper to my kids and we watch CNN together and then discuss what is happening," says Dominique's mother, Glenda Amponsah Tandoh. "Since my daughter is running for class president, she's particularly interested in how the candidates are doing."

Parents should also encourage letter writing.

"It's a level of engagement every school-age child can get involved in," says O'Malley. "And when they get responses back — which they usually do — it encourages them even more."

Tandoh found this to be true. When her son was studying current events in sixth grade, he became concerned about an issue being addressed before congress. He and several other students shared their views with the teacher, who then suggested they write a letter to the governor.

"Before long we received a letter inviting us to come and share our views before state congress, which we did," says the now 16-year-old Isaac Watkins. "After we returned, we received another letter thanking us for getting involved and saying that our views were being considered. This showed me that even though I can't vote, I can still make a difference."

Family visits to state and national historic and governmental sites can foster an interest in political affairs, as can a trip to the polls, so young-

sters can learn about voting processes.

"That's the whole point of my organization — we educate and prepare kids to be engaged voters," says Coe. "Children go to the polls with their parents and vote, and the results are published in the newspapers."

"When Jeffery has gone to the polls with me I've taken him into the booth and he's seen how I may vote republican in one area and democrat in another," says Sullivan.

"Later, I explain why I've chosen one candidate over another so he understands."

Finally, consider family volunteering.

"Candidates are always looking for people to assist during campaign time and families are no exception," says O'Malley. "Parents and children can help with neighborhood mailings, drop-off literature, distribute buttons, or put up campaign signs."

Most important, remember that nurturing an interest in political affairs fosters responsible citizenship.

"Involving my kids in politics helps them to understand the world is bigger than just our home and community," says Tandoh. "It also encourages them to think about issues they wouldn't otherwise consider. I'm planting seeds now in hopes that one day they will step out and make positive changes their world."

*Denise Yearian is the former editor of two parenting magazines and the mother of three children.*

## Resources for your children

Here's a list of subject-related juvenile resources:

### Books

- "America Votes: How Our President is Elected" by Linda Granfield.
- "Arnold for President" by Craig Bartlett.
- "As If Being 12 3/4 Isn't Bad Enough, My Mother Is Running for President!" by Donna Gephart.
- "Barack Obama: An American Story" by Roberta Edwards.
- "Class President" by Johanna Hurwitz.
- "Dork on the Run" by Carol Gorman.

- "Duck For President" by Do-reen Cronin.
- "First Boy" by Gary Schmidt.
- "First Daughter: Extreme American Makeover" by Mitali Perkins.
- "Girl Reporter Rocks Polls!" by Linda Ellerbee.
- "Grace for President" by Kelly S. DiPucchio.
- "Hail to the Chief: The American Presidency" by Don Robb.
- "Hillary Clinton: An American Journey" by Laura Driscoll.
- "If I Ran for President" by Catherine Stier.
- "Phineas L. MacGuire ... gets slimed!" by Frances O'Roark Dowell.

- "So You Want to Be President" by Judith St. George.
- "Vote!" by Eileen Christelow.
- "Vote for Me: All About the Civics" by Kirsten Hall.

### Internet sites

- www.cnn.com/studentnews
- www.kidsvotingsoutheastpa.org
- www.pbskids.org
- www.timeforkids.com/TFK/kids
- www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/kidspost/orbit/kidspost.html
- www.whitehouse.gov/about/white-house-101



## ASK AN ATTORNEY

ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER,  
ESQ.

# To gift or not to gift

*I have been hearing a lot about the expiration of the “Bush tax cuts” and changes in the estate and gift tax laws, and how people should be making substantial gifts this year. What does this mean? Is this true*

**M**any clients have heard in the media that the window to make tax-free gifts is closing, and that they should be gifting all their assets. Unfortunately, those articles and reports do not effectively explain what the changes will be and how they will impact you.

Currently, an individual may transfer \$5.12 million during his lifetime or at death without incurring any federal transfer tax. The tax rate on transfers above the exemption amount is at an historic low of 35 percent. A married couple can transfer a combined \$10.24 million because of a newly introduced concept of “portability,” allowing a surviving spouse to “carry over” the unused exemption of a dead spouse. This high exemption amount expires on Dec. 31, 2012, when the federal exemption drops to \$1 million at a 55 percent tax rate.

This presents a unique opportunity to transfer a large amount of assets free of transfer taxes, the current low interest rates, and the current depressed asset values, but gifting is not right for everyone. Many clients do not have an objective of shielding their children’s inheritance from estate taxes, feeling that they should be content with the net result of their hard-earned wealth. For family business owners, it could be a unique opportunity to implement business succession planning at valuation discounts.

Considering whether to gift depends on many factors, including: the nature and extent of the client’s assets, the cost basis at which he required those assets, whether he is ready to give up control, the family dynamic, and the personalities of the children or other individuals whom he would entrust with his assets. The



assessment should address whether a gift makes sense, which assets should be gifted, whether conditions should be placed on transfer of assets, whether a trust should be used to hold the gifted assets, and the terms and structure of that trust.

Some of these issues are contemplated in greater detail:

- Will the estate tax exemption be lowered? This depends, in part, on politics. President Obama has proposed a \$3.5 million estate tax exemption at a rate of 45 percent, with a lifetime gift tax exemption of \$1 million. If he wins in November, he will still need to convince Congress to enact his proposal. If the Republicans take control of Congress, they will either insist on keeping the exemption at \$5 million at a 35 percent rate, or compromise with President Obama.

- Are you ready to give up control? In general, enjoying estate tax savings techniques requires that the donor give up some control over assets. Giving a substantial portion of your wealth to another individual leaves you without any legal guarantee that he will use the money to pay for your care, or return the money at your request. Not everyone is ready to put himself at someone else’s mercy.

If, having contemplated the benefits and drawbacks, you or a client decide to make substantial gifts, some strategies include:

- Outright gifts. This is appropriate only in certain situations, as it is not always appropriate to give significant gifts to minor children or grandchildren without putting asset protection

in place against potential creditors or future ex-spouses. There may also be generation-skipping tax consequences to making outright gifts to a younger generation. Keep in mind that anyone can gift \$13,000 per year to any individual (\$26,000 from a married couple) and can pay unlimited medical and educational expenses. Annual exclusion gifts remain an effective way to decrease your estate without using up any of your lifetime exemption, wherever it winds up. As noted above, New York State does not impose a transfer tax, but has a very low estate tax exemption of \$1 million. Thus, making annual exclusion gifts can help to reduce the size of your taxable estate.

