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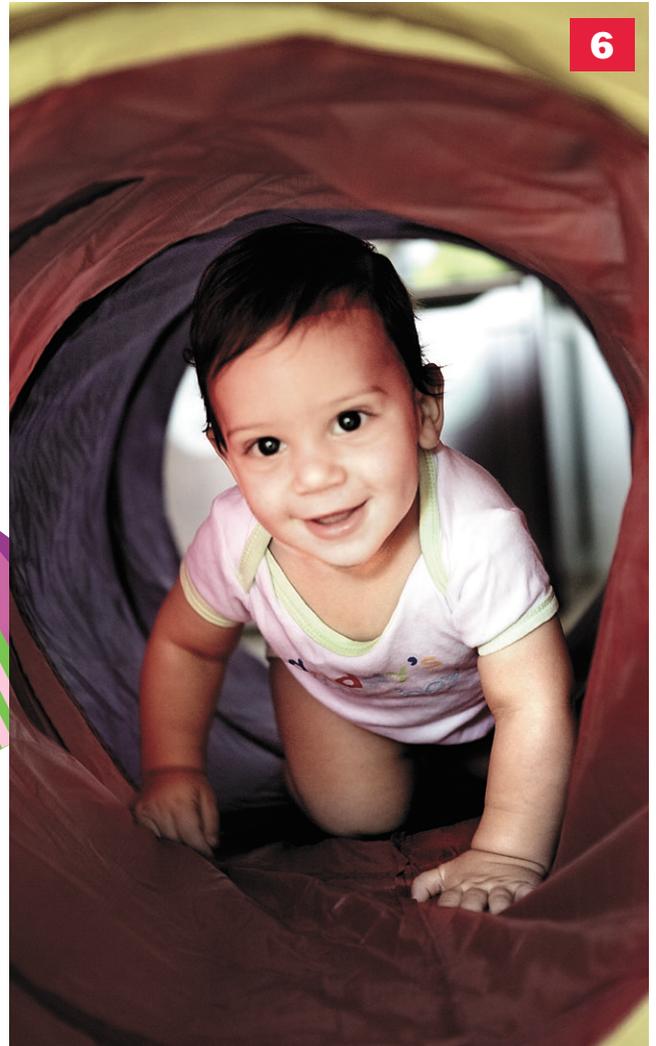
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# Letter from the publisher

## Our children's future

**M**y college student daughter recently asked me if I knew what she should do after she graduates. Her original plan to go to law school is being reexamined. The word is out that this career choice is not necessarily viable



any longer with a glut of law graduates and very few jobs for them. Outsourcing of this type of work is as prevalent as call centers, apparently. Who of us has made a call to a customer service center of any kind lately and spoken to someone in the 50 United States? Not many, I would imagine.

So what will our children do? How will they earn a living? What do they need to be studying to be ready

for the jobs of tomorrow? What will the jobs be? Who really knows? What we do know is that we are not properly preparing our children to be ready for tomorrow's work force and for the future. Our education systems are largely stuck in the past and

the preparedness is geared to yesterday's possibilities. The curriculums are based on a past economy that no longer exists or is fading fast.

What's a parent to do? What are the teachers to do? Who will provide the leadership and the new ideas, and when? We need to be asking these questions. Every parent needs to be asking and prodding the politicians, the corporate leaders and the educators so our children don't

come up empty-handed in the future; unprepared and unable to find security and fulfillment in their lives. Right now other governments are paying our universities to educate thousands of their children. They are getting the credentials and the training and then taking that expertise back home with them. Where is the investment for our kids? They will be competing against those same youngsters for jobs as the work force continues to go global.

The certainty of future joblessness for those without higher or specialized education would appear to be a given. As parents, this means it is our responsibility to make sure our children, from an early age, develop the kind of focus necessary to achieve, grow, and be competitive and adaptable as the new vocations unfold. We must steer them into

places we can't even see clearly ourselves — the unknown. This is an enormously important responsibility. This is pioneering. This is our century's "wagon train."

As we move into the New Year and the years ahead we will need to partner with each other more than we ever have before. Our children's futures will depend on it.

New York Parenting Media wishes your families happy holidays. My personal thanks go out to all our staff for their fine work, and especially to "our parents," Sharon, Tina and Lori, whose presence continues to make it all worthwhile.

Thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher

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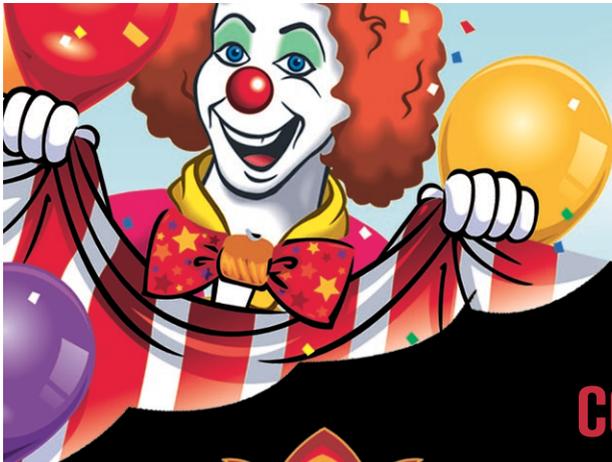
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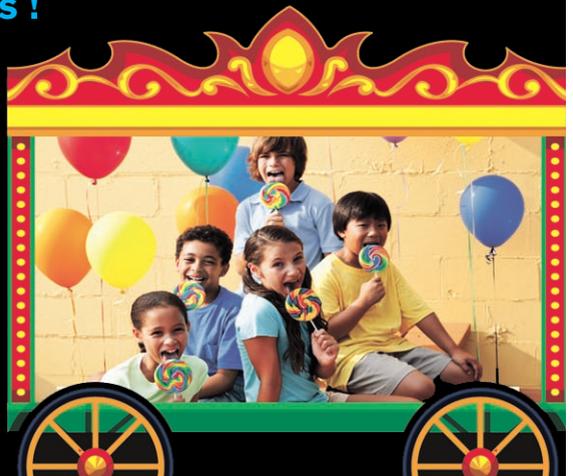
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# The cost of having a baby

How to manage a bundle of joy who costs a bundle

BY CANDI SPARKS

**P**arenthood is a transformative experience on many levels, and one that will surely affect a family's finances — because having a baby is expensive! The average cost for an in-hospital delivery and caring for a baby during the first few months of life falls somewhere between \$20,000 to \$30,000, with the costs largely dependent on the family's resources, lifestyle and finances. Many families plan the financial outlay in advance, but not everyone thinks that far ahead, or in comprehensive terms. There are, however, some ways to cut expenses and get the most for your money for you and your little bundle of joy.

Sharon, a Staten Island working mom, is happy to share financial information with mothers-to-be. She says that when she got pregnant, she sat and figured out the costs in advance; including missing time from work and having to go on disability during maternity leave. Despite her best guessing though, she exceeded the amount she calculated for the baby by about a third.

"Health insurance premiums are about \$1,000 a month or \$12,000 a year. The co-pays were another \$1,000 or so. I had a normal hospital delivery at \$12,000, but we live far away from my family, so when they came to visit, we got a hotel room for our relatives for about another \$400," explains Sharon. "When you add in all the baby equipment and items that you need to stock up on — like diapers, wipes, formula,



Photo by Ralph Renz

furniture and clothes — it's about another \$18,000.

"If you don't nurse, formula is pretty costly over the months until the baby is weaned. Away-from-home baby care is at least another \$25,000, and could be another \$10,000 on top of that, if you have someone caring for your baby in your home. That's not even for the first full year!"

## Expect the unexpected

Regardless of one's circumstances, pregnancy is risky — and financially risky as well. Health issues for mother and child can drive the costs even higher. Marie, a Bronx mother of two, received two gifts last year, one when her husband returned home safely from the military, and the other when she became pregnant shortly thereafter. Although the couple has a 13-year-old son, Marie said she felt like a first-time mom all over again. There were unexpected

medical issues for both mother and child, and there had been such a gap between children that she was at a loss as to what she would need and when she would need it.

Marie estimates the cost associated with her 6-month old was at \$25,000 so far. She did not anticipate having an emergency cesarean section or needing an extra epidural and anesthesia. It was a risky pregnancy, which drove the cost up.

Then, once Marie's baby was delivered, there were feeding issues. She hired a lactation specialist to help, which cost extra. Marie then discovered that due to an allergy, the baby needed a special formula, sold in a specialty shop. She said she did not expect the unexpected, which happened to her at every turn during this pregnancy.

Marie's advice to future mothers is simple: "Plan ahead." She was so excited about the pregnancy, that she had purchased the bare mini-

mum in baby essentials only, and little else.

### Stocking up

"Don't wait until the last minute and don't depend on getting gifts at the baby shower," she says. "Be prepared and save in advance for major items like the crib or changing table."

Since Marie will be heading back to work in the coming months, she suggests that mothers "figure in the cost of having a second playpen at the sitter's or a relative's home." This can really save a mom a lot of back pain resulting from toting baby items around.

For shoppers who don't know what to get, online baby registries can suggest what is needed for the baby and give the loved ones in your life a good idea of needed shower gifts (amazon.com, babiesrus.com, buybuybaby.com and others). Some retailers and registries also have great exchange programs in case of duplicate or unwanted baby items.

### Medical care

Having a baby is expensive, but there are ways to cut expenses and get the most for your money. A reliable health insurance plan is a key factor in keeping costs down. The mother will need to go for regular check-ups, ultrasounds, lab work and any other necessary doctor visits. If you are planning a hospital delivery, the mother may also want to attend childbirth classes and see what special amenities a particular hospital may offer, and at what expense. The delivery itself is an extra expense to be considered. A cesarean section will cost more than a vaginal delivery.

### Doctor vs. doula

Finding the right hospital or delivery room can also reduce costs. A future mother can call and ask questions in the early stages of the pregnancy to find out what is covered and what is not at a particular hospital. The doctor will have a fee, but the billing department will be the most familiar with the fees and coverage. Some options might include an at-home birth instead of a hospital delivery.

Jamie, a Brooklyn doula and mother of three, said she decided to do things differently with her third child. Her two boys were hospital deliveries, and she decided that her third child, a daughter, would be an at-home birth.

"The at-home birth was about one-third of the cost. Insurance covered the medical visits and the doula was a few thousand more, but my insurance also covered that," she says. "Having a doula and the at-home birth took a lot of the worry out of the equation. We did not have to think about when to transition to or from the hospital, or when the baby would be taken to the nursery. It was not an issue at home. I was comfortable and in one place the entire time."

Jamie had no medical issues and welcomed less medical supervision during this pregnancy. She recommends that a mom who is not having a high-risk pregnancy, or who is less risk averse, might actually prefer working with a doula at home.

### Know your benefits

"Parents-to-be should consult the job manual before a pregnancy. It is important to know the parameters for time off, sick days and childbirth," explains June, a human resources professional in New York. "Most women work too hard and too long into the pregnancy to really enjoy it. If they had read the book and asked a few questions, they might have been able to relax a little bit more."

For the working mother-to-be, unpaid time out of the office is a big consideration. Taking time off from work during the pregnancy to go to doctor and lab visits may be used as "sick time." Or, this time may be calculated as "time without pay." Check the employee manual and visit human resources to see how this time off will affect the salary.

Mothers who love to save can find ways to reduce costs. Some move to cloth diapers and save a bundle on the disposables. Many community parenting sites offer free advice and hand-me-downs on gently used baby items. Craigslist is also a place to find freebies and bargains. Online baby calculators can give a range of expenses for various items and help to soften the blow when your baby arrives (babycenter.com, babyzone.com, i-am-pregnant.com are among a few of them out there).

Having a baby can be very costly, but there is nothing like the joy of holding him in your arms.

*Candi Sparks is a Brooklyn mother of two and author of children's books about money, "Can I Have Some Money?" "Max Gets It!" and "Nacho Money." She is on Facebook (Candi Sparks Author) and on Twitter (Candi Sparks, New York).*

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# How to save big on maternity wear



BY JENNIFER LACEY

**C**ongratulations! You've just discovered that you are pregnant, and the shopper in you can't wait to hit the stores to look for new clothes for your soon-to-be changing figure. But, even the most enthusiastic shopper can fret at the thought

of spending a fortune on clothes that are, let's face it, worn only for a short amount of time. Before you make your credit card balances blow up with new maternity outfits, here are some simple tips that will help you to become a penny-wise momma-to-be!

## Shop smart in the stores

Nationwide retailers from Macy's to JC Penney regularly place merchandise onto clearance racks in order to make room for new arrivals. Trips to clearance aisles are a wonderful way to start building up your maternity wardrobe. Clothes and accessories in clearance are typically marked down anywhere from 20 to 85 percent off the regular price. So, when you make

your next visit to your local dress store, resist temptation, and keep walking past the beautiful displays in the front and head straight to the back, where you will find the clearance section for the best sales.

Another good tip: sign up for your favorite store's mailing or e-mail list (or even become their fan on Facebook) to find out about weekly or monthly sales or to get coupons.

