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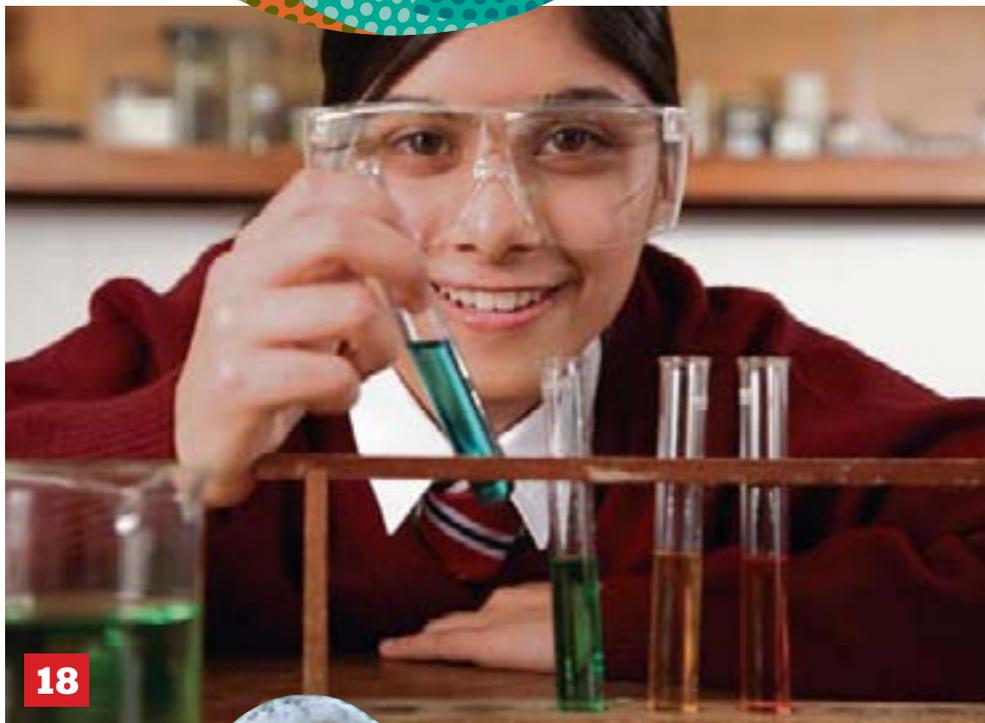
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Family January 2015



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Letter from the publisher

Our multicultural city

If one listened to the news all the time one could get a very dismal point of view about the world today and become largely despondent. There's little doubt as one story after another points out the horrors and the inadequacies



of the global reality that the human experience has room for growth and that outrageous suffering is endured by millions.

Here in New York, however, we are better off in so many ways, starting from the basic fact that we are a pluralistic society that becomes only more so with each passing day. Not that it's perfect here, and we have loads of issues

to deal with and to improve, but it's my contention that if you take warring peoples from far away and bring them here to Coney Island Avenue or the Grand Concourse or Victory Boulevard or Steinway Street or the Lower East Side, they

will go into business together and find their brotherhood and commonality.

This is the great beauty of our complex multicultural city and most of the time there is great beauty and one finds displays of human kindness here and sensitivity that surprise the false impression that we are a rude bunch with no manners and a lack of caring.

Raising children in New York City is a breeze actually compared to the isolation of some of the suburbs and/or a rural world where there is less stimulation and far less contact with others.

Our children are sharper, more astute and more worldly. They are more at ease with differences and thrive because of them. They become creative and sophisticated in ways that are copied by every major industry. The fashion world looks to our street kids to find the next wave and the music is created often on those streets, just a few of the trend setting examples of young influence coming out of our neighborhoods.

Life isn't perfect, but human contact is key to the transition from barbarism to conflict resolution.

As New York parents we must provide our children with as much contact as possible because the opportunity here is profound. Meet your neighbors, get involved in the parent association and make sure your children's day to day world is inclusive. Only by knowing each other can the future society rid itself of ancient grudges, vendettas and prejudice.

Happy New Year! Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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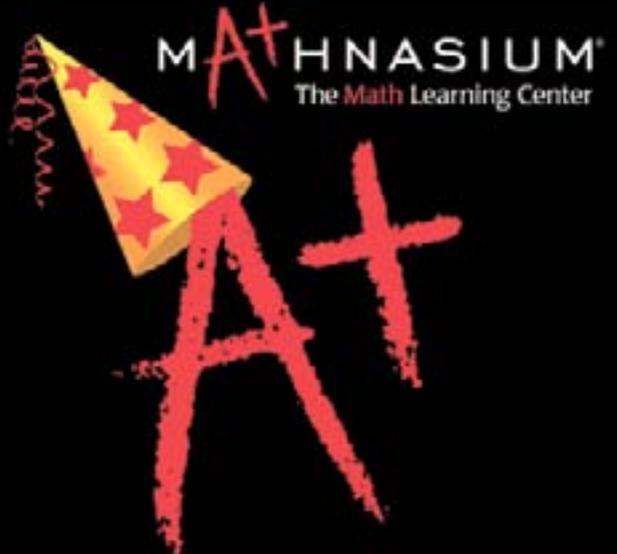
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PEACE ON EARTH

Tips for choosing, promoting and teaching peace in your life

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

Pace, as with most aspects of the human condition, is a choice. It may not be obvious or even conscious, but it is always an option. For every instance or occasion when cruelty, abuse, or violence occurs, a more peaceful solution existed.

The thing about peace, though, is that it is hard. It typically requires giving something up — having the last word, making a point, believing your way is the right way, winning at any cost, or getting what you want. There are even those who have given up their lives in the pursuit of peace. Peace is not compatible with selfishness, competitiveness, prejudice, or arrogance. These obstacles to peace grow out of vulnerability, fear, ignorance, and insecurity.

Peace requires personal discipline, courage, patience, tolerance, and grace. An essential prerequisite for peace is empathy — as Atticus Finch explains to Scout in “To Kill a Mockingbird,” “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” When we can

look into the eyes of others and see all the ways they are like us rather than the ways they are different, we are primed for peace. When we accept the equality of all humankind, we can promote peace.

Unfortunately, we are living in a time when being kind, polite, considerate, decent, respectful, and peace-seeking is not “in.” These qualities are not considered sophisticated, edgy, or trendy. Those observed exhibiting these characteristics are scorned for their naivete and assumed lack of worldliness. But these individuals are not strangers to controversy and conflict. For peace is not merely the absence of conflict. Peace is both the means as well as the desired end of conflict resolution.

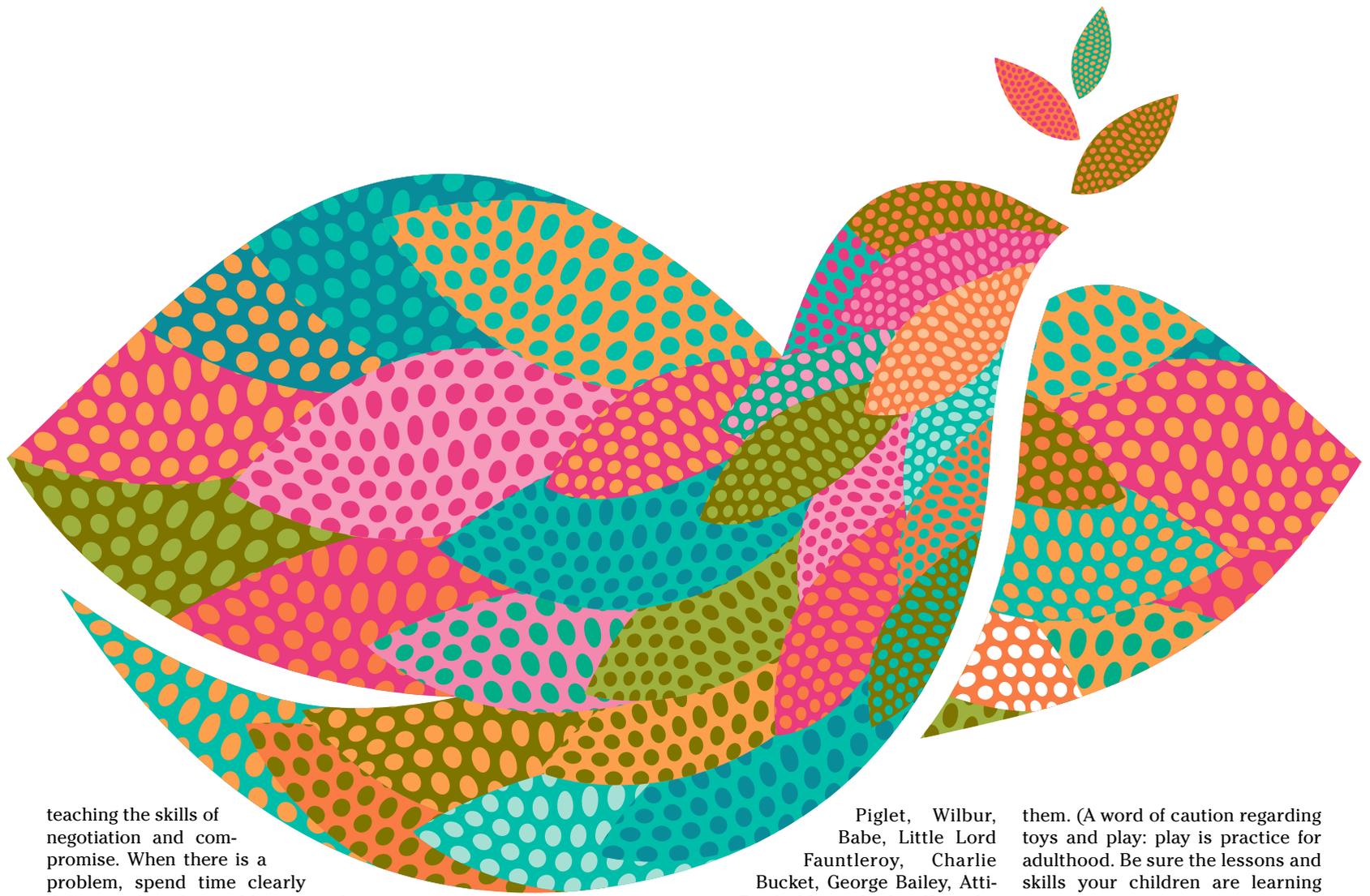
Eleanor Roosevelt said, “It isn’t enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it. One must work at it.” How do we choose peace? What can we do to promote peace in our lives? How do we teach our children peace? Here are a few suggestions for how we can be models of peace in our families, for home is where peace begins:

Study peace. Familiarize yourself with the meaning of peace. Explore the lives of those you would

describe as peaceful individuals. Identify those qualities and practices that exemplify peace. Decide what peace means to you. Evaluate your position on it. Choose words and actions that reflect your beliefs. Share your position with the other significant adults in your child’s life. Develop a plan for peace.

