

BRONX/RIVERDALE

December 2018

**FREE**



# Family

[www.NYParenting.com](http://www.NYParenting.com)



Happy Holidays!



## The New York City Charter High School for Architecture, Engineering & Construction Industries

**838 Brook Avenue, Bronx, New York 10451 | 646-400-5566 | aecicharterhs.org | Fax: 718-585-4780**

### ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

Parents and Guardians are cordially invited to attend this annual open house event for the upcoming 2019-2020 school year. We invite families to our school to preview our school environment and tour the building to see the program currently available for incoming freshman students.

**Thursday, December 4, 2018 • 4:30pm – 6:30pm**

**Saturday, December 8, 2018 • 10:00am – 1:00pm**

**Saturday, January 5, 2019 • 10:00am – 1:00pm**

The Mission of AECI is to create an integrated rigorous academic program and career preparatory learning environment that provides students with a foundation of the necessary skills, knowledge, and practical experience to pursue a path leading to college and/or a career in the Architecture, Engineering or Construction Industries.

- Students are exposed to Architecture, Engineering or Construction Industries during their four-year degree
- College partnerships expose students to college level course work in preparation for college and career
- Over 96% of our students graduate and attend 2 and 4 year colleges
- Students are highly encouraged to participate in clubs, sports teams and internships in order to expose students to working collaboratively as teams and individually.



### EVENTO ANNUAL DE PUERTAS ABIERTAS

Los padres y tutores están cordialmente invitados a asistir a este evento anual de puertas abiertas de nuestra institución para el próximo año escolar 2019-2020. Invitamos a las familias a nuestra escuela a realizar una vista previa para conocer nuestro ambiente escolar y recorrer el edificio para ver los programas que están disponibles para los estudiantes del primer año.

**Jueves, Diciembre 4, 2018 • 4:30pm - 6:30pm**

**Sabado, Diciembre 8, 2018 • 10:00am - 1:00pm**

**Sabado, Enero 5, 2019 • 10:00am - 1:00pm**

La Misión educativa de AECI es crear un riguroso programa académico integrar de enseñanza y aprendizaje preparatorio de carreras que proporcionen a los estudiantes una base de habilidades necesarias del conocimiento y la experiencia práctica, para seguir un camino que los conduzcan a la universidad en los estudios de Arquitectura, Ingeniería e industrias de la construcción.

- Los estudiantes están recibiendo clases sobre Arquitectura, Ingeniería e Industrias de la Construcción durante su carrera de cuarto años.
- Las asociaciones con las Universidades ofrecen a los estudiantes prepararlos en cursos de nivel universitario antes de ingresar a una Carrera universitaria en estas áreas.
- Mas del 96% de nuestros estudiantes se graduado y asisten a colegios universitarios de 2 o 4 años.
- A los estudiantes se les anima a participar en clubes, a formar equipos deportivos y a realizar sus prácticas con el fin de conducir a los estudiantes a trabajar en colaboración como equipos e individualmente.



# NEW YORK Parenting

Bronx/Riverdale Family  
December 2018

Where every child matters



16



30



26



14

## FEATURES

- 12 Laying off sweets**  
How to help your kids reduce their sugar intake  
**BY JAMIE LOBER**
- 14 Give back**  
Get kids involved in donating to or organizing a food drive this holiday season  
**BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON**
- 16 Your family's New Year's resolutions**  
A group effort to improve relationships and well-being  
**BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL**
- 18 Inspiring change**  
Sex abuse survivor's story leads pol to draft new legislation  
**BY TAMMY SCILEPPI**
- 22 Smart moves**  
Reducing your risk of a child with a neurological disorder  
**BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL**

## COLUMNS

- 6 Short Stuff**
- 20 Healthy Living**  
**BY DANIELLE SULLIVAN**
- 21 Family Financial Planning**  
**BY ANTHONY N. CORRAO**
- 24 Just Write Mom**  
**BY DANIELLE SULLIVAN**
- 30 Good Sense Eating**  
**BY CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD**

## CALENDAR

- 26 December Events**

## SPECIAL SECTIONS

- 8 Mid-Year Education Directory**

# The end of the year — a new beginning

The year 2018 is almost over and it's hard to believe how quickly it all passes. I was having lunch with my niece the other day — whose kids are 4 and 7 — and I told her to treasure every moment because it all goes so fast! One day your children are just being born, and then they're off to school, and then they're teenagers and pulling away, and then they're adults on their own and you're an empty nester.



Bronx/Riverdale, and lastly Manhattan. Recently we merged with another excellent title in Manhattan and after the end of this month, our company name will change to New York Family Media, and the magazine in Manhattan will be a blend of both of them, with the name changing to New York Family.

It will offer the continuation of the best of both editorial efforts. When you see it, please know that it's still ours. The other titles will be staying exactly as they are.

It's 20 years since we started Brooklyn Family, which was the first of our monthly titles. I was a mom in Brooklyn, and my daughter was 7 years old. Now she's a lovely grown woman. Then came Queens,

and our distributors. I want to thank all of them for the years of collaboration. Personal thanks to Tina, Erin, Leah, Courtney, Arthur, and Vinny. You've made it a real pleasure to do my work. And a big thank you to Cliff for 20 years of letting me "do my thing."

Wishing you and yours a wonderful holiday season.

Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
Publisher/Executive Editor  
Susan@nyparenting.com

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 1399 Ogden Avenue  
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**Richard H. Mangum Early Learning Center**  
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 Bronx, New York 10451  
 (718) 590-0673

**Marshall England Early Learning Center**  
 800 Concourse Village East  
 Bronx, NY 10452  
 (718) 742-2366/69

**Head Start Program**  
 880 River Avenue 2nd Floor  
 Bronx, NY 10452  
 (718) 992-1321

# Short Stuff



## Connect with local moms

Join our Facebook sisterhood to find moms in your neighborhood for advice, community, and commiseration at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nypmoms>

## For creating keepsake ornaments

Bubzi Co's Baby Clay Ornament Keepsake Kit makes a great gift for new parents. The ornaments can also be given as gifts to grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends! Busy parents can create meaningful baby keepsakes without the fuss of making their own dough and mixing and baking when they are time poor and trying to keep up with their baby. Non-toxic ingredients of this kit make it safe for both mama and baby.

The kit includes air-drying clay (no baking), a circle- and a heart-shaped mold, non-toxic paint, ribbons and twine, wax



paper, plus organza gifts bags. You can purchase additional clay refill packs to create two more ornaments using the materials from the original kit.

*Bubzi Co's Baby Clay Ornament Keepsake Kit, \$16.95, available at <https://bubzico.com> or on Amazon.*



## Private & Independent School Guide for NYC

Check it out on [NYParenting.com](https://nyparenting.com)



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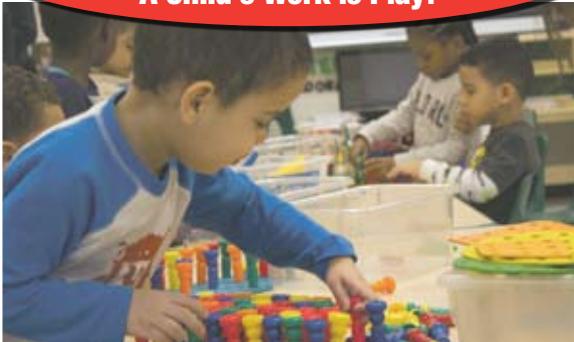
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[trabajamoscommunityheadstart.com](http://trabajamoscommunityheadstart.com)



## Come visit us on our Magnet Mondays!

Call the school and arrange a tour.

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For more information, give us a call at **718.239.7401**

Address:

**1560 Purdy Street  
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**www.LindenTree567.com**

## Mid-Year Education

### DIRECTORY

#### **(AECI) NYC Charter High School for Architecture, Engineering & Construction Industries**

**Mott Haven, 646-400-5566  
www.aecicharterhs.org**

An academic program providing students with a foundation of the necessary skills, knowledge and practical experience to pursue a path leading to college and/or a career in the architecture, engineering, or construction industries. AECI's offerings are focused on providing a rigorous college preparatory sequence of classes while also preparing students for success on industry-recognized certification exams. All students receive double periods of math and ELA in freshman year to prepare for long lasting success. All staff members are tasked with developing the whole child by working together to ensure that all students' academic, emotional and social development is supported, cultivated and challenged.

#### **Aquinas High School Belmont, 718-367-2113 www.aquinashs.org**

Our high school is committed to educating and inspiring young women to a lifetime of faith, learning and compassionate action for a more just world. We are a community of faith and learning, rooted in the Catholic tradition and committed to excellence in the education of young women - mind and heart, body and spirit. Since its founding in 1923, our school has welcomed each new wave of NYC's population with a challenging curriculum, a broad spectrum of co-curricular activities and passionate community service in a diverse and nurturing environment. Today, 100% of our students achieve Regent endorsed diplomas and go on to attend college or university of their choice.

