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# Letter from the publisher

## Another school year

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

Here in New York City all our kids are back in

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

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



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

be elsewhere when we need to be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
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# Wellness in the Schools

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

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

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

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

## How it started

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

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

## Nutrition in other schools

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

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

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

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

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

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

## What it does

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

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

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

## Chef Telepan’s vision for the future

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

- etarian chili (in burritos or as a rice topping).
- Fitness and sports programs in every school.



Photo by John Kernick

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wellness in the Schools is on Facebook and Twitter.

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



## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

# Do children need a cholesterol check?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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# Head of the class

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

BY SANDRA GORDON

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Elementary school: Milestone-mania

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Middle school: Hormone havoc

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

disorder, seek professional help.

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

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

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

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



# Back to school!

Some tips  
to keeping  
your kids  
interested in  
learning

BY DR. VALERIE ALLEN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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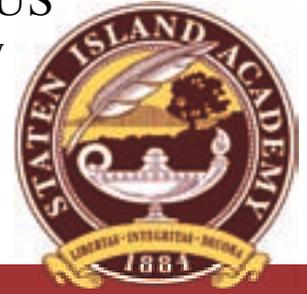
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# Don't miss your child's back-to-school physical

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

BY JAMIE LOBER

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

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

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

Hospital in Brooklyn.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

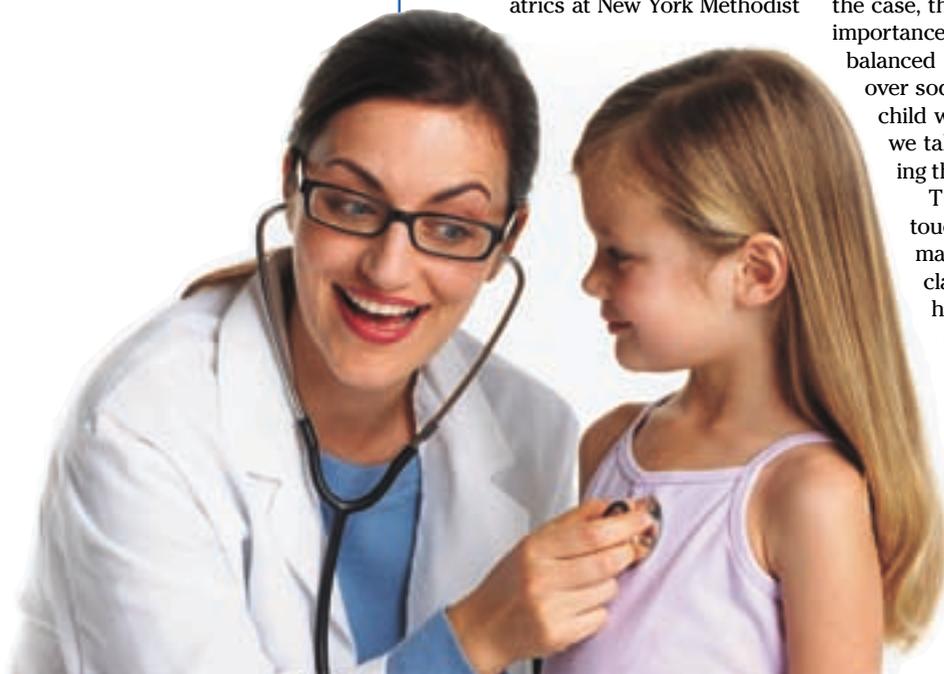
As kids get older, their doctors may talk to them about personal safety, such as car safety for a teen who is starting to drive, or safe dating. The point is to tailor the advice to each child.

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

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

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

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



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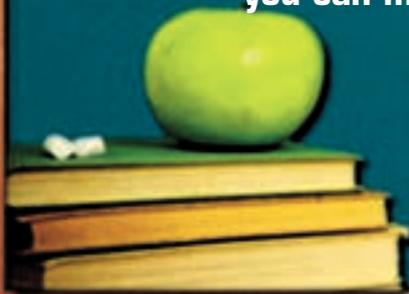
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## Fall Activity

### GUIDE

#### ART

##### Art Lab

1000 Richmond Terrace

718-447-8667 or [www.artlab.info](http://www.artlab.info)

Art Lab's purpose is to offer Staten Island the best possible and most professional independent school of fine and applied art, and to bring knowledge and appreciation of artistic excellence to the metropolitan community through regular classes, exhibitions, demonstrations, workshops, and lectures.

To this end, our goals are:

To enable artists to refine the skills necessary for art-related careers. To assist non-professional artists of all ages to develop their talents to the highest levels of skill and enjoyment. To help young adults bridge the transition from secondary school to professional standing. To develop scholarship programs to insure that students may nurture and use their talents regardless of economic limitations. To collaborate with other cultural and educational organizations in programming that will expand Art Lab's ability to serve the multi-cultural community while maintaining the integrity of its overall objectives.

#### DANCE

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Nicole has been dancing since the age of 3. At age 15 she was accepted into the prestigious "Fame School" Fiorello LaGuardia High School as well as the Alvin Ailey School of Performing Arts. She chose Fiorello LaGuardia High School where she was trained in Ballet and Martha Graham technique of Modern Dance. Nicole also studied Ballet at The Joffrey Ballet. She has performed at Madison Square Garden and Disney World. At 19 years of age Nicole left New York to sign a contract with Barry Manilow's Production Company, Stiletto Entertainment where she performed all over the world on Holland America Cruise Line. Nicole's love for dance has brought her to this new exciting chapter in her life. After teaching and choreographing for other dance studios, she is fulfilling her dream of opening her own studio where she can pass on her love and talent to others.

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Remember...there is a small "window of opportunity" for your child to make critical brain connections for future learning. Don't wait for this window to close on them!

Thank you for visiting us! If you have any questions, please call or see our website.

