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APRIL 2019

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letter from the publisher

Award wins for our designers and writers

I attended the recently held Parenting Media Association Annual Awards Dinner where numerous honors are given out for excellence in Editorial & Design. It was with real pleasure that I was there to accept nine awards for our titles in the city and three for our sister publication in Westchester. Among our winners were three for our front covers; one being an illustration and two for our use of stock photography. Congratulations to Leah Mitch, Art Director.

Danielle Sullivan's Healthy Living column was a winner of a GOLD AWARD for Child Development & Parenting Issues; contributing writer Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman won a BRONZE AWARD for a personal essay "What Can We Teach Boys?"; contributing writer Tammy Scileppi won



three awards, two for provocative Q & A interviews and one for a feature in our Special Child magazines about folic acid supplements helping to prevent birth defects and lower the risk of autism. They translated into a BRONZE and two SILVERS.

Finally, contributing writer Alison Plitt won a GOLD News Feature Award for an article on a local New York Mom who has successfully raised her son "range free," a term that encourages childhood independence.

I was so proud to accept these Awards. I have been attending the PMA conferences for the last 20 years and have developed significant relationships with my colleagues around the nation and around the world



who publish in this niche. It's always a learning experience as well as one where I actually mentor the newer members and publishers just starting out. I am a veteran now it seems.

Thank you to the many talented and committed people who contribute and have contributed to our overall excellence. Over the years we have won numerous awards and I'm thrilled to say that this year was no exception.

Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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New York Family Media is a division of Schneeps Media

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New York Family Media has been recognized for editorial and design excellence by PMA.

New York Family is published monthly by Queens Family Media, LLC.

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Filling Easter Eggs (Without Candy)

By Sarah Lyons

Our family loves an Easter egg hunt. It is always fun to see the kids running through the yard rushing to find the most eggs. As a mom of a child with food allergies, it is always a challenge to find items to fill all those plastic eggs with that are not candy. Having a variety of egg sizes helps you be able to stuff all your new ideas into the eggs without frustration. Whether, like me, your child has a food allergy, or you would just like to cut down on sugar overload, here are some non-candy ideas to fill all your eggs for the annual hunt.

Small toys

There are numerous ideas for small toys that you could fill eggs with: bouncy balls, small craft items, Play-Doh, tiny cars like Micro Machines, Shopkins, whistles, mini kazoos, hand stamps, Polly Pockets, Barbie



accessories, mini rubber ducks or other bath toys, finger skateboards, marbles, jacks and a ball, fake bugs and worms, pirate patches, play money, stickers, tops, LEGOs, sticky hands, or just for fun—confetti! When choosing small toys to fill your eggs, please consider the age of the children participating in the egg hunt. Small toys may pose a choking hazard for young children.

Something practical

Practical items can be fun, too. Try filling eggs with erasers, pencil sharpeners, key chains, magic towels, cute Band-Aids, travel-size lotion, or hand sanitizer. My kid's favorite practical Easter egg filler is money!

Something to wear

Your kids can have fun and accessorize with these ideas: barrettes, hair ties, socks, nail polish, chapstick, lip gloss, silly shoe laces, bracelets, earrings, rings, temporary tattoos, zipper pulls, or bead necklaces.

Snacks

If you are avoiding candy due to the sugar rush, try these little snacks that are the perfect size for Easter eggs: Goldfish crackers, pretzels, grapes, soup crackers, Cuties (oranges), veggie straws, berries, animal crackers, bite-size graham crackers, nuts, raisins, or other dried fruit.



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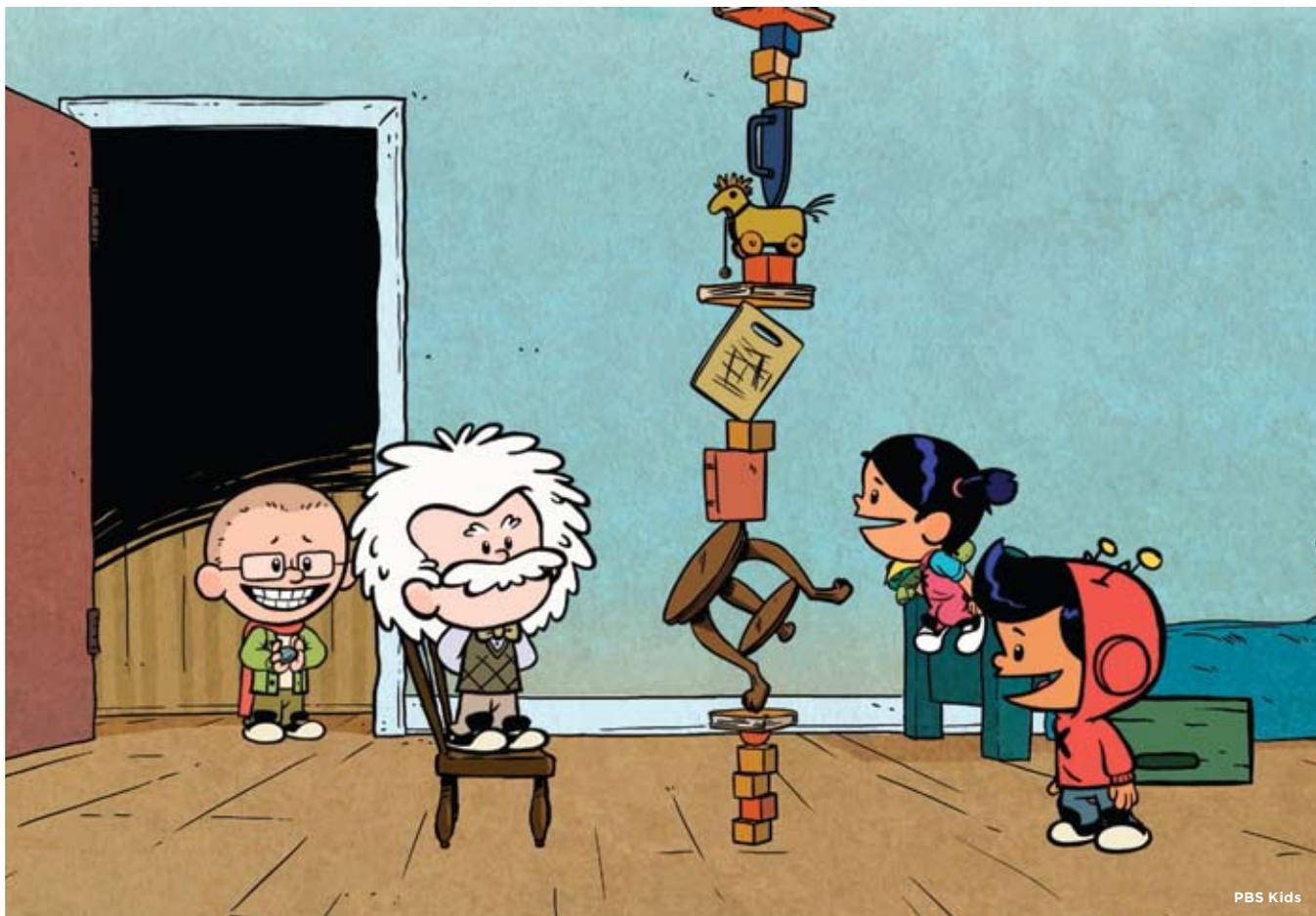
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PBS Kids

Kids will meet historical figures such as Albert Einstein in the PBS KIDS show “Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum.”