- A living trust can be drafted for the benefit of intended beneficiaries or a class of beneficiaries (i.e., descendants, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, etc.). The trust terms can be tailored to dictate when and how specific distributions can be made, and can be structured as “Grantor Trusts” for income tax purposes so that any trust income is picked up on the grantor’s individual return. Devising a trust and the appropriate trust terms requires time, attention, and careful planning.

Deciding whether to take advantage of estate planning techniques requires an individual assessment of your own situation. Before undertaking a drastic restructuring of your assets, you should fully understand the mechanisms and consequences of doing so, and feel comfortable with the transfers and structures you are implementing.

It is essential that you consult with your accountant, tax planner, financial advisor, and attorney before undertaking any change in your estate plan.

*Alison Arden Besunder assists new and not-so-new parents with their estate-planning needs. Her firm assists clients in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. You can find her on Twitter @estatetrustplan and on the web at [www.besunderlaw.com](http://www.besunderlaw.com).*

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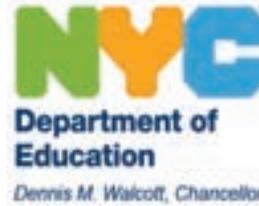


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# 2012-2013 School Year Calendar

## September 2012

- 6 Thursday SCHOOL SESSIONS BEGIN FOR ALL STUDENTS. Early dismissal for non-District 75 Kindergarten students only.
- 7 Friday First Full day for non-District 75 Kindergarten students.
- 10 Monday First Full day for Pre-kindergarten public school students.
- 17 Monday Rosh Hashanah (schools closed)
- 18 Tuesday
- 26 Wednesday Yom Kippur (schools closed)

## October 2012

- 8 Monday Columbus Day Observed (schools closed)
- 17 Wednesday Pre-kindergarten Non-Attendance Day

## November 2012

- 6 Tuesday Election Day. Students will not be in attendance.
- 12 Monday Veterans Day observed (schools closed)
- 22 Thursday Thanksgiving Recess (schools closed)
- 23 Friday

## December 2012

- 24 Monday Winter Recess begins (including Christmas and New Year's Day)

## January 2013

- 2 Wednesday Students return
- 21 Monday Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (schools closed)

## February 2013

- 18 Monday through Friday Midwinter Recess (including Washington's Birthday and Lincoln's Birthday (DOE observed) (schools closed)

## March 2013

- 25 Monday through Tuesday Spring Recess (including Good Friday, Easter and Passover) (schools closed)

## April 2013

- 3 Wednesday Students return to school

## May 2013

- 27 Monday Memorial Day Observed (schools closed)

## June 2013

- 6 Thursday Chancellor's Conference Day. Students in all five boroughs will not be in attendance.
- 21 Friday In non-District 75 high schools having to administer Regents Exams from June 12 through June 20, students will not be in attendance.
- 26 Wednesday LAST DAY FOR ALL STUDENTS (all students report)

# Brush wars

## What to do if your daughter won't let you brush her hair



BY JENNIFER BILEK

**I**s your daughter stubborn when it comes to brushing her hair? Hair brushing is an important part of personal daily hygiene and whether she is a 2 or a 10-year-old, the habit should be instilled in her as early as possible. After all, you teach her to brush her teeth every night, right?

That said, your daughter's reluctance may very well have to do with knots that are painful to remove. Teaching her how to brush her hair properly — and treating hair brushing spent between you and her as an opportunity for quality time spent together — can lessen the tantrums, leave her hair looking beautiful, and give her the tools to keep it healthy for the rest of her life.

If your daughter is seriously vocal about her objections to hair brushing, take her to a room that is quiet and explain that hair brushing is not up for negotiation. Listen to and acknowledge her fears or concerns — when children feel like their problems are being heard they tend to act out less.

You can also ask your daughter what might make the experience more pleasant for her. Listening to her favorite music, sharing a story with her that no one else knows, allowing her to watch TV, or letting her put together a jigsaw puzzle as you brush can occupy her mind and make her less anxious. It's also important that you learn how to brush her hair in a way that doesn't hurt, so you can teach her how to do it as well. Keep in mind that some people do have more sensitive scalps and your daughter may be one of them.

•Removing tangles is the first order of business when brushing hair. You should choose a brush with soft plastic or rubber teeth for removing tangles and always start about an inch from the bottom of the hair. Starting at the top, near the

scalp, will only reinforce tangles as you bring the brush down on them.

Grab a section of hair about an inch in diameter and separate it from the rest of the hair. Work your way up the hair gradually, while holding it tightly in your fist slightly above the part you are brushing, which cuts down on pulling at the scalp. Bring another inch into the brush on the down stroke, and then another until you are at the top. When you are done with one section, take another section and proceed the same way until you have made your way around the entire head. Tug softly at knots. No yanking!

•For tough knots, try gently kneading them first in your fingertips, very softly pulling them apart like you might pull cotton from a large roll. If you pull hard on a knot it gets tighter, so knead and pull very gently and the knots will loosen enough for the brush to go through. Have patience! De-tangler can help, but if you use too much it builds up on the hair and causes more problems than it cures. De-tangler is best used right out of the bath on wet hair.

•Now that her hair is tangle-free and dry, a natural bristle brush will distribute the oils from the scalp to the rest of the hair, giving it shine and keeping it healthy.

•Lemon-juice rinse (pure lemon juice and water left on hair for 20 minutes and then washed out) bi-weekly in summer will keep the chlorine — which tends to make all hair very stiff and unmanageable — out of your child's hair.

It is never too late to create a positive hair-brushing routine, so begin now and happy brushing!

*Jennifer Bilek is the owner of Get Coiffed, a haircut house-call service for Manhattan families that specializes in children's hair care. Bilek has published numerous articles on hair care and general health issues.*

# Finding the right shoes

Putting your  
best foot  
forward when  
shopping for  
your child

BY KIKI BOCCI

**Y**ou know the return to school means you need to put something more substantial on your child's feet than flip-flops and sandals, but what? Is there really that much of a difference among children's shoes?

If you think about the wide variety of shoes in your own closet, you'll know the answer is yes.

There are shoes that pinch your toes and are agony by the end of the day, and then there are the shoes that make you feel like you're walking on air. Which kind would you prefer your child to be wearing all day?

Finding proper shoes is not just a back-to-school task — it's a challenge all year long, say the experts at the American Podiatric Medical Association. Here are some things they suggest you keep in mind:

- When it comes to shoes, banish the hand-me-downs. Even if the shoes seem like they still have a lot of wear left, never hand down footwear. Just because a shoe fit one child comfortably doesn't mean it will fit another the same way. Also, sharing shoes can spread fungi like athlete's foot and nail fungus.

- Take your child shoe shopping. You may think you know what your child will like. And you may think you know the correct size. But every shoe fits differently. Letting a child



have a say in the shoe-buying process promotes healthy foot habits down the road.

- Proper fit is key. Always measure a child's feet before buying shoes. Don't assume you know the correct size based on your last purchase, even if it was just last month (or even last week). When your child tries on a pair — yes, both shoes! — Watch him walk in them. Do they slip down on the heel? Do they look too tight? Watch for signs of potential irritation.

- Bigger is better. Always buy for the larger foot. Feet are seldom precisely the same size. Make sure you check both feet and select the larger size. It's easier to deal with a shoe that is slightly too big than one that is too small. Also, make sure your child tries on shoes with socks of the thickness he will be wearing with the shoes.

- Patience isn't a virtue when it comes to shoes. Do not buy shoes

that need a "break-in" period or that your child needs to grow into. Shoes should be comfortable immediately and fit properly from the start. How long would you be willing to wear shoes that give you blisters, make you walk awkwardly, or are uncomfortable?

- Buy something solid. Look for a stiff heel — it shouldn't collapse when you press on the back of the shoe. Also, the shoe should have a reasonably rigid middle. Your child's shoe should never twist in the middle. Finally, check for toe flexibility. The shoe should bend with your child's toes.

- Be prepared to go shopping again soon. Children's feet change with age. Shoe and sock sizes may change every few months as a child's feet grow. Don't expect your purchase to last for months on end.



**DIVORCE & SEPARATION**

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

# Please don't leave!

## Helping worried children to understand divorce

**I**t can be hard to believe, but if you are getting divorced, your children may be afraid that you will leave them.

“How can that be?” you wonder. You love your children dearly. You spend lots of time, take care, and play with them. Your children are the most important thing in your life. Abandoning them is impossible — your children “have” to know that.

But do they?

Imagine you're 7-year-old Jamie who was at a sleepover at a friend's house, playing and watching cartoons while a few blocks away, her father was moving out of their family home. Or step into 4-year-old Justin's shoes. He watched his mother pack. Before leaving, she hugged him, said that she loved him, and promised she would call.

What's missing here? How about sitting these parents down with their children to provide an explanation, reassurance, comfort, and a glimpse of what life will be like post-divorce?

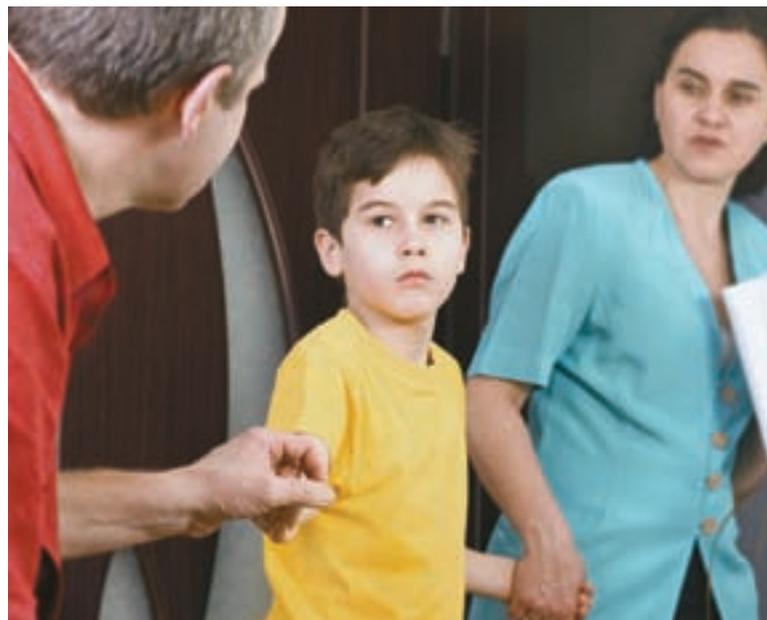
Why do parents fail to provide preparation and comfort? Usually, it has to do with a lack of knowledge or because handling these conversations is just plain hard, or both.

Imagine — as you may have already — telling your children that the marriage is over, and that you or your spouse will be moving out permanently. Won't they be sad? Might they cry? Get angry? Yes — and that's OK.

Stop telling yourself that your kids are better off by avoiding the subject — you're not doing them any favors. Children will fill in the blanks and their invented versions will probably be far more frightening than the truth. Imagined truths can range from “Dad left because I fought a lot with my brother” to “Mom doesn't love me enough, and that's why she moved. I'm so bad and worthless that she's even living in another city.”

Children can — and do — think this way. Kids of divorced parents also often experience insecurity with the parent who has physical custody.

“What do you mean? I work long hours to care for my daughter. I do ev-



erything for her. I'm there for her 100 percent. She's not insecure about me,” you may think.

Maybe, but consider this — from her point of view, one parent she loved has already left. Why shouldn't you leave someday, too?

“And if Mom also leaves me, how will I take care of myself?” she may be thinking. “How will I live?”

If you have primary physical custody, you may have double the parenting workload now — doing both your former parenting role plus much of what the absent parent used to do. Errands, mowing the lawn, or discipline are suddenly all on your shoulders. Day after day, the demands from the kids seem to grow. Your daughter clings to you when you drop her off at school, whereas she used to walk in without a care. Your son begs to be told another joke, for more water, or another hug at bedtime.

Maybe you have less time for your children, lose your patience, or are less affectionate. Kids may think they're at fault if you are less available to them just when they need you most. Fear of losing you can grow.

So parents (together, if possible) need to tell kids what is about to happen.

Here's a sample sit-down conver-

sation parents can have with their children:

**Dad:** “Your Mom and I aren't happy being married anymore. I'm going to be moving to a new apartment at the end of the month. I love you, just like I always have. We both love you and will take care of you. And you didn't do anything wrong.”

**Mom:** “Would you like to see Dad's new apartment this weekend? You'll be there with him every Friday after school and Saturday. And on Tuesday nights, too. When you're at Dad's we can talk on the phone, and when you're with me, you and Dad can talk a lot.”

Explain upcoming changes, especially how your kids will be affected, tailoring the words to your situation. Don't blame. Invite questions from the children and make sure to listen.