Practice peaceful communication. Remember: communication includes listening as well as speaking, so listen carefully to what others say. Listening does not mean you agree, approve, or give permission. It just means you are listening. Try to identify the feelings behind others’ words. Try getting “into their skin.” Increase your peaceful vocabulary. Think before you speak. Ask yourself how you would feel if someone said to you what you are about to say. Speak without raising your voice. Learn to be honest in a way that expresses caring and concern. It is possible to be honest without being cruel. Make saying something kind a habit. Keep a smile close at hand.

Seek peaceful solutions to conflict. Share the plan for peace with your family. Discuss what the expectations are for resolving conflict peacefully. Spend time learning and



teaching the skills of negotiation and compromise. When there is a problem, spend time clearly defining what the problem is and who is involved. Include all family members in the peace process, when appropriate. Create an atmosphere of trust among family members. Empower family members with the courage to take responsibility for their words and actions as well as the consequences. Take responsibility for whatever part you have played in starting or continuing an argument. Apologize if you have said or done things that have caused another pain. Explore alternatives to unacceptable behavior. Expect everyone to cooperate in instituting the agreed upon peaceful solution. Look for common ground. You are a family. You love each other. That's a good place to start.

Employ peace-compatible discipline. Adopt a preventive approach to discipline. Be sure expectations for behavior are age-appropriate, clear, and understood ahead of time. Be sure consequences are also age-appropriate, related to the offense, consistent, and occur in a timely manner. Whenever possible, make consequences for failure to comply clear ahead of time.

Instead of telling your children what they can't do, try telling them what they can do. Make compliance and cooperation more desirable than misbehavior by expressing appreciation when they occur. We — children, too — tend to respond more favorably to fans than to critics. In her book, "Positive Parenting," Jane Nelsen reminds us, "Our children do not have to be made to feel worse in order to do better." Remember that *you* — your time, attention, approval, and affection — are your child's greatest reward.

Provide age-appropriate models for peace. In addition to modeling peace for your children, point out examples in the world around them with whom they can identify. Introduce them to age-appropriate role models from sources such as history and literature. Knowing that others their age have made peaceful choices in difficult situations can inspire and encourage them when they face the inevitable challenges to peace. (Some of our favorites are Winnie the Pooh and

Piglet, Wilbur, Babe, Little Lord Fauntleroy, Charlie Bucket, George Bailey, Atticus Finch, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi.)

Choose peaceful forms of entertainment. Pay close attention to the messages your children are getting about relationships, conflict, violence, and peace from television, movies, toys, games, music, and literature. When the messages they are getting go against the values you are trying to teach, speak up! (If you do not believe your children are influenced by what they are watching and listening to, then why do companies spend billions of dollars on advertising? Don't fool yourself. Take control of the influences on your children's lives.)

Take advantage of the opportunity to explain your views regarding what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable messages and behavior. Engage your children in a dialogue about how situations could be addressed in a more peaceful manner. Make it clear how you would expect them to behave in a similar situation. If there are shows, movies, or toys that do not meet with your approval, refuse to let them be viewed — refuse to buy

them. (A word of caution regarding toys and play: play is practice for adulthood. Be sure the lessons and skills your children are learning will be useful to them as peace-seeking adults.) Take the time to explain your position.

Have the courage to make unpopular decisions. After all, we expect our children to do so when they are pressured to participate in bullying, alcohol, drugs, or promiscuity. Practice the peace you preach.

If you fall short of your efforts, forgive yourself, make amends, and try again. Peace is worth it. There is a beautiful song, composed by Sy Miller and Bill Jackson, that proclaims, "Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me." Imagine what might happen if each of us made this our New Year's resolution? Peace be with you.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman has degrees in Child Development, Family Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapy. Waterbury-Tieman has been married for 29 years and has two sons, ages 24 and 14. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator and has written extensively on the topic of parenting. To contact her, please e-mail parent4life@yahoo.com.



FOCUS

on eye health

How to know
if your child
needs glasses

BY ALLISON PLITT

Every parent should be on the lookout for potential problems with her child's health, and vision impairment is no exception. Marc Weinstein, who worked as the Optometric Director for various New York locations of Macy's Vision Express, gives parents some guidelines to help them evaluate

their child's vision.

Although all pediatricians offer some type of vision testing, Weinstein refers to the recommendations of the American Optometric Association, which represents 39,000 professionals in the field of optometry in the United States. According to the Association, the first eye exam a child should have is by 6 months of age, which consists of

a general evaluation that's done to assess the overall health and alignment of the eyes.

Subsequently, the Association typically recommends a second exam at age 3, when the child is able to give some responses. The first full exam for a child will happen usually before first grade. If the child's eyes are healthy, then he will need an eye exam every two years after that.

"If the child doesn't like the eyeglasses, he's not going to want to wear them. If he doesn't wear them, then this defeats the purpose."

"At the end of the day, children's performance in school is highly dependent on their vision," Weinstein says. "If you notice that your child is having difficulty in school, or if they're complaining that they're rubbing their eyes a lot, or if they're complaining that they're having trouble seeing the board, it's really important to take them in for a full eye exam."

A full eye exam should also include a dilated exam, which is when the optometrist puts drops in the eye to dilate the pupil. This allows the doctor to look in the back of the eye and check for any possible conditions that could be causing a decrease in vision.

Weinstein stresses the necessity of the dilated exam.

"Even though people might say, 'My kid is young and healthy,' it's a really important exam to have done on your child," Weinstein explains. "It gives the doctor baseline measurements, so if anything does change in the future, they can reference previous exams and see what changes have taken place."

For parents with children who have eyeglasses, Weinstein advises, "Make sure your kid really likes the eyeglasses. At the end of the day, no matter what we all do as professionals and as parents, if the child doesn't like the eyeglasses, he's not going to want to wear them. If he doesn't wear them, then this defeats the purpose."

Weinstein encourages parents to "really engage their child in the process of choosing the right pair of eyeglasses. Make sure they get something that they really want to wear. Going beyond that, make sure, obviously, that the eyeglasses fit well, that they're not too loose or too tight, that they're comfortable for the child."

As Weinstein advises, an important component for children's eyewear is that all eyeglasses should always have polycarbonate lenses.

"Polycarbonate is a type of lens. It's shatter-resistant material," Weinstein explains. "It includes scratching and ultraviolet

protection built into the lens. You shouldn't have to pay extra for that. It protects the child's eye, and it's also 30 percent lighter and thinner than standard glasses."

If your children wear prescription eyewear, Weinstein recommends that he should also have a pair of prescription sunglasses.

"People might not realize this, but even at a very young age, exposure to the sun does put us at a higher risk in the future, for things like cataracts," he warns. "So it's very important, even at an early age, to wear protective eyewear for the sun."

Weinstein is the CEO and founder of a company called 39DollarGlasses.com, a website where people can buy glasses for toddlers to adults for only \$39 a pair. Not only does the company provide quality and affordable eyewear, but they work with non-profit organizations to provide free eyewear to children in public schools.

Explaining his charitable work, Weinstein adds, "A lot of times, even when people have vision insurance, if the child loses or breaks the eyeglasses, they don't have coverage for a second pair. Even if the child did get one pair, if there's a problem, and children do frequently break or lose their eyeglasses, they need another pair and the parents can't afford it. That's where the kids fall through the cracks."

Weinstein's 39DollarGlasses.com goes even further to help families who are struggling financially.

"We reach out to schools all over the country, and we try to provide free eyewear for children whose families can't afford it," says Weinstein. "The company pays for the eyeglasses directly from its own profits."

For more information about vision care for your child, visit the American Optometric Association's website at www.aoa.org.

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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Show time!

Kids Night on Broadway is a great intro for little folks

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

As a parent, you have to decide the right age for your child to experience his first live theater show. Kids Night on Broadway offers the perfect opportunity to see if your child is ready. Hosted by the Broadway League, the 19th annual Kids Night on Broadway provides parents a chance to expose their kids to this sector of the performing arts. It will take place between Friday, Jan. 9, and Thursday, Jan. 15, and kids between the ages of 6 and 18 can see Broadway shows for free when accompanied by a full-paying adult. As a bonus, a Kids Night On Broadway ticket includes restaurant discounts and educational programs for individual shows, such as activity and study guides.

This event was created in order to introduce young people to live theater and make Broadway accessible to young theater-goers. Kids Night on Broadway is not just happening in New York, but all over the country. Select shows currently touring the United States are offering nights in various cities to welcome young people to Broadway-style shows for free. Kids Night On Broadway is presented by The New York Times and is sponsored by WABC-TV with additional support from KidzVuz and Z100. Tony Award-winning actress Judith Light will serve as the National Ambassador for the 2015 Kids Night on Broadway.

Participating shows include:

“A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder”

<http://agentlemansguidebroadway.com>, Walter Kerr Theatre, 219 W. 48th St.

The 2014 Tony-winner for Best Musical, this uproarious comedy is set in England’s elegant Edwardian era, and shows just how low we’ll go to make it to the top.

“Aladdin”

www.aladdinthemusical.com, New Amsterdam Theatre, 214 W. 42nd St.

Adapted from the Disney film and centuries-old folktales including “One Thousand and One Nights,” the story of Aladdin is brought to fresh



Photo by Kristina Bumphrey / Stampix

Actor Tony Danza, pint-sized theater critic Iain Armitage, and actress Judith Light celebrate the launch of Kids Night on Broadway.

theatrical life in this exuberant new musical comedy.

“Beautiful – The Carole King Musical”

<http://beautifulonbroadway.com>, Stephen Sondheim Theatre, 124 W. 43rd St.

The musical tells the inspiring, true story of Carole King’s remarkable rise to stardom, becoming one of the most successful solo acts in popular music history.

“Chicago”

<http://chicagothemusical.com>, Ambassador Theatre, 219 W. 49th St.

There’s never been a better time to experience “Chicago,” Broadway’s razzle-dazzle smash. A sensational tale of sin, corruption, and all that jazz, “Chicago” has everything you could want in a musical: knockout dancing, an edge-of-your-seat story, and one showstopper after another.

“The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time”

<http://curiousonbroadway.com>,

Ethel Barrymore Theatre, 243 W. 47th St.

Fifteen-year-old Christopher has an extraordinary brain; he is exceptionally intelligent but ill-equipped to interpret everyday life. When he falls under suspicion for killing his neighbor’s dog, he sets out to identify the true culprit, which leads to an earth-shattering discovery and a journey that will change his life forever.

“Honeymoon in Vegas”

www.honeymoonbroadway.com, Nederlander Theatre, 208 W. 41st St.

A regular guy with an extreme fear of marriage finally gets up the nerve to ask his girlfriend to marry him. But when they head to Las Vegas to get hitched, a smooth-talking gambler falls head-over-heels for his fiancée.