Meeting History’s Heroes

New PBS KIDS series teaches history—and important life lessons

By Tammy Scileppi

Kids can do incredible things! Tomorrow’s changemakers are being told from a young age that they can accomplish anything, as long as they work hard and believe in themselves.

And it seems clear that today’s girls and boys are getting a strong sense of who they are early on in their development. Ask any parent and they’ll tell you their feisty preschoolers already know what they want and oftentimes, just how to get it.

Because our cute, super-bright stars also need good role models outside the home, it’s a shame that these days, there aren’t that many real heroes they can look up to.

And, in case you haven’t noticed, the quality of our future movers and shakers’ education isn’t what it used to be. Angry city parents are asking: “Where have all the millions of funding dollars gone?” and “Why are so many

public schools getting failing grades?”

So, thank goodness for PBS KIDS! The channel has helped children ages 2-8 by providing a much-needed educational boost that has given America’s kiddos the opportunity to explore new ideas and worlds through television, digital media, and community-based programs. The free PBS KIDS 24-seven channel and local stations across the country support the entire ecosystem in which kids learn, along with their teachers, parents, and community.

In the fall, PBS KIDS will be filling in a bit of that history gap as well, with a new animated series based on the children’s book series “Ordinary People Change the World” by *New York Times* bestselling author Brad Meltzer (and illustrator Christopher Eliopoulos). “Xavier Riddle And The Secret Museum” debuts on November 11 and will introduce youngsters to inspiring, real-life historical figures they can learn about and

look up to, and the character virtues that helped them succeed.

Young viewers will feel like they’re taking part in the exciting adventures of Xavier Riddle, his sister Yadina, and their friend Brad, as they face a new “teaching moment” challenge each episode. The trio must turn to the Secret Museum, a hidden room under an ordinary museum, which gives them the ability to travel back in time to meet several historical folks, portrayed as kids. These inspirational encounters will help the adventurers solve those challenges through relatable stories that imaginative girls and boys can easily connect with.

A young, brave Rosa Parks and a creative Leonardo da Vinci; budding athlete Jackie Robinson and fearless Amelia Earhart, as well as other historical figures, will teach kids important lessons in history—and about themselves—through which children can recognize their own unlimited potential and

make the connection between attributes that made each historical figure a hero and the same qualities they possess as well.

“Our goal is always for children to see themselves in our characters,” said Linda Simensky, vice president of children’s programming at PBS. “The series takes a fresh and accessible approach to teaching kids ages 4-7 about important historical figures and the experiences that shaped their lives, while exploring social and emotional concepts and character traits, like courage, resilience, and setting and accomplishing goals.”

She added: “Characters find out that you have to practice something to be good at it, or they might learn a strategy for dealing with stage fright. Or perhaps they’ll find out that learning can inspire you. Many of the ideas are basic, but to our viewers, these are new.”

Boys and girls will meet a young Marie Curie, who follows her dreams no matter what, and a school-aged Harriet Tubman, who models courage and bravely moves forward even when she is scared.

“Author Brad Meltzer is a visionary

storyteller, and we’re thrilled to partner with him and 9 Story Media Group to bring this series to life. We hope that it will help kids across America discover that anyone can change the world,” Simensky says.

“‘Xavier Riddle And The Secret Museum’ isn’t just an entertaining educational series, but something much more personal to me. I was determined to give my kids better heroes to emulate,” said Meltzer. “When my own kids watch this series, I get to see them realize that there’s extraordinary within the ordinary. This was my hope in creating the book series for my kids—and my hope for children around the world. Through this show and the heroes we feature, I hope all children find their own heroic abilities and feel empowered to change the world.”

“This series has it all—endearing characters, action-packed adventures, a healthy dose of humor and an important message for kids,” says Angela Santomero, Chief Creative Officer for 9 Story. “We love that it celebrates the idea that kids have the curiosity and adventurous spirit to change the world. This series does just that and

inspires us all.”

Along with the TV series, “Xavier Riddle And The Secret Museum” will offer digital content for kids, parents, and teachers, debuting this fall. These resources provide an opportunity to extend the learning at home (PBS KIDS for Parents) and in the classroom (PBS LearningMedia) for educators.

Kids, parents, and teachers will be able to stream clips and full episodes across PBS KIDS’ video platforms, including the free PBS KIDS Video App. “Xavier”-themed games will be available on pbskids.org and the free PBS KIDS Games App.

For more, visit pbs.org/pressroom, or follow PBS KIDS on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer and journalist, parent, and regular contributor to New York Parenting. Interviewing hundreds of New York City’s movers and shakers has been an amazing adventure for her. Scileppi’s work has appeared in a variety of media outlets. She has also written book cover copy for Simon and Schuster.



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The ABCs of IEPs

An education & disabilities advocate shares essential info for parents navigating the Individualized Education Plan process

By Margarycel E. Nunez.

In today's society, it is not uncommon to know a child who needs an IEP (Individualized Education Plan). This is due to the awareness that parents have about child development and milestones, along with the efforts from preschools that are receiving more training to help identify, and properly guide parents on how to manage this difficult task. Another factor that adds to more IEP designations is that children are more sedentary and technologically connected, this leads to the inability to develop social skills, and therefore concerns from teachers result in evaluations to rule out delays or neurological disconnect.

An IEP, as the name suggests, takes education and unitizes it for the specific child listed on the document. It's a road

map of success for everyone (parents, teachers, support professionals, and school administrators) to be on the same page, and effectively work on the skills as mandated in the document. It's not an instrument of doom, as some parents erroneously believe; its purpose is to provide all the help necessary for a child to succeed in school and in society at large. A child that goes without needed services will develop deeper issues, something as simple as a speech delay can become behavioral, stemming from frustration of not being understood.

An IEP is a living document that is revisited every year in order to determine its viability, and every effort is made by the education team to provide the least restrictive environment for the child. During the meeting everyone discusses what they think needs improvement and would like to see change.

Every year the meeting ends in one of three conclusions: Either the child is found to still need the services provided, or the child needs to add services or frequency of services, or the child no longer needs an IEP. These meetings and the needed evaluations are made by the professionals (child psychologist, followed by a Special Ed teacher, Speech Therapist, OT, or PT) that come to do formal assessments at home or at school (in the case of an initial evaluation) or the teachers and therapists at school that are in constant contact with the child and know what has been improving and what will need more work or different strategies, including the school social worker or preschool director if a child is under 5.

Most people wait until the child turns 3 in order to request an evaluation from the DOE, when in fact, it can be requested as soon as the child turns two and a half. The benefit in requesting an evaluation a bit earlier is that this process takes a long time and the more services a child receives before entering Kindergarten, the more likely it will be that the child will overcome some, if not all, the concerns if the child has a simple IEP that lists just speech or Physical Therapy as the prescribed service. All children are categorized as "preschooler with a disability" if they have an IEP, even if

there is no diagnosis and what they need is minimal to reach their educational goals; it is a blanket statement and there is no diagnosis or stigma behind it, so parents shouldn't be alarmed to see that. Once the child no longer needs services, the document will read "preschooler/student without a disability"

In order to request an evaluation, parents need to follow a few steps and be prepared to be persistent, staying on top of everyone who is handling the case will ensure you don't wait for a year. It is wise to enlist your child's preschool director and their teacher; they should be familiar with this process, but for reference please see this list:

1. Make a letter to the school district, citing your concerns and requesting an evaluation packet, make sure to include your child's name and date of birth, as well as your name, address and phone number. Make a few copies for your records.
2. Take the letter in person to the designated CPSE district, this way they will give you the packet on the spot which shaves a few weeks off the process.

