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Family June 2011

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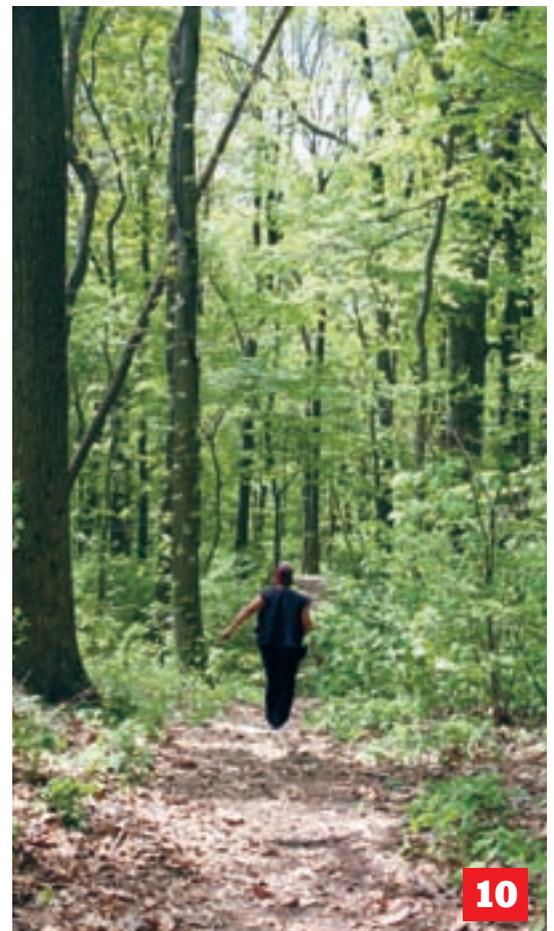
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Letter from the publisher

Wonderful month of June

June is a gorgeous month. The days are the longest they are going to be and the weather is typically ideal. It is the month I was born in, the month my daughter was born in, the month I got married in, the month of our graduations, and the month when school vacation for our kids usually begins here in the city.

June smells good. It has the wonderful aroma of fresh flowers, clear skies, street fairs and barbecues. The strawberries are in and so are the blueberries, and the greenmarkets all over the city are lively with great produce and the early summer fruits and vegetables. How lucky we all are that our neighbor-



ing farmers are bringing their goods into so many communities throughout NYC. What a great partnership it is and how beneficial it is for all of us, farmers and city-dwellers alike.

Day camps are starting up and the kids are busy doing all the great things of summer: swimming, cycling, tennis, skateboarding, and just being outdoors a lot. The playgrounds are full and the swings are flying high. That's the best part of June, it's not too hot and not too cold and it's easy to be just hanging out. The beaches are open and the parks are welcoming the throngs of families who have made it through the long winter and are relishing the picnics, parties and cookout

opportunities. I smell grilling on my block almost every night and I'm certain it's in everyone else's neighborhood also.

I like June as a vacation month and lately we've been choosing to travel as soon as my daughter's classes are over. It's a good time for this and we relish the change of scenery and pace. The rates are lower and everything is less crowded than it is later on in the summer. We appreciate the long hours of daylight and get the most out of the possibilities. I also like coming back to a full summer of beach-going, and I'm an avid fan of our local beaches.

I don't know what your summer plans are, but I know that a lot of people are sticking closer to home than they have in the past. Many people are watching their pock-

ets carefully and are cautious in their expenditures, waiting to see how this economy will play out and when the recovery will really begin.

Maybe you have a recent graduate or a wedding in your family, or maybe, like us, a family loaded with birthdays. June is a special month to celebrate, and speaking of celebrations, happy Father's Day to all our dads! So many excuses and reasons to have a party this month and I hope all of them will turn out to be loads of fun.

Thanks for reading. Have a great month.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher

STAFF

PUBLISHER / ADVERTISING / EDITORIAL:

Susan Weiss

PUBLISHER / BUSINESS MANAGER:

Clifford Luster

SALES MANAGER / ADVERTISING:

Sharon Noble

SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT:

Tina Felicetti

SALES REPS: Laurie Falco, Linda Smith, Muriel Puder, Stephanie Stellaccio, Jay Pelc, Andrew Mark

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Keith Oechsner

ART DIRECTOR: Leah Mitch

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: On Man Tse

LAYOUT MANAGER: Yvonne Farley

WEB DESIGNER: Sylvan Migdal

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: Arthur Arutyunov, Patty Coughlan, Mauro Deluca, Earl Ferrer

MANAGING EDITOR: Vince DiMiceli

ASSISTANT EDITORS: Meredith Deliso, Courtney Donahue

COPY EDITOR: Lisa J. Curtis

CALENDAR EDITOR: Joanna Del Buono

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Risa Doherty, Allison Plitt, Candi Sparks, Mary Carroll Winingar

CONTACT INFORMATION

ADVERTISING: WEB OR PRINT

(718) 260-4554

Family@cnglocal.com or
SWeiss@cnglocal.com

CIRCULATION

(718) 260-8336

TFelicetti@cnglocal.com

EDITORIAL

(718) 260-4554

Family@cnglocal.com

ADDRESS

Family Publications New York/CNG
1 Metrotech Center North
10th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

www.webfamilyny.com



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Challenging the ‘Sib Fib’

Why sibling rivalry can actually be a *good* thing

BY LAURA J. VAROSCAK

My 4-year-old son, Henry, awaited the arrival of his brother for nine months. I did not plan for him to find out the news so early, but an hour after taking a home pregnancy test, Henry pulled it out of the trash and exclaimed, “Two lines — you’re having a baby!”

In the months that followed, Henry had questions about his sibling: Would it be a girl or a boy? Did it pee and poop inside of me? How would it come out? We talked, read books, looked at pictures and observed my growing belly. Henry couldn’t wait for his little brother to come, and helped prepare for him with great anticipation and love.

I delivered Charlie via C-section. Henry was at the hospital waiting to meet his brother for the very first time. I looked forward to the expression on his face — the pride, joy and excitement. My expectations were shattered. Henry was not interested in seeing me, or Charlie. In fact, he opted not to visit us during my four-day hospital stay. When we were back home, Henry walked in and headed straight for his toys. He didn’t even glance at Charlie.

It is normal for some children to react this way — ignoring the

baby, displaying anger, regressing or acting out in other ways — but I was disappointed. I wanted Henry to embrace his brother wholeheartedly from day one. Fortunately, this phase was short, and by the next day, Henry was holding Charlie and helping to feed him — even if he vowed to never to change his diaper!

The relationship Henry and Charlie have developed during the past 11 months is a testament to the special bond siblings share. Brothers and sisters will go through trials and tribulations throughout their lives, but the benefits of having a healthy sibling relationship outweigh the challenges.

Most Americans have at least one brother or sister. Siblings provide one of the longest relationships an individual will experience, and the complexity and permanency of this connection creates intensity between siblings, bringing conflict as well as comfort and joy. Parents want harmony between their sons and daughters, but competition, jealousy and squabbling are all part of development, and should be expected. Sibling rivalry can be an asset if parents understand the dynamic and nurture their children appropriately.

Healthy sibling relationships... Contribute to overall well-being

Longitudinal studies reveal that strong ties between siblings during youth contribute to social, emotional and physical health in adulthood. These findings are independent of influential factors such as birth order, age spacing, gender or socioeconomic status.

What parents can do: be the best role model possible. If your children observe generosity, patience, and respect at



home, they will be more likely to practice these traits themselves, which will improve their relationships.

Provide companionship

Living with a playmate helps lessen feelings of boredom and loneliness. Participating in common activities, as well as sharing individual interests, strengthens the bond between people. Spending time together — playing, laughing, and joking — deepens the relationship and fosters trust.

What parents can do: as children grow older, life gets busier and siblings often go their separate ways. Reserve time for siblings to engage in meaningful activities together.

Develop social skills

Practicing important communication skills with siblings can help children interact more effectively with peers outside of the home. Loving brothers and sisters begin new relationships with positive attitudes.

On the playground

What do you like most about your sibling(s)?

“We do things together — like go to the park and play with toys.” (*Juan, age 6*)

“They make me laugh when I’m sad or mad.” (*Mo, age 7*)

“No matter what, my sisters love me.” (*Sophie, age 8*)

“She keeps my secrets.” (*Mia, age 9*)

“When I’m having trouble with something, my brother gives me advice or tells me what to do.” (*Ali, age 10*)



At first, Henry didn't like his new little brother, but now, Henry and Charlie have developed a healthy sibling relationship.

Studies indicate that children who have a strong connection with their siblings are more likely to make and maintain quality friendships.

What parents can do: practice building effective communication skills, especially when problems arise. This will prepare your child for interacting with peers and hopefully reduce potential conflict.

Decrease stress

Close sibling relationships provide protection and comfort, which can help to reduce stress, especially during difficult times. Research shows that children who have supportive brothers and sisters are less lonely, self-conscious and fearful than children without siblings.

What parents can do: when appropriate, encourage your children to rely on each other for emotional support. Suggest positive activities

for them to participate in together.

Encourage sharing

Siblings are expected to share everything from possessions and space to parental love. This concept is hard to grasp by young children, but over time, brothers and sisters learn the importance of sharing, and use it to their advantage when they participate in household chores and responsibilities. Sharing also has its benefits and joys: sharing family history through memories and stories is an invaluable gift that lasts forever.

What parents can do: point out the benefits of sharing. Help your children set and respect personal boundaries, then discuss why they are important.

Promote individuality

Comparison between siblings is inevitable, because they are form-

ing their identities and finding their roles in the family. This internal struggle can lead to competition and jealousy. However, this rivalry provides the perfect opportunity for children to examine their emotions and discover who they are. Working through this process helps to shape their identity.

What parents can do: support your children individually, equally, and without judgment.

Boost self-image

Healthy sibling relations contribute to a higher sense of self-worth and confidence. Compared to single children, siblings tend to be more assertive and take better care of themselves.

What parents can do: spend quality one-on-one time with your children. Siblings naturally strive for their parents' attention, which can lead to disappointment and frustration when there are others competing for the same thing at the same time.

Increase emotional awareness

Children learn to identify and manage their feelings by interacting with siblings on a daily basis. The at-home practice helps them to express their emotions more appropriately when they are outside of the home environment.

What parents can do: acknowledge and accept your child's feelings, and then help manage them appropriately. Use words to help your child identify the negative emotions and discuss safe ways to express them.

Encourage respect

Being part of a family means learning to love and respect others. Over time, siblings learn to recognize and appreciate each others' different perspectives. Sharing their lives with siblings naturally builds acceptance, tolerance and empathy in children. Consequently, this increases their ability to help others and get along with people from different backgrounds.

What parents can do: praise your

children when they respect others' points of view. Cherish the special bond they share, regardless of their differences; they will, too.

Teach conflict resolution

The more children talk through their problems instead of fighting, burying feelings or acting out, the easier communication will become. Living with a sibling provides endless opportunities to practice compromising, cooperating and working as a team to achieve peace. Children are also in their home environment where they can test limits safely. This gives them a chance to practice "fighting fairly," and provides good training for interacting with peers.

What parents can do: always start by allowing siblings to work through differences on their own. If they need your involvement, teach them problem-solving techniques. Explain that fair doesn't always mean equal. Discuss age-appropriate rules and ask your children to help you determine what is fair. Set rules and enforce consequences. Be consistent.

Influence positive behavior

Siblings shape each other in many ways. As they get older, they develop their own lives away from home and are more vulnerable to outside influences. How a child acts in different social environments has a significant impact on his sibling's behavior. It is not uncommon for younger children to emulate older siblings. If they observe their big brother or sister engaging in negative behavior, chances are, they will do the same.

What parents can do: be aware of your children's activities when they are not at home. Know where they are and who they are with. Maximize positive influences as much as possible. Let them know you care.

Parents of only one child — don't fret! Siblings may share built-in benefits, but single children can learn many of the same skills with friends and extended family. A healthy social life develops if young children have the opportunity to interact and play with others of similar age early on. This can be achieved through caregivers, play dates, play groups and preschool. Spending time with peers on a regular basis will teach sharing, empathy and conflict resolution. The rewards of establishing warm, loving relationships in childhood will last a lifetime.



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Time to play it safe

How dangerous is your local playground?

With school out this month, a chorus of “I’m bored” will be heard throughout our city as kids try to find activities to fill their days. For many parents and grandparents, the playground is nothing short of a lifesaver. Yet, increasingly, many area playgrounds are posing safety concerns.

