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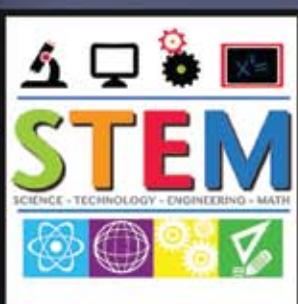
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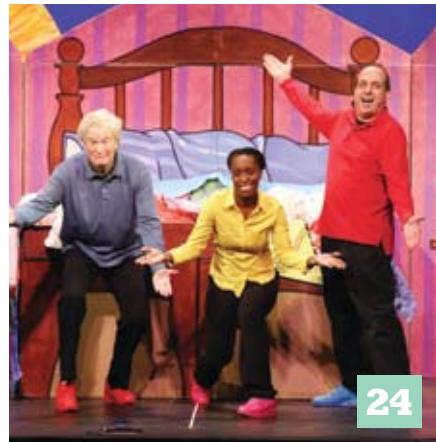
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April 2017



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Winning awards at the Parenting Media Association

New York Parenting was the recipient of 6 Awards of Excellence at Parenting Media Association's Annual Editorial & Design Awards. I once again attended the conference and Award Dinner and happily accepted the Awards on behalf of our team.

We picked up a Silver Award for our June 2016 Front Cover Stock Photo design, featuring a tender portrait of a new Dad lovingly holding his infant. I love that cover! Congratulations to our Art Director, Leah Mitch.

Additionally, this year we again picked up Awards for Editorial pieces from two of our resident writers. Allison Plitt won a Silver Award for her excellent Book Reviews, and Tammy Scileppi was the recipient of two Awards, a Bronze for her News Feature on the tenacious women who battled the NYS Tampon Tax, and another Silver Award for her fine Q & A Interview with a local transgender family. They are fantastic writers who



always provide great work.

Our sister publication Westchester Family also won two Awards of Excellence. Congratulations to Jean Sheff, Editor, and her writers.

I am so proud of the marvelous team of talented professionals who share with us their columns and articles. We are

grateful for their expertise and for their informative contributions to our editorial content. We strongly believe that quality content is essential and that our readers are actually still interested in reading.

It's a great pleasure to continue this work for that I began 17 years ago when we first launched Brooklyn Family. It certainly has grown. Most recently we have been thrilled to see the expansion, relevance and popularity of our fine website, NYParenting.com, as well as numerous other digital initiatives.

Who knows what's coming next ... Thanks for reading.

A handwritten signature in cursive ink that reads "Susan Weiss-Voskidis".

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Self-defense

Life-saving tips for children

BY MATT ROMOND

Many children spend their mornings and afternoons unsupervised as they travel from home to school and back again. Bullies and other predators can pose a threat to the safety of a child who is waiting for the bus or walking with just one or two other children, which is why parents need to make sure their children are physically prepared for their new-found independence.

In addition to pencils, pens, paper, and a backpack, parents also need to make sure they have taught their children basic self-defense and safety skills that could save their life if they are ever attacked. These unsupervised hours pose unique dangers for different age groups. Here is a list of tips on what parents need to be teaching their kids now to make sure they stay safe throughout the school year:

Grades one to five

Lack of proper supervision is rare for this group of students, except for very short periods of time. Children of this age are most commonly left alone during a short walk to and from school. Here are a few practical tips to ensure that this time is as safe as possible:

- Always walk with a buddy who lives very close.
- Be sure to go straight to school or home. No detours or goofing around.
- If a stranger says "hello," the child can smile, make eye contact, waive, and say "hello" back, but should always keep walking toward either school or home — no matter what.

Grades six to 10

Lack of supervision is relatively common in this group. At this age, children take on more responsibility and are less susceptible to the dangers faced by younger children. However, the dangers that these older children encounter are more commonly imposed by friends and acquaintances. These peer pressure-based dangers are experienced by every child in this age group. But the risk can be mitigated by ensuring that your child's time and attention is occupied during these key hours. Here are a couple of practical tips for this



age group:

- Get your child involved in after-school activities that he or she genuinely enjoys.
- Schedule time after school for your child to complete chores or homework. Ensure that you hold him or her to that expectation when you come home from work.

Communication is key

Make sure your children understand that there is no such thing as communicating too much. By letting them know that you expect regular updates, you will feel better leaving them unattended. Before leaving them for the first time, set these expectations. Let your kids know what you expect — whether it be staying inside while you are gone or coming straight home after school.

Here are a few more tips every parent and child should know:

Talk to kids about knowing their surroundings. By explaining to them that they need to be fully aware of what's going

on around them, they can stop a dangerous situation from happening.

Teach them to project confidence. Confidence in speech (speaking clearly) and body language (good posture, eye contact, etc.) are the single most important factors that can increase your child's chances of safety. Regardless of the dangerous situation or the age, a child with a strong presence is less likely to be at risk than those that project shyness or aloofness.

Children should always listen to their instincts. If something doesn't feel right, they should leave the area immediately without hesitation or fear of getting in trouble.

Matt Romond is a third-degree Krav Maga Worldwide Black Belt, the director of Krav Maga Worldwide's KMX kids program, and has more than a decade of experience teaching children and adults Krav Maga self-defense and fight classes. For more, visit www.kravmaga.com.

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Connecting *with the earth*

Fostering appreciation, knowledge, and respect for nature

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

Sundays during my childhood meant making the arduous trek over hill and hollow to my maternal grandparents' house for dinner. The scenic journey along state Route 11 bordered patchwork-quilt farms, wound between walls of sheer rock, and skirted pitch-black openings in the hillside that ignited my childish imagination, all the while roughly paralleling the south fork of the Kentucky River. Oftentimes I spent the duration with my nose in a book, singing with my sisters, or listening to my mother tell stories of growing up and rarely traveling beyond those hills. So familiar was this trip that I can still close my eyes and retrace its meandering course.

On one such Sunday excursion, when I was about 8 years old, my father suddenly proclaimed, "Look out the window, girls. Take a good look around. The world will never again look exactly the same as it does today." I begged to differ, pointing out that it looked just like it did the last time we drove this way.

He explained that while it may appear to be the same, it wasn't. The leaves on the trees had changed color, even if only slightly. Leaves had fallen. Different clouds were in the sky. Different water was flowing down the river.

Prior to this conversation, I'd considered the earth as merely a backdrop against which my life was meant to

unfold. But in that moment, the earth became a living entity, with a life of its own, and the seeds of my environmental conscience had been sown.