“If/Then”

www.ifthenmusical.com, Richard Rogers Theatre, 226 W. 46th St.

“If/Then” is a contemporary new musical that follows two distinct storylines in the life of Elizabeth



The genie is a crowd pleaser in "Aladdin," one of the featured shows.

(Idina Menzel), a city planner who moves back to New York to restart her life in this city of infinite possibilities. When her carefully designed plans collide with the whims of fate, Elizabeth's life splits into two parallel paths. "If/Then" follows both stories simultaneously as this modern woman faces the intersection of choice and chance.

"It's Only A Play"

<http://itsonlyaplay.com/>, Schoenfeld Theatre, 236 W. 45th St.

It's opening night of Peter Austin's (Matthew Broderick) new play as he anxiously awaits to see if his show is a hit. With his career on the line, he shares his big First Night with his best friend, a television star (Nathan Lane), his fledgling producer (Megan Mullally), his erratic leading lady (Stockard Channing), his wunderkind director (Rupert Grunt), an infamous drama critic (F. Murray Abraham), and a fresh-off-the-bus coat check attendant (Micah Stock) on his first night in Manhattan.

"Jersey Boys"

www.jerseyboysinfo.com/broadway

www.augustwilsontheatre.com, August Wilson Theatre, 245 W. 52nd St.

"Jersey Boys" is the Broadway musical based on the life story of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons.

"Kinky Boots"

<http://kinkybootsthemusical.com>, Al Hirschfeld Theatre, 302 W. 45th St.

Inspired by a true story and based on the film of the same title, "Kinky Boots" is a funny, heartwarming musical about being true to yourself.

"Les Misérables"

www.lesmis.com/broadway, Imperial Theatre, 249 W. 45th St.

Set against the backdrop of 19th-century France, "Les Misérables" tells an enthralling story of broken dreams and unrequited love, passion, sacrifice, and redemption — a timeless testament to the power of the human spirit.

"The Lion King"

www.lionking.com, Minskoff Theatre, 200 W. 45th St.

Giraffes strut, birds swoop, gazelles leap — the entire Serengeti is represented in this Disney production about the circle of life. And as

the music soars, Pride Rock slowly rises from the stage.

"Mamma Mia!"

<http://mammamianorthamerica.com/>, Broadhurst Theatre, 235 W. 44th St.

This sunny, funny tale of family and friendship unfolds on a tiny Greek island. On the eve of her wedding, a daughter's quest to discover the identity of her father brings three men from her mother's past back to the island they had last visited 20 years ago.

"Matilda The Musical"

<http://us.matildathemusical.com/>, Shubert Theatre, 225 W. 44th St.

It's the story of an extraordinary girl who dreams of a better life. Armed with a vivid imagination and a sharp mind, Matilda dares to take a stand and change her destiny.

"On the Town"

www.onthetownbroadway.com, Lyric Theatre, 213 W. 42nd St.

The Bronx is up, the Battery's down, and three sailors are hoping to get just a little bit lucky on their one day of leave in the Big Apple.

Three sailors and the high-spirited young women they meet chase love, dreams, and each other during an unforgettable day in the city that never sleeps.

"The Phantom of the Opera"

www.thephantomoftheopera.com/new-york, Majestic Theatre, 245 W. 44th St.

"The Phantom of the Opera" is based on the novel by Gaston Leroux. It tells the story of the hideously deformed Phantom who lurks beneath the stage of the Paris Opera, exercising a reign of terror over its occupants.

"Rock of Ages"

www.rockofagesmusical.com, Helen Hayes Theatre, 240 W. 44th St.

This explosive musical takes audiences on a joyride set to blazing hits from iconic 1980s rockers such as Journey, Bon Jovi, Styx, Reo Speedwagon, Pat Benatar, Twisted Sister, Poison, Asia, Whitesnake and many more.

"Wicked"

www.WickedTheMusical.com, George Gershwin Theatre, 222 W. 51st St.

Long before Dorothy drops in, two other girls meet in the land of Oz. One, born with emerald-green skin, is smart, fiery, and misunderstood. The other is beautiful, ambitious, and very popular.

"You Can't Take It With You"

<http://youcanttakeitwithyoubroadway.com>, Longacre Theatre, 220 W. 48th St.

James Earl Jones plays wily Grandpa Vanderhof, leader of a happily eccentric gang of snake collectors, cunning revolutionaries, ballet dancers, and skyrocket makers. But when the youngest daughter brings her fiancé and his buttoned-up parents over for dinner, that's when the real fireworks start to fly.

Tip:

Purchase tickets via Telecharge.com and use the code KIDS2015 when purchasing tickets.

For participating restaurants, visit www.kidsnightonbroadway.com/restaurants

For show dates, visit www.kidsnightonbroadway.com/shows/calendar

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.



GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Fight colds and flu with these foods

It's back! Cold and flu season, that is. Besides the usual prevention tips — washing your hands often, getting eight-to-10 hours of sleep each night, and drinking plenty of fluids — there are specific foods that can prevent and even help shorten the length of this year's colds and flu.

One of the most important things you can do is to consume foods rich in probiotics. Why? These friendly bacteria promote a stronger immune system by populating the gastrointestinal tract (or gut), the largest organ of immunity in the body.

Yogurt made with live and active cultures, fermented vegetables like kimchi and sauerkraut, fermented soybeans products like miso and tempeh are all rich in probiotics.

It's also important to consume foods rich in prebiotics. These are the foods that fuel our body's friendly bacteria. A plant-based, high-fiber diet that includes artichokes, asparagus, bananas, raisins, onions, garlic, leeks, and oats contains prebiotics and is another way to positively impact your gut microflora.

Looking for menu items? These common foods may be in your kitchen right now.

Vegetarian chili

Most chili dishes contain onions, garlic, beans and a variety of spices. Both onions and garlic contain antiviral properties, which can help combat viruses. Kidney beans are packed with vitamin B, which strengthens the immune system and can ultimately help build your defense system against germs. Lastly, spices not only add a hint of flavor to meals, but can clear your sinuses of congestion as well.

Fresh Clementines

Clementines are packed with vitamin C, which we all know is an antioxidant powerhouse. Although loads of vitamin C cannot ensure total cold and flu prevention, it can decrease the duration of both. Two clemen-



tines account for 100 percent of your vitamin C intake for the entire day.

Roast beef sandwich

Both roast beef and whole grain bread are loaded with zinc. This mineral has been known to stop the growth of microorganisms, including harmful bacteria. A half of sandwich with a cup of chicken soup can make for a comforting meal if you are feeling under the weather. Don't forget, chicken soup has been known to help control inflammation and congestion.

Tuna fish

Tuna contains an amino acid, glutamio, which aids in immune health. Spice up this basic lunchmeat with one tablespoon of low-fat mayonnaise and spread on whole grain crackers.

Ginger

Ginger helps relieve congestion and can calm the throat if you have a cough or slight irritation. Make a cup of homemade ginger tea with a bit of honey and a side of ginger snap cookies for a comforting treat.

Don't let the cold or flu get you or your children down this fall. Boost your immune system by consuming both pro- and pre-biotics. These foods provide a greater volume and diversity of microorganisms in the gut which offers a better defense against disease causing invaders.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who is a new Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

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Recycled love

Talking with Sasha Lipton, founder of Second Chance Toys

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

Her desire to help kids in need went hand-in-hand with her green attitude, and gradually evolved into a vision. And it all started with a couple of discarded, rescued, and recycled plastic toys that she donated for the holidays.

Sasha Lipton grew up in a New Jersey town, about a half-hour outside of Manhattan. In 2006, at age 15, she looked around her and saw a lot of sadness — families living in nearby communities who were struggling to put food on the table and couldn't afford to buy toys for their kids. She felt compassion for them and decided to take action.

Fast forward eight years. Thanks to Second Chance Toys, the organization that Lipton founded as a teen, nearly 200,000 gently used, donated toys have been distributed to local organizations serving kids in need, like Head Starts and family shelters. In so doing, Second Chance Toys has helped keep 40 tons of non-biodegradable plastic out of our landfills.

Lipton calls her movement “recycled love and a second chance.”

Due to its partnership with Kohl's early on, Second Chance Toys got much-needed funding to create a website and hire a full-time employee.

And on Thanksgiving Day 2014, in the spirit of gratitude, Lipton, now 24, appeared on “Good Morning America” to talk about her life's work and Second Chance Toys abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/chance-toys-recycles-unwanted-toys-27218383.

Standing beside a ginormous box overflowing with an array of rescued toys, Lipton, who currently lives on the Upper West Side, described the impact her organization has made on so many kids' lives, and reminded viewers to donate toys for the holidays.

The Second Chance Toys story

NY Parenting spoke with Lipton about Second Chance Toys and what's next.

Tammy Scileppi: What were the circumstances that led to Second Chance Toys?



Sasha Lipton at a Second Chance Toys event.

Sasha Lipton: I came up with the idea for Second Chance Toys in high school, while driving around on a big garbage collection day. I noticed that so many people were throwing away plastic toys and I knew that there were so many kids in towns not far from mine (in New Jersey) whose parents couldn't afford those toys. Additionally, I knew the toys were headed straight for the landfill — and that throwing out these plastic toys presented a hazard to our environment.

When I began collecting plastic toys, I enlisted my mom (and her sports utility vehicle, since I couldn't drive yet) and we started retrieving these toys from the curb, one by one, until our basement was filled. We then cleaned and tagged them with notes for the new owners, and delivered them to a family violence shelter in Newark.

TS: How can people get involved?

SL: The small idea I had really took off and has become contagious because anyone can join in and help! Whether you want to donate, collect, or receive toys, just visit our website, www.secondchancetoys.org, for information.

And we couldn't have expanded without the help of corporate partners like 1-800-Got-Junk, Kohl's, and Old Spice.

TS: Describe your “Good Morning America” experience.

SL: It was so exciting for me to be able to share the Second Chance Toys story with millions of viewers watching “Good Morning America.” I especially loved the big toy box they created and I thought it was awesome that they held a toy drive of their own, with all of the producers, so that we would have toys for the segment and so that they could



make a donation to children in need.

TS: So, what's next?

SL: We want to continue expanding across the US and make Second Chance Toys a household name. I hope that someday people everywhere will know that they can donate their toys to other children and that there is no need to throw them away. In order to do this we are looking to connect with a national retail partner that would hold collections during the holidays or Earth week. We are also always looking for new corporations to partner with that will help us grow.

TS: What do you do in your spare time?

SL: I love to workout (mostly barre and spin classes), cook or bake, try new restaurants, and get outdoors as often as possible!

While Lipton sits on the board of Second Chance Toys, she also has a "day job," working as a digital producer at Everyday Health for the past year and a half. Each summer, her company hosts an event in which employees divide up amongst various organizations and spend their day volunteering.