The National Program for Playground Safety reports that each year, “200,000 children are treated for injuries sustained from unsafe playgrounds, and approximately 15 children are killed as a result of those injuries.”

The organization’s goal is to improve the safety and quality of

parcs, schools and other recreation areas across all 50 states. Its initiative, called National Playground Safety Week 2011, takes place each spring to bring awareness to the many safety hazards that disheveled playgrounds cause. Unfortunately, New York is not one of the states participating in this initiative, but the organization hopes that will change.

Annette Suarez hopes so, too. She says her 2-year-old daughter, Kayla, was playing at a playground inside Marine Park in Brooklyn when she tripped over a protruding corner of a play-mat while running to the swing set. Kayla fell directly on her face and knocked her two front teeth backwards.

“It was horrifying,” says Suarez. “She was screaming and there was blood everywhere. The dentist was able to save her two front baby teeth, but she is afraid to go back to the playground. And frankly, so am I!”

Suarez says the play-mats were not properly adhered and looked as though they came unglued, possibly due to winter weather.

In addition, she says at least five other play-mats were tripping accidents just waiting to happen, but she hadn’t noticed them until it was too late.

Play-mats can also become incredibly hot — long before summer officially starts.

The Indian Road Playground at Inwood Hill Park in the Bronx has play-mats that are heat traps. Parents who go there have reported that a child burned his hands on the mats when the temperature was just 66 degrees.

Moms and dads have become so enraged over the playground’s safety conditions, they created a Facebook page to alert other parents, grandparents, and caretakers.

Besides play-mats, there

are a few primary safety hazards that parents should look out for when taking their kids to the playground. The National Program for Playground Safety created a checklist of things to be sure of to create a safe environment at playgrounds:

- **Supervision**

Adult presence is needed to watch for potential hazards, observe, intercede and facilitate play when necessary. Strings on clothing or ropes used for play can cause accidental strangulation if they get caught on equipment.

- **Age-appropriate**

All children should play on age-appropriate equipment. Preschoolers, ages 2 to 5, and children ages 5 to 12 are developmentally different and need different equipment located in separate areas to keep the playground safe and fun for all.

- **Fall surfacing**

Nearly 70 percent of all playground injuries are related to falls, and what a child falls on can make a difference. Acceptable surfaces include loose-fill materials, such as hardwood wooden fiber; shredded rubber; sand; pea gravel; and synthetic surfaces, such as rubber tiles and mats; and synthetic poured surfaces.

Playground surfaces should not be concrete, asphalt, grass, blacktop, packed dirt, or rocks.

- **Equipment management**

Check to make sure the equipment is anchored safely in the ground, all equipment pieces are in good-working order, S-hooks are entirely closed, bolts are not protruding, and there are no exposed footings, etc. Thoroughly inspect your child’s playground before allowing your child to roam freely.

For more tips on safety on the playground, check out playground-safety.org.

Danielle Sullivan, a Brooklyn-born mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years, and was recently honored with a Gold award for her health column by the Parenting Publications of America. Danielle also writes for Babble.



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High Rock Park

A free way to
have some
fun on Staten
Island

BY SUE CATRAMA

I often overhear parents complaining that “there’s nothing to do on Staten Island with the kids that’s free.” Naturally, I always put my two cents in, and end up telling them about a park many people don’t seem to know about — High Rock Park.

High Rock is recognized as a Natural Environmental Education Landmark. Over the past centuries, prominent Staten Island families — including the Flaggs, Conners, Ebbets, Tompkins and Vanderbilts — have occupied parts of High Rock. Many think the Boy Scouts own the land. The council did own it in 1930, but in 1951, sold it to the Girl Scouts, which then sold it to private developers in 1964. The land was officially dedicated as parkland in 1965.

High Rock is located between Pouch Camp (Boy Scout land) and the Moravian Cemetery. Nestled in High Rock is a rustic stone house built around 1921, which is now the headquarters for the Green Belt Conservancy. The park boasts five ponds, six walking trails, and a magnificent 360-degree panoramic view from the top of Mt. Moses, named after city builder and park commissioner Robert Moses. Visitors can also see hawks, owls, frogs, and turtles. Along the trails there are red maples, high bush blueberries, and patches of skunk cabbage. In 1996, Mayor Giuliani funded an asphalt parking lot on Nevada Avenue.

I often took my older boys there for days spent playing hide and seek, racing to the top of Mt. Moses, and simply enjoying the outdoors. They are much older now, 23 and 18, but I am blessed with another boy who is now 5, and we were there recently. Of course, I no longer have the desire to seek his hiding spot, or the energy to race, but I still love the outdoors. We spent the day pretending to be great explorers and animal rescuers, and rested for a while enjoying lunch on one of the many picnic tables. My son spotted a small stage in the mid-

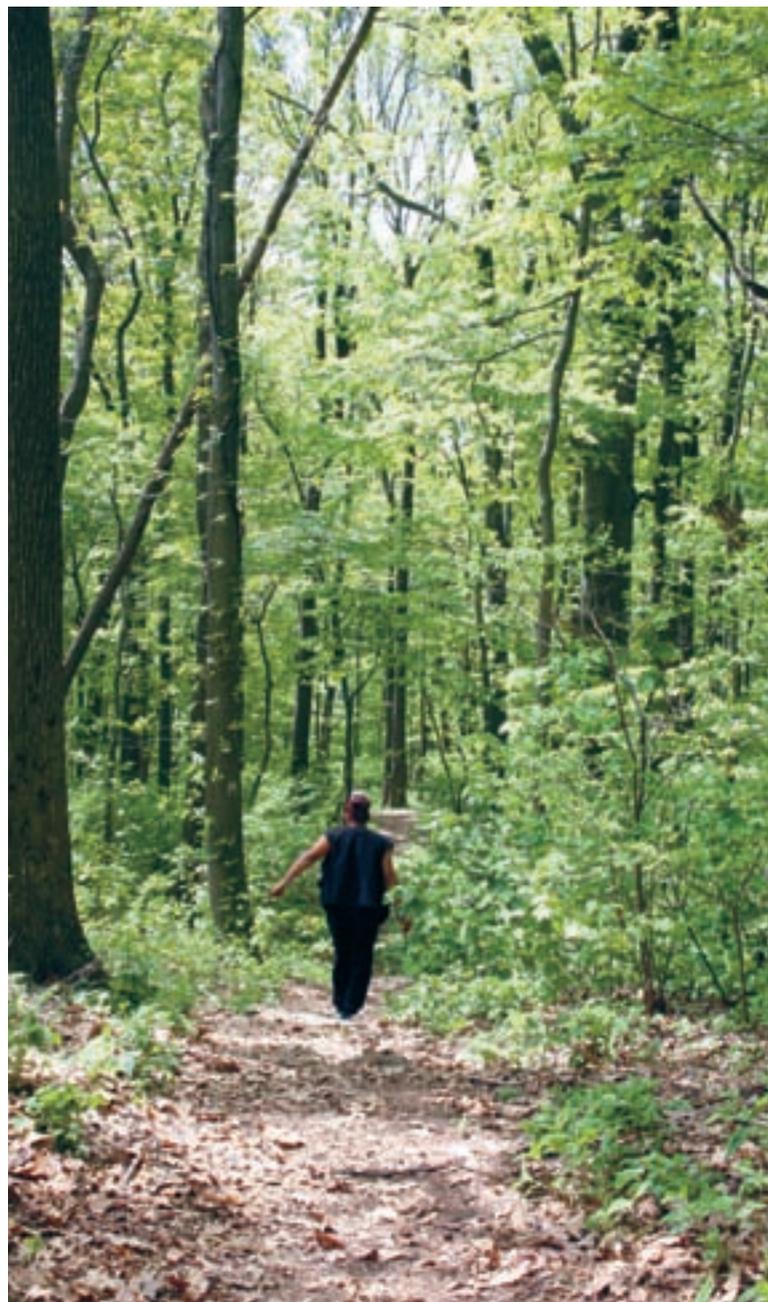


Photo by Jim Romano

dle of the trees, and he entertained me with his version of Shakespeare in The Park.

So, to all those who say there is nothing to do for free on Staten Island, I say: look around! We have many parks here — Silver Lake, Clove Lakes, and Wolf Pond Park to name a

few — and every acre is free! Layer up, pull up your rain boots, lather on the sunblock, or zip up your windbreakers — and take a hike!

High Rock Park [200 Nevada Ave. in Lighthouse Hill, (718) 667-2165] Free. For more information, visit sigreenbelt.org.

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8/15~8/19 Exploring the Human Body
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FAMILY HEALTH

EDWARD MCCABE, DO, MPH
 Assistant Director of
 Adolescent Medicine, Staten
 Island University Hospital

Testing the waters

Pool safety for young people this summer

If the past few years are any indication, spring will come late and leave early, abruptly dropping us on the doorstep of another hot and long summer. And when it's hot, nothing feels better than a refreshing dip in a pool.

But pool use can be dangerous, so, before the summer season is thrust upon us, this is a great time to review some safety tips regarding children and pools. Whenever young people get together to swim or play in the water, following some basic rules can help to ensure that a planned fun time doesn't turn into something life threatening.

These guidelines should be considered whenever young people access any form of recreational waters, including pools (public or private), hot tubs and spas, and natural environmental water sources (lakes, rivers or the ocean).

When arriving at a pool, caregivers should survey the area, checking for ways to access the water and assessing if appropriate safety equipment is available. Check for fencing which might limit free access to the pool for the child. Ask if the pool has been recently inspected and how often the water is tested. See if the pump is running while young people are in the pool. Also see if life rings and reaching poles are available. Finally, check for a lifeguard, and check-in with her, to erase any additional pre-swim concerns you might have.

Once you are ready to allow your child to enter the pool, continue to watch him to keep him safe. He should be visible to you at all times.



Submersions and drownings during childhood can happen quickly, often in the time it takes to answer a phone call, run to the bathroom, or return to the house or car for some forgotten item. In case of an emergency, it is important to keep a charged phone nearby to call 911.

You can let children use different sections of the pool based on their experience and comfort in the water. Ask yourself: Does my child know how to swim? Do I know how to swim? Would my child be safer if he used flotation equipment? Are there people nearby who are trained in life-saving?

To avoid entrapment, keep children away from pool drains, pipes and other openings. This can be especially important in a hot tub or spa because of the powerful suction necessary to move water through the jets. If any child goes missing, remember to always look for him in the pool or spa first. Every second counts!

Pool fences should be four feet high or more, and should surround the pool for optimum protection. Gates should be self-closing. Consider one or more of the alarms that are available for pool safety, including pool, gate, surface wave and/or underwater alarms. And — although they can be expensive — various pool covers can also be part of a plan for optimizing pool safety.

If there is a likelihood that your child will be swimming in neighbors' pools as well, it could be helpful to meet as a community to discuss a plan and to establish shared, consistent rules for safety. Water accidents and their potentially tragic results affect families, neighbors, schools and society. We are all richer when we take the appropriate steps to ensure the safety of children.

For more information, visit <http://poolsafety.gov>.

Dr. Edward McCabe is the assistant director of Adolescent Medicine at Staten Island University Hospital.

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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

What kids eat & why

Starting in the womb, a mother's influence on her child's nutrition is irrefutable. Researchers are discovering just how much sway she has, along with other influencers in a child's world.

• **Maternal personality.** Mothers with many negative thoughts and feelings are more likely to give their children unhealthy food, according to a 2009 study published in *Maternal and Child Nutrition*. The mothers who were emotionally unstable, anxious, angry, sad, had poor self-confidence or a negative view of the world, were far more likely to give their children sweet and fatty foods. Yet there was no link between maternal personality and the amount of fruit and vegetables a child receives. The researchers suspect the moms may be trying to compensate for their negative emotions.

• **Parenting styles.** Parents with extreme parenting styles usually fail to serve as good dietary role models for their children, according to Oklahoma State University research. Parents who are strict in general also tend to have an authoritarian approach to their children's eating, such as banning certain foods or using pressure to get them to eat fruits and vegetables. On the other hand, permissive parents who let



their children eat whatever they wanted tended to be permissive in their parenting styles as well. Parents who fell somewhere between permissive and authoritarian were those who set limits on their kids' diets and enforced them through more positive approaches, such as leading by example, to get their kids to eat well. This authoritative approach is the best way to influence a child's diet.