Having been allowed to revel in nature as a youngster — climbing trees, catching all manner of creatures, exploring the woods in search of fairies and wildflowers — the transition from casual observer to student and steward came about quite naturally with the guidance my father provided. He taught me to identify trees by their leaves, birds by their song and plumage, and the constellations by their pattern of stars. He explained the life cycle, the water cycle, and rainbows. While I may not have completely comprehended the words, the wonderment with which he conveyed this information was contagious. He made it clear that the ability to explain a phenomenon renders it no less miraculous.

These vivid recollections were prompted by an e-mail exchange with my son. He suggested I write an article exploring the role of parents in influencing environmental awareness in their children. When asked about the goal of the article, he replied, "to encourage parents to raise strong advocates for the earth who adhere to environmentally responsible practices." His heartfelt message reflected the appreciation, knowledge, and respect for nature that had been shared with him. My father's legacy of establishing a connection to the earth

is in good hands.

Establish a legacy for your children:

- Revel in nature. Roll in the grass. Walk in the woods. Wade in a stream.
- Identify nature. Books and apps can help.
- Plant something. Whether it's a garden on the terrace, windowsill, or rooftop or a single seed in an old boot, watch something grow.
- Bring nature indoors. Collect rocks, feathers, nuts, and shells.
- Create nature-inspired art projects.
- Work in the yard or adopt a space to maintain in your neighborhood or local park.
- Participate in conservation and anti-pollution efforts. Consume less. Waste less. Share more.
- Celebrate the earth every day, not just once a year.

There are those who lack contact with nature. From the time they rise in the morning until they retire at night, they don't step foot on actual ground, they don't encounter a wild creature, and they experience the weather as something they seek to avoid while getting from one place to another. This lack of connection with the natural world contributes to indifference.

Those who are ignorant of, or refuse to acknowledge, the interconnection between human activity and the environment are easily persuaded to adopt and support practices that potentially cause



irreparable damage to our planet, especially if they mean to benefit financially. They are operating on the misguided notion that they'll be immune to the consequences. But nature is apolitical and its forces are completely unbiased. Political affiliation, socioeconomic status, age, race, or religion are irrelevant. The environment is the one thing that cannot be corrected after the next election cycle.

The earth is an approximation of a closed system, which means, what is here is all there is. Fresh air, clean water,

and healthy soil cannot be pumped in from outer space. Nature's ability to recover from whatever damage we inflict is not infinite. The effects of human activity on the environment will continue to occur whether we believe it or not. The choice of whether or not to limit those effects is ours. But it is our children and grandchildren who will inherit the consequences of our choices.

Raising children to become good stewards of our planet begins by fostering their personal relationship with nature

— a connection to the earth. If we expect them to adhere to environmentally responsible practices, we must do so first. Imagine what could happen if we all intended to leave the earth a little better than we found it.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Ky. She has been married for 29 years and has two sons. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator and has written extensively on the topic of parenting. To contact her, please e-mail parent4life@yahoo.com.

Understanding a Supplemental Needs Trust

I have an adult cousin who is disabled. She is the beneficiary under the Will of our aunt. She went to another relative who is an attorney to do her Will. Although the attorney was aware of my cousin's disability, he did not put any Supplemental Needs Trust provisions in the Will. Our aunt died. The bequest, which is significant, will disrupt her government benefits, which include residence in an assisted living facility paid for by Medicaid. What can I do?

This is a frustrating problem that happens quite often. Before we look at the solution, let's review what a Supplemental Needs Trust is. These trusts are authorized by federal and state law and are created to hold assets for the benefit of a disabled individual in a way that will not interfere with any government benefits available to him or her. The assets could come to the individual by employment, testamentary bequest, or proceeds from a personal injury litigation settlement. These benefits include Social Security income and Medicaid benefits.

These can be crucial for the disabled individual, both in economic terms and to the extent that there are community resources available to the disabled beneficiary through Medicaid that would not otherwise be available, even through a private pay mechanism. It is paramount to protect these benefits so that care continues without interruption.

There are two types of Supplemental Needs Trusts: a "first-party" and a "third-party." A Supplemental Needs Trust is often referred to as a Special Needs Trust and the two terms are, for general purposes, referring to the same trust vehicle.

When a Supplemental Needs Trust is funded with the individual's own assets

(i.e. bequest, lawsuit proceeds), it is called a "first-party SNT." This is in contrast to a "third-party SNT," which is funded with another person's assets for the individual's benefit.

A first-party trust is permitted only when the individual is younger than 65 years old when the transfer occurs; otherwise there is a transfer penalty (a period during which the government will not pay for benefits). If the individual was still in the community, a first-party trust may be established after the age of 65; however, the transfer is a non-qualified transfer with a five-year look-back period. If the disabled beneficiary is over 65 years old, however, and already in nursing home care, this is not the best option.

A testamentary trust established under someone's will is generally a "third-party SNT." The benefit to a third-party trust is that it does not have a "pay back" requirement to the government, because the funds used to "seed" the third-party trust are not the disabled individual's own funds. They are generally the funds contributed by a third-party, whether a parent, grandparent, sibling, or anyone else. Any remaining assets at the individual's death pass as the grantor of the third-party trust directs. A first-party trust requires that the trust balance be used to pay back any government benefits received.

Back to the problem with your aunt's Will. There are a few options, but usually the most prudent option is to seek reformation of the Will if it is financially feasible to do so:

Option 1: Pooled trust

Pooled Trusts are essentially a form of a Supplemental Needs Trust in that it suspends ownership of the funds sufficient to



ASK AN ATTORNEY

ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER, ESQ.

preserve benefits, but the individual need not create or administer a separate trust (hence the "pooled" reference). A pooled trust is managed by a nonprofit organization that is authorized to act as trustee of a global Supplemental Needs Trust for several beneficiaries (not just one, like a privately created trust). The assets in the pooled trust are not counted as assets of the individual for the purpose of determining eligibility for government benefits. Unlike the first-party trusts discussed above, the pooled trust can be utilized at any age. However, a transfer to a pooled trust can create a transfer penalty if the disabled beneficiary is currently receiving Social Security income.

Assets of a disabled person are put into a subaccount with the pooled trust and the assets can be used for the individual's benefits during her life. Distributions are permissible to enhance the individual's quality of life, which may include payments for vacation, computers, sporting goods, furniture, or transportation. Prohibited distributions include distributions to the beneficiary directly (as with all trusts discussed herein), distribution to a bank account, alcohol, tobacco, or firearms.

The pooled trust option alleviates the administrative burden of ensuring payments won't jeopardize benefits, but drawback of this type of trust is that there are delays in payments, as the pooled trust must first authorize the payment and then send a check. Also, at the individual's death, the remainder of the trust assets

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will become the property of the pooled trust; you cannot direct a beneficiary.