Recycled love and pro-social millennials

Millennials like Lipton are eager

to make a difference. She is a shining example of how pro-social behavior benefits others by changing people's lives for the better and helping make the world a nicer place in which to live. With Second Chance Toys, she says she has the ability to put smiles on children's faces — and that's a powerful thing.

The Millennial Generation (about ages 18 to 33) is made up of extremely ambitious young people who believe in good causes and have high expectations for themselves, as well as for those around them.

In fact, one in-depth, worldwide study by Deloitte revealed that many millennials, like Lipton, tend to be very charitable: 63 percent donate to charities, 43 percent actively volunteer or are a member of a community organization, and 52 percent have signed petitions. And a new study on millennials in the workforce shows that 88 percent — especially young women — gravitate toward companies with strong corporate social responsibility programs. More and more companies have been focusing on addressing a variety of social and environmental issues.

Solange Charas, a gender-in-the-workplace expert, weighs in why young women like Lipton are leaders in the business of helping others.

"Women want their work to have meaning and purpose — for them to have a feeling of usefulness and worth, to feel like they make a difference, that they have some control over their jobs and lives and that they are socially included," she explains. "There is a draw for women to work at organizations with a strong culture of giving back because of what those organizations stand for — namely, providing a context for purpose and meaning of their work. I think this is particularly important for women, as they have a natural (and learned) propensity to take care of others, and organizations that align their mission and vision with taking care of others, naturally resonates with women."

"Organizations that have strong corporate social responsibility cultures are good at connecting the dots of what employees do in their work, and how it impacts the world — or provides a social good, like Toms, [a company that matches every pair of shoes purchased with a pair of new shoes for a child in need]," she adds.

Reputational Institute has identified the top-10 corporate-social-responsibility-organizations as:

- Microsoft
- Google

- Disney
- BMW
- Apple
- Daimler (Mercedes Benz)
- VW
- Sony
- Colgate-Palmolive
- LEGO Group

Making a difference

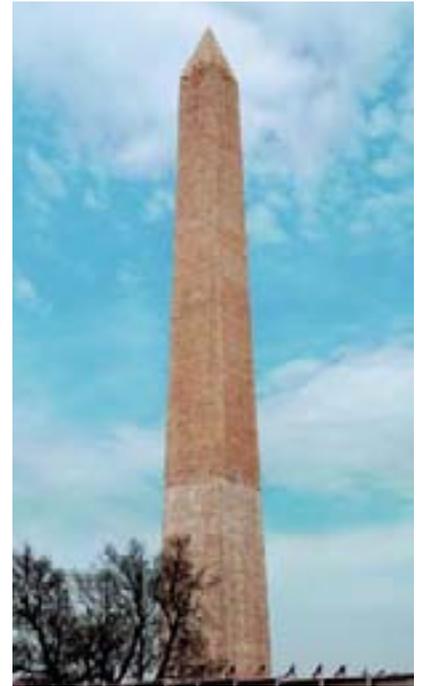
It's the dawn of a new year, so in the spirit of giving back and de-cluttering, why not ask your kids to donate their gently used toys, as they make room for all those cool, new gifts they got over the holidays?

The process can also serve as a teaching moment: You have to give to get.

Second Chance Toys holds two toy drives annually: One in December and another for Earth Day, in April.

Visit www.secondchancetoys.org and click "donate" for drop-off locations in New York City and other areas. There will be plenty in the spring and you and your family can celebrate Earth Day by recycling plastic toys and giving them a second chance.

Don't see a drop off location near you? Consider starting a collection. It takes just 50 toys to be matched with an organization.



The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial on the National Mall (left) is hosting special events this month.

Washington DC

A great weekend for families

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

Trying to figure out what to do over the long weekend of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day? Looking to go somewhere that is just a short plane, train, or car ride from New York? Consider Washington, D.C., where you can learn more about the civil rights leader. Although America's capital city is known for its politics, its history, diversity, and accessibility draws families from throughout the country all year long.

Some of the biggest draws in D.C. are the impressive monuments, museums, mansions, and government buildings — many of which are free of charge. As expected, there is heightened security in D.C., but there are concerted efforts to keep the significant buildings open to the general public. With proper planning, you can schedule a visit or even a tour. The opportunity to witness the government in action is equally

thrilling. Imagine walking through the Pentagon, taking a peek into the Supreme Court, or standing in awe of the lavish rooms in the White House. If you are planning to visit the White House, remember that trips must be coordinated through your member of Congress at least 21 days before the planned trip.

The Arlington National Cemetery — and its “sea of stones” that holds thousands of graves of those who served in the U.S. military — will humble you. The gravesites of President John F. Kennedy and his well-known brothers (former Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and former Sen. Ted Kennedy) are also housed at Arlington.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is grand in scale, and is even more impressive in the evening with its spotlight beaming. By visiting the Memorial (or any of the memorials on the National Mall and Tidal Basin) at night, you will encounter smaller crowds. If visiting on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Jan. 19), you can

witness the parade and peace walk. As part of the celebration for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, you can also attend the Kennedy Center celebration “Let Freedom Ring,” or participate in a day of service to honor the slain civil rights leader.

Throughout D.C., there are statues, plaques, and monuments to honor those who helped shape our country. The most visited sites are on the National Mall, and the National Park Service has conveniently developed an app to navigate the area easily (entitled “NPS National Mall”). Another feature of the app is the “park lens” that aids users in locating nearby monuments. You can follow a recommended tour or create your own. If you plan ahead, you can also print a copy of the useful “Be a Park Ranger” packet for your kids. This will add a sense of adventure to your visit to the National Mall and its monuments.

Washington D.C. is a terrific place for families, and you will be drawn in

by the educational and historical appeal the city offers. There are also tantalizing restaurants that you will want to seek out. During the week of Jan. 19 to 25, you can take advantage of Restaurant Week, when more than 200 restaurants will be offering three-course lunches for \$20.15 and three-course dinners for \$35.15. This will be a great opportunity to experience D.C.'s best restaurants at affordable prices.

Here are 10 places and events that you cannot miss:

Bureau of Engraving and Printing

www.moneyfactory.gov/tours/washingtondctours.html, 300 14th St. SW, Washington, DC 20228, (202) 874-2330

Also referred to as the "Money Factory," it offers a self-guided tour that takes approximately 35 minutes. As you would expect, this tour is quite popular, so plan ahead.

Discovery Theater

www.discoverytheater.org, 1100 Jefferson Dr. SW, Washington, DC 20560, (202) 633-8700

A theater devoted to young audiences, it offers 300 programs a year exploring art, science, and global heritage.

International Spy Museum

www.spymuseum.org, 800 F St. NW, Washington, DC 20004, (202) 393-7798

This museum explains the art of espionage and displays cool gadgets. Please note that this museum is best for older kids and teens — strollers are not allowed in the museum.

Mount Vernon

www.mountvernon.org, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon, Va., 22121, (703) 780-2000

Visit George Washington's former home, which is now home to farm animals, a discovery center, and museum. This site is stroller friendly and dogs are welcome. Open all year.

National Air and Space Museum

www.airandspace.si.edu, Independence Avenue at Sixth Street, Southwest, Washington, DC 20560, (202) 633-2214

One of the most popular museums in Washington, it houses 23 galleries that illustrate the story

of aviation, space, and human attempts at flight.

National Museum of Natural History

www.mnh.si.edu, 10th Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest, Washington, DC 20560, (202) 633-1000

This huge museum is dedicated to natural wonders and boasts a great collection on dinosaurs. It also houses an "Insect Zoo," which is home to live insects and other critters.

National Zoo

www.nationalzoo.si.edu, 3001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008, (202) 633-4888

One of the world's most renowned zoos, it is family friendly and easily navigable with a stroller.

National Gallery of Art

www.nga.gov, Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest, Washington, DC 20565, (202) 737-4215

During the winter months, there is an outdoor ice skating rink in the sculpture garden. View sculptures while skating with your children.

Newseum

www.newseum.org, 555 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 292-6100

This museum houses seven floors of interactive exhibits covering the history of journalism. The exhibits are sure to engage kids of all ages.

United States Botanic Garden

www.usbg.gov, 100 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 225-8333

Located on the Capitol grounds, the garden has living exhibits in the conservatory, such as seasonal exhibits.

Other links:

Be a Junior Ranger: www.nps.gov/kids/jrRangers.cfm

NPS App: www.nps.gov/nama/photosmultimedia/app-page.htm

Washington DC Restaurant Week: www.ramw.org/restaurantweek

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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The value of Catholic schools

Why parents
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BY CANDI SPARKS

At a time when the New York City public school system is under so much criticism and revision, working families have found an alternative in the Catholic school system. These schools have historically been the ones to reach out to and support communities in need.

Years ago, hundreds of thousands of immigrants came to the New World to have a fresh start. They put in long hours at low-level jobs, striving for greater opportunity and a better life for their children. It was a financial sacrifice for these immigrants to send their children to Catholic schools, rather than through the public school system, but to them, it was well worth it.

The public schools in their working-class neighborhoods were largely overcrowded and not necessarily providing top-notch education. In order to be more assured that their children would be taught their values — including discipline, which was a rigorous part of their children's life at home — they decided to send their children through a parochial school system, even if it meant struggling to find the extra money to pay for it.

In the early days of the immigration wave, it was primarily Irish and Italian immigrants that sent their children to Catholic parochial schools. As the years went by and new immigrants came from more countries

and continents, the demographic shifted and one didn't necessarily have to be Catholic to choose this educational option. As a result, many Catholic schools throughout the city have continued as an integral part of our citywide school landscape.

Currently, Catholic schools serve more than 160 nationalities. With each wave of immigration — Hispanic, Asian, Slavic and many others — Catholic schools offer diversity. These schools are not just racially diverse; there is also religious diversity in the Catholic school system. In fact, non-Catholics comprise about one quarter of the student body.

“Catholic schools are not just meant for the faithful. We are here to grow faith by building community and reaching out to those in need,” says Tom O'Brien, of the Brooklyn Diocese, which is involved in raising scholarship funds to help families offset tuition. “But not every Catholic school family is in great economic need. Our demographic is changing. We have seen an influx of middle income families who choose Catholic school because of the class size, excellence in education, and for a safer environment than what most parents think the neighborhood public school would offer.”

Patty, a public school teacher from the Bronx, sends her son Ronald to a Catholic elementary school.

“The environment stresses academics and doing the right thing,”

she says. “The teachers set high standards for the children. They are expected to do well and they rise to the occasion.”

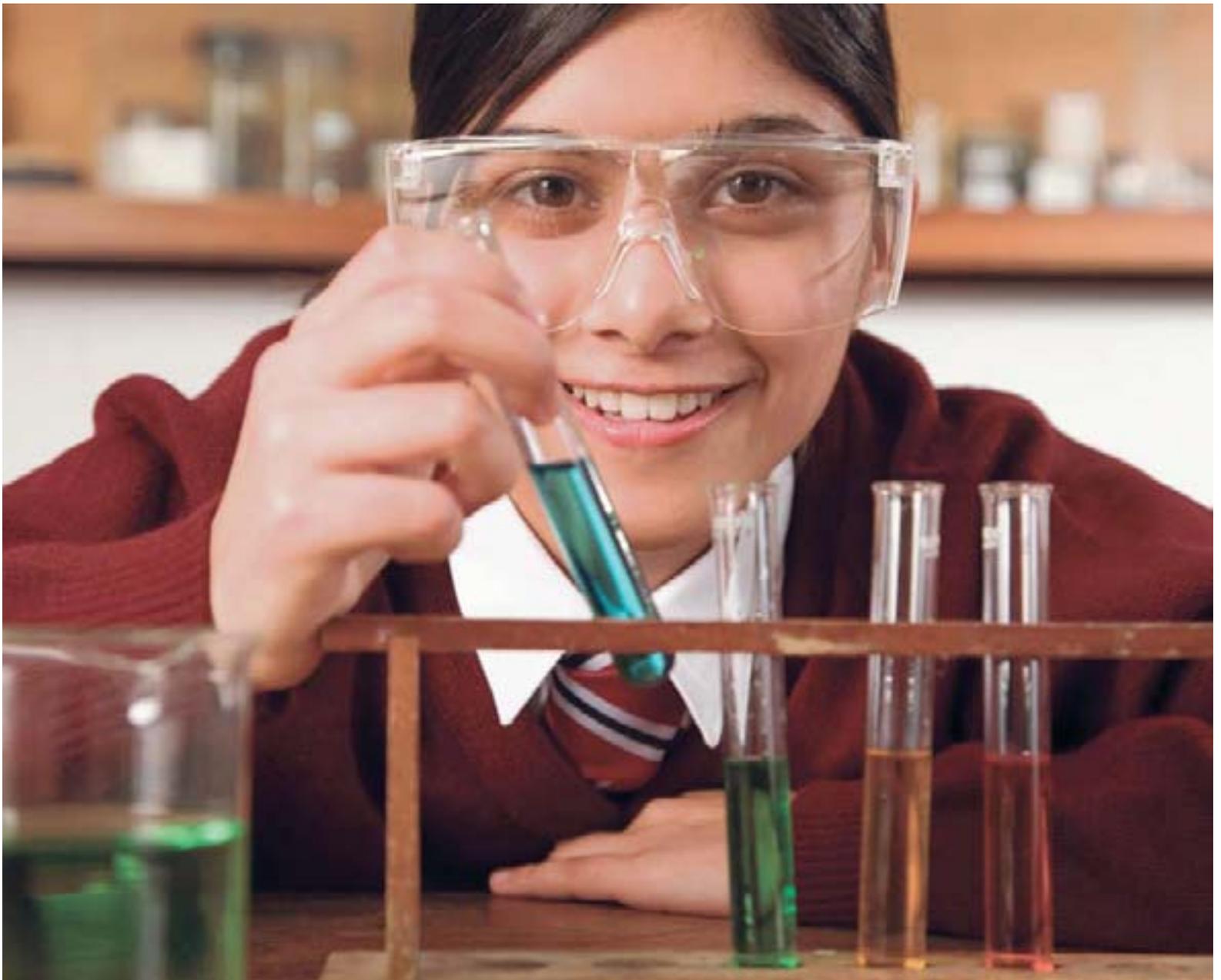
Many Catholic school students are the first ones in their families to graduate from college. In low-income neighborhoods, this means that the school is providing the lion's share of educational support for children who do not have access to private tutoring or help at home.

There is a 99 percent graduation rate for Catholic high schools, followed by a 97 percent college graduation rate for those who graduated Catholic high school. Compared to the 41 percent public high school graduation rate, Catholic school students have a better success rate. They are guided up the ladder of growth and achievement, making a real difference for present and future generations. Overall, Catholic school seems to outperform public school and is a viable, less-expensive system of education in the private sector.

In fact, the only two private schools in New York State that were designated by the U.S. Department of Education as Blue Ribbon — a program that honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels, or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap — in 2011 were both Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York. The honorees were St. Ignatius Loyola School on E. 84th Street in Manhattan and St. Ignatius on Mott Street in Manhattan. This year's honorees show the excellence in education and the diverse population served by Catholic schools. The incentives for getting a Catholic school education are different than what they used to be, and this is changing the demographics of Catholic school students.

“Families that don't have money don't usually have many choices. We needed to find a school with the right mix for Benny. He really wanted to play baseball. The only school that we could find to bridge the gap was a Catholic school. We are all very happy with the switch,” says Elizabeth, a Brooklyn mother of two, who chose to send her son to a Catholic school with solid academics and a baseball program.

Likewise, Patty, of East Harlem, sends her daughter Amber to a bilingual Catholic school.



“My daughter goes to a school that gives her [education] in both languages,” says Patty. “Sure, they speak the same languages in the public school around the corner, but it is unofficial. The public school does not have the same structure.” Amber’s Catholic school is also closely related to other parish activities and offers bilingual masses, events and service projects for the community. This makes the Catholic school a great way for Patty and Amber to meet people of similar backgrounds and build a community. Parochial schools celebrate the tradition of faith, family and community.

Unfortunately, keeping these schools open has become a challenge. The Catholic school sector is no different than any other, and closings have been publicized. In response, Catholic

schools are researching and developing new educational business models. Some Catholic schools have closed their doors, only to reopen as academies. For example, in South Ozone Park, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School and St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr School closed their doors, only to be succeeded by the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Because the school involves more than one parish, the school is called an academy to differentiate it from a single-parish school. Since 2005, the Brooklyn Diocese has opened many Catholic academies in Brooklyn and Queens.

The Brooklyn Diocese has also implemented the program “Preserving the Vision.” The name means exactly what it says: preserving what has always been an integral part of Catholic life: the education of chil-

dren. This vision includes developing schools that will be better able to meet the diverse and changing needs of students and parents, and providing competitive compensation and benefits to teachers and staff.

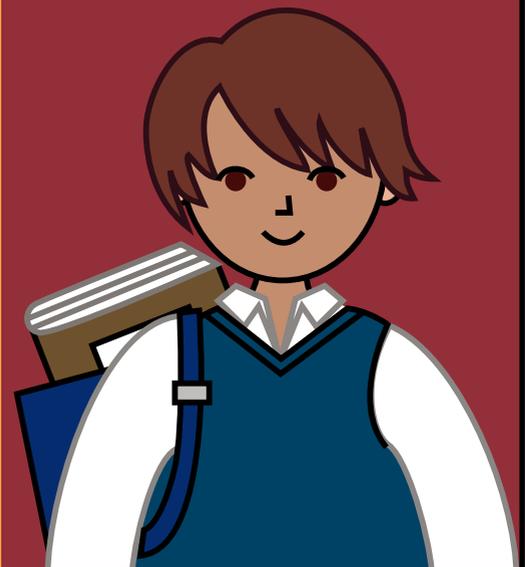
Even though two schools in the Archdiocese of New York have won the 2011 Blue Ribbon Award, the organization is still committed to improving. The Archdiocese has initiated the “Pathways to Excellence” program, aimed at professional development for principals, teachers and staff at schools that already do outstanding work. Because of the diverse population, there is still more than can be done to close the achievement gap. The program is aimed at raising standardized test scores and providing teachers with new classroom tools, such as the digital teaching

program for fourth and fifth grade math, “Time to Know,” which provides online learning, data collection and feedback for the school.

Personally, I am proud to share that my fondest childhood memories revolve around a humble beginning, in a humble neighborhood. My siblings and I attended a Catholic elementary school, Our Lady of Victory, for eight years. I am pleased that Catholic schools are committed to remaining vibrant institutions for generations to come.

Candi Sparks is the author of children’s books about money including “Can I Have Some Money? Educating Children About Money,” “Max Gets It!” and “Nacho Money.” She is a Brooklyn mother of two and is on Facebook (Candi Sparks, author) and Twitter (Candi Sparks, author). Her website is www.candisparks.com.

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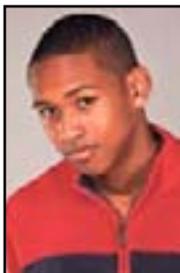
Kid movie critics review 'Into the Woods' musical

KIDS FIRST! FILM CRITIC

"Into the Woods" gives a modern twist to the beloved Brothers Grimm fairy tales — "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "Rapunzel" — in a musical format tied together by an original story about a baker and his wife who are under the influence of a witch's curse that prevents them from having a child. The 1987 Broadway play of the same name earned Tony Awards for Best Original Score (Stephen Sondheim) and Best Book of a Musical (James Lapine).

I confess that I binge-listened to the soundtrack before seeing this film and was thoroughly impressed with the vocals. It got me excited going to the screening. I also admit that I am a fan of the Broadway musical. I've seen the play starring Bernadette Peters, Vanessa Williams, and Phylicia Rashad. All three have played The Witch. I have watched Johanna Gleeson as the Baker's Wife light up the stage with energy, charm, and humor. I noticed every change, subtraction, and addition in the cinematic adaptation and I must say, this film is a triumph. It has wit, humor, emotion, magic and music — all the makings of a great musical.

The first 15 minutes, the prologue, is edited with such vivacity and rhythm that you are immediately engulfed into the stories and the action. Then, director Rob Marshall slowly starts to focus on the rhythms and details of each individual story. From the Baker and his Wife to Little Red Riding Hood, to Jack, to the Witch, and Cinderella. All their sto-



ries are told with the same passion and intent as the others, each with their individual flair. Yet, somehow, Marshall is able to have each story fit perfectly into the grand puzzle that is "Into the Woods."

I could rave on and on about Sondheim's score. His scores always have a sort of, inside joke sound to them. It's as if Sondheim knows something we don't know when he composes. There is an obvious humor and wit in his score of "Into the Woods," but it is the lyrics that tell the story. James Lapine, who wrote the screenplay and the libretto for the Broadway musical, makes some interesting changes for the film version. Fans of the musical will recognize the changes immediately and they may or may not like them. I, personally, liked them. For those who've never seen or even heard the Broadway version, this film will entertain and even touch them.

Meryl Streep is the best Witch I've seen. The finest actress of all-time gives The Witch a portrayal big enough to fit Rob Marshall's theatrical style, but is subtle enough for us to understand her. Her solo "Stay With Me" is one of the best scenes in the whole movie and one of the best acted scenes this year. But, it is the show-stopping number of "Last Midnight" that will leave a lasting impression on you. I haven't been able to stop listening to it since I saw it. I was in jaw-dropping awe in the theater watching that number. It's because Meryl Streep doesn't just sing a song (she has a beautiful voice and can surprisingly belt very well), she acts it. She feels each word and doesn't waste them. She's able to find the subtext in every song, every line of dialogue, every lyric. She will definitely be a presence this awards season and rightfully so.

Speaking of showstoppers, I must mention the funniest duet in any musical from any time, "Agony." Sung by Chris Pine and Billy Magnussen,

who play Cinderella and Rapunzel's princes respectively, the number is beautifully staged and timed hilariously. Everyone in my theater roared with laughter and I was a part of it. That may actually be the best musical number in the whole movie.

I'd also like to point out James Corden, who really surprised me. I knew he'd do the comedic portrayal of The Baker well, but it is the dramatic parts that had me apprehensive. He killed them. His chemistry with Emily Blunt is very believable. They work well together and they both have fantastic voices as well.

I think Blunt is one of the most underrated actresses today and I'm confident this film will put her on the map. She is a grand talent. The million-dollar question fans of the musical may have, "Does she live up to Johanna Gleeson?" My answer is, I don't know. They approach The Baker's Wife differently. Their choices completely differ and therefore they cannot be compared.

The last standout I want to mention is young Lilla Crawford, who some may know as Annie in the 2012 Broadway revival. She has impeccable timing and a great voice. It is a great feature film debut for the young star.

The ensemble overall is fantastic and work extremely well together. Of course, the costume and production design are top-notch, but I don't think anyone expected anything less. Rob Marshall and company have made the best American musical in more than 10 years. Ironically enough, Rob Marshall's "Into the Woods" is the best musical since Rob Marshall's "Chicago." I give it four and a half out of five stars and recommend it for ages 10 to 18.

— Willie J., age 15

See his video review at: <http://youtu.be/OhamWpAPOOg>

"Into The Woods" is a brilliant new film adapted from the award-winning Broadway musical.

This lively tale tells the story of some of the most well-known Brothers Grimm fairy tales, but with an unexpected twist. In the film we see the stories The Baker and his Wife, Cinderella, Rapunzel, Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk. All of their lives





intertwine and it makes for a wild journey full of song, humor, heart-break and wonderful lessons.

“Into The Woods” is a must-see this season, and I am so pleased with how it turned out. Being a theater junky, I heard news that this musical was going to be made into a film and the anticipation began to grow. The execution of this film is flawless. It captures the feel of seeing a musical live, with the over-the-top theatrics and set design. It translates so well to the screen and allows the audience to fully immerse themselves into this incredible story. The costumes and locations for this film are beautiful and the music is excellent. I caught myself singing along with the movie more than once.

Something that I love about this film is that it isn't the “classic” Disney version of these fairytales that most of us grew up with. It goes back to the authentic stories from the Grimm brothers themselves, with the obvious twist here and there. In this film, the bad stuff that tends to be cut out of modern fairytales actually happens. For example, Cinderella's step-sisters cut off bits of their feet to fit into the golden slipper, Rapunzel's prince is blinded by blackberry thorns, and there are no fairy godmothers. Rest assured, all of these misfortunes are done in very humorous ways. I also love that it takes all of these different fables

and weaves them together so that everyone has a part in each others' story. The final thing that really makes “Into The Woods” stand apart from other fairy tales is that not everyone gets a happy ending. You have to work with what you're given and make the best of the situation.

The entire cast is wonderful and so talented. Meryl Streep plays The Witch, Anna Kendrick plays Cinderella, Emily Blunt The Baker's Wife, Johnny Depp The Wolf, and Chris Pine Cinderella's Prince. Every character has a solo and I'm so impressed with all of these actors' amazing voices. I had no idea they could sing. This film brings in names and faces that are very recognizable and also incorporates actors that most of us have probably never seen. So, it's a really nice mix of people that make up this cast.

My favorite scene is when the two Princes sing “Agony.” It is the most hilarious scene in the film and I laughed so hard I cried. Prince Charming and his brother are lamenting over their princesses, Cinderella and Rapunzel, and it is the cheesiest, funniest thing I have seen in a long time. The Princes are the most melodramatic people, making everything a big deal and this song highlights just how over-the-top they are. The entire audience was cracking up and after the film was over I could not stop singing “Agony” and

laughing about how ridiculous the musical number is.

“Into The Woods” is a film that all ages will enjoy. I cannot wait to see it again. Every aspect of it is so well done — the cast, the visuals, the music and even though a few moments could maybe be a bit scary for younger children, it is something for the whole family. I recommend it for ages 5 to 18 and give this film five out of five stars. Be sure not to miss it.

— Raven D.

“**I**nto the Woods” is a musical comedy about a journey

The Baker and his Wife must take in order to reverse the curse The Witch put on their house and have the child they always wanted. They must go into the woods and get four things — a slipper as pure as gold, hair as yellow as corn, cape as red as blood, and a cow as white as snow — all before the blue moon rises. The most interesting thing about this film is how it merges the stories of Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel and Little Red Riding Hood into this fairytale based on the Broadway mu-



sical of the same name.

Cinematographer Dion Beebe has created incredible fairytale-like scenes that are just outstanding. I loved the scene when Cinderella goes to her mother's grave and tells her that she wishes to go to the ball. All of a sudden, the tree and the leaves twirl her around to dress her in a beautiful golden dress and slippers. It's fascinating how the camera moves around her to make the scene magical.

Of course, music plays a huge role in the film thanks to the brilliant work of Stephen Sondheim, who has written perfect lyrics that capture the emotions of every scene. Meryl Streep's character, The Witch, is the most memorable character. Her voice is powerful and beautiful. When she discovers that Rapunzel has fallen in love with a prince, she begs Rapunzel to stay with her. When The Witch sings “Stay with Me,” you realize that she isn't as cold-hearted as everyone thinks. She locks Rapunzel in a tower because she is protecting her from the world.

The message of the film is that you should be careful of what you wish for. Sometimes what you wish for isn't exactly what you really want. A secondary message is when you love something, you should set it free. I recommend this film for ages 10 to 18 and give it four out five stars.

— Shelby R., age 14



DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Mediators versus divorce attorneys

I'm talking with someone at a networking event, and he asks about the work I do. "I'm a mediator," I say. "I help people — often people who are getting divorced — resolve their conflicts without going to court." He responds, "I wish I had known about you when I was going through my divorce. It was horrible."

How many times has someone said this to me? Many times.

I'll often ask, "Did you have a lawyer for your divorce?" Almost everyone answers "yes."

"Did your lawyer tell you about mediation?" Almost always, the answer is "no."

Some mediation clients tell a similar story. They started with a divorce lawyer, didn't like where it was going, and then learned about mediation, but not from the lawyer. The attorney didn't say anything about the process.

Mediator colleagues have told me of similar experiences. The stories are anecdotal, but I believe that they are indicative of a widespread problem; namely, that when potential clients consult with lawyers, the lawyers fail to provide them with information that they might find important and helpful.

I want to acknowledge the lawyers who do share such information, and I think that there are more than a few matrimonial attorneys who tell a potential client about mediation, even at the risk of "losing" (not being retained) by that person.

Should all divorce lawyers tell those coming to them about something mediation, when doing so might cost them business?

David Saxe apparently thinks so. Saxe, an associate justice at the Appellate Division, wrote an article for the *New York Law Journal* (read primarily by lawyers) in 2011, entitled "Encourage Divorce Clients to Mediate". In it, he pointed out that the litigation process often extended into years, exacerbating conflicts instead of resolving them amicably, and that legal fees can often be enormous,



sometimes well into the six figures, for the more contentious cases.

Saxe wrote that mediation was "more focused on the needs of the parties [than litigation]," and that in mediation "the majority of the expended time is devoted to exploring disputes, proposals, suggestions and possible solutions."

Are many more matrimonial attorneys informing (let alone 'encouraging') those who come into their offices about mediation since the Saxe article was published? Who are giving a brief overview of how it works and saying that the process might save time and money? That spouses who mediate reach their own agreements on how to spend time with their children, how to divide property, and on all their other questions? I doubt it.

Informed decision-making is at the very heart of mediation. That is, parties in mediation are required to gather and share information so that they can make the important decisions that they need to.

Imagine a wife saying in regard to her husband, "I don't need to know anything. What's his is his and I don't care." Imagine that same wife learning that her husband is holding a winning lottery ticket worth \$5 million, and that she may be entitled to a share of the proceeds. Might this

hypothetical wife make a different decision, knowing about the lottery ticket and its value, than she would if she were ignorant of it?

While the example seems far-fetched, I think that the point is clear. Having information may impact our choices.

According to the New York Rules of Professional Conduct <https://www.nycourts.gov/rules/jointappellate/NY-Rules-Prof-Conduct-1200.pdf>, communication is rule number one: A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

I don't believe, as some do, that everyone should have to try mediation, but everyone getting divorced should at least know that it is an option. Then that person can decide what to do. In my view keeping such information from a potential client is downright unethical.

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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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Cut the mean girls out of your circle

Do you have a toxic friend? If you are a woman, chances are you have had a toxic friend, and surprisingly, you may have kept that friendship for a while. Self Magazine and Today.com asked 18,000 readers about their experiences with toxic friends. 84 percent of women said they'd had a toxic friend at some point, and 1 in 3 surveyed said they had a toxic best friend.

The disturbing part is that 83 percent said they had held onto a friendship longer than was healthy simply because it was hard to break up with that friend. Yet a dysfunctional relationship is still dysfunctional, even if it is between two female friends, so why is it so difficult to end the friendship?

"The reason it's hard to dump a toxic friend is the same reason people stay in all kinds of dysfunctional relationships," says Dr. Gail Saltz, associate professor of psychiatry at New York Presbyterian Hospital. "There's something in it that you find compelling or familiar. Depending on the nature of what's going on in the relationship, you may feel guilty [about breaking things off]. Or it could be that the person has implied you need them in some way — that you would be a bad person to walk away."

It's worth noting that women's friendships are centered on feelings where as men's friendships mostly focus on joint activities and business. Some of the toxic friendship types include those who are chronic downers, self absorbed, overly critical, undermining, and unreliable.

The popular movie, *Mean Girls* that focuses on high school social cliques and the detrimental effect they can have on girls, reflects not only high school. Unfortunately often cliques form in elementary and middle school, and continue into adulthood, in friendship circles, family get-togethers and even the workplace.

What we should teach our young girls is that if anyone treats them poorly on a consistent basis, they probably shouldn't be their friend.



Furthermore, they shouldn't feel bad for ending a friendship; they should feel empowered for protecting themselves. Of course, most of us don't want to be intentionally mean, but setting boundaries for what you accept from others is one of the very most important ways you can teach your kids self-love.

I am just now learning how to do this over the past few years. Growing up, I was always taught to be polite, help others, and extend yourself, which are all good things. It's just that I never learned how to set boundaries for myself or even realize when I was being taken for advantage in my friendships, and being helpful can quickly turn into being an easy target. It's amazing how many of us can recognize when

a boyfriend or a boss is being insincere or sneaky, but don't immediately see it in our girlfriends.

The ironic part is that my friends, my best friends in adulthood, have showed me through example how to be set boundaries without being mean and how to cut off those female friends who are there for the wrong reasons, or in other words, toxic. It's the most freeing thing I've done. Have you had a toxic friend? Did you stay friends longer than you should have?

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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Calendar

JANUARY



Associated Press / Manuel Balce Ceneta

Who goes there?

“Who” goes there? It’s the Owl Prowl at Blue Heron Nature Center on Jan. 18 and Jan. 25.

Naturalist Cliff Hagen leads an owl talk and walk, where nature lovers search for resident owls, including long-eared and saw-whet owls. The event is fun for all ages.

Flashlights are suggested.

Jan. 18 and Jan. 25 from 6:30 to 8 pm. Free

Blue Heron Nature Center [222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard in Annadale, (718) 967-3542; www.nycgouparks.org]

Submit a listing

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

Send your listing request to 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!

FRI, JAN. 2

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

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

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 babies and toddlers.

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.

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

Traditional games including checkers, Sorry, Connect Four, and Battleship.

FURTHER AFIELD

Music and movement: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 12:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Stomp your feet and count the beats while learning about traditional dances.

Light it up: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Many holiday traditions use light in this dark time of year. Come learn the science behind lightbulbs, and safely experiment with electricity using common objects in strange and fun ways.



The dinos are in town

The mighty dinosaurs are roaring into the Staten Island Zoo for an extended stay until April 1.

Dilophosaurus, triceratops, oryctodromeus and a host of others from the Secaucus Field Station will be wintering here in the zoo's large indoor space, which is just perfect for the dinos and children to visit.

Children of all ages will delight and learn a thing or two after the encounter with these

realistic animatronic dinos created by scientists, engineers, and artists.

So come on down and visit with a T-rex or two you will be glad you did. Roar!

Dinosaur Encounter daily now through April 1 from 10 am to 4 pm. Free with zoo admission.

Staten Island Zoo [614 Broadway at Martling Ave. in West Brighton, (718) 442-3174; www.statenisland-zoo.org]

SAT, JAN. 3

ON STATEN ISLAND

Saturday studies: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 10 am–noon; Free.

Teens who need a quiet place to study find a nook in the library.

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

Fun themed crafts and arts.

"Toy Story 3": St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 1–3 pm; Free.

The animated adventure continues.

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

The squirrel is on a mission to find the tastiest nuts for winter.

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

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

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; 11 am, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm; Included with All-Garden Pass admission.

Join Thomas and Driver Sam on a fun-filled sing-along performance. Bring a camera to have a photo-op with Thomas.

SUN, JAN. 4

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": 11 am, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

MON, JAN. 5

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Hang out with friends in the community room, do homework, bring snacks, or check out a laptop and do homework or just browse. For children 13 to 18 years old.

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

Children 5 to 12 enjoy books.

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 through sixth grades on assignments.

TUES, JAN. 6

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Teens and tweens explore their designer skills. Registration is required.

Tutoring: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 3:30–5:30 pm; Free.

Students in pre-K through eighth grade get help with math and reading by Staten Island High School volunteers. In-person 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.

WED, JAN. 7

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Young adults 12 to 18 years old discuss anime, draw, play games, and even do homework.

Tween science: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 4–5 pm; Free.

Children 8 to 12 years old discover the inside info on poop.

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.

Craft time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 4–5 pm; Free.

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

Continued on page 30

Calendar

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

Continued from page 29

THURS, JAN. 8

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Workshop combines art making and collected words to create a mandala mobile. Recommended for children 8 years and older.

FRI, JAN. 9

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Pre-school time: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Children 3 to 5 years old.

Doodlebug Fun Time: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgov-parks.org; 1 pm; Free.

Kathleen Hagen leads tots 18 months to 4 years old with a caregiver in stories, songs, crafts. Registration required. Series 1.

Fun Fridays: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Board games: 3:30 pm. St. George Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

SAT, JAN. 10

ON STATEN ISLAND

Seasonal Explorers: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 10 am-10:45 am; \$8 (per week; \$6 members).

Winter wonders offers children 5 to 7 years old fun-filled activities, crafts, stories and hikes (weather permitting). Must be accompanied by a chaperone. Pre-registration required.

Saturday studies: 10 am-noon. St. George Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

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

Whimsical animated film about a lone unicorn seeking out others of its kind.

Bricks for kidz: Mariners Harbor Library, 206 South Ave. at Arlington Place; (212) 621-0690; nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

Children learn about the historic, scientific, and mathematical info on LEGO, then build models in teams using their imaginations and skills. Suggested for children 6 to 12 years old.



Ben Rudnick & Friends

Ben Rudnick & Friends come to Symphony Space on Jan. 31.

The popular Boston children's band returns to New York City for a morning jam session of cheerful kid-friendly music. Playing everything from light folk and bluegrass to calypso and rock and even Irish jigs, Ben Rudnick & Friends are guaranteed to supply

an entertaining musical morning for all members of the family. And singing along is expected!

Ben Rudnick & Friends on Sat. Jan. 31 at 11 am. Tickets are \$12 and up.

Symphony Space [2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street on the Upper West Side; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org].

Presented by Bricks4Kidz. Space limited, registration required.

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": 11 am, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

SUN, JAN. 11

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": 11 am, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Gingerbread Lane Giveaway:

New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Noon; Free with museum admission.

Take a piece of the Gingerbread Lane home with you. Houses will be given away on a first-come, first-served basis until the last square of real-estate is gone. Limit one house per person.

MON, JAN. 12

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen Cafe: 2-4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Monday, Jan. 5.

Read aloud: 4 pm. Huguenot Public Library. See Monday, Jan. 5.

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

TUES, JAN. 13

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Teens 13 to 18 years old make wearable art with Susan Hale. All materials provided.

All about animals: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Children explore the animal kingdom. Recommended for kids 5 and older. Registration required. Limited to 25 participants.

WED, JAN. 14

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen club: 2-4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 7.

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

Children 4 to 12 watch a performance shaped around the holiday season. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is featured through song and dance.

Read aloud: 4-4:30 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 7.

THURS, JAN. 15

ON STATEN ISLAND

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.

FRI, JAN. 16

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Play time: 11 am-noon. Mariners Harbor Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Teen Advisory Group: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 2-4 pm; Free.

Children 13 to 18 years old get hands-on experience by attending monthly meetings and volunteering for the library.

Calendar

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

Mostly Monstrous Monster

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

Monsty introduces his relatives from all cultures from the Lock Ness to Big Foot. Plus a craft.

Fun Fridays: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Board games: 3:30 pm. St. George Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

SAT, JAN. 17

ON STATEN ISLAND

Junior science club: Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Pl. corner of Wall Street; (718) 727-1135; www.statenislandmuseum.org; 10 am-noon; \$8 (\$5 members).

Tweens 8 to 13 years old design and build their own contraptions and learn about gears, levers and other simple machines.

Seasonal Explorers: 10 am-10:45 am. Greenbelt Nature Center. See Saturday, Jan. 10.

Saturday studies: 10 am-noon. St. George Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Kids craft time: 11 am. Mariners Harbor Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

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

Disney hit featuring Anna, Elsa and Olaf.

Saturday showtime: 2 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": 11 am, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Let's March: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with Museum admission.

Learn all about the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

Film Screening: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 12:30 pm; Free with Museum admission.

"Our Friend, Martin" animated film uses historical footage of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

SUN, JAN. 18

ON STATEN ISLAND

Explorers of the Wild: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. be-



Story time with music

Enjoy a Daily Story Hour at the Bank Street Bookstore, and a musical story hour every Tuesday with CC and Mallory.

Children beat the winter blues with a trip around the neighborhood at Bank Street. Kids 5 and under can enjoy fun, educational, and socially engaging story-times at this popular series featuring special guest authors.

Once a week favorite storytell-

ers, CC and Mallory (pictured) present musical story hours, which bring the books to life.

Musical Story Hour takes place every Tuesday morning. Daily Story Hour takes place every day, seven days a week at 10:30 am throughout January. Free.

Bank Street Bookstore [610 W. 112th Street, corner of 112th and Broadway; (212) 678-1654; <http://bankstreetbooks.com>].

tween Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 2-2:30 PM; Free.

Explorers 6 to 12 years old learn about the environmentalist Clay Wollney learn about nature.

Owl Prowl: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 6:30-8 pm; Free.

Join Ranger Cliff Hagen and search for resident owls. Flashlights are suggested. Suggested for older children accompanied by an adult.

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": 11 am, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Film Screening: 12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 17.

MON, JAN. 19

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas &

Friends": New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; 11 am, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm; Included with All-Garden Pass admission.

Join Thomas and Driver Sam on a fun-filled sing-along performance. Bring a camera to have a photo-op with Thomas.

TUES, JAN. 20

ON STATEN ISLAND

Kiddie Game Time: 4-5 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Tuesday, Jan. 6.

WED, JAN. 21

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen club: 2-4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 7.

Fun with lanyards: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Teens create a fun project.

Read aloud: 4-4:30 pm. New Dorp

Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 7.

FRI, JAN. 23

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Pre-school time: 10:30 am. Huguenot Public Library. See Friday, Jan. 9.

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

Kathleen Hagen leads tots 18 months to 4 years old with a caregiver in stories, songs, crafts. Registration required. Series 2.

Fun Fridays: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Board games: 3:30 pm. St. George Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; 11 am and 1:30 pm; Included with All-Garden Pass admission.

Join Thomas and Driver Sam on a fun-filled sing-along performance. Bring a camera to have a photo-op with Thomas.

SAT, JAN. 24

ON STATEN ISLAND

Seasonal Explorers: 10 am-10:45 am. Greenbelt Nature Center. See Saturday, Jan. 10.

Saturday studies: 10 am-noon. St. George Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Kids & Kritters: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am-12:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 7 years old with caregiver enjoy a craft, story or game; along with a walk outside (weather permitting); Appropriate dress required; registration required.

Krafty Kids: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 1-2 pm; Free.

Children 4 to 10 years old with caregiver enjoy a craft, registration required.

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

Continued on page 32

Calendar

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

Continued from page 31

Full-length feature following Emmet, an ordinary Lego mini-figure, on an awesome adventure.

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

Inquisitive tweens 8 to 12 years old meet with resident naturalist Clay Wollney and explore the natural world. Registration required.

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; 11 am, 1:30 pm and 3:30 pm; Included with All-Garden Pass admission.

Join Thomas and Driver Sam on a fun-filled sing-along performance. Bring a camera to have a photo-op with Thomas.

SUN, JAN. 25

ON STATEN ISLAND

Paws to Read: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 2:30 pm; Free.

A great way to get children involved in reading — an OutLoud volunteer visits with a gentle, child-friendly pooch. Registration required.

Owl Prowl: 6:30-8 pm. Blue Heron Nature Center. See Sunday, Jan. 18.

FURTHER AFIELD

"All Aboard with Thomas & Friends": 11 am, 1:30 pm and 3:30 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Jan. 24.

MON, JAN. 26

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen Cafe: 2-4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Monday, Jan. 5.

Pajama time: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Stories and fun activities.

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

TUES, JAN. 27

FURTHER AFIELD

Bug Out: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3:30 pm; Free with Museum Admission.



Parenting conference

The 92Y presents the third annual 92Y Parenting Conference on Jan. 25 — with a focus on dads.

Both working and stay-at-home parents will benefit from hearing the latest from today's top experts on how to be great role models, and raise happy, healthy kids, at the forum, "Why Fathers Matter: Creating Successful Parenting Partnerships."

Topics include: At-home Dads: What Do Breadwinning Moms Really Think?; Juggling Dads: Finding Time for Work, Family & Play; and Parenting Partnerships: Building a High-Perfor-

mance Parenting Team.

"The Science of Fatherhood" delivers the lowdown on how research is changing the conversation, and how fathers shape their children's bodies, brains and futures.

Speakers include psychologist and author Dr. Michael Thompson; author Paul Raeburn ("Do Fathers Matter"); and Lance Somerfeld, founder of NYC Dads.

Parent workshop, Jan. 25 from 10 am to 3 pm; tickets are \$99.

92Y [1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street on the Upper East Side; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org].

Meet grasshoppers, worms, stick bugs and cockroaches - eek!

ners Harbor Library. See Thursday, Jan. 15.

WED, JAN. 28

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen club: 2-4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 7.

Urban art: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street; (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free. Teens explore their artistic talents.

Read aloud: 4-4:30 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 7.

THURS, JAN. 29

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Children 3 years and older make a fun project.

Kiddie tech time: 4-5 pm. Mari-

FRI, JAN. 30

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Play time: 11 am-noon. Mariners Harbor Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Fun Fridays: 3:30-4:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Board games: 3:30 pm. St. George Library. See Friday, Jan. 2.

Craft time: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 7.

SAT, JAN. 31

ON STATEN ISLAND

Saturday studies: 10 am-noon. St. George Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Sensory story time: St. George Library, 5 Central Ave. at Hyatt Street;

(718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 11 am-noon; Free.

For special-needs children with a caregiver.

Kids craft time: 11 am. Mariners Harbor Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Kids & Kritters: 11 am-12:30 pm. Blue Heron Nature Center. See Saturday, Jan. 24.

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

A screening of the 1959 Disney classic.

Saturday showtime: 2 pm. Mariners Harbor Library. See Saturday, Jan. 3.

Star gazing: Wolfes Pond Park, Cornelia Ave. and Hylan Blvd.; (718) 967-3542; 6 pm; Free.

Join with the rangers and take a trip through the stars. Telescopes and binoculars are supplied.

FURTHER AFIELD

Quilting Kids: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am; Free with museum admission.

Discover the art of quilts, share stories, and decorate a quilt square to take home.

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

Children discover why some traditions are based on the moon and touch a real rock from outer space.

LONG-RUNNING

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Toddlers and pre-schoolers with a caregiver listen to stories, do crafts, listen to songs, dance and sing and have play with other children.

Dinosaur encounter: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 442-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; Daily, 10 am-4 pm, Fri, Jan. 2 - Wed, April 1; Free with zoo admission.

Meet eight mighty dinosaurs including Dilophosaurus, Triceratops, and Oryctodromeus from the Secaucus Field Station. Realistically animated characters created by scientists, engineers, and artists delight children of all ages.

Calendar

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

Riding the waves: Conference House - Lenape Gallery, Hylan Blvd. at Satterlee Street; (718) 227-1403; www.nycgovparks.org; Daily, 1 pm; Fri, Jan. 2 - Thurs, Jan. 29; Free.

The exhibit features pieces from Maritime Navigation and Communication.

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

Children experiment with all types of food.

Storytime: Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; www.barnesandnoble.com; Tuesdays, 11 am-1 pm, Saturdays, 11 am, Sat, Jan. 3 - Tues, March 24; Free.

Stories, crafts and fun activities.

Art Studio: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tyssen Street; (718) 273-2060; stateniskids.org; Saturdays and Sundays,

1-4 pm, beginning Sat, Jan. 3; Free with museum admission.

Children create fun projects.

FURTHER AFIELD

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; \$9 general admission (Children under 1 free).

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

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; \$20 (\$8 children, Free for children under 2).

The annual tradition is open again. Model trains are enlivened amid the glow of twinkling lights in Victorian style glasshouses featuring replicas of New York landmarks crafted of natu-

ral materials by designer Paul Busse's team.

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; Free with museum admission.

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

Ice skating: Lefrak Center in Prospect Park, Parkside and Ocean avenues, Brooklyn; (718) 594-7439; info@brooklynice.org; www.brooklynice.org; Tuesdays - Thursdays, 11 am-6 pm, Fridays, 11 am-8 pm, Saturdays, 10 am-9 pm, Sundays, 10 am-6 pm, Now - Tues, March 31; \$6 (\$8 on Sat. and Sun) plus \$6 skate rental.

Families have a great time twirling and skating and enjoying the rink.

Art Kids: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Fridays,

11:30 am and 2:30 pm, Fri, Jan. 2 - Fri, March 6; Free with museum admission.

Children explore a new style of art and discover the artistic process while developing artistic skills.

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; Free with museum admission.

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

Ice skating school: Lefrak Center in Prospect Park, Parkside and Ocean avenues, Brooklyn; (718) 594-7439; info@brooklynice.org; www.brooklynice.org; Mondays and Wednesdays, 4-6:30 pm, Now - Tues, March 10; Free.

Instructions, fitness, homework help and lots more. Pre-registration required.

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CHERISH THE MOMENTS

BY PATRICK HEMPFING

Why did I have to see that when I peered out from my in-laws' patio on Christmas morning? It could have been anything else — a rambunctious squirrel, a trespassing dog, or low-flying vultures. Instead, I saw a teenage girl run across my in-laws' backyard to the rear window of the neighboring house. She paused at the window and looked toward the street. She blew two kisses to, I'm guessing, the friend who dropped her off. Then she carefully lifted the window from the outside, crawled into her house, and closed the window and blinds behind her.

As a parent, I had trouble processing what I had just witnessed. If my daughter was sneaking out of the house for who-knows-what-kind of get together, I'd want to know about it. I'd certainly rather deal with it now than nine months later when there could be additional issues. However, I didn't know the people, and wouldn't want to cause trouble between my in-laws and their new neighbors. I decided to mind my own business; yet, I couldn't get it out of my head.

About an hour later, I was helping my 8-year-old daughter, Jessie, with her new purple dress. As I buttoned it up in the back and tied the bow around her waist, I flashed back to the teenage girl I had seen earlier that morning. It feels like I was just changing Jessie's diaper. Now she's wearing size 10 dresses and stands as tall as her mother's chin.

I felt it was time for a talk. No, not "the talk" as her mother, Mattie, will cover that one. This one I could handle. I told Jessie that she must never sneak out of the house. Her response didn't put me completely at ease, though I accepted it. She said, "I'll check with Momma." Maybe she knows that Dad will say "no" more quickly when it comes to dating decisions.

Later on Christmas Day, Jessie opened a special gift — a pair of roller skates. The next day we went to the park to break them in. Mattie was on one side holding her hand while



I was a steady force on the other side. Even though Jessie had on her helmet and elbow and knee pads, it was still stressful for me. We went back to the park to practice again the following two days. Jessie improved dramatically each day. On the third day, Mattie just watched while I held my daughter's hand. Then Jessie said it. "Daddy, you need to let go."

Reluctantly, I released her hand but remained within catching distance behind her. Mattie's brother, who was with us, laughed at me as I zoomed in ready for the catch each time Jessie flailed her arms. His laughter didn't bother me, though, because I was right where I needed to be.

Later, I again thought about the teenage girl in the window, knowing that Jessie's teenage years aren't that far away. I realize that more "letting go" times are ahead. I also know it's not possible to catch all the falls. I'm hoping that because I've stood beside Jessie when she learns to

skate, and for many of the other important times of her childhood, that I'll never have to stand guard outside her bedroom window.

I've concluded that parenting requires seeing your child through a series of wheels — stroller, wagon, tricycle, training, bicycle, scooter, and now roller skate wheels. I'm going to enjoy the pink skate wheels stage to the fullest. Something tells me that seeing Jessie behind the wheel of a car will be much harder. When that time comes, I'll be beside her in the front seat. Then it will be time for Daddy to let go again, and Mattie and I will find ourselves peering out the window, waiting for her safe return home.

Patrick Hempfing had a 20-year professional career in banking, accounting, and auditing before he became a father at age 44. He is now a full-time husband, stay-at-home dad, and writer. Follow him at www.facebook.com/patricklhempfung and on Twitter @PatrickHempfung.

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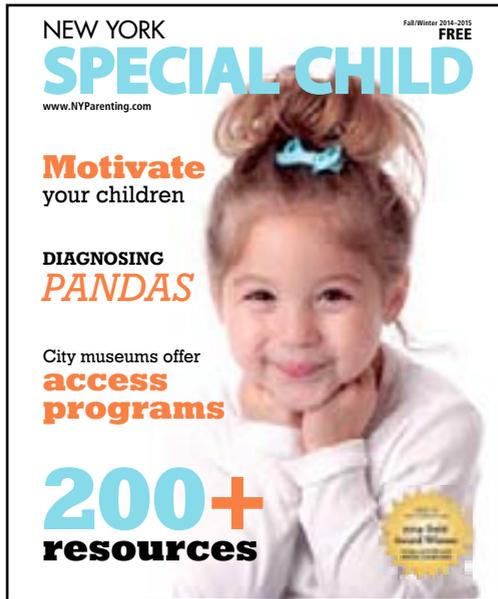
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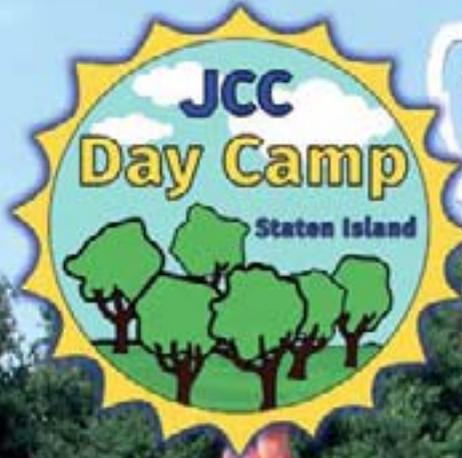
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