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*Continued on page 18*

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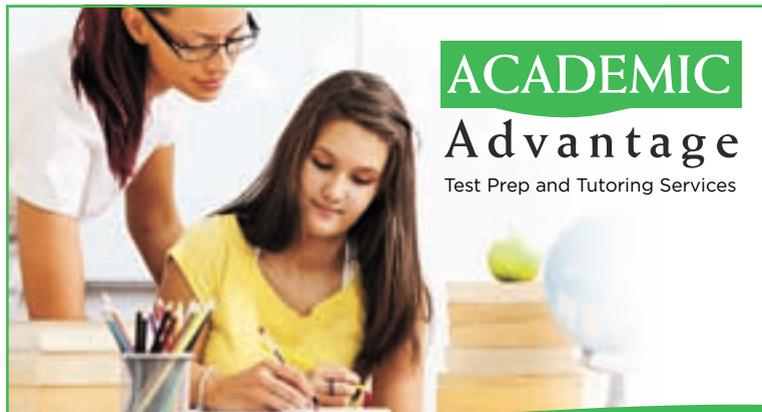
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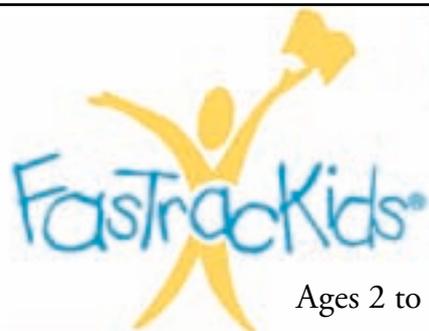
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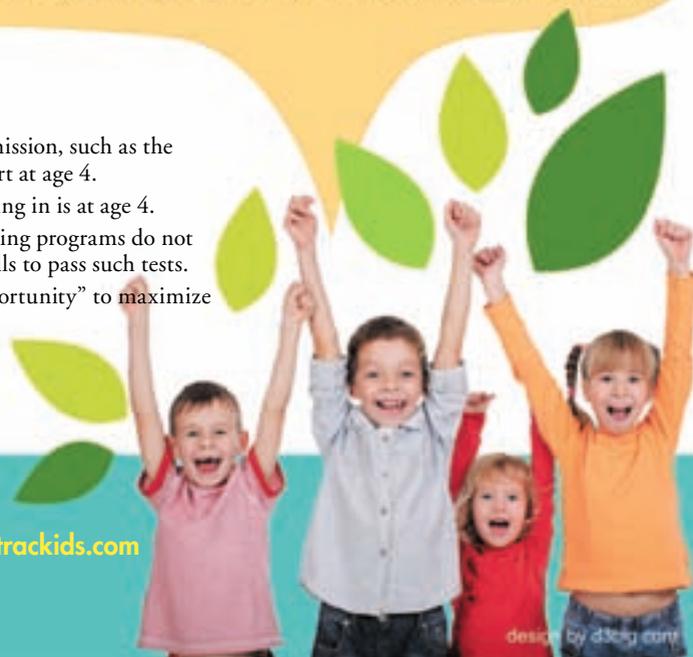
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# Fall Activity

## GUIDE

*Continued from page 16*

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*Continued on page 20*



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## Fall Activity

### GUIDE

Continued from page 18

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### Richmond Choral Society Youth Chorus

718-448-3656 or [www.richmondchoral.com](http://www.richmondchoral.com)

Richmond Choral Society Youth Chorus (RCSYC) was created in 2003 as the junior division of Richmond Choral Society, an adult community chorus bringing the best in choral music to the Staten Island community since 1951. Young singers from 4th through 12th grades in Staten Island encounter a variety of fun and challenging musical experiences and receive instruction in vocal production, music literacy and concert performance skills. They meet every Wednesday from 4:00 to 6:30 from September through May to rehearse music from the classical and contemporary choral repertory in different languages for two adult RCS concerts in December and May. RCSYC holds its own concert every year in June. Auditions are held in September and January. This year, auditions for the 2012-2013 season will be held at New Dorp Moravian Parish House, 2205 Richmond Road, SI, NY 10306, on the first two Wednesdays of September (9/5/2012 & 9/12/2012) from 4 to 6 p.m. No preparation necessary. Call for an appointment to have your child try out for the youth chorus!

### RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

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Hebrew School Hotline 718-556-9883  
or [www.cbjsi.com](http://www.cbjsi.com) or [facebook.com/cbjsi](https://www.facebook.com/cbjsi)

Congregation B'nai Jeshurun (CBJ), affiliated with Judaism's Conservative movement, boasts Staten Island's largest afterschool/weekend Hebrew School program. Tuition is free for members and reasonably priced for everyone else.

The Hebrew School hosts an open house 11 a.m.-1 p.m. on Sunday September 9. There will be crafts and activities for the children and a free brunch and Men's Club sponsored BBQ (despite the no free lunch saying). However, donations will be accepted to offset the BBQ's cost.

The Hebrew School curriculum includes

more than Aleph Beit (The Hebrew ABCs) and Bar/Mitzvah preparation. CBJ offers experiential learning, integrating art, music, cooking and field trips with classroom instruction. CBJ extends its fun and wholesome atmosphere beyond academics, sponsoring youth groups for both younger and older children.

### SPORTS

#### JCC of Staten Island

1466 Manor Road, [www.sijcc.com](http://www.sijcc.com)

Sports come in many forms at the JCC – basketball, swim, soccer, volleyball, golf and more. There's Sports Introduction for the younger athletes all the way to intramural basketball or competitive swimming teams – there's a level for everyone. Children and teens are taught the skills they need to be successful in the game as well as the importance of good sportsmanship. There is also a full aquatics program for all ages beginning with infants. For information, contact [mreape@sijcc.com](mailto:mreape@sijcc.com) or 718-475-5212.

JCC/Richmond Gymnastics Center has been training preschoolers through high school teens in the many levels of gymnastics for the past 30+ years. Whether your child is at the entry level or taking their skills to a higher level, the instructors will help develop the skills and enthusiasm that enhance them in the sport and in their lives. For information contact [mfontana@sijcc.com](mailto:mfontana@sijcc.com) or 718.485.5275.

#### Rab's Country Lanes

1600 Hylan Blvd., 718-979-1600 or [www.bowlatrabs.com](http://www.bowlatrabs.com)

Bowling is the sport where no one rides the bench... More activity each outing than many other recreations provide and no rain-outs! Rab's Country Lanes Youth Bowling Programs combine the excitement of competition with the fun of bowling with your friends and teammates.

We offer youth bowling programs for kids 3 to 20!

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Specialized program for kids ages 7 & under.

Rab's Has a Ball Youth Bowling Club, all kids get a bowling ball as part of the program!

Wednesday afternoons at 4pm

Ages 8 to 12

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Wednesday afternoons at 4pm and Full Season programs for kids ages 5 to 20.