An IEP is not an instrument of doom, as some parents erroneously believe; its purpose is to provide all the help necessary for a child to succeed in school and in society at large.

3. Do not sign anything from the packet, this gets done during the initial evaluation with someone from the agency you will select out of the listing they provide.
4. Choose an evaluation site to conduct the evaluation, I highly recommend to schedule all evaluations and observations at the child's school as much as possible; it is likely that the child will have different behaviors when in a group setting versus in the comfort of home. The more

information is provided to and observed by the specialists, the more accurate the education plan will be.

5. Receive and go over the evaluation summary that the site will send you via mail and speak to them should you have any concerns or if they forgot to include crucial information such as delays at birth or existing diagnosis, both of which have weight in a service determination.
6. Attend the meeting.
7. Follow up on recommendations.

During the year when the child turns 5 there is a "turning 5 meeting" which basically means that the child is reassessed and transferred from CPSE (Committee for Preschool Special Education) to CSE (Committee for Special Education). With the right supports, adequate professionals and follow up, every child will do an amazing job during their school years.

Margarycel E. Nunez, MASSED., is an accredited preschool administrator and proud mother-of-three, one of whom has Down Syndrome.



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Planning a Trust for Your Special Needs Child

Ensuring legal and financial care to make sure your vulnerable child is protected

By Anthony Corrao

If you have a child with special needs, you've probably stayed up at night with unique concerns about the future. One natural concern is who will take care of your child if you are unable to do so. Another major concern for parents of special needs children is how much it will cost to care for your child and who will pay for it. Even if you are around, the need to care for special needs children may continue into their adult years. Here are some tips for creating a plan that will help ensure your child is protected and cared for:

Set up a special needs trust

A special needs trust will formalize decisions about your child's care after you pass away. This is an important step. Without a special needs trust established before your death, other people, or even the courts, will make decisions for your child. A special needs trust provides for your child—the beneficiary. The funds in a special needs trust are allocated toward the cost of caregivers, education, travel, and medical expenses not covered by Medicaid or other government programs.

Special needs trusts are complex legal documents. Each trust is set up to meet your child's unique needs. They must comply with state laws and government agency rules. There are also costs associated with establishing and managing the trust, which you'll need to budget for properly. Consulting a lawyer who specializes in this area can help you understand and set up a special needs trust, and manage it safely.

Choose your trustee carefully

A trustee is the person you choose to administer the trust with for the purposes specified in the trust. You'll need to designate a trustee to oversee the special needs trust, and that person pays service providers and other vendors directly from the trust for goods and services involved in your child's care. He or she will also decide how much money your child gets out of the trust.

The job of the trustee is extremely

important. Choose this person wisely—the trustee should understand your wishes for your child, is someone you trust, and is willing to accept the long-term commitment and responsibilities of being a trustee.

Consider how the trust will be funded

A well-executed special needs trust should protect the assets for the benefit of your child. Assets in the trust invested in stocks or mutual funds will be affected by market swings and volatility. Working with a financial advisor to create a diversified portfolio may give you some comfort during tumultuous periods in the market.

Another method people choose to fund a special needs trust is with life insurance. There are many different types of life insurance to choose from. I recommend consulting with a financial advisor to learn about the options and which type of life insurance might be best suited for your specific circumstances, goals, and concerns.

Important documents

Another often overlooked step it is to prepare some important documents to guide the trustee and future caregivers. This will help them honor your wishes for your child's care. These documents might include:

A life care plan or letter of intent. While not a legal document, it can be very important. This document should include every aspect of day-to-day care requirements for your child, including dietary needs and restrictions. It should mention family dynamics that might make care challenging. These instructions should be given to family members, caregivers, guardians, trustees, or anyone else who will be regularly involved in your child's care.

Beneficiary designations. If you set up any additional trust funds, make sure family members know who your other beneficiaries are so there's no dispute about trust fund assets.

Last will and testament

This is separate from the trust, but your lawyer should prepare it with the trust in mind.



You should also have a list of caregivers and successor trustees or guardians. These are people whose commitment you already have, in writing, to accept these roles.

Communication is key

Talk to your family members about the trust, the life care plan, and other important documents so they understand their roles. They'll need the names and contact information of your attorney and trustees who aren't family members. Also, make certain family members know where they can find these documents you've prepared.

Planning for the future of your special needs child can be challenging. You can ensure peace of mind for you and your family by following these tips early and updating your care plan and other documents as needed.



Anthony N. Corrao is President of Wealth Management and Director of Corporate Education at Manhattan Ridge Advisors. For over 25 years he has helped families move towards their financial goals by developing financial, educational, and retirement planning strategies.

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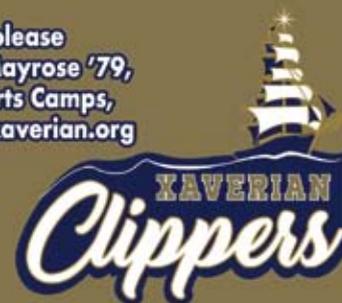
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laries, ideal for school age learners. The Young Artist Programs in classical training formats incorporate concept development guidance while exploring techniques & color theories, ideal for serious learners age 9+. To prepare for portfolio and auditions with customized schedule, please consult with Mrs. Ma for private lessons. Visit our FB page to see our student gallery. Illustration/cartooning in the April spring break are available.

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Spring is “ACHOO” Season

Help for allergy sufferers of all ages

By Dr. Marigold Castillo

The long-anticipated winter thaw is just around the corner, and we will soon see sprigs of beautiful flowers and blooming buds across trees and fields in Queens. Soon, bright green leaves and colorful flowers will pop up everywhere, from Forest Park to Cunningham Park, to the boulevards and your local streets.

Amidst the beauty and exhilaration of spring is a nuisance that many of our family members suffer from all the way to summer and autumn: seasonal allergies.

Seasonal allergies attributed to the changes in the seasons are primarily due to pollen from plants and trees. Queens is mainly populated by London plane trees as well as a variety of maples. Allergy from the usually heavy pollen count during the months of March through June (much earlier in the Southern states) causes moderate to severe symptoms for more than 50 million Americans each year. That translates to boxes of tissues, millions of sneezes, itchy eyes, dripping noses, sore and raspy throats, dry mouth, itchy skin, et al.

To make matters worse, many seasonal or pollen-related allergy sufferers become sensitive and have other allergens triggered at the same time, worsening their symptoms. This means that in the springtime, many who are allergic to pollen will have heightened allergy symptoms from mold, ragweed, dust, mite, cigarette smoke, and more. An allergy sufferer’s immune system reacts to these allergy triggers, causing an immediate and sometimes prolonged immune reaction, such as the release of histamine, triggering the allergy symptoms.

If some of the remedies are not helping you or your family, please consult your physician. Your doctor may order an allergy test (usually via simple blood work or skin



test). If over-the-counter allergy medications fail to relieve symptoms, your physician may order a more aggressive approach such as one or more of the following:

- Allergy shots
- Mast cell inhibitors/ cromolyn sodium (Nasal crom) (Nasal crom)
- Leukotriene inhibitors (Singulair)
- Nebulizer therapy

Here are some simple remedies and ways to avoid allergy symptoms:

- Close windows and doors of the house at all times.
- Discourage children from bringing clothing and footwear exposed to the outdoors inside the house, especially the bedroom, where pollen and other allergens could settle. This includes school bags, hats, jackets, etc.
- Vacuum and wipe down the household daily. Monitor household family members’ foot traffic after coming from outside.
- Wash clothes frequently. On the side of precaution, use hypoallergenic detergents.