There are some start-up costs to a pooled trust and a monthly (or annual) fee during the individual's life. In New York, there are approximately 20 different pooled trusts to choose from. Each has its own rules, minimum contribution limits, and fees. Once the individual is accepted into a pooled trust, her guardian or representative notifies Medicaid and the Social Security Administration by presenting the acceptance letter, a copy of the Master Trust Agreement, and Joinder Agreement, in order to ensure there is no disruption in the individual's government benefits.

The pooled trust option may not be viable if the beneficiary (your cousin) is already receiving government benefits, since it could create a transfer penalty.

Option 2: ABLE account

In 2014 President Obama signed a law called the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE), which created the ability for disabled persons to have a savings account, similar to the college education 529 Plans, but for a broader scope of services beyond higher education. In order to be eligible for an account, the disabled person must be someone who had a disability that occurred before she turned 26 years

old. Even then, the account may only be funded with amounts up to the annual exclusion, currently \$14,000.

Because the individual became disabled later in life, she is not eligible for this type of account. Also, although the law has been enacted, it is up to each state to implement the accounts, and in New York, this type of trust is not yet available.

Option 3: Will reformation

The final and usually preferable option is to seek reformation of the Will. A reformation seeks to "rewrite" the will to include the trust provisions that were not included in the first place. If there is a contingent beneficiary in the Will, you can seek reformation in a way that would allow any remaining trust funds to pass to that beneficiary. There is no age limitation to a testamentary Supplemental Needs Trust.

In order to reform the Will, the executor or the representative of the disabled beneficiary petitions the court for a construction proceeding, and asks the court to establish the trust and authorize a trustee. You would present a proposed draft of the trust provisions. Ideally, you would obtain consent from all other interested parties (the other beneficiaries) who should not be adversely affected by the reformation and therefore are not likely to object.

Notice would also likely need to be given to the New York State Department of Health and the Department of Social Services, which might object because it might deprive it of reimbursement for the provision of benefits. However, case law does suggest that the court will be willing to reform a Will in order to effectuate the testator's intent, and if the reformation would not materially change the testator's dispositive plan.

If your aunt knew that your cousin was disabled, a valid argument could be made that she intended to protect her and would have done so had she known that the trust provision was an option. In that regard, if the reformation were to be disallowed, the testator's intent that the disabled beneficiary receives a benefit under the Will would be frustrated because it would require disclaiming her interest under the Will and sacrificing it in order to preserve her government benefits. However, the Department of Health and Social Services may object to the trust unless a payback provision is included.

Alison Arden Besunder is the founding attorney of the law firm of Arden Besunder P.C., where she assists with estate-planning. Her firm assists clients in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. Find her on Twitter @estatetrustplan and on her website at www.besunderlaw.com.



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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

born in our children. While we may feel like giving up some days, we have to keep trying. One thing we can do is be the good we want to see, be the change that needs to occur, be the kindness we want to foster, as Gandhi said so many years ago.

I commend the writers, producers, and actors of "This Is Us" for taking the lead in a sea of sharks, and taking a chance that good would outweigh evil. (I often imagine some of our so-called leaders being forced to watch this series, "A Clockwork Orange"-style, and see if any sense of humanity might well up in them after a while.) Many viewers have commented that each week, after watching, they try to be a better person and do better in their individual life. One viewer tweeted that after every episode, they want to hug everyone they see, because they have more of an open heart to a person's struggles. And each of us has our own.

A teacher once asked my high school class if we thought that people were inherently evil with a propensity to do good or if people were fundamentally good with a tendency to do evil. As an optimistic teen, I told him, I thought people were inherently good, and I still do, despite what we see over and over again on TV.

Maybe if we saw more goodness on the screen, just maybe, we just might see more goodness in our real lives.

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

This is all of us

The show we all need right now

It's been a long while since I have been moved by a television series as much as I have been with NBC's "This Is Us." It's the story of a family — which is everyone's story. I've been waiting for a few weeks now to see what will become of William, Randall's biological father, who has terminal cancer. Randall (Sterling K. Brown) tracked William (Ron Cephas Jones) down and brought him into his own home after being abandoned by William as an infant. Of course, if Randall hadn't been left at the hospital, he wouldn't have been adopted by his parents (Milo Ventimiglia and Mandy Moore) and become one of the "big three," along with his sister Kate and brother Kevin, played wonderfully by Chrissy Metz and Justin Hartley, respectively.

Each week, this show has presented a glimpse into this beloved, imperfect, yet perfect family. The love they have for each other is real and uniquely, almost palpable. For instance, it shows Kevin, the actor about to take the stage at his new play, running off at the last minute to do what his dad would do, knowing that his brother Randall was having a breakdown.

And we see William utter his dying

words to his long-lost son:

"You deserve everything, Randall. My beautiful boy. My son. I haven't had a happy life. I had breaks. I had choices. A life of almosts and could-haves. Some would call it sad, but I don't. 'Cause the two best things in my life were the person in the very beginning, and the person at the very end."

Or the scenes of baby William dancing with his mother intermingled with scenes of him as an old man meeting his mom in heaven — I don't know what impacted me more. Watching William take his last breath just about broke me.

This isn't only writing at its best (and big huge kudos to these amazing writers, in particular creator and writer Dan Fogelman), it is humanity at its best. It is one of the very few displays of media that choose to show humans being kind and good rather than terrible, simply for ratings. I wonder if we were as deluged with simple acts of human kindness day in and day out, the same way we are inundated with horrific images, lies, corruption, and plain wickedness, would we be a different society?

With the current world, we may feel helpless and wonder what we can do to preserve the goodness that was innately

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Benefits of camp

— *from a kid's perspective*

BY GAYLA GRACE

Nathan Cole, 16 years old, has attended camp every year since he was 5. His eyes light up when you ask what he enjoys most about camp. A typical teenage boy who's not overly expressive, Nathan can quickly list reasons why he still loves to go to camp. Here are a few benefits from Nathan's point of view:

1. It's fun!

"Camp is always fun. Sports camp, church camp, day camp, or week-long camp — it doesn't matter, I always have fun when I go to camp," said Nathan. His preference is to head out with a few kids he already knows, but he says he's attended a few sports camps where he didn't know anyone on day one.

"The camaraderie happens easily among kids at camps. It doesn't take long for fun to begin, even with those you've just met," he adds.

2. It takes you away from normal life

Nathan admits that long summer days can get boring.

"I like to get away from the routine and experience things I can't do at home," he said. "My favorite camp has stuff like zip lines, paddle boats, go carts, paintball, archery, and riflery—things I don't get to do at home."

With activities like that to keep kids entertained, technology gets left behind and exercise becomes a daily occurrence.

3. You make new friends

"I didn't have any friends the summer we moved out of state when I was in elementary school," said Nathan. "I went to a baseball camp that summer and made friends who ended up being in my class the next school year, which helped me adjust to a new school."

Learning to meet new people and easily form friendships is a valuable skill for kids at any age.

4. You learn about others and different ways kids live

"I learned to appreciate my own family much more after finding out about the difficult home life many kids have," Nathan said. "Campers tend to open up with each other, and you find out your own life isn't so hard," he said.

Kids learn to accept others from different walks of life and appreciate their circumstances as they make friends outside of their everyday people base.

5. Sports camps help improve your skill

"I've gone to a lot of sports camps that helped me get better at soccer," Nathan said. "I've made the high school soccer team the last two years, and I think the camps I've attended helped."

Sports camps provide discipline and individual attention to a particular sport. They help develop an athlete in the game he loves. Competition on the playing field grows stronger as kids move through junior high and high school.

6. You learn to respect different kinds of authority

Kids grow accustomed to the authorities at home and school. It's good for them to experience different levels of authority at camp.

"The camp counselors are usually teenagers, and sometimes kids disrespect them," said Nathan. "But campers have to understand the counselors' place of authority, regardless of their age, and consequences for not following the rules," he added.

7. You gain confidence when you step outside your comfort zone

Camp offers activities not available at home, and kids are encouraged to try them.

"Some kids don't like to experience new things, but camp counselors help them move out of their comfort zone and do it anyway," Nathan said. Confidence is gained when kids overcome their fears.

...

Nathan says his camp experience will be different this summer.

"I'm going as a junior counselor for the first time to the camp I've attended since I was in elementary school," he said. "I'm looking forward to helping young campers get out of their everyday routine and find fun at camp!"

Gayla Grace is a freelance journalist and mom to five who sends her kids to camp every summer.

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718-847-6470
www.bluedolphincamp.com

Campers may enroll for 2-8 weeks, and they do not have to be consecutive weeks. Program hours are from 7:00am-6:00pm. Bus service is available. A camper's day consists of sporting events, arts & crafts, games, swimming, amusement parks and exciting trips. Camper's ages 3-15 enjoy fun excitement filled programs in house and off campus. Providing a great place for campers to enjoy a safe and diverse summer of fun! Our camp is licensed by the Department of Health and our counselors consist of teachers and other professionals in the Educational field trained in CPR PRO & First Aid.

Camp is open to both public and private school students.

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68-02 Metropolitan Avenue
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718-888-9341
www.crayonboxpreschool.com

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Continued on page 18

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www.idtech.com/Queens

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Continued on page 20

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 July 31 – August 4 - boys and girls

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Screen-free tips

Simple swaps for switching off for a week — and beyond

BY LARA KRUPICKA

Screen-free week" can be a challenging exercise that provides a sense of accomplishment. A nationwide movement May 1–7, it's a way to get people to unplug and rediscover the joys of life beyond the screen.

But to many families, it's also a relief to return to a screen-filled lifestyle. In fact, it can be hard to imagine going without television or internet devices on a regular basis.

For some practical screen-time substitutions, take a glimpse at a day in the life of our (relatively) screen-free family:

Morning

Morning in our household consists of getting three children out the door to junior high and elementary school. I'm up at 5:30 am to snatch time to myself. By 6:30 am, my girls are up and getting dressed for school. A quick check of the weather forecast in the paper or on an iPod and wardrobes are selected. Within a half-hour, everyone gathers for breakfast.

We eat together most days (minus Dad, who usually arrives at work before we're up). Over breakfast we review any activities for the day. Then I read the newspaper, my eldest occasionally looking over my shoulder at the sports news. Occasionally, we all discuss an interesting news report I've chosen to share with them.

Dr. Amy Nathanson, associate professor of communication at Ohio State University, points out the crucial nature of parents filtering the news for their children.

"Depending on their age and development, children simply aren't ready to hear the kind of information news stories typically contain. In many cases, exposing children to news stories only results in them becoming frightened and without the abilities to effectively manage their fears."

Developmental pediatrician Dr. Mark

Tips for limiting your family's screen time

- Model intentional viewing habits by turning the television on only for specific programs.
- Set and keep rules on how and what children will watch.
- Provide reasons for those rules and involve older children in deciding

the rules.

• Don't place televisions and computers in children's rooms or other places where they can't be easily monitored. Also consider limiting where tablets and laptops can be used.

For more information and ideas about screen-free week, see www.screenfree.org.

Bertin agrees.

"The news has become really disturbing. The images being shown and the information shared aren't things many kids are ready to hear in that format."

By 8 am, everyone is gone. I head to my office where I will work at my computer. The morning is otherwise screen-free.

Afternoon

Elementary school dismisses at 2:30 pm and my younger two arrive home shortly after. They empty their backpacks and scoot up to the kitchen counter for a snack. I stand and chat with them for a bit.

Soon my eldest returns from junior high and by then homework time is well under way. The television in our family room sits dark. Except for my teen listening to her iPod in her room and instruments being practiced, the house is still.

It's 4 pm. One child reads on a couch while another plays with Lego bricks nearby. Even though the television is right there, they don't ask to turn it on.

No television during playtime, as it turns out, is a good thing.

"Children's play sessions are shorter and less sophisticated when background television is present compared to when it is not," says Nathanson. "Because children learn a tremendous amount from playing, the detrimental effect of back-

ground television on children's play is significant."

Before I start dinner preparations, I urge my middle child into the kitchen to work on her birthday wish list. She has no ideas. It's not that she's an odd child with no desires. Nor are we indulgent parents, buying her everything she requests. Essentially, without television marketing to influence her, she lives relatively satisfied with what she has. The wish list grows slowly.

I move on to cooking dinner. Sometimes my children ask to play a video game together during the dead time before dinner. And often I allow them. Because it's a limited time and I know exactly what they'll be seeing on the television, I'm comfortable with it. And I'm not alone.

Lesley Wagner, a mother of three young children, also keeps her days relatively television free. But when it comes time to get dinner together, she admits she sometimes puts the television on.

"When my 4-year-old wakes up from his nap, we may watch TV while I'm making dinner. Maybe for 20 or 30 minutes."

As Bertin notes, "Some screen time is a part of life. If children are watching a small amount, and we're closely watching the content, they'll be fine."

The problem arises when it becomes a habit that takes over. Nathanson ex-



plains, "Parents may want to rethink their use of TV when they find they are continually turning to it to satisfy their own or their child's needs."

Evening

By 6 pm Dad comes home, and we sit down to dinner together. My husband takes this time to do his own catch-up with our girls. Soon our kitchen grows noisy with our girls' rapid-fire interchange.

"When the TV is off during meal time, family members can tune into each other," says Nathanson. "The reality is it's difficult for anyone to ignore the images and sounds coming from a television. By turning the television off, parents and children

can talk and really listen to each other."