#### **Linden Tree Elementary Magnet School for Global Leaders of Innovation and Discovery**

**Parkchester, 718-239-7401  
www.lindentree567.com**

Pre-Kindergarten thru 5th Grade where the most dedicated educators work alongside our families and community members to foster a love of education that will last a lifetime. We believe all children can learn and achieve in a safe and academically rigorous environment and that every child is entitled to the same opportunities and the best education available. To become competitive in the world, we will provide all students from Pre-K to 5th Grade with the most current technology. Our ultimate goal is to use pathways in Mathematics, Computer Science, Engineering and the Arts to engage students in learning quests that empower them to solve real world challenges and inspire them to reimagine how they see themselves and the world.

#### **Rosalyn Yalow Charter School**

**NEW Kindergarten - 1st Grade Campus  
Sunset Park, 347-735-5480  
www.yalowcharter.org**

Kindergarten and First Grade classes are now available on their own new campus. Our mission is to eliminate the learning achievement gap for poor urban children - including special needs students and English language learners - by using an engaging and demanding curriculum to graduate students at or above grade level in literacy and math. Recognizing the relationship between social emotional support and student achievement, our school uses a collaborative teaching approach - lead teacher and one with a background in social work for grades K-2. Our extended school day runs from 8:00am to 5:00pm, filled with rich extracurricular activities like art, chess and fencing.

#### **Spuyten Duyvil Pre-School**

**Riverdale / Kingsbridge  
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spuytenduyvilpreschool.org**

Offering a mix of PreK4 and private programs for children ages 2.9 through 5 years. Housed in an historic brick building from 1905, our well-established school has a warm, flexible and appropriately stimulating envi-

*Continued on page 10*



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 Please contact us with any questions: [apply@zetaschools.org](mailto:apply@zetaschools.org)

Zeta Bronx 1  
 222 Alexander Ave  
 Bronx, NY 10454  
 (serving Pre-K\* - 2nd grade)



Zeta Inwood 1  
 652 West 187th St  
 New York, NY 10033  
 (serving K - 2nd grade)



Zeta Charter Schools will serve students in \*Pre-Kindergarten through 2nd grade.  
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## The Rosalyn Yalow Charter School

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For more information,  
visit us at  
[www.aquinashs.org](http://www.aquinashs.org)

**ACADEMICS:** Aquinas offers an exemplary college preparatory curriculum with a wide range of Advanced Placement and Honors courses.

**TECHNOLOGY:** Aquinas provides state-of-the-art technology including iMac computers, Chromebooks, Smartboards and campus Wi-Fi.

**PARTNERS:** Aquinas offers an internship at the Bronx County Courthouse, a Financial Literacy Program, Bridge-Up Program, PricewaterhouseCoopers Financial Program, among many others.

**AFTER-SCHOOL:** Aquinas offers a wide variety of activities, clubs and sports.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Aquinas is easily accessible by bus and train with private MTA dismissal buses.

## Mid-Year Education

### DIRECTORY

*Continued from page 8*

ronment, designed to encourage independence, social growth, creativity and enjoyment of learning. The “hands-on” curriculum supports each child’s social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. Daily activities include stories and discussions, regular and varied art activities, math and science experiences, extensive dramatic play and block building, cooking and a large, a unique outdoor play space to support large muscle development. The front yard holds a compost bin and large planting areas where all children get direct experience in planting and environmental studies.. All children also take part in weekly Music and Chess@3 classes. Open Houses held monthly; check the website and come visit. To see and hear the school in action is to love it!

**St. Theresa School**  
718-792-3688

[sttheresaschoolbronx.org](http://sttheresaschoolbronx.org)

The children who pass through our doors are eager to learn and are challenged by a stimulating academic, social and athletic curriculum infused with Catholic values. The program reflects an integrated learning experience for Pre-Kindergarten three year olds, Universal Pre-Kindergarten four year olds, kindergarteners and students in grades one through eighth grade. Teachers, administrators, aides and other professionals who also pass through our doors impart their knowledge and extensive experience with enthusiasm and a truly caring respect for the children in their charge. Providing before and after school programs, breakfast and lunch, children’s choir, art, music, Italian language studies, computer classes, phys. ed and accelerated mathematics. We

also offer a wide variety of after school activities. St. Theresa’s offers children a place to grow and blossom with discipline and guidance.

**St. Thomas Aquinas School**

East Tremont  
718-893-7600

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

Our school was founded by Mother Butler and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary in 1907. Over these years, the school has been a mainstay in the neighborhood. It continues to provide a Roman Catholic curriculum and a quality education addressing the changing needs of the student population. Catholic values are infused in every aspect of the students’ educational experiences. The faculty and staff are dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all. Registration is ongoing. Inquire about scholarships. The school has full-day Pre-K4 and Kindergarten, and grades 1 to 8. Early drop-off and after school programs are available.

**Zeta Bronx 1 Elementary Charter School**

South Bronx  
929-386-9987

[zetaschools.org/apply](http://zetaschools.org/apply)

Our school is a place that nurtures mind, body, soul and connectedness so our children can achieve their greatest potential. Mindfulness and wellness permeate the school day. Rigorous hands-on academics with cutting-edge innovation and technology are at the heart of each school. Healthy breakfast, lunch and snacks, innovative activities, field trips and after-school programming enrich the learning experience.

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CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Visit our website at [sttheresaschoolbronx.org](http://sttheresaschoolbronx.org)

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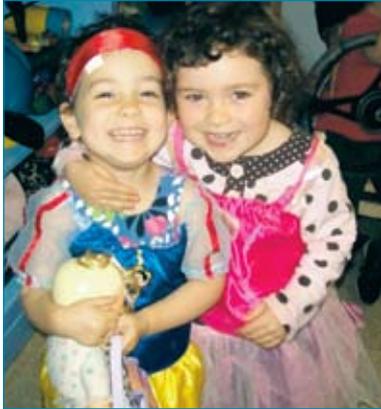
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[www.spuytenduyvilpreschool.org](http://www.spuytenduyvilpreschool.org)  
for more information

**718-549-1525**

3041 Kingsbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY (Between 230 & 231 Street)



## St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School

1909 Daly Avenue, Bronx, NY 10460  
718-893-7600

*"Founded in Faith, Growing with Confidence"*

St. Thomas Aquinas School is proud to announce the addition of FREE Full Day Universal Pre-Kindergarten for the 2018-2019 school year! Our school is also a proud participant in the new Blended Learning Initiative bringing advanced technology and instructional innovation into the classroom resulting in higher test scores and increased subject comprehension.



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- Early Drop off 7:15 am
- Guidance Counselor
- After School Program until 6:00pm
- State of the Art Wireless Access
- Computer Lab and Smartboard Technology
- Title I Services: Reading, Math & ESL Resource Room/SETSS (for eligible students with IESP)
- FREE Breakfast & Hot Lunch Programs
- Phys Ed, Art & Music Programs
- After School Piano Lessons
- Daily Prayer and Weekly Masses

Apply today to become part of an expanding St. Thomas Aquinas School community. Registration is open and our admissions are limited! Contact the school directly at **718-893-7600** to arrange a tour.

*"Celebrating over 100 years of Academic Excellence in the West Farms-South Bronx Community"*

## Districts 8 & 11 Magnet Schools Assistance Program

The NYC Department of Education Magnet Schools are schools of choice offering distinct, innovative, thematic learning opportunities for your child. Each federally funded magnet school offers specialized curriculum aligned to the school theme with student activities designed to promote academic excellence.

### I.S. 123

Theme: **Bronx Urban STEAM Magnet School**  
Address: **1025 Morrison Avenue**  
Bronx, New York 10472 (District 8)  
Tel: **718.328.2105**

### P.S. 178

Theme: **Magnet School of Multimedia Arts & Design**  
Address: **850 Baychester Avenue**  
Bronx, New York 10475 (District 11)  
Tel: **718.904.5570**

### P.S. 567

Theme: **Magnet School for Global Leaders of Innovation and Discovery**  
Address: **1560 Purdy st.**  
Bronx, New York 10462 (District 11)  
Tel: **718.239.7401**

### P.S. 160

Theme: **The Walt Disney Magnet STEAM School**  
Address: **4140 Hutchinson River Parkway East**  
Bronx, New York 10475 (District 11)  
Tel: **718.822.8402**



**COME  
SEE OUR  
MAGNET  
SCHOOLS!**

For additional information call the schools or contact:

JoAnn Rintel Abreu

Email: [JRintelAbreu@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:JRintelAbreu@schools.nyc.gov) Phone: 718.968.6178

**Applications Accepted for September 2019 Enrollment**

# Laying off sweets

## How to help your kids reduce their sugar intake

BY JAMIE LOBER

If you have a child with a sweet tooth, you are not alone. And this time of the year can make it particularly difficult to for anyone to watch how many sugary holiday treats they indulge in.

"It is always more challenging to keep sugar intake under control from Halloween through New Year's because there will be a heightened exposure to sugary foods," said Laurie Simon, registered dietician at Midtown Nutrition Care.