- Use mild saline rinse or spray to clean the nostrils
- Use over-the-counter medication such as Zyrtec, Allegra, Claritin, and Benedryl.

Always check instruction labels and consult your pharmacist and health provider.

Strengthen the immune system by decreasing stress, as well as getting adequate sleep, good nutrition, and sufficient hydration.

For severe allergy sufferers, using a mask outdoors may help alleviate some of the symptoms.

Dr. Marigold Castillo is board-certified by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and is an assistant professor of Pediatrics at the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell. She is an attending physician at Cohen Children’s Medical Center, specializing in Adolescent Medicine. She is a medical officer/contractor at the United States Merchant Marine Academy and for the NYC Board of Education’s school-based health centers.

The Arts

A critical component for a child's education and development

By Jean Sheff

Most parents have heard of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education, but maybe not as many know about STEAM (science, technology, education, art, and math) education. Some educators contend that adding the "A" for art is essential for a child's full development and education.

Why are the arts important for children?

Arts education encompasses many disciplines including music, drama, dance, design, and the visual arts. Yet, it is more than just studying specific disciplines, an arts education can teach children to generally use their imagination to solve problems and approach their work in a variety of ways.

"The arts teach discipline, focus, cooperation, and creativity—a trait that 72 percent of employers say is the number one skill they seek when hiring," says Mara Manus, executive director of New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). "Students involved in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, and arts engagement makes low-income students more than twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education."

Many educators agree that arts education can help build determination and resilience in children and can also help them master important skills. Yet, in many school districts funding for arts programs have been slashed to the bone.

Providing financial support

"Through the Arts Education Program, NYSCA provides \$3 million statewide in dedicated support to community arts education programs as well as hands-on grade pre-K-12 in-school instruction," Manus says. In addition, she says the agency provides nearly \$500,000 to support scholarships and training programs for underserved communities and \$150,000 to support community music schools.

Manus says NYSCA sees the impact of



this support in so many ways: students build self-esteem and confidence as they learn and excel at new talents; they cultivate empathy as they study the viewpoints of diverse characters through theater and literature; they develop diligence as they practice an instrument or polish dance moves; they learn to express themselves in healthy ways as they write, paint or create their own films and videos.

NYSCA in-school grantees must all meet state learning standards. "We are continually

impressed by the innovative ways they connect the arts to school curricula—from a mummy-inspired dance segment tying into a social studies class about Egypt to architecture instruction that integrates math and science concepts as students build their own bridges," Manus says.

Throughout the city, there are so many opportunities for children to explore the arts through NYSCA's programs. According to their website: "NYSCA's Arts Education

Program cultivates the creativity of all New Yorkers, from preschoolers to seniors, in both school and community settings. Arts instruction empowers students of all ages and backgrounds to build hands-on skills in a range of disciplines, such as mastering a musical instrument, experimenting with a collage technique or learning a new dance choreography.”

Manus says that it’s also worth noting that museums often have special family programming during school vacations, and local libraries may be able to provide passes for museum admission.

How parents can help

Manus says parents can encourage children of all ages to explore the arts by sharing experiences with them and helping them pursue artistic interests through community arts education programs.

Here is just a small sampling of New York City arts programs for parents to explore with their children:

- **The Art Farm** theartfarms.org
- **The Brooklyn Museum**

“Students involved in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, and arts engagement makes low-income students more than twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.”

brooklynmuseum.org

- **Carnegie Hall Kids** careniehall.org
- **Children’s Museum of the Arts** cmany.org
- **Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM)** cmom.org
- **Church Street School for Music and Art** churchstreetschool.org
- **The Craft Studio** craftstudionyc.com
- **JCC Manhattan** jccmanhattan.org
- **Private Picassos** privatepicassos.com
- **Symphony Space** symphonyspace.org
- **Theatreworks USA** twusa.org
- **WeBop at Jazz at Lincoln Center** academy.jazz.org/webop
- **Young Audiences New York** yany.org
- **92Y** 92y.org

Anywhere, anytime

“An increasing number of arts and cultural

organizations also have rich digital offerings, making even snow days or sick days opportunities to engage with the arts, often for free or at a low cost,” says Manus.

For example, she points out that the Metropolitan Museum of Art website offers a digital search of its collection, and you can download more than 400,000 public domain images that can be “remixed” to create your own works of art. The New York Philharmonic website includes free video of recent concerts.

Audiences of all ages have greater access to the arts than ever before, says Manus, and this means that sharing the arts with children is an attainable and deeply worthwhile goal.

Jean Sheff is editor of Westchester Family and an enthusiastic supporter of children’s art programs.



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Kids and VAPING

What parents need to know about this dangerous trend

By Tanni Haas

Most parents have heard about vaping, but many are unsure about the answers to basic questions, such as how many kids actually do it, and whether or not it's something they should be concerned about. Here are the answers to some of the most common questions parents ask about this trend, based on the latest scientific research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Who vapes?

Twenty percent (one in five) of all high school students across the U.S. vape regularly, according to the research. For middle school students, that number is five percent (one in 20).

Those figures have increased dramatically over the past few years. In 2011, only 1.5 percent of high school students and less than one percent of middle school students vaped regularly. Put differently: more and more kids are starting to vape, and they are doing so at an alarmingly younger age.

What are kids ingesting?

Kids prefer either flavored vaping liquids with nicotine or marijuana.

The by far most popular vaping product, Juul, contains a lot of nicotine. Each Juul pod has as much nicotine as one full pack of regular cigarettes. Kids are especially attracted to vaping liquids that taste like alcoholic drinks, chocolate, fruit, menthol, and sweets.

When and where are they vaping?

In a word, everywhere, and any time they can get away with it.

They do it at school—in bathrooms, in hallways, even during class. Many kids admit to exhaling the vapor into their shirts or doing it when the teacher isn't looking.



They also do it at parties, where they try each other's vaping devices and liquids. They host so-called "cloud competitions" where they demonstrate and video each other's vaping tricks, like blowing smoke rings or creating funnels of smoke that look like tornadoes, and then upload videos to social media, especially YouTube.

Why vape?

When asked why they vape, most kids say because it's considered cool among their friends.

They enjoy entertaining their friends with tricks and watching other kids perform tricks on social media. They also do it to escape from boredom: They do it when they can't come up with anything better to do, just like constantly and mindlessly fidgeting with their phones and checking their texts and social media. Finally, they think it's harmless and very different from smoking cancer-causing regular cigarettes. More than 70 percent of middle and high school students have seen online and print advertising making that claim, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What are the effects?

Contrary to what kids believe, all vaping devices and liquids are bad for their health, especially those that contain nicotine, like Juul.

Nicotine is highly addictive and negatively impacts kids' ability to focus and learn. It also affects their mood and impulse control. Vaping increases kids' heart rate and blood pressure, causes the same kind of lung irritation like regular cigarettes, and can lead to coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.

Kids who vape are four times more likely than those who don't vape to start smoking regular cigarettes, according to the research. Instead of being a substitute for smoking, as many people think, vaping can actually lead kids to start smoking, researchers found. Finally, many vaping devices are of poor quality. There have been numerous incidents of exploding devices that have caused burns and other injuries.

Tanni Haas, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Communication Arts, Sciences, and Disorders at the City University of New York – Brooklyn College.