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Friday Afternoons at 4pm

Saturday Mornings at 10am

Saturday Afternoons at 12pm

Sunday Mornings at 11am

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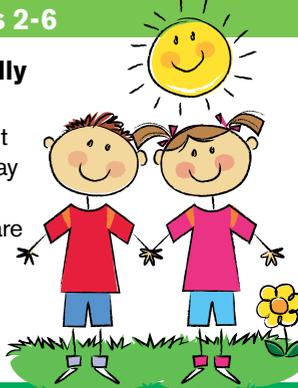
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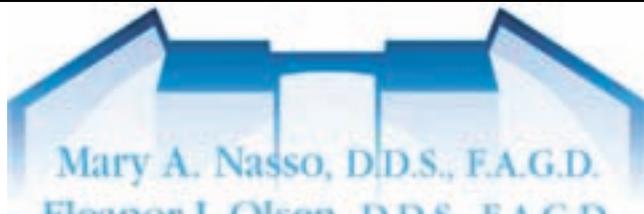
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DEAR  
DR. KARYN  
DR. KARYN GORDON

# Teaching your kids gratitude & empathy

Dear Dr. Karyn,

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

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

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

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

## Model It

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

## Teach It

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

### To teach gratitude:

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

- After you have modeled saying

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

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

### To teach empathy:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Dear Parent,

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

## Understand It

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



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# Calendar

SEPTEMBER

## Rev your engine

**T**ake the wheel and drive on in to Casa Belvedere to see the Motori D'Italia show on Sept. 22 at 11 am.

The annual festival features cars and motorcycles that are Italian made, and showcases the rich heritage of Italian culture with fine food, music, and rides for children. This year's event will also have a special raffle for a seven-day Italian vacation package, courtesy of Ciao Italy and Carrani tours.

Come on down and get up close and personal with Maseratis, Fiats, Ferraris, Alfa Romeos, and Lamborghini cars.

Don't miss out on the cars, food, and the chance to win a trip to Italy. *Abundanza!*

*Motori D'Italia at Casa Belvedere [79 Howard Ave. at Louis Street in Silver Lake, (718) 273-7660, www.casa-belvedere.org]. On Sept. 22 at 11 am. \$10 admission price includes the vacation raffle.*



### THURS, AUG. 30

**Wii day:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 2 pm; Free.

Join with friends and have a dance party while playing games. For children 10 years and older.

### FRI, AUG. 31

**End of Summer Celebration:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 2-3:30 pm; Free.

Children who participated in the summer reading program will be treated to a musical concert by Presley and Melody, get their certificates for school, and more.

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

Children 3 years and older can hear stories, sing songs, and also do a fun craft.

### SAT, SEPT. 1

**St. George Greenmarket:** Saint Marks Place, Hyatt Street www.americantowns.com; 8 am-2 pm; Free.

Fresh veggies, fruits, baked goods, hand-made items, and more.

**Stories on the terrace:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 10-11 am; Free.

A Greenbelt educator reads stories under the trees in the fresh air. Registration recommended.

**Richmond County Fair:** Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351-1611; www.historicrichmondtown.org; 11 am-6 pm; \$15 (\$10 seniors, children under 30 inches free).

Dog racing, crafting, tours of historic houses, and family fun.

**Kayaking:** South Beach Parking Lot #1, Boardwalk at Ocean Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; Noon-4 pm; Free.

Trial kayaking lesson, sit-on-top kayaks, life jackets, and paddling tips on land and water. Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

**The Mystical Journey:** Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 2-3 pm; Free with zoo admission.

Ms. Rajeswari and her students perform Mahabharata — the Indian epic of the story of man's eternal struggle in life.

**Story circle:** African Market, 140-160 Park Hill Ave. www.americantowns.com; 2-4 pm; Free.

Folklore in African oral literature is a rich source of cultural history and socialization. Stories, songs, and dance performed by Liberian Women's Folklore Project in Park Hill.

### SUN, SEPT. 2

**Saltwater fishing:** South Beach Pier, Fr. Capadanno Boulevard and Seaview Avenue; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgov-

# Calendar

## 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 [stateniscalendar@cnglocal.com](mailto:stateniscalendar@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!

parks.org; 10 am–noon; Free.

Master a new skill with the rangers and learn all about ecology of the waterways and fishing programs.

**Richmond County Fair:** 11 am–6 pm. Historic Richmond Town. See Saturday, Sept. 1.

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

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

## MON, SEPT. 3

**Richmond County Fair:** 11 am–6 pm. Historic Richmond Town. See Saturday, Sept. 1.

## TUES, SEPT. 4

**Blood drive:** 122 Precinct, 2320 Hy-lan Blvd. (718) 667-2211; Noon–5:30 pm; Free.

Donors must be between the ages of 16 and 76 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds, and be in good health in order to donate.

**Tech time:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old get computer time.

## WED, SEPT. 5

**Italian classes:** Casa Belvedere, 79 Howard Ave. at Louis Street; (718) 273-7660; [www.casa-belvedere.org](http://www.casa-belvedere.org); 3–7 pm; Free (Registration).

Registration begins for classes for teens, toddlers, children, and adults. There is also a classic cooking series, "In Cucina," where students enhance their culinary skills. Classes are on a 12-week session, and family and sibling



## Exhibit at the Newhouse Center

**T**ime is running out to see the works of Mitsuko Brooks and Heidi Lau. The two artists' exhibit at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center ends on Sept. 16.

Brooks and Lau are two emerging artists who were selected to participate in the Snug Harbor Residency Program and present their works at the Newhouse Center at Snug Harbor earlier this year. The artists drew their inspiration from the vibrant and lush gardens at Snug Harbor. Brooks created a series of photographs that document the body immersed in the landscape and

Lau created a series of fantasy landscapes in clay.

Snug Harbor is also home to 28 historical buildings and beautiful gardens to stroll through, as well as the gallery at the Newhouse Center.

*Mitsuko Brooks and Heidi Lau exhibit at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center [1000 Richmond Ter. between Snug Harbor Road and Tysen Street, (718) 448-2500]. Now until Sept. 16 at the Newhouse Center. Open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 pm. Tickets \$5 for adults, \$4 for students and seniors, and free for children under 12.*

discounts are available. Classes begin the week of Oct 1.

**Picture-book time:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

For children 3 years and older. Finger play, action rhymes, and coloring.

## THURS, SEPT. 6

**Italian classes:** 3–7 pm. Casa Belvedere. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

## FRI, SEPT. 7

**Fun Fridays:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

Children 3 years and older hear stories, sing songs, and do a fun craft.

**Kids Yoga:** The Willow Pilates and Yoga Inc, 649 N. Railroad Ave. (718) 351-0011; 4–5 pm; \$15.

Children are encouraged to explore the mind and body experience through breathing and visualization techniques.

## SAT, SEPT. 8

**St. George Greenmarket:** 8 am–2 pm. Saint Marks Place. See Saturday, Sept. 1.

**Butterfly walk:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Am-boy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 11 am; Free.

Explore the wildlife with the rangers and learn about falcons, salamanders, deer, and butterflies.

**Snake Saturday:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; [stateniskids.org](http://stateniskids.org); Noon–7 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children meet and greet and touch exotic snakes. Yikes.

**Deep Tank Arts Festival:** Deep Tank Studio, Central Avenue between Bay Street and Slosson Terrace; (917) 669-1094; Noon–5 pm; Free.

Local artists present their works for sale, plus live musical performances, spoken word, a fashion show, and artist interactive installation and workshops for children 7 years old and up.

**Bead crafts:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; [www.nycgovparks.com](http://www.nycgovparks.com); 1–2 pm; \$7 (\$5 conservancy members).

Make a beaded craft your favorite Greenbelt animal. Suitable for children 6 and up.

**Music and dance festival:** Tap-

*Continued on page 26*

# Calendar

## Continued from page 25

pen Park, Canal Street at Wright Street; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 1–5 pm; Free.

Enjoy entertainment from around the world including Arabic and Middle Eastern, Bhangra Bollywood, and Spanish, along with salsa lessons.

**Park celebration:** Westerleigh Park, Willard Avenue at Maine Avenue; (718) 442-0336; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 2–4 pm; Free.

Enjoy a day out in the park.

## MON, SEPT. 10

**Baby and me:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 11 am; Free.

Infants from birth through 1 and a half with their caregivers.

**Italian classes:** 3–7 pm. Casa Belvedere. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

**Arts and crafts:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

Kids 5 to 18 create a fun project.

## TUES, SEPT. 11

**Tech time:** 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Sept. 4.

**9-11 Remembrance:** Alice Austen House, 2 Hylan Blvd. (718) 816-4506; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 5–9 pm; Free.

The annual event is hosted by the Fire Department Retirees and Alice Austen House.

## WED, SEPT. 12

**Pre-school program:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 11 am; Free.

Children 2 to 5 years old with a parent or caregiver read books, finger play, and color. Pre-registration required.

**Picture-book time:** 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

## THURS, SEPT. 13

**Movie night:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3 pm; Free.

The whole family enjoys a PG flick.

## FRI, SEPT. 14

**Story time:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 11 am; Free.

Stories for kids ages 3 to 5 with a caregiver. Pre-registration required.

**Fun Fridays:** 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Sept. 7.



## Explore technology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SAT, SEPT. 15

**St. George Greenmarket:** 8 am–2 pm. Saint Marks Place. See Saturday, Sept. 1.

**Science club:** High Rock Park, 200 Nevada Ave. at Rockland Ave. (718) 727-1135; [www.statenislandmuseum.org](http://www.statenislandmuseum.org); 10 am to noon; \$8 (\$5 members).

Children 8 to 13 years old explore chemistry with hands-on activities. Pre-

registered by the Staten Island Children's Museum.

**Open house:** Wagner College's Campus Hall, 1 Campus Rd.; (718) 390-3221; [www.wagner.edu/external](http://www.wagner.edu/external); 10:15 am.

Children 6 to 17 are invited to explore the Actor Children's Theatre workshop.

**Archery:** Willowbrook Park, Eton Place at Richmond Avenue; (718) 967-3542; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 11 am–1 pm; Free.

Trained rangers demonstrate the safe and proper way to draw a bow and shoot an arrow. Recommended for children 8 years and older.

**Anniversary celebration:** Conference House, Satterlee Street at Hylan Boulevard; (718) 984-6046; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 11 am–4 pm; \$5 (\$3 children and seniors).

Come and experience the past at the 236th anniversary of the 1776 Peace Conference with children's activities, historic house tours, re-enactments, crafters, colonial dancing, outdoor cooking, music, and more.

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

Create your own woodland fairy or wizard, and then take a hike. For children 7 years old and older. Pre-registration and pre-payment required.

**Patrick and the Rock-a-Silly Band:** Westerleigh Park, Willard Avenue and Main Avenue; (718) 442-0336; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 3 pm; Free.

A concert for all ages.

## SUN, SEPT. 16

**Nature walk:** High Rock, 200 Nevada Ave. at Rockland Avenue; (718) 351-3450; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 1–3 pm; Free.

Hike with rangers and explore the marvelous mushroom. Recommended for children 6 years old and up.

## MON, SEPT. 17

**Street Games:** Tappen Park, Wright Street and Bay Street; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 1–3 pm; Free.

Sponsored by state Sen. Diane Savino, parents and children participate in a day of double Dutch, hopscotch, and tag.

## TUES, SEPT. 18

**Tech time:** 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Sept. 4.

## WED, SEPT. 19

**Picture-book time:** 4 pm. New

# Calendar

Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

## THURS, SEPT. 20

**Environmental club:** Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Pl. corner of Wall Street; (718) 727-1135; www.statenislandmuseum.org; 4 pm; Free.

Teens join the club and learn all about the environment from Seth Wollney.

**Craft time:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 years old are invited to celebrate back to school and make a craft. Pre-registration required.

**Open house:** Wagner College's Campus Hall, 1 Campus Rd.; (718) 390-3221; www.wagner.edu/external; 6:45 pm.

Explore the Dramatic Scene Master class for experienced teens.

## FRI, SEPT. 21

**Fun Fridays:** 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Sept. 7.

**Kids Yoga:** The Willow Pilates and Yoga Inc, 649 N. Railroad Ave.; (718) 351-0011; 4-5 pm; \$15.

Children are encouraged to explore the mind and body experience through breathing and visualization techniques and improve their concentration.

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

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

## SAT, SEPT. 22

**St. George Greenmarket:** 8 am-2 pm. Saint Marks Place. See Saturday, Sept. 1.

**"Can't Stop Singing":** 10:30 am,

2 and 5:30 pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Friday, Sept. 21.

**Italian car show:** Casa Belvedere, 79 Howard Ave. at Louis Street; (718) 273-7660; www.casa-belvedere.org; 11 am; \$10.

The annual Motori D'Italia show showcases cars and motorcycles that are Italian-made, plus children's rides, music, and entertainment.

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

Children 3 to 6 years old with an adult listen to stories about the critters that live in nature. Pre-registration required.

**Family camping:** Wolfe's Pond Park, Hylan Boulevard and Cornelia Street; (718) 967-3542; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers/register; 6 pm; Free.

Break out the s'mores and sleeping bags. Participants chosen by lottery, must register prior to event.

## SUN, SEPT. 23

**Sing along with Patrick:** Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; statenislandkids.org; Noon-7 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children enjoy the museum and great kid-friendly songs.

**Birds of Prey:** High Rock Park, 200 Nevada Ave. at Rockland Avenue; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm; Free.

Rangers introduce participants to falcons, eagles, and other species.

**Nature hike:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 1-3 pm; Free.

Easy introductory walk through the Greenbelt.

**"Can't Stop Singing":** 1 and 4:30

pm. Nassau Coliseum. See Friday, Sept. 21.

## MON, SEPT. 24

**Baby and me:** 11 am. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Sept. 10.

## TUES, SEPT. 25

**Nature workshop:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

Children 13 to 18 years old learn about the wild.

**Tech time:** 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Sept. 4.

## WED, SEPT. 26

**Picture-book time:** 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Sept. 5.

## FRI, SEPT. 28

**Toddler rhyme-time:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 10:30 am; Free.

For children 13 through 30 months and a caregiver, includes interactive program of simple books, songs, and gentle movement. Pre-registration required.

**Story time:** 11 am. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Sept. 14.

**Crafting:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 years old create a project. Pre-registration required.

**Fun Fridays:** 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Sept. 7.

**Kids Yoga:** The Willow Pilates and Yoga Inc, 649 N. Railroad Ave. (718) 351-0011; 4-5 pm; \$15.

Children are encouraged to explore

the mind and body experience through breathing and visualization techniques and improve their concentration and focus.

## SAT, SEPT. 29

**St. George Greenmarket:** 8 am-2 pm. Saint Marks Place. See Saturday, Sept. 1.

## SUN, SEPT. 30

**Busy bees:** Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 1-3 pm; \$8 (\$6 members).

Rangers teach children 7 years old and older about the busy bees that make honey and beeswax. Children can make lip balm to take home.

## FRI, OCT. 5

**Fun Fridays:** 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Sept. 7.

**Kids Yoga:** The Willow Pilates and Yoga Inc, 649 N. Railroad Ave. (718) 351-0011; 4-5 pm; \$15.

Children are encouraged to explore the mind and body experience through breathing and visualization techniques and improve their concentration and focus.

## LONG-RUNNING

**Cartoon exhibit:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Sun, Sept. 2; \$11 (\$8 children 2-17, college students and seniors).

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

*Continued on page 28*

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# Calendar

Continued from page 27  
and drawing.

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

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

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

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

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

Enjoy shopping and schmoozing in the all-day market.

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

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

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

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

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

Fashioned to complement the park’s French style, the ride features brightly colored animals and French music.

**Ping Pong:** Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. and W. 42nd Street; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Daily, 11 am–7 pm; Now – Sun, Sept. 30; Free.

Paddles and balls provided and all



## Thirteen going on 50

Channel Thirteen’s going on 50, and is celebrating with a poster workshop at the Museum of the City of New York on Sept. 30, Oct. 28, and Nov. 3.

In celebration of Channel Thirteen’s 50th anniversary, Kids Club Thirteen is hosting a poster workshop and contest for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. Children are invited to drop in on an art workshop and create

a poster depicting their favorite Channel Thirteen children’s show.

Drop-in workshops are on Sept. 30 and Oct. 28 from 10:30 am to noon, and on Nov. 3 from 1:30 to 3 pm. Free with museum admission. Recommended for children 6 to 14 years old.

*Museum of the City of New York [1220 Fifth Ave. between 103rd and 104th streets at Central Park East, (212) 492–3490, [www.kids.thirteen.org](http://www.kids.thirteen.org); [www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org)].*

skill levels welcome.

**Carousel:** Willowbrook Park, Eton Place and Richmond Avenue; (718) 477–0605; Fridays–Sundays, 11 am–5:45 pm, Sat. Sept. 1 – Sun. Oct. 27; \$1.50.

Kids will love the painted ponies, lions and tigers that go up and down and round and round.

**Story museum:** Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351–1611; [www.historicrichmond-town.org](http://www.historicrichmond-town.org); Thursdays, 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm, Now – Thurs, Nov. 15; \$3 (Adults free).

Pre-schoolers listen to stories, do crafts, dance and sing.

**Mitsuko Brooks and Heidi Lau:** 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); Wednesdays – Sundays, Noon–5 pm, Now – Sun, Sept. 16; \$5 (\$4 students and seniors, free for children under 12).

Exhibit features the work of these

two emerging artists.

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

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

**House tours:** Conference House, 298 Satterlee St. at Hylan Boulevard; (718) 984–6046; [www.conferencehouse.org](http://www.conferencehouse.org); Fridays – Sundays, 1–4 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 9; Free.

Vist and explore the house and the grounds.

**Kidz Cook:** Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273–2060; [statenisland-kids.org](http://statenisland-kids.org); Fridays, 2–3 pm, Now – Fri, Sept. 28; Free with museum admission.

Children have a chance to explore the culinary arts.

**Beginners trainer program:** Long

Island Aquarium & Exhibition Center, 431 E. Main St. (631) 208–9200, X H2O; [reservations@amwny.com](mailto:reservations@amwny.com); [www.longislandaquarium.com](http://www.longislandaquarium.com); Saturdays, 10:15 am and 2 pm, Now – Sat, Sept. 29; \$150 (Members: \$125).

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

**Storytime:** Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982–6983; [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com); Tuesdays and Saturdays, 10:30 am, Now – Sat, Nov. 24; Free.

Children listen to a different story each week.

**Up4Art:** Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273–2060; [statenisland-kids.org](http://statenisland-kids.org); Saturdays and Sundays, 1, 2 and 3 pm, Now – Sun, Sept. 30; Free with museum admission.

Children create art with different mediums.

**Resources:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351–1444; [www.nysl.org](http://www.nysl.org); Tuesday, Sept. 4, 4 pm; Wednesday, Sept. 5, 4 pm; Wednesday, Sept. 12, 4 pm; Monday, Sept. 17, 4 pm; Wednesday, Sept. 19, 4 pm; Monday, Sept. 24, 4 pm; Wednesday, Sept. 26, 4 pm; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old learn all about what the library has to offer in homework help and research.

**After-school book club:** Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351–1611; [www.historicrichmond-town.org](http://www.historicrichmond-town.org); Wednesdays, 3:30–4:30 pm, Wed, Sept. 5 – Wed, Dec. 26; Free (plus cost of book).

It’s back. Students in fourth through seventh grades read and discuss selected books covering major periods in history.

**Tutoring:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351–2977; [www.nysl.org](http://www.nysl.org); Tuesdays, 3:30–5:30 pm, Saturdays, 11 am–1 pm, Sat, Sept. 8 – Sat, Sept. 29.

Children pre-K to eighth grade get assistance in math and reading from Staten Island Tech volunteers.

**Tot Shabbat:** Temple Israel Reform Congregation of Staten Island, 315 Forest Ave. (718) 727–2231; [tmplisrael@aol.com](mailto:tmplisrael@aol.com); Friday, Sept. 21, 6 pm; Friday, Oct. 19, 6 pm; Friday, Nov. 16, 6 pm; Friday, Dec. 21, 6 pm; Friday, Jan. 18, 6 pm; Free.

Little ones enjoy a service filled with music and song that’s just right for their level of understanding and participation.

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# 2012-2013 School Year Calendar

## September 2012

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

## October 2012

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

## November 2012

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

## December 2012

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

## January 2013

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

## February 2013

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

## March 2013

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

## April 2013

- 3 Wednesday Students return to school

## May 2013

- 27 Monday Memorial Day Observed (schools closed)

## June 2013

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

# Raising your kids to be politically savvy

How to engage your children with the world around them

BY DENISE YEARIAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Everyday politics

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

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

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

he frequents, such as parks and libraries.

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

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

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

- Motion for movies. Teens can develop some political concepts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top Tips



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

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

Dominique Downs likes that book, too.

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

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

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

Parents should also encourage letter writing.

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

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

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

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

sters can learn about voting processes.

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

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

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

Finally, consider family volunteering.

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

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

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

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

## Resources for your children

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

### Books

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

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

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

### Internet sites

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



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# To gift or not to gift

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

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

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

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

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



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

Some of these issues are contemplated in greater detail:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**S**

pirit is not measured by awards that line our mahogany bookshelves, but by the number of smiles we elicit. Let us always remember that there is always someone who looks up to us so let us lead by example, for our success as a society is measured by the outcome of tomorrow, not by the events that happen at present. Let spirit bridge the ignorance that divides us. Let spirit knock down the walls of ignorance that imprison us and

*let spirit unite us as a community.*

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# Brush wars

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



BY JENNIFER BILEK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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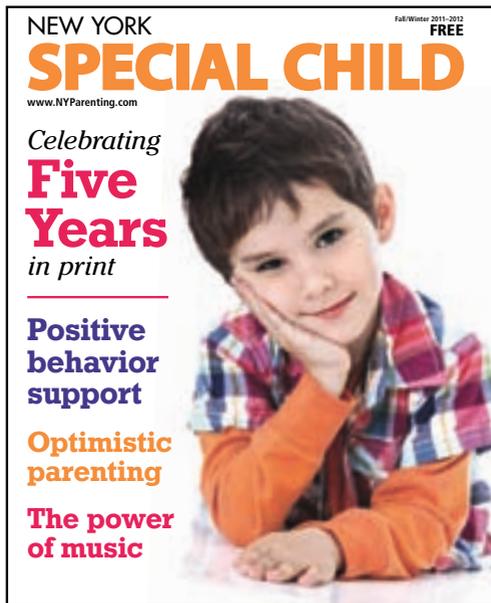
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# Finding the right shoes

Putting your  
best foot  
forward when  
shopping for  
your child

BY KIKI BOCCI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

## Modern-day mystery that teens will love

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

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

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

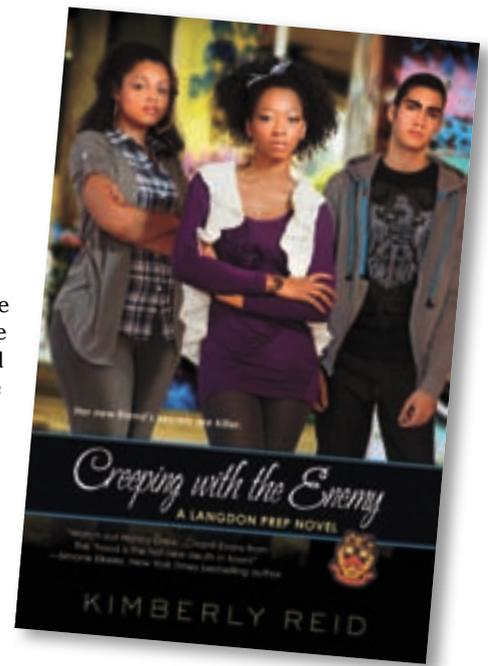
She also noticed a creepy guy flirting with Bethanie. There was something really off about him. He acted weird — like he was some kind of hero — when the gunman entered the restaurant, when, in reality, he almost got everybody killed.

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

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

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

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

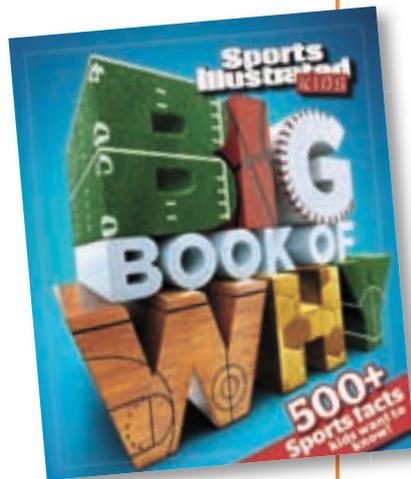


keep savvy 12- to 17-year-old readers from tossing this book aside.

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

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

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



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

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

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

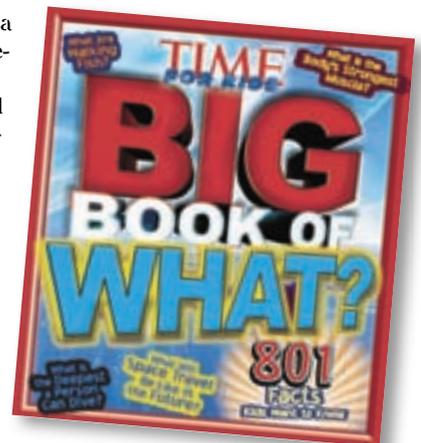
They'll better understand their bodies by reading about which muscle in the body is the strongest (and a few runners-up), what it means to be dou-

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

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

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

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



Book of Why."

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

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

"Sports Illustrated Kids Big Book of Why" [128 pages, 2012, \$17.95].

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



## LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

# Teens young & old

## Different problems as your teenagers mature

**Y**our children's teen years are particularly demanding on parents because expectations and rules must continually adapt to the kids' ever-changing behaviors.

Typical teen temperament — rebellion, moodiness, and insecurity — usually begins in the “tween” years (ages 10 to 12) and becomes full-blown around age 13. In all fairness, though, teens should not be lumped into one category. I prefer to categorize the teen years into two distinct phases — the “roller coaster” phase (ages 13 to 15) and the “know-it-all” phase (ages 16 to 19).

For the record, my daughter experienced mood changes that swung

chotherapist from Long Island who specializes in treating at-risk teens, describes the young adolescent as conflicted between wanting to rely on his peers and still needing parental support. This estrangement phase is troublesome for parents because their child becomes dismissive and no longer idealizes them.

“In my experience, it proves to be less about willfully rejecting loved ones than carelessly struggling with one’s own identity,” he says.

Shelly Furuness, PhD, an assistant professor of secondary education at Butler University in Indianapolis, Ind., agrees.

“Younger teens are trying to figure out who they are in relation to everyone else,” says Furuness. They are constantly mirror-checking because their bodies are incessantly changing, and they fear that they’ll look weird or different. “They know what they’re supposed to do, but it’s physically and emotionally harder for a younger teen to control their behaviors.”

### What’s a parent to do?

Don’t get caught up in the drama and sink to your teen’s level. Try to empathize with your teen’s inner turmoil and the likelihood that she literally feels uncomfortable in her own skin.

DeCamello urges parents to maintain their role as adult models and to avoid “falling prey to reactive battles with their teens.”

### Know-it-all phase

During the “know-it-all” phase, teens experience significant firsts as they prepare for adulthood, such as driving or living on one’s own.

Teens start to find their way during this phase. Perhaps they are earning their own income, driving to school, or becoming increasingly secretive about their love lives. Fortunately, their temperaments are a bit more even-keeled than their younger counterparts.

“As the teen years progress, a trend toward less emotion-driven impulsiveness and more thoughtful, pondered responses begins to emerge,” DeCamello reports.

It’s difficult to allow your older teen to make mistakes because the consequences can be frightening, such as a car accident or an unwanted pregnancy.

“Older teenagers are looking for independence and ways to leave the nest,” Furuness explains. “They take on responsibilities to show they are capable of being on their own.”

### What’s a parent to do?

Let go. Allow your teen to grow away from you and become a unique person.

Levester Johnson, EdD, the vice president for student affairs at Butler University in Indianapolis, Ind., instructs parents to provide their teens with more independence so they can acquire the skills they will need as adults.

“Give them more freedom as they demonstrate that they’re using their freedoms properly. Don’t sweat the little things like hair and clothing that they may be experimenting with.” Johnson says that successes and failures are all part of the maturation process.

*Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist, and author of the newly released book, “Lions and Tigers and Teens: Expert advice and support for the conscientious parent just like you” (Unlimited Publishing LLC) now available on Amazon.com and at: [www.unlimited-publishing.com/haskell/](http://www.unlimited-publishing.com/haskell/).*

### Tips and tales

“Older teens drive in cars with other teenagers. Therefore, parents should know their teen’s circle of friends and ask a lot of questions.”

*Peggy Farrington, Wappingers Falls, NY*

“Younger teens seem more eager to explore things that feel ‘rebellious,’ while older teens seem to have more of an idea about consequences.”

*Jennifer Malcarne, Clinton, NY*

### Share your ideas

Upcoming topic: Suggestions for teens to beat the winter blues.

Send your full name, address, and brief comments to [myrnahaskell@gmail.com](mailto:myrnahaskell@gmail.com), or visit [www.myrnahaskell.com](http://www.myrnahaskell.com).



back and forth like Tarzan on steroids during her “roller coaster” phase, and my “know-it-all” son — now 18 — has the habit of telling my husband and I, “Let me explain this to you,” as if we just fell off the turnip truck. So here’s a breakdown of the two phases from someone who knows them well.

### Roller coaster phase

During the “roller coaster” phase, teens experience extreme hormonal and physical changes, such as acne, weight gain, and facial hair growth, which leave them feeling awkward at a time when they are desperately trying to fit in.

Anthony DeCamello, PhD, a psy-

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# Off to college

Ways to help your student and family cope with emotions

BY CAROL BRZOZOWSKI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

derstanding.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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# Singing the world

The Young People's Chorus visits China — and discovers much more

BY LAURA J. VAROSCAK

**W**hen the Young People's Chorus of New York City received an invitation to represent North America at the 2012 World Choral Summit in China, Francisco Nunez — the founder and artistic director of the chorus — was thrilled, but not entirely surprised. Since its start in 1988, the Young People's Chorus has received numerous honors and awards for its stellar performances around the globe. Nunez, a 2011 MacArthur Fellow, describes the chorus as an “artistically viable and an incredibly multicultural choir,” completely deserving of such an honor. Still, one of his biggest challenges was to narrow down a selection of music to represent the United States and its widely diverse background.

He called fellow choir director Philip Burnell for advice. Burnell simply responded, “Do what you do.” Appreciating his friend's confidence and trust in his ability to prepare an impressive repertoire, Nunez got to work. His vision was to create something more than a traditional choral performance, instead, an event with staging that would capture the heart of the U.S. Under his direction and the choreography of Jacquie Bird, 43 members of the Young Men's Chorus and Concert Choir began a demanding two-week rehearsal schedule, practicing everyday from 10 am to 5 pm, before departing for China.

The invitation came from the International Federation of Choral Music,



an organization committed to facilitating communication and exchange between choral musicians throughout the world. The 11th annual China International Chorus Festival and World Choral Summit took place in Beijing in mid July. Internationally renowned choral leaders and world-class choirs came together to share their musical talent, individual perspectives, and passion through a series of concerts, workshops, and discussion groups. The theme of the summit was “Voices in Harmony.” The Young People's Chorus of New York City joined other choruses from Europe, Africa, South America, Australia, and Asia to share their different cultures.

The Opening Ceremony was a great success. Ten thousand people packed the MasterCard Center, and international TV channels were there to document the event. During its visit, the

Young People's Chorus held two-hour concerts at the Guangzhou Opera House and the Chinese Conservatory of Music. The singers delivered flawless vocal and dance performances that had the audience on its feet by the end of the performance.

The choristers performed the first half of the program in their formal uniforms, and then switched to a classic Americana look inspired by Broadway musicals like “Showboat,” “Ragtime,” and “Newsies.” The boys dressed in caps and vests to capture the feeling of old New York. The girls wore long white dresses and carried white parasols, reminiscent of Alvin Ailey's “Revelations.” Nunez's selections ranged from the Renaissance to the contemporary periods and included music from the Amazon, Latin America, and China. They sang classical and traditional music, Shaker hymns, folk songs, gospels, spirituals, and contemporary pieces.