## Consignment shops

Say you have an invitation to your cousin's wedding. You're six months along, and although you know you will need to wear something special, you are hesitant about shelling out so much money for a dress that you are only going to wear for a few hours. Well-respected consignment shops may be a great place to find gently-used maternity clothes at a fraction of the cost. Consignment shopping provides you with several benefits, including:

- Finding better prices than at resale stores.
- The seller typically gets a better price than if he sold his items to a resale shop. The consignor (you) also typically gets a better price. For example, you might get 70 percent off your purchases.
- The variety and quality of items can be a lot better than those purchased at a garage sale.

## The World Wide Web of bargains

When I was pregnant with my first child, the very idea of waddling my way through crowds at my local mall was not my idea of a fun day out. If fighting the crowds at the mall is not your thing either, you can compare prices online and find some fantastic savings online! Kimberly Hines, a mother of two, saved money by searching online for sales on mater-

Even the most enthusiastic shopper can fret at the thought of spending a fortune on clothes that are worn only for a short amount of time.

nity clothes.

"I would just wait until I would see that something that I wanted was on sale, and then I'd buy it online. A lot of the websites that I shopped from home on often had free shipping or half-off shipping specials, so that was a huge plus for my budget."

Have you had your eye on a pair of Lavish by Heidi Klum capri leggings, but you just can't bear to pay the full price? Try eBay! You can bid on new and used clothes and you may get lucky and find a great deal.

After your pregnancy, you could consider selling your gently-used maternity clothes on the site to get a return on your investment! Craigslist is another site where you can find maternity clothes. You can search your area and contact most sellers through the e-mails provided. Many sellers are looking to sell entire wardrobes for very little. (For your personal safety, never meet up with any seller alone and do not give him any address or other personal security information.)

Rentmaternitywear.com allows you to rent a designer dress for one to two weeks. You choose the dress (or dresses) you want, and they will send your choices via FedEx for a 48-hour-try-on period. If the dress you chose does not fit, you can easily return it for a free second chance. If the dress fits you perfectly, all you have to do is show up at your holiday party looking fabulous. When the party's over, just send the dress back to them right in your mailbox. Rentmaternitywear.com also offers brand new dress rentals for a little bit more money.

### The power of frugal accessories can go a long way

Take a good look at your pre-pregnancy clothes and chances are, you will notice that several items are capable of growing with

you for a portion of your pregnancy with a little help from some useful gadgets.

Belly Bands ([http://babybeminematernity.3dcartstores.com/White-Maternity-Belly-Band\\_p\\_8.html](http://babybeminematernity.3dcartstores.com/White-Maternity-Belly-Band_p_8.html)) consist of a stretchy band of fabric that is placed over your open jeans to create a new belted waistband. Belly Bands are available in several colors, and you can find them at many maternity stores and online.

Or, there are other types of fabric patches that conveniently insert into your jeans' fly to build a patch between an open zipper. No matter what type of band you choose, you will be able to wear pants that will fit well and stretch along with your expanding belly bump.

Not only is your belly expanding, but your breasts will change size and shape regularly throughout the next nine months. Every mom-to-be's body is different; however, if you have found that your cup size has remained almost the same and you are just not ready to shell out \$30 for a maternity bra, a bra back extender may become your new best friend. Bra back extenders ([www.kaboodle.com/reviews/motherhood-maternity-bra-back-extender](http://www.kaboodle.com/reviews/motherhood-maternity-bra-back-extender)) help you to continue to comfortably wear your pre-pregnancy bra longer. Working in tandem with a two- or three-hooked bra, an extender can allow you to increase your bra size between 1 1/4-inches to 3 1/4-inches. They do not require sewing and just connect to your current bra at the hook.

### Hip hand-me-downs

Michelle Salvo, a mom of four, found that the best thing to do during her pregnancies was, "to take any and all hand-me-downs from my friends and family. Maternity clothes are so expensive to only wear for nine months, and for me, it was really a lot less time than that, because I didn't wear maternity clothes until I was about six months along. So for me, I was only really wearing maternity clothes for three to four months."

And, let's face it; because of the short amount of time that a mom-to-be wears maternity clothing, it is generally in good condition, and can offer you an inexpensive alternative.

Jennifer Lacey is a freelance journalist, specializing in pregnancy and parenting issues, whose work has been featured in numerous national and regional publications and websites.

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# Premature birth

## You've come a long way, babies!

Advances in medicine gave these infants a chance

BY LAURA VAROSCAK-DEINNOCENTIIS

**I**n the United States, more than half a million infants are born premature each year. Many factors contribute to preterm delivery, including poor nutrition, drug and alcohol use, diabetes, hypertension, infections, heart and kidney problems, and abnormalities with the cervix or placenta.

Age is also a determinant. Women under the age of 19 or over the age of 40 have an increased risk of delivering prematurely. When carrying more than one fetus, it is common for the uterus to overstretch — leading to early labor.

Preterm delivery has risen 36 percent in the past 25 years largely due to more older mothers having babies, as well as the use of assisted reproductive technology, which increases the chance of multiple births.

Joanne Hayes conceived triplets through in vitro fertilization at 35 years old. Two years earlier, she and her husband welcomed their first child, Caitlyn, into the world. Caitlyn was born one week early at a healthy 8.5 pounds.

Hayes understood that her second pregnancy was considered high risk because she was older and carrying multiples. Common medical complications in premature babies include problems with the lungs, brain, heart, and gastrointestinal tract, as well as ineffective immune systems.

Hayes's obstetrician started her on corticosteroids, knowing that she went into early labor at 34 weeks with Caitlyn. (Steroids help to speed up the development of the lungs and other organs, which increase the infant's chance of survival.)

When her doctor asked if she wanted an amniocentesis (a medical procedure used to determine chromosomal abnormalities and

fetal infections), Hayes refused.

"It wouldn't have changed anything, and I wasn't willing to risk hurting the babies."

The first 23 weeks of Hayes's pregnancy were uneventful. Her regular check-ups were normal and, other than tired, she felt fine. At 23 ½ weeks, Hayes experienced false labor and knew she was in trouble. Most premature babies are born "late-preterm," between 34 and 36 weeks gestation. About 12 percent of preterm babies are born between 32 and 33 weeks, about 10

After three months, Christopher, Ryan and Tara were finally discharged from the hospital. They still weighed less than five pounds.

percent between 28 and 31 weeks, and about 6 percent at less than 28 weeks gestation. All premature babies are at risk for health problems, but the earlier a baby is born, the greater the risk for serious complications.

Hayes's doctor admitted her to the hospital and put her on bed rest. She was carefully monitored and pumped with fluids to avoid dehydration. She went into true labor five weeks later. Within minutes, she had dilated from three to seven centimeters and one of her babies had already descended into the birth canal. Ryan (3.3 pounds), Christopher (2.3 pounds), and Tara (2.7 pounds) were delivered by Cesarean section in the neonatal intensive care unit at Long Island's Stonybrook Hospital the day before

Thanksgiving.

At such low birth weights, the babies lacked the fat necessary to maintain their body temperature and were immediately placed in incubators to keep them warm and protected from potential hypothermia and dehydration.

Hayes held Ryan right away, and says she remembers how tiny her largest baby felt in her arms. Christopher and Tara were immediately taken away before Hayes had a chance to see them. Ryan needed the support of continuous positive airway pressure, which delivered pressurized air to his lungs through small tubes to help him breathe. Christopher was able to breathe on his own with supplemental oxygen. Tara, the last one delivered, was immediately put on a respirator.

The lungs of preterm infants in respiratory distress are deficient in surfactant, a combination of fats and proteins that help to prevent the collapse of the air sacs in the lungs. By the second day, Tara had multiple complications. She suffered from pulmonary interstitial emphysema and was put on a jet ventilator, a loud, pounding machine, where she lay for almost a week, covered in sterile plastic resembling Saran Wrap. Finally, one of her lungs collapsed. The collapse closed up the air sacs that had been over-inflated and her condition gradually improved.

By the next week, however, Tara developed sepsis and was put on another respirator. Premies in the neonatal intensive care unit are particularly susceptible to this serious, potentially life-threatening blood infection. The invasive procedures (intravenous lines, catheters, and tubes) used to keep them alive can provide openings for dangerous bacteria, which their underdeveloped immune systems cannot handle. If left untreated, the toxins cause the immune system to



## The Hayes triplets



Joanne Hayes's son Christopher was delivered by cesarean section. He weighed 2.3 pounds at birth. Christopher is now an 11-year-old who enjoys cooking.



When Ryan Hayes was born he weighed 3.3 pounds. Ryan is now an 11-year-old who is in honors classes.



Tara Hayes was born weighing 2.7 pounds. She was the last of the triplets born, and was immediately put on a respirator. Tara is now a happy 11-year-old who is doing well in school.

attack the body's own organs and tissues. Tara recovered with antibiotics. Soon after she was treated for sepsis, Tara was diagnosed with a heart murmur. Fortunately, that was also corrected with medication.

The constant pressure from the jet ventilator that kept her alive is likely to have contributed to the hemorrhage the doctors spotted on an ultra sound when Tara was a month old. The bleeding caused the ventricles of her brain to rapidly expand. Some hemorrhages are mild, but severe bleeds cause pressure that can lead to brain damage, including cerebral palsy and learning and behavioral problems. Tara's doctors continued to monitor her closely.

At 3 months old, Tara and her brothers were finally discharged from the hospital. Hayes and her husband, Michael, were relieved, but the need for medical attention was far from over. Although they were now strong enough to survive outside of a protective environment, the three siblings, who each weighed less than five pounds when they went home, required special shots on a regular basis. These synergist shots protected them from respiratory syncytial virus, a common virus that produces cold-like symptoms but can be dangerous to premature infants. The virus was such a threat to Tara, Christopher and Ryan that they could only visit the doctor after office hours, when no other children were present.

Although the Hayes triplets developed more slowly than others their age, they made slow and steady progress. Ryan came home from the hospital on an apnea monitor, but he and his brother gradually became stronger.

Tara struggled with feeding issues and continued to have medical problems. She developed aspiration pneumonia, which was treated with IV antibiotics. Her doctors attributed it to hydrocephalus. She had been vomiting from the pressure on her brain, so doctors inserted a shunt to drain the fluid and reduce the risk of brain damage.

Since then, Tara has survived three shunt replacement surgeries. Her health improved and for years she had few additional complica-

tions. Then in second grade, she began complaining of headaches. The doctors determined that her head was too small (from the constant draining of fluid) and performed an operation to enlarge her skull. The surgery was a success.

Despite the shunt that remains in her head, Tara is a happy, healthy 11 year old who loves school. She doesn't talk much about her past trauma, but recently asked her mother about the scars that extend from ear to ear.

Both Tara and her brother Christopher were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in second grade, and are doing well in school with the help of special education classes. Ryan, the first born of the triplets, is in honors classes. The boys spend their free time playing video games, building with LEGOs and firing Nerf guns. Christopher has an affinity for cooking. Like most 11-year-old girls, Tara enjoys watching TV, shopping, and texting her friends.

Hayes describes caring for her infants as "a chaotic blur." Through it all, she clung to the positive and focused on the small changes that took place each day. She kept herself well educated so that she could be the best advocate possible for her children. The relatively recent advances in obstetrics and neonatology helped to give Ryan, Christopher and Tara life when they struggled for survival. Not so long ago, a premature baby was treated with no more than warm blankets and an oxygen mask. Today's specialized machines, procedures, and medications provide more hope for preterm babies. Although treatment also brings risks, the technology in the neonatal intensive care unit saves many premies whose underdeveloped bodies are vulnerable to living outside of their mother's protective womb.

*Teacher and freelance writer Laura Varoscak-DelInnocenti is a regular contributor to New York Parenting Media. In this capacity she has won numerous editorial awards from the Parenting Media Association. She holds master's degrees in fiction writing, education and psychology. She lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, and is the proud mom of two sons, Henry and Charlie. Visit her webpage ([www.examiner.com/parenting-in-new-york/laura-varoscak](http://www.examiner.com/parenting-in-new-york/laura-varoscak)) for more articles on parenting.*



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At Bumblebees-R-Us our philosophy is simple, "To provide a safe, loving, stimulating environment where our children will thrive in all areas of development." By implementing a multi-sensory approach to learning, our children learn through play and play while they learn. Our daily schedules are jam packed with creative hands-on activities, indoor and outdoor play, teacher instruction and supervised free play. We are licensed under the Department of Health and we carefully adhere to all of their guidelines.

#### C.B.I. Academy Preschool

45 Twombly Avenue, Bay Terrace  
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We are a preschool for 2, 3, and 4 year olds. Full and half day classes are available. Our hours of operation are 7am to 6pm. There are beautiful, fully equipped classrooms, with learning centers. We have a caring and nurturing staff with licensed and experienced teachers. Extended care classes have enrichment activities. Lunch and snacks are provided. All vouchers are accepted. We also have a fun-filled summer program with many outdoor activities.