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BIG BONES

The American Museum of Natural History has brought a new exhibition to life, “T:rex: The Ultimate Predator.” In honor of the museum’s 150th anniversary, they went big by unleashing the killer-predator T.rex last month. In this exhibit, you will be able to see a T.rex from its early, defenseless hatchling years to a fully grown massive adult. With the most scientifically accurate display of a 43 ft. T.rex on display, you will be in awe of what this historic creature was capable of. Not only was this dinosaur enormous but it weighed 6-9 tons. At this exhibit you will be able to build a 66 million old T.rex

through a virtual reality experience and interact with a life-size animation of the dinosaur reacting to visitors passing by. Whether you are a T.rex enthusiast or know little about these amazing creatures, this engaging exhibit will reel you in with life-like displays and information on discoveries that you never would have expected. The Museum of Natural History’s objective is to spark curiosity and a sense of exploration—“T.rex:The Ultimate Predator” truly represents that and is definitely worth seeing. This exhibit will run through August 9. Prices vary. *American Museum of Natural History [Central Park West & 79th Street, Manhattan. amnh.org]*

2 TUESDAY

Ping Pong Game Time. Every Tuesday at the Glen Oaks Library, you will get to meet your match at Ping Pong. Have a sporty time with the family around a Ping Pong table and show off your skills. Everyone is welcome, however, children under 13 years old must be accompanied by a guardian. April 2, April 9, April 16, April 23, April 30, May 7, May 14, May 21, May 28, June 4, June 11, June 18, June 25, 4:30–5:30pm. Free. *Glen Oaks Library, Queens Library at Glen Oaks, Union Turnpike, Glen Oaks. queenslibrary.org.*

Crafty Tuesday: Earth Day.

After school on Tuesday, come to the Rochdale Public Library where you can get crafty. Get to do a newly themed craft each Tuesday with your pals. Don't miss out with some Earth Day art by making some beautiful, colorful crafts! You will even get to make paper mache globes! Another day, you can make your own "I Spy" page—there are no limits to what you can create! Tuesdays, 3:30–4:30pm, April 2–30. Free. *Rochdale Library, 169-09 137th Avenue, Jamaica. queenslibrary.org.*

Tech Time. Kids can come by Broadway Library to advance their computer skills and explore new apps using the library's resources of laptops and tablets. Here you can discover stop motion animation, digital comic books, drawing apps, and more! Make sure that you get here early because space is limited. April 2, April 9, April 16, April 23, April 30, 4–5pm. Free. *Broadway: Queens Library, 40-20 Broadway, Long Island City, NY 11103. queenslibrary.org.*

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 calendar@newyorkfamily.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!



Carnival for the Kiddos

Nothing says fun like a carnival to kick off spring, with colors, music, and rides—you won't know where to start. At Queens County Farm Museum, they are holding the "Apple Blossom Children's Carnival" and it is going to be packed with fun. Down at the farm, kids will be able to go on carnival rides, hayrides, and participate in midway games. With your admission ticket, you will be able to ride all the carnival rides that your heart desires and get to roam the farm. After exploring the farm and getting your share of the

rides, your ticket will also allow you to get started with creative crafts at the Con Edison Ecology booth. And just when you thought that this carnival had it all, it also will be holding a petting zoo and pony rides for an extra cost. In addition, there will be food vendors in case you get hungry from jumping from activity to activity. Recommended for kids 2 to 12 years. This event will be held from 11am-6pm on the dates of April: 6, 7, 13, 14. Starting at \$10. *Queens County Farm Museum [73-50 Little Neck Parkway. queensfarm.org.]*

Grades 3 and 4 Book Club. Join the Queens Library's Hillcrest Branch Bookclub! Now, kids in grades 3 & 4 get to pick and read a book each month. The club will meet every 4 weeks to discuss different plot points and important topics the book raises! Get your reading glasses on and immerse yourself in a world of literature with a community

that will encourage all readers! March 5, April 2, 5–5:45pm. Free. *Queens Library at Hillcrest, Union Turnpike, Fresh Meadows. queenslibrary.org.*

3 WEDNESDAY

Teen Program: Teen Movie Wednesdays. At Forest Hills, join the fun for a family teen movie event where you can see a variety of movies with your neighborhood friends. Go ahead and take a mid-week after school break and have some fun watching your favorite films with your friends. Wednesdays, 3:30–6pm, beginning April 3. Free. *Queens Library at Forest Hills, 71st Avenue,*

Forest Hills. queenslibrary.org.

Switch Gaming At Woodside.

Put down the books and play Nintendo Switch at the Woodside Library! Here, you can play casual games with your friends, or if you are feeling competitive, join the tournament to see who will be the ultimate champion. There will be plenty of fun and gaming! April 3, April 10, April 17, April 24, Free. *Woodside Library, 54-22 Skillman Ave, Woodside. queenslibrary.org.*

Intro To Martial Arts: Hung

Gar. If your child is interested in getting a start in Hung Gar, Cambria Heights Library is

teaching the basics. Start to learn about Hung Gar, where each session will introduce a new aspects of this art form. For ages 11 and up. April 3, April 10, 4–5 pm. Free. *Queens Library at Cambria Heights, Linden Boulevard, Cambria Heights. queenslibrary.org.*

5 FRIDAY

Mary Poppins Returns. Many have grown up with the iconic movie Mary Poppins starring Julie Andrews singing supercalifragilisticexpialidocious! Now, Mary Poppins has returned to screens with a new version to this miraculous nanny tale! See this new film at the Corona Library with your family and experience this timeless movie. 3:15-5:30pm. Free. *Queens Library at Corona, 104th Street, Corona. queenslibrary.org.*

Family Film Friday. At North Hills, join the fun for a family film movie event where you can see Ralph Breaks the Internet with your family and friends. This is a great way to kick off the weekend with an eventful Friday night! 3-5pm. Free. *North Hills Library, 57-04 Marathon Pkwy, Flushing. queenslibrary.org*

City Center On The Move. To commemorate the 75th anniversary of New York City Center, NYC Parks Arts and Culture & Fun are making performing arts accessible for everyone in the city. There will be plenty of fun for all by bringing dancing and singing performances throughout all the boroughs with Bronx-born performers and other musical New York natives. Free. *Lost Battalion Hall Recreation Center, 1138, 93-29 Queens Boulevard, Rego Park. nycitycenter.org.*

6 SATURDAY

NYRR Open Run: Astoria Park. Throw on your sneakers and join in the NYRR Open Run fun! Every weekend run or walk New York City's beautiful neighborhood parks. Open to all ages and



Green is Great!

The Earth is our home. With that being said, it is our responsibility to clean up, tend to it, and take care of it with kindness. April is a great time to recognize and celebrate our earth with beauty blooming everywhere—flowers, green grass, and trees turning the perfect hue of color. This year for Earth Day, celebrate at The Museum of the City of New York by engaging with the many activities that commemorate the environment. Go on a scavenger hunt in the exhibition Activist New York, where you will learn plenty of helpful tips to help the environment. Aside from the hunt, there will be plenty of other activities that will teach you about our planet. This event is a great one for the entire family because not only is it fun, it's informative and vital that we teach our little ones how to protect our habitat. This event will be held from 11am-2pm on April 22nd (Earth Day). Free with museum admission. *Museum of the City of New York [1220 5th Avenue, Manhattan. mcny.org.]*

distances ranging between 2.5 - 3.0 miles long, the NYRR Open Run is a great activity for the whole family! Saturdays, 9-10am. Free. *Astoria Park, 100 Hoyt Avenue North, Astoria. nycgov-parks.org.*

Apple Blossom Children's Carnival. Celebrate springtime with a carnival at the Queens County Farm Museum. There will be carnival rides, hay rides, and activities for all! Have good old-fashioned fun with the whole family with Tilt-a-Whirls and Apple Orchards. April 6, April 7, April 13, April 14, 11 am – 6 pm. Advanced Tickets: \$15, Door Tickets: \$20. *Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Parkway, Queens. eventbrite.com.*

Stop 'N' Swap With GrowNYC.