But watching sugar intake is important regardless of the time of year, and it's up to parents to teach kids to make good decisions. To start, try to make it a family affair to eat better by reading labels together.

"You should have under 25 grams of sugar a day, and aim for things that have at least 3 grams or more of dietary fiber," said Simon.

Offer a variety of foods so that your kids can make good choices when at school or at a party.

"Have his palette exposed to all types of foods so sugar is not the only taste he is after," said Simon.

Feel free to play around with your recipes. For instance, substi-

tuting applesauce or banana for sugar in recipes may go unnoticed.

"Fruit is a natural way to satisfy some of the sugar craving, and you can camouflage them in dishes by pureeing things into smoothies, sauces, baked goods, or casseroles," said Simon. Remember, when you wear the chef's hat, you are controlling what is going into your child's food.

To increase fiber content, and in turn omega-3s, Simon suggests adding, "chia seeds or ground flax seeds to bread crumbs when making chicken cutlets, or put them in breads or muffins."

And be aware of where sugar may be hiding. Sometimes there are sneaky sources of sugar, such as in yogurts, granola bars, or cereals.

If your child is struggling to maintain a healthy weight, you may want to negotiate how often he will indulge in sweets, and help him incorporate healthy snacks into his regimen.

"Do not have the same snack every day. Try to introduce new foods," said Simon.

But remember that weight is affected by more than what you eat.

"Getting good sleep, exercise, and hydration are factors that come into play with weight management," said Simon.

So encourage your kids to get active, get a good night's sleep, and increase water intake.

The pediatrician should familiarize you with the growth curve, and you'll want to keep a watchful eye to be sure your child's weight does not go up greater than his height. You also want to be vigilant of pre-diabetes and signs of insulin resistance.

Keep in mind that you, as the parent, are your child's biggest role model, and he is always paying attention to your behavior.

"Parents want to be proactive and good role models, so if you are sitting down and eating a brownie when you are telling your child he cannot have the same thing, that is not good nutritional etiquette, in a sense," said Simon.

Most of all, talk about why monitoring sugar matters. Explain to your child that sugar is part of a balanced diet, but needs to be kept under control. Teach him that everything he eats affects his body in some way, and too much sugar can have negative consequences.

"Sometimes too much sugar makes people fatigued, and without physical activity, you will gain weight," said Simon.

This should help him understand and get on board.

"It should be educational, where your child learns about how food affects mood and how it is important for your immune system, for growth and development, for bones, for energy, and when you put good quality ingredients in your body, it runs, feels, and develops at its best," said Simon.

But remember that your child is more likely to have a better relationship with food and sugar if it's not forbidden altogether.

"It does not mean you cannot indulge in sweets, but rather that they should be enjoyed in moderation," said Simon.

*Jamie Lober, author of "Pink Power" ([www.getpinkpower.com](http://www.getpinkpower.com)), is dedicated to providing information on women's and pediatric health topics. She can be reached at [jamie@getpinkpower.com](mailto:jamie@getpinkpower.com). © 2018 Jamie Lober*





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# Give back

Get kids involved in donating to or organizing a food drive this holiday season

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

**D**uring the holiday season, there are a number of opportunities to give back to New Yorkers in need. This is a great time of the year to teach children about the importance of giving back, a value that will stick with them throughout their lives. Learning to give back is vital for positive youth development. Parents, schools, and communities play an important role in making community service a way of life. Participating in community service or philanthropy with your children will aid the development of qualities that foster social responsibility and help them become good citizens.

With more than one million New Yorkers (including one in five children) struggling to put food on the table, there is no better time than now to lend a hand. New York parents can get involved in a big way, and so can the city's kids.

"For 35 years, City Harvest has been on the road every day rescuing food that would otherwise go to waste, and delivering it, free of charge, to hundreds of soup kitchens and food pantries across New York City," said Lisa Sposato, director of Food Sourcing for City Harvest. "Our work also focuses on providing



nutrition education to children and their families, and working with communities to increase access to healthy food. Every item donated to one of our drop-off locations and every dollar contributed to

the digital drive will make a noticeable impact on a fellow New Yorker in need," she added.

This a great way for families to get the kids involved in philanthropy and

discuss what it means to give back. The process to set up a food drive is quite simple. And often a good place to start is by rallying your school communities.

"Starting a food drive at your child's school is an easy, three-step process," said Sposato.

Here's how to get started, as recommended by City Harvest:

**Select dates for your drive.** While the Daily News Food Drive runs from Oct. 23 through Jan. 18, you can run your school's drive at any time during that period. City Harvest recommends running a drive for at least two weeks.

**Set up a bin in a high-traffic area of the school with a list of suggested items.** The most-needed items are canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned proteins, peanut butter in plastic jars, packaged macaroni and cheese, cereal, soups, and juice packs.

**Spread the word!** Hang flyers, make announcements at assemblies and over the PA system, and encourage age-appropriate students to share on social media using #DailyNewsFoodDrive. A toolkit that includes Daily News Food Drive flyers and tips for running a successful drive are available for download at <http://www.cityharvest.org/dailynews/>.

"All participating schools will be en-

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This a great way for families to get the kids involved in philanthropy and discuss what it means to give back.

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tered into the Kids Can Help Competition. The school in each borough that collects the most food will win a prize from Macmillan Children's Publishing Group," Sposato shared.

New York families looking to donate food have convenient locations all over the city and in every neighborhood.

"This year's drive drop-off locations for non-perishable food items are at City Harvest's office in Midtown Manhattan, located at 6 E. 32nd St., any FDNY or NYPD stations, and select Goodwill or Apple Bank locations throughout all five boroughs," said Sposato.

The simple act of donating food will help an in-need individual or family in a very special way. All collected food will go to hundreds of food pantries, soup kitchens, and community food programs

across the five boroughs. But if you don't have the space to collect can goods and other food items, there are other ways to give. For instance, a virtual food drive.

"If you're interested in donating funds, you can show your support by donating online to the Daily News Virtual Food Drive, created specifically for this year's drive. Every \$1 donated helps City Harvest feed our neighbors in need for a day," said Sposato. "Families can donate food to any drop-off locations, submit funds to the virtual food drive, or even start their own team to encourage everyone to stand with City Harvest in the fight against hunger," she added.

No matter how young or old your children are, everyone benefits by participating in community service. Cultivate your child's charitable interests during the holiday season and everyday by making charity a fun event for the family. This holiday season, have your family come together to do good and give back. To find exact drop off locations near you, visit <http://www.cityharvest.org/dailynews>.

*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.shnieka-johnson.com](http://www.shnieka-johnson.com).*

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# Your family's New Year's resolutions

## A group effort to improve relationships and well-being

BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL

**H**ave you decided on a New Year's resolution yet? How many times have you started a new year planning to exercise more, eat healthier, or go to that special place on your bucket list only to find that — three weeks in — you've lost your enthusiasm?

Some folks swear that exercising with a partner helps them to stay motivated, or that joining a reading group keeps them focused on finishing a novel. So why not try a family resolution this year? This would be a resolution that the entire family signs on to in order to build better bonds, live a healthier lifestyle, or just focus on a group goal, such as raising money for a desired big-ticket item everyone can enjoy.

### Strengthening bonds

Family resolutions are not only more fun, but they also help to strengthen bonds.

Stacy Kaiser, a licensed psychotherapist, relationship expert and Live Happy ([www.livehappy.com](http://www.livehappy.com)) editor at large, explains, "Any time a group of people unites to do something together that they all agree upon, it helps to build a bond. Sharing common interests and ideas while working together helps us to connect with

one another."

In general, group activities foster togetherness.

"When we think of activities, we tend to think of hobbies and sports, but resolutions are activities as well and are all about improving ourselves and making our families better."

Susan Kuczmariski, EdD, a leading expert on the dynamics of family culture and bonding and author of several award-winning books, including the bestselling "Becoming a Happy Family: Pathways to the Family Soul" (Book Ends Publishing), shares, "We did New Year's resolutions within our family when our three sons were young. I believe you can start early with this exercise, and, when they become teens, they relish this opportunity. It gives them a chance to focus on something that is meaningful and familiar."

Kuczmariski stresses that spending time with each other should be a priority.

"If family togetherness is nurtured, there is a deep, fulfilling sense of belonging. The family that plays together, stays together. For many time-crunched families, that variation on a familiar saying rings true. In fact, these days, as the hustle and bustle of holidays continues, carve out time to spend together doing activities

that everyone enjoys. Make spending time with each other a priority and strengthening family bonds a concentrated focus."

### Develop a plan together

It's imperative that all members of the family are invested in the resolution, so Mom and Dad should be sure to involve everyone in the planning.

Kuczmariski advises, "Have each family member do their own list of strengths and needs and share them in order to get input from other family members."

Knowing what everyone's individual strengths and needs are helps the family to choose activities for both personal and family growth.

"The trick is to let differences within the family flourish. There must also be room for each child's unique and personal ideas and contributions," she says.

### Sticking to It

Now the hard part. It's hard enough for one person to stick to a resolution. How does a family do it?