If this talk is too difficult for you, get help from a therapist or a support group. Whatever it takes, you owe it to your children.

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

Disclaimer: All material in this column is for informational purposes only.



# Simple rules of backpack safety

BY JAY HUNT

**I**t's that time of year again! With school starting up, it's a good time to remind parents to exercise caution about their children's backpacks, which are often used improperly or are overloaded. It is estimated that annually, some 10,000 school-aged kids across the country visit doctors or the ER with complaints of back-related injuries. When backpacks are worn improperly or are too heavy, students are at a risk for spinal injury. Some simple warning signs:

- Struggling to put on or take off backpack.
- Change in posture or pain when wearing backpack.

- Tingling or numbness in arms, shoulders, or hands.
- Red marks on shoulders from shoulder straps.

Simple tips to help:

- Backpack should not exceed 10 to 15 percent of a child's total body weight.
- Wear both shoulder straps for better distribution of weight.
- Choose a backpack with multiple compartments.
- Pack heavier items at the bottom or closer to the back.

Get the school year off to a safe start. And don't forget to include the backpacks!

*Jay Hunt is the Clinical Director of Madison Physical and Occupational Therapy, and someone who has youngsters of his own.*

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# A hero for my son

Honoring a relative who died on 9-11

BY ROBERT TROTTA

**T**here is no doubt that every year, when September comes around, the 9-11 tragedy is on everyone's mind. People will continue to remember where they were when they first heard the news. Personal stories are still shared and new ones will surface. For me, the tragedy has even greater significance and connection to my life. It was on that day, and the days that followed, that I found someone to look up to — a real hero.

My cousin Mary's husband, Captain Thomas Farino of Engine 26 of the New York City Fire Department, gave his life on Sept. 11, 2001, during his efforts to save the lives of people he never knew. His unit, stationed in Manhattan, was one of the first to be called to the site of the World Trade Center. Tom's body was never recovered, and he was posthumously promoted to Battalion Chief. He left behind Mary and their two wonderful chil-

dren, Jane and Jimmy. He was only 37-years-old.

Only a few months prior to the tragedy, I met a girl whose last four digits of her phone number were 0911. Her name was Giovanna, she lived in Astoria, and on the day of the terrorist attacks, she and thousands of other New Yorkers were forced to walk over the Queensborough Bridge in order to get home due to chaos, fear, and confusion shutting down most methods of transportation.

In July of 2003, Giovanna and I were married, and in June of 2006, we were blessed with a son — Matthew. His middle name was very easy for us to decide upon. We wanted his name to have meaning, to be relevant. Therefore, because of both of our experiences on Sept. 11, and because of my cousin giving his life to save others', we chose Thomas. Over these last few years, we have told Matthew about a family member who showed courage, kindness, dedication, and selflessness. Fictional stories are a joy to read to Matthew, but our story of what Tom did for others is very real and, obviously, quite different and unique.

On my car dashboard sits a photo of Tom. It makes me feel much more at ease when I'm driving, especially when I'm on my way to work. It reminds me of how fortunate I am to be able to begin another day.

I teach at John Adams High School in Queens, and each September I have a discussion with my students — who I consider extended family — about heroism. I ask them who their heroes are and I often get names of athletes, singers, actors, and other celebrities. I do get much more satisfaction when a student names a parent, guardian, or other relative as his hero because it relates more profoundly with my hero. After our



The writer's son, Matthew, in firefighter gear.



The writer's cousin, Captain Thomas Farino.

discussion, I pass around a photo of Tom and I tell them all about his character. As a writing assignment, I instruct my class to create friendly letters addressed to their heroes. I encourage them to hand their letters to the individuals they wrote to, if possible. And if any of my students write to police officers or firefighters, I personally bring their letters to the local police and fire departments near our school.

As an American, I continue to feel the loss of each "family member" who died that day. As a New Yorker, it hits even closer to home. Cousin Tom was one of 343 firefighters who perished that day and his existence makes 9-11 more personal — he was someone who I saw at family weddings and exchanged handshakes, a pleasantry, or a simple smile with. He was dedicated to his family and to his career. He grew up in Ozone Park, died in Manhattan, and still lives in our hearts with each day that passes.

He remains a perfect role model for my son, Matthew Thomas Trotta.



THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

## Modern-day mystery that teens will love

**Y**our teen loves mysteries, but your weathered Agatha Christies are too old-school for her.

Then try Kimberly Reid's "Creeping with the Enemy," a mystery set in a school with a street-smart sleuth lead by 15-year-old Chanti Evans, who's an ace at wedding through lies.

When Chanti and her new friend Bethanie witness a robbery at a tamale place, Chanti knows something is off. It took place on freebie Friday, and the restaurant's buy-one-get-one-free offer usually means a line out the door. But for some reason, on this particular Friday, no one was there. And Chanti noticed.

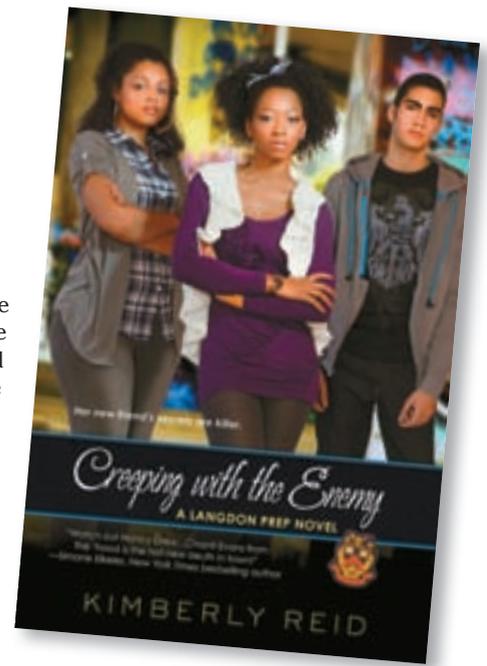
She also noticed a creepy guy flirting with Bethanie. There was something really off about him. He acted weird — like he was some kind of hero — when the gunman entered the restaurant, when, in reality, he almost got everybody killed.

After the gunman fled the scene, Chanti searched the area for clues, but found nothing. Worse of all, she can't even ask her mom, Lana — who's a cop — for help figuring things out because she wasn't supposed to be in the tamale place's dangerous neighborhood.

Chanti also starts to realize that her friend Bethanie's life seems to be one gigantic fib — especially when she discovers that Bethanie is actually dating the creep from the restaurant.

The more Chanti finds out, the more everybody hates her snooping. But what else can she do?