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[www.thepavilion.org](http://www.thepavilion.org)

Prodigy Preschool and Childcare at the Staten Island Skating Pavilion is a specialty preschool in which children are involved in one hour of on ice skating activities where children learn in small group sizes the techniques and foundations of ice skating. The coaches are fully certified by USFS

and also coach at the Pavilion's skate school. We encourage exploration and hands on learning as well as center-based activities. Children are given an age appropriate curriculum which will prepare them for kindergarten. Our small classroom size provides an intimate setting where children are able to receive much one-on-one attention from the NYS certified teachers. Prodigy is designed to be a home away from home for children where they can learn, laugh, grow, and have fun. Our program focuses on inspiring creativity and independence through a socially stimulating and academically challenging curriculum. It is truly a Different Kind of Preschool.

#### Staten Island Academy

715 Todt Hill Road  
718 303-7846 or  
[www.statenislandacademy.org](http://www.statenislandacademy.org)

Successful students -- achieving their goals in school and in life --are at the center of Staten Island Academy. An independent, co-ed, college prep school for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12, the Academy provides an inspiring balance of challenge, exploration and opportunity. In Pre-K through Grade 4, children receive the kind of nurturing that makes them feel at home, comfortable enough to ask questions, explore, and create. In Grades 5-8, students begin to stretch their wings in a safe, supportive environment. In Grades 9-12, we put our students at the center of their high school education with outstanding academics, one of New York City's finest college guidance programs, and a wide variety of extracurricular activities. Learn more about our school at [www.statenislandacademy.org](http://www.statenislandacademy.org).

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1779 Richmond Avenue  
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 Join us for a tour of our beautiful and safe campus, lead by our Director of Admissions, to learn more about how students are at the heart of the learning community that is Staten Island Academy.

**Info Sessions:**  
 Attend a daily Info Session at 10:00 am or 1:00 pm.

**Open Houses:**  
 Throughout the year, our Admissions Team hosts a series of Open House events at the Academy to introduce parents and students in Pre-K through Grade 11 to the school and its programs. Check online for dates.

To plan a visit to the Academy, please call (718)303-7802 or go to [www.statenislandacademy.org](http://www.statenislandacademy.org).

The Academy is located at 715 Todt Hill Road, Staten Island, NY, 10304

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# Gift ideas for teachers

This holiday season, give something they'll really appreciate

BY KATHY SENA

**T**ired of giving apple stationery, apple earrings and “#1 Teacher” sweatshirts to your children’s teachers every holiday season? Imagine how the teachers feel! Here are some parent- and teacher-tested gift ideas that will really make the grade.

• **Think outside the classroom.** “I like giving something that conveys that you know the teacher is human, too — not just a teacher,” says mom Joy Hall. Think sports memorabilia (if you know the teach-

Jennifer Vena gives goody bags full of classroom supplies — dry-erase markers, paper clips, Post-it Notes, overhead markers, etc. With many teachers spending their own money on these items, this is a welcome gift.

• **Make it personal.** “Have your child make something that shows how much the teacher is appreciated,” suggests Hall. Including a photo is a wonderful touch, she adds, and it will help the teacher to remember your child when she looks at the gift in years to come. A personal letter of appreciation, along with a drawing from your child, is something many teachers say they read over and over again — and keep forever.

• **Choose a gift from the whole class.** Several parents suggested taking up a collection and choosing a class gift.

“This eliminates the two-dozen ‘#1 Teacher’ gifts,” says Karen Hammond of South Bristol, Maine. Some classes choose to purchase a pair of earrings or a gift certificate. One Southern California class pooled their gift funds and bought the teacher a much-longed-for gift: a beach-cruiser-style bicycle. While the bike cost a couple hundred dollars, when divided by the number of families in the class, it became an affordable group gift. The teacher was speechless — and thrilled.

Celeste Armitage of Hermosa Beach, Calif. suggests creating a class quilt. Have each child draw a picture. Then transfer the pictures onto individual fabric squares using heat transfers (the kind designed to be used on fabric), which are sold at craft stores. Finally, sew the squares into a simple quilt pattern.

“I’ve seen self portraits, flowers or a mixture of pictures,” says Armitage. “The important thing is to have each child sign his or her picture.”

• **Think books.** RaShell LeMay, a teacher, says teachers love to receive children’s books to help beef up their classroom libraries. Adding your child’s photo to the inside

cover, along with a note from the child, makes the gift extra special. To add a truly memorable touch, have the book signed by the author and dedicated to the teacher.

• **Let the teacher decide — with a gift certificate.** Ruth Opdycke says she once gave her son’s preschool teachers gift certificates to be used at any store at the local mall.

“They all loved it,” she reports, adding that she’s also given gift certificates to upscale toy stores for those teachers who have to buy classroom toys on their own.

Other popular gift-certificate options: massages, facials, manicures and pedicures, movies (either for movie theaters or the local video store), and restaurants. Most teachers don’t splurge on themselves very often, and a group gift of a gift certificate good for a day at a local spa may be just the well-deserved slice of heaven your favorite teacher has been wishing for.

• **Make your own goodies.** When you’re a teacher, there’s never enough time for holiday preparations. With winter music programs to organize, homework to grade, classrooms to decorate, class parties to plan, and a whole class of kids on holiday overdrive, what teacher has time — or energy — to go home and bake cookies in the evening?

“A can’t-miss idea for teachers is a plate of assorted, nicely decorated, homemade holiday cookies, wrapped for freezing or for immediate use,” says Hammond. “I used to buy inexpensive ceramic holiday plates to put them on (these can often be picked up at garage sales), but heavy-duty paper plates will work. They were so popular the first time I made them, that I repeated the idea for years.”

Be careful, though, or you may be labeled the “Wonderful Cookie Mom” for the duration of your child’s school career, says Lisa Iannucci.

“Now my kids’ teachers actually request the cookies,” she says. “One teacher told me she had to fight her husband for the last ones!”

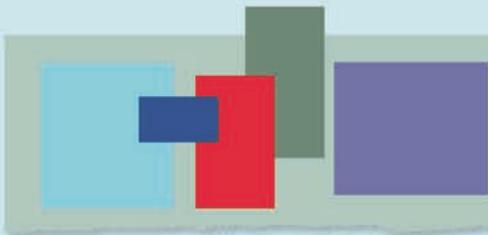
*Kathy Sena is a freelance writer specializing in parenting issues. Visit her website at [www.badballet.com](http://www.badballet.com).*



er’s favorite team), an addition to a favorite collection of bears, dolls, or snow globes. The list can be endless if you or your child just happen to listen up when the teacher mentions favorite hobbies and activities.

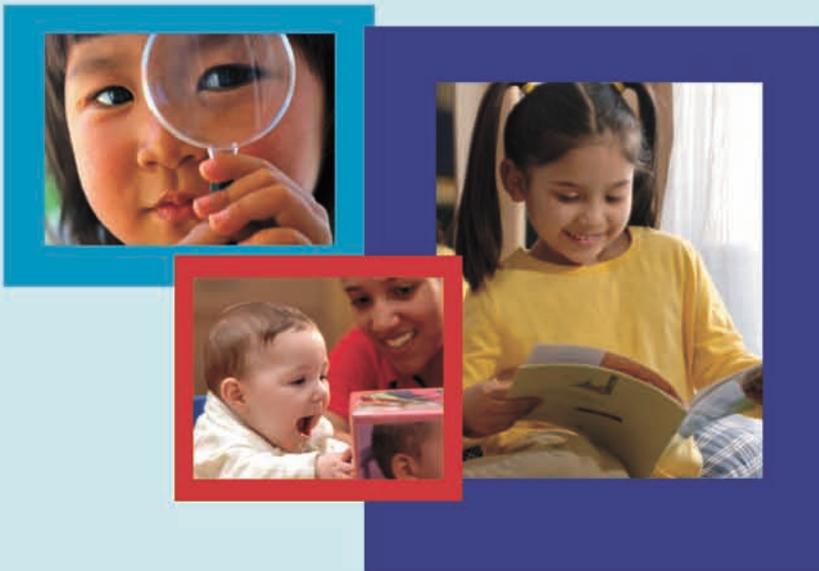
• **Consider a gift for the classroom.** As school budgets are increasingly cut, teachers are often asked to supply certain classroom items. So when her child was in kindergarten, Dorothy Foltz-Gray asked what classroom game the kids needed.

“The teacher responded as if I were a saint!” she says. Another time, she gave a monetary gift, again to be used for classroom supplies.



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# 'Legend Award' for Island's teen artists

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

**M**aybe, if the Legend Award for High School Artists had been around in Vincent Van Gogh's time, the Dutch painter would have sold more than just one painting in his lifetime!

Staten Island high school students in grades 9-12, with designs on a career in the visual arts, can apply for a cool opportunity to exhibit their masterpieces — plus receive a cash prize — thanks to a new partnership between the Legend Business Group, and the Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island to help budding artists with their painting, drawing, sculpture and installations.

The accolade is meant to foster creativity in teens while encouraging them to follow through with their artistic dreams, said Legend Business Group President Sharon Voto, who conceived the award.

"It's our way to recognize the talents of local, young visual artists," said Voto, "And give them the financial support to help them achieve their goals."

Entries will be judged on creativity, skill and ambition by a panel of arts professionals, and five finalists will be selected by Voto to exhibit their work at the Legend Business Group Showroom.

One of them will win the grand prize of \$500, and the first and second runners-up will receive \$250

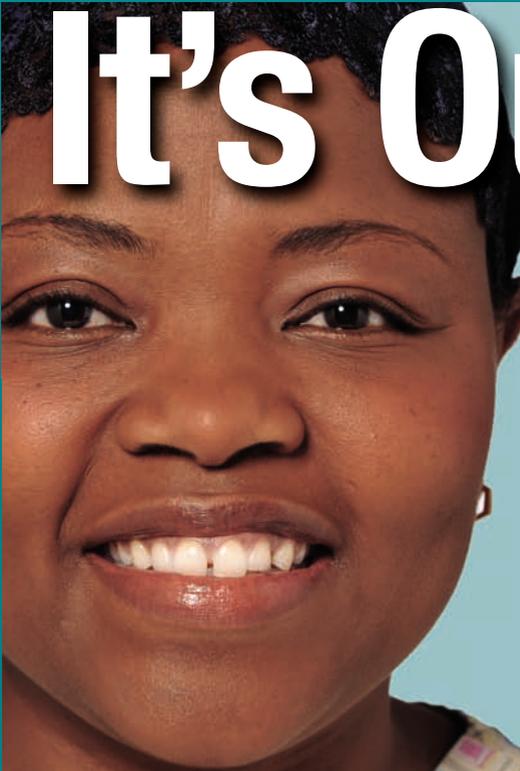
and \$100.

Students should submit an application letter, including details about their aspirations and how they plan to spend the grant, in addition to a work sample, to the Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island office by Feb. 1, 2012. The awards will be announced at a public ceremony in April 2012.

Mail applications to: Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Building G, Staten Island, NY 10301, Attn: Monica Valenzuela.

For more information, contact Monica Valenzuela at [mvalenzuela@statenislandarts.org](mailto:mvalenzuela@statenislandarts.org) or at (718) 447-3329 x 1004, or visit [www.statenislandarts.org](http://www.statenislandarts.org) or [www.facebook.com/coashiteens](http://www.facebook.com/coashiteens).





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# Find something fun and educational in our 2011 Gift Guide

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

**Y**ou know the drill by now, moms and dads. Every year you promise to get an early start on your holiday gift shopping, but here you are again, just weeks away from Chanukah, Christmas and Kwanzaa,

and you haven't bought a thing for junior or any of the other pint-sized people in your life.

Worse yet, the vast selection of toys, games and gadgetry out there — a mind-boggling maze that seems to grow each year like a wired Chia Pet — has you baffled about where to even start!

We suggest that you get cracking right here and now with our fun-tastic 2011 Holiday Gift Guide, a jam-packed seasonal blockbuster that takes the guesswork out of gift-giving with smart and wallet-friendly items culled from the toy boxes of some of the most innovative manufacturers around. From

classic to cutting edge, our editor's selections are hand-picked for their educational value without skimping on the fun.

The best part?

All of them are under \$50 and can be bought online, which means you can enjoy a hassle-free holiday!

## My Keepsake Portfolio

(Ages 2+, \$19.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

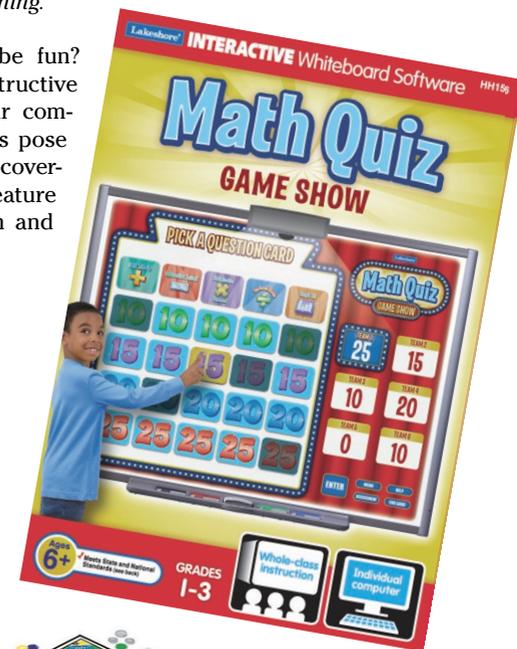
Preserve your pint-sized Picasso's paintings, drawings and other masterpieces in this super-sturdy, handy organizer. It comes with nine expandable storage pockets — large enough for even oversized works! Each has a nifty tab for easy labeling, and there's even room to label the cover!



## Math Quiz Game Show

(Ages 6-8, for ages 9-11, \$14.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

Can homework really be fun? Count on it by holding instructive game nights right on your computer! Exciting game shows pose more than 200 questions, covering key math concepts. Feature totally awesome animation and sound effects!



## The Allowance Game

(Ages 5-9, \$16.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

It's never too early to begin teaching your munchkin about money management! This fun-fueled, fast-paced game for two-to-four players teaches kids how to handle money and make change as they save and spend their allowance.



## ← What's Inside? Soft Feely Box

(Infant to 3 years, \$39.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

Go on, feel away! Little ones won't be able to resist getting their mitts into this fleecy and adorable treasure trove — and find out what's inside! It's packed with 10 different objects for kids to touch and explore, including a pretty butterfly with crinkly wings and a cute lion with a corduroy coat. Soft and machine washable, too.



## ↑ Gathering A Garden Board Game

(Ages 5+, \$9); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

Hurry around to every vendor, so you can be a garden tender. Get your flower, herb and tree, vegetable and bird — they're free! Your garden is completely done? Get home first, and you have won!

## → Squinkies Surprise Inside Bubble Packs

(\$9.99); [www.squinkies.com/boys](http://www.squinkies.com/boys)

Each pack contains 16 collectibles Squinkies individually-packed in a toy bubble! Also includes four hidden "surprise" Squinkies to start or add to a collection!



## → Sunflower Growth Chart

(\$8.50); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

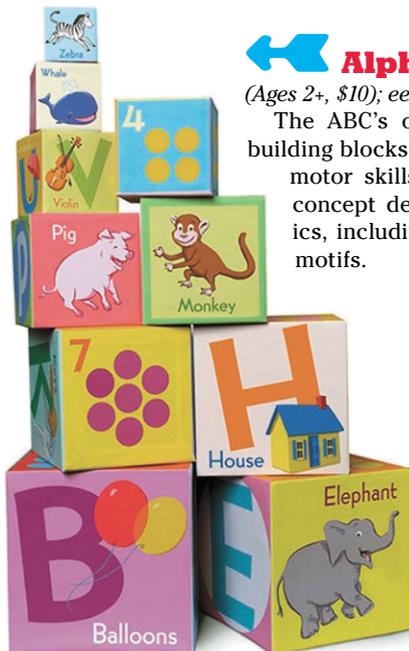
Your self-scrutinizing sprouters can gauge their gains as they inch towards new heights! Also available in baseball field, castle, firemen, musical fairy tree, solar system, and other eye-pleasing backgrounds. They come laminated with a gros-grain ribbon to hang, and stickers to mark special occasions!



## ← Alphabet Tower

(Ages 2+, \$10); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

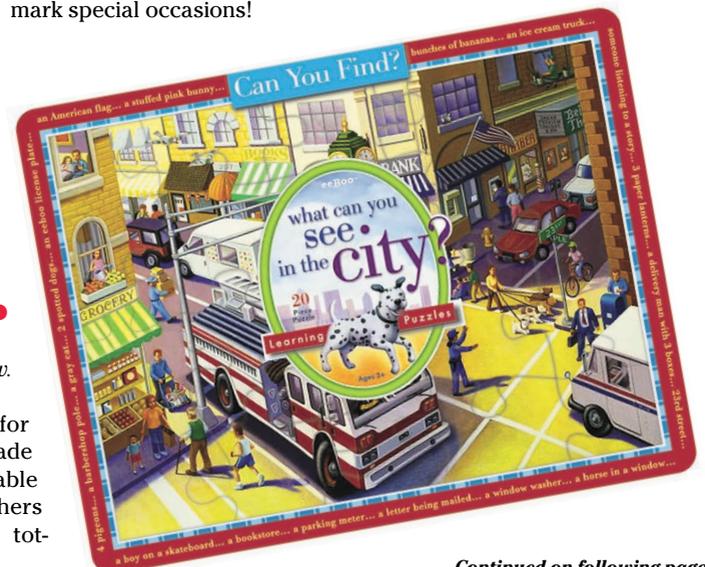
The ABC's of life begin with these colorful building blocks, designed to develop your child's motor skills while promoting language and concept development. Features cute graphics, including monkey, fireman and airplane motifs.



## → Friends Say Hello Tray Puzzle

(Ages 3+, \$4); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

Fun learning tray offers food for thought anytime! It's 15" x 11" and made from sturdy durable board. Also available in "Fruits and Vegetables," "Wild Mothers and Babies," "Alphabet," and other top-pleasing topics.



Continued on following page

# Gift Guide

continues...



## Soccer Girls

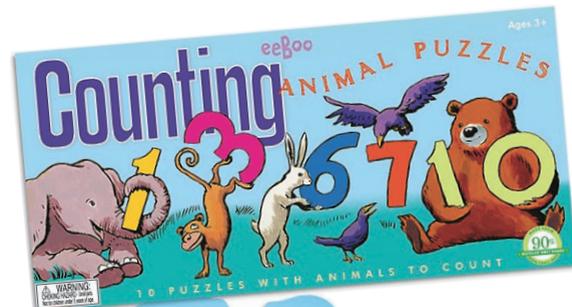
(Ages 3-9, \$24.99); KaskeyKids, (866) 527-5437, [www.kaskeykids.com](http://www.kaskeykids.com)

KaskeyKids is ahead of the rest with its first boxed set of sports action figures for girls! Each comes with up to 30 pieces, including two full teams, a washable felt field, accessories and a snazzy storage container, allowing young athletes to recreate games and enjoy imaginary play for hours! Also available in other sports (for the little guy), and don't forget to check out the Go-Go Sport Dolls, and Bop Bags!

## Magnetic Fishing Set

(Ages 3-5, \$29.95); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

Aspiring anglers can fish for the fun with sturdy poles baited with eye-catching magnetic "hooks" to reel in 18 colorful gilled beauties, and other sensational sea critters. They're weighted to float upright for a trouble-free trawl. Includes four adjustable poles.



## Counting Animal Puzzles

(Ages 3+, \$7.50); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

These fierce jigsaws add up to great downtime while honing vital math skills. Contains 10 three-piece puzzles with a divided tray for easy storage!



## Mini Playing Cards Classic Card Games

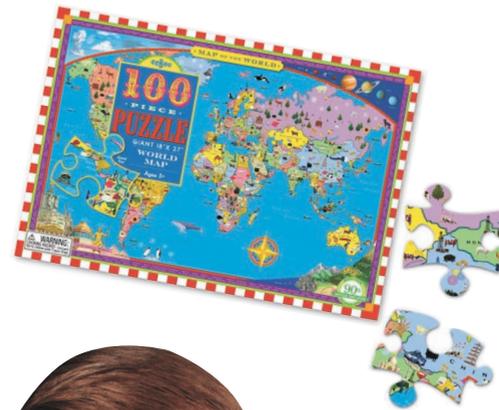
(Ages 5+, \$4-\$6); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

Raining outside? Deck the doldrums and stack up the good times with a few rounds of Animal Rummy, Hearts, Color Go Fish!, Old Maid, and Crazy Faces (plays like Crazy 8's).

## World Map Puzzle

(Ages 5+, \$7); eeBoo, (888) 800-1442, [www.eebo.com](http://www.eebo.com)

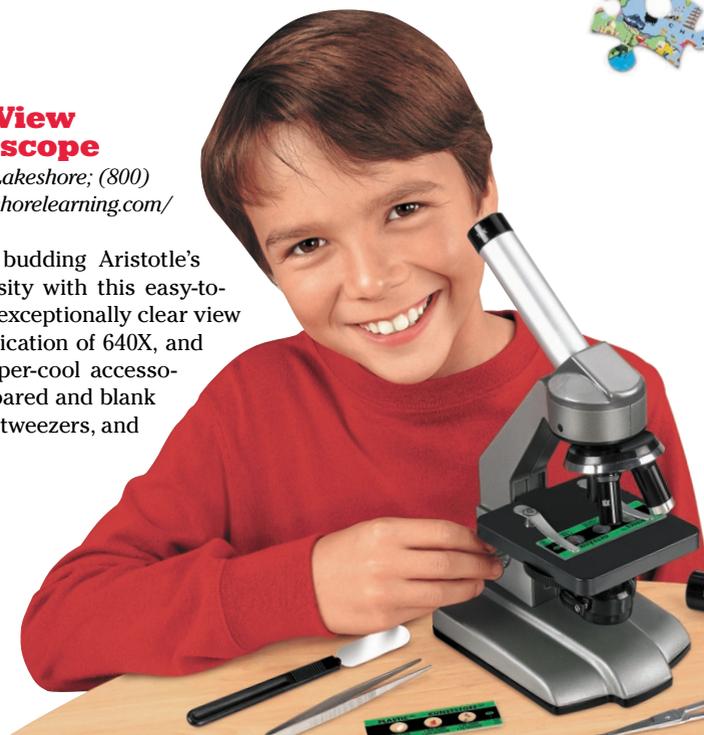
Cultivate your child's world view with this colorful, 100-piece jigsaw — Legends of Icons included.



## Easy-View Microscope

(Ages 8-11, \$49.99); Lakeshore; (800) 778-4456, [www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/Holiday2011)

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The perfect book can be enjoyed for years to come

# Gifts to read

## Helping kids overcome fear

If you're near a beach, pool, water trough, garden hose, or fire hydrant, there's a good chance your child is going to get wet this summer. But before he does, you'll want to read Jennifer Sattler's new book, "Pig Kahuna," first.

The pig, Fergus, doesn't like water because of what's in it. But as you'll see in "Pig Kahuna," when a friend is in trouble, even the worst fears can be overcome.

It was a warm day at the beach and Fergus and his baby brother, Dink, were busy collecting treasures.

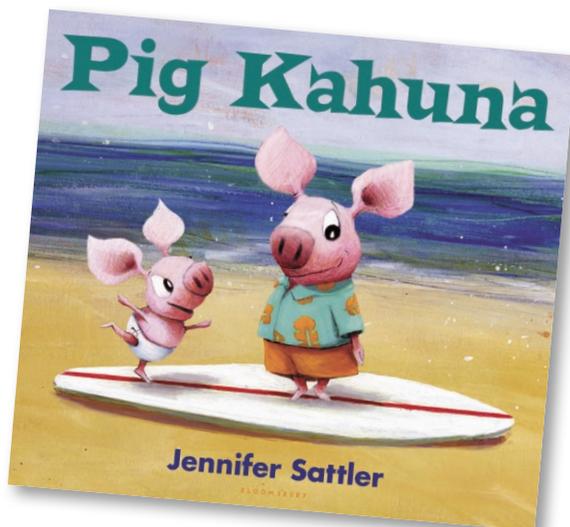
The ocean was behaving very well. Its waves rolled out, then rolled right back again, and each time, it brought more cool stuff for Fergus and Dink's collection. It laid them right on the beach, which was a very good thing. That meant that Fergus

didn't have to go into the water.

Fergus hated the water. It scared him, because he knew there was more than just his cherished items out there. He didn't even like to think about it.

Still, the ocean was good to Fergus and Dink. It gave them lots of awesome stuff: they found seaweed and shells, something that just might have been a real shark tooth, and a big, white surfboard that washed up on shore.

Since surfing was out of the question, Fergus and Dink dragged the surfboard out of the water. It was a



good board, perfect for all kinds of pretending. They named it Dave and played with it all afternoon.

But when Fergus left to get ice cream, Dink thought Dave looked kind of sad. He let Dave go wild and free, back to the ocean, but just seeing Dave floating away into the sea, well, that scared Fergus even more

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

than water did.

What if Dave was afraid of water, too?

Bravely, Fergus went out to rescue his new friend, but there was a gigantic surprise waiting for him in the water — that turned out to be the biggest treasure of all.

With a really cute story and two adorable characters, author Sattler shows kids that they can jump in, because the water's just fine. I loved how Fergus was whistle-in-the-dark, positively certain of the nasties that lurked in the drink, and I loved the subtle, soft humor in Sattler's illustrations.

Whether your 3- to 7-year-old is a tadpole at swimming lessons, or can hang 10 with the best of 'em and has just recently learned the meaning of "Cowabunga!," this is a great book to read aloud. Grab "Pig Kahuna" and dive right in.

*"Pig Kahuna" by Jennifer Sattler [32 pages, Bloomsbury Kids, 2011, \$14.99] is recommended for children ages 3-7.*

## A new Christmas tale for your family to love

Looking for a children's book to explore the true meaning of the holiday season? For something very different, grab "The Christmas Eve Ghost."

In the 2010 hardcover by author-illustrator Shirley Hughes, two young children know it's not Santa they hear at the back of their house. It's too scary to be Santa!

Bronwen and Dylan hadn't lived in Liverpool long; they moved there from Wales after their Da died and their Mam needed a job.

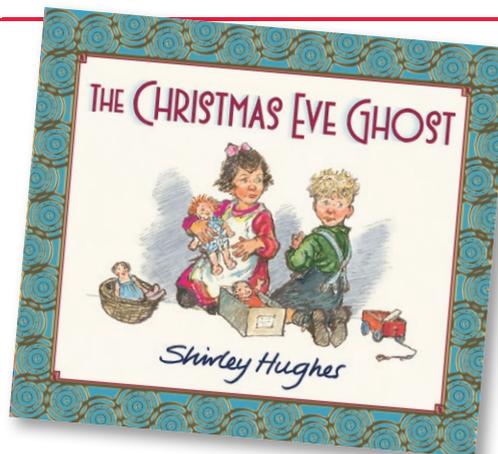
Every weekday morning, long before Bronwen and Dylan awoke, Mam, a laundress, left the children sleeping as she walked from house to house on her rounds. She hated leaving the children alone, but she

always returned in time to make porridge for breakfast. On Sundays, they went to chapel together.

In the house next door, lived Mr. and Mrs. O'Riley and their two sons. Mr. O'Riley and the boys worked at the docks in good times, and they stood on street corners in bad times.

There were no washing machines in those days, and well-off people were happy to have Mam do their washing. It was a hard job, and Mam was tired at the end of the long day. Most nights, though, she saved enough energy to spin ancient tales and legends of green valleys, dragons, and ghosties.

On the afternoon before Christmas, Mam left the children at home,



so she could finish shopping. She wanted to get them something special, so she warned them not to open the door and to stay quiet. All alone, Bronwen and Dylan were playing on the floor of their flat when they heard a noise. Plonk! Plonk!

That didn't sound like Santa! Could it be a ghost, like in one of Mam's stories?

The children ran outside as fast as they could, away from the ghost, and right into the nicest Christmas present anyone could have given them.

Based loosely on her Liverpool childhood, Hughes tells a tale of a Christmas that barely happens, and the gift of unlikely friendship. I loved the lesson in this book, subtle as it was, and I was absolutely smitten with the illustrations. This is the kind of book to read, savor, and discuss, particularly in this time when we gather our friends and family close.

If you plan on giving a book to your favorite kid this Christmas, here's one to find.

*"The Christmas Eve Ghost" by Shirley Hughes [32 pages, Candlewick Press, 2010, \$15.99] is recommended for children ages 4 and older.*

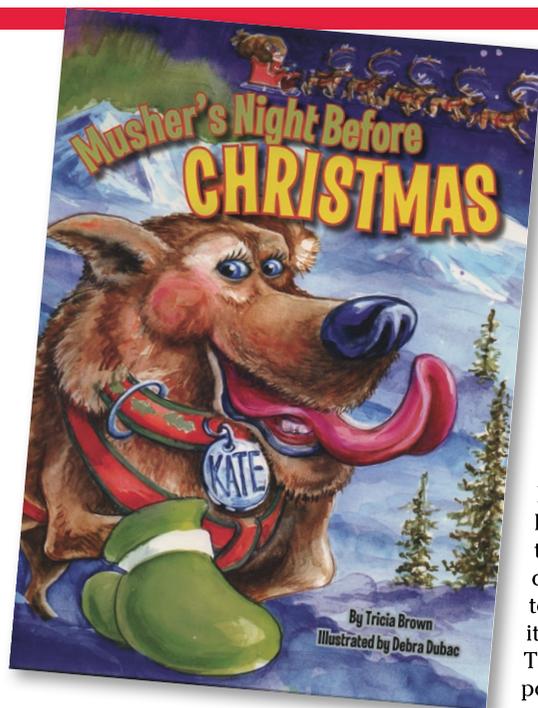
# A new holiday favorite

**S**anta brings joy to so many, but who helps Santa? As you'll see in "Musher's Night Before Christmas" by Tricia Brown, illustrated by Debra Dubac, you might be surprised at the answer.

It was Christmas Eve, and everyone at the North Pole was caught up in the excitement. All the elves were there, clapping for the guy in the red suit and listening to reindeer facts and weather reports.

As the reindeer lined up and prepared to go, Mrs. Claus reminded Santa that it was cold up in Alaska and snowing hard in Nome.

But Santa wasn't worried. He patted each of his teammates, checked his pockets for last-minute things, looked the sleigh over, and when he was satisfied that everything was A-OK, he jumped



aboard and the reindeer leaped into the sky.

At a faraway cabin way up north, a yard full of huskies were yapping at the snow. Fleece booties, meant to protect their paws, were hung by the fire and everyone — including the dogs' owner, Tom — settled down

to dream of winning big races.

Then, one by one, the huskies saw someone coming, and they started howling. When Tom heard the noise, he jumped from his bed and ran outside. It was Santa and his reindeer, and they were exhausted!

While Tom danced barefooted in the snow, Santa explained that he was nearly done delivering presents, but there was one place he didn't have the energy to reach: Nome, where it was snowing hard. The reindeer were out of power and Rudy's nose was fading to pink, but Santa knew who could

help him get the gifts to Nome. He'd been following the news, and he knew all about Tom and his crew.

Could Tom and his huskies save Christmas morning?

Every year, it seems, someone comes out with another take on

Clement Moore's classic. Many of them have the barest relationship to the Yuletide, but this book is set practically in Santa's backyard.

With just a hint of Moore's "The Night Before Christmas," Brown tells the story of a string of unlikely heroes who thunder through the snow to give St. Nick a hand with his annual job. I especially enjoyed how Brown adds a touch of humanity to Santa's superhuman abilities, making the Big Guy even more huggable.

What kids will love, though, are the illustrations by Dubac. Her bold colors are holiday-perfect, and the facial expressions she gives each character are deliciously funny.

If reading a holiday book has become a beloved tradition in your family, reach for this one.

"Musher's Night Before Christmas" by Tricia Brown, illustrated by Debra Dubac [32 pages, Pelican Publishing Company, 2011, \$16.99] is recommended for children ages 3-5.

• • •

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

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## FAMILY HEALTH

DR. DASSI TEITELBAUM, MD,  
Director, Inpatient Pediatrics,  
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# Keeping kids safe around Xmas lights

**N**othing says “It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas” better than the glow of a well-lit tree, lights strung outdoors, scented candlelight, and maybe even a fire burning in the fireplace. Celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights, means lots of candles filling the home with a warm glow. Making all of that come to life requires planning, time and effort. Certainly, keeping the family safe through the holidays is worth a few moments to review these safety measures that make all the difference in preventing fires and burns.

Live trees are safest when they are fresh and moist. Look for a tree that is nice and green, needles are hard to pull from branches, and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk of your tree should be sticky with resin. Before you buy, try tapping it on the ground and see that it does not lose a shower of needles.

If you’re going with an artificial tree this year, look for the label, “Fire Resistant.”

If you have a metallic tree, be aware that you must never use electric lights on those, because they can become charged and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

When setting up your tree, keep it away from fireplaces, radiators, or portable heaters. Always cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose the fresh wood and allow water absorption, preventing drying and a serious fire hazard. Check that the stand is filled with water daily, because heated rooms can dry out live trees rapidly.

Check all tree lights — even brand new ones — before hanging them on your tree. Make sure all the bulbs work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets, or loose connections. Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples,



not nails or tacks. Never pull or tug lights to remove them.

Outdoor electric decorations should be plugged into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters to avoid potential shocks. Get in the habit of turning off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

When trimming your tree, carefully choose flame-resistant materials. Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Remove all wrapping papers, bags and bows from under the tree after gifts are opened.

If you’re going to use your fireplace to enhance the holiday atmosphere, be sure to remove all greens, papers, and other decorations from the fireplace area. Check to see that the flue is open. Do not burn gift wrap paper in the fireplace. A flash fire may result, as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

When preparing candles, choose

sturdy candle holders that keep the candles well secured in place. Ideally, flame-protective, non-combustible (glass or metal) shades or globes should be used. Place candles at least four feet away from curtains, draperies, blinds, kitchen cabinets and bedding, and secure hair, clothing and loose sleeves when lighting candles.

It is best to extinguish candles when they burn within two inches of the holder. Lit candles should never be left unattended, and should always be placed, along with other supplies — such as matches and oils — well out of the reach of children or pets. If your family plans to light multiple candles, be aware of the high amount of heat the candles generate. Create a safe place in the house where multiple candles can be lit.

This holiday season, as you fill your home with warmth and light, know that you have done your part to keep your family safe.

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## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

# Fight holiday stress

**“I** hate to admit it, but I almost can’t wait until the holidays are over,” says Anna Rosario, a mom of two from Fort Greene in Brooklyn. “I am already stressed out!” Rosario feels the way many moms do at this time of year. She says the thought of having to get all the various tasks done — like decorating, shopping, cooking, wrapping, writing cards, and visiting extended family — is overwhelming. When you throw in the demands of raising kids, running a household, and working, it’s a sure-fire recipe for stress. But don’t throw in the towel just yet, because there are some practical tips to relieve holiday stress.

### Maintain healthy habits

By keeping healthy eating habits, you will be better equipped to deal with stress, so make sure you are eating healthfully, as well as exercising and getting a good night’s sleep. Sleep is often an underrated component of our health and one of the first things to go when stress hits. Likewise, skipping meals will make you more likely to overindulge later and will leave you feeling worse.

### Ask for help

Enlist your spouse and kids to help plan the holiday gatherings, gifts and menus. Maybe your spouse can take over kitchen clean-up duties if you cook the meal. Maybe you can split the shopping down the middle, instead of you doing it all yourself. Make decisions together about who will accomplish each task, so there are no last minute hassles. Kids can help address cards, wrap presents, and decorate. Online shopping with your spouse (after the kids have gone to bed) can be a lifesaver, and most stores



offer free shipping during the holidays,” she advises.

Bartell also suggests taking small steps to make the day more pleasant. Maybe you can visit difficult in-laws but only stay for an hour or show up an hour late. She also says whatever you can do to dilute a tense situation helps, such as helping out in the kitchen or keeping the kids busy with things to do.

### Make a shopping list before you go to the store

Identifying what gifts you want to purchase is the hard part. If you walk into the store with a list, it will enable you to get the shopping done fast. If you don’t, you might spend hours walking round aimlessly, feeling pressured to pick the right gift, and then end up choosing something you don’t really want.

### Create a budget and stick to it!

If you spend too much, not only will it stress you out now, but it may cause long-term tension if you accumulate debt. Don’t think you have to get the most

extravagant gift for everyone on your list. A recent survey conducted by research firm Toluna said that nearly half of respondents said a phone call to catch up is the best present a distant friend or family member could give them during the holiday season.

### Make a plan for dealing with extended family

Let’s face it, for many people, visiting extended family and in-laws are a large component of the holiday stress. Dr. Susan Bartell, a nationally recognized psychologist, and author of “The Top 50 Questions Kids Ask,” says maintaining a positive attitude is vital.

“The first thing you have to do before you go to a family gathering is focus on the positive and don’t obsess on what you hate and rehash old wounds. If you do, you’ll go in with a really negative attitude and look for stuff to complain

about,” she advises.

The holidays are about showing the people who are important to you that you care — and that is absolutely free.

*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 Media Association. Sullivan also writes for Babble. You can find her on her blog, Just Write Mom.*

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## A TEEN'S TAKE

AGLAIA HO

# Why I love winter in New York City

**W**ith winter in full swing, the cold weather might tempt us to remain in the sanctuary of our warm houses. For me, winter in New York City means picking my way through slushy streets, avoiding catching a cold at school, and bundling up in scarves, down jackets, and bulky mittens. It's no surprise that at times I envy Fuzzy-Wuzzy, who hibernates until spring! Nevertheless, I've learned that wintertime has its own joys. The snow doesn't have to keep us inside. I've enjoyed many, fun-filled activities when I've braved the cold with my family.

## Get inspired

Winter transforms our city into a pure white land of glistening icicles and snow-capped buildings. As an avid artist, I've been truly inspired by the way winter transforms the landscapes and scenes of the city. I find myself looking outside my window and being awe-struck by the breathtaking view of newly fallen snow, gently illuminated by morning light. This wondrous image soon translates into a poem. Sometimes, I rush outside in the bitter cold and whip out my digital camera to capture stills of my neighborhood.

One winter, a huge snowstorm hit New York City. Two feet of snow piled up in front of our house, locking us inside. My family and I were watching the snow come down, and we were inspired to create our own winter wonderland indoors. Together, we cut out at least a hundred, unique snowflakes out of recycled paper and hung them up all around our dining room.

Let the snow and wintery weather inspire you to release your inner creativity. Draw a picture, write a story, or create a song. Gather the family together and share your winter-themed creations.

## Challenge yourself

With a world filled with progressive technology, it's not too hard to



occupy ourselves during a snowstorm. Yet, one of our family traditions is to dig out old-fashioned jigsaw puzzles. We sit around our coffee table cooperating to finish a 1,000-piece puzzle!

My dad's technique consists of dividing the pieces by shape, while my mom generally separates everything by color. I just use the common and very-effective method of plug and chug, otherwise known as "just guess!" We chat about life in general, tell jokes, and tease each other. Sometimes, I even serenade my parents with a song or two, mostly about nonsense, but it cheers us all up. It's an invigorating challenge that brings us together and also helps to pass time as the wind howls violently outside. Of course, puzzles can be extremely addictive (and frustrating, too).

Find your old puzzles and redo them during a frosty day. Perhaps challenge your family with a crossword puzzle or some brainteasers. It's bound to keep your mind churning and be enjoyable for everyone.

## See the sights

Almost every year, for as long as I can remember, my mom and I would

take the subway into Manhattan to experience the holiday magic. We'd visit the magnificent tree at Rockefeller Center and stand under its gigantic boughs, smelling the distinct scent of the evergreen. Although I was never a huge fan of this towering tree, I loved to watch the ice skaters in the plaza below. I was even able to convince my mom to let me join them gliding by the golden, radiant beauty of the Prometheus statue.

However, the best part of our excursion was seeing the Christmas windows. Each year, Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Henri Bendel's (which this year has a spectacular Lady Liberty decked in jelly-bean garb), and other department stores fill their windows with holiday and winter-inspired decor.

Saks Fifth Avenue windows are definitely the most memorable for me. Every year, they tell a different, adorable children's story. To this day, I find myself reliving my childhood as I watch the characters play out scenes from the stories. Afterwards, we'd treat ourselves to the warm, tantalizing taste of steamy pretzels, roasted nuts, and hot chocolate. Snacks in hand, we'd proceed through the city, drooling over the jewelry in the Tiffany's windows, marveling at the Gothic designs of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and greeting the Santas that line the street.

The city is always decked out for any approaching holidays. Experiencing the atmosphere is definitely enough to make an incredible memory.

Winter doesn't have to be a tiring season, waiting out the snow and longing for the warmth of spring. With innovation and fun, you can enjoy tried-and-true experiences or make new traditions that are the key to having a fulfilling winter.

*Aglaia Ho is a 16-year-old student from Queens who enjoys writing. Her work has been published in Creative Kids, Skipping Stones, Daily News/Children's Pressline, and The State of the Wild.*



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# Vegecontrarian!

A meat-loving dad tries to understand his son's selective vegetarianism

BY CHRISTOPHER GARLINGTON

**A**s I write this, I am covered in blood and barbecue sauce. My keyboard is a Pollock painting of reds and browns, with tacky bits of bone and sinew clinging to my QWERTY row. I tell you this for full disclosure, so you can understand, perhaps sympathize, perhaps lend a commiserate ear (or trotter, or snout) to my dilemma: Despite my best efforts in parenting, despite my fiery discourses at the backyard grill, despite a sink regularly full of well-gnawed chicken bones, I have managed to raise my son with the terrible flaw of rebellion. My boy, my former brother in bacony goodness, is a...

Vegecontrarian!

As much as I applaud the anti-cruelty philosophy behind my son's vegetarianism, I'm beginning to suspect that he doesn't entirely get that being a vegetarian means you have to eventually eat some vegetables.

I was thrilled when he told me he was a vegetarian. Ok, I was bemused when... Look: I was holding a pork shoulder I'd slow roasted all day. I put the pork

down, looked him in the eye, and said, "You know this means you have to eat zucchini, right?"

It hasn't happened yet. So far my vegetarian's diet is ramen noodles, grilled cheese sandwiches, pizza, and cuisine d'microwave. I haven't seen a single green vegetable enter his mouth since he declared his unmeatfulness, and I hold little hope that I will.

It's not like I don't try. Witness our regular conversation. And by regular, I mean every seven minutes:

"Dad, I'm hungry."

"Awesome, how about some Brussels sprouts?"

"Dad, please be serious. I'm starving."

"Zucchini?"

"Yeah...no."

"Asparagus?"

"Dad."

"Spinach?"

"I had spinach last year."

He's a vegecontrarian! And he's definitely mature for his 14 years. Most vegetarians don't get all political until they can drive, because they need that first car for all the bumper stickers. Mine is constantly bringing up meat processing horror stories and asking me if I like the spleen bits in my hot dog. (They're the best part, dammit.)

Currently, we're in a standoff.

"Hey kid, I made instant Udon noodles."

"Can't. They use fish products."

"Hot fries?"

"Fried in beef tallow."

"Wheat grass?"

"Buffalo walked through it."

"Gravel?"

"You scooped that out of the fish tank. I'm not stupid."

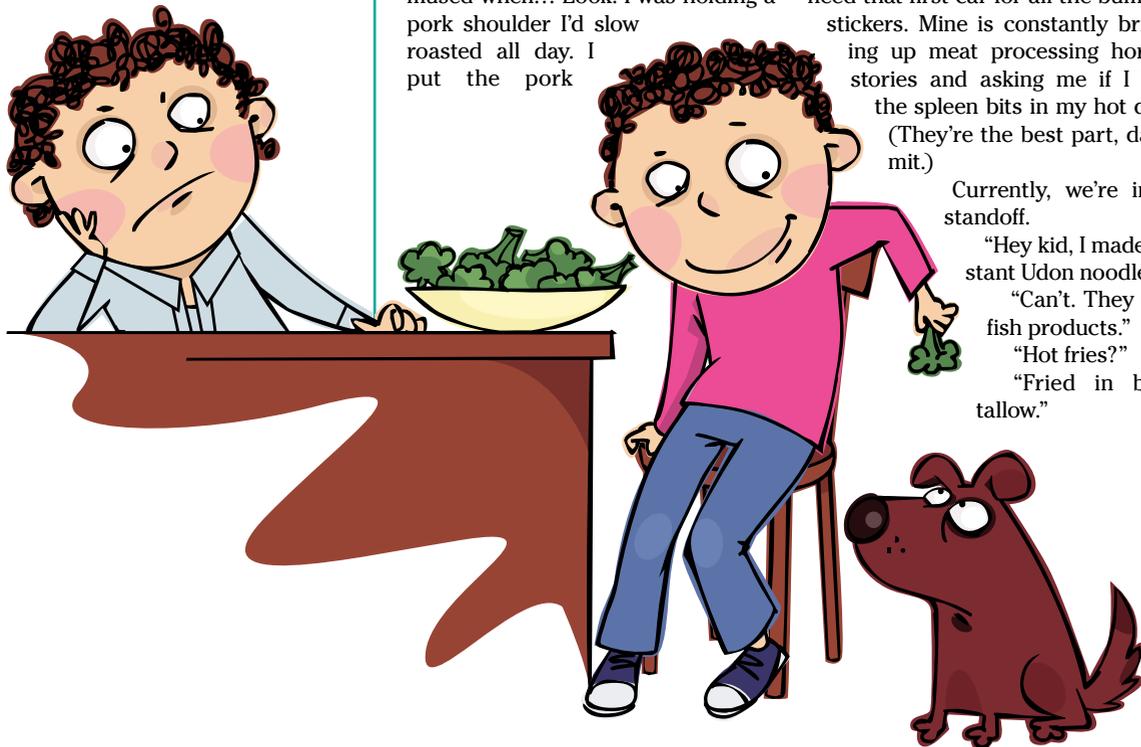
I've handed him tabbouleh ("Ew!"), hummus ("Isn't that Latin for dirt?"), falafel ("Papier mache meatballs") and tofu ("Who sneezed in my stir fry?"). For a veggie, he's a tad particular.

Maybe I have little room to complain, as he's lost 12 pounds, his acne has cleared up, and he's spending a lot more time outside (probably foraging). Even our grill time is not entirely lost. I buy him "smeat" (soy-based fake meat — as if Willy Wonka worked in produce), sign an affidavit that I scoured the grill of all meat remnants, then grill it right alongside my rib-eyes.

And I taunt. I taunt mercilessly, because I hate that he's a vegetarian. I don't care if you think it's un-supportive. We're talking U.S.D.A. here, people. We're talking bacon. We took some visiting relatives to Gene & Georgetti's. I ordered a lightly seared, full-grown steer. As I looked across the expanse of burnt flesh before me, I watched my son pick at a wan pasta-based afterthought and look wistfully askance.

Is it mean? Look, I don't know. Maybe. But there are two ways this can go: I can taunt him into giving up his hippy stance, wherein he will actually eat broccoli as an accompaniment to a New York strip, or he will get fed up and start shoveling green things into his mouth just to show me he means business. Everybody wins.

*Christopher Garlington lives in a standard two kids, wife, dog, corner-lot, two car, small business owner American dream package. He drives a 2003 Camry, sports a considerable notebook fetish, and smokes Arturo Fuente Partaga Maduros at the Cigar King as often as possible. His stories have appeared in Atlanta Parenting, Florida, Orlando, Orlando Weekly, Catholic Digest, Retort, Another Realm, The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, South Lit, and other magazines. His short story collection, "King of the Road," is available on Amazon.*



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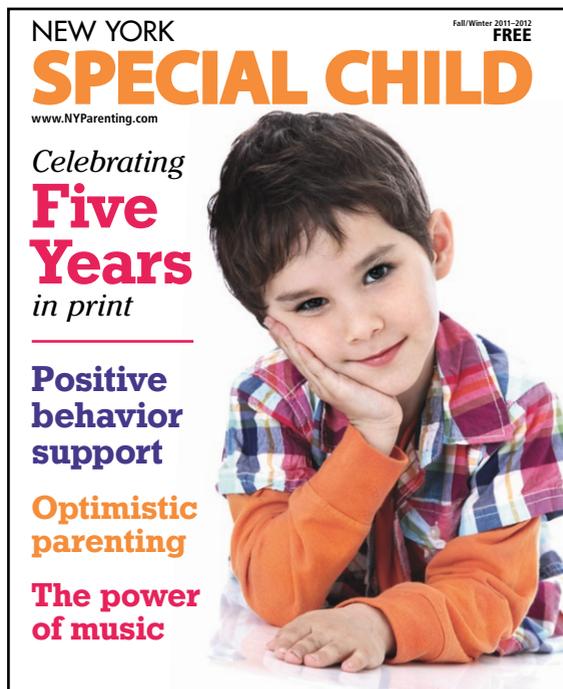
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# www.NYParenting.com

The screenshot shows the NYParenting.com website. At the top, the logo 'NYParenting' is displayed in a large, stylized font. To the right, it says '2011 Gold Award Winner' from the Parenting Media Association. Below the logo is a navigation bar with 'Where every Family matters!' and links for Contact, Twitter, Facebook, and Feeds. A search bar is also present. The main content area is divided into several sections: a left sidebar with 'Home' (listing various family groups) and 'Calendar' (with options like 'Submit an event', 'MAP: Today's events', etc.); a central 'The Hub' section with tabs for 'The Magazines' and 'The Map', featuring a 'Calendar: Tomorrow' and 'Directories: Featured' section with articles like 'Bounce-night' and 'Mathnasium'; and a right sidebar with 'Looking for fun with the kids?' and 'WIN TICKETS' for family-friendly shows. At the bottom, there's an article titled 'When should I feed my baby solid foods?' by Kerry and Jacqueline Donelli, a newsletter sign-up form, and a 'Popular stories' list. A 'parenthood.com GO LOCAL partner!' logo is also visible.

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# Going Places

## LONG-RUNNING

**"Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol":** Conference House, 298 Satterlee St. at Hylan Boulevard; (718) 984-6046; info@conferencehouse.org; www.conferencehouse.org; Friday, Dec. 2, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 3, 8 pm; Sunday, Dec. 4, 3 pm; Thursday, Dec. 15, 8 pm; Friday, Dec. 16, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 17, 8 pm; Sunday, Dec. 18, 3 pm; \$15-\$18.

Presented by the SI Shakespearean Theater, the play sees Scrooge's redemption through the eyes of his dead partner.

**"My Fair Lady":** The Music Hall at Snug Harbor, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; Friday, Nov. 18, 8 pm; Saturday, Nov. 19, 2 pm; Thursday, Dec. 1, 8 pm; Friday, Dec. 2, 8 pm; Saturday, Dec. 3, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 4, 2 pm; \$27 (\$16 children 13-18).

The musical tells the beloved story of Eliza Doolittle and Prof. Henry Higgins.

**Teen lounge:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nysl.org; Monday, Nov. 21, 3:30 pm; Monday, Nov. 28, 3:30 pm; Monday, Dec. 5, 3:30 pm; Monday, Dec. 12, 3:30 pm; Monday, Dec. 19, 3:30 pm; Free.

For ages 12 to 18.

**Christmas Spectacular:** Radio City Music Hall, 1260 Ave. of the Americas between 50th and 51st streets in Manhattan; (212) 247-4777; www.radiocity.com; Daily, check for times, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; \$45-\$125.

The world famous Rockettes, new music, dazzling new costumes and state-of-the-art 3D technology make this year's show the greatest ever. And of course a visit from the jolly old elf himself, Saint Nick.

**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, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; \$24 (\$18 students, \$14 children).

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

**Big Apple Circus:** Lincoln Center, 62nd Street between Amsterdam and Columbus avenues in Manhattan; (888) 541-3750; www.bigapplecircus.org; Sundays and Mondays, 10 am–6 pm, Tuesdays – Saturdays, 10 am–8 pm,



## Zoo fun in December

**F**rom learning about polar bears to enjoying crafts while school is out, the zoo is the place to be.

Learn all about the effects of climate change, the environment, how the white bear eats and its habitat on Dec. 4 from 1 to 4 pm.

Then, on Dec. 17, you can enjoy a hearty breakfast with the beasts and learn what happens to the animals at the zoo during the winter months. Breakfast is served from 8:30 to 10:30 am.

Now – Sun, Jan. 8, 2012; \$15-\$95.

The Big Top returns featuring the Flying Cortes, magician Scott Nelson and Muriel Brugman, aerialist Anna Volodko and the mistress of the horses Jenny Vidbel on her fiery Arabian.

**Gingerbread Adventure:** New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Boulevard in the Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Daily, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16, 2012; \$20 (\$18 seniors and students; \$10 children).

Children explore the spices that make up a classic gingerbread recipe.

**"The Three Bears Holiday Bash":** Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre,

Finally, finish out the month on Dec. 29 with a fun day of activities, movies and crafts, from 11 am to 3 pm.

Admission for the polar bear event and fun day is free with regular admission. The breakfast is \$20 for members and \$24 for non-members, with pre-registration required.

*The Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Marling Ave. in West Brighton, (718) 422-3174. For more visit www.statenislandzoo.org.*

81st Street and Central Park West in Manhattan; (212) 988-9093; www.cityparksfoundation.org; Weekdays, 10:30 am and noon, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; \$5 (\$8 adults; group rates available).

Celebrate Hanukkah, The Night Before Christmas, and Kwanzaa with song, dance and puppetry. Reservations required. There are no performances on Nov. 24 and Dec. 25 and 26.

**Holiday train show:** New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Boulevard in the Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16, 2012; \$20 (\$18 seniors and stu-

## Submit a listing

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

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

dents; \$10 children).

The annual event features model trains that zip over bridges and past replicas of New York landmarks. (Closed on Nov. 24 and Dec. 25.)

**Tree tots and peppers:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; Wednesdays, 9:45–10:30 am and 11–11:30 am, Now – Wed, Dec. 21; \$4 (\$6 non-members) per event.

For children 2-4 years old. Hands on activities, finger plays, games and stories. Registration 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, Now – Wed, Dec. 28; \$5 (\$4 seniors; \$3.50 children 5-17).

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

**Picture-book time:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nysl.org; Wednesday, Nov. 23, 4 pm; Wednesday, Nov. 30, 4 pm; Free.

For children ages 3 and up. Finger play, action rhymes and coloring.

**The Yak Packers:** Ruben Museum of Art, 150 West 17th St., between 6th and 7th avenues, in Manhattan; (212) 620-5000 X 344. www.rmanyc.org; Thursdays, 10:30–11:30 am, Now – Thurs, Dec. 29; \$10 child and parent (\$5 members).

Children, ages 2-4 accompanied by an adult, touch, explore and create projects inspired by Himalayan art.

**Picture book time:** Great Kills Li-

# Going Places

brary, 56 Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; Thursday, Dec. 1, 4 pm; Thursday, Dec. 8, 4 pm; Thursday, Dec. 15, 4 pm; Thursday, Dec. 22, 4 pm; Thursday, Dec. 29, 4 pm; Free.

Children, ages 3 and up, enjoy hearing stories.

**"Atlas":** Dixon Place, 161A Chrystie St. in Manhattan; www.dixonplace.org; Tuesdays – Fridays, 7:30 pm, Saturdays, 3 and 7:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 11; \$10-\$18.

Lava's newest show featuring acrobatics and dance set to live and sampled music.

**Mini-golf:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science in Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Fridays, 2–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$6 (\$5 children and seniors plus museum admission).

Putt your way through a nine-hole course and learn about spaceflight along the way. Weather permitting.

**Science playground:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science in Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Fridays, 2–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$4 (plus museum admission).

The nation's largest playground featuring 60,000 square feet of exhibits, with slides, seesaws, climbing webs, drums, mirrors, sand boxes and more, weather permitting.

**Wild Ocean:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science in Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Fridays, 3:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 and 3:30 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$6, (\$5 children, students and seniors, plus museum admission).

Science-themed 3-D show about the ocean and ecosystem. The movie is approximately 30 minutes long and is suitable for children 6 years and older.

**Up4Art:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; www.statenislandkids.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1, 2 and 3 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 24; Free with museum admission.

Children create projects.

**"Peter Pan":** The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza in Manhattan; (866) 858-0008; www.theateratmsg.com; Daily, check for times, Wed, Dec. 14 – Fri, Dec. 30; \$35-\$99.

Cathy Rigby plays the boy that doesn't want to grow up, flying through the air and creating magical moments that delight young and old.



## Get a kick out of the Rockettes

**T**he world-famous Rockettes are back in high-kick mode for the annual "Christmas Spectacular" at Radio City Music Hall. With dazzling new costumes, new music and state-of-the-art,

3-D technology, this year's show promises to be the greatest ever. And of course what would the holidays be without a visit from the Jolly Old Elf himself, Santa?

The show runs daily through

Jan. 2, 2012. Check for times. Tickets are \$45-\$125.

*Radio City Music Hall [1260 Sixth Ave. between 50th and 51st streets in Manhattan, (212) 247-4777]. For more info, visit www.radiocity.com.*

### FRI, DEC. 2

**Shababa Bakery:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at East 91st Street in Manhattan; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 10:15–11 am; \$15. Children squish, roll and braid their very own dough to make a challah loaf to take home.

**Art and craft fair:** Alice Austen House Museum, 2 Hylan Blvd. at Edgewater Street; (718) 816-4506 X 10; 11 am–5 pm; Free.

Local vendors showcase their artwork, jewelry, handmade soaps, and holiday ornaments.

**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 session.

Kathleen Hagen helps little ones kick off the weekend with song, music, and storytelling. For children 18 months to four years.

**Kidz Cook:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; www.statenislandkids.org; 2, 3 and 4 pm; Free with museum admission (\$6, Free for members).

Children make a traditional, Italian holiday favorite, Strufole.

**Preschool craft:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

For children 3-5 years old. Pre-regis-

tration required.

**Grand illumination:** Conference House, 298 Satterlee St. at Hylan Blvd; (718) 984-6046; info@conferencehouse.org; www.conferencehouse.org; 7 pm; Free.

Sing Christmas Carols, have a hot cider with cookies, and view the windows beautifully lit.

### SAT, DEC. 3

**Breakfast with Santa:** Applebee's, 2655 Richmond Ave. at Platinum Avenue; (718) 889-3029; 8:30–10 am; \$10.

All proceeds benefit 16 Island organizations that provide educational, recreational and counseling services to children. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

**Postcard art:** The Skyscraper Museum, 39 Battery Pl. at First Place in Manhattan; (212) 945-6324; 10:30–11:45 am; \$5 (Free for members).

Children create their own postcards featuring their favorite skyscraper.

**Holiday party:** The New York City Police Museum, 100 Old Slip at Water Street in Manhattan; (212) 480-3100; www.nycpm.org; 11 am–2 pm; \$8 (\$5 seniors, students and children; Free for children 2 and younger and members).

Celebrate the season with fun activities and crafts. For all ages.

**Outdoor adventure:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 11

am–12:30 pm; Free.

Kids and Kritters takes children 5-7, with a parent, outdoors to hike on the preserve, weather permitting then make an appropriate craft. Pre-registration required.

**Art and craft fair:** 11 am–5 pm. Alice Austen House Museum. See Friday, Dec. 2.

**Yoga:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; Noon–1 pm and 4:30–5:30 pm; \$13 (\$15 non-members).

Children, ages 5-10, learn basic moves from instructor Nancy Corrigan. Pre-registration required. Limit 20 children per class.

**"My Baby is a Hero":** Repertorio Espanol, 138 E. 27th St. between Lexington and Third avenues in Manhattan; (212) 225-9999; www.repertorio.org; Noon; \$12 (Free for parents).

Bi-lingual puppet show; presented by Scaramouches Latino Puppet Theater. For children ages 3-8.

**Math tutoring:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; Noon–3 pm; Free.

For children in Pre-K through eighth grade.

**"The Phantom Tollbooth at 50":** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at East 91st Street in Manhattan; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 12:30 pm;

*Continued on page 36*

# Going Places

Continued from page 35

\$10.

Author Norton Juster and illustrator Jules Feiffer visit with the children.

**Tree lighting:** Snug Harbor Cultural Center, 1000 Richmond Ter. between Snug Harbor Road and Tysen Street; (718) 448-2500; [www.snug-harbor.org](http://www.snug-harbor.org); 5–9 pm; \$10.

Carolers and light refreshments, music and dancing. Please bring a non-perishable food item for the Food Drive.

**The John Pizzarelli Quartet:** College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. near Christopher Lane; (718) 982-2787; [www.cfashows.com](http://www.cfashows.com); 8 pm; \$30, \$35, \$40.

Perform holiday standards.

## SUN, DEC. 4

**Breakfast with Santa:** 8:30–10 am. Applebee's. See Saturday, Dec. 3.

**Christmas celebration:** Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351-1611; [www.historicrichmondtown.org](http://www.historicrichmondtown.org); 10 am–5 pm; \$2.

Watch tinsmiths create handmade ornaments; take a pic with Santa; listen to carolers sing seasonal music.

**Art and craft fair:** 11 am–5 pm. Alice Austen House Museum. See Friday, Dec. 2.

**Holiday crafts:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 1–3 pm; \$6, \$8 non-members).

Teens, 16 and up, make ornaments and herbal gifts. Pre-registration and pre-payment required.

**Chris Van Allsburg:** Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at West 94th Street in Manhattan; (212) 316-4962; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 1 pm; \$15 (\$12 members).

Author of "The Polar Express" talks about his new short story collection, "The Chronicles of Harris Burdick."

**Love a Polar Bear:** Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; [www.statenislandzoo.org](http://www.statenislandzoo.org); 1 pm; Free with zoo admission.

Presented by Con Edison, this event covers the effects of climate change on the arctic bear. Suitable for children, ages 6 to 9.

**Winter festival:** The Morgan Library and Museum, 225 Madison Ave. between East 36th and East 37th streets in Manhattan; (212) 685-0008; [www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org); 2–5 pm; \$15 (\$10 for children).

Featuring ballet, crafts and more!

## THURS, DEC. 8

**Arts and Crafts:** Great Kills Library,



## Haunting holiday story

**I**t wouldn't be Christmas without a visit from Jacob Marley. The Conference House presents "Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol," performed by the Staten Island Shakespearean Theater ensemble, Dec. 2-18. Come and experience the classic story retold through Jacob's eyes.

The performance runs from December 2 to 18, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8 pm and 3 pm on Sundays.

Tickets are \$15-\$18.

*The Conference House [298 Satterlee St. in Tottenville, (718) 984-6046]. For more info, visit [www.conferencehouse.org](http://www.conferencehouse.org).*

56 Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

Children, ages 12 to 18, make a Kwanzaa project.

## FRI, DEC. 9

**Shababa Bakery:** 10:15–11 am. 92nd Street Y. See Friday, Dec. 2.

**Doodlebug Fun:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 1 pm; \$1 per session.

Kathleen Hagen helps little ones kick off the weekend with song, music and storytelling. For children ages 18 months to 4 years.

**Kidz Cook:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [www.statenislandkids.org](http://www.statenislandkids.org); 2, 3 and 4 pm; Free with museum admission (\$6, Free for members).

Children fry up potato latkes.

**"Polar Express":** Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com); 7 pm; Free (\$5 suggested donation).

Children read the classic.

## SAT, DEC. 10

**Breakfast with Santa:** Applebee's,

430 New Dorp Lane at Hylan Boulevard; (718) 983-3800; 8:30–10 am; \$10.

All proceeds benefit 16 Island organizations that provide educational, recreational and counseling services to children. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

**Breakfast with Santa:** Applebee's, 1451 Richmond Ave.; (718) 983-3800; 8:30–10 am; \$10.

All proceeds benefit 16 Island organizations that provide educational, recreational and counseling services to children. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

**Breakfast with Santa:** Applebee's, Veteran's Road West; (718) 983-3800; 8:30–10 am; \$10.

All proceeds benefit 16 Island organizations that provide educational, recreational and counseling services to children. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

**"Elf on a Shelf":** Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com); 10:30 am; Free (\$5 suggested donation).

Where will he wind up next? Tots find out.

**Math tutoring:** Noon–3 pm. Great Kills Library. See Saturday, Dec. 3.

**Holiday workshop:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at

Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 1–3 pm; \$10 (\$12 non-members).

Artist Kathy Trimarco leads craft workshop for children, ages 8 and up, and adults. Pre-registration and pre-payment required.

**Craft workshop:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 1–3 pm; \$10 (\$12 non-members).

Artist Kathy Trimarco leads children, ages 8 and older, to create holiday pieces made out of natural objects. Pre-registration and pre-payment required.

## SUN, DEC. 11

**Hanukkah festival:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at East 91st Street in Manhattan; (212) 415-5500; [www.92y.org](http://www.92y.org); 10:30 am–1:30 pm; \$10 (\$15 children).

Kids celebrate by making their own menorah, dressing up as a Maccabee and making olive oil. Author Norton Juster and illustrator Jules Feiffer visit.

**David Weinstone:** 92Y Tribeca, 200 Hudson St. at Vestry Street in Manhattan; (212) 601-1000; 11 am; \$15.

The fab performer just right for toddlers.

**Survival workshop:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 11 am; Free.

Hands-on activities in an outdoor setting along with emergency preparedness tips. For children ages 8 and older.

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

Children, ages 8-12, meet with science guy Clay Wollney.

**"Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins":** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [www.statenislandkids.org](http://www.statenislandkids.org); 3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children enjoy a live musical performance of this holiday classic.

## FRI, DEC. 16

**Kidz Cook:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [www.statenislandkids.org](http://www.statenislandkids.org); 2, 3 and 4 pm; Free with museum admission (\$6, Free for members).

Children learn how to make beignets, classic New Orleans fritters.

**The Christmas Show:** St. George Theatre, 35 Hyatt St. between St.

# Going Places

Mark's Place and Central Avenue; (718) 442-2900; [www.stgeorgetheatre.com](http://www.stgeorgetheatre.com); 7 pm; \$10, \$20, \$30, \$40.

A magical experience with Santa.

## SAT, DEC. 17

**Breakfast with the Beasts:** Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; [www.statenislandzoo.org](http://www.statenislandzoo.org); 8:30-10:30 am; \$20 (\$24 non-member).

Ever wonder what happens with the animals in winter? Find out and have hot breakfast, too. Pre-registration required.

**Hanukkah storytime:** Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com); 10:30 am; Free (\$5 suggested donation).

Children hear stories about the holiday and make a craft.

**Folk rock concert:** Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. at West End Avenue in Manhattan; (212) 864-5400; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 11 am; \$25 (\$21 members; \$15 children; \$13 members).

Joined by her husband, Daniel, and daughter, Storey, Elizabeth Mitchell brings back the great songs of Woodie Guthrie, Bob Marley, The Velvet Underground and Vashti Bunyan.

**Math tutoring:** Noon-3 pm. Great Kills Library. See Saturday, Dec. 3.

**Elf story times:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 1:30-3 pm; \$6 (\$4 members).

Children, 4-8 years old, explore the forest for magical creatures, then hear a story and create a craft. Pre-registration and pre-payment required.

**The Christmas Show:** 3 and 7 pm. St. George Theatre. See Friday, Dec. 16.

**Astronomy workshop:** Wolfe's Pond Comfort Station, Cornelia Avenue at Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; 6 pm; Free.

View the winter skies.

**Tree lighting:** Westerleigh Park, Garrison Avenue at Neal Dow Avenue; (718) 442-1383; 6-9 pm; Free.

Light the Christmas tree, sing carols, visit with Santa, and enjoy a musical performance by the Port Richmond High School Marching Band.

## SUN, DEC. 18

**Brunch with Santa:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 10-11:30 am; Free.

Children, 2-5 years old, visit with the Jolly Old Elf and have brunch. Bring your camera. Registration required.

**Chip Taylor & The Grandkids:** 92Y Tribeca, 200 Hudson St. at Vestry Street in Manhattan; (212) 601-1000; 11 am; \$15.

Children's concert.

**"The Legend of the Giant Caterpillar":** Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at West 94th Street in Manhattan; (212) 316-4962; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 1 and 3 pm; Free.

Presented by the Thalia Teen Theatre Project, the story is from the Ivory Coast of Africa and involves interactive theatre for children of all ages.

**Sing-a-long:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [www.statenislandkids.org](http://www.statenislandkids.org); 2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Enjoy the sounds of the season and learn new ones with Patrick.

**The Christmas Show:** 3 and 7 pm. St. George Theatre. See Friday, Dec. 16.

## FRI, DEC. 23

**Shababa Bakery:** 10:15-11 am. 92nd Street Y. See Friday, Dec. 2.

## SAT, DEC. 24

**"Twas the Night Before Christmas":** Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com); 10:30 am; Free (\$5 suggested donation).

Clement Moore's classic. Children can come in their pj's.

## MON, DEC. 26

**Cool school holiday:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [www.statenislandkids.org](http://www.statenislandkids.org); 10 am-5 pm; Free.

School's out, so enjoy a day of fun activities. Sponsored by the Lois and Richard Nicotra Foundation and Empire State Bank Charitable Trust Fund.

**Dinosaurs and more:** Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway; (718) 442-3100; [www.statenislandzoo.org](http://www.statenislandzoo.org); 1:30-3:30 pm; Free with regular admission (donation requested).

Join Richie Miriss as he presents fossils, three dimensional models and memorabilia. Make a clay fossil.

## TUES, DEC. 27

**Holiday celebration:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science in Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); 9:30 am-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Re-make the holidays by bending, twisting, sculpting and tasting.

## WED, DEC. 28

**Holiday celebration:** 9:30 am-2

pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

**Kwanzaa stories:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [www.statenislandkids.org](http://www.statenislandkids.org); 2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Listen to tales of the season read by Robert "Babaloo" Basey.

## THURS, DEC. 29

**Holiday celebration:** 9:30 am-2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

**Fun day:** Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; [www.statenislandzoo.org](http://www.statenislandzoo.org); 11 am-3 pm; Free with regular admission (donation requested).

Enjoy a visit with the animals, with activities, crafts and a movie.

## FRI, DEC. 30

**Holiday celebration:** 9:30 am-2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

## SAT, DEC. 31

**Tim and the Space Cadets:** Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at West 94th Street in Manhattan; (212) 316-4962; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 11 am; \$20 (\$17 members; \$13 children; \$11 member).

Heartwarming lyrics and pop tunes to get you up and rocking.

**New Year's Eve:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [www.statenislandkids.org](http://www.statenislandkids.org); 1-3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Join Patrick and family for a rocking day of music, dancing and snacks.

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# New & Noteworthy



## Match game

Who needs plastic, mass produced dolls, when you could have something unique and handcrafted?

Perfect for littles ones just learning how to count, the Monster Match-Up Learning Game Peg Doll Set from the etsy shop, Pegged, is a set of educational dolls in an array of colors, designed to help your tot identify colors and numbers. The set comes with five figures — each in two removable parts — to encourage your child to match shapes and colors. Each doll is hand-painted, and has varying numbers of eyes painted on its face, to aid in number recognition. Plus: they're adorable. This shop will be open through Dec.9.

*Pegged Monster Match-Up Learning Game Peg Doll Set, \$25. For info, visit [www.etsy.com/shop/Pegged](http://www.etsy.com/shop/Pegged).*

## New and old classic tales

The latest edition of Scholastic's DVD collection of adapted-for-film Caldecott Award-winning storybooks features an array of 20 phenomenal stories for tots, from classic tales such as "Make Way for Ducklings" and "The Ugly Duckling" to modern favorites "The Bear Snores On" and "Antarctic Adventures." Each adaptation upholds the integrity of the origi-

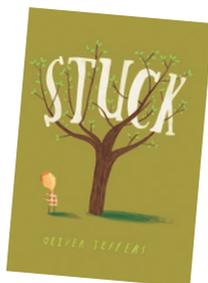


nal piece of literature, while delighting your child with different styles of animation. This collection includes three DVDs: "The Ezra Jack Collection," "Antarctic Antics — and More Hilarious Animal Stories!" and "Make Way For Ducklings — and More Hilarious Duck Stories!"

*Scholastic Storybook Treasures Caldecott Favorites DVD collection, \$24.95. Order online at [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com).*

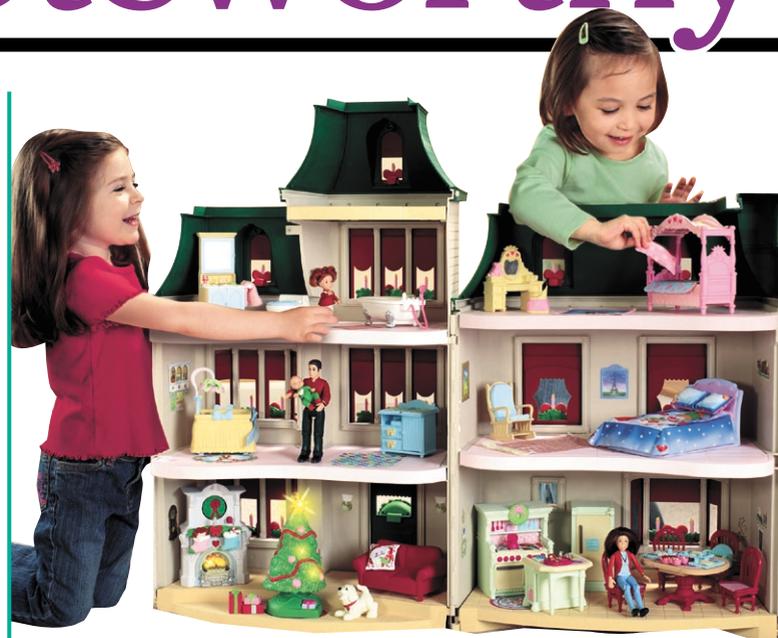
## Laugh between the lines

You'll have more luck encouraging your tot to sit still for storytime if you read him Oliver Jeffers' hilarious new picture book, "Stuck" (Philomel Books). Recommended for children ages 3-7, this is the tale of Floyd, whose kite gets stuck in a tree.



never what the reader expects. Instead of climbing the ladder to retrieve the kite, Floyd hurls it into the tree, hoping to knock down the pinned toy! And this is just one of his many creative — and foiled — ideas to free the kite — each one, ramping up the suspense and teasing yelps of laughter from young and old readers alike.

*Stuck by Oliver Jeffers, \$16.99.*



## Deck these halls

It's the ultimate, seasonally appropriate dollhouse!

Fisher Price's new Loving Family Home for the Holidays House has six rooms to decorate, with a stash of seasonal accessories including a Christmas tree, wreaths, candles for the window, a fireplace that glows, and holiday lights.

The house also makes sounds of its own — the stovetop sizzles, the tea kettle whistles, and

the Christmas tree plays holiday music. The best part? The house easily transforms from a holiday abode to an all-year-round toy. In fact, each room is reversible — one side features seasonal decor, and the other side is decorated for everyday play. Perfect for kids ages 3 and up.

*The Fisher-Price Loving Family Home for the Holidays House, \$200, available at [www.fisher-price.com](http://www.fisher-price.com).*

## Set the stage for play

If reading "Where the Wild Things Are" isn't experiential enough for your tot, now you can literally transform his bedroom into a jungle or a pre-historic forest — complete with birds, volcanoes and dinosaurs — using Smiley Walls Art Studio removable wall decals.



With several designs to choose from — including a blossoming cherry tree, replete with butterflies; a dinosaur land set with volcanoes, birds, clouds and rocks; and an owl-and-bird set.

The best part? You can even pick your own colors, so these stickers will match any nursery's

color scheme and design concept. And they come off as easily as they can be stuck on. Can you think of an easier way to decorate?

*Smiley Walls Art Studio on Etsy.com, \$147 a set. Contact them at [www.etsy.com/shop/smileywalls](http://www.etsy.com/shop/smileywalls) and via [smileywalls@gmail.com](mailto:smileywalls@gmail.com).*



## OBESITY PREVENTION IN CHILDREN IS WHAT'S ON THE MENU AT "HEALTHY LIFESTYLES FOR KIDS"!

"Healthy Lifestyles" is a program whose goal is to reduce the risk and complications of obesity in children — especially unhealthy weight gain from age 8 through age 18.

"Healthy Lifestyles" tackles the problem using a comprehensive group approach that involves the child's family, backed by our team of child health specialists.

Each case is coordinated by a physician and a registered nurse, with support from a dietician, child psychologist, and physical therapist. The kids meet for group counseling for 2 hours per week for 6 weeks, and may continue meeting with their peer support group after the program has been completed.

**FREE INFORMATION  
SESSION JANUARY 9  
AT 6:00 PM**

The Regina M. McGinn, MD  
Education Center  
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SIUH Main Campus

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