After dinner, we all clear the table. Then Dad and I retire to the couch where we catch up some more. In the kitchen the three girls tease each other and carry on loudly as they wash the dishes.

Once the dishes are done, our eldest returns to her homework. Sometimes the rest of us play a board or card game.

At 7 pm, the bedtime routine starts. Our youngest showers, while the others read. The family room is empty, so Dad sneaks in a quick video game. (He can't help it.)

By 8:30 pm, the house is quiet. The girls have gone to bed. I read. Dad settles in with a puzzle. The television is off.

After catching up on Facebook (yes,

we're guilty of computer screen time more than anything), it is lights out for us. We both drift off easily, not wired by a fast-paced, late-night news program.

As you can see, we are not Luddites. Screen time does figure into our day in small amounts, and we've been intentional to constrain its limits.

Dr. Bertin sums it up well: "Recognize that media doesn't have to happen to us. We can decide how to use media, even for our kids."

It's intentionality that makes the difference.

Lara Krupicka is a freelance writer who admits to enjoying one television show and plenty of games each week with her husband and three girls.

Calendar

APRIL



Richard Termine

Take a musical journey to 'Toyland'

Victor Herbert's classic operetta "Babes in Toyland" comes to the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at LIU Post on April 29.

The production is full of glorious melodies, and tells the story of mean Uncle Barnaby and his plot to get rid of his young niece and nephew to get his hands on their inheritance.

With the help of several Mother Goose characters, the pair defeat his evil plans and bring happiness back to Toyland. The original score includes "Toyland," "March

of the Toys," and "I Can't Do the Sum," and features Kelli O'Hara, Bill Irwin, Lauren Worsham, and Christopher Fitzgerald as well as the Orchestra of St. Luke's with Ted Sperling conducting.

Recommended for children 8 years and older.

"Babes in Toyland," April 29, 7 pm. Tickets \$50, \$65, \$80.

Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at LIU Post [720 Northern Blvd. in Greenvale, (800) 745-3000; www.ticketmaster.com/venue/131].

Never miss a great event!

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Calendar

Submit a listing

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

Send your listing request to queenscalendar@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, APRIL 1

IN QUEENS

Spring carnival: Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy.; (718) 347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; 11 am to 6 pm; \$15 (rides are included in price of admission).

Have fun at the annual event full of rides, midway games, hayrides, pony rides, petting zoo, face painting, balloons, and tours of the historic farmhouse. Recommended for children 4 to 12 years of age.

Hands-On History: King Manor Museum in Rufus King Park, 89th Avenue and Archer Avenue; (718) 206-0545; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 4 pm; Free.

This Old House provides children a glimpse of what old-fashioned fun was like. Embellish the corners of a simple square of white cotton to create your own handkerchief, an accessory no one would have been without!

Story time & craft: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 886-3800; info@queensbotanical.org; www.queensbotanical.org; 2 pm to 3:30 pm; Free.

Bring your little nature lovers to the garden for a relaxing afternoon featuring seasonal nature-inspired stories, followed by a botanically themed craft activity. Recommended for ages 10 and under.

FURTHER AFIELD

"Red Riding Hood": Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.lcm.org; 11:30 am and 2 pm; \$7 members (\$9 non-members); \$12 theater only.

Two siblings on a sleepover at their grandmother's house have trouble falling asleep. To pass the time, they decide to act out their favorite story with items found in their room. Soon, what's real and what's imagined begin to blur, and the children find themselves in the deep dark woods with a wolf tracking them down. Experience this innovative musical that offers an interactive take on a classic tale.

SUN, APRIL 2

IN QUEENS

Spring carnival: 11 am to 6 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Saturday, April 1.



Carnival time in Queens!

Step right up and get your tickets, because for two weekends in April, it's carnival time at the Queens County Farm Museum!

Spend the day playing midway games, going on hayrides, winning prizes, chowing down on cotton candy, and touring the historic farmhouse.

Spring Carnival on April 1-2 and 8-9 from 11 am to 6 pm. Admission is \$15 per person and includes all rides. Recommended for children 4 to 12.

Queens County Farm Museum Carnival [73-50 Little Neck Pkwy. at Elmont Avenue in Floral Park, (718) 347-3276; www.queensfarm.org].

FURTHER AFIELD

"Red Riding Hood": 2 pm to 4 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, April 1.

FRI, APRIL 7

IN QUEENS

Parent Support Group: Queens Museum of Art, New York City Building, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; (718) 592-9700; www.queensmuseum.org; 11 am to 12:30 pm; Free.

Parent-led support group for parents and caregivers affected by autism. The group will use mindfulness-based approaches to explore reducing anxiety from stressful situations. Support tools will be developed for parents to share, learn, and explore methods for self-care and coping. To register, please contact her at jaxbydesign@gmail.com. Registration required. Please note that this is designed for parents or caregivers only.

FURTHER AFIELD

Kids in the Kitchen: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.lcm.org; 11:30 am to noon; \$5 plus admission (\$4 for members).

Little chefs use real cooking tools (with some help from adults) as we make easy, yummy, kid-friendly snacks from start to finish. As they

make their treat, kids gain experience measuring ingredients, following directions, and building their vocabulary.

SAT, APRIL 8

IN QUEENS

Spring carnival: 11 am to 6 pm. Queens County Farm Museum. See Saturday, April 1.

FURTHER AFIELD

Spring Eggstravaganza: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.lcm.org; 6 pm to 9 pm; \$11 (\$9 members) for Eggstravaganza only, \$15 (\$12 members) for both Eggstravaganza and theater portion.

Hop on over for a special night at the museum to celebrate the arrival of spring! Meet Peter Rabbit, explore egg decorating, create spring-themed craft activities, and collect eggs as you hop from activity to activity! Theater Add-On: New York's favorite zoologist, Nature Nick, will present a fun and fast-paced show featuring birds of prey, a flamingo, alligators, snakes, and many other egg-laying animals! Showtimes at 6:15 pm, 7 pm, and 7:45 pm.

SUN, APRIL 9

IN QUEENS

Spring carnival: 11 am to 6 pm. Queens

Calendar

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

County Farm Museum. See Saturday, April 1.

Story time & craft: 2 pm to 3:30 pm. Queens Botanical Garden. See Saturday, April 1.

FURTHER AFIELD

"Red Riding Hood": 11:30 am and 2 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, April 1.

MON, APRIL 10

IN QUEENS

All about insects: Fort Totten Visitor's Center, Ordinance Road at Shore Road; (718) 352-1769; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Join the Urban Park Rangers as we learn about insects and search for the six-legged critters under rocks and logs.

FURTHER AFIELD

Winter Break Fish and Whales: Vanderbilt Mansion Museum, 180 Little Neck Rd., Long Island; (631) 854-5539; www.vanderbiltmuseum.org; 10 am to noon; \$20 (\$18 members).

Children 9 and 10 years old visit the marine collection and compare the anatomy of fish and marine mammals and create a mixed-media underwater seascape. Pre registration is required.

Line Up for Willem de Kooning: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.lcm.org; 11 am, 1 pm and 3 pm; \$3 plus admission (\$2 for members).

Can a painting move? Can lines take you on a journey? Join us as we make creations inspired by the life and work of Willem de Kooning! Using a variety of materials, explore how lines create energy within a composition and take us on a visual trip.

"Red Riding Hood": 11:30 am and 2 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, April 1.

TUES, APRIL 11

IN QUEENS

Birding for kids: Alley Pond Park, Winchester Boulevard under Grand Central Parkway; (718) 352-1769; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Join the Urban Park Rangers for a walk through Alley Pond Park and learn about the different birds that live in the park.

Spring break activities: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 1 pm to 4 pm; \$6 adults; \$4 seniors; \$4 students; \$2 children 4 to 12; free for children under 3.

While school's out, roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty! Children can sift and search through the Queens Botanical Garden's Exploration Station. Pick up a self-guided spring scavenger hunt and learn about our upcoming gardening programs for kids. Activities are drop-in, while supplies last.

'Something' to talk about

It sure is something else!

"Something," at the New Victory Theater now through April 16, is a beautiful performance featuring a troupe of seven skilled acrobats who fuse circus, dance, physical theater, and clowning into a singular, captivating performance that appears comically effortless. From reading a book to playing a game of poker, these inventive performers create silly, surreal scenes out of everyday ordinary acts.

A special performance on April 2 is specifically geared to families with special-needs children and was designed in collaboration with Autism Friendly Spaces, Inc., which provided consultative services for this performance.

Performances run approximately 60 minutes and there are no intermissions.

"Something," now to April 16, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 2 pm; Fridays and Saturdays, 2 pm and 7 pm; and Sundays, noon and 5 pm. Tickets begin at \$16.

Autism-friendly performance April 2 at 5 pm. All tickets \$25.

New Victory Theater [209 W. 42nd Street in Midtown, (646) 223-3000; www.newvictory.org>Show-Detail?ProductionId=7687].



Giovanni Chiodini

FURTHER AFIELD

Winter Break Carnivores & Herbivores: Vanderbilt Mansion Museum, 180 Little Neck Rd., Long Island; (631) 854-5539; www.vanderbiltmuseum.org; 10 am to noon; \$20 (\$18 members).

Children in kindergarten through second grade visit the wildlife dioramas, compare carnivores and herbivores, and make a big cat mask. Pre-registration is required.

Family Art: Nassau County Museum of Art, 1 Museum Drive, Long Island; (516) 484-9338; nassauartmuseum.org; 11 am to 2 pm; \$10 plus museum admission.

Families can enjoy the school break together with three days of art making and gallery tours inspired by the Haston designs to be seen throughout the museum. A different project will be offered every day! For children of all ages and their families.

Line Up for Willem de Kooning: 11 am, 1 pm and 3 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Monday, April 10.

"Red Riding Hood": Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.lcm.org; 11:30 am and 2 pm; \$7 members (\$9 non-members; \$12 theater only).

The 11:30 am performance is an American Sign Language-interpreted performance.

WED, APRIL 12

IN QUEENS

Native American Games: Kissena Park, Rose Avenue and Oak Avenue; (718) 352-1769; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Join the Urban Park Rangers for a fun afternoon of games and a little history about Native American games.

Spring break activities: 1 pm to 4 pm. Queens Botanical Garden. See Tuesday, April 11.

FURTHER AFIELD

Winter Break Butterflies and Moths: Vanderbilt Mansion Museum, 180 Little Neck

Calendar

Rd., Long Island; (631) 854-5539; www.vanderbiltmuseum.org; 10 am to noon; \$20 (\$18 members).

Preschoolers accompanied by an adult visit the insect collection, learn about the characteristics of butterflies and moths, and make a mobile. Pre-registration is required.

Family Art: 11 am to 2 pm. Nassau County Museum of Art. See Tuesday, April 11.

"Red Riding Hood": 11:30 am and 2 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, April 1.

THURS, APRIL 13

IN QUEENS

Nature Exploration: Forest Park Visitor Center, Woodhaven Boulevard and Forest Park Drive; (718) 352-1769; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Join the Urban Park Rangers on our exciting exploration hike through Forest Park.

Spring break activities: 1 pm to 4 pm. Queens Botanical Garden. See Tuesday, April 11.

FURTHER AFIELD

Family Art: 11 am to 2 pm. Nassau County Museum of Art. See Tuesday, April 11.

"Olive and Pearl": Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.llicm.org; 11:30 am to 12:30 pm; \$7 (\$9 non-members; \$12 theater only).

"Olive and Pearl," specifically created by the dance and theater company Treehouse Shakers, is for the very young child, ages 2-5. It's the story of a young girl, Olive, who is lovingly being raised by her granny. The show is intimate, as audiences sit within their home, which is made out of a dome of soft felts, crocheted squares, and colorful fabrics.

FRI, APRIL 14

IN QUEENS

Storytelling: Baisley Pond Park (Garden entrance), 155th and 122nd avenues; (718) 352-1769; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Bring the kids to this storytelling event with our Urban Park Rangers. Ranger programs.

Spring break activities: 1 pm to 4 pm. Queens Botanical Garden. See Tuesday, April 11.

FURTHER AFIELD

"Olive and Pearl": 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Thursday, April 13.

SAT, APRIL 15

IN QUEENS

Barnyard Egg Hunt: Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Pkwy.; (718) 347-3276; www.queensfarm.org; 11 am to 3 pm and 11 am to noon; \$10 (members free).

Bring your baskets to this celebrated event

Take a 'Trip to the Moon'

Get your ticket and blast off for a trip to the moon at Queensborough Community College when the Paper Bag Players present "Trip to the Moon," on April 26, 27, and 28.

Children ages 3 to 8 will delight in this classic blend of cardboard and paper sets, whimsical stories, lovable characters, and live music that will have them singing and dancing in the aisle. Show time is approximately one hour.

"Trip to the Moon," April 26, 27, and



28, at 10:30 am. Tickets are \$8.

Queensborough Community College (222-05 56th Ave. in Bayside, www.thepaperbagplayers.org).

for kids! Egg hunts will be ongoing in the orchard throughout the event and Whiskers the Bunny will be hopping about, ready for photo ops! Advanced ticket purchase required.

Sakura Matsuri (Cherry Blossom Festival): Pavilion and Astral Foundation, Merridian Road; (718) 760-6560; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Sakura Matsuri is an annual festival to celebrate the spring blossoming of the cherry trees at Flushing Meadows Corona Park. This event features live drum performances (Taiko), a traditional Japanese chorus, a Japanese folk dance, and a tea ceremony.

FURTHER AFIELD

Eggsactly It: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.llicm.org; 2 pm; \$3 with admission (\$2 for members).

Many different cultures around the world have their own traditions of decorating Easter eggs. This year, commemorate the Easter holiday by embellishing your own egg using the method of decoupage, the art of decorating with paper cut-outs. For children 5 and older.

SUN, APRIL 16

IN QUEENS

Creative Spectrum Art Social: Queens Museum of Art, New York City Building, Flushing Meadows Corona Park; 718.592.9700; jax@jaxbydesign.com; www.queensmuseum.org; 10 am to 11 am; Free.

Engage in a creative project where families can enjoy making hands-on art projects together! This program is designed for families affected by autism, especially children ages 5-13. Through collaborative artmaking, we will challenge kids with opportunities to socialize and think in new, creative ways. Advanced registration is required.

Sensory Perception Hike: Forest Park Vis-

itor Center, Woodhaven Boulevard and Forest Park Drive; (718) 352-1769; 1 pm to 2:30 pm.

Hiking is the ultimate way to enjoy the outdoors and have fun. Our Urban Park Ranger hiking guides will introduce you to the hidden gems of New York City while you learn orienteering skills and explore our city's urban forests.

FURTHER AFIELD

Easter Parade and Bonnet Festival: Kick off at E. 49th Street and Fifth Avenue, Manhattan; 10 am; Free.

Put on your bonnet and show off your Sunday best in the annual event that has marchers traveling up Fifth Avenue from E. 49th Street to E. 57th Street and passing St. Patrick's Cathedral.

WED, APRIL 19

IN QUEENS

Easter Egg Hunt: Lewis H. Latimer House, 34-41 137th St.; (718) 961-8585; 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm; Free.

Join other families to celebrate the traditional Easter egg hunt in the garden of Lewis H. Latimer House, a historic home in Flushing, Queens. For children under 11.

SAT, APRIL 22

FURTHER AFIELD

Green teen series: Our Earth, Our Home: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road, Long Island; (516) 224-5800; www.llicm.org; 11 am to 3 pm and 11 am to noon; Free.

Out Earth is our home. Come celebrate Earth Day and learn how you can make a difference in keeping our planet healthy! This program is made possible with the support of National Grid.

Calendar

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

SUN, APRIL 23

IN QUEENS

Freshwater fishing: Baisey Pond Park Parking Lot, Baisley Boulevard and 155th Street; (718) 352-1769; 11 am to 12:30 pm; Free.

Catch-and-release fishing is a great way to get outdoors and discover nature just a few blocks from home. Our experienced Urban Park Rangers teach the ethics of fishing and the ecology of our waterways on every fishing program. You can try to hook a pumpkinseed sunfish, carp, or chain pickerel. All equipment is provided; this program is recommended for ages 8 years and older. Participation is first-come, first-served.

FURTHER AFIELD

Earth Day: Nassau County Museum of Art, 1 Museum Drive, Long Island; (516) 484-9338; nassau-museum.org; 1 pm to 4 pm; \$10 plus museum admission.

Run, skip, hop, or jump to the museum for a day of art-making inspired by movement and nature. Then, get your bodies moving outside with members of the RADD Fitness team of Glen Head in activities designed for all ages and abilities. Dress for art making and physical activity. Program will move indoors in case of rain.

WED, APRIL 26

IN QUEENS

"Trip to the Moon": Queensborough Community College, 222-05 56th Ave.; www.thepaperbagplayers.org; 10:30 am; \$8.

Children ages 3 to 8 will delight in this classic blend of cardboard and paper sets, whimsical stories, lovable characters, and live music that will have them singing and dancing in the aisles.

THURS, APRIL 27

IN QUEENS

"Trip to the Moon": 10:30 am. Queensborough Community College. See Wednesday, April 26.

FRI, APRIL 28

IN QUEENS

"Trip to the Moon": 10:30 am. Queensborough Community College. See Wednesday, April 26.

SAT, APRIL 29

IN QUEENS

Key to the City-Family Resource Day: Far Rockaway High School, 8-21 Bay 25th St.; (212) 627-2227 X 218; ewatson@nyic.org; www.nyic.org; 9 am to 1 pm; Free.

The New York Immigration Coalition is partnering with City Council and many consulates to offer this program. Staff will be on hand to offer immigration legal consultations thanks to New York Legal Assistance Group (no appoint-



Old-fashioned games

Go back in time at the Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden's Spring Break Crafts and Games.

Drop-in during regular museum hours from April 11 to April 21 and make a 19th-century craft and play historic games. If the weather is nice, enjoy the museum's collection of wooden toys outside in the garden. A tour and children's corner is included.

ment needed, open to all) and the Mexican Consulate will be offering its services (call 1 (877) 639-4835 for an appointment). We will also have resources for health, finances, adult education, and more.

Bird walks: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main St.; (718) 539-5296; www.queens-botanical.org; 9:30 am to 10:30 am and 11 am to noon; Free with garden admission.

Register for one or multiple free nature walks in this special series with NYC Audubon! Spot and identify creatures of flight and learn how Queens Botanical Garden provides important resources for birds. Registration is required.

Gather around the campfire: Alley Pond Park, Cross Island Parkway and Grand Central Parkway; (718) 217-4685; www.nycgovparks.org; 6 pm to 7:30 pm; Free.

Join the Urban Park Rangers as we gather around our roaring camp fire for an evening of s'mores, games, and storytelling. Participants are chosen by lottery. To register, please visit nyc.gov/parks/rangers/register. Registration begins on April 19.

FURTHER AFIELD

Run for the Wild: Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road, The Bronx; (718) 220-5103; www.bronxzoo.com; 7 am to 1 pm; \$50 (registration for adults); \$40 regis-

Spring Break Crafts and Games, April 11-21, Tuesdays to Sundays, 11 am to 4 pm (closed Mondays). Free with museum admission: \$8 for adults, \$7 seniors and students, free for children under 12. Reservations required.

Mount Vernon Hotel Museum & Garden [421 E. 61st St. between First and York avenues on the Upper East Side, (212) 838-6878; www.mvhm.org].

tration for children 3-15 and seniors 65 and older) Zoo Admission is included.

Join us for the annual event and run this year on behalf of your favorite animal and then spend the day with us for exciting new activities. The Family Fun run begins at 8:45 am (strollers permitted).

Sakura Matsuri 2017: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 10 am to 6 pm; \$25 (\$20 seniors and students; \$free for children under 12 and members).