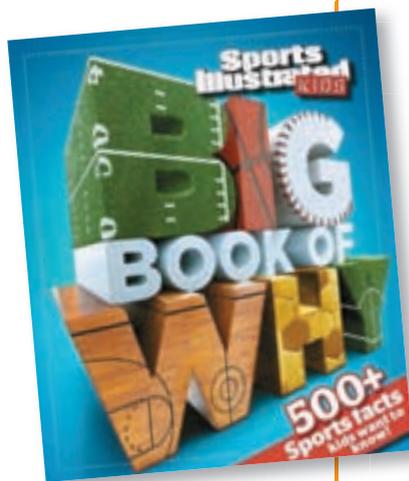
Reid gives Chanti brains, maturity, and a sense of humor without making her too much of a good-girl type. That, and the novel's real-life, conversational dialogue lend authenticity to the book, which will



keep savvy 12- to 17-year-old readers from tossing this book aside.

This teen novel is the third in a series, and while it could be read first, your teen will appreciate the characters better if she starts from the beginning. Start there, and "Creeping with the Enemy" will be a mystery she'll have no trouble enjoying.

"Creeping with the Enemy" by Kimberly Reid [256 pages, 2012, \$9.95].



## Kids won't even know they're learning

**P**arents have to be sneaky with their kids. They have to slip spinach into brownies so they will eat their vegetables and tell them that if they don't behave they'll end up on Santa's "naughty list." And, sometimes parents have to be sly about schooling children as well.

"Time for Kids Big Book of What?" and "Sports Illustrated Kids Big Book of Why" are two fun books pumped

full of informative facts that will educate while entertaining kids. By reading these books, children will learn where the largest meteorite landed, the difference between a fruit and a vegetable (and how long they can survive without either one), where the hottest temperature was recorded, and how long they could survive in space without protection.

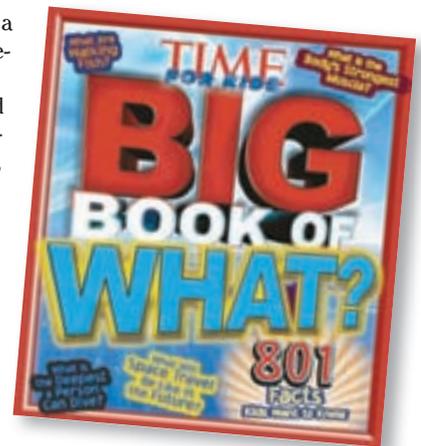
They'll better understand their bodies by reading about which muscle in the body is the strongest (and a few runners-up), what it means to be dou-

ble-jointed, and why it's not always a good idea to do a lot of stretching before exercising or playing sports.

Future doctors, surgeons, and nurses can also learn what an artery is while learning about nutrition, cooking, eating bugs, and not consuming things that are poisonous. They'll impress their teachers and classmates by knowing what Olympics sports are men-only, how to play Mancala, why tennis balls are furry, and why pitchers' warm-up area is called the bullpen.

By delving into subjects that kids actually want to learn about, both of these books whet kids' appetites with small bits of information that won't cause them to lose interest. These kid-friendly, parent-pleasing books offer a wide variety of topics and plenty of pictures to keep even the most non-bookish children reading.

So before the summer ends, give your 7- to-12-year-old a scholarly jump-start on the new school year with "Time for Kids Big Book of What?" and "Sports Illustrated Big



Book of Why."

Just don't tell them that they're learning. That's your little secret.

"Time for Kids Big Book of What?" [192 pages, 2012, \$19.95].

"Sports Illustrated Kids Big Book of Why" [128 pages, 2012, \$17.95].  
Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was 3 years old, and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill with two dogs and 12,000 books.



# Off to college

Ways to help your student and family cope with emotions

BY CAROL BRZOZOWSKI

**I** remember the day like it was yesterday, the day my first-born started his first day of school. It was a bittersweet moment — I had done everything I could to prepare him for this day, so I was confident he had the best shot at success that he could have.

Yet it also was a milestone day — I had to let go of his hand and pass him off to his teacher, who took his hand and guided him into her classroom. I bid him a tearful goodbye, and then stood in the courtyard, hiding behind a post, watching him settle in until the bell rang. I then drove home, tears rolling down my cheeks.

That was then. This is now, as I prepare to send him off to his first year of college.

The bittersweet feelings have returned. In a few weeks, I will be embracing my son, who is now much

taller than me. I am confident that I have done everything I could to prepare him for this day. I know he will have the best shot at success that he could have, at one of the best public universities in the country.

I will help him unload all of his personal items from our vehicle and bid him what is sure to be another emotional good-bye. It will be a much longer drive back home. This time, I will not see him again for a month until family weekend.

During orientation, which the University of Florida calls “Preview,” I attended a seminar called “Family Transitions,” moderated by the university’s counseling and wellness center.

I affectionately referred to it as group therapy for parents sending their first-borns off to college. Even looking at the seminar’s title on the program triggered tears.

Recently, a young man at the gym where I work out indicated to me

that as a new college student, he was both excited and nervous. As parents we may focus on our own emotions at this time, but it also is an emotionally turbulent time for our sons or daughters, as well as their siblings, and even the family pet.

In the college student’s first days, he may experience a roller coaster of emotions.

There are issues associated with leaving home, such as displacement of traditional support systems, knowledge of a familiar environment, change in friendships, and changes in familiar expectations.

There’s uncertainty about the future. A student’s goals may be idealized and untested in the new environment.

Although students are aware that study demands in college are different, many are unprepared for the amount of, and rate at which, the material will be presented. While

many have been successful in high school, receiving an average grade may come as a shock. It takes time to see the bigger picture and the learning process over a semester.

What the student thinks others expect of him is very important. Living up to or failing those goals can be a source of motivation and reward, but also stress and shame.

There's the "hidden curriculum" of college: how does one navigate the campus, pay bills, balance a checkbook, shop for groceries, find classrooms, ensure he's in the right course, is on track for his major, approach a professor, ask for help with academics, figure out where to eat, do laundry, manage differences with roommates, and the myriad of tasks that were once taken for granted or provided by others? Can anyone help? Is it even OK to ask for help?

Fitting in socially also is a significant concern — developing friendships, intimacy, and social support is desired but takes time. Where does one go to initiate these important aspects of community life? How does one cope with difficulties in creating a social network?

For some students, making independent decisions can be daunting. How does a student decide how to act and what options to choose? Who will approve or disapprove of those options?

So what can parents do to help make the transition to college go as smoothly as possible for their offspring? The center's counseling staff acknowledges that there are no easy answers for parents and family members, but there are some general guidelines:

- Listen to your student's concerns; avoid lecturing or too quickly offering solutions.

- Ask questions to help your student clarify the concerns; avoid giving answers too readily.

- Acknowledge and communicate emotions — affirming that you recognize your student's feelings — and avoid denying the presence of strong feelings (in yourself or your student).

- Express your thoughts and provide perspective; avoid making demands.

- Help clarify the consequences of behaviors; avoid threatening in ways that stifle communications.

- Be supportive and remind him you love him; avoid taking responsibility away from your student.

- Strive for mutual respect; avoid demanding submission without un-

derstanding.

- Let go a little and compromise where possible; avoid giving up completely and exasperation.

- Deal with the problems openly and as calmly as possible; avoid ignoring or exaggerating problems.

- Allow mistakes for both of you; avoid expecting perfection... growth takes time.

Starting college is a highly emotional time for students and their families. The tension can be high. Counselors have seen a range of scenarios, from those parents who've had a strained relationship with their students and drop them off at college and spin off in their cars to those who book a hotel for a week and keep checking on the student on a frequent basis.

Siblings may either feel sad or none too happy to try to take over their brother or sister's room (this is not the time to turn the room into Dad's man cave, an exercise room, or a tranquility space).

The University of Florida's dean of students' office offers several other suggestions for families to help support their student:

- A helicopter parent hovers; a rocket ship parent takes issues straight to the top. Avoid those behaviors, but do be involved and stay informed. Be aware of deadlines, resources, and opportunities.

- Encourage your student to get involved in at least one extracurricular activity; these helps ensure a successful transition. That activity can be connected with the student's academic or social interest, or can enhance an activity in which he is interested.

- Encourage your student to do research with a professor or study abroad.

- Discuss expectations about substance abuse, money management, wellness, and integrity.

- Communicate frequently, but ask your student what he prefers: phone calls, texts, Skype, or Facebook. Don't make surprise visits to the campus — ask the student if the time is convenient, as he may need study time.

- Trust your instincts; if you are concerned for your student's well-being, contact the dean of students.

- The best advice to give your student — everything at the university is a learning experience — including what happens outside the classroom.

That's also a concept worth embracing for the rest of your family.



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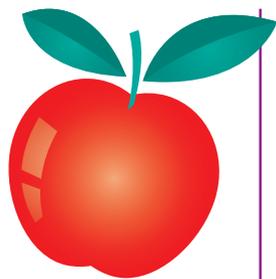
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## DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND  
MARGE EBERTS

# How to prepare for the new school year

## A great start

**Dear teacher,**

We're back to school this month, and I want to make the year go smoothly. What are some of the really important things to do to make this happen?

**Dear parents,**

To make the school year go smoothly, a family discussion really helps. Talk about the things that really worked last year and those that didn't. Focus on everyday activities such as the time to get up, go to bed, eat, and do homework.

It is also important to discuss how the children will organize getting everything ready for the new school day, such as getting forms signed and handling lunch.

Early agreement on all these things is vital. Nothing, however, should be written in stone. Routines can be changed if they are not working.

Once the nitty-gritty of each day is organized, parents need to focus on the things that they can do to make the school year look a whole lot better. For many families, the answer is to slow things down to be able to avoid feeling exhausted and tense from too many activities. A steady routine of rushing to ballet, sports, and clubs for the children, and then parents trying to squeeze in meetings and exercise classes for themselves can eliminate any chance family members have to relax and enjoy time together. It is also very important to have dinner together so the family can talk to each other.

## Value of pretend play

**Dr. teacher,**

I am a bit worried. My two young girls, ages 3 and 5, spend a great deal of their time doing pretend play. Is this a good thing for them to do? A lot of it centers on being princesses.

They have their princess dolls riding horseback and living in castles. They also dress up as princesses.

**Dear parents,**

Pretend play is a wonderful thing for children to do, and educators are very enthused about its benefits. It is a great way to get kids ready for school. By playing together, your children are learning to take turns, be part of a team, negotiate, and play leader. At the same time, they are enhancing their verbal skills and learning how to solve problems.

It certainly seems to be popular right now for young girls to playact being princesses and to play with princess dolls. If you are upset about their concentration on princesses in particular, you might try providing additional paraphernalia to broaden their horizons. They may, however, just move their princesses into these new venues.

Pretend play also fosters creativity. Since young children learn by imagining and doing, be glad that they are building so many skills.

## Is cursive writing disappearing?

**Dear teacher,**

My daughter did not learn cursive handwriting in third grade. And apparently cursive is not going to be taught in fourth grade. How will she ever learn to sign her name?

**Dear parents,**

Many of today's elementary teachers believe that teaching cursive is old-fashioned in this technological age. Instead, they favor keyboarding instruction.

Furthermore, states now have the choice under the Common Core State Standards to decide whether or not to include cursive in the curriculum. And more and more of them are eliminating cursive partly because of the crowded curriculum necessary to prepare for standardized testing.

Because your daughter did not receive any instruction in cursive in third grade when handwriting is typically introduced, she may never

be taught to write or read cursive.

As far as her signature goes, she will probably create her own signature, as most children without cursive instruction do. It is likely to be very simple and may not be too legible. The best way for her to learn to write her name is for you to have her practice tracing and then copying her signature until she can easily write it.

## Handling bullying

**Dear teacher,**

My seventh grader has just told me that he doesn't want to go back to school. It comes out now that a group of kids teased him unmercifully last year about his very curly hair. How can I help him handle this?

**Dear parents,**

First, you have to find out how serious this situation really is. Could it just be anxiety about returning to school? Or is it in any way a threatening situation?

As you know, bullying is a big problem, and close to three quarters of all children have been bullied. Your son needs to learn how to respond to verbal bullying. Should the bullying become physical or escalate to threats of violence, school personnel must be brought into the situation at once.

There are books that will give you and your son ideas about how to deflect bullying. A good choice is "Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain." Look for a video by the same title on YouTube, where you'll also find other videos that have solid approaches to handling bullying.

Advise your son that this is a new school year, and he may no longer be a target of the bullies. Also, help him develop strategies to use if he should be bullied again. These could include avoiding the bullies, making everyone laugh, and staying with friends.

*Parents should send questions and comments to [dearteacher@dearteacher.com](mailto:dearteacher@dearteacher.com) or ask the columnists at [www.dearteacher.com](http://www.dearteacher.com).*



GROWING UP  
ONLINE  
CAROLYN JABS

# Making a digital grounding work

**T**eaching kids to do the right thing isn't easy. Basically, parents have three options: encourage good behavior, ignore poor behavior (especially when it's caused by temporary factors such as fatigue, hunger, or simple immaturity), or discourage bad behavior by associating it with disagreeable consequences.

For wired kids, the most disagreeable consequence is often loss of digital privileges. Parents have been doing it for years, but "digital grounding" got its name in 2010 when research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that 62 percent of parents had disciplined their kids by taking away a cellphone.

Grounding of any kind is simply a big-kid version of "time out." The theory is that if a

child is disconnected from other people for a while, he will have extra time to think about what he did wrong, and miss his social connections so much that he won't want to repeat the problem behavior. Now that kids do most of their socializing online, the only effective way to disconnect them is to confiscate their digital devices or limit access to texting, social media, and interactive games.

To make digital grounding effective, parents should be aware of the distinction between discipline and punishment. Both words are rooted in Latin, but discipline comes from a root that means "to teach," while punishment comes from a word that means "to inflict pain." The impulse to punish is understandable, especially when a child's behavior has caused distress for a parent. The theory, of course, is that making a child suffer for a mistake will dis-

courage that mistake in the future. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Punishment often triggers resentment, which in turn, makes kids devious or even defiant.

In contrast, the goal of discipline is to help children learn from mistakes and develop the self-control that guides better choices in the future. Instead of doing the right thing because he is afraid of external consequences, a child who has the benefit of good discipline develops an inner sense of what is right based on trust, respect, and an ability to think about long-term goals.

Come to think of it, those three qualities — trust, respect, and clarity about long-term goals — are also what parents will need if they are going to make digital grounding a form of discipline in the best sense of the word. Here are some suggestions about how to do just that:

- Be clear about expectations. Children are more likely to experience grounding as punishment if it seems like a random response to behavior parents don't like. Whenever possible, be clear in advance about what you expect and why it matters. As children get older, listen to their point of view and modify rules to reflect their growing capabilities. House rules that are clear and make sense to kids are less likely to be broken. And when transgressions do occur, kids are less likely to resent calm, evenhanded enforcement of penalties that have been discussed in advance.

- Connect consequences to behavior. Many experts believe the most effective consequences grow logically out of misbehavior. A child who sends inappropriate text messages loses cellphone access precisely because he's demonstrated an inability to use the device responsibly. A child whose grades suffer because she's gossiping on Facebook when she says she's researching a paper can't use social media until she makes schoolwork a priority. In such cases, parents may actually

want to say that the device is causing a problem so it's being grounded (instead of the child).

- Enlist tech support. One of the best things about technology is that there are off buttons. If you've decided it's in your child's best interest to use the computer only for homework, use a timer to back up a digital curfew. Curtail access to specific websites by changing passwords or using blocking software. Contact your cellphone carrier to find out whether you can temporarily disable services such as texting or web access. Some companies will also let you restrict calls so your child can use a cellphone only for emergency calls or to get in touch with you.

- Think ahead. Before blurting out, "You're grounded!" parents should anticipate consequences — for themselves. The Pew Report found that many parents didn't follow through on cellphone bans because they needed to reach their kids on the phone. The same thing may be true of social media. If your child depends on an afternoon gaming session to relieve stress or social media to maintain friendships, you'll want to think carefully about whether taking away those privileges is the best way to achieve your goals.

Used judiciously, digital grounding may actually improve family relationships. Some parents find that unplugging a child for a while opens up opportunities for conversation and other shared activities. They aren't likely to see it that way at the time, but many children will, in retrospect, be grateful for parents who insisted that they step away from digital distractions so they could reconnect with a better, more responsible version of themselves.

*Carolyn Jabs raised three computer-savvy kids, including one with special needs. She has been writing Growing Up Online for 10 years and is working on a book about constructive responses to conflict. Visit [www.growing-up-online.com](http://www.growing-up-online.com) to read other columns.*



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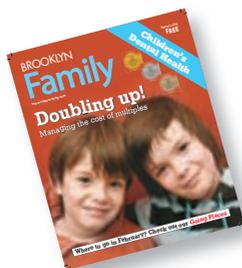
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# It figures

BY CYNTHIA WASHAM

## FOOD AND FAMILY

**4,500**

Number of McDonald's Happy Meal toys  
Pennsylvania father of three David Bracken has collected since 1993.

**12** Number of fast-food kids' combo meals out of more than 3,000 studies that meet the nutritional standards for preschoolers.

**500** Calorie limit  
New York City Councilman Leroy Comrie is proposing for children's meals to include a toy.

**1,090** Calories in a typical McDonald's Happy Meal.

**15** Percent of children who ask daily to go to McDonald's.

**30** Percent of children who say their favorite breakfast food is bacon.

**2** Percent who say oatmeal.



**23** Age of Romanian gypsy Ridca Stanescu in March 2011, when she became the world's youngest grandmother.

**61** Age of Chicago grandmother Sara Connell in February 2011, when she gave birth to a test-tube baby fertilized from her daughter and son-in-law's egg and sperm.

**33** Percent of Americans honored on Stepfamily Day, Sept. 16, for being stepparents, stepchildren, or stepsiblings.

**65** Percent of remarriages that involve children from a previous marriage.

**62** Percent of obese women who were put on their first diet before age 14.

**40** Percent who were put on a diet by their parents.

Sources: Steppingstones, tripod.com, FoxNews.com, HollyBaby.com, Medicinenet.com, Time.com, USA Today, Slashfood.com, CNN.com