Give items that you no longer use a new life with Stop N' Swap! Bring your own clean, reusable, and portable items such as clothes, toys, housewares, games, books, and take home something "new-to-you." If you don't have anything to bring you can still come out and browse! Stop N' Swap locations vary! April 6, April 13, April 14, April 18, 12-3pm. Free. 212-788-7900. *grownyc.org/swap.*

7 SUNDAY

Apple Blossom Children's Carnival. See April 6

8 MONDAY

National Library Week Out-

reach with DJ Preme. What better way to celebrate National Library Week than to be at the library? Join Cambria Heights Library as we celebrate National Library Week with live music by DJ Preme. This will be a fun-filled time to for the entire family. 5-6:15pm. Free. *Queens Library at Cambria Heights, Linden Boulevard, Cambria Heights. queenslibrary.org.*

9 TUESDAY

Crafty Tuesday: Earth Day. See April 2

Ping Pong Game Time. See April 2

National Library Week Outreach with DJ Preme. See April 8

Tech Time. See April 2

Kids'/Teens' Jewelry Making Program. Fashion is one of the greatest ways that we can express ourselves! Make your own jewelry with custom designs and colors that are perfect for you! It is a great way to get creative and make something that you crafted yourself. 3-4pm. Free. *Queens Library at South Hollis, Hollis Avenue, Jamaica. queenslibrary.org.*

10 WEDNESDAY

National Library Week Outreach with DJ Preme. See April 8

Switch Gaming At Woodside. See April 3

Intro To Martial Arts: Hung Gar. See April 3

Spring Health Challenge. Spring is here and it is a great time to get out and active after a season of staying indoors from the cold. Come learn about staying healthy from an early age at this workshop. There is no better time to start instilling a healthy lifestyle for your child. 3:30-4:30pm. Free. *Queens Library*

at South Hollis, Hollis Avenue, Jamaica. queenslibrary.org.

11 THURSDAY

National Library Week Outreach with DJ Preme. See April 8

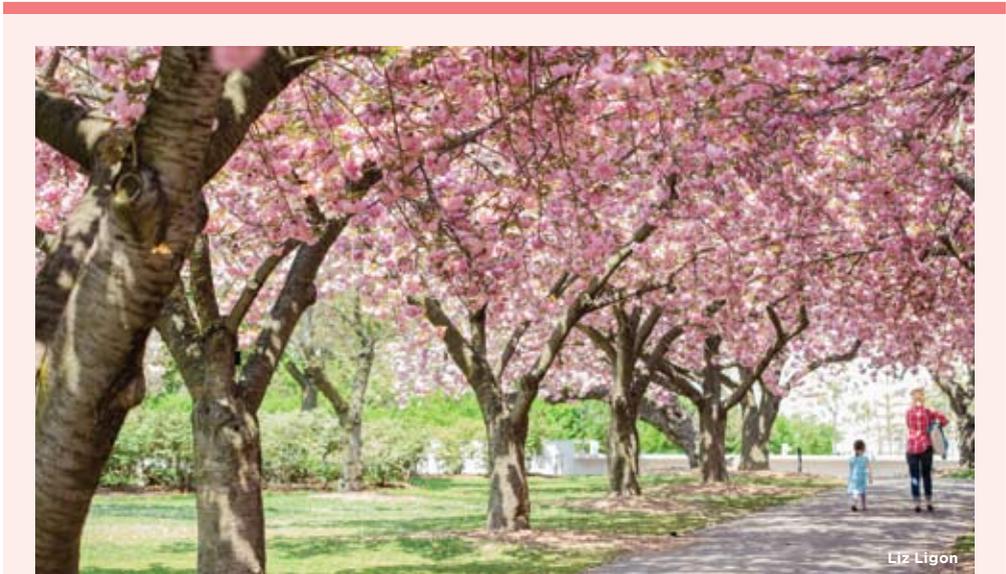
12 FRIDAY

National Library Week Outreach with DJ Preme. See April 8

Toddler Learning Center. Raising a kid isn't easy. That's why the Queens Library is offering a free workshop where parents can learn from childhood professionals. These professionals will go over issues like nutrition, education, speech development, and social interaction skills. Come out to learn the best parenting techniques from the best! April 12, April 19, April 26, May 3, May 10, 10:30-11:45am. Free. *Queens Library at Forest Hills, 71st Avenue, Forest Hills. queenslibrary.org.*

National Library Week. What better way to celebrate National Library Week than to be at the library? Join Laurelton Library as we celebrate National Library Week with live music by DJ Preme. This will be a fun-filled time to for the entire family. 4-5:15 pm. Free. *Queens Library at Laurelton, 225th Street, Laurelton. queenslibrary.org.*

Pajama Story Time: Spring Has Sprung. Does your child love animals or have a knack for arts and crafts? If so, come on over to the Queens Zoo for their Pajama Storytime event. Here, they can hang out with all the zoo's hairy and scaly creatures, play games, and create crafts. At the end of the night, they will leave with a cookie in their hand and a bedtime story in their head. This spring instead of watching a movie or spending a night at the museum, spend a night at the Queens Zoo! 5:30-8pm. \$20. *Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th Street,*



Fleeting Beauty

It is almost that time of the year again for the majestic Japanese cherry blossoms to bloom at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. This festival celebrates the beautiful Sakura Matsuri as they bloom. Walk the gardens and see their fleeting beauty as you celebrate the coming of spring and the outdoors. These cherry blossoms are definitely something to celebrate and admire. This customary Japanese flower not only holds great

beauty but carries many traditions as well. So many that the Brooklyn Botanic Garden has planned 60 events and performances to celebrate their great bloom. There will be performances, tea ceremonies, games, and more to keep the whole family happy. This event will be held from 10am-6pm on April 28 & 29. Prices vary. *Brooklyn Botanic Garden [990 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn. bbg.org.]*

Corona. (718) 271-1500. queenszoo.com.

The Lorax. Kick off the weekend by seeing the Lorax after school at the Middle Village Library! Bring your family and friends to watch this fun-filled movie and have a great time. Meet new friends and enjoy hanging out with familiar faces! 3-4:45pm. Free. *Middle Village Library, 72-31 Metropolitan Avenue, Middle Village. queenslibrary.org.*

Henna and Fingernail Painting. No need to get a mani pedi when you can come to the South Ozone Park Library for a fun time spent painting nails and decorating your hands with henna designs. This will be a great opportunity to mingle with others within the neighborhood while getting to do some creative

art on your hands! 4-5 pm. Free. *Queens Library at South Ozone Park, Rockaway Boulevard, South Ozone Park. queenslibrary.org.*

June 1, 10:30am-11:30pm. \$175/ \$150 for members. *Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th Street, Corona. (718) 271-1500. tickets.wcs.org.*

13 SATURDAY
NYRR Open Run: Astoria Park. See April 6

Apple Blossom Children's Carnival. See April 6

Stop 'N' Swap With GrowNYC. See April 6

Stroller Safari. Come for an early morning at the zoo with your child. There will be plenty of learning activities for your little one to take part in, like learning their numbers, colors, and using their sensory system of hearing, feeling, and smell! April 13, April 27, May 11, May 18, May 25,

PJ Storytime At The Zoo (Ages 4 and up). Start off with a spring-time craft when you first arrive at the PJ storytime, then head into a VIP tour around the Queen's Zoo at night! After, you will be able to see animal encounters within the classroom and top it off by spending the evening with your family listening to stories. April 13, May 17, 5:30 - 8 pm. \$20/ \$15 members. *Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th Street, Corona. 718-271-1500. tickets.wcs.org.*

Special Movie: "The Jackie Robinson Story." Calling all baseball fans! Celebrate Jackie Robinson Day with this movie starring Jackie Robinson himself

calendar APRIL

and Ruby Dee. This special movie night will be packed with intriguing facts about the baseball star and will give you a closer look at his life. 1–4pm. Free. *Rosedale Library, 144-20 243rd Street, Rosedale. queenslibrary.org.*

14 SUNDAY

Apple Blossom Children's Carnival. See April 6

16 TUESDAY

Ping Pong Game Time. See April 2

PJ Storytime At The Zoo (Ages 4 and up). See April 13

Tech Time. See April 2

Crafts to Celebrate Easter.