Chorister Ada Huang blogged about the audience's enthusiasm when they performed “Oye” as an encore.

“The whole song was an amazing experience because in the heart of the moment, we decided to bring children up on the stage, and mothers were practically throwing children in our arms to dance with us,” she wrote. “We sang with all the people who came to see us and the ending was so full of power and love.” This was especially significant because it was Huang's first visit to Guangzhou, her





family's hometown.

Lu Wei and the late Anne Ofstedal, the parents of choristers Christina and Dustin Lu, had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to China to watch their children perform at the Conservatory. They borrowed the words of a teenage girl in the audience to describe their experience: fabulous and awesome!

"Song by song, dance by dance, the YPC choristers, singing and moving as perfectly as we've ever seen them, left their audience with a rich impression of the talents and vibrant joy of American young people."

Nunez believes the educational impact of the tour for the choristers was boundless.

"Traveling changes a child's perspective of his or her place in the world, giving these young people first-hand knowledge of issues affecting the international community," he said. "Music is powerful. In Estonia, it helped bring down the Iron Curtain!"

Sixteen-year-old Louise Sullivan was excited to travel to China with the chorus.

"It was amazing to sing in a giant, beautiful opera house, visit different temples, and see the Great Wall! I also understood what it was like to go someplace with a mission: YPC is

about connecting with others through music by having fun and sharing our experiences with others from different cultures and backgrounds," she said. "As a singer, I was always thinking about the music — memorizing, searching for meaning, saving my voice — because I know our performances would influence others."

Tohar Scheininger has been with the chorus for four years. The 17-year-old alto looked forward to sharing the music she and her fellow choristers had worked so hard perfecting with a Chinese audience.

"The Boatman Song" was the most musically challenging for her. Sung in Chinese, the piece moved the audience. Tohar noticed a middle-aged woman sitting in the front row and focused on her smile while singing and felt a deeper connection with the Chinese culture. She appreciated the strong emotional response to the music, which reminded her that music is truly a universal language.

Nunez says the chorus does more than just singing beautiful songs.

"People watch them perform and think, 'Everything is going to be OK.' These young men and women are change makers. They are making a difference in the lives of others. They make a good impression and



people meet them and think, 'This is what Americans are like.' They are helping our country," Nunez states emphatically.

Louise and Tohar thank Nunez for helping them by being such a brilliant teacher and a good friend.

"He has such a way with kids," Tohar explains. "He knows how to talk to us so we'll listen — not just about music — he grabs our attention, motivates us, guides us. He's incredible!"

Indeed, Nunez is a passionate, dedicated, and gifted man who cares about

humanity and believes that change is possible in the world. His positive influence on the lives of young people builds bridges between cultures around the globe, joining people in peace and harmony.

For more information about the Young People's Chorus of New York City, visit [www.ypc.org](http://www.ypc.org).

*Laura Varoscak-DeInnocentiis is a writer, educator, and mom living in Brooklyn. A regular contributor to NY Parenting Media, Varoscak-DeInnocentiis has won several editorial awards for her articles.*



# Simple rules of backpack safety

BY JAY HUNT

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

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

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

Simple tips to help:

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

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

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

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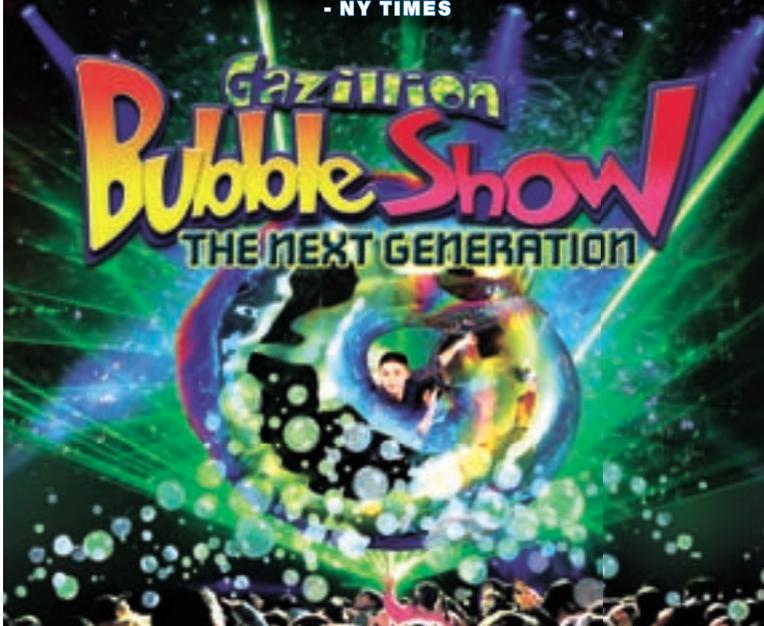
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# New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

## Modern life

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

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



## Young folk

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

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

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



## Book of shadows

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



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

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

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

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



## Delicious design

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

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

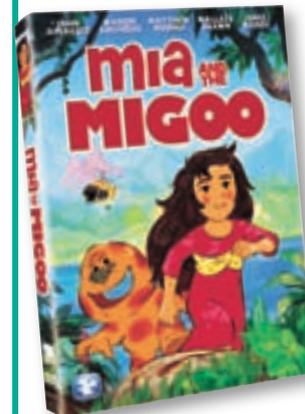
## Rescue mission

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

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

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

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



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

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

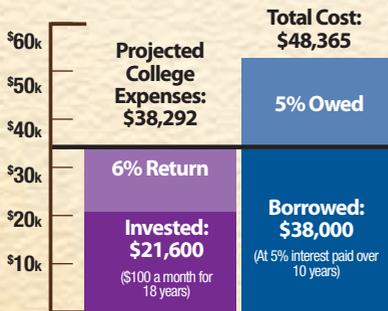
"*Mia and the Migoo*" DVD, \$19.98, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

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\*\* Up to \$10,000 is deductible from New York State taxable income for married couples filing jointly; single taxpayers can deduct up to \$5,000 annually. May be subject to recapture in certain circumstances — rollovers to another state's plan or nonqualified withdrawals.

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**For more information about New York's 529 College Savings Program *Direct Plan*, obtain a Program Brochure and Tuition Savings Agreement at [www.ny529directplan.com](http://www.ny529directplan.com) or by calling 1-800-376-9166. This includes investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other information. You should read and consider them carefully before investing.**



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