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FEATURES

- 6 Parenting resolutions**
Advice for the not-so-perfect parent
BY GAYLA GRACE
- 8 Arts get a boost**
A program with the goal of arts education for all
BY ALLISON PLITT
- 10 This holiday, turn your child into a tradition tracker**
BY SARA MARCHESSAULT
- 14 Tiny babies, big love**
Part 2: Two micro-preemie moms share their experiences
BY TAMMY SCILEPPI
- 19 Warming up muscles, minds**
BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO
- 20 Treating dry winter skin**
Tips for the whole family
BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON
- 22 Keeping the happy in the holidays**
Celebrating the season should be satisfying, not stressful
BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN



COLUMNS

- 12 Healthy Living**
BY DANIELLE SULLIVAN
- 18 Lions and Tigers and Teens**
BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL
- 24 Just Write Mom**
BY DANIELLE SULLIVAN
- 26 Divorce & Separation**
BY LEE CHABIN, ESQ.
- 34 Good Sense Eating**
BY CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

CALENDAR

- 28 December Events**

SPECIAL SECTIONS

- 33 The Marketplace**

Letter from the publisher

Happy holidays and more

It's hard to believe that a whole year has passed. It seems like I was just writing this column a few months ago, not an entire year. The speed of things passing is truly awesome and I don't think I'm the only one who's experiencing



it. So here it is again and I'll soon be going to various performances of "The Nutcracker" and celebrating the holiday season with the special art events that New York offers in abundance. Lucky me!

On the other hand, recently we had to say a difficult good-bye to my right arm and soul mate Sharon Noble. For the last nine years Sharon and I have partnered together in harmonious ways to create these magazines, website and digital plat-

forms. We grew and the business grew with us and our children who also were integral to the process grew too. It was a match that anyone could see was a perfect union until quite recently when Sharon expressed her desire to move on and try something new in her life. It wasn't easy to let her go and I did my best to hold on, but as the months passed we came to an understanding and now after a wonderful party send-off by our company to this extremely well liked and popular staff member, her office is vacant.

We all wish her well. We will miss her laugh, her insight, her intelligence, her vision. Lucky me, I still get to see her because we are a lot more than mere colleagues. We are family.

That said and speaking of family, I want to extend a big thank you to all the members of our team and wish all of them a wonderful holiday season and a great New Year. Notably I want to thank Tina for all she does to make my work easier and for being funny too! A big shout out of thanks to our sales team, those still with us as well as the few who have moved on. Lori Falco, Sharon Leverett, Shanika Stewart, Alexis Benson and our newest member Erin Brof. Welcome!

Thanks to Vinny, Leah, On Man, Arthur, Cheryl, Yvonne, Raymond, Earl, Mauro, Courtney, Sylvan, Shavana and to all our columnists. Thank you to Tammy, Shneika, Allison, Risa, and Jamie, who are our go-to's for articles, interviews and profiles. Thanks to Joanna and Danielle for their calendar skills and for being super to work with. An additional

thanks to Danielle for her expertise and for helping us to understand and utilize social media. Thanks to Pat, Paul and Charlie for their distribution skills. Thanks to Lisa and to Jesseca and most definitely thanks to Cliff, Les and Jennifer.

Finally all of us wish to thank you our readers, for reading our magazines, visiting our website and for logging on to our Guides. We wish each and every one of you a happy season and a new year filled with health and prosperity. Thanks for making a successful 2014 for New York Parenting.

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Parenting resolutions for the not-so-perfect parent

BY GAYLA GRACE

Considering the innumerable parenting books I've read and parenting workshops I've attended, I should be a perfect parent. I'm not. I've been a parent long enough, however, to realize that if I keep pressing forward and do the best job I can with a loving and sincere heart, my kids won't be eternally scarred by my imperfections.

This year, instead of making resolutions about being a better parent, I decided to ponder a few resolutions on how to move past my imperfections and keep going on days I want to quit as a not-so-perfect parent.

So, this year I commit to...

Let go of the mommy guilt. We all experience it from time to time. We do too much for our kids one day, and the next day, we do too little. One day, we give them too much slack, and the next day, we nag them incessantly. Our parenting choices never seem right. Or maybe our thinking isn't right. Mommy guilt comes from the expectation that we need to be perfect. But a perfect mom doesn't exist. We can choose to let go of unrealistic expectations that keep us bound to guilt when we don't measure up.

Forgive myself when I fail. A defeated parent doesn't parent effectively. When we barrage ourselves

with negative self-talk over a poor parenting choice, we continue down a negative path. Forgiving ourselves for less-than-stellar parenting moments allows us to begin again with a renewed mind and fresh perspective for our parenting challenges.

Seek out support from other moms on hard days. My neighbor is a single parent with two school-aged children. She recognizes her need for help in juggling her responsibilities and seeks out other moms to assist with car pool or after-school care when the demands of her work schedule become overwhelming. Fellow moms understand the struggles of busy moms and are usually happy to help when asked.

Listen to my heart on how to parent my child, instead of others' opinions. It's easy to run to the phone and ask our best friend what to do when we're facing a difficult parenting moment, but if we step back and listen to our heart while considering our options, we make better decisions. Considering our child's personality (which we know better than anyone) as part of the parenting equation allows us to tailor our parenting in a healthier light.

Take time to run, or quilt, or whatever activity works for me to re-group when the parenting strain takes over. It's important to re-group and make time for self-care when we're about to go off the parenting cliff. Balancing parenting demands with activities we can look forward to and enjoy alone or with others creates a well-rounded parent who can more effectively handle the strains of parenting.

Remember that my kids love me, even on days I'm a not-so-perfect parent. Our kids don't expect us to be perfect parents. If they know we are doing our best to care for them, emotionally and physically, they love us on our good days and our days that aren't so good. I heard the reply of a young child recently when asked what he thought about his mom's significant weight loss. "I don't see her any different — I love her either way 'cuz she's my mom."

As you start a new year, do you have resolutions to consider as a not-so-perfect parent? Do you need a mindset do-over that includes room for imperfection and second chances as a parent? Perhaps that's the ticket to success this year on your not-so-perfect parenting journey.

As a freelance journalist, Gayla Grace loves sharing experiences to encourage other parents. She is thankful for her five children, who love her despite her not-so-perfect parenting.

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Arts get a boost



A program with the goal of arts education for all

BY ALLISON PLITT

After years of seeing funding for arts education slashed from their budgets, New York City public schools got a big surprise this past summer when Mayor DeBlasio promised \$23 million dollars would be spent on arts education for the 2014-2015 school year. Besides stating that the money would be used to hire 120 new, certified art teachers, DeBlasio also said the financial support would also be ap-

propriated to improve art facilities in schools as well as create “new partnerships with cultural institutions.”

The city’s public schools aren’t the only recipients of this much-needed funding. Non-profit organizations that bring arts education into public schools have also received additional money from the city for this school year. One such organization, Arts For All, has been bringing free arts programming into public schools and youth organizations for nearly a decade. Seventy percent of

the clients that Arts For All serves are public schools that lack access to an arts curriculum.

The services Arts For All provides are free of charge to its clients, so the organization has to focus a lot of effort on fund-raising.

“We’re always working really hard to get funding wherever we can,” admits Executive Director Anna Roberts Ostroff. “We have a number of wonderful private donors. We’ve also now secured city and state funding, which has been really helpful, and also corporate sponsors, and family foundations. We’re always out there looking for fund-raising opportunities to offer more quality art programs to the children we serve.”

The story of how this non-profit was created is an inspiring story in itself. According to Ostroff, Arts For All started as a small club at New York University and taught at a couple of organizations at the time. When Ostroff and the club’s other founder graduated in 2003, they realized no one was going to take over the club, but they really believed in the work they were doing and decided to try to continue to sustain the club.

For four years Arts For All worked with two established non-profit organizations that helped it expand its programming and grow.

“Back when we were first getting started, there was certainly a lot of us introducing ourselves to youth organizations,” recounted Ostroff. “It really did take a while for people to realize what we were doing. We weren’t trying to sell anything. We were trying to offer accessible programming to organizations that may not have had the opportunity to offer that to their students. We now have a waiting list of clients.”



(Above) PS 69 students with their flowers. (Top) A student works on a mural.

By 2007, Ostroff said, "We realized we were ready to branch off on our own and became our own non-profit. As a non-profit standing on our own, we're still pretty young, but we do have a history with some of our clients, our schools, and our programs that go back beyond 2007."

In addition to increasing in size, Arts For All increased its clientele. Through an application process, a public school or youth organization can apply to have Arts For All come teach arts education in the classrooms. The board of directors reviews the applications to get a sense of what the organizations specifically need, who their students are, and why these organizations need arts programming to be accessible to children.

When Arts For All approves the organization that it knows will fit its mission, the staff works one-on-one with the individual school or youth organization.

"We basically will discuss with each of these organizations what age group is most in need of our programming and specifically what art forms the students would most respond to," says Ostroff.

Arts For All offers a wide range of art programs from visual arts to dance and music to drama and film. The organization hires teaching artists who are not only talented in the artistic discipline, but who are also comfortable teaching their art form in challenging learning environments.

"We work really hard to then pair the right teaching artist with each school," explains Ostroff. "We do work really closely with the schools and youth organizations to create unique programs that work for them whether in terms of the artistic disciplines, the lengths of the residency, and the specifics about what that teacher might want to focus on to enhance what they're already learning in the classroom."

Arts For All also does academic-based art programming. For instance, its Literacy through the Arts Program, which is one of its strongest programs, works with kindergarten through second-graders to help improve their reading, writing, and verbal expression. Literacy through the Arts Program also has a teaching artist tie the lesson plans in with the Common Core Standards and what the teachers are doing in the classrooms.

Giving an example of another academic-based program, Ostroff offers,

"We've also recently created a haiku program that blends haiku poetry of the late Sydel Rosenberg, with either visual arts or music. This program is made possible because of a very generous donor, Amy Losak."

Arts For All changed its mission statement two years ago to one that is now more specific about arts education helping children mature through the arts. The mission statement reads, "Arts For All offers accessible artistic opportunities to children in the New York City area who face socioeconomic, physical, or emotional barriers to exploring the arts. Through Arts For All, professional artists work with youth organizations to build self-confidence, self-expression, teamwork, resilience, and creativity in children."

Ostroff explained the reason for the change.

"What was really important to the organization and to the board of directors was to put out our core values in our mission statement, so people had a really strong understanding of what we were doing through the arts," she says. "We believe very much in art for art's sake. However, our staff is doing a little bit more than that in teaching life skills through the arts."

She adds, "We may or may not have someone in one of our classes that one day becomes a Broadway star or a famous painter, but that's really not the goal of the work we are doing. We want all children to have access to the arts and feel all students, even if they don't necessarily do this as a career going forward, can gain so much from having accessible arts programming."

As for the mayor's current support of arts education in public schools, Ostroff says everyone in her field is "very excited" to see an increase in funding, although she thinks there is still more work to be done.

"The biggest hope is that it can sustain and we can really start to see those results," Ostroff observed. "As New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer recently stated in his State of the Arts report, last year, 419 schools in New York City still lacked one full-time, certified arts teacher, so we still have a long way to go."

For more information about Arts For All, visit www.arts-for-all.org or call (212) 591-6108.

Allison Plitt is a freelance writer who lives in Queens with her husband and young daughter. She is a frequent contributor to *New York Parenting*.



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This holiday, turn your child into a tradition tracker

BY SARA MARCHESSAULT

Every year, my dad looks forward to Christmas, because he knows he will get one specific treat — homemade, chocolate-covered peanut butter balls. We've never called them buckeyes, and we aren't from a place that is famous for making them, but they mean "Christmas" to my dad and without them, the holidays just aren't the same.

Every family has traditions like this. Special foods, putting out the old decorations, favorite carols, and even rituals like going to midnight

mass or sharing what we're thankful for are all ground in tradition.

There are things that we do that make the holidays feel like the holidays. Each one of those acts in which we participate is special and unique. But where do they come from? Why are they special?

My dad looks forward to the peanut butter balls, because they were a treat that appeared at Christmas Eve when he was a kid. They remind him of a grandmother who was reported to be an excellent cook, and she delivered favorite sweets every holiday.

My great-grandmother is long

gone, but my dad still speaks of her fondly, usually when his memory is prompted by food, and the stories rise to the surface.

These stories are important. Traditions can become more meaningful when we know the history behind them. Tracking holiday traditions is about recording the stories of the rituals that make the holidays special for you and your family.

And the best part? Tracking traditions is a great project to give your kids over winter break.

If you have a kid who's into writing or storytelling, let him take the lead on collecting stories from fam-

Questions to get your interviews started

When your child sits down with your grandmother or great uncle to talk about what holidays were like when they were kids, it's smart to have a few questions handy. Thoughtful questions can help keep the conversation going and help to elicit memories. Here are a few to start with:

- What was (Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's, etc.) like for you as a child?
- Describe to me how you celebrated this holiday when you were a kid.
- Do you have a favorite Thanksgiving?
- What is the one food that

you absolutely have to have around the holidays?

- What was your role in the family around the holidays? Did you prepare food? Help with the dishes?
- What relatives did you most look forward to seeing?
- What relatives did you least look forward to seeing?
- Were the holidays busy and crowded or pretty quiet and low-key?
- Do you enjoy the holidays more, less, or the same now as you did when you were a child?
- What was my mom or dad like around the holidays when she or he was a kid?

ily members about their holiday memories. How about the sleuth in your family? Let her dig up facts and details from the days of yore and turn her results into a news broadcast.

There are three basic ways to accomplish the goal of tradition tracking: audio, video, or good, old-fashioned writing. Let your youngster choose his tools of the trade.

For audio recordings, he'll need a handheld voice recorder or a voice recording application or software on a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. Tapes and tape recorders may be outdated, but they still work.

To conduct video interviews, you'll ideally want a camera with a good, built-in microphone, or you may want to use a lapel microphone. In addition to the camera, a tripod is a good idea, too. That way, if you have a long-winded great aunt, your videographer won't get tired arms trying to hold the camera up.

Finally, if your tradition tracker prefers to write, maybe a new journal or blank book would be an enticing tool to take notes and capture stories. And of course, if you use video or audio, you can transcribe any interview into a text format for future use. This is a nice option because then you have a recording with the voice of the interviewee (and maybe what they look like too).

Once the tools and method of

tracking are selected, the real fun begins. You can work with your son or daughter to create a list of potential questions for tradition tracking, or let them give it a shot on their own. A list of questions is good to help people get started talking.

The next step is to make a list of the people your child would most like to interview. A list will help keep him focused on getting the job done and give him the satisfaction of crossing off one name at a time.

Once your youngster has a collection of holiday traditions, let him decide what to do with them. Will they become files that are stored in a special place on the shared family hard drive? The topic or content of a family home movie? Or perhaps put into a book that can be shared with family members?

Not only will you have a record of family traditions and stories that you can treasure, but you'll also get to watch your child connect with other family members, learn about family history, and maybe even gain a new appreciation for the circumstances of his own life.

Sara Marchessault is an author, professor, and coach. She has maintained personal journal writing for 25 years. Many of the journals from her childhood include stories she has collected from family members that she has been able to share with her own children.

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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Stress & the heart

What stresses you out most during the holidays? Hosting family get-togethers? Buying gifts? All that wrapping? Or all that pressure from family and friends (not to mention yourself!) to plan the perfect memory? It's been well documented that social ties can improve heart health, but the worry often caused by family and friends can hurt you.

I recently came across a study from the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, performed by Dr. Rikke Lund at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, which says that family stress can increase angina. Moreover, the closer you are to the person, the more damage they can do.

With the pressure of shopping, finances, and family get-togethers, nervous tension is especially on the rise during the holiday season. As most parents are running around trying to plan the perfect holiday, it's

a recipe for tension.

Interestingly, according to the study, the more you care about the person, the more your health is affected. This makes two key categories prime to induce stress: spouses and kids. But which stresses you out more?

“When the source of these worries/demands was a spouse or partner, the angina risk was increased more than threefold, while for children it was more than twofold. Other family members nearly doubled angina risk. By contrast, excessive demands or worries caused by more distant family relations or from friends and neighbors were associated with little or no risk.”

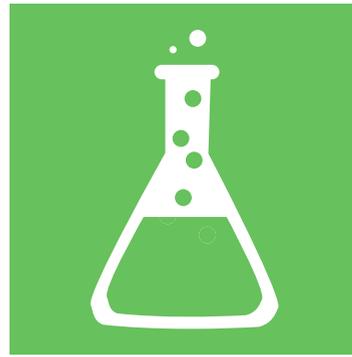
Since angina may be a risk for future heart disease, it makes sense to let things slide over the holidays, rather than allowing yourself to become stressed.

Does this study beckon the questions, who are parents closer to:

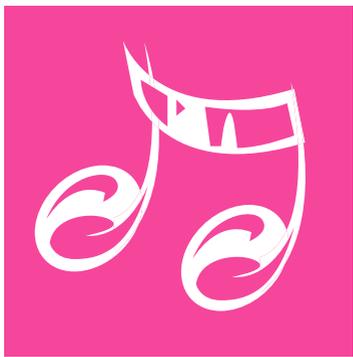
their spouse or their children? Maybe. But perhaps moms and dads just don't get as stressed out by their own kids, because they are just that: kids. After all, when a spouse does something inconsiderate or ill-mannered, as an adult, he is held responsible. Kids, however, to a certain extent, are released of that culpability.

On the contrary, the good news is that the less you care about someone, the smaller chance they have of risking your health. So eat, drink, and be merry this holiday season, and when the snide remarks surface from in-laws or acquaintances, just let them roll right off your shoulder — and away from your heart.

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



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Tiny babies, big love

Part 2: Two micro-preemie moms share their experiences

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

Jennifer Degl's straight-from-the-heart memoir, "From Hope to Joy: A Mother's Determination and Her Micro-preemie's Struggle to Beat the Odds" chronicles her harrowing journey. It's a touching and riveting story, filled with love, determination, strength, hope — and finally, Joy.

Degl, her husband John, and their three boys live only 40 minutes north of the city in Westchester. The family remembers all too well the grueling ordeal that became their daily existence, and the emotional roller coaster they endured after their miracle micro-preemie Joy (now 2) burst unexpectedly into the world. The author details her troubled pregnancy,

the scary delivery, and Joy's struggle to survive. For a long time, it was one step forward and four steps back.

Tammy Scileppi: It's been two years since your child left the NICU. Please tell our readers how your daughter is doing, and what she's like.

Jennifer Degl: Joy is doing very well! She is an energetic little lady who is determined to keep up with her three big brothers. Joy wakes up each morning calling, 'Mommy, Mommy!' and if I don't answer her within a few minutes she switches to 'Daddy, Daddy!' She just started pointing her index finger in the air while saying, 'be right back,' before she runs away, laughing.

Joy asks for her hair to be done each morning, after she is dressed. She loves to point to pictures of babies and puppies because she can say those words, as well.

Developmentally, Joy is closer to her due date and not her birthday, which is what doctors expect of such an early preemie. Joy was born four months before her due date, at the brink of viability, and this is where her brain development seems to be at. She rolled about five months after most full-term babies roll, and she walked a few months after most other full-term babies walk. The same applies to talking. That being said, Joy sees a speech therapist twice a week, as well as an educational expert twice a week, and both of these women work to catch her up.

We are very lucky that Joy does not have any physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy. Disabilities like CP are very common in micro-preemies (babies born before 27 weeks gestation). Micro-preemies typically have issues with their eyes, and as far as we can tell, Joy has normal vision.

TS: Tell us about your boys. Are they protective of their little sister?

JD: The boys each have their own special relationship with Joy. Sean

(9) carries her around the house after she asks him to pick her up. Jack (7) enjoys tickling her. And Shane (5) and Joy seem to share an unspoken language, where they play for hours making silly sounds at each other. But overall, they all include Joy in their playtime and also help us encourage her speech by trying to get her to pronounce words correctly.

TS: Please discuss the following topics from your personal experience:

Maintaining normalcy at home with a baby in the NICU

JD: This is difficult for the most organized parent, but it is possible. I would suggest one or two days a week that you do "normal" things with your other children and just visit the NICU in the evenings on those days. Maybe even take a day off of visiting. You will feel wonderful after spending time with your family, and your children will feel like life is normal.

TS: Involving siblings in the life of a baby in the NICU

JD: This can be hard if the siblings are very young because they cannot tolerate long visits to the NICU and they can also be loud and full of germs. We brought the boys to the NICU only a handful of times, but showed them pictures and videos of Joy almost daily.

Another fun thing we did was buy preemie undershirts and onesies and allowed the boys to decorate them with fabric markers and paint. We would then take pictures of Joy wearing the shirts and show them, or we ask the nurses to put her in one of the shirts if we were bringing the boys to visit.

TS: High-risk pregnancies and living with a high-risk pregnancy

JD: [Degl's doctors told her that having a fourth child would be risky, but she yearned for another baby.] A pregnancy is considered high-risk when there are potential complications that could affect the mother, the baby, or both. These are always stressful! I would love to say I handled it well, but hindsight begs to differ! Looking back, I would suggest that both partners communicate their hopes and fears as they arise and that will help maintain sanity. Also, there are many different online communities and support groups in which you can find friends and confidants.

TS: Neonatal intensive care units

JD: Most people (luckily) do not really know what a NICU is. My advice to new NICU parents is: introduce yourself to the NICU social



From left, Sean (9), Shane (5), mom Jennifer, and Joy (2), and Jack (7) Degl on Mother's Day 2014.



Ayla in the neonatal intensive care unit.

worker (unless they find you first), and they can inform you about the available support services. Then, I would talk to the other NICU parents who are going through something very similar and will most likely welcome your company. I made two very close friends in the NICU when our babies were there together.

TS: The life of a micro-preemie in the neonatal intensive care unit.

JD: Micro-preemies have a rough go of it. Most of their first few months are full of pain and stress. They are subjected to breathing tubes, IVs, numerous heel pricks and blood draws a day, daily X-rays, medications, and feeding problems. They should be listening to the muffled sounds of their mother's voice for months to come yet they are exposed to pain, alarms, and bright lights. Only the toughest will go home.

Micro-preemies are not done with medical interventions once they go home. Many are sent home on oxygen, with trach tubes, and almost all will have daily doctor or nurse appointments for the first few months of being released from the NICU. The majority of micro-preemies will have interventions for a few years. Joy now has physical therapy once a week, speech therapy twice a week, and a teacher that comes to work with her twice a week. Many other

micro-preemies have more services than Joy.

TS: How did you and your husband cope with everything, emotionally, psychologically, financially?

JD: Honestly, we are still dealing with it. At first, we fought a lot during my time on bed rest. Then things calmed down while Joy was in the NICU, because neither of us could focus on anything else, other than her health and taking care of our other children. After Joy's first birthday, we really had time to reflect on all that we went through and we are still trying to move past it, both as a couple and individuals.

...

For parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends of preemie parents, "From Hope to Joy" is a truly inspirational and in-depth look into the author's journey. Here's an excerpt from chapter 23, Waking Up to New Challenges, www.fromhope-tojoy.com.

The longer I was denied access to my daughter, the more depressed I became. Later that evening, John tried to show me pictures of our baby girl — I refused to look at them, and I refused to name her. She's going to die. My positivity had flown out the window. I feared that naming her would somehow make me more attached to her, and I didn't want to be attached to her

in case she died before I saw her.

That night after everyone left, I couldn't sleep. At 3 am, I was still wide awake — and crying. A few hours later, my doctor was back in the hospital and came to see me. I begged her to let me see my daughter.

"No. You don't seem to understand that you're in critical condition," she admonished. She told me my job was to get better — and then I could see my daughter.

Sunday was Mother's Day, and I didn't even get to see my kids. John came and spent the afternoon and evening with me. We watched the finale of "Desperate Housewives" on TV and when John left, he promised to bring the boys on Monday.

When I was alone, Susan — the one nurse with whom I had bonded — came to my room. Susan was a surgical nurse, around my age, and a mom. "It's Mother's Day. I need to see my daughter," I pleaded with her.

To my astonishment, Susan agreed. Somehow she got me in a wheelchair, pain pump, blood transfusion, and all. She wrapped me up, and down the hall we went, to the NICU. Susan told me I had five minutes, and then introduced me to Helen, a NICU nurse with an Irish brogue. Helen reminded me of my paternal grandmother, and I liked her instantly.

Our daughter was way back in the

corner, in one of the two rooms in the front of the NICU, where the sickest babies are. There were tubes everywhere. I burst into tears that wouldn't stop. She was so tiny: She weighed one pound, four ounces at birth, and was a tad over eleven inches long.

Helen carefully explained each of the bags and tubes. She wheeled me to a sink so I could wash my hands and then put my wheelchair right next to my daughter's isolette.

I stuck my finger through the opening in the isolette, and my tiny daughter grabbed my finger.

After Susan wheeled me back to my room, I called John, and woke him out of a sound sleep. "We have to name her," I said.

...

Another New Yorker, Jaime Hamm, shares her daughter Ayla's micro-preemie baby story:

When I found out I was pregnant with a second daughter, I thought of the tea parties she could have with her sister. I thought of all the experiences I could share with them and what I could teach them, and what they could learn together. However, at 27 weeks and three days, I went into labor at a hospital I'd never heard of, with a doctor I'd never met, and delivered via C-section a one-pound, 14-ounce, 13-inch baby girl, Ayla Evelyn, who had less than a

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

10 percent chance of survival. A bacterial infection that began in my placenta and spread to my uterus forced Ayla to find a way out of what should've been the safest place in the world for her.

The next three-and-a-half months would require a strength that our family didn't know we were capable of, as we navigated through our new life in the NICU. Small victories, such as when Ayla would gain 30 grams or when one of her many IVs were removed, were short-lived. It was a two-steps-forward and 10-steps-back kind of world. One minute I'm breast feeding her for the first time, the very next minute, her lung collapsed. There was no relief ... only hopeful sadness that would occasionally make way for a bit of good news. The possible outcomes of having such a premature baby were severe. If she did survive, Ayla could suffer from cerebral palsy, brain damage ... just pick your worst case scenario; according to statistics, it was a likelihood.

When their daughter Mila was 6 months old, Jaime and her husband Eric moved from their Upper West Side apartment to a home in Edgewater, NJ, a waterfront town right under the George Washington Bridge, less than three miles away. Hamm said it gave them a bit more space without leaving all the creature comforts of Manhattan, including her obstetrician and gynecologist, which she would need a mere two months later, when she found out she was pregnant again. She continued to see her doctor at her Upper West Side office and planned on delivering at St. Luke's Roosevelt in Manhattan, where Mila was born.

My pregnancy with Ayla was [otherwise] unremarkable: all my blood work was fine; I was eating well; and [I was] getting exercise through long walks in Central Park with Mila. Since I was 34, I wasn't high-risk, so there wasn't any need for an amniocentesis — the only thing that would've detected the infection!

On the evening of March 13, 2012, I started having what felt like contractions. Surely, at six months I wasn't going into labor — or so my husband and I told ourselves — so I took a warm bath and tried to relax. A couple hours later, the "contractions" had not subsided. We called my ob-gyn, Dr. Shulina, and she advised that we go to the local hospital and have them rule out contractions, just to be on the safe side. An hour later, it was confirmed. They were contractions, and I was in pre-term labor.

The emergency room advised that its hospital wasn't equipped for a pre-

emie of that size, and I would need to be transferred to another hospital that had a level III or level IV NICU. Dr. Shulina, who was in constant contact with the hospital in Edgewater, requested that I be brought to St. Luke's Roosevelt immediately for treatment.

Anyone that has spent any time in New York City knows that with the bridges and tunnels, [traffic flow is unpredictable]. Either you fly on through, or you're stuck in soul-crushing traffic. The physicians in Edgewater knew this, too, and refused to transfer me with the risk that I could go into labor while stuck in the Lincoln Tunnel. The decision was made to take me to Jersey City Medical Center. It was the closest hospital with a level IV NICU. I was frightened. I had no idea where I was going, who would be helping me, and I certainly didn't know if my child would survive this — I was only 27 weeks!

Seventeen hours later, after a painful emergency C-section, and horrified gasps from an attending nurse upon seeing the condition of my uterus, Ayla was born. I saw her for only a moment before CPR was initiated and she was whisked away in a plastic box.

A doctor from the NICU met me in recovery to explain the situation. Ayla was sick, really sick, and her chances were less than 10 percent of surviving the night. In the words of the neonatologist, "we need her to fight." And fight she did!

Ayla had lost three quarters of her blood supply fighting the infection my body had failed to protect her from. She survived six blood transfusions, three collapsed lungs, a grade-2 brain bleed, retinopathy, dangerously high bilirubin counts (jaundice), a slight opening in her kidney, and a heart murmur.

Ayla suffered through countless infections and infinite needle pricks to her tiny hands and feet. The suffering a mother goes through, watching helplessly as their baby fights with every labored breath in their small body to survive, is immeasurable. All I could do was use my hospital-grade breast pump, dutifully, every three hours, so that Ayla would always have fresh breast milk; read countless books and studies on prematurity; sit next to her incubator for hours at a time; and pray to God for a miracle — even if my lack of attendance in church didn't quite warrant one, I prayed for one anyway.

On June 4, after Ayla's brain bleed had begun to resolve, and it was safe enough to move her, Ayla was transferred to New York Presbyterian Hospital to have sight-saving eye surgery by renowned pediatric ophthalmologist Dr. Chan. The increase in oxygen delivered to Ayla after the collapse of



New Yorkers Jaime and Eric Hamm with their daughters Mila and Ayla.

her right lung, then her left, and then her right again, caused her right eye to hemorrhage. However, upon closer inspection, Dr. Chan told us that she wouldn't need the surgery after all.

After months of setbacks and heartbreak, Ayla was out of the woods. In three more weeks, at a whopping five pounds, nine ounces, Ayla came home!

Today, Ayla is a happy, playful, walking, running 2-year-old, who loves Fisher Price Little People, her Pinkie Pie doll, and adores her big sister Mila. There are no more neonatologists, urologists, cardiologists, or ophthalmologists. She finished physical therapy and after four months of speech therapy, she is starting to talk!

My experience changed me forever. I learned so many things, namely, patience. I had to learn that it would take hours, days, weeks, months, sometimes YEARS to get answers to questions I had (and still have) about what her life would be like. I learned to trust the neonatologists, nurses, specialists, X-ray technicians, even the ambulance driver that transferred her to New York Presbyterian. I had to relinquish my

most basic right as a mom to protect and care for my baby to strangers who had the medical expertise to help her. I'm glad I did; they saved her life.

I learned that I was stronger than I gave myself credit for, that you can never cry enough, and that a mother's love for her child trumps all. I learned that miracles can and do happen, and I've learned to be thankful. I'm thankful for the incredible doctors at both Jersey City Medical Center and New York Presbyterian. I'm thankful for the nurses who held Ayla when I wasn't there and thankful for the friends and family who rallied behind us. I'm thankful for the advances in modern science that in only the last few years have helped give these tiny angels a better chance at life.

Finally, I'm thankful that instead of holding Ayla's hand through a small opening in an incubator, I get to hold it when we cross the street to go to the playground. In the end, it was Ayla who was the teacher, and I was the student. Through her, I learned how to be the best mom I can be — to two wonderful little ladies, who like to have tea parties.

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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Teens and holidays

So, your teen has decided to ditch the family and spend time with so-and-so. Really? No more chestnuts roasting on the open fire? No more cozy family traditions? Did you pitch a fit and tell your teen if he doesn't spend time with the family this holiday season you're cutting him out of the will?

When our kids were young, holidays were easy. The anticipation of rich chocolate desserts and time off from school to go sledding was all it took to keep them grounded. Once adolescence strikes, they suddenly get a severe case of ants in their pants. If there is a boyfriend or girlfriend in the picture, the inclination to spend the holidays somewhere else is probably more intense. One friend regaled me with a tale about a ruined holiday. When her family headed out-of-town to Grandma's, her teenage daughter remained miserable for the entire 10 days, and then some.

Is this a case when parents should abide by the adage of picking your battles? Or should parents insist their teens spend the holidays with family?

Despite her preoccupation with friends and crushes, holiday traditions and family rituals are more important to your teen than you might think. You'll realize this when your teen announces that she can't find the ornament from Great Uncle Jack on the tree, or she notices that Grandma's sweet potato pie is not on the Thanksgiving table.

"The teenage years are a time when children are struggling to differentiate themselves from their family. They are also wishing to strike out on their own and test boundaries. At this age, kids are highly influenced by their peers, but studies tell us that they still look up to their parents, and wish to please," explains Dr. Scott Haltzman, a clinical assistant professor at Brown University's Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior and author of "The Secrets of Happy Families: Eight Keys to Building a Lifetime of Connection and Contentment" (Jossey-Bass, 2009).

It might help to ask for your teen's assistance with the holiday planning,



Remember, your teen probably has some creative talents you can utilize. Give him things he can be responsible for, such as creating the family newsletter or choosing items for the holiday menu. This gives your teen an opportunity to make a contribution. If he feels like he is an integral part of the holiday experience, instead of a mere spectator, he might buy into your need to have him around.

However, despite your best intentions and efforts, your teen might still want to spend time elsewhere. Dr. Haltzman says, "While it's important to inject routine and tradition into your family life, it's also important to know that some traditions can change slightly, and it won't kill anyone. Children, including teens, should be with their families whenever possible, but there should also be room for compromise. Perhaps your child can go to a friend's house before or after a holiday dinner, or perhaps you can change the time you open presents so that he or she can still go to work at the restaurant up the street."

Sometimes the idea of "family coming first" is foreign to teens because they tend to be egocentric. Consider the age of your child, her relationship with this friend or friends, and her attitude toward the family. It doesn't have to be an "either or" situation if you don't want

it to be. Discuss a compromise with your teen that will work for both of you. If there is a religious service or annual family tradition that can't be missed, explore the idea of inviting the friend, or allowing your teen time with him or her afterward.

Do your best to avoid a nasty battle with your teen, and you'll find you can keep the "happy" in the "holidays."

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist and author of, "Lions And Tigers And Teens: Expert Advice and Support for the Conscientious Parent Just Like You" (Unlimited Publishing LLC, 2012). For details, visit www.myrnahaskell.com.

Tips and tales

"My 18-year-old son wanted to be with his girlfriend in California one Thanksgiving. I realized that if I didn't let him go, he might be miserable and resentful. Give them freedom to make choices to be with their peers. They will come back and hang out with the family in no time."

Lisa Zarowitz, Woodstock, NY

"Share the holidays and special events. If your son has dinner at the girlfriend's house, then he can have dessert at home. The next holiday he should switch. This may sound a little complicated, but it works. *everyone* is happy."

Corinne Clerkin, Hyde Park, NY

Warming up muscles, minds

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

Students at PS 30 on Staten Island can enjoy an invigorating gym class — before they hit the books.

The Westerleigh school became the 37th in the city — and the 1,000th around the world — to enroll in Reebok Foundation's Build Our Kids' Success program to help improve academic performance, health, and learning ability. More than 50 students have already signed up for the free morning sessions of warm-ups, running-related activities, and games.

The program is both proactive and health smart, according to the school's lead trainer.

"It will help set the stage for a day of learning and a lifetime of healthier habits," said Jacquelyn Mahoney.

Principal Alan Ihne was excited about the outcome.

"We are eager to see the difference

it makes in our students," he said.

The group of moms who created Build Our Kids' Success believe that active kids equal active minds; they were inspired by Dr. John Ratey's book "Spark," which theorized that physical activity supercharged mental circuits in children to beat stress, sharpen thinking, and enhance memory. A recent National Institute on Out-of-School Time study found exercise before school had a positive influence on classroom performance and behavior, while results from its 2013 survey showed participants had an edge over their peers when it came to memory.

The program is a win-win, claimed founder and executive director Kathleen Tullie, who has shared the stage with First Lady Michelle Obama to promote active lifestyles.

"It helps improve classroom performance and behavior while building healthier lifestyles," she said.

www.bokskids.org



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Treating dry winter skin

Tips for the
whole family

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

Dry skin is a very common condition, typically characterized by a lack of moisture in the epidermis, which is the superficial layer of skin. The epi-

dermis is composed of lipid (fatty oils) and protein. When fatty oils are removed from the skin, the skin loses moisture more easily. As skin becomes dry, it also becomes more prone to rashes and skin breakdown.

External factors are the most common cause of dry skin — and the cold and dry air of the winter season can worsen the level of dehydration in the skin. Exposure to cold air outside can especially be a problem for children who get dry skin. Combining the effects of cold air outside with low humidity inside our heated homes adds to the problem. Winter's freezing temperatures and heat-induced dry air can leave skin dry, flaky, and itchy, which makes it difficult to keep your children's skin from getting too dry.

Babies and young children are prone to winter dryness that can cause irritation to the skin of the cheeks, lips, and hands. Children most commonly exhibit peeling and itching, and areas may appear red with a rough texture. Although tempted to scratch itchy skin, it will only make your child's irritation worse. So, how do we prevent winter itch and flakiness?

I spoke to Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley,

Winter's freezing temperatures and heat-induced dry air can leave skin dry, flaky, and itchy, which makes it difficult to keep your children's skin from getting too dry.

a board-certified dermatologist in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. A member of a private practice, she's seen irritations from mild to severe. Here's her take on what parents can do:

Shnieka Johnson: Is sunscreen a "must" even in winter?

Jennifer Hensley: Sunscreen is still important in the winter months, especially on the face. We are still exposed to UV light. In most cold-weather areas, people spend more time inside, and cover up when heading out. Our faces are always exposed and wearing a moisturizer with sunscreen is recommended.

SJ: What other products are important to use in winter months?

JH: Moisturizers are VERY important this time of year. Our skin is protecting the rest of our body, so it is imperative to keep its barrier intact. Dry air and cold temperatures can lead to dry skin and itching, or exacerbate skin conditions, such as eczema. Many people forego moisturizers, but in winter months, I recommend taking the extra step.

SJ: Are dry hands, chapped lips, and red cheeks worth a doctor visit?

JH: Not necessarily. If this occurs after being in the cold for a period of time, moisturizers and an emollient lip balm should lead to resolution. However, if other symptoms are involved or this persists, a trip to the doctor is warranted.

SJ: What will happen if dry skin is ignored or worsens?

JH: Ignored conditions such as this will often lead to extremely dry skin and a weakened skin barrier. This can lead to fissures or open areas, which could be po-

tential access for bacteria and viruses to enter the skin and cause infection.

SJ: How should parents treat these winter skin problems?

JH: Start with gentle skincare practices to prevent problems. Use a gentle moisturizing soap and bathe with warm, not hot, water. Moisturize immediately after bathing. It is important not to over-bathe, especially with infants. Ceramide-containing moisturizers are good year round. In the winter, cream formulations of moisturizers are more beneficial for dry skin. Applications twice a day may be needed.

Ointment forms of moisturizers, while slightly greasy, are good at keeping moisture in the skin.

Patches of itchy dry skin may be treated with an over-the-counter cortisone cream.

If persistent, I recommend following up with a doctor as further treatment may be necessary.

SJ: Are there ingredients to avoid using on young skin?

JH: I recommend avoiding products with significant amounts of fragrance, which could potentially cause further irritation.

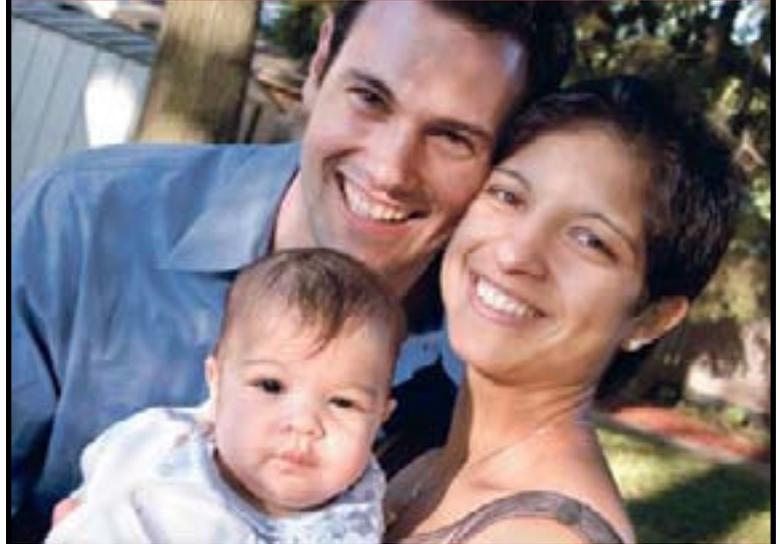
SJ: What tips do you have for parents to prevent winter skin problems?

JH: Again, gentle, daily skincare is key. Consider a humidifier if the air is dry in the home. Protecting skin from the elements when outside and immediately caring for any chapped areas is key.

Dr. Jennifer R. Hensley received her dermatology training at Georgetown University-Washington Hospital Center Department of Dermatology in Washington, DC. Dr. Hensley completed a Clinical Research Fellowship at Northwestern University Department of Dermatology in Chicago, as well as a Melanoma Fellowship at Washington Hospital Center Department of Dermatology in Washington, DC. Dr. Hensley completed her medical studies and Internal Medicine Internship at the University of Louisville. She is on staff and sees patients (both adults and children) at Shady Grove Dermatology, Laser & Vein Institute with locations in Maryland and Northern Virginia. For more, visit www.northernvirginiadermatology.com.

Shnieka Johnson is an education consultant and freelance writer. She is based in Manhattan where she resides with her husband and son. Contact her via her website, www.shniekajohnson.com.

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Keeping the happy in the holidays

Celebrating the season should be satisfying, not stressful

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

As parents we long to create magical holiday memories for our children. However, while their heads are filled with “visions of sugarplums,” we often feel overwhelmed by all we think we have to do and spend to make them happy. So how do we make this holiday season memorable and meaningful while minimizing the hassles and stress?

When planning your holiday celebrations, ask yourselves, “What do we want the holidays to mean to our children? What kind of memories do we want them to have? What feelings do we want them to associate with the holidays? Are we effectively communicating the meaning this holiday holds for us through our celebration?” Spend time revisiting your own childhoods and your favorite holiday memories. What kinds of things did your families do to make these memories possible?

My suspicion is that when you recall your favorite memories they have little or nothing to do with how many gifts there were or how much your parents spent on them. You may or may not even remember specific gifts. Most people’s memories have more to do with the atmosphere of the holidays that existed in their homes — the aromas, the music, the voices, the feelings. Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli remind us in their book, “Unplug the Christmas Machine,” that no matter what cultural or religious holiday you are celebrating, “What

children want and need is more time with their parents, an evenly paced holiday season, traditions they can count on, and realistic expectations about gifts ... Most people spend more time and emotional energy on gift-giving than anything else, and yet gift-giving is consistently rated as the least-valued aspect of the celebration.”

Here are a few suggestions for creating the meaningful holiday memories you desire:

View the holidays through the eyes of your child. Children experience the holidays differently at different ages. For example, the infant who rests calmly in Santa’s arms may become the toddler who shrieks in terror at this bearded stranger. The very young child for whom you carefully shopped may be more interested in the package’s wrapping than its contents. Pay attention to and respect your child’s reactions and avoid taking her preferences personally. By demonstrating respect toward your child, she will learn to respect you and others. Your responsiveness to her needs and feelings will leave a more lasting impression than any picture with Santa.

Make time together as a family a priority. Let decorating the house, making and wrapping gifts, and preparing meals be family activities. Delegate tasks according to age and ability. Everyone can do something. Having a special job to do makes everyone feel that they are making an important contribution to the family’s celebration.

Put together a collection of holi-

day books and read to each other! Listen to holiday music! Get out the art supplies and create! Take a walk in the neighborhood and enjoy the sights and sounds of the season. Limit television viewing to holiday specials that the family can watch together. Take advantage of this opportunity to discuss the portrayal of the holiday and whether or not it is in agreement with your values. Spend time exploring with your children the meaning of the holiday you are celebrating and its religious or cultural significance.

Simplify your social calendar. Attend only those functions that you believe to be absolutely necessary. Space events and maintain a flexible, realistic schedule as much as possible. When children will be accompanying you to events that may last past their bedtime, take along pajamas to change them into if there is a chance they will fall asleep. If you are attending an event that involves a meal with lots of unique or unusual dishes, take along food that you know your child will eat or feed her ahead of time. Take along a few quiet toys, books, or art supplies in case the entertainment is geared mostly toward adults. Your children will remember your efforts to make these experiences enjoyable for them, too.

Schedule some quiet time for your family. Listen to soothing music and use soft voices. Some families choose to institute a “whisper hour” during which everyone is asked to speak only in whispers. Individual family members are encouraged to spend this time in whatever



way they find most relaxing — reading, drawing, doing puzzles, resting, or writing letters.

Limit your children's wish list. Help your children learn to make choices by limiting their list to three items. They are more likely to identify what they really want this way. Encourage them to make choices that are within the family budget. Let making the list be part of the fun by having them write it themselves, draw pictures of the desired items, or cut them from catalogues and paste them on a piece of paper (you will want to save these).

Try to give your children at least one thing from their list. Remember that more is not always better. Knowing that someone cared enough to get what she really wanted tends to leave the recipient feeling very special.

Avoid taking your children

shopping. Arrange to let them stay with trusted relatives or friends. Set up a babysitting co-op for the holidays with these individuals or couples so that everyone gets a chance to get some uninterrupted shopping done. When taking your children along is unavoidable, plan several, short trips during the time of day when they are at their best — after meals or naps. Involve them in the shopping when possible. Let them hold or read the list and help look for the items.

Involve your children in the joy of giving. Ask them who they want to include on the family's gift list and for gift suggestions. Encourage them to make as many gifts as possible. This is best accomplished by starting early. Close friends and relatives will treasure simply framed original works of art, homemade calendars using your child's art-

work or photos, or treats your children helped bake and decorate. Never underestimate the value of a handmade gift, for these come from the heart.

Include children in a holiday tradition of giving to those less fortunate. Help them collect for food, clothing, coat, book, or toy drives in your area. Let them put some money in the Salvation Army bucket and explain what that money is used for. Prepare a meal for a lonely individual or needy family in your neighborhood. Teach your children the lesson that Scrooge's friend, Jacob Marley, discovered too late — that humankind is our business.

Whatever the holiday you are celebrating, keep the focus where it belongs. The common thread woven through all of these holidays and traditions seems to me to be reaf-

firming our commitments, strengthening our families, and dedicating ourselves to making this world we have been given a better place.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Kentucky. She has degrees in Child Development, Family Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapy. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator. She has written extensively on the topic of parenting. After six years as Arts Facilitator for the School for the Creative and Performing Arts, she chose to return to her favorite place of employment — home. Her son, Douglas, 24, is now based in New York City when he is not on the road performing. He is an actor, singer, musician, dancer, writer, and visual artist. Joseph, 14, is a freshman theatre major at the School for the Creative and Performing Arts who also sings, dances, plays piano, and creates visual art.



JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Searching for Santa

Memories of tracking the sled in real time

When my oldest daughter Amanda was 3, we were at my brother-in-law's house one freezing-cold Christmas Eve. My husband has seven siblings and many of them had kids at the time, so the house was filled with Christmas spirit. As they waited for their presents, they ate, played, danced, and asked the big question over and over, "When will Santa come?"

At regular intervals, one of the adults would take all the kids out onto the stoop, and we would stare into the sky looking for Rudolph's shiny red nose.

"Be quiet," my daughter said. "I think I hear his bells."

"I think I see something. Look over there," another would say pointing to the dark sky.

Amanda swears she heard those bells and listened each year after that for them to ring again or see the lights move along the heavens.

At home, we would track Santa on North American Aerospace De-

fense Command's (Norad) website (there is a science to tracking the big guy!), but once we got to the Christmas Eve celebration, we lost track of the Command's path since my brother-in-law's computer was not downstairs (and this was before everyone had a smartphone). By the time we got back home, the kids would be exhausted, and if they hadn't already fallen asleep in the car, they would conk out the minute their heads hit the pillow.

Tracking Santa in real-time is probably the most fun there is for a child on Christmas Eve. I remember searching for Santa about 20 years ago with my nephew, Michael, who is now grown. Santa's in Africa, now he's in Europe: Ireland, England, Scotland. With each new country or continent, a glimmer of light would shine in his eyes. The ultimate was when Santa got to Canada because that meant we were next.

Over the years, the thrill of it all, and the delight of seeing the kids' faces brighten up was

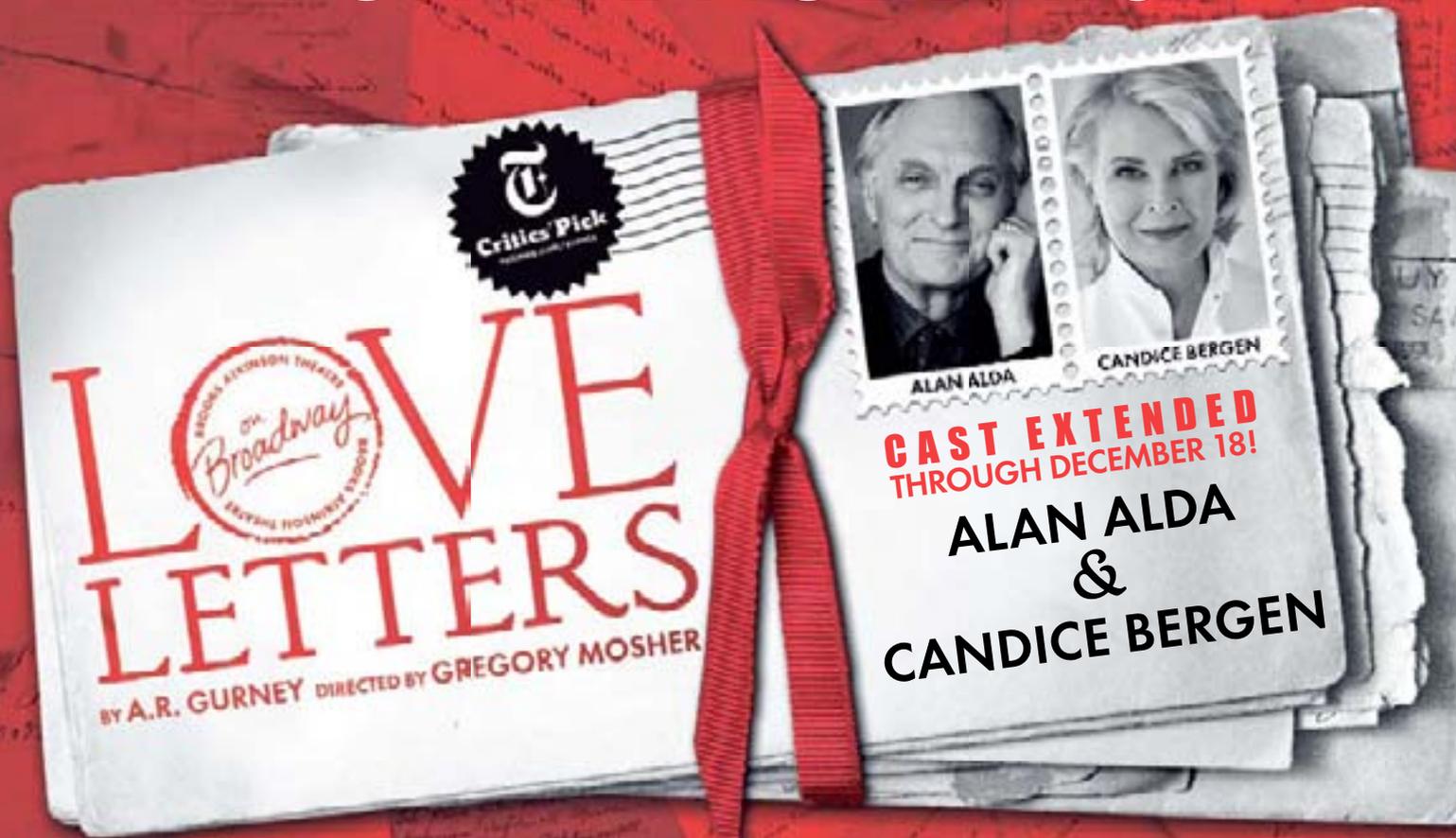
so much fun that I almost forgot that Santa wasn't really on his sled high above. Part of the real fun of Christmas is seeing just how happy our children get and enjoying those special moments with family and friends.

This year, the Christmas Eve celebration will be closer to home. In fact, it has been at my home the past few years. The party starts when Santa is overseas and ends when he gets to Canada. Somewhere in between, there will be trips to the stoop, some lights in the sky, and hopefully, lots of life-long memories.

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



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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Mediation & people that just won't budge

Anyone familiar with this column knows that I am a big proponent of mediation. But not every case can be mediated.

When “Darlene” called me, she said that she and her partner “Jeremy” were ending their relationship. Darlene wanted to talk out all of the issues with Jeremy, and to work together with him to reach the best agreements possible, to allow each to move on, and to insure that their children would be well cared for.

Darlene called me, and we briefly discussed how mediation works. She liked hearing that she and her husband would have a chance to communicate; they hadn't really talked in months. Darlene seemed happy that she and Jeremy would be the ones making the decisions that would so greatly affect their family (as opposed to a judge deciding matters for them). She understood that by talking over the issues between them, and by staying out of court, tensions could be reduced.

Our short conversation ended with Darlene saying that she would

speak to her husband and get back to me.

Within a few days, Darlene called again saying that Jeremy had agreed to come in for a consultation. We scheduled a time for the three of us to meet together.

At the consultation, I soon learned from Jeremy that he (perhaps with the help of a lawyer) had already written up what he considered an agreement for him and Darlene. He wanted this so-called “agreement,” which the wife had not helped to create, to be the final agreement. For Jeremy, the purpose of mediation was to begin and end with what he had prepared, perhaps allowing for minor changes.

I explained that we could discuss his proposals during mediation. Jeremy would be welcome to share his ideas and concerns that were reflected in his document. However, his agreement would not be the basis for all discussion (just as it wouldn't have been had Darlene prepared one and demanded that the outcome adhere to it).

Not surprisingly, Jeremy, who perhaps tellingly had arrived to our appointment 30 minutes late, wasn't happy with what I had to say. Darlene was clearly saddened at this breakdown before we had even had a first session. But she understood, and seemed to appreciate that proceeding as Jeremy had been demanding wouldn't have been mediation at all.

We didn't meet again.

A discussion along the lines that Jeremy was insisting on would probably have been very limiting. Most or all questions would have dealt with his — and only his — plan. The conversation would have been stunted, the freedom to express and consider different views and ideas (often critical in reaching agreements) strongly discouraged.

In mediation — even during a consultation — parties who have up until then been rigid and uncompromising often demonstrate a shift in their thinking and a willingness to be open-minded; not to give in, but rather to be open to the possibility that there may be other ways of having their needs met. Such people can let go of their ultimatums, and engage in a constructive dialogue.

For other people, it is “my way or the highway.” They won't consider any plan other than the one they walked in with. Parties like this are poor candidates for mediation; they won't get anywhere in the process, because they are unwilling or unable to engage in it. Often, they wind up in court, expecting a judge to decide in their favor.

Quite frequently, they are disappointed with the outcome.

New York City and Long Island-based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without going to court. Contact him at lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com, (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/>. Follow him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lchabin.

Disclaimer: All material in this column is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.



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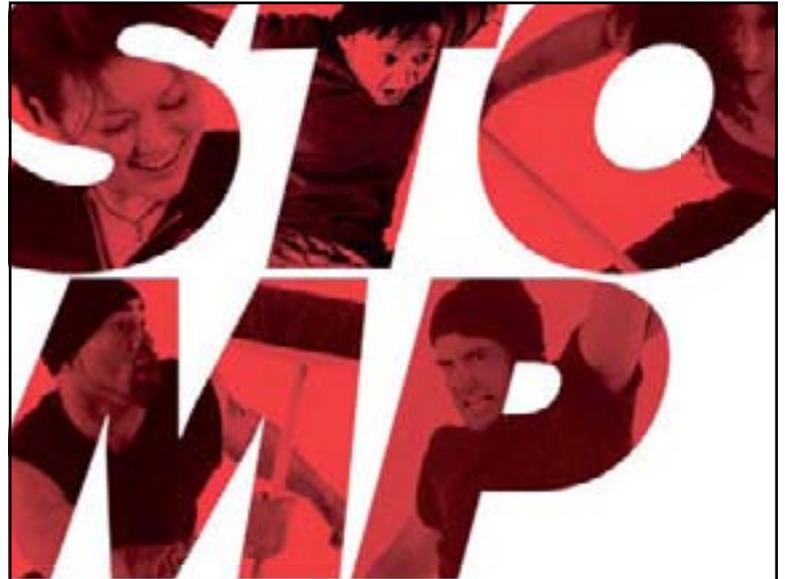


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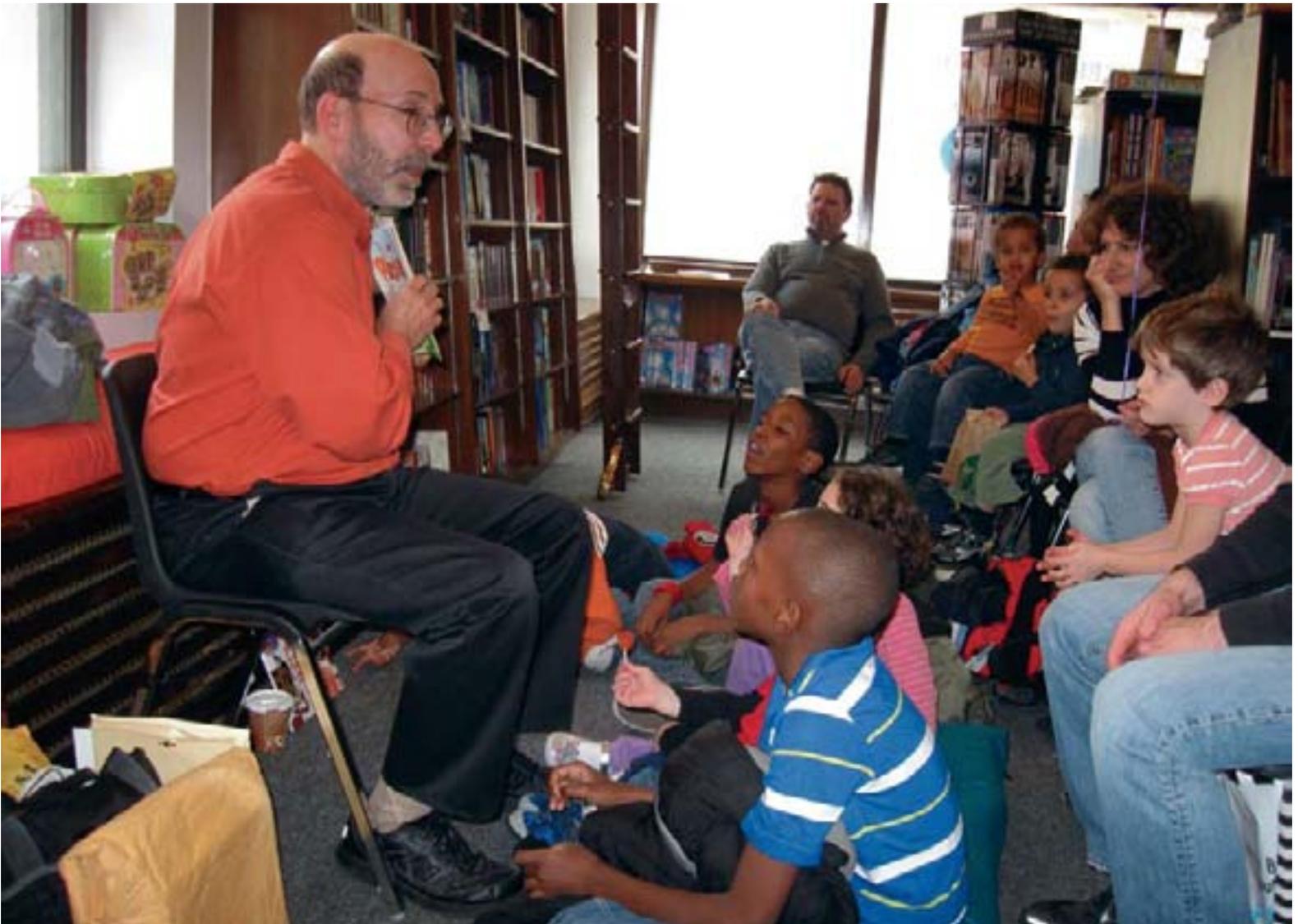
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Calendar

DECEMBER



Celebrating the body's noises

He's back! The author that dared to ponder butts, poop, and meltdowns is at Barnes & Noble for a special reading and signing on Dec. 14 with his new picture book.

Artie Bennett again braves bodily functions in "Belches, Burps, and Farts — Oh My."

His new picture book takes kids on a fascinating journey through the gas we pass. With laugh-out-loud humor, awesome illustrations, and scientific facts, children learn

all about the digestive system — from gaseous animals to foods that affect our farts and burps, all aspects of the gas we pass are explored without a "yech" in sight.

The reading is great for all burpy kids that want to know!

Artie Bennett, Dec. 14 from 11 am to 1 pm. Free

Barnes & Noble [2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue in New Springville, (718) 982-6983, [jwww.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)].

Submit a listing

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

Send your listing request to 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!

MON, DEC. 1

ON STATEN ISLAND

The Road to Success: Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, this program features master teachers Paul and Suzy Adams and teaches children the challenges of success.

Baby and me: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11 – 11:30 am; Free.

Parents and caregivers share a book, songs and rhymes with children birth to 18 months old.

Board Game Bonanza: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30-4:30 pm; Free.

Roll the dice, move pieces and have fun with board games. For all ages.

Homework help: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 5 pm – 6 pm; Free.

Staff and volunteers assist children in first to sixth grades on assignments.

TUES, DEC. 2

ON STATEN ISLAND

Family workshop: AdvantageCare Physicians Health Connections, 2134 Richmond Terrace; (877) 237-3936; www.events.acpny.com; 10 am-11 am; Free.

Parents discuss what to expect the first year of life.

You are what you eat!: Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, this program features Austin the Unstoppable. Children learn all about junk food and unhealthy eating.



Bah humbug!

“A Christmas Carol” is headed to the stage at the Center for the Performing Arts at the College of Staten Island on Dec. 6 and it’s just in time for the season of ho, ho, ho.

Presented by Sundog Theatre, Scrooge, the three Ghosts of Christmas, Tiny Tim, and a host of other characters enchant the audience with this production of the classic Dickens tale of redemption and forgiveness.

WED, DEC. 3

ON STATEN ISLAND

Greenbelt Peepers: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 10 am; \$8 (\$6 members).

Explore the forest and learn all about the creatures, the sounds and the sights. For children 2 years and older with caregiver.

Lego workshop: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3:15 pm; Free.

For children 5 to 12 years old.

Read aloud: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 4-4:30 pm; Free.

Children 3 years old and up finger play, learn action rhymes and color.

tion and forgiveness. The play explores the themes of humanity and materialism and is suitable for children of all ages. Don't be a Scrooge — get your tickets now.

“A Christmas Carol,” Dec. 6 at 3 pm. Tickets are \$12 and \$14.

Center for the Performing Arts at College of Staten Island [2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Place in Bulls Head, (818) 982-ARTS (2787), www.cfashows.com].

THURS, DEC. 4

ON STATEN ISLAND

Greenbelt Tree Tots: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 10 am; \$8 (\$6 members).

Explore the forest and learn all about the creatures, the sounds and the sights. For children 3 and 4 years old with caregiver. Weather permitting.

Toddler time: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11-11:45 am; Free.

Little ones 18 months to 3 years old with a caregiver listen to interactive stories, fingerplay and spend time with other tykes. Pre-registration required.

Teen Lounge: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30-4:30 pm; Free.

Join with friends, bring snacks and

use the library's lap tops for homework. For children 13 to 18 years old.

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

The puppet “pond town” comes to the library with Frankie the Frog and other characters performing short, interactive shows feature singing, guessing games, and storytelling about the animals you might find in a pond or barnyard. Children will learn basic animal concepts such as shapes, sounds, locomotion, and metamorphosis. Presented by the Central Park Zoo Wildlife Theatre. For children ages 3 to 5 years old.

Kiddie tech time: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 4 pm-5 pm; Free.

Children can join in for a STEM focused play with computer games, building supplies, legos and other crafts and games. For children 5 to 11 years old.

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm to 5 pm; Free.

Enjoy the museum and have fun exploring.

FRI, DEC. 5

ON STATEN ISLAND

Magic of science: Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, this program performs magic, circus skills and audience participation.

Toddler Time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Little ones birth to 5 years old with a parent or caregiver.

Story-time: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11-11:45 am; Free.

Preschoolers from 3 to 5 years old and a parent or caregiver listen to story, sing songs and meet other preschoolers.

Play time: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 11 am-noon; Free.

Children birth to 36 months old with a caregiver listen to stories, do interactive activities, and join with other ba-

Continued on page 30

Calendar

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

Continued from page 29

bies and toddlers.

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

Discover the fascinating world of the arctic birds with an interactive performance using drama, puppet games, and songs. For children 4 to 10 years old.

Fun Fridays: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30-4:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 years and older listen to stories, play games, fun crafts, and sing songs.

Tree lighting: Annadale Park, Annadale Rd and Jefferson Boulevard; (718) 490-5023; 6:30 pm; Free.

Join in for the annual event featuring live musical performances, a kiddie train ride, a visit from Santa, and a visit from Olaf and Elsa from "Frozen." Hosted by Councilman Ignizio, the South Shore LDC, Hudson Wealth Management, Decks R Us and Hudson Wealth Management. Rain date, Dec. 12.

SAT, DEC. 6

ON STATEN ISLAND

Happy Trails: Henry Kaufmann Camp Grounds, 1131 Manor Road; (718) 667-2165 - X 311; Jeanne.Paliswiat@parks.nyc.gov; Call for time; Registration fee.

This ultra-running event is suitable for children over 14 years old. Presented by the King of the Mountain's this a 10K, 25K and 50K course.

St. Nick's fair: Christ Church New Brighton, 76 Franklin Ave. at Fillmore Street; (718) 727-6100; 9 am-4 pm.

Breakfast and brunch with Santa, vendors, handmade items, attic treasures and homemade cakes and goodies. Raffles, 50-50 and fresh pine wreaths available for purchase.

Kids craft time: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Young crafters make a "Percy Jackson"-themed project. For children 3 to 12 years old. First come, first served. Care-givers welcome.

Scientific Saturdays: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Children learn from hands-on experiments.

Craft fair: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 1 pm; \$12 (\$10 members).

Artist Kathy Trimarco leads a family craft workshop in which participants create pieces inspired from natural objects. Suitable for children 8 years and older; Registration and pre-payment required.

Saturday showtime: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 2 pm - 4 pm; Free.

Children 12 years old and younger view a screening of "Shrek."

"Tinkerbell and the Great Fairy Rescue": New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 2-4 pm; Free.

Classic Disney movie.

"A Christmas Carol": Center for the Performing Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Place; (818) 982-ARTS (2787); www.cfashows.com; 3 pm; \$14 (\$12).

Sundog Theatre presents the classic Dicken's story with Scrooge, Tiny Tim and all three Christmas ghosts.

FURTHER AFIELD

Jingle Bell Jog: Prospect Park Nethermead, Enter the park at Flatbush Ave. and Lincoln Road, Brooklyn; www.nyrr.org; 7:30 am; \$55 (entry free).

Festive event is family friendly and features post race hot chocolates, raffles and prizes. The four-mile race begins at Center Drive wends through the park and ends at the starting point. Proceeds benefit New York Road Runner's Youth Programs. Entrance fee includes jingle bells for your sneakers, a pair of knee-high tech socks and hot chocolate.

SUN, DEC. 7

ON STATEN ISLAND

Space travel: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 2 pm; Free.

Children 7 years and older explore the future of mankind and learn about Mars and other worlds. Registration required.

FURTHER AFIELD

Middle of Nowhere: BAM Cafe, 30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street, Brooklyn; www.bam.org/programs/bamcafe-live; 10:30 am; \$9.

Eliska introduces the audience to the Arctic island home sound, a seamless blend of theater, storytelling and music. Great for children 2 to 6 years old.

"Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins": Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1 pm and 2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

MetLife presents this musical story of

the classic tale.

MON, DEC. 8

ON STATEN ISLAND

Holiday tales: Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$9.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, this program features the classics from O'Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," Hoffmann's "The Nutcracker," "A Hanukkah Miracle," and the "Kwanzaa Kite set in Nigeria."

Baby and me: 11-11:30 am. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

Board Game Bonanza: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

Mystery hunt: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Follow the clues for adventure. Robin Bady leads children 4 years and older on a fun hunt with stories and songs.

Homework help: 5 pm - 6 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

TUES, DEC. 9

ON STATEN ISLAND

Family workshop: AdvantageCare Physicians Health Connections, 2134 Richmond Terrace; (877) 237-3936; www.events.acpny.com; 10 am-11 am; Free.

Parents learn all about childhood vaccinations.

Holiday tales: 10 am and 11:30 am. Center for the Arts - CSI. See Monday, Dec. 8.

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

Tweens and teens 12 to 18 years old explore graffiti lettering and street styles.

Sewing workshop: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30-5:30 pm; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old explore their designer skills. Registration is required.

Kiddie Game Time: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Children 6 to 11 years old develop strategic thinking and gaming skills while having fun.

Play it forward NY: Rossville AME Zion Church, 584 Bloomingdale Rd. at Woodrow Rd.; (646) 765-6531;

6:30-8 pm; Free.

The anti-bully group provides a support meeting for children and teens who have been bullied.

WED, DEC. 10

ON STATEN ISLAND

Greenbelt Peepers: 10 am. Greenbelt Nature Center. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

Holiday tales: 10 am and 11:30 am. Center for the Arts - CSI. See Monday, Dec. 8.

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

Children 3 to 12 years old enjoy a celebration of all things "Frozen" with games, crafts and dress up.

Read aloud: 4-4:30 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

THURS, DEC. 11

ON STATEN ISLAND

"The Town that Fought Hate": Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, this program features the play based on the Janice Cohn's award-winning children's book.

Greenbelt Tree Tots: 10 am. Greenbelt Nature Center. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

Toddler time: 11-11:45 am. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

Teen Lounge: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: 3 pm to 5 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FRI, DEC. 12

ON STATEN ISLAND

"A Christmas Carol": Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, the perennial story of redemption based on the classic story.

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Dec. 5.

Story-time: 11-11:45 am. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Dec. 5.

Fun Fridays: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Dec. 5.

Craft time: Dongan Hills Library,

Calendar

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

1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nysl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children make assorted projects. Suitable for ages 4 and older.

"The Christmas Show": St. George Theatre, 35 Hyatt St. between St. Mark's Place and Central Avenue; (718) 442-2900; www.stgeorgetheatre.com; 7 pm; \$10-\$40.

The magical family tradition presents a two-hour high-energy, rhinestone-studded series of song and dance celebrating the season. After the show meet and greet with the performers. Bring your camera!

SAT, DEC. 13

ON STATEN ISLAND

Rockit: Snug Harbor Cultural Center, 1000 Richmond Ter. between Snug Harbor Road and Tysen Street; (718) 448-2500; www.snug-harbor.org; call for time; Free.

An opportunity for young musicians to rock on out with their peers and perform as a live band.

Seasonal walk: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.ny-cgovparks.com; 11 am; Free.

Search for animal tracks, calling birds, evergreen trees and shrubs, and more as the trails reveal how merry and bright they can be this holiday season. This trail walk is at least an hour in length and suitable for children 6 years and older. Carolers and ugly sweaters welcome! Registration required.

Scientific Saturdays: 11 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

"Power Rangers Megaforce the Mysterious Robo Knight": New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nysl.org; 2-4 pm; Free.

Children love this action-packed movie in the franchise.

"The Christmas Show": 3 pm and 7 pm. St. George Theatre. See Friday, Dec. 12.

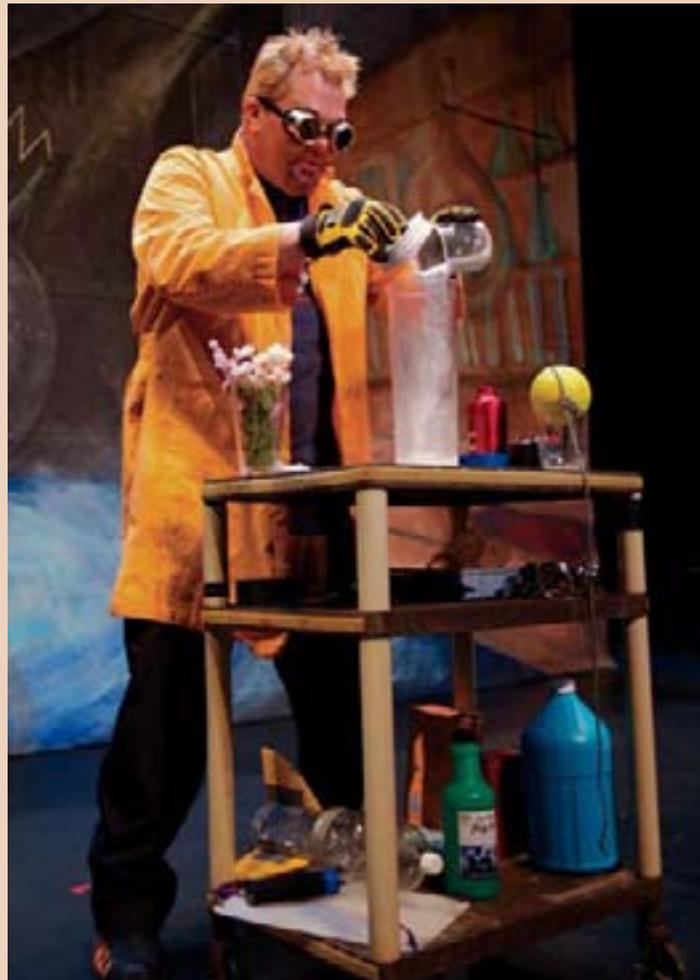
Sewing workshop: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nysl.org; 3:30-5:30 pm; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old explore their designer skills. Registration is required.

FURTHER AFIELD

Gingerbread Lane Workshop: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 1:30-3:30 pm; \$10 (\$8 members).

Marvel at creative culinary constructions of gumdrops, candy, icing and gingerbread. Participants receive a kit with pieces, icing and candy. Register on day of; space limited.



Science of the season

Dr. Kaboom takes on Christmas and the Jolly Old Elf on Dec. 20 in the Science of Santa at the NYU Skirball Center.

Everyone knows that Christmas-time is magical for kids of all ages. But did you ever care to know the actual science behind the magic that Santa brings each year?

The science is finally explained and families find out from Dr. Kaboom as he takes the audience on an interactive and thrilling scientific exploration into Santa's

secrets.

This hilarious show explains to the audience how Santa climbs down tight chimneys, makes reindeer fly and, most importantly, knows who has been bad or good.

The Science of Santa on Dec. 20 at 11 am. Tickets range from \$20 to \$28.

NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts [566 LaGuardia Pl. at W. Third Street in NoHo; (212) 992-8484; nyuskirball.org].

SUN, DEC. 14

ON STATEN ISLAND

Artie Bennett: Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; www.barnesandnoble.com; 11 am-1 pm; Free.

The author that dared butts, poop and meltdowns is at it again — this

time he covers "Belches, Burps, and Farts — Oh My!" Book reading and signing. For burpy kids who want to know!

Christmas Around New York: Snug Harbor Cultural Center, 1000 Richmond Ter. between Snug Harbor Road and Tysen Street; (718) 448-

2500; www.snug-harbor.org; 3 pm; \$25 (\$15 seniors and children under 12).

New York Choral performs holiday music including a sing-along of carols.

"The Christmas Show": 3 pm and 7 pm. St. George Theatre. See Friday, Dec. 12.

FURTHER AFIELD

House Tour: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Noon-1 pm; \$10.

Teens tour the historic bones of the house and view the many layers that were added, subtracted and changed over the last 230 years. Reservations required; only 10 persons per tour.

Movie Matinees: BAM Kids, 30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place, Brooklyn; (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org; 2 pm; \$7 children 12 and younger (\$10 adults; \$9 for BAM members).

The BAM series offers the perfect opportunity for families to introduce their children to the classics on the big screen, featuring "The Muppet Christmas Carol."

Amelia Robinson of Mil's Trills: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm; Free with museum admission.

She's back with an interactive concert of her original quirky songs on her famous ukulele. Great for children birth to 4 years old.

MON, DEC. 15

ON STATEN ISLAND

"The Nutcracker": Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, this program performs the most beloved of ballets.

Winter Wonderland Week: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nysl.org; 10 am-4 pm; Free.

Come join in for a special event celebrating the one-year anniversary of the library. For all ages.

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

Tweens and teens 11 to 14 years old play the game show with a holiday pop theme.

Board Game Bonanza: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

Continued on page 32

Calendar

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

Continued from page 31

Homework help: 5 pm – 6 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

TUES, DEC. 16

ON STATEN ISLAND

Family workshop: AdvantageCare Physicians Health Connections, 2134 Richmond Terrace; (877) 237-3936; www.events.acpny.com; 10 am–11 am; Free.

Learn what to feed your baby.

"Mistletones": Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$9.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, this program has Squeaky Clean and the gang present holiday classics. Sing along and have fun.

Winter Wonderland Week: 10 am–4 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 15.

"A Christmas Carol": Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Live theater performance based on the Charles Dicken's classic presented by the Traveling Lantern Company. For children 4 to 12 years old.

WED, DEC. 17

ON STATEN ISLAND

"Twas the Night Before Christmas": Center for the Arts at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd. at Morani Street; (718) 982-5678; enrichmentthroughthearts.com; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Presented by Enrichment through the Arts, the story inspired by the poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas."

Winter Wonderland Week: 10 am–4 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 15.

Greenbelt Peepers: 10 am. Greenbelt Nature Center. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

Lego workshop: 3:15 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

Read aloud: 4–4:30 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

THURS, DEC. 18

ON STATEN ISLAND

Winter Wonderland Week: 10 am–4 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 15.

Greenbelt Tree Tots: 10 am. Greenbelt Nature Center. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

Painting workshop: Great Kills

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

Teens 12 to 18 years old stretch their artistic talents and paint on silk that they can wear. From bandanas to bracelets to wall art. All materials provided.

Games and gaming: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 4 pm–5 pm; Free.

For tweens 6 to 12 years old. Board games, bottle bowling, word puzzles and more. Pre-registration required. Space is limited.

Kiddie tech time: 4 pm – 5 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FURTHER AFIELD

Free Thursdays: 3 pm to 5 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 4.

FRI, DEC. 19

ON STATEN ISLAND

Winter Wonderland Week: 10 am–4 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 15.

"A Christmas Carol": 10 am and 11:30 am. Center for the Arts - CSI. See Friday, Dec. 12.

Play time: 11 am– noon. Mariners Harbor Library. See Friday, Dec. 5.

"Frozen": Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 3–5 pm; Free.

Elsa and friends are waiting.

Fun Fridays: 3:30–4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Dec. 5.

SAT, DEC. 20

ON STATEN ISLAND

Winter Wonderland Week: 10 am–4 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 15.

Nature talk: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 11 am; \$8 (\$6 members).

Weather permitting, take a short walk and see how the forest has been preparing for winter. Then create a craft that will add light to the season's shorter, and enjoy a warm cup of tea or hot cocoa. For children from ages 4 – 8 years, with an adult chaperone. Registration and pre-payment required.

Kids craft time: 11 am. Mariners Harbor Library. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

"Cloud 9": New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 2–4 pm; Free.

The Disney movie about Kayla Morgan, the queen of snowboarding. Fun coloring sheet to take home.

SUN, DEC. 21

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Learn myths and legends surrounding the season's shortest day, as well as the science behind the shorter days and the snow to come. Take a short hike along the Nature Center Trail, and get warm by the fireplace with a cup of hot cocoa or tea. For children 10 and older. Registration and pre-payment required.

MON, DEC. 22

ON STATEN ISLAND

Board Game Bonanza: 3:30–4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

Homework help: 5 pm– 6 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

TUES, DEC. 23

ON STATEN ISLAND

Family workshop: AdvantageCare Physicians Health Connections, 2134 Richmond Terrace; (877) 237-3936; www.events.acpny.com; 10 am–11 am; Free.

When should you call the doctor for your child's illnesses.

Kiddie Game Time: 4–5 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Tuesday, Dec. 9.

WED, DEC. 24

ON STATEN ISLAND

Read aloud: 4–4:30 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

FRI, DEC. 26

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Dec. 5.

Craft time: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Dec. 12.

SAT, DEC. 27

ON STATEN ISLAND

Scientific Saturdays: 11 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Saturday, Dec. 6.

"Sofia the First Ready to be a Princess": New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 2–4 pm; Free.

The favorite little princess returns for more music, and adventure. Take home coloring sheet.

FURTHER AFIELD

Gingerbread Lane Workshop: 1:30–3:30 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Dec. 13.

MON, DEC. 29

ON STATEN ISLAND

Board Game Bonanza: 3:30–4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

Homework help: 5 pm–6 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Monday, Dec. 1.

"Frosty the Snowman": St. George Theatre, 35 Hyatt St. between St. Mark's Place and Central Avenue; (718) 442-2900; www.stgeorgetheatre.com; 6 pm; \$20, \$18.

Come on down and enjoy this fun holiday presentation of the classic tale of Frosty.

WED, DEC. 31

ON STATEN ISLAND

New Year's Eve party: Staten Island Children's Museum; (718) 273-2060 ext 264; Noon–3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Everyone's favorite clowns Watson & Christine count down to the New Year, with snacks, crafts, give-aways, and sparkly drinks.

Read aloud: 4–4:30 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Dec. 3.

FURTHER AFIELD

New Year's Eve Fireworks: Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West, Brooklyn; 11 pm; Free.

Start the celebration early with entertainment, hot refreshments and the firework extravaganza at midnight. Ring out the old and bring in the new, but don't forget to bring blankets and chairs; come early to get the perfect spot.

LONG-RUNNING

ON STATEN ISLAND

Up4Art: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; statenisland-kids.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1, 2 and 3 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 28; Free with museum admission.

Children create fun projects.

Story Museum: Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351-1611; www.historicrichmondtown.org; Thursdays, 11:30 am–12:30 pm; \$3.

Toddlers and pre-schoolers with a caregiver listen to stories, do crafts, lis-

Calendar

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

ten to songs, dance and sing and have play with other children.

Kidz cook: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; stateniskids.org; Fridays, 2,3 and 4 pm, Now - Fri, Dec. 12; Free with museum admission.

Children experiment with all types of food.

Learn Italian: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; Fridays, 3:30-4:30 pm, Now - Fri, Dec. 19; Free.

Children in kindergarten to first grade learn the basics, the alphabet, colors, numbers, days of the week and seasonal songs. Pre-registration required.

FURTHER AFIELD

Science Playground: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Wed, Dec. 31; \$4, plus museum admission.

Explore science through slides, see-

saws, climbing webs, a water play area, sand boxes, and more. Weather permitting.

Rocket Park Mini Golf: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Wed, Dec. 31; \$6 (adults,) \$5 (children and seniors,) plus museum admission.

Golfers of all ages can learn about key science concepts such as propulsion, gravity, escape velocity, launch window, gravitational assist, and more!

More than meets the "I": Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays - Sundays, 10 am-5 pm, Now - Mon, Jan. 19, 2015; \$9 general admission (Children under one free).

The new exhibit at the museum provides young scientists the opportunity to explore innovations in biology, health, robotics, and technology.

Gingerbread Lane Exhibit: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Daily, 10 am-4 pm, Now - Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

Marvel at creative culinary constructions of gumdrops, candy, icing and gingerbread.

Touch tank: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm, Now - Sun, Jan. 11, 2015; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages touch a starfish, a horseshoe crab, or a sea snail.

"Galapagos - Nature's Wonderland in 3D": New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 11 am and 2 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 and 3 pm, Now - Sun, Dec. 21; \$6 adults; \$5 children.

In this 3D movie, travel to the Galapagos archipelago to meet giant half-ton tortoises and marine iguanas that spit sea-salt from their noses, hunt fishes with the colorful blue-footed boobies, and swim with tiny penguins.

Holiday Train Show: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays - Saturdays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Mon, Jan. 19, 2015; \$20 (\$8 children, Free for children under 2).

Model trains are enlivened amid the glow of twinkling lights in Victorian style glasshouses featuring replicas of New York landmarks crafted of natural materials by designer Paul Busse's team. Closed Christmas Day.

Bug out!: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 pm, Now - Thurs, Dec. 18; Free with museum admission.

Feeling brave? Meet grasshoppers, worms, stick bugs and Madagascar hissing cockroaches.

Needlework and games: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Daily, 1-3 pm, Fri, Dec. 26 - Thurs, Jan. 1, 2015; \$3.

Join in with staff and make a small sampler and play board games.

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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

The health benefits of fermented foods

As the temperatures plunge and sick days loom, did you know fermented foods can boost your family's immune system?

Fermented foods contain the beneficial bacteria *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. This friendly organism consumes the natural starches and sugars in foods. At the same time, it creates several byproducts, including lactic acid, the agent responsible for preserving those foods.

As the bacteria do their work, they enhance the nutritional value of the food by increasing its digestibility, enzyme level, and vitamin content. Fermentation can decrease the gas-producing compounds in legumes, increase the availability of certain nutrients like the vitamin B group, preserve levels of nutrients like vitamin C, and decrease the level of compounds that may interfere with nutrient availability.

If you or your child has taken antibiotics, try fermented foods before trying probiotic supplementation. Fermented foods can reintroduce beneficial bacteria to rebalance the intestinal flora. They may also help

treat diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome.

You may already be enjoying fermented foods. Natural pickles, sauerkraut, miso, tofu, tempeh, kimchi, kombucha tea, and fermented cheeses all fall under the fermented banner.

The real deal

What are the basics of fermentation? Adding salt to fresh produce kills the harmful bacteria present while allowing the good *Lactobacillus* bacteria to thrive. This preserves the food while also developing a distinctive tangy flavor.

But many commercially available pickled products are high in salt and lack beneficial bacterial cultures. Most jarred pickles on supermarket shelves are simply cucumbers in a vinegar solution and are not fermented.

When buying fermented foods, look for "live cultured" pickles or sauerkraut. To be sure, call the manufacturer to ask if the product has live cultures. Shopping at a health food, ethnic,

or "fresh" store may be your best bet to find old-fashioned barrels of pickles or sauerkraut near the deli counter. Or look in the refrigerated section of your usual supermarket.

Making your own at home can be a fun kitchen experiment with the kids this winter. Any vegetable can be fermented, including carrots, radishes, green beans, eggplant, and cabbage. A terrific resource is the National Center for Home Food Preservation, as well as several books written by Sandor Katz.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who is a new Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. While growing up, she loved sauerkraut and is inspired to make her own after researching this column. Find her at Christine Palumbo Nutrition on Facebook, @PalumboRD on Twitter, and Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.



Homemade sauerkraut

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 small cabbage head (one-and-a-half to two pounds)
- 1 tbsp. salt
- 1/2 cup filtered water

DIRECTIONS: Sterilize a one-quart sized wide-mouth Mason jar and all tools (knife, canning funnel, metal mixing bowl) by dipping into boiling water for one minute. Air dry.

Wash cabbage head and remove outer leaves, saving one of them. Quarter cabbage, cut out core, and cut into 1/2-inch (or thinner) slices.

Place cut cabbage into metal bowl and sprinkle with salt. Crunch up cabbage with your hands and allow it to sit for 5 minutes so the texture softens.

Using the funnel, stuff cabbage and any liquid that appears into the Mason jar, tapping it periodically to make it fit. Pour filtered water into metal bowl to get out any extra salt, then pour over cabbage. Top cabbage with reserved cabbage leaf. Keep the funnel in your jar to help press down the cabbage.

Take a quart sized freezer bag and fill it with water part way. Place this bag in the funnel. This will act as a weight to keep the cabbage leaves pressed down under the liquid.

Store cabbage in a cool, dark place inside a bowl to catch liquid in case it bubbles over.

Daily for the next couple weeks: Press down leaves to ensure cabbage

leaves are under water. If not, take 1/2 cup water and 1 tsp. salt and heat until salt dissolves. Cool liquid then add the water to the cabbage as needed.

Skim off any foam.

Every week taste your cabbage. After two to four weeks when it has the desired sourness, discard the top cabbage leaf. Screw on the jar lid and store sauerkraut in the refrigerator.

Used with permission by Wendy Jo Peterson, MS, RD, CSSD, culinary nutritionist

NUTRITION FACTS: 120 calories, 8 g carbohydrate, 0 g protein and fat, 4 g fiber, 880 mg sodium, 24% DV vitamin C.

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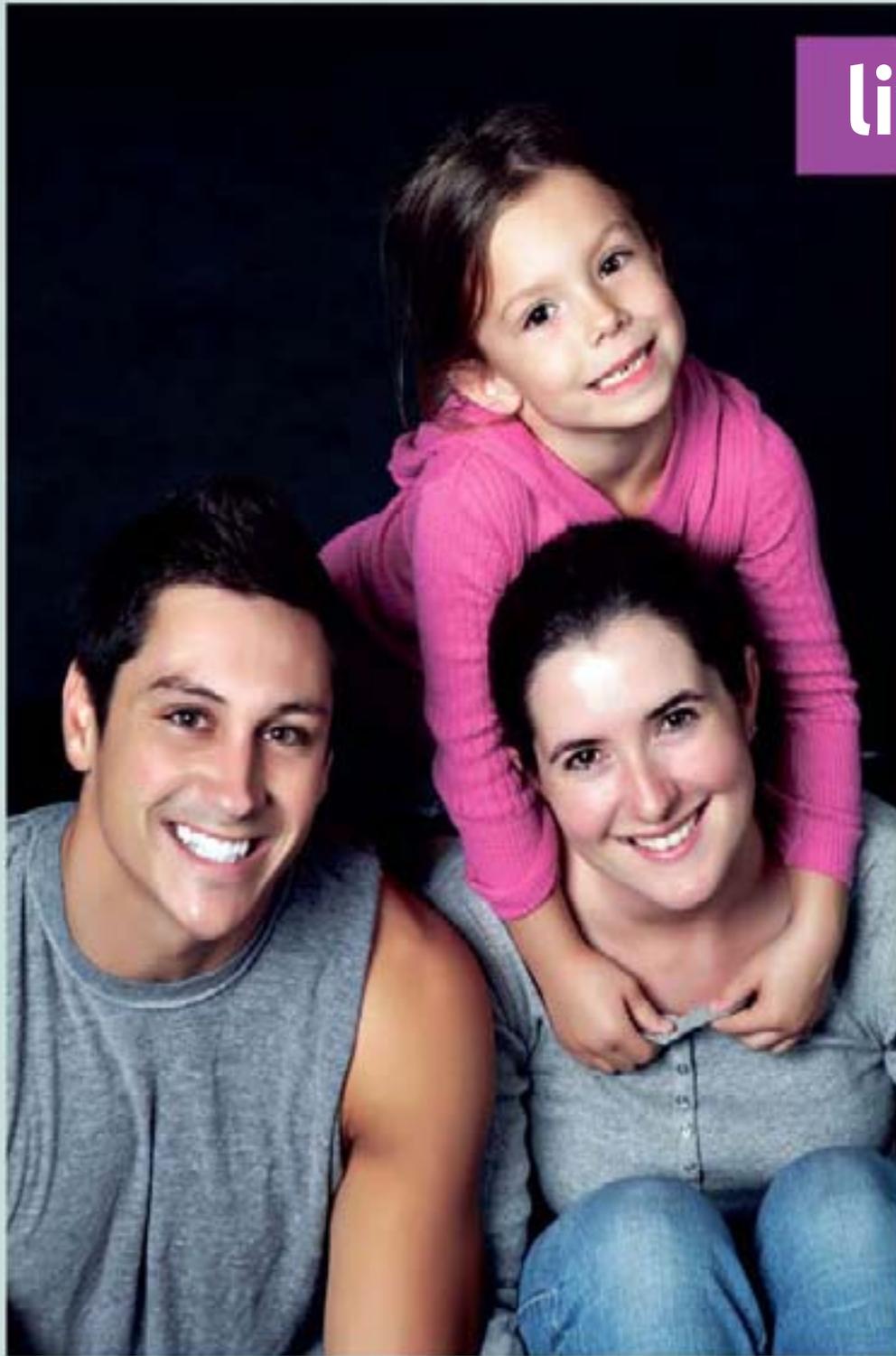
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