Sakura Matsuri, the annual cherry blossom festival at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, offers more than 60 events and performances that celebrate traditional and contemporary Japanese culture.

Garden opening: Highland Park Children's Garden, Jamaica Avenue and Ashford Street, Brooklyn; (718) 235-4100; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 3 pm; Free.

Enjoy a fun-filled opening day at Highland Park's community garden. Enjoy workshops, music, and games.

"Babes in Toyland": Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at LIU Post, 720 Northern Blvd., Long Island; (800) 745-3000; www.ticketmaster.com/venue/131; 7 pm; \$50, \$65, \$80.

Victor Herbert's classic operetta is full of

Calendar

glorious melodies, and tells the story of mean Uncle Barnaby and his plot to get rid of his young niece and nephew, to get his hands on their inheritance. Recommended for children 8 years and older.

SUN, APRIL 30

FURTHER AFIELD

Sakura Matsuri 2017: 10 am to 6 pm. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. See Saturday, April 29.

LONG-RUNNING

IN QUEENS

Stacks After School program: Queens Library at Arverne; Queens Library at Baisley Park; Queens Library at Briarwood; Queens Library at Cambria Heights; Queens Library at Corona; Queens Library at East Elmhurst; Queens Library at Far Rockaway; Queens Library at Flushing; Queens Library at Jackson Heights; Queens Library at Laurelton; Queens Library at Lefferts; Queens Library at Lefrak City; Queens Library at Long Island City; Queens Library at Queens Village; Queens

Library at Richmond Hill; Queens Library at Ridgewood; Queens Library at South Hollis; Queens Library at South Jamaica; Queens Library at Ozone Park; Queens Library at Woodside; (718) 990-0728; www.queenslibrary.org/services/stacks-after-school-program; Weekdays, 3 pm to 5:30 pm, Now – Fri, June 23; Free.

Children 6 to 14 years old have an opportunity to improve their education through structured and unstructured activities that enhance science, technology, engineering and math along with literacy activities. Each child must commit to the full year program; have a valid Queens Library card, and the permission of a parent or guardian.

Make it Friday: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St.; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Fridays, 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm, Now – Fri, June 2; Free with admission to the Hall.

Join us in Maker Space Friday afternoons to explore different materials, concepts, and ideas while making and tinkering with your family. Drop in and see what we're working on!

Digital Media Lab: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888;

www.movingimage.us; Friday, April 21, 4 pm; Friday, May 5, 4 pm.

Teens dive into the world of Snapchat and explore its use as a storytelling tool. For teens 14 years and older.

FURTHER AFIELD

"The Princess, The Emperor, and the Duck": Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater, W. 79th Street and West Drive, Manhattan; (212) 988-9093; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10:30 am and 2 pm.; \$12 (\$8 for children under 12).

The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre presents three classic tales from Hans Christian Andersen. For children ages 3 to 9.

Neiman Marcus Family Sundays: Nassau County Museum of Art, 1 Museum Dr., Long Island; (516) 484-9338; nassauumuseum.org; Sundays, 1 pm to 4 pm, Now – Sun, July 9; Free with museum admission.

Be inspired by the works in the galleries, and explore new art materials. Talk about and make art together. During the showing of Feast for the Eyes, family art projects will draw inspiration from the exhibition's many works showing food and feasting, restaurants and dining. New projects featured every week.

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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

New color palette

Packaged foods now replacing synthetic dyes with hues direct from nature

Whether you're dyeing Easter eggs or simply enjoying the emerging daffodils and hyacinths, your world is bursting with color this time of year. Yet, you may notice that some of your family's favorite packaged foods are becoming more muted.

Many well-known food companies are phasing out synthetic dyes from their products and replacing them with natural colors. Why? A growing body of research suggests synthetic food dyes trigger hyperactivity in susceptible children. There is growing pressure from consumers to ditch the dyes.

Mars Incorporated announced it would remove artificial colors from all the processed foods it makes for humans to be replaced with pigments found in natural substances. Other companies have also made the pledge — such as Campbell's, Frito Lay, General Mills, Kellogg's, Kraft Heinz, Mondelez International, Nestlé USA, and Panera. Some food chains, such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's, have long refused to sell foods with artificial coloring.

The familiar macaroni and cheese found in the yellow-and-blue box? Tinted now by paprika, turmeric, and annatto (a color taken from achiote tree seeds). Sunkist orange-flavored jelly candies? Carrot juice now provides their bright shade. And Yo-plait's Blackberry Harvest yogurt gets its purple hue from beet juice.

A study released last year found that 43 percent of all food products marketed toward children contain artificial colors. Surprising foods with added pigments include marshmallows, French dressing, cherry pie filling, cookies, canned pasta, and hot chocolate mix.

In a 2014 study, some cereals, candies, and cakes were found to contain much more artificial coloring than we would expect. Food companies have to disclose the presence of artificial coloring on labels, but they don't disclose specific amounts.

Yet, while food scientists are having pretty good luck replacing orange and red with natural colors, they're having a devil of a time with the color blue. If you think about it, there isn't much blue that occurs in nature. And blue is generally associated with "fun" foods aimed at children, such as M&Ms, sugary drinks, cereal, ice pops, and candy.

Scientists are also finding the "natural" colors aren't predictable and can turn strange looking or tasting. Artificial colors are easier to work with and look and taste the same regardless of where they're placed.

An example of a natural food coloring is McCormick's Color from Nature Food Colors. More muted than the original food colors, they're an option for parents who wish to eliminate artificial dyes from their children's diets for recipes such as frost-

ing. The colors are made from ingredients such as plants, vegetables, and seeds.

All color additives used in food — synthetic colors and those derived from natural sources — must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Synthetic colors that are on critics' radar include Red 40 (causes behavior issues in certain children), Blue 1 (worrisome since it passes through the protective blood-brain barrier), and Yellow 5 and Yellow 6 (may contain a cancer-causing contaminant).

You might be asking, "Why add artificial colors to begin with?" There are several reasons why: Humans seek color in what we eat. Bright, artificial colors simulate the presence of fruits or other natural ingredients. Interestingly, adding a red color can make a food taste 10 percent sweeter.

What you can do:

- Watch out for labels stating "artificial color added" or "color added." Or that list "FD&C red #3" or any color followed by a number.

- Prepare more foods at home from scratch.

- Limit the amount of foods marketed towards kids.

Finally, children who get on a so-called "sugar high" may actually be experiencing the effects of these artificial colors. There is no peer-reviewed research that sugar causes hyperactivity.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville, Ill.-registered dietitian nutritionist. After doing the research for this article, she plans to shun most artificially colored foods. Find her at Christine Palumbo Nutrition on Facebook, @PalumboRD on Twitter or ChristinePalumbo.com.



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