• **Nagging.** Mothers who pressure their children to clean their plates may help produce a fussy eater, while tight control of what they eat could make children prone to overeating, according to a new study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. But parents' mealtime

strategies don't necessarily cause their children to overeat or become picky eaters. The researchers admit the parents' urges may be in response to eating habits their children already have.

• **Mothers and friends.** When a young child's mother is present, he tends to eat more nourishing foods than when he's with his friends. In a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, boys and girls ages 5 to 7 ate fewer calories from unhealthy snacks and desserts when their mothers were with them, compared to when their friends were alongside them.

• **Grandma.** Grandmothers can greatly influence the nutrition environment of their preschool-aged grandchildren. In a Maryland study, grandmothers shaped their grandchildren's fruit and vegetable consumption by purchasing and providing food for their daughters and grandchildren. However, grandmothers also reported consuming less than the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables, which suggests they might have a negative effect on how much produce their grandchildren eat.

• **Buying healthy foods, or not.** While parents prefer nutritious foods for the entire family, their preference for healthy foods is about 50 percent weaker when they're selecting products for the kids, rather than for themselves. The likely explanation is that parents give in at the grocery store — or before they even get there — compromising their preferences based on what they believe their children will accept, according to a study published in the *Journal of Consumer Behavior*.

Tip: While you provide the food your child eats, he decides what to eat and how much. Try to strike a balance between strictness and being overly relaxed.

Christine M. Palumbo, RD is an award-winning dietitian and mother of three from Naperville, IL. She wishes she'd had this knowledge when her children were preschoolers. Follow her on Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition.

Beef, wild rice and mushroom bake

Total recipe time: 1 to 1 and 1/4 hours.
Makes four servings

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound ground beef (90 percent to 95 percent lean)
8 ounces assorted fresh wild mushrooms (such as cremini, shiitake and oyster) or button mushrooms, sliced
1 package (5.6 to 6.6 ounces) wild rice mix with seasonings
1/4 cup sun-dried tomatoes, not packed in oil
Water
1/2 cup shredded Italian blend cheese

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 375°F. Heat large, nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add ground beef and mushrooms; cook 8 to 10 minutes, breaking into 3/4-inch crumbles and stirring occasionally. Remove drippings. Stir in rice, contents of seasoning packet and tomatoes. Spoon beef mixture into 2-quart baking dish. Stir in water amount indicated in rice package directions, plus 1/2 cup additional water. Cover with aluminum foil. Bake in 375°F oven 45 to 50 minutes or until water is absorbed. Uncover; sprinkle with cheese. Continue baking, uncovered, 5 minutes or until cheese is melted.

NUTRITION INFORMATION: (per serving) 380 calories; 11 g fat; 86 mg cholesterol; 822 mg sodium; 36 g carbohydrate; 2.1 g fiber; 35 g protein; 8.1 mg niacin; 0.4 mg vitamin B6; 2.3 mcg vitamin B12; 4.9 mg iron; 26.7 mcg selenium; 6.4 mg zinc. This recipe is an excellent source of protein, niacin, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, iron, selenium and zinc.

COOK'S TIP: Cooking times are for fresh or thoroughly thawed ground beef. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F. Color is not a reliable indicator.

Recipe courtesy of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

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8 costly mistakes

Things to avoid when planning for your special needs child

BY JOSEPH P. DONLON, ESQ.

We all hope to live long lives, but sudden illness or accidents are impossible to predict, so it's never too early to start making sure your loved ones will be taken care of when you're gone — especially if you have a child with special needs.

Unfortunately there are common mistakes people make when planning for the future that could cost a special needs child in the long run.

Here's how to make sure that he is provided for in case something happens to you.

MISTAKE 1: Disinheriting the child. Many disabled people rely on Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid or other government benefits to provide food and shelter. You may have been advised to disinherit your disabled child (the child who needs your help most!) to protect that child's public benefits. But these benefits rarely provide more than subsistence, and this "solution" does

not allow you to help your child after you are incapacitated or gone. When your child requires — or is likely to require — governmental assistance to meet his basic needs, you should consider establishing a Special Needs Trust.

MISTAKE 2: Ignoring the special needs when creating a trust for the child. A trust that is not designed with your child's special needs in mind will probably render your child ineligible for essential benefits. The Special Needs Trust is designed to promote the disabled person's comfort and happiness without sacrificing eligibility.

Special needs can include medical and dental expenses not covered by Medicaid, cutting-edge or non-traditional treatments or therapies, necessary or desirable equipment (such as specially equipped vans), training and education, insurance, transportation, and essential dietary needs. If the trust is sufficiently funded, the disabled person can also receive computers, books, games, vacations, movies, payments for a companion, and other self-esteem and quality-of-life enhancing expenses — the sorts of things you now provide.

MISTAKE 3: Creating a "generic" Special Needs Trust that doesn't fit your child. Even some Special Needs Trusts are unnecessarily inflexible and generic. In most cases, an attorney with some knowledge of the area can prevent a trust from invalidating the child's public benefits; however, many trusts are not customized to the child's specific needs. As a result, the child fails to receive the benefits that the parents provided when they were alive.

Another mistake is when lawyers put a "pay-back" provision into the trust, rather than allowing the remainder of the trust to go to others upon the death of the special needs child. These pay-back provisions are necessary in certain types of Special Needs Trusts — and not necessary in others. An attorney who knows when they should be used can save your family hundreds of thousands of dollars, or more.



A child without special needs can obtain more resources as he reaches adulthood, and can work to meet essential needs. Your special needs child may not have that opportunity.



MISTAKE 4: Procrastination. Since no one knows when they will die or become incapacitated, it is important to plan for your special needs child early, just as you would for other dependents, such as minor children. Unlike other beneficiaries, your special needs child may never be able to compensate for your failure to plan. A child without special needs can obtain more resources as he reaches adulthood, and can work to meet essential needs. Your special needs child may not have that opportunity.

MISTAKE 5: Failing to invite other people to contribute to the trust. A key benefit of creating the trust now is that your extended family and friends can make gifts to the trust or remember the trust as they plan their own estates. In addition to the gifts and inheritances from other people who love your child, you can leave your own assets to the trust in your will. You can also name the trust as a beneficiary of life insurance and retirement benefits.

MISTAKE 6: Choosing the wrong trustee. During your life, you and your spouse can manage the trust. When you and your spouse are no longer able to serve as trustee, the person or persons you specify in the trust instructions will become the new trustee, such as a professional trustee or a team of advisors. Make sure that whomever you choose is financially savvy, well-organized, and ethical.

MISTAKE 7: Relying on your other children to use their money for the benefit of your special needs child. This can be a temporary solution, such as during a brief incapacity, if your other children are financially secure and have money to spare. However, because of the potential problems, this solution will not protect your child after you and your spouse have died, or when siblings have their own expenses and financial priorities. For example:

•What if your child with the money divorces? His or her spouse

may be entitled to half of the funds and will not likely care for your special needs child.

•What if your child with the money dies or becomes incapacitated while your special needs child is still living? Will his or her heirs care for your special needs child as thoughtfully and completely as your child with the money did?

•What if your child loses a lawsuit and has to pay a large judgment or has other creditor problems? The court will certainly require your child to turn that money over to his or her creditors.

When you create a Special Needs Trust, you protect all of your children. The trust facilitates easier record-keeping and allows your other children to rely on the assistance of a professional trustee, if needed. Siblings of a special needs child often feel a great responsibility for that child, as they have all of their lives. When you provide clear instructions and a helpful framework, you lessen the burden on all of your children and build a loving, involved relationship that benefits your child with special needs.

MISTAKE 8: Failing to protect the special needs child from predators. Thieves, con men and other criminals look to take advantage of those who are most vulnerable, like your special needs child. A child trapped in the system with precious little resources and without anyone to look after his affairs can easily fall prey to these predators. When you establish a Special Needs Trust and properly structure your estate plan to protect your special needs child, you ensure that your child will never be left alone, will always be provided for, and will always have a trustworthy person — either a guardian or trustee, or both — watching over him.

Joe Donlon is an Estate Planning Attorney who has in-depth experience working with parents who have a special needs child. He offers the free article, "7 Key Questions Parents Should Ask About Special Needs Trusts." To receive a free copy, send an e-mail to joe@donlonlaw.com.



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Facing the stress

Overcoming the challenges of raising a special child

BY JULIA GARSTECKI

Parenting a child with a disability comes with its own set of unique frustrations: the level of exhaustion might be tripled; evaluations and assessments are often scary and stressful; and there may not be one best way to move forward with therapy.

Fortunately, most mothers of children with disabilities are positive, proactive, and energetic. They lead

cles her experiences with her daughters. “All I Can Handle; I’m No Mother Theresa” is funny, sad, and informative. When asked what helped get her through the worst of times, she said that there were moments in which all she could do was hope.

Kim suggests parents let their emotions take course; if you need to cry, do it. It can be cathartic. She says she remembers feeling like a hamster on an exercise wheel. She was exhausted, but knew that her girls needed care. There will not be an end to the demands, she says, so you need to learn to deal with it.

To start, Stagliano suggests building a support system.

Family members or neighbors can offer love and — hopefully — periodic babysitting, but parents of special-needs kids also need to find families in similar circumstances.

Find national websites that provide information and research, as well as ones that offer an online community of parents whose needs mirror your own, and with whom you can chat. Look to see if there are support groups near you. Through these websites and support groups, you may also find therapy tips, nutrition and diet information, and possible social outlets for you

and your family.

- Julie McAllister, a mother of one child with Asperger’s Syndrome and one child with food allergies, has had her share of depression. Before her children were diagnosed, she says she began to feel lonely, guilty and isolated as she did her best to raise her sons. There was very little sleeping going on at her house, she says, and between the exhaustion and her sons’ mysterious meltdowns, McAllister rarely left her home. She says she finally began to treat her depres-

sion by making self-care a priority. She focused on nutrition, and sought the help of educated professionals. Because she made time for herself, she says, she had more energy and enthusiasm for her family.

Stagliano echoes Julie’s sentiment about needing to have a life. While taking an exercise class or going out with friends might be best, that involves finding child care, which can be tricky. If the only option is watching a favorite television program, or reading a good book, do it. To maintain the endurance necessary for raising a child with special needs, it’s important to lose yourself in another world from time to time. It’s in those moments that you might determine what you need for yourself, whether it’s rearranging the therapy schedule, getting help with chores, or getting out of the house by yourself for an hour or two a week. There are also activities that your whole family can enjoy, and they include special assistance. One, Programs to Educate All Cyclists, helps individuals with disabilities develop cycling skills for recreation, fitness and transportation. You can also try horseback riding. Therapeutic riding facilities are common, and children who never thought to get on a horse are amazed at the independence and enjoyment riding can offer. So, explore the Internet, ask questions, and keep an open mind. Finding a new family hobby can bring a feeling of accomplishment, bonding and fun.

It won’t always be easy, but there is help.

If you are struggling to find resources, contact your school district. Or, if the school cannot help you, start making phone calls and don’t stop until you find what you are looking for.

Kim Stagliano’s book, “All I Can Handle; I’m No Mother Theresa,” is available in bookstores now. You can also visit her website, www.kimstagliano.com.

Julia Garstecki is a freelance writer living in western New York. Her passion for writing is second only to her passion for her family. Contact her with your stories at juliagarstecki@gmail.com.



support groups, are activists in the special education community, and are champions for their children.

However, even the most optimistic of these mothers has struggled with anxiety and worry at one time — or 100. Here are some suggestions from parents who have been there — and what they’ve learned along the way.

- Kim Stagliano, a mother of three autistic daughters, is somewhat of an expert on the subject. She’s even written a book in which she chroni-

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A double whammy

When a second child is diagnosed with autism

BY JULIANNA GIL
DE LAMADRID

Lately, we are seeing a lot more attention in the media being paid to the prevalence of autism. Those who are not affected by autism may skim through the news, recent findings, and fresh research that is available to the autism community, thinking, "What are the chances that I or a loved one will actually be affected by this?" Sadly, the answer to this question is given to us with every autism ad, commercial, statistic, book, article, etc.: "ONE IN 150 CHILDREN," or "ONE OUT OF 70 BOYS."

So, when a family is given the

news, "Your child is on the autism spectrum," what are the chances that this family will be given this news twice? When exactly does a family have to be cautious of having more children?

My first son was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified at the age of 2. Like many families who are given this diagnosis, our son went through a stage of alarming regression in which his speech, along with his social skills, drastically weakened.

Unlike with other families, my son, at the age of 2, already had a baby brother who was 8 months old. Truth be told, my 2-year-old should have been diagnosed months prior to his second birthday. I cannot say my husband and I were in denial, because we did not even know what autism was, or that our son truly had a problem at all. Along with comments from friends and family who constantly said, "well, boys develop slower than girls," or "just give him time," we simply thought he was going through a phase, and had put off his evaluation for almost three months.

Battling with the idea that something may in fact be wrong with him, we completely ignored the alarming delay his baby brother exhibited. How could we have been so blind? We had a son who had developed typically up until his regression, with which to compare our youngest, and still, we had not addressed the fact that our second born was completely in his own world.

At this point, denial had set in. There couldn't possibly be two of them in the family ... could there? During our youngest son's evaluation, I felt my heart drop as I answered the psychotherapist's ques-

tions: *No, he never looks at us when we speak to him. No, he does not express his needs/wants. No, he does not like to play with us or his brother. Yes, he does rock back and forth and flap his arms...*

There we were, faced with two boys, both diagnosed with autism. In as little time as it took for these professionals to observe my boys and come to their conclusions, my dreams for them had been taken from me.

What kind of school will they end up in? Will they have girlfriends? Be married? Be able to work? Will they be dependent on me their entire lives?

Suddenly, I looked at them differently; as though I hardly ever knew them to be my own. I didn't know how to speak to them, how to relate to their needs.

Were they even listening to me? Did they love me? Do they even know who I am?

I did my share of research, and slowly, I began to accept the fact that I was given these two boys for a reason. As I read about other families, I also began to accept the fact that there was hope for my sons through the intense early intervention they were receiving. I went from a dark place in which I hardly knew my own children to a place where I felt comfortable knowing I would do everything in my power to help them develop and become all that I had hoped they would be on the day they were born.

To this day, three years after my sons were diagnosed, I have devoted my life to their development and the well-being of all who suffer from autism. My boys are strong, each in their own way, and they have encouraged me to be the same. Today, I study not only for their future, but also for the future of all the children who are, and will, be part of this prevalence. I see the changes that intense intervention and — most importantly — love, has made on my boys, and it gives me nothing but hope for their futures. Every day is a battle, but slowly, I am rebuilding those dreams that were once knocked down by a diagnosis.



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Sleepovers

The survival guide

BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Are you thinking of inviting several of your child's friends over for a sleepover bash, but you are not sure you can handle all those exuberant and tireless kids for more than three hours?

It's OK, sleepovers can be overwhelming and exhausting. Let's face it: they can be a downright nightmare. It will take quite a bit of planning and forethought, but both you AND your child's friends can have a positive experience if you take the time to think things through before the first excited guest appears at your door.

Rule 1: Establish the rules from the get-go

Sleepovers are different from other parties hosted in your home in that the kids know their own parents won't be picking them up until the next day. This gives them a "no holds barred" attitude toward the night.

After hosting several sleepovers for both my son and daughter, I've found that kids will respond well to rules if you establish them right away. Hold a "welcome meeting," in which you tell the guests about all the great activities you have planned. Then, give them a list of rules to follow. Make sure that they understand these are YOUR rules, not your child's. Tell them if things go well, you have a special activity planned (this can be a blockbuster movie or a game with really cool prizes).

Rule 2: Prepare your home and plan ahead

Find a place in your home that will be suitable for several kids bunking out and playing group games. This might be a playroom, or any large space with sparse furnishings. Remove any breakable or valuable items, so you won't become a nervous wreck if a pillow fight ensues. Make sure that the eating area is properly protected. If you don't have

easy-to-clean tile or vinyl flooring, prepare the floor with some plastic splash mats or drop cloths.

Keep in mind that your child's friends may not know their way around your house very well, especially in the middle of the night. Place nightlights in bathrooms and hallways to make your home easy to navigate when it is dark. It's a good idea to stock up on a few extra supplies, too. Make sure you have toothbrushes, pillows, and socks — in case one of the guests forgets to bring them.

Most parents agree that too much free time is a recipe for disaster, so plan ahead. Make sure you have scheduled several controlled activities besides dinner, cake and opening gifts.

Rule 3: Sanity is in the numbers

Larger groups of kids tend to get more unruly.

"I had 12 10-year-old boys for my son's sleepover a few years ago," recalls Mary Kiernan, a mother of five. "This was way too many. They were wild!" Kiernan suggests that the maximum number should be about eight, including your own child. Most parents also agree an even number works best — to avoid the "odd-man-out" scenario.

A good rule of thumb is to invite those children whose families you know. Many parents today are leery about sending their children to sleepover parties if they don't know the family. In order to avoid inevitable disappointment due to declined invitations, put a message on the invitation such as, "Party continues after 8 for those who would like to sleep over." This will enable guests to decline the sleepover part, but to

Kids have advice for kids

And for the kids, here's some tips from kids across the country so your first sleepover can be perfect:

Ways to be prepared:

"Make sure you get a good night's sleep the night before. You will be up late!"

Trevor, age 12, Salt Point, NY

"Bring your mom and dad's cell-phone numbers."

Samantha, age 8, Narragansett, RI

"Bring your favorite snack and make sure there is plenty to share!"

Dominique, age 7, Richmond, VA

Most important thing to bring:

"Bring money, just in case you end up going somewhere like the movies."

Andrew, age 12, Hyde Park, NY

"Yourself!"

Spencer, age 11, Indianapolis, IN

"Bring cute pajamas!"

Savannah, age 8, San Diego, CA

What to do if you don't like the food:

"If you don't like the breakfast, say you and your family have to go to your grandparents' anniversary brunch." *Nicole, age 10, Cary, NC*

"I bring a hidden snack."

Evan, age 11, Narragansett, RI

Keeping track of your stuff:

"Make a list of what you are bringing."

Lauren, age 10, Hopewell Jct., NY

"Always label your things so you'll be sure it's yours."

Emily, age 12, Portland, OR

Other:

"Whenever I'm at a sleepover, I always tell myself to let NOTHING get in the way of having a fun time. You're only a kid for so long, and sleepovers are supposed to bring out the kid in you!"

Morgan, age 14 - Indianapolis, IN



join the festivities and celebrate with your child early in the evening.

Rule 4: Activities make or break a party

It's imperative that you have a list of various activities planned.

"You have to plan lots of activities to wear them out," says mom Christina Castelonia. However, for indoor activities, she suggests anything that will keep the kids calm. "For girls, painting nails and doing hair always works," she says.

If you are having a sleepover for boys and you are worried about them spending too much time in front of the computer or video games, schedule some group activities.

Boys enjoy team activities, so organize a mystery game or sports trivia game and break the kids up into teams. Kiernan also advocates planning group activities.

"Charades and bingo are always a hit," she says. "Make sure you have an alternative planned in case one or two don't want to play the game."

Crafts are enjoyable for any gender. The best crafts are those that also serve as party souvenirs:

- Photo frames (take a digital group picture, print and insert in each child's custom frame). Glue magnets on back for bulletin boards
- Pillow cases, tote bags or T-shirts — use fabric markers or paint to decorate (don't forget the party date and signatures of all those who attended)
- Bookmarks or book bag chains that celebrate the theme of the party

Rule 5: Fun food, happy campers

You will probably be serving dinner, snacks and breakfast, so the food will play an important role in making the party successful.

Mixing food and fun is always a hit.

"I always do pizza," says Kiernan. "I had the kids make their own individual pizza at one of the parties and that made a great activity, too. The kids loved it!" In lieu of traditional

birthday cake, set up bowls of toppings for make-your-own-sundaes or make-your-own-cupcakes. You can always put a candle on the birthday child's concoction!

I made the mistake of not having enough drinks at my son's first sleepover. Remember, popcorn and chips are laden with salt. The kids will be thirsty, so you'll need to stock up on a variety of drinks that quench thirst.

Keep breakfast simple.

Avoid making omelettes or scrambled eggs, which only serve a few at a time. Kiernan prefers pancakes and French toast to feed a large group.

"It's easy to make, easy to keep warm, and you can make a large quantity for not too much money," she says.

"I like to serve chocolate chip pancakes or M & M pancakes," adds Castelonia. "The kids love anything with chocolate!"

Don't forget to check on food allergies. As a mother of five children, Kiernan is all too familiar with allergies. She says that it's imperative that you ask parents ahead of time if their children have food allergies.

"Always keep cereal on hand in case someone is allergic to eggs," she says.

Be prepared for the occasional vegetarian, as well. Making sure you have at least one meatless choice is not a difficult task, and it will save you the trouble of whipping something up if one of the guests is a budding vegetarian — I've had a few at my house!

Quick food tips:

- Less fuss is a must
- Use paperware and paper tablecloths for easy clean up
- Provide a healthy-choice snack, such as carrots and dip
- Don't serve caffeinated items close to bedtime (i.e. cola or chocolate)

Rule 6: Yes Virginia, there is a bedtime!

Uh-oh ... it's bedtime! Even for the most organized party host or hostess, getting the kids to bed at a "respectable" hour can prove to be an insurmountable task. Castelonia remarks that although sleepovers can be some of the most talked about celebrations, you have to have reasonable expectations about how things will go.

"That's the price you pay. The kids will be up late and cranky the next morning," she warns.

Kiernan suggests putting a movie in at the very end of the evening once the kids have prepared for bed.

"The kids will be ready to relax," she claims. Make sure that the movie is age-appropriate (when in doubt, ask for permission from parents beforehand). Any type of calming activity will suffice late in the evening — just make sure you've completed all endeavors that encourage hysterical enthusiasm (such as piñatas) early on.

Plan to separate groups of kids if some seem to want to whisper and pass notes via a pen light while others are ready to crash. At my daughter's last sleepover, I separated them into two groups. The sleepyheads made a beeline for the family room, while those who wanted to chit-chat remained in the playroom. This seemed to quell any impending arguments.

Rule 7: There's got to be a morning after!

After a night of ghost stories, giggling and gossiping, your child's bleary-eyed guests may not be ready to "get with the program" the next morning. Here's a perfect solution: a contest. Give your child's guests a specified time to get dressed, clean up, and pack their things. Tell them there will be a surprise treat if they are successful. This may be a good time to give out goodie bags with a little something extra, such as energy bars or drinks, because they will need the energy!

Hopefully, you remembered to list the pick-up time on the invitations, and to remind parents of this time when they dropped their children off the night before. Castelonia suggests that pick-up time be no later than 11 am. "Most will be leaving to go to other activities anyway," she says.

Finally, when the last guest has stepped out the door, grab yourself a cup of herbal tea and head for the couch. This respite will be well deserved!

For theme ideas, creative activities and other tips, check out these books:

"Slumber Parties," by Penny Warner (Meadowbrook Press)

"52 Slumber Party Activities," by Lynn Gordon (Chronicle Books, LLC)

"Slumber Parties," by Brooks Whitney (American Girl Library: Pleasant Company Publications)

Or, visit http://www.birthdaypartyideas.com/html/sleep_over.html for a list and detailed description of award-winning sleepover parties for both boys and girls.

The secret's out

The chorus of Staten Island's PS 22 grapples with fame

BY MONICA BROWN

Gregg Breinberg is battling a cold. While the PS 22 chorus director is escorting me into the school, he lets it slip that he was out sick earlier in the week — but today is different.

"Today is chorus day," he says, with a hoarse laugh. "And I can't miss that."

We head to the auditorium, tucked away in the back of the Graniteville school, where he gradually begins to teach the kids how to hit a high note in a new song they're working on. This prompts "Mr. B," as the kids call him, to remind them that he's not feeling 100 percent today, and that he expects them to work as hard as he is. He plays the notes again on the piano, taking them through the routine one more time.

Sopranos and altos finally find synergy, hitting the notes together, perfectly. The result is breathtaking harmony.

Breinberg is pleased.

To call him dedicated would be a gross understatement. Now in his 12th year at the school (11 directing the chorus), Breinberg seems to bring his A-game to every facet of his job. He's part music instructor, part composer, and part motivational speaker.

"Remember, you have to believe to achieve," he reminds the students during practice, pushing them to hit the high notes.

The PS 22 chorus has hit several high notes over the years. Breinberg catapulted the 2006-2007 school year chorus into Internet stardom, after posting some videos on a Tori Amos fan page. Celebritygossip blogger Perez Hilton picked up the videos, word spread, and the kids quickly became an overnight sensation on YouTube.



Greg Breinberg, center, is surrounded by fifth grade members of the PS 22 Chorus.

"I knew from the get-go. I knew something special was going on in this auditorium," says Breinberg. "We always used to say our chorus was the best-kept secret on Staten Island. And now the secret's out in a major way."

Singing with the stars

The 2007-2008 chorus performed at a sold-out concert for the New Zealand band Crowded House, and several members were featured on the children's show, "The Electric Company."

The following year, the chorus performed on "Good Morning, America," VH1, and at Madison Square Garden, singing with R&B artist Rihanna and Fleetwood Mac singer Stevie Nicks.

The 2009-2010 group was invited by Billboard magazine to perform for Beyonce and Lady Gaga at an awards ceremony.

It also performed for President Obama at the White House Tree Lighting in 2009, and, in February of 2010, sang with the musical group Celtic Woman at Radio City Music Hall.

This year's chorus — among other highlights — was invited to perform at the 83rd Academy Awards. The students followed that with a post-Oscar show for Oprah Winfrey, alongside singer Katy Perry. The chorus is currently nominated for a Best Fan Cover award for the MTV Video Music Awards.

The chorus continues to be fea-



The chorus got the chance of a lifetime when it walked the red carpet and performed at the 2011 Academy Awards in Hollywood.

tured on several national news and music networks, and according to its blog, its videos have been watched more than 31 million times.

The chorus meets twice a week during school hours to practice. There is an audition process to select the best talent each year, and anyone who watches them in action can't help but be captivated.

"There's an energy to these kids, to their singing," says Breinberg. "There's a unique sound. For public school kids — fifth graders, not trained — it's pretty impressive, the sound that they get."

Publicity machine

Breinberg is making sure the world knows it.

He spends a good portion of every day returning e-mails, fielding phone calls, and blogging — and that's on top of his daily duties as chorus director. (He also teaches daily music classes to the fourth and fifth graders who are not in the chorus.)

Clearly, heading to Hollywood was the experience of a lifetime for these kids, but on top of all the hype and national attention, some of them will tell you that their favorite part of the whole trip came smack in the middle of the actual performance. It's their love of singing, of music, of performing, that they say they will always remember. The song that was chosen for them — "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" — was, they tell me, perfect.

"It's a really strong song," says Brianna C., a soprano. "It's really down to earth, and you can really feel the words."

Being "down to earth" is a concept these 10-year-olds seem to be familiar with. And that's the way Breinberg wants it. He says he tries hard to prepare them for the price of fame. There have been less-than-flattering comments about their performances, including one by talk show host Andy Cohen, who issued a brief tongue-lashing shortly after their Oscar performance ended. (Cohen later apologized for his comments).

Breinberg takes it all in stride, and says he tries hard to teach them to do the same thing.

"I try to tell them, and this is the God's honest truth, that you haven't made it in this life until you have haters," he says. "When you're doing something that's powerful, that's unique, that is going to make people take notice, you're going to

have that contingent of people who aren't going to get it, or that won't be responding to it the way you thought they would. There's a yin and yang, you can't expect to just get all accolades in life."

The "publicity machine," as Breinberg calls it, "could shut down tomorrow. It's not why we do what we do," he says.

For the love of music

The kids seem to agree. For many of them, music may just be a way of life that will continue to take center stage in their lives, well after they graduate this June. Brianna comes from a musical family, and says she's been singing for as long as she can remember. A soft-spoken violin player, Brianna says she and her family members are no strangers to performing on stage.

"We'd be at family gatherings and my grandpa would start singing," she says. "Block parties, restaurants — he'd sing Beatles songs and he's always invited my brothers and me to come sing with him."

Abigail S., an alto, says her family sings, too, and plays a bunch of different instruments. She likes dancing, and says of her life after the Oscars, while "more people know us now," nothing much has changed outside of school — including her relationships with her friends.

"Everything's exactly the same. It's not like there's any jealousy or anything," she explains. "We can pretty much just hang out and be friends, like before."

Ah, the innocence of youth.

The students had been wooed and surrounded by movie stars on the red carpet. They were hounded by fans wanting their pictures and autographs (including while they were in the airport bathroom coming home from the West Coast), but, with a humility that some adults couldn't embrace, it seems these kids never lost sight of the big picture.

"I consider us a whole group doing this together," says Abigail. "Sometimes people feel bad because they're cut from the chorus. But I feel like they're still a part of it, because we're representing them. We're representing the whole school."

A high note, indeed.

Monica Brown is a television news anchor who lives on Staten Island with her husband and two children. She can be reached at monicaldbrown@gmail.com.

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Test-taking jitters

Seven ways students can ease nerves and improve test scores

BY TUTOR DOCTOR

Test-taking can be stressful for both students and parents. Most people are familiar with the butterflies that flutter up inside your stomach before taking a test. While it is normal for most students to experience some level of jitters before and during an exam, it has proven to become a real problem for others, affecting their scores so much that the tests can't be an indi-

there while he takes the test, you are there in spirit. It is a simple gesture that goes a long way toward comforting your child.

You can pack the kit in a colorful bag or box and even label it with the student's name. Inside the kit, place a notebook (moleskin notebooks work great), a healthy snack (something small and tasty such as an apple), and a little bottle of aromatherapy oil (I recommend lavender).

The **notebook** will help your child work through his anxiety. There are two ways in which he can do this:

- Write down anxieties before a test: A recent study in the journal *Science* explains that students can greatly benefit from writing down their anxieties before taking an exam. The study suggests that releasing anxieties onto paper will clear students' minds during a test and help them to focus.

- Counter apprehensions by writing down positive responses: In a guide to reduce dread before taking tests, Claire Stone, a Berkeley therapist, explains that it is beneficial to write positive responses to the negative anxieties or thoughts that students just wrote. This will ensure that all the negatives will be cleared from students' minds while taking a test.

The **healthy snack** is in the kit to remind your child not to take his test on an empty stomach. There are a few reasons for this:

- There is a correlation between positive test scores and a healthy diet: Students should be sure not to take an exam on an empty stomach, and should make sure that they are eating the right foods. Joe Landsberger, creator of the Study Guides and Strategies website, www.studyguidesandstrategies.com,

[studygs.net](http://www.studygs.net), offers fruit and vegetables as a recommended option to reduce stress. Avoid processed foods, artificial sweeteners and foods containing preservatives, as they are considered "stressful foods."

- A physically fit is more likely to be a good student: According to Lesley Cottrell, an associate professor of pediatrics at West Virginia University, children's physical fitness is associated with their academic performances. Students who stay physically fit during the week generally experience better test scores.

- Getting enough sleep makes the mind work better: Many students struggle to get adequate sleep at night, but it is important that they try to get between seven and nine hours.

"Sleep keeps students well-rested. It gives them a good attention span, along with a more stable mood, which increases concentration," says psychologist John Markovich. Getting enough sleep at night will help students focus while taking tests.

The **aromatherapy bottle** is to help your child activate his memory and approach the test from a calmer perspective.

It has been proven that essential oils, such as lavender and rosemary, can stimulate the brain and improve concentration and learning abilities. Students can benefit by lighting a lavender candle while studying, which can help them retain information before the test.

Even if a child has the first-aid kit, he still needs to be prepared — and reparation for tests should be a group effort. A student's parents, teachers and tutors should all work together to set the student up for success.

Studying with a friend, when possible, can help students better understand the material and learn from one another.

Hopefully, these tips will get you and your child on the path to better results in test-taking.

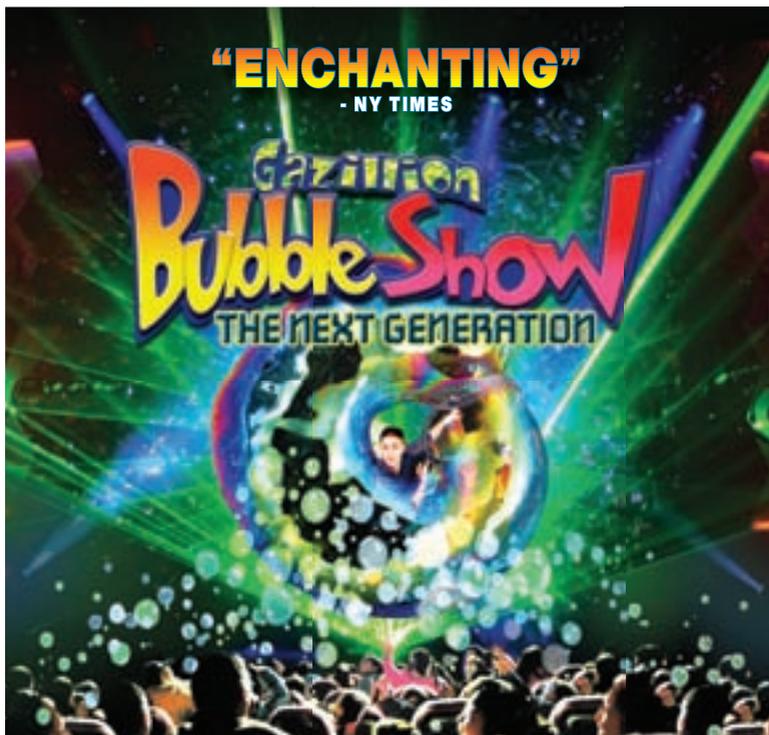
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cation of the student's ability.

There are many techniques that students can use to improve concentration and ease their nerves, and there are many ways in which you can help them.

The morning of the test, surprise your child with his own anxiety-busting first-aid test kit. This is a perfect way to start the day and show him that although you can't be



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SHARON C. PETERS, MA

Should the family dog share the bed?



Dear Sharon,

Our 5-year-old son sleeps with our dog every night (a loving and tender Irish setter). We're concerned that he is too dependent on him for company and will not be able to sleep alone in the coming years. What do you think?

Dear parents,

When I first saw your question, I happened to be with a 22-year-old friend of mine who loves animals, particularly dogs. Her reaction to your concern was, "I have a 25-year-old friend who sleeps with his dog. He loves his dog. It's great to love your dog." I generally agree that it is wonderful for children and adults to love their pets. I, too, know many people who sleep with their animals and enjoy doing so.

It is also true that many people, children and adults, would rather not sleep by themselves. I have rarely met a young person who chooses to

sleep alone — even though there are many reasons it might be best for him to do so.

Many parents to whom I speak have to sort through if, how, and when to have their children sleep by themselves when there is resistance to doing so. Oftentimes, music, soft blankets, favorite stuffed animals, or siblings become sleepmates to fill the void and help with the transition to sleeping alone. It is also common that pets help provide company to a "lonely" child and help him sleep through the night with some much appreciated company.

It is difficult for parents to remember that children develop in stages. The interests and levels of independence of a 5-, 10- and 15-year-old child are very different. As little ones get older, their needs at night (and during the day) change a great deal.

Most children develop an interest in their own physical space and personal autonomy, especially as they get close to adolescence. As children grow in size and emotional understanding, a pet — such as an Irish setter — who climbs into bed every night can start to take up too much physical space or be "troublesome" in other ways.

Parents of a child of any age should probably be concerned if their son or daughter is relying on a pet for extensive companionship during the day, when ongoing relationships with friends and adults should be primary to a young one's social life and overall development.

If a child's connections with their parents and other children are going well, then I believe that sleeping with his beloved dog at night is probably fine.

Sharon C. Peters is a mother and director of Parents Helping Parents, 669 President St., Brooklyn (718) 638-9444, www.PHPonline.org.

If you have a question about a challenge in your life (no issue is too big or too small) e-mail it to Dear Sharon at SWeiss@englocal.com.

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BEST FRIENDS

What to know before adopting that fluffy bundle of joy

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

During my junior year of college, my roommate brought home a kitten, which I named Tess, after the title character of the 1979 Roman Polanski movie. Although I never had a pet before, I attempted to adapt to the new little creature cohabiting with me — moving swiftly across my furniture, settling on top of any open book I was reading, and shredding entire rolls of paper towels when she felt she had been left home alone for too long.

After two months, my roommate decided that Tess was not worth half the cost of her food and kitty litter and wanted to get rid of her.

But it was too late for me. I already loved her. So I kept the kitten — and dumped the roommate.

Later, I married a dog person. Years after Tess was gone, and our nuclear family seemed complete, he suggested we get a dog, like his family had done when he was growing up. I was not about to become mother to a canine that was large enough for a toddler to ride on (complete with doggie smell), but when my then 6-year-old daughter asked for a dog that would “stay a puppy,” my husband and I compromised, and we got a miniature dachshund.

Milton has always been a source of unbridled joy for our family. He has a special relationship with my children — who literally grew up with him, and my daughter has always referred to him as her “younger brother.”

Despite some initial trepidation, I was in favor of introducing the furry bundle of joy into our family. I understood that bringing home a pet was not exactly like bringing home a cuddly stuffed animal.

Veterinarian Ann Hirschegger equates adopting a pet with adding “an additional child, especially [if you bring home] a puppy.”

So, if you’re considering adding a

pet to your family, there are several factors to consider.

Practice

If you’re considering a new pet, acclimate your children to the idea of being around and caring for animals. Dr. Susan Bartell, a family psychologist, suggests pet sitting for a friend before introducing your new addition into your home. I also suggest encouraging your children to volunteer at a local pet shelter. (But first, check to see if your children meet the age requirement, and make sure you are comfortable with the extent of the commitment required.)

Set guidelines

Each breed or type of pet will need to be handled in a certain way. Since our dachshund was small and needed to be lifted and carried in a particular manner, we taught our children to handle him carefully. Children also have to be taught that certain foods, like chocolate, can be dangerous to dogs. Different breeds will have various temperaments and needs, so it will involve some research in advance.

Training

It seems simple and straightforward, but it is not. I recommend that families unfamiliar with dog handling be sure to learn how to best manage a new dog, whether by hiring a private trainer, reading books, or researching online. We hired a dog trainer to help us understand how to manage Milton.

Dogs are pack animals, so when they are first brought into a new home, they need to understand their position in the family hierarchy. They need to know that they are not higher in importance than even their smallest human counterpart, because if this order is not established, a seemingly sweet and tame dog could nip a child.

Milton’s trainer also warned against allowing a dog to walk his owner. I see dogs leading their owners around my neighborhood all the

time. To set the tone, the dog should always enter the house after the humans.

Responsibility

Having a pet is a big responsibility, and, as such, the duties should be carried out by the whole family. Expecting a child to shoulder the entire burden of pet ownership is unfair and unreasonable, warns Bartell.

“Kids are just not responsible enough, [however] well-intentioned,” agrees Hirschegger.

Still, with some guidance, children who are allowed to care for pets are given an early opportunity to contribute to the family.

Beware, though, that even in families in which parents are diligent about children regularly helping to care for a pet, kids’ time is much more limited by the time they reach middle school. Their free time is quickly consumed with homework, sports, and after-school activities.

Costs

Caring for a dog or cat can become expensive. In addition to the cost of food, kitty litter, or dog licensing fees, there are bills for ongoing veterinary care, and the possibility of great expense if the animal becomes ill. Worm, flea, and other medications will also need to be purchased and administered.

Keep in mind that most animals need to be groomed and bathed, whether that involves buying your own supplies to routinely upkeep your pet, or paying a professional groomer to do the job. Teeth and nails also need to be maintained. Plus, dogs need to be boarded when a family goes on vacation. If you are lucky enough to have a friend who will take care of your dog for free, you can avoid the boarding fee, which can run from \$20 per day in a local kennel to \$30 per day for the neighborhood dogsitter, to \$80 per night for the suite in Barkingham Palace in Port Washington. Boarding, for dogs with medical issues, starts at \$180 per night. Another option is to stay at a pet-friendly hotel, but there can be extra fees and



Milton, the author’s miniature dachshund, is now an important member of the family.

some pets do not travel well.

Cats — and some breeds of dogs — are a little less work when it comes to grooming, as they are mostly self-cleaning, much like Milton and my kitchen oven.

However, even with the expense and responsibility, most pet owners will tell you the experience is worth it and that their pet is a family member.

Pets and kids

Having a pet can be a great experience for children. A pet can provide an only child with additional companionship, or, as in my family, can provide a child with someone younger to boss around.

Pets also help children grow emotionally. For example, a child learns tenderness when she cares for a small pet, says Dr. Nina Malik, a veterinarian. She says a child also learns about experiencing the different stages of life through her pet, as the animals often join families as kittens or puppies, and share their middle and golden years with the same family.

“Children learn how to attach, how to love, and to lose,” Malik explained to me.

This could prepare the child for later in life, when she may have to cope with the loss of a family member, or a friend who moves away.

Also, a 2002 article in the *Journal of American Medicine* referenced a study that showed babies who live in a home with two or more pets may be less likely to develop allergies to pets.

There is, of course, always the possibility of sibling rivalry. A child can get jealous when her parents need to devote time to caring for an animal, or, more often, a pet could have a hard time adjusting to the introduction of a new baby.

Unconditional love?

Many people believe that pets can offer their owners unconditional love.

In his book, “Dogs Never Lie About Love,” psychoanalyst Jeffrey Mousaieff Masson adamantly asserts that dogs indeed feel love. Stanley Coren takes a somewhat different approach in his book, “How Dogs Think,” advocating what he calls “classical conditioning,” by way of hand-feeding a dog to teach him love.

Jan Fennell, author of “The Dog Listener,” assured me via e-mail that



Expecting a child to shoulder the entire burden of pet ownership is unfair and unreasonable.

dogs merely have a natural loyalty to their pack members for survival. “[Dogs] are loyal to those they survive alongside,” explained Fennell. “This shouldn’t be interpreted as devotion.”

While some veterinarians deny that dogs can experience such a human emotion, I tend to side with

Masson. In his book,” he captures the indescribable sense of elation a dog exhibits whenever his favorite human appears.

Despite their stubborn independent streak, I believe cats experience love, too. They may be more subtle, but they also let their owners know when they are ready for company.

A child’s dog can undoubtedly behave like president of her fan club. Who wouldn’t want a creature that is always available and appears to think you are the greatest all the time?

• • •

When you decide to make an addition to your family, make sure that this is truly what you want. It can be difficult for a child if her parents adopt a pet, and then decide to give the pet away because the expense

is too great, much like my college roommate. Bartell points out that a child may get attached to a pet more quickly than an adult, and if parents hastily rush to adopt and then change their minds, the child may experience a rollercoaster of emotions.

I am in no way trying to discourage you from adopting a cute, furry friend for your tyke; but I am recommending that you go in with your eyes open. Pets are accepting of their owners, warts and all, and this can be reassuring, even to a socially well-adjusted kid.

To help select the right pet for your family visit petfinder.com.

For more information on children and pets, visit www.aspc.org/pet-care/kids-and-pets and www.petco.com/caresheets/dog/Dog_ChildSafety.pdf.

She's having it all

Momprenneur manages beauty biz and family

“Momprenneur” Eva Asmar has created an opportunity for herself to balance the two most important parts of her life: running her own business and spending plenty of time with her family.

Asmar has combined the experience she earned in the beauty biz — as global product manager of L’Oreal and The Body Shop — with her passion for women’s rights and the environment, to create her own line of beauty products for moms and babies.

She conceived the line, called Bionee Organic-Certified Maternity Skin Care, when she and her husband, Georges, were living in Philadelphia, and he was attending business school. Pregnant with their first child, she quit her position at The Body Shop to pursue her dream. No one knows the effects pregnancy can have on a woman’s skin and hair quite like — well — a pregnant

woman, and Asmar quickly realized how important it was to have products that could safely cater to mothers both during and after pregnancy, as well as to their babies.

“I felt that there was not enough out there and not enough good-quality products that were offered for women expecting children, and for the children as well,” explains Asmar.

She knew that above all else, her products had to be effective, safe, natural, and green.

“During my pregnancy, I learned a lot about safety,” she says. “Everything you put on your skin gets into your bloodstream, and you have to be careful about what you use, especially during pregnancy and for newborns.”

Asmar and her husband trav-



Eva Asmar with her son Gabriel. (At left) Her Bionee cosmetics line.



eled to France to find ingredients, create and test formulas, and network with cosmetic industry professionals.

When her son, Gabriel, was born, so was her beauty line.

As important as work is to Asmar, her family is even more so. That’s why she made sure that she can run her line from her home on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, where she can care for her son and work on expanding her business.

“It was, and still is, and will be, very important for me to be independent and be my own boss, and choose the time I want to give to my child and to my job,” explains Asmar. “I can go to the park with him and then work when he sleeps. I do work late, but I have flexibility, which is really, really important.”

Born in Poland, Asmar has lived all over the world, including Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While living in

Paris, she attended the Sorbonne University and completed a Masters at ESSEC Business School. It was while in the City of Lights that Asmar took an interest in cosmetics, and soon, established herself as a cosmetics industry leader, with high-ranking positions at Yves Rocher, L’Oreal, and later, The Body Shop.

As her work experience grew, so did her ideas for women’s products. During her time at The Body Shop, her commitment to safety and women’s rights strengthened, as well. She felt that products should have safe, natural in-

gredients and support fair trade.

Now, her brand has been organically-certified and received numerous safety and quality certifications from top organizations in Europe, Australia and the U.S.

Asmar set out to make sure that women have access to effective, safe, natural, and green beauty products for themselves and for their babies. Now, she encourages other women to create their own employment model that gives them the life they want.

“We really want to encourage women and young moms,” she says. “No one should have to give up one or the other. You have to give yourself what’s important to you.”

As a result of her labors, her line has developed eight Bionee products, with 11 more on the horizon — and Asmar has a new baby on the way, too! She set out to make sure that no matter how well her business did, she stayed a dedicated mom. Mission accomplished.

For more information and to buy products, visit www.bionee.com.

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The danger zone

Alcohol and pregnancy don't mix

BY REUEL S. AMDUR

Who is advocating for children affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, a condition that is perhaps the most common birth defect, but one that also could be easily prevented? Most often, it is the adoptive parents of children with the disorder, and they are tirelessly working for not only better education about the condition, but better rights for those children and adults affected as well.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum, caused by a woman drinking alcohol while pregnant, is identified by the presence of three factors: growth problems, brain damage, and certain

facial characteristics. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder covers a broader range, including people with some, but not all, of the markers of the spectrum. The disorder is perhaps the most common birth defect, and some 10 to 12 percent of all children are affected to the extent that they require special education, according to Bruce Ritchie, moderator of Faslink Fetal Alcohol Disorders Society based in Bright's Grove, Ontario, Canada.

The disorder can involve birth defects of many organs, such as the heart, fingers and toes, kidneys, and a cleft palate, among others. About a quarter of the children affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum are mentally deficient, and while most children with the disorder have intelligence in the normal range, the condition is the number one cause of mental deficiency.

They are also likely to have poor judgement, including poor moral judgement, poor memory, and difficulty managing money and time. As a result, they are easily led astray, and many get in trouble with the law. Psychological difficulties they face include depression, panic attacks, schizophrenia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Many students with these conditions are suspended or expelled from school because of their behavior caused by these conditions.

Education for children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder needs to take into account some common difficulties they have: difficulty in transforming words into actions; difficulty in generalizing, and hence, a tendency to repeat mistakes; difficulty organizing one's time; easy over-stimulation; misreading cues from other people, and consequent difficulties in relating to them. Unfortunately, schools often lack the skilled teachers and other personnel to meet these children's needs.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum cannot be diagnosed at birth, but rather only when the infant or child fails to meet certain milestones, or exhibits certain behaviors associated

with the spectrum, according to Dr. Russell Kirby, professor and Marrell endowed chair in the Department of Community and Family Health at the University of South Florida in Tampa, FL. Misdiagnosis is common, especially for minority children, as doctors are often likely to not recognize the facial characteristics correctly because of lack of sufficient experience with such children, especially native Indians.

"Many people don't recognize that their children have the problem," says Johnna Breland, a Decatur, AL, woman who, with her husband, has adopted a number of disabled children, including some with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Failure to identify and treat Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder early and appropriately can mean that the person may be permanently lost. While some may require lifelong support of one sort or another, many can become functioning members of society in appropriately supervised settings. However, if they do not get help early, they risk a lifetime of legal and personal difficulties. Incarceration and homelessness are common.

The good news is that Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is 100 percent preventable. Put simply: pregnant women should not drink alcohol.

"Alcohol exposure in the first three months is more apt to have effects on the embryo," says Kirby. "Most basic structures of the body are basically formed in the first 10 to 12 weeks of pregnancy."

Even mild alcohol use at any stage in the pregnancy may be risky. Drinking later in pregnancy could have other serious effects, such as smaller size at birth and greater risk of mental deficiency.

If your child, biological or adopted, has Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, you may want to join with other parents in advocating for better screening, appropriate special education, and better public education.

Reuel Amdur is a social worker and freelancer living in Quebec, Canada.



It figures

BY CYNTHIA WASHAM



DAD'S DATA

84 Percent of dads who say moms are treated better on Mother's Day than dads are on Father's Day.

39 Percent of people who consider Ben Stiller the best celebrity dad.



25 Percent who consider Brad Pitt their favorite.



312 million
Number of hits from Googling "mother."

270 million
Number from Googling "father."

More than 30 Percent of an average man's sperm that's normal and healthy.



Less than 10
Percent of normal, healthy sperm in triathlete males, presumably from miles spent on a bike saddle in tight shorts.

TRAVEL TRIVIA



67 Percent who consider family vacation a time for "fun, action and adventure."

18 Percent who consider it a time for "rest and relaxation."

39 Percent of parents who say they would take their children out of school for a family vacation.

11 Percent who say they would never do that.

43 Percent of parents who say their kids are very involved in planning family vacations.

11 Percent who say the adults decide when and where to go.



Sources: PRweb.com, Parentdish.com, babytalk, MayoClinic.com, Urology Times, DisneyFamily.com, Familyvacationcritic.com

Going Places

LONG-RUNNING

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

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

YuGiOh game time: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; Weekdays, 1 pm, Now – Fri, May 27; Free.

Meet new friends and enjoy card games.

Cooking lessons: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; stateniskids.org; Fridays at 2 pm; Now - Fri, July 29; Free with museum admission of \$6.

Presented by Health Plus Kidz. Children learn the healthy way to eat.

Tutoring: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; Saturdays, 2–4 pm, Now – Sat, June 25; Free.

Children in pre-K through eighth grade get help in math and English from volunteers from Stuyvesant High School. Pre-registration required.

Toddler storytime: Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; www.barnesandnoble.com; Tuesdays, 10:30 am–Noon, Now – Tues, June 21; Free.

A different book and songs each week.

Tree tots and peepers: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; Wednesdays, 9:30 am–noon, Now – Thurs, June 9; \$4 (\$6 non-members).

Two-year-old children learn about nature. Pre-registration is required.

Life in the 19th Century: Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351-1611; www.historicrichmondtown.org; Wednesdays, 1–5 pm, \$5 (\$4 seniors; \$3.50 children 5-17).

A look back through children's objects including safety tips, diet, social skills and hygiene.

After-school club: Historic Richmond Town, Clarke Avenue at Gilbert Street; (718) 351-1611 X 281;

Fun at the museum

It's never dull at the Staten Island Children's Museum, where kids can enjoy interactive exhibits and creative workshops:

- Every Friday at 2 pm, there's a class offering hints and recipes that encourages children to make sure their meals and snacks are as healthy as they can be;

- Every Wednesday is Clay Day, from 11 am to 1 pm, when children get to explore their messy, creative side while producing a masterpiece to take home;

tions@historicrichmondtown.org; www.nycgovparks.org; Wednesdays, 3:30 pm; Free (cost of book additional).

Students in grades four through seven read and discuss selected books.

Teen night: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; Mondays – Thursdays, 6 pm, Thurs, June 2 – Wed, June 29; Free.

Study for school or catch up on a good book.

Teen Cafe: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; Mondays,

- Parents can read stories, sing songs and finger play with their little ones during Tot Time every Wednesday, from 11 am to 1 pm.

The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays, from noon to 6 pm, with all events free with general admission of \$6. Admission is free for members.

Staten Island Children's Museum [1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street in Randall Manor, (718) 273-2060]. For additional information visit www.stateniskids.org.

2:30 pm; Now - Mon, June 20; Free.

Play games on the PS3 and Wii and meet with friends.

WED, JUNE 1

Picture book time: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; free.

Children, ages 3 and up, interact with finger play, coloring and listening to books.

THURS, JUNE 2

Origami workshop: Dongan Hills

Submit a listing

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Public Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Seaview Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Learn the ancient art of paper folding.

FRI, JUNE 3

Doodlebug Fun: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm; \$1 per child.

Children, ages 18 months to four years old, with care giver listen to stories, enjoy music and do crafts. Pre-registration required.

Board games: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

For children ages 3 to 12.

Toddler time: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children 18 months to 3 years old with parent/caregiver share interactive stories, songs and fingerplay.

Tony 'n Tina's Wedding: Es-Ca's Restaurant, 1559 Richmond Rd.; (347) 600-8293; tonytinastour@yahoo.com; www.tonytinastour.com; 7 pm; \$30-\$125.

Buffet dinner and a show.

SAT, JUNE 4

Patrick and Friends: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; stateniskids.org; 1 pm; Free with museum admission (plus \$5 egg hunt fee).

Concert, sing, dance and have fun.

Going Places

Origami: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 2 pm; Free.

Learn the ancient art of paper folding. Young children must be accompanied by an adult. Registration required.

Cooking lessons: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 2-3:30 pm; material fee depending on ingredients.

Chef and food therapist Jamie Seaman teaches children, ages 8-12, how to cook healthy dishes. Pre-registration required.

"Snoopy": Full Cup, 388 Van Duzer St. and Beach Street; (888) 731-8719; 4 pm; \$10 (\$5 children under 10; Children under four free).

Musical performance of the Peanuts character presented by the Spotlight Children's Theater.

SUN, JUNE 5

Gone fishing: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3101; www.statenislandzoo.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with zoo admission.

Classes for children six and older providing step-by-step instructions about everything fish. Pre-registration required. Must provide your own fishing equipment.

Nature workshop: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 1-2 pm; \$4 (\$6 non members).

Children six and up learn about the amazing world of birds. Pre-registration and pre-payment required.

Science club: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 2-3:30 pm; Free.

Students, ages 8-12, meet with Clay Wolleny and learn about different topics.

MON, JUNE 6

Read aloud: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Librarian shares picture book selections with children three to 12.

TUES, JUNE 7

"Gloria": Christ Church, 76 Franklin Ave. at Eadie Place; (718) 448-3656; www.richmondchoral.com; 7:30 pm; Donation suggested.

Performed by the Richmond Choral Society and members from Moore High School.

Special needs workshop: Path



Photo by Paul Marinka

Just fishing around

This one's for the fishes! On June 5 at the Staten Island Zoo, children — ages 6 and older — can learn everything about the art of fishing.

Step-by-step instruction will be provided but participants must provide their own equipment. There's never been a better time to invest in a rod and tackle box.

Family Center, 1779 Richmond Ave. at Croft Place; (212) 677-4650; www.resourcesnyc.org; 10 am-noon; Free.

Help is a support service for families.

Toddler storytime: Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; www.barnesandnoble.com; 10:30 am; Free.

Books and sing-alongs for children under 5-years-old.

Tech time: Dongan Hills Public Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Seaview Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Teens, 13 to 18, bone up on computer programs.

Jewelry workshop: Dongan Hills Public Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Seaview Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Teens, ages 13 to 18, create new pieces from recycled old pieces.

"Snoopy": 6 pm. Full Cup. See Saturday, June 4.

WED, JUNE 8

Teen-tech time: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street;

After all, fishing's a hobby your family will enjoy all summer long.

"Gone Fishing" at the Staten Island Zoo [614 Broadway at Martling Avenue in West Brighton, (718) 442-3101], June 5 from 10 am to 1 pm. Admission \$8 adults, \$6 seniors, \$5 for children (ages 3-14), and free for kids under 3 years. For info, visit www.statenislandzoo.org.

(718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 2:30-4:30 pm; Free.

For children 12 to 18 years old.

Teen dating: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Got a question? Dating guru Lesley Moody can help. For teens 12 to 18.

Picture book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, June 1.

THURS, JUNE 9

Cool school: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; statenislandkids.org; 10 am-4 pm; Free.

Presented by Northfield Bank. Children of all ages enjoy age-appropriate activities.

Sing along: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 2 pm; Free.

Interactive musical for children of all ages featuring selections from Africa, the Caribbean, Mexico and Asia.

Art of Mime: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.

org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Urban Stages presents the summer reading kick off with a discussion and interactive mime performances.

Summer reading: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Kick-off event for children in pre-school through age 12. Earn incentives and prizes.

"The Silkie": Dongan Hills Public Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Seaview Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Summer reading kick off featuring this story based on Celtic folktale.

FRI, JUNE 10

Drums and rhythm: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

Drum Diva Dale provides African drums, bongos, congas and shakers for children, ages 12 to 18.

Board games: 3:30 pm. St. George Library. See Friday, June 3.

SAT, JUNE 11

Swamp stories: High Rock Park, 200 Nevada Ave. at Rockland Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am-noon; Free.

Children, ages 3-6, with an adult, hear stories about the critters that live nearby. Registration required.

"Chubby Hubby Fun Fun": Clove Lake Park, 1150 Clove Road at Greenway Drive; (718) 816-5558; www.nycgovparks.org; Noon-2 pm; Free.

Fun for the whole family to celebrate Father's Day with games, arts and crafts, pie-eating contest and sack races.

Crafts: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; statenislandkids.org; 1, 2 and 3 pm; \$5.

Children create a card for their dad.

"Snoopy": Oakwood Heights Community Church, 345 Guyon Ave. at Falcon Avenue; (888) 731-8719; 6 pm; \$10 (\$5 children under 10; Children under four free).

Musical performance of the Peanuts character presented by the Spotlight Children's Theater.

SUN, JUNE 12

Crafts: 1, 2 and 3 pm. Staten Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, June 11.

Baseball lecture: Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351-1611; www.historicrichmond-

Continued on page 38

Going Places

Continued from page 37

town.org; 2 pm; Free. Discuss the Negro Leagues and the House that Ruth Built.

Explorer club: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 2–3:30 pm; Free.

Students, ages 6–12, meet with Clay Wolleny and learn about different topics.

MON, JUNE 13

Read aloud: 4 pm. Huguenot Public Library. See Monday, June 6.

Origami workshop: 4 pm. Dongan Hills Public Library. See Thursday, June 2.

TUES, JUNE 14

Advisory group: Dongan Hills Public Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Seaview Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

Teens, ages 13–18, give input on what the library needs.

Tech time: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Public Library. See Tuesday, June 7.

WED, JUNE 15

Teen art: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 3–4 pm; Free.

Teens, ages 12–18, create projects.

Picture book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, June 1.

FRI, JUNE 17

Rhyme time: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 10:30 am–12:30 pm; Free.

For toddlers 13 to 30 months old. Pre-registration required one week prior.

Doodlebug Fun: 1 pm. Blue Heron Nature Center. See Friday, June 3.

Board games: 3:30 pm. St. George Library. See Friday, June 3.

“Annie Jr.”: Wagner College Gymnasium, 531 Howard Ave. at Strafford Avenue; (718) 390-3221; www.wagner.edu/external; 7 pm; \$15.

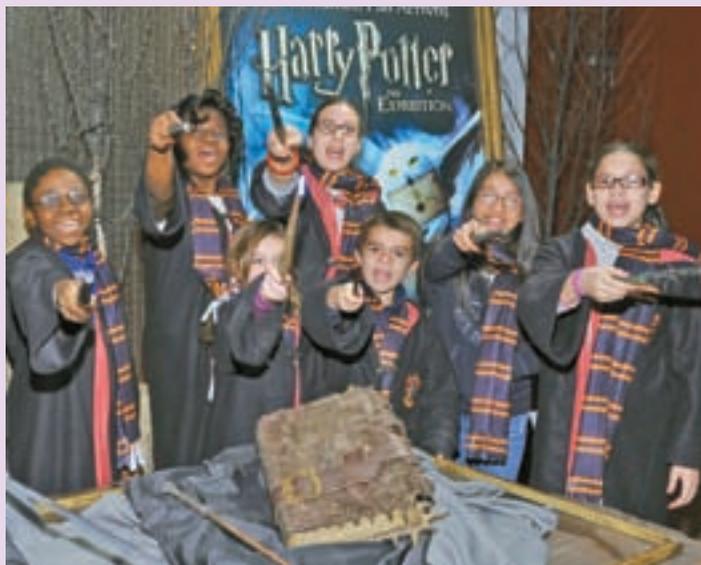
Actor Children’s Theatre presents a musical based on the classic “Annie.”

Miss New York Pageant 2011: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 7:30 pm; \$42.

Preliminary competition.

SAT, JUNE 18

Art workshop: Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; staten-



Magical exhibition

The magic of “Harry Potter” comes to life in this new exhibition at the Discovery Times Square museum.

You and your little Hogwarts fan can explore more than 200 authentic costumes and props from the popular films, displayed in settings inspired by the sets.