Easter is around the corner and it is always a great time to dive into some colorful crafts. Be part of this storytime at the Astoria Library where you will be able to create greeting cards and other Easter-themed crafts! 4:30 – 5:30 pm. Free. *Astoria Library, 14-01 Astoria Boulevard, Long Island City. queenslibrary.org.*

17 WEDNESDAY

Switch Gaming At Woodside. See April 3

18 THURSDAY

Kids' Easter Egg Hunt Program. Nothing says Easter than the customary Easter Egg hunt! Be part of the fun as you search high and low for the candy-filled eggs that everyone will want to stash in their colorful, woven basket. This awesome family activity will be great for everyone and will be memorable for years to come. 2–3pm. Free. *Queens Library at South Hollis, Hollis Avenue, Jamaica. queenslibrary.org.*

19 FRIDAY

Toddler Learning Center. See April 12

PJ Storytime At The Zoo (Ages 4 and up). See April 13

Happy Spring Game Time. If you are thrilled by games, join the Auburndale Library for an afternoon of checkers, chess, Connect Four, Jenga, jigsaw puzzles, mancala for kids, Monopoly, Scrabble, World Hangman, Yu-Gi-Oh, and more! Tune up your game strategies and learn new ones when you face other competitors. 2:30–5:30pm. Free. *Auburndale, 25-55 Francis Lewis Boulevard, Flushing. queenslibrary.org.*

Celebrate Earth Day! Test your Earth Day knowledge and see if you are doing your part to help the earth at Poppenhusen Library. Learn the importance of why it is essential to care for the earth and take a recycling quiz where you can win prizes. You may just be the grand winner! This is for school-age kids, those under 8 years must be accompanied by an adult. 4–5pm. Free. *Poppenhusen, 121-23 14th Avenue, College Point. queenslibrary.org.*

20 SATURDAY

NYRR Open Run: Astoria Park. See April 6

Happy Spring Game Time. See April 19

PJ Storytime At The Zoo (Ages 4 and up). See April 13

Barnyard Egg Hunt. Bring a basket, a smile, and come up to the Queens County Farm Museum's Barnyard Egg Hunt! Hunt for Easter eggs, hop on a hayride, and play with furry farm animals. Play games, participate in activities, and have fun with the whole family! 11am–3pm. \$10. *Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Parkway, Queens. eventbrite.com.*

Global Mashup 4: Bluegrass Meets Cuba. Two bands and one big open dancefloor! For a night, learn some new moves and

mingle on the dance floor when Bluegrass music and Afro-Cuban rhythms come out to Flushing Town Hall. With square dancing tunes performed by Buddy Merriam and the Back Roads, and hip-swiveling songs played by the rhythmic Afro-Cuban Band, Conjunto Guantanamo, you won't know what hit you once you slip on your dancing shoes. Learn to dance and jive to music from two different cultures and watch the pair combine their two musical styles together at the end! 7pm. Adult Tickets: \$16, Student Tickets: \$10, Teen Tickets: Free. *Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Boulevard, Flushing. flushingtownhall.org.*

21 SUNDAY

Happy Spring Game Time. See April 19

22 MONDAY

Earth Day: Paper Your Walls! Be part of the Earth Day celebration by bringing your enthusiasm to the Rosedale Library in Queens. Create silhouette masterpieces from magazines and newspapers to make a one-of-a-kind art piece that you can keep as a reminder to take care of the earth. Teen session will be at 3pm and children's session will be at 4pm. 3–5 pm. Free. *Rosedale Library, 144-20 243rd Street, Rosedale. queenslibrary.org.*

23 TUESDAY

Earth Day: Paper Your Walls! See April 22

Crafty Tuesday: Earth Day. See April 2

Ping Pong Game Time. See April 2

Tech Time. See April 2

Queens Zoo: Spring Break Wild-Life Mini Camp. No school? No problem! Come out to the zoo and get to know the hairy and scaly creatures in a whole

new way! Though animals may seem fundamentally different than humans, they're not as different as we tend to think. Find out how these awesome creatures are a lot like us this spring break! Daily, April 23–26, 9 am–3pm. \$300. *Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St, Corona. (718) 271-1500. tickets. wcs.org.*

Spring Wildlife Mini-Camp.

You may think that animals and humans are nowhere near the same, but in fact, we are quite similar! Just like us, animals eat, play, sleep, and spend time with their family. At the Queen's Zoo explore the many similarities and learn about animals from a new perspective. Daily, April 23–26, 3 pm. \$300. *Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th Street, Corona. 718-271-1500. tickets.wcs.org.*

24 WEDNESDAY

Queens Zoo: Spring Break Wild-Life Mini Camp.

See April 23

Switch Gaming At Woodside. See April 3

Spring Wildlife Mini-Camp. See April 23

Seedlings & A Story: Celebrating Spring & Earth Day. If you have ever wanted to learn more about plants this storytime is a great way start. Children will plant seeds in upcycled containers and adults will make DIY plastic water bottle planters. You are more than welcome to bring your own supplies, but materials will be provided. 1:30–2:15 pm. Free. *Queens Library at Rochdale Village, 137th Avenue, Jamaica. queenslibrary.org.*

25 THURSDAY

Queens Zoo: Spring Break Wild-Life Mini Camp.

See April 23

Spring Wildlife Mini-Camp. See April 23

Family Movie: “Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation.”

Come to the Briarwood Library to watch Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation (2018, PG). Watch the story unfold as the monster family decides to take a summer vacation on a cruise ship and get involved in all the ship activities—a great laugh for everyone! 3–5pm. Free. *Queens Library at Briarwood, Main Street, Briarwood. queenslibrary.org.*

26 FRIDAY

Queens Zoo: Spring Break Wild-Life Mini Camp.
See April 23

Seedlings & A Story: Celebrating Spring & Earth Day. See April 24

Spring Wildlife Mini-Camp.
See April 23

Virtual field trip: Behind the Scenes of “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.” Have you ever wondered how they made the iconic Spider-Man movie? Discovery Education has produced an incredible 32-minute behind-the-scenes Virtual Field Trip about the making of Spider-Man. Learn how directors and animators made this famous comic book story come to life with additional interviews from cast

and crew members in this clip. 2:30–3pm. Free. *Queens Library at Hillcrest, Union Turnpike, Fresh Meadows. queenslibrary.org.*

27 SATURDAY

NYRR Open Run: Astoria Park.
See April 6

Virtual field trip: Behind the Scenes of “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.” See April 26

Stroller Safari. See April 13

Workshop Mornings @ MoMI. All visitors, small and large, are invited to explore the Museum of Moving Images before the crowds roll in. Tour the exhibits and participate in themed art projects with museum educators. Take advantage of all the MoMI has to offer while also enjoying a light breakfast of refreshments with your own little artist. April 27, May 25, June 29, 9–10:30am. \$5. *Museum of Moving Image, 36-01 35th Avenue, Astoria. movingimage.us.*

Earth Day Beautification. Pull on your working boots and get ready to beautify New York City’s third largest park, Forest Park. With The Friends of Forest Park, beautify the park’s formal gardens and tidy up the grounds around the playground. This

Earth Day, celebrate by giving back to the planet that has given so much to you! 10 am – 2 pm. Free. *Forest Park, Forest Park, Queens. 718–235–4462. nycgov-parks.org.*

28 SUNDAY

Virtual field trip: Behind the Scenes of “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.” See April 26

30 TUESDAY

Tech Time. See April 2

LONG-RUNNING Flight Of The Butterflies 3D.