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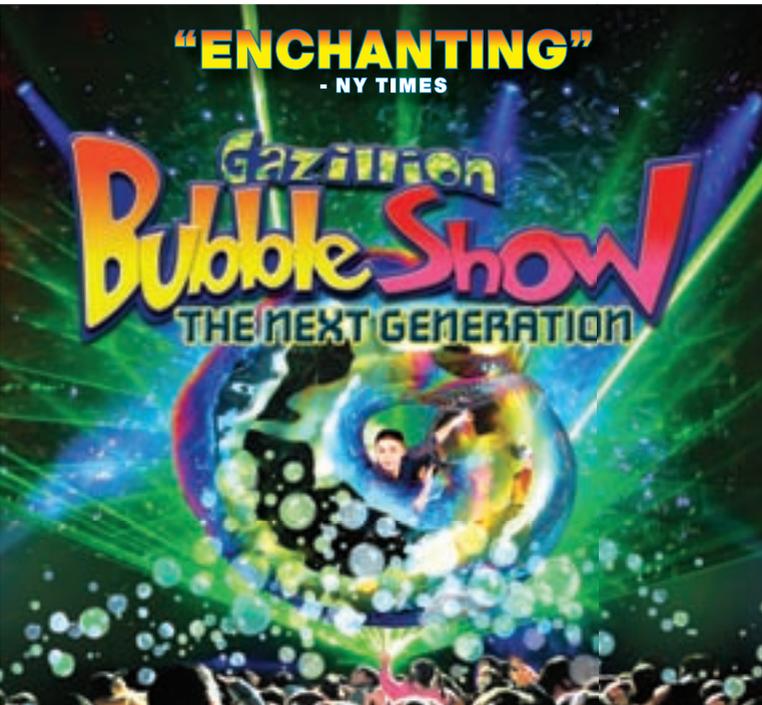
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# New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

## Modern life

Bennett House by *brinca dada* is not your typical dollhouse. It's constructed from eco-friendly woods in a muted palette of colors rather than garish plastic. Designed by Tim Boyle, it can be played with when it's open or closed and features a two-story living room, elevator, roof top pool and glass rail balconies. The house measures 36- by 21- x 21-inches, and can be filled with *brinca dada*'s sleek furnishings (sold separately). Made of non-toxic, lead-free paints and stains, you'll happily bring this modern home into your child's room — and hope that they'll let you join in the fun!

*Bennett House by brinca dada*, \$499, [www.brincadada.com](http://www.brincadada.com).



## Young folk

When I heard my son's school sing Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" this year, I was stirred by its timeless message. So I was delighted when I discovered Elizabeth Mitchell's new CD of 13 child-friendly Guthrie classics!

Sure, we couldn't be more excited to see the Fresh Beat Band in concert later this month, but Mitchell's "Little Seed: Songs for Children by Woody Guthrie" reminds us that the folk hero's soothing songs are worth revisiting.

"Little Seed: Songs for Children by Woody Guthrie" CD, \$11.98; \$9.99 for download; [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu).



## Book of shadows

"Gustav Gloom and the People Taker" (Grosset & Dunlap) is the first book in a new fantasy series for 8- to 12-year-olds published just in time to celebrate the spooktacular Halloween season. Penned by Adam-Troy Castro, this suspenseful novel tells



the tale of Fernie What, a courageous girl who moves with her family to a home across the street from Gustav's creepy mansion, wonderfully rendered in "Corpse Bride"-esque illustrations by Kristen Margiotta.

Fernie barges into Gustav's house in pursuit of her cat, Harrington, and soon finds that it is filled with dotting aunts, criminals, hilarity, and horror. She does her best to make sense of the shadows with minds of their own as she attempts to find her feline and get out before the deadly People Taker can wrap his hands around her throat.

"Gustav Gloom" is part cautionary tale encouraging kids to tell their parents where they are going and part rousing endorsement of the power of friendship that has us looking forward to the sequel, "Gustav Gloom and the Nightmare Vault"!

"Gustav Gloom and the People Taker" by Adam-Troy Castro, \$12.99, [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com).



## Delicious design

Need a little help fueling your child's return to school? Try reinventing her lunch with the super adorable Kotobuki Geisha Doll Bento Box by Hakoya. This five-piece, lacquered plastic set assembles to look like a kokeshi doll (a charming yet limbless figure), and pulls apart to reveal two bowls and a lidded container (the face). The pieces can be filled with soup, vegetables, dips, yogurt, granola, fruit, and more. The three bowls are held together with a large, black elastic band that is included. (The bento box is also available from Amazon.com in a samurai warrior design.) The set measures 3.8 x 3.8 x 5.5-inches, for toting a small meal that will be sure to earn you an A for effort.

Kotobuki Geisha Doll Bento Box by Hakoya, \$20.43. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## Rescue mission

In the feature-length, animated film "Mia and the Migoo," families are introduced to a courageous girl who overcomes numerous obstacles to reunite with her father and save life itself.

Directed by Jacques-Remy Girerd, this English language version of a French movie follows the motherless, impoverished Mia (Amanda Misquez) as she tracks her father Pedro (Jessi Corti) to a remote mountain where he is helping build a resort.

Along the way, our heroine runs into a sorceress (Whoopi Goldberg), who wields a knife to cut the girl's hair while she sleeps. Soon after, Mia befriends the goofy Migoo (Wallace Shawn), a doughy creature that guards the tree of life — an eyesore to the resort's investors.

The artistry of the film's 500,000 hand-painted frames had my 5-year-old gasping with delight, and



we both appreciated the original score by Serge Basset, performed by the Bulgarian Symphony Orchestra.

Sub-titled bonus features detailing how Girerd pulled it all together will awe viewers of all ages, and possibly inspire a new generation of illustrators and musicians.

"Mia and the Migoo" DVD, \$19.98, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

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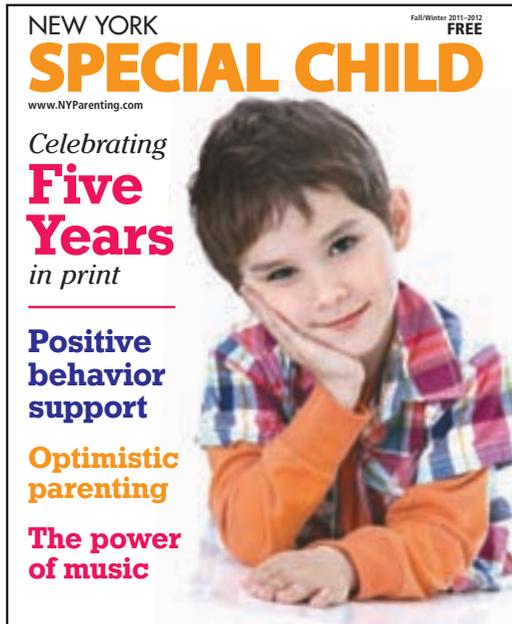
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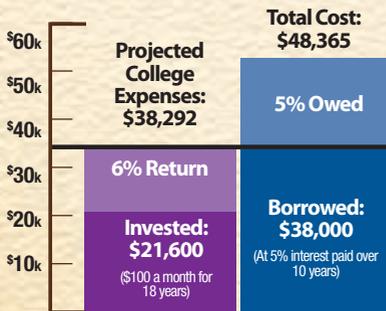
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