While touring the exhibition space, you can even discover iconic items such as Harry’s original wand and eyeglasses, the Marauder’s Map, Gryffindor school uniforms as well as costumes

worn at the Yule Ball. Enter the Quidditch area and toss a quaffle, pull your own mandrake in the herbology vignette, encounter Buckbeak the hippogriff and even a giant Acromantula spider. The only thing missing is Daniel Radcliffe himself!

“Harry Potter: The Exhibition” at Discovery Times Square [226 W. 44th St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues in Manhattan, (866) 987-9692], now through Oct. 5. Tickets \$25, \$22.50 for seniors, \$19.50 for children. For info, visit www.discoverytsx.co.

islandkids.org; 1, 2 and 3 pm; \$5.

Children learn printing techniques from artist Ryan McGivern.

“Annie Jr.”: 7 pm. Wagner College Gymnasium. See Friday, June 17.

Miss New York Pageant 2011: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 7:30 pm; \$52.

Final competition.

SUN, JUNE 19

Nature tour: High Rock Park, 200 Nevada Ave. at Rockland Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.org; 1–2 pm; Free.

Discover the ponds with dad. Pre-registration required.

Art workshop: 1, 2 and 3 pm. Staten Island Children’s Museum. See Saturday, June 18.

tion required.

Picture book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, June 1.

THURS, JUNE 23

Origami workshop: 4 pm. Dongan Hills Public Library. See Thursday, June 2.

Bedtime storytime: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 5 pm; Free.

Children, ages 3 and older, come in pajamas and hear stories and watch a short movie.

FRI, JUNE 24

Board games: 3:30 pm. St. George Library. See Friday, June 3.

SAT, JUNE 25

Metal art: Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; staten-islandkids.org; 1, 2 and 3 pm; \$5.

Children create tin art projects with artist Janice Patrignani.

SUN, JUNE 26

Metal art: 1, 2 and 3 pm. Staten Island Children’s Museum. See Saturday, June 25.

MON, JUNE 27

Read aloud: 4 pm. Huguenot Public Library. See Monday, June 6.

TUES, JUNE 28

Tech time: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Public Library. See Tuesday, June 7.

WED, JUNE 29

Cool school: 10 am–4 pm. Staten Island Children’s Museum. See Thursday, June 9.

Puppet show: Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; staten-islandkids.org; 1 and 3 pm; \$5.

Children learn to understand children with disabilities through interactive show.

Picture book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, June 1.

THURS, JUNE 30

Origami workshop: 4 pm. Dongan Hills Public Library. See Thursday, June 2.

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NEWBIE DAD

BRIAN KANTZ

Dressing up

Will his boys discover the fun?

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of accompanying my mom and my aunt on a tour of their childhood home. They hadn't been inside the place in decades. A church owns the house now, so it looks quite a bit different than it did when they were kids. The living room serves as a Sunday school classroom, the dining room is a conference center, and the bedrooms have been converted to office and storage space.

Still, enough of the house's original character was left intact to spark some colorful memories — like the winter when they sprayed the basement floor with a garden hose to make an indoor ice rink (note to my boys: I know it's a sweet idea, but don't even think about it!); the time their little brother was launched head-first from a rocking horse that he rocked on too fast; and some wonderful Thanksgivings, including that November day back in 19... well, back when my mom was born. It was a thrill for me to hear all of those stories while standing in the house that was so integral to their lives.

As we walked up the stairs to the second floor, my mom and aunt were immediately drawn to the giant, floor-to-ceiling cupboards that lined the hallway. "Dress-ups!" the two joyfully said in unison. My aunt opened one of the cupboard doors and explained how the sisters used to keep their "dress-up" clothes in that very spot.

They loved to play dress-up and they had shirts, skirts, dresses, pants, coats, hats, gloves and shoes fit for a thousand adventures — a spot of tea with the Queen of England, dinner at the White House with the President of the United States, or an afternoon of being shipwrecked on an island in the South Pacific. Whatever the occasion, the girls could imagine themselves right in the middle of it, dressed the part.

In today's age of electronics, where traipsing an avatar through parallel universes is as easy as pressing the "on" button, dress-up may sound quaint, but it also sounds wonderfully refreshing. To be a kid with an imagination — a real imagination — is an awesome thing.

Until recently, I was getting a little concerned that my two boys, ages 4 and 6, may have been a little lacking in the imagination department. They just didn't seem to be into the whole

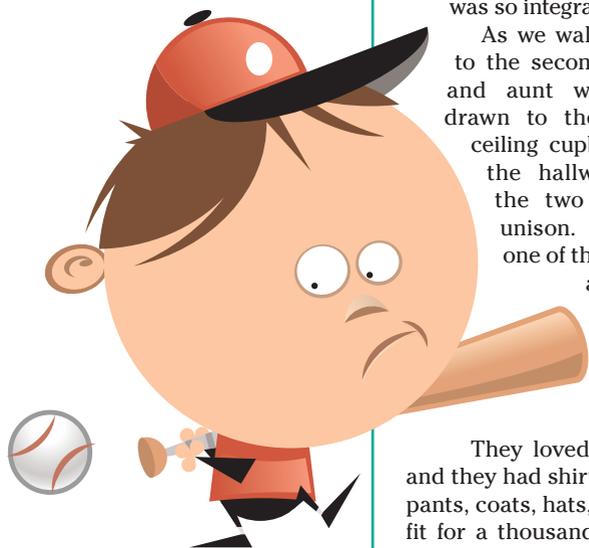
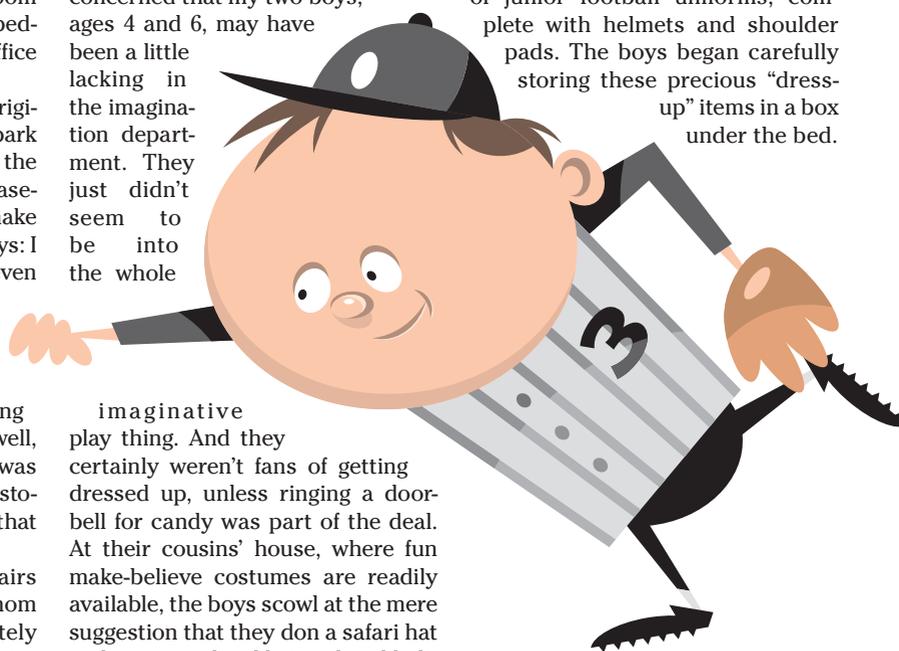
imaginative play thing. And they certainly weren't fans of getting dressed up, unless ringing a doorbell for candy was part of the deal. At their cousins' house, where fun make-believe costumes are readily available, the boys scowl at the mere suggestion that they don a safari hat and vest, or a hard hat and tool belt. Not no way, not no how.

The two boys were just not into dressing up, and it had me scratching my head. My brothers and I played cops-and-robbers and cowboys-and-Indians when we were kids. We put on the costumes. We became Superman and Captain America when we wore our Underoos (sing it with me: "Underoos are fun to wear!") and we were KISS when we painted our faces white and cranked up "Rock and Roll All Nite" on the record player. I remember that being pretty silly and fun, and I didn't want my kids to miss out.

Then, it happened. My older son joined his first Little League team last year and was issued a uniform. Not the generic red shirts and caps we were given as kids, but the real deal. A real Major League Baseball-

style uniform. Suddenly, he was a player for the New York Mets wearing a pin-striped jersey with his name and number on the back. And his imagination soared.

For the rest of the summer, even after Little League season had ended, my son would put on his jersey and baseball pants every single day and pretend he was in the big leagues, swinging a real bat outdoors and an imaginary one inside the house. We encouraged the whole thing by supplying miscellaneous sports gear like batting gloves, wristbands and face masks. My mom, the dress-up expert, sent her grandsons a couple of junior football uniforms, complete with helmets and shoulder pads. The boys began carefully storing these precious "dress-up" items in a box under the bed.



Now, at nearly any time of day, you can hear the sounds of sports-themed imaginative play in our house. It usually begins with the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" (and the Canadian national anthem if they're playing hockey). The anthems are then followed by the introduction of the starting lineups and complete play-by-play calls of all the action.

It's very cute.

Now, I wouldn't go and call their sports uniforms "dress-ups" in front of them. That might ruin the whole thing. But I do tell them how much I love their little imaginations.

Brian Kantz always played the part of star-eyed guitarist Ace Frehley. Visit Brian online at www.briankantz.com or drop him a note at thenewbiedad@yahoo.com.

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New & Noteworthy



The bow show

This is the how-to for hair.

Learn how to make boutique bows, baby clips, tutus, braided barrettes and more with these online tutorials.

Birdsong Bows has 20 guides to making fun or fancy accessories for your little girl, niece or granddaughter, complete with easy-to-read descriptions and plenty of photos.

Geared towards beginners, you can make crafting hair accoutrements an engaging activity with your child, or a new hobby all to yourself.

Bows for beginners bundle packages, \$35. For info, visit www.etsy.com/people/birdsongbows.

'Zoo' story

Butts are so useful — not only do they enable us to sit, they can even teach us how to draw!

The new activity book "Everything Butt Art at the Zoo" teaches children ages 4 and older the core principals of step-by-step drawing. And every drawing originates from the outline of — yes — a butt.

This creative and educational activity book by Brian Snyder and illustrator Alexis Moniello is designed to encourage young artists with a fun and effective technique,



which Snyder has found to be successful with his own daughter.

In addition to providing step-by-step instructions for sketching 15 zoo animals, "Everything Butt Art at the Zoo" offers unique facts about each of the characters alongside colorful illustrations your own child will be making in no time.

"Everything Butt Art at the Zoo," \$9.95. For info, visit everythingbuttart.com.

Hop to it

With a name like HuggyBunny, you know these clothes are soft and comfortable!

This line of Peruvian Pima cotton baby clothes is just that, in a variety of styles, including sleeveless onesies, T-shirt onesies, long sleeve onesies, skirt onesies, rompers, classic gowns, and convertible gowns, as well as footsies, blankets, hats, and bibs, with as many precious screen-printed images, including hummingbirds, butterflies, monkeys



and bananas, frogs, and this kangaroo romper. There's also, of course, a gown with a bunny printed on the front — and back.

Girl romper by HuggyBunny, \$36. For info, visit www.huggybunny.com.

'Bugs' to be released

"Bugs" for sale!

Favorite kids musician Mister G has a new record ready to infest your CD player just in time for summer BBQs and pool parties.

A follow-up to his beloved 2009 album "Pizza for Breakfast," "Bugs" features 13 original songs by Mister G — aka Ben Gundersheimer, a critically acclaimed singer-songwriter who spent 20 years as a rock

frontman and solo artist before making the transition to family music.

"Bugs" features musical styles that bounce engagingly from bluegrass to bossa nova, ska to folk and rock. The song themes vary from world travels to a shark in the bathtub to annoying siblings and, of course, bugs!

"Bugs" by Mister G. For info, visit www.mistersongs.com.



Word up

During your next family road trip or play date, little wordsmiths looking to pass the time have a fun new game.

From the makers of Bananagrams comes ZIP-IT, a two-player crossword race that can be played anytime, anywhere, in as little as 20 seconds.

To play ZIP-IT, each person takes 12 cubes and races to form his own crossword grid using any side of the cubes. The first player to use all his cubes calls, "ZIP!" and scores a point by moving his or her own



zipper up the pouch.

The first person to score 10 points shouts, "ZIP-IT!" and wins the game.

Geared towards players ages 7 and up, ZIP-IT features 24 high-quality letter cubes packaged in a unique cloth pouch with scoring zippers, so everything you need to play is — literally — in the bag.

ZIP-IT, \$14.95. For info, visit www.bananagrams.com.

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