Did you know that the monarch butterfly weighs less than a penny and makes one of the longest migrations across earth! Those were just a couple of incredible facts about monarch butterflies. Discover more about these incredible creature by following their journey through award winning cinematography and see how amazing they are. Daily. Free. *New York Hall Of Science, 47-01 111th Street, Corona. nysci.org.*

“Bionic Me” Exhibit. Explore how bionic technology has evolved when you visit the New York Hall of Science! The Hall’s new exhibit “Bionic Me,” will immerse visitors in medical and

industrial breakthroughs through hands-on displays and full-body experiences. All ages can control a robotic arm, see in the dark using night-vision, move a ball with just their mind, and more. Free with Hall admission. Daily, through May 5, 10am. *New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th Street, Corona. nysci.org.*

Nature Club (All Ages). Come to the Queen’s Zoo for an adventurous time at Nature Club. Through these free sessions, you will be able to venture out to nearby parks and get reconnected with nature by exploring with your family. Daily, through the month of April. 2–3:30 pm. Free with admission. *Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St, Corona. 718–271–1500. tickets.wcs.org.*

FURTHER AFIELD

T Rex: The Ultimate Predator. The American Museum of Natural History is bringing in a new exhibition that explores the tyrannosaur superfamily. Learn about the latest research by scientists, discoveries, fossils, and casts. Their engaging learning opportunities and virtual reality experience will surely not disappoint the kids. Daily. Prices Vary. *American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West & 79th Street, Manhattan. amnh.org.*

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Take a Real “Break” this Spring Break

By Danielle Sullivan

With just a few short weeks until spring break, many families are planning their vacations and getaways. But spring break doesn't have to include a trip or a big destination to be enjoyable. In fact, I tend to think that spring break should be just that—a break. After six consecutive weeks of school, with never-ending homework, projects, reports, presentations, quizzes, and tests (whew!), don't our kids deserve a long break? Furthermore, don't we?!

In our fast-paced digital world where students often have assignments due at all hours of the day and night, I sincerely hope that teachers and administrations give our kids a break, put a brake on assignments, and let them just enjoy these few days without deadlines. The point of spring break is to recharge and come back to school refreshed, ready to crush the last two months of school. A vacation should be a vacation, after all.

Planning activities shouldn't be a chore

for parents, either. Family oriented venues know that and hold special scheduling this week to accommodate families. If you are staying in the city this week, there are so many things to do. Science buffs may be interested in checking out “T. Rex: The Ultimate Predator” at the American Museum of Natural History, or the “Bionic Me” exhibit at the New York Hall of Science, which shows us the many medical and industrial advances in recent years.

Art enthusiasts can immerse themselves in Spring Art Colony at Children's Museum of the Arts. On the nature front, there are countless things to do at Coney Island (including magic), Central Park, and Prospect Park, if only hitting up each of the zoos and the aquarium alone. And it wouldn't be spring without the Orchid Show at New York Botanical Garden. If by some chance, we encounter more showers than sun during this week, the museums are loaded with fun and often free activities during spring break. (Check out our calendar jam-packed with

spring break activities!).

It's also worth remembering that every child relaxes and restores in a different way. One kid might be all about sports while another is into gaming and yet another would like to simply sleep late and watch movies or hang out with friends and enjoy each other's company. Each of your children may want to unwind in a different way from each other and you, too. Compromise works here, and luckily, we have many days to plan several activities or simply let the day take us where it will.

We are lucky enough to live in a city where we are never at a loss for things to do, and without the demands of school on our

kids, spring break is sure to be fun no matter what you plan.



Danielle Sullivan is a writer living in New York City. Follow her on Instagram @Deewrite.

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Baby's First Foods

Solid foods to consider offering your infant

Whether it's your first baby or you've done this before, it's a big day when you begin offering solid food to your infant.

Most babies begin eating first foods—also known as complementary foods—at the age of 6 months. This is no coincidence, according to Keli Hawthorne, MS, RD, LD, Director of Clinical Research, Department of Pediatrics, Dell Medical School.

“Around 6 months of age is the right time because the child is developmentally ready at this point: holding her head up, sitting with assistance, becoming interested in food by watching parents eat and opening her mouth wide when food is headed her way,” Hawthorne says.

Not only is baby physically able to start eating solid food, six months is also the time when the baby's iron and zinc stores from birth have diminished. These minerals are key nutrients necessary for baby's growth and brain development. Breast milk or infant formula does not provide enough on their own.

While the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends introducing solids at around six months, pediatricians can evaluate individual infants with their parents to determine readiness while still promoting the benefits of breastfeeding or infant formula.

Typical first foods

A generation ago, the rule of thumb was rice cereal, then other cereals, then veggies, fruits, and finally meats. But because nutrition science is constantly evolving as we make new discoveries, this is no longer the case.

“The AAP recognizes that there is no medical evidence that introducing solid foods in any particular order has any advantage,” Hawthorne says.

Back in the day, mothers were advised to offer vegetables before fruit. The thinking was that naturally sweet fruits might “spoil” a baby's taste buds and she would subsequently refuse vegetables.

“There's no evidence that if you introduce

fruits before veggies, your baby will develop a taste for sweet foods and reject veggies,” Hawthorne explains. “What is important is to expose your baby to a wide variety of healthy foods and textures.”

A surprising food to consider

Because baby's iron and zinc stores are dwindling at this time, consider serving meat as baby's first food.

“Meats are an excellent source of iron and zinc, nutrients that are especially important for a baby's growth, brain development, and immune function,” says Hawthorne. “The iron in meat is very well absorbed by babies and is easily used for growth and development. Research has shown that babies who receive meat as early as 6 months of age have better growth and psychomotor development—such as reaching developmental milestones—than those who didn't.”

Baby-led weaning—infant self-feeding—can work with home-cooked meat. For example, give baby a bit of crumbled ground beef, piece of steak, chicken drumstick, or even a pork or beef rib. While only about 10 percent of the meat (or just the juices) actually makes it into her stomach, she is experiencing the flavor!

And what about single-grain infant cereals?

“Although infant cereals have iron added to them most of the time, not all products on the market have iron included,” Hawthorne says. “Parents need to read labels and choose iron-rich infant cereals to meet their baby's nutritional needs. And the iron in cereals is not as well absorbed or utilized by your baby's body as the iron in meat.”

Of course, until your baby is 12 months old, the majority of her calories will come from milk or formula. Choosing a wide variety of healthy foods for your baby such as meats, eggs, iron-fortified cereals, fruits, and veggies starting at 6 months of age will set them on a pathway to a lifetime of health.



Christine Palumbo is a registered dietitian nutritionist and Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She is a 2018 recipient of the Medallion Award from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

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