Kaiser suggests the following for ways families can stick to resolutions:

- Make goals small and reachable.
- Be sure that all family members are in agreement with the resolution.
- Encourage each other daily. Encouragement provides motivation and serves as another way to bond with one another.

"Family members are ideally set up to remind each other about the resolution," says Kuczmariski. "This is one benefit of a group situation. Reminders should be gentle, not forceful in any way."

Make it fun and be sure that everyone is involved. If a resolution is to do one healthy activity together each weekend, take turns choosing the activity.

### Resolution ideas for families

In need of some ideas to help kick off your resolution? Here are some to consider:

1. **Start a weekly or bi-monthly ritual**  
Perhaps your family wants to plan a

### Document memories

You might decide that your resolution is to combine your efforts to document a year of memories. Here are some ideas for this year-long project:

**Take turns photographing family events.** At the end of each month, have a family scrapbooking day to display the photos creatively.

**Draw a map of the U.S. or globe on poster board.** Each family member chooses a color to represent themselves. Then they use their individual color to highlight states, cities, or countries visited over the course of the year. This would include school trips, business trips, and family vacations.

**Plan a family reunion.** You've put it off for too long. Just do it! Include the kids in the planning. Take a group photo at the event and have reunion T-shirts designed to document the day.

**Family history project.** Do an ancestor search as a family. Once you have a family tree completed, make a book (one page per family member) with photos and descriptions of each person.

**Start a family vacation journal.** Each family member writes down his or her favorite experience from the current year's trip with a photo to accompany the memory. Leave room for future years.



family “date” once per week or twice per month. This could be a family night out, such as bowling, going to a restaurant, or attending a group painting class. Perhaps an occasional tech-free day will work. Instead of everyone’s attention focused on their phones or other tech device, choose to have a family reading night. Have the chosen reader rotate each time. Family members could read from something they’ve written for school, from a journal, or from their favorite book. Then, everyone discusses it.

## 2. Family conference day

You might consider committing to a family meeting once per week. It keeps communication flowing and is a great way for members to support each other and resolve internal issues as well.

Dr. Michelle Maidenberg, a psychotherapist whose specialties include marital and family issues, and author of “Free Your Child From Overeating: 53 Mind-Body Strategies For Lifelong Health” (The Experiment, LLC), suggests, “Invest in facilitating and improving family communication. My family (our children are ages 17, 14, 11, and 9) has a Sunday evening family meeting where we each share things that went well for us during the week and things and people that also disappointed us. This is a

time to share and to work through selective issues with family members.”

## 3. Reevaluate dinner time

“It’s extremely important to eat meals together,” Maidenberg stresses. “According to research, 59 percent of families report eating dinner together at least five times a week (CASA at Columbia University).”

The positives are endless including, “an increased chance of having healthful meals, more opportunity for dialogue and connection, and, according to research, it decreases the chances that teens will smoke, drink, and use substances.”

Maidenberg advises that families instill mealtime as part of the family culture, set a specific schedule for the meals, and ensure that meals are enjoyable and engaging.

If schedules simply won’t allow for daily family meals, be sure to schedule meals on weekends or rework schedules so that regular weekly meals become a given. Perhaps, a family breakfast would work.

## 4. Make health a priority

“Integrate ongoing family self-care,” says Maidenberg. “This can be an agreement among family members to include exercising (biking, hiking, etc.), meditation, or yoga as regular family activities.”

She reminds that individual family members need to regenerate, or else they won’t have the energy to give to each other.

Other ideas:

- Collect vegetable recipes that everyone would actually like to eat.
- Build an obstacle course together to use throughout the warm months.
- Find indoor activities that facilitate cardio exercise (e.g. indoor rock climbing, roller skating, swimming) to stay active in the winter.

## 5. Volunteer together

Kuczarski shares, “Community service is an outlet for families to experience renewal or a sense of restoration.”

Maidenberg agrees that when families volunteer together it creates better bonds.

“When the family engages collectively toward a mission and purpose that is meaningful to the family system, it provides them with something to talk about, bond over, and work toward. Families naturally bond when they feel purposeful and united.”

## 6. Money matters

“Hold a monthly, family financial discussion night,” suggests Pamela Yellen, a financial investigator and author of two New York Times bestselling books, including “The Bank on Yourself Revolution: Fire Your Banker, Bypass Wall Street,” and “Take Control of Your Own Financial Future” (BenBella Books). She recommends focusing on the family budget.

“Even children as young as 4 or 5 can get involved. Create your family’s ‘Personal Spending Rules’ together to work toward family goals. Your children will not only learn good financial skills through this process, but they’ll take pride in being part of it.”

Families can also decide to save for a big-ticket item that the family can enjoy together, such as a trampoline or a special vacation. Plan a garage sale — kids can create a lemonade stand and help with the tagging. This is also a great teaching moment about the importance of saving for something special.

## 7. Improve your environment

Each family member states something that can be improved about the home environment. Then, decide on one thing to tackle as a family. For instance, the family van may have become a dumping place for toys, newspapers, and candy wrappers. Each week a different family member takes a turn to pick up items left in the car. And the person cleaning gets to keep the change!

*Myrna Beth Haskell is an award-winning author, columnist, and feature writer. Her work has appeared in national and international publications ([www.myrnahaskell.com](http://www.myrnahaskell.com)).*

# Inspiring change

## Sex abuse survivor's story leads pol to draft new legislation

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

*Connie Altamirano, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, is continuing her crusade in the state legislature against this ongoing national epidemic — spreading the word within her Queens community and beyond.*

*The mom-activist bravely came forward to tell her story (read Part I here: <https://www.nyparenting.com/stories/2018/10/child-sex-abuse-survivor-mother-advocate-2018-09.html>) sharing how her experience as a victim has affected her as a woman, and most importantly at this juncture, as a parent.*

*Her story has inspired a new piece of legislation aimed at advancing justice and healing for survivors.*

In her fight against injustice, Ridge-wood parent Connie Altamirano has joined forces with a New York state senator to advance changes that will help other survivors find justice.

“As a parent, and as a legislator, it both angers and saddens me that so many young lives are devastated and left permanently scarred by these despicable acts,” said state Sen. Catharine Young (57th Senate District in Upstate New York), sponsor of the new Child Victims Fund legislation.

Sen. Young and Altamirano have forged a friendship and close working relationship in the course of developing a dialogue on the issue of childhood sexual abuse.

Altamirano's story, shared during a budget hearing, had a profound impact on the senator and was part of her motivation for developing an alternative to the Child Victims Act, which has been stalled in Albany year after year, that would help assure justice and compensation for survivors like Altamirano, whose abusers were family members, and not affiliated with large, deep-pocketed institutions like the Catholic Church or Scouting organizations.

“While high-profile cases and multi-million-dollar settlements brought against institutions like the Catholic Church, and the Boy Scouts make headlines, the reality is that institutional sexual abuse accounts for only a fraction of child sexual abuse cases,” Sen. Young noted. “The other 80 to 90 percent of

victims — abused by family members, neighbors, or acquaintances — who lack the means to pay civil damages, [The Child Victims Act] would do nothing for them. That is why we came up with a different solution,” she added.

In the hopes that Sen. Young can provoke change that helps others, her office has reached out to NY Parenting, so that readers can be made aware of her ongoing efforts and have a clear understanding of this crucial, solution-oriented proposal.

### The Child Victims Fund

The legislation recently introduced in the New York State Senate by Sen. Young will advance justice and healing for many brave survivors of childhood sexual abuse by making it easier to prosecute perpetrators and provide restitution to victims. Key elements of the measure include the creation of a \$300-million state fund from asset forfeiture monies to compensate victims for physical and psychological harm, and the elimination of the criminal statute of limitations for child sex offenses, allowing for prosecution of predators to occur no matter how many years had passed (the Child Victims Act only extends the criminal statute of limitations from 23 to 28 years of age).

“Childhood sexual abuse is one of society's most insidious crimes. Perpetrated on innocent children, often by someone they know and trust, these crimes are frequently shrouded in shame, confusion, and silence, leaving victims with deep emotional and psychological wounds that can take decades to confront,” Sen. Young said. “While the wounds will never fully heal, victims deserve access to all avenues of justice, both criminal and monetary. This legislation serves as the bridge to that justice.”

Senator Young's proposal would help all survivors by assuring compensation for everyone who has been a victim of childhood sexual abuse. The Child Victims Act and its “look-back window,” which would allow time-barred victims to sue their abusers for financial damages would, practically speaking, really only results in compensation for those who were abused by individuals affil-

ated with large, deep-pocketed institutions such as churches, the Boy Scouts, etc., according to the senator.

Victims like Altamirano, who were abused by family members, step-family members, etc. (the majority of child sexual abuse cases fall into this category), would probably not be able to collect compensation, unless their abuser is independently wealthy.

The Senator says her proposal would also completely eliminate the criminal statute of limitations on child sexual abuse, while the Child Victims Act would only raise it from 23 to 28 years of age. With most victims unable to confront their abuse until, typically, their 40s, the Child Victims Act's minor change in the criminal statute would have little to no effect.

### The healing process

As a clinical psychologist with expertise in psychological trauma, including due to child abuse and sexual assault, Dr. Jim Hopper has studied traumatic, as well as recovered, memories of sexual abuse for 20-plus years.

He writes on Psychcentral.com: “Research evidence shows victims can go for decades without having (recognizable or explicit) memories of the abuse. People almost always have implicit memories of the abuse, i.e. memories they did not realize were memories; for example, physiological or emotional responses triggered by encountering things associated with the abuse, like being touched in a certain way.”

Most survivors feel stripped of their dignity and sense of control and tend to block early memories of abuse until their 40s and 50s, sometimes only recalling snippets as though from a bad dream.

Early traumatic events seem to color a survivor's world like a dark cloud hanging over their lives. Sadly, that has been Altamirano's experience.

But there's hope. According to Dr. Hopper, while traumatic memories can be scary and confusing, “they can be sorted out too,” he writes; “certainly enough to heal and have the life you want.”

Professional therapy may help, but it can take years and isn't always effective. Indeed, the healing process is a long one,



Child sexual abuse survivor and advocate Connie Altamirano and her children, ages 9 and 13.

and the journey is daunting and emotionally arduous.

“By creating a state compensation fund for victims, monetary reparation for the horrific crimes victims endured will be available to them, regardless of the amount of time that has passed or their abusers’ financial status,” Sen. Young explained. “More efficient and expedited than a civil action, deserving victims who have been denied justice in other venues will find redress through this process.”

One of the most widely underreported crimes estimates are that approximately one in four girls and one in six boys will

be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.

To get what they want, predators weave a complicated web of lies and deceit, ensnaring their victims with manipulation and threats.

Sen. Young agrees. She says, “Victims of child sexual abuse are too often silenced — by their perpetrators, sometimes by disbelieving families and by a system that slams the door on their right to be heard before they have even found their voice. It is time for that to change. Providing victims with redress through the courts is not only just, it is a crucial part of the recovery process.”

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“By creating a state compensation fund for victims, monetary reparation for the horrific crimes victims endured will be available to them, regardless of the amount of time that has passed or their abusers’ financial status.”

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Increased vigilance in reporting and preventing abuse are the goals of the final provisions of the new bill, which add members of the clergy to the list of “mandated reporters” obligated to report suspected abuse and require criminal background checks for employees and volunteers who work with children.

Particularly important, this expedited and streamlined compensation process would spare victims from waiting years for civil cases to work their way through the courts and protect them from the often re-traumatizing process of a trial. It would also offer the assurance of an award. When victims receive civil judgments against family members or other non-institutional abusers, the likelihood of the victim actually collecting those funds is low, according to Sen. Young, who emphasizes that “no matter the circumstances, victims could apply for compensation to rebuild their lives. My 21 co-sponsors and I believe that any measure to help victims must offer justice for all.”

She added: “The courageous survivors who are spearheading action on this issue are heroes. Their stories have convinced me that we need to help all victims affected by this devastating crime,” Sen. Young said. “However, in continuing to play partisan politics rather than working towards a realistic solution, Senate Democrats are leaving victims in the cold. The session clock is running out. The time to act is now.”

*Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer and journalist, parent, and regular contributor to New York Parenting. Interviewing hundreds of New York City’s movers and shakers has been an amazing adventure for her. Scileppi’s work has appeared in a variety of media outlets. She has also written book cover copy for Simon and Schuster.*



# Gotta hand it to you

Proper hand hygiene helps quell colds

**T**he more you look around the city, the more you see hand sanitizer dispensers: at doctors' offices, restaurants bathrooms, workplaces, and schools. (In fact, the place where you might need them the most is the one area where you won't find them: on the subway, but that's clearly a larger issue!). Now heading into the brutal winter season, how do you keep your kids (and yourself) protected from picking up the rampant barrage of cold germs and viruses that flood the school halls and handrails all over the city? Every parent has her own idea and often the plan includes Purell.

"No eat, wipes," says 3-year-old Evan Goldstein as he refuses a cookie from his father at the playground. In his short life, Evan has been trained not to eat anything unless he cleans his hands with disinfectant wipes or covers them in Purell. Some parents would admire his restraint, but could Evan be on the road to an unhealthy tolerance for germs, not to mention a harmful obsession with cleanliness?

While Evan's mom, Stacey, carries antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer everywhere she goes, Evan's dad, Joe, thinks a little dirt never hurt anyone. It's a source of conflict for the Goldsteins.

## When to practice hand hygiene

The American Academy of Pediatrics agrees that hand hygiene is the most effective means of reducing germs and infections. Whether you choose to use hand sanitizer or regular soap and water, it is key to teach your children to practice good hand hygiene throughout the day. Children should learn to wash their hands:

- Before eating
- After using the bathroom
- Whenever they come in from outside
- After petting a cat or dog, or touching any other pet
- After they cough or sneeze into their hand or blow their nose

Remember, kids learn what they see, so it's important for mom and dad to practice the same hygiene habits.

When we were kids, soap and water was enough. This begs the question: Have parents become overly cautious?

Dr. Anatoly Belilovsky, a pediatrician and medical director of Belilovsky Pediat-



## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

rics in Brooklyn, believes that since "most colds and viruses are spread by hand-to-hand and surface contact, any of the anti-germ products are better than nothing." He says that while soap and water still suffice for washing hands, instant sanitizers hold the attraction that anything "instant" does in today's culture. "It's not that we need different products in order to sanitize; it's that we need different products to motivate us to sanitize."

With all the talk and fear lingering around super-strain viruses and immunity, Dr. Belilovsky believes that sanitizers won't cause super-strains of viruses to develop.

"Many people worry about the 'hygiene hypothesis' — that all of the sanitizing antibacterial products are preventing children from developing immunities — and a lot of research is being done on it. However, the jury is still out; there is no solid proof for the hygiene hypothesis."

Despite this ongoing debate, doctors and parents do agree on this: One good bet to keeping your kids healthy is to educate them on proper hygiene techniques and boost their immunity with healthy food, adequate sleep, and exercise.

"Surprisingly, Evan has not really been sick in his three years," says Stacey Goldstein. "So although I never let him eat anything without wiping his hands, and Joe sometimes does, I hope that his immunity is strong from the nutritious diet he eats, and that's something that Joe and I agree on wholeheartedly."

*Danielle Sullivan is a writer living in New York City. Follow her on Instagram @Deewrite.*

# Here's your year-end financial to-do list

The end of the year is always a happy time for most people. There are holiday parties, family gatherings, and a slower time at the office. With a little planning and action now, you'll be able to enjoy all those parties without worrying about financial items on New Year's Eve. Here is a list of what to look over:

## Review your 401(k) contributions

If you participate in a 401(k), the 2018 maximum contribution limit is \$18,500; if you're age 50 and older the maximum contribution is \$24,500. You have until Dec. 31 to make the contribution to your account.

If you haven't contributed the maximum and still want to contribute more money to your 401(k), you'll need to contact your company's payroll department and ask what steps are needed to increase your deduction starting with your next paycheck. If your employer allows a lump sum contribution you may want to redirect some or all your year-end bonus into your 401(k).

## Take your required minimum distributions

Once you reach age 70-and-a-half, you are required to take a distribution from your IRA, 401(k), and other types of retirement plans by Dec. 31. The only exception to this is the year you turn 70-and-a-half, because you're given an extension until April 1 to make your first withdrawal. Another exception is if you are still employed at this age. If you are still working, it isn't necessary to take the distribution from your employer's 401(k). Missing the distribution deadline, if you are eligible, can lead to penalties that are quite large. Although there are mechanisms to request the penalty be waived, the amount not withdrawn is subject to a 50-percent excise tax. If you haven't taken your distribution yet, contact your financial advisor or 401(k) administrator and take the distribution before the deadline.

Withdrawals from IRA and 401(k) accounts are considered taxable income and may increase future taxes. If that is

a concern, there is a way to avoid those income taxes. Owners of IRA accounts over age 70-and-a-half can make contributions directly to charity from their IRA. This is a powerful planning tool because it allows taxpayers to make qualified charitable distributions up to the \$100,000 limit from their IRAs directly to a charity and to exclude that amount from income. Remember, no taxes will be paid on the distribution, and the income tax charitable deduction is not permitted for this amount.

## Make tax-effective charitable gifts

Making a gift before the end of the year can increase deductions if you itemize your deductions. Consider gifting highly appreciated stock instead of selling the stock and donating cash. If highly appreciated stock is donated to charity before Dec. 31, you get a deduction for the full value of the contributed stock and avoid paying capital-gains taxes on the increase in value since you've owned it.

## Check the deadline for withdrawals flexible spending account

Most flexible spending accounts are use-it-or-lose-it accounts, meaning if you haven't spent all the funds in your account by Dec. 31, you may forfeit whatever money is left in the account. So, before the end of the year, check to see if there is a balance in the account and make that doctor or dentist appointment, or buy the new glasses you may have been putting off.

Flexible spending account funds can also be used for many over-the-counter items like contact lens solution, pain relievers, diaper cream, medical devices like walkers and wheelchairs, and a host of other items.

The same use-it-or-lose-it rules applies to Dependent Care flexible spending accounts. A Dependent Care account allows you to defer up to \$5,000 in 2018 to pay for qualified child care expenses. Some expenses that may qualify are preschool, summer day camp, before or after school programs, and child day-care.



## FAMILY FINANCIAL PLANNING

ANTHONY N. CORRAO

## Contribute to a 529 college-savings plan

For most people, 529 accounts are an excellent strategy to save for college tuition. They allow the beneficiary of the account to use the money tax-free for college tuition, room and board, and fees. In some states, a state income tax deduction is available for your contribution. Most states require the contribution be made by Dec. 31 in order to get the state tax deduction.

A note: Before buying a 529 plan, you should inquire about the particular plan and its fees and expenses. You should also consider that certain states offer tax benefits and fee savings to in-state residents. Whether a state tax deduction and/or application fee savings are available, depends on your state of residence. For tax advice, consult your tax professional. Nonqualifying distribution earnings are taxable and subject to a 10-percent tax penalty.

A little year-end planning could put you on the path towards solid retirement and college planning and might help you save on your taxes. Take a few minutes to review your financial plan before the end of the year to see if you can take advantage of any of these year-end strategies.

*Anthony N. Corrao is president, wealth management and director of corporate education at Manhattan Ridge Advisors. For more than 25 years he has helped families towards their financial goals by developing financial, educational, and retirement planning strategies.*

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# Smart moves

## Reducing your risk of a child with a neurological disorder

BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL

**T**he statistics are alarming no matter how you crunch the numbers. There has been a large increase in recent years of children diagnosed with neurological disorders.

A 2016 “Community Report on Autism,” published by the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, which is funded by the Centers for Disease Control, reported, “One in 68 children or 1.5 percent of 8-year-olds were identified with autism spectrum disorder.” This statistic is particularly daunting because this network studied children ages 4.5 to 9.9 years in 2000 and found that only one in 150 children had a diagnosis.

The percent of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is also concerning. The Centers for Disease Control reports, “The percent of children estimated to have ADHD has changed over time and can vary by how it is measured. Recent surveys show that approximately 11 percent of children 4–17 years of age (6.4 million) have been diagnosed with ADHD as of 2011. A history of ADHD diagnosis by a healthcare provider increased by 42 percent between 2003 and 2011.”

In 2007, the National Institute of Mental Health issued a press release stating, “The number of visits to a doctor’s office that resulted in a diagnosis of bipolar disorder in children and adolescents has increased by 40 times over the last decade.”

Whether the statistics are rising due to earlier under-diagnosis, current over-diagnosis, a true increase in prevalence of the disorders, or some combination of these factors, the numbers have sparked needed debate and continued research. Are the increases due to toxins in the environment? Can a specific diet, exercise program, or reduction in stress during pregnancy reduce the chance of a child being born with a neurological disorder? The bottom line: Women who plan to be pregnant should educate themselves and prepare their bodies, even before conception.

Chris Willhite is chairman of the board of directors for the Neurological Health Foundation, a non-profit that works with medical doctors, nutritionists, neuroscientists, and other researchers to develop

### More reading

Here are some additional resources women planning to get pregnant should check out:

- **Healthy Child Guide:** This is a Neurological Health Foundation publication based on a wealth of research and clinical experience. It is a must-read for moms-to-be. This guide provides a step-by-step plan that women and their partners can follow to improve their chances of having a healthy child.

- **Food Safety for Pregnant Women:** [Foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov)

- **Avoiding Toxic Exposure During Pregnancy:** [Autism Speaks](#)

- **Stress and Pregnancy:** [March of Dimes](#)

specific, evidence-based recommendations that women or couples can follow to improve the odds of having a healthy child, free of chronic neurological health disorders. Willhite talks a bit about the alarming statistics.

“NHF has been around since 2011. It was founded by a group of parents who found the increase in neurological health problems with children extremely disturbing. The cases of bipolar disorder, ADHD, and autism were rising at alarming rates.”

Willhite says that there are several contributors, including environmental toxins, diet, and stress during pregnancy.

“We can educate parents on how to have a higher probability of having a healthy child,” he says.

### Nutrition specifics

“What we know about foods has not changed too much over the years, but there are some specific things to consider,” explains Dr. James B. Adams, director of the Autism-Asperger’s Research Program at Arizona State University and chair of the Neurological Health Foundation’s Scientific Advisory Board. “Prenatal vitamins should be taken even before you plan to conceive. Women who do this have a 40 percent lower chance of having a child with autism.”

The vitamins and minerals present in

the prenatal vitamins that doctors prescribe — including folic acid, vitamin D, and iron — are crucial for a growing fetus.

Adams says that most women are not getting enough vitamin D and that taking a supplement from the start can reduce the number of pre-term births by half. Many women also have iron deficiencies, and low iron can increase your chance of having a baby with autism (e.g. a University of California, Davis study found that 40 to 50 percent of pregnant women have an iron deficiency). However, not all physicians retest for iron levels after the first tests are taken.

“It’s very important to test for iron again in the third trimester,” Adams states.

It’s also imperative to have folic acid (the synthetic version of folate, which is found in dark green vegetables and citrus fruits) in your system before you get pregnant. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that women take 400 mcg of folic acid every day starting one month before they get pregnant. This is because folic acid helps your baby’s neural tube development.

“Folic acid is important in reducing autism because it helps with the methylation cycle (process of turning genes on and off),” says Adams. Studies have shown that impaired methylation leads to increased risk of birth defects, speech delay, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, etc.

Pregnant women used to be told to avoid fish because nearly all fish contain some mercury, and babies exposed to mercury in the womb can be born with brain damage.

“Seafood quality has changed quite a bit. Omega 3 fatty acids are very good for you, but farm-raised fish are fed corn, so you are not getting the benefits, and most shrimp that you find in the grocery store today is farmed,” warns Adams.

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists advises, “Limit your exposure to mercury by not eating shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish. Limit eating white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces a week. Be sure to eat at least 8–12 ounces of low-mercury fish and shellfish per week.”

Pregnant women should also be wary



of bottled water. Willhite cautions, “Water bottles sit on trucks during transport and can be exposed to high temperatures. The chemicals released from the plastic in this case can cause health problems.”

MarchofDimes.org also makes the following recommendations:

- Don’t use plastic containers with the numbers 3 or 7 or the letters PC on the bottom. PC stands for a chemical called polycarbonate. Plastics with the numbers 1, 2, and 4 are safe to use. Use glass containers instead of plastic.

- Don’t re-use single-use plastics. These are plastics that are meant to be used once and then thrown away, like shopping bags, water bottles, coffee cups, and straws. If you re-use them, they can break down and release chemicals. Instead, use cloth shopping bags, glass bottles or cups and paper straws.

### **Avoid toxins**

Avoiding toxic metals, such as mercury and lead, is critical, says Willhite.

Mercury is found in fish, light bulbs, thermometers, dental fillings, and can be released from burning waste and coal

products. Lead is found in paints and dust in older homes, auto refinishing materials, soil, some personal care products, tap water, etc. Exposure to pesticides is also dangerous to the fetus. These toxins can damage the body’s ability to methylate DNA, which is why the folic acid supplements are so important.

“Studies have shown that exposure to endocrine disruptors during pregnancy is linked to autism,” Adams warns.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences states, “Endocrine disruptors may be found in many everyday products — including plastic bottles, metal food cans, detergents, flame retardants, food, toys, cosmetics, and pesticides.”

It’s difficult to guarantee zero exposure to toxic metals or products considered to be endocrine disruptors, so women should do everything they can to boost their body’s natural defenses.

Adams explains that glutathione, which is an important antioxidant, removes toxic metals in the body before they can reach the developing baby. Several foods boost glutathione levels. Sulfur-containing vegetables (e.g. kale, broccoli, Brussels

sprouts, cabbage, etc.), raw goat whey, and some spices, such as rosemary, help boost glutathione levels.

### **Reduce stress**

Dr. Barbara Held, who specializes in both routine and high-risk obstetrics and gynecology at Houston Methodist Hospital, counsels, “Everyone has stress in their life. However, it is the significant, chronic stress that can produce detrimental effects on a pregnancy, such as small birth weight and preterm delivery.”

She also adds that a recent study showed that stress can lead to chronic inflammation, which can have detrimental neurodevelopmental effects on a pregnancy.

“A lot of stress early in the pregnancy increases risk of miscarriage,” Adams reports. “Stress later in pregnancy is associated with lower birth weights, higher risk of anxiety disorders, and permanent changes in the child’s brain.”

Dr. Michael Cackovic, a maternal-fetal medicine physician at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center cautions, “The problem with trying to establish stress as a cause of adverse pregnancy outcomes is that there are often [additional variables] associated with stress, such as smoking, illicit drug use, and poor nutrition, to name a few. Much of the research on the effects of stress on reproduction used experimental animals subjected to physical stressors, including noise, restraint, heat, or food deprivation. It is not clear that these stressors adequately model human psychological stress.”

However, he points out that in addition to low birth weight and premature delivery, some reports have associated stress with an increased risk of congenital anomalies involving cranial neural crest-derived tissues. (“Cranial neural crest cells contribute to much of the bone, cartilage, and connective tissue in the head, including most of the head skeleton and parts of the teeth,” writes H.M. Young in the *Encyclopedia of Neuroscience*.)

Women should practice healthy ways to combat stress.

“Yoga, massage therapy, and getting enough sleep (seven to nine hours per night) all help to lower stress levels,” explains Adams.

Held suggests that women speak with their obstetricians to decide on a specific plan to reduce daily stress. A plan might include exercise, yoga, meditation, psychotherapy, improving eating and sleep habits, or medication, if necessary.

*Myrna Beth Haskell is an award-winning author, columnist, and feature writer (www.myrnahaskell.com). She is also co-founder of SANCTUARY (www.sanctuary-magazine.com).*



## Put politics aside at your holiday table

**F**or many people, December marks a time of goodwill. From Hanukkah and Christmas to Kwanzaa and New Year's Eve, this month is a period when most of New York gets together with family and friends. It's not only the religious either; lapsed Catholics and non-practicing Jews still go home for the holidays or at least attend the holiday meal. And even atheists cannot walk the streets without seeing the holiday lights and festivities, and again the message behind them of generosity and benevolence.

We need that message now more than ever amidst our tumultuous political climate. Everyone is so heated about his or her party, and countless holiday get-togethers will be tarnished with raised voices on both sides of the aisle. It's hard to see a truce as a possibility when simple basic human rights are being put on the chopping block for discussion.

Yes, it is incredibly difficult to keep quiet when you hear insane rants being thrown around the dinner table ... but a holiday with children all around is never

a time to argue (and the mix of personalities combined with liquor do result in a certain lethal combination). However, the holidays should be child-centered, for them and also for us.

The truth is that kids know way more than we do. Children could teach us all a lesson in life. Look at the typical 5 year old in your family. Chances are he goes to school with vastly different races, religions, and economic backgrounds. But he doesn't see that; instead he sees his friend. Just by being in the same class, kids realize that all belong and are each an important part. They are each expected to respect each other and their teacher. They help one another. They share. They do what is right. They feel bad when a fellow classmate is upset. They care about the feelings of their classmates.

There is a common belief that babies are born with everything they need to know, with a strong connection to heaven, knowing they chose us for their parents, knowing they are good. Even the non-religious might be able to see the truth there. It's easy to recognize that children aren't born with hate. They



### JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

aren't racist, or sexist, or judgmental. They are not bullies. Those things are learned. And yes, unfortunately, they are often learned at the dinner table or on the couch or when damaging words are hurled within an earshot of a child quietly playing.

*"If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children."*  
—Mahatma Gandhi

*Danielle Sullivan is a writer living in New York City. Follow her on Instagram @Deewrite.*

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# Calendar

DECEMBER



## A friend transforms

“I Spy Butterfly” flitters into Symphony Space on Dec. 15.

Tots and pre-schoolers will enjoy this musical puppet show full of colorful critters, lively music, and oodles of audience interaction.

How does a nature-loving explorer become a bug’s best friend? Award-winning puppeteer Faye Dupras and her company return to Just Kidding with a new musical eco-puppetry tale about growth and change. When Tru-

dy’s friend Harold the caterpillar suddenly transforms into a chrysalis, she’s determined to do the same. Just when she is about to give up hope, she learns that her tiny friend needs her now more than ever.

“I Spy Butterfly” Dec. 15 at 11 am and 2 pm. Tickets are \$17 and \$14 for members. Suitable for all ages.

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

## Never miss a great event!

Sign up for our FREE newsletter and get twice-a-week ideas for you and your family right in your mailbox. [NYParenting.com](http://NYParenting.com)

# Calendar

### 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 [bronxriverdalecalendar@cnglocal.com](mailto:bronxriverdalecalendar@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, NOV. 30

#### IN THE BRONX

**Seasonal Arts and Crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; 2:30 pm to 4 pm; Free.

Kids create fun art inspired by the season, using various materials and techniques.

#### FURTHER AFIELD

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall, 135th Street and Convent Avenue, Manhattan; [www.cthny.org](http://www.cthny.org); 8 pm; \$45/\$35/\$25; \$10 students and seniors.

This family-friendly re-imagining of the classic Christmas tale will include some original music and classic holiday carols tinged with gospel, hip-hop, pop, and R&B influences, which celebrate the spirit of the season the Harlem way.

### SAT, DEC. 1

#### IN THE BRONX

**Kids Art and Table Top activities:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/09/01/kids-art-and-table-top-activities](http://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/09/01/kids-art-and-table-top-activities); 9 am to 11 am; Free.

While Mom and Dad take fitness class, the kiddies have fun with arts and crafts and table-top activities.

**Holiday Family Day:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 10 am to 1 pm; \$15 member child 1 year or older; \$20 non-member child 1 year or older; Free adults and children under 1 year.

Meet Santa, sip hot cocoa, and celebrate the spirit of the holidays at our annual Holiday Family Day! Explore the 19th-century mansion decorated for the season, and enjoy crafting in the conservatory, shop for unique gifts, and meet Santa for a photo-op (professional photos with Santa available for an additional fee). Space is limited. Registration requested.

**Kids Paper Arts and Crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; 2 pm to 3:30 pm; Free.

Kids create cute and fun objects out of paper and other ordinary materials they can



## Creating holiday crafts

'Tis the season for cookies and crafts at the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum on Dec. 23.

Parents can drop in with their young ones and decorate some holiday cookies to take home or create a fun craft after exploring the mansion, which is decked out for the season. Recommended for ages 4 and older. Children

must be accompanied by an adult.

Cookies and Crafts, Dec. 23, noon to 2 pm. \$8, free with museum admission (\$8 adults, \$6 seniors and students, free for children under age 6). Registration requested.

*Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum [895 Shore Rd. in Pelham Bay, (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org)].*

take home. Parents are invited to join their little ones in the activities.

#### FURTHER AFIELD

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** 1 pm; City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall. See Friday, Nov. 30.

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** 8 pm; City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall. See Friday, Nov. 30.

### SUN, DEC. 2

#### FURTHER AFIELD

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** 1 pm; City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall.

See Friday, Nov. 30.

### TUES, DEC. 4

#### FURTHER AFIELD

**Little Playtimes:** LEGOLAND Discovery Center Westchester, 39 Fitzgerald St., Westchester; (866) 243-0770; <https://westchester.legolanddiscoverycenter.com>; 10am-2pm; \$24 for an adult and child, children 2 and under free.

Have a LEGO play date! Little ones build their curiosity with LEGO bricks while parents mingle together. Activities include story time, Animal Bingo and Farmers Workshop. Check website for schedule.

# Calendar

Our online calendar is updated daily at [www.NYParenting.com/calendar](http://www.NYParenting.com/calendar)

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** 8 pm;  
City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall.  
See Friday, Nov. 30.

## THURS, DEC. 6

### FURTHER AFIELD

**"The Yorkville Nutcracker":** The Kaye Playhouse, 695 Park Ave., Manhattan; (646) 765-4773; [lilli@michelletabnickpr.com](mailto:lilli@michelletabnickpr.com); [www.dancespatrelle.org](http://www.dancespatrelle.org); 7 pm; \$65.

This year marks the 23rd anniversary of "The Yorkville Nutcracker," set in 1895, which includes lavish sets and costumes and takes the audience on a tour through Olde New York's most beloved landmarks, including a holiday party at Gracie Mansion, dancing at the Crystal Palace in the New York Botanical Garden, and skating in Central Park. "The Yorkville Nutcracker" provides an opportunity for young dancers to dance alongside professional artists. This year, Abi Stafford of New York City Ballet will be the Sugar Plum Fairy with Cavalier Ask La Cour (principal dancer, New York City Ballet), and Maximilien Baud and Therese Wendler will perform the Snow Pas de Deux.

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** 8 pm;  
City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall.  
See Friday, Nov. 30.

## FRI, DEC. 7

### IN THE BRONX

**Caroling:** Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East; (718) 543-8672; [www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/caroling](http://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/caroling); 11 am to 1 pm; Free.

Join in to celebrate all of the winter holidays and festivals in song. Come with your own favorites to sing and we will add it to the list. Lyrics will be provided.

**Seasonal Arts and Crafts:** 2:30 pm to 4 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center - Poe Park. See Friday, Nov. 30.

**Van Cortlandt by Twilight:** Van Cortlandt House Museum (Van Cortlandt Park), Broadway at West 246th Street; (718) 543-3344; [www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/van-cortlandt-by-twilight](http://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/van-cortlandt-by-twilight); 4 pm to 8 pm; \$20 (includes admission and light refreshments).

Enjoy the rare treat of being able to explore Van Cortlandt House Museum after dark. The house will be decorated for the winter holidays of Saint Nicholas Day, Christmas Day, New Year's, and Twelfth Night. You'll be able to experience the house lit by candlelight while enjoying light refreshments. Weather permitting, we'll have the cressets lit, a campfire glowing, and marshmallow and chestnuts roasting. Last admissions at 7 pm. The event will take place even in the event of rain or snow.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** 8 pm;

City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall.  
See Friday, Nov. 30.

## SAT, DEC. 8

### IN THE BRONX

**Kids Art and Table Top activities:** 9 am to 11 am. Poe Park Visitor Center. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

**Celebrate Saint Nicholas:** Van Cortlandt House Museum (Van Cortlandt Park), Broadway at W. 246th Street; (718) 543-3344; [www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/van-cortlandt-by-twilight](http://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/van-cortlandt-by-twilight); 11 am to 4 pm; Donations accepted.

Long before Saint Nicholas became associated with Christmas, his feast day was a holiday for giving presents and honoring children. Come to Van Cortlandt House Museum to learn more about the history of Saint Nicholas through a special eye-spy tour of the house, stories, craft projects, games, and hot chocolate around our campfire (weather permitting). Activities and tours will take place throughout.

**Kids Paper Arts and Crafts:** 2 pm to 3:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**"A Christmas Carol in Harlem":** 8 pm;  
City College for the Arts' Aaron Davis Hall.  
See Friday, Nov. 30.

## SUN, DEC. 9

### IN THE BRONX

**Bronx Arts Ensemble Presents Manhattan Brass Quintet Holiday Concert:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 1 pm to 3 pm; Free with museum admission (\$8 adults, \$6 seniors and students, free for children under 6).

Please join us for a memorable afternoon of elegant music in the parlors. Registration requested.

## TUES, DEC. 11

### IN THE BRONX

**Teddy Bear Tea Party:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 11:30 am to 1:30 pm; \$20 per person.

We're bringing back a beloved Bartow-Pell favorite for the holidays! Celebrate the season with a child-approved, bright, colorful, and deliciously decadent holiday-themed menu, story time with the Bartow snow queen, and a sing-along. Perfect for 3- to 5-year-olds accompanied by a parent, grandparent, or favorite adult. Registration requested.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**Little Playtimes:** 10 am-2 pm. LEGOLAND Discovery Center Westchester. See Tuesday, Dec. 4.

## FRI, DEC. 14

### IN THE BRONX

**Seasonal Arts and Crafts:** 2:30 pm to 4 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Friday, Nov. 30.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**"The Nutcracker":** Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St., Manhattan; (212) 355-6160; [www.nytb.org/calendar-and-tickets](http://www.nytb.org/calendar-and-tickets); 6 pm; \$27 (\$15 children).

From clockwork imps to a luminous owl that flies above the audience, mice dressed in polka dots and dancers dancing with huge chopsticks, this timeless, re-imagined classic bursts with energy and excitement. This holiday ballet, danced to Tchaikovsky's beloved score, is set in Art Nouveau style, circa 1907.

## SAT, DEC. 15

### IN THE BRONX

**Kids Art and Table Top activities:** 9 am to 11 am. Poe Park Visitor Center. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

**Teddy Bear Tea Party:** 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. See Tuesday, Dec. 11.

**Winter Wonderland:** Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East; (718) 543-8672; [www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/15/wbo-winter-wonderland](http://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/15/wbo-winter-wonderland); 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Join us for winter arts and crafts, carnival games, and pictures with Santa! Celebrating all winter holidays including Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Christmas, Eid, and New Years!

**Kids Paper Arts and Crafts:** 2 pm to 3:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

**Candlelight Tours and Victorian Carolers:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); 7 pm to 9 pm; Free for members (\$15; Not-Yet Members: \$10 seniors and students).

Experience the mansion by candlelight with costumed docents highlighting 19th-century holiday traditions. Victorian carolers add to the festive atmosphere while you enjoy wine and holiday snacks in the conservatory. Registration requested.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**"The Nutcracker":** 11 am, 1 pm, and 3:30 pm. Florence Gould Hall. See Friday, Dec. 14.

## SUN, DEC. 16

### FURTHER AFIELD

**"The Nutcracker":** 11 am, 1 pm, and 3:30 pm. Florence Gould Hall. See Friday, Dec. 14.

Our online calendar is updated daily at [www.NYParenting.com/calendar](http://www.NYParenting.com/calendar)

## TUES, DEC. 18

### FURTHER AFIELD

**Little Playtimes:** 10 am–2 pm. LEGOLAND Discovery Center Westchester. See Tuesday, Dec. 4.

## FRI, DEC. 21

### IN THE BRONX

**Seasonal Arts and Crafts:** 2:30 pm to 4 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Friday, Nov. 30.

## SAT, DEC. 22

### IN THE BRONX

**Kids Art and Table Top activities:** 9 am to 11 am. Poe Park Visitor Center. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

**Kids Paper Arts and Crafts:** 2 pm to 3:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

## SUN, DEC. 23

### IN THE BRONX

**Cookies and Crafts:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org); Noon to 2 pm; Free with museum admission (\$8 adults, \$6 seniors and students, free for children under age 6).

Drop in with your young ones to decorate some holiday cookies to take home after exploring the mansion decked out for the season. Recommended for ages 4 and older. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Limit of one house per family.

## FRI, DEC. 28

### IN THE BRONX

**Seasonal Arts and Crafts:** 2:30 pm to 4 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Friday, Nov. 30.

## SAT, DEC. 29

### IN THE BRONX

**Kids Art and Table Top activities:** 9 am to 11 am. Poe Park Visitor Center. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

**Kids Paper Arts and Crafts:** 2 pm to 3:30 pm. Poe Park Visitor Center at Poe Park. See Saturday, Dec. 1.

## LONG-RUNNING

### IN THE BRONX

**Holiday Train Show:** New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Rd.; (718) 817-8700; [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org); Daily, 10 am–7 pm; until Mon, Jan. 21, 2019; Included in All-Garden Pass. \$30 adults, \$18 children 2-12, children under 2 free.

## Museum visit by twilight

The Van Cortlandt House Museum is all dressed up and decorated for the holiday season and awaiting your visit on Dec. 7.

Enjoy the rare treat of being able to explore Van Cortlandt House Museum after dark. The house will be decorated for the winter holidays of Saint Nicholas Day, Christmas Day, New Year's and Twelfth Night. You'll be able to experience the house lit by candlelight while enjoying light refreshments.

Weather permitting, we'll have the cressets lit, a campfire glowing, and marshmallow and chestnuts roasting.

Van Cortlandt House by Twilight on Dec. 7 from 4 pm to 8 pm; last admission is at 7 pm. \$20 (includes admission and light refreshments). Reservations not required but are strongly suggested.

*Van Cortlandt House Museum [Van Cortlandt Park, Broadway at W. 246th Street in*



*Riverdale, (718) 543-3344; [www.vchm.org](http://www.vchm.org); [www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/van-cortlandt-by-twilight](http://www.nycgovparks.org/events/2018/12/07/van-cortlandt-by-twilight)].*

A favorite holiday tradition has arrived once again at the New York Botanical Garden. See model trains zip through a dazzling display of more than 175 New York landmarks, each re-created with bark, leaves, and other natural materials — all under the twinkling glow of the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. This year's exhibition showcases Lower Manhattan, with One World Trade Center making its debut.

**Evergreen Express:** New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Rd.; (718) 817-8700; [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org); Tuesdays – Fridays, 1:30–5:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–5:30 pm, until Mon, Jan. 21, 2019; Included in All-Garden Pass. Weekdays: \$23 adults, \$10 children 2-12; Weekends: \$30 adults, \$18 children 2-12; children under 2 free.

The Everett Children's Adventure Garden gets into the holiday spirit with train-inspired fun! Hop aboard a play train and pretend to ride the rails! Hike winter trails and find evergreen trees and shrubs. Warm up in the Discovery Center while learning more about amazing evergreen plants. Make a festive evergreen swag bundle to brighten up your home.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**GingerBread Lane:** New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Queens; (718) 699-

0005 X 353; [www.nyscience.org](http://www.nyscience.org); Weekdays, 9:30 am to 5 pm, Saturdays, 10 am to 6 pm, Sundays, 10 am to 6 pm, until Mon, Jan. 21, 2019; Free with general admission to the hall.

Visitors marvel at homemade gingerbread houses made entirely of edible gingerbread, royal icing, and candy. The houses are drafted, designed, baked, planned, built and decorated by creator Jon Lovitch over the course of an entire year. GingerBread Lane has won the Guinness World Record for 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 for the largest gingerbread village.

**Ocean Wonders – Sharks!** New York Aquarium, 602 Surf Ave. between W. Eighth and W. Fifth streets, Brooklyn; (718) 265-3448; [www.nyaquarium.com](http://www.nyaquarium.com); Daily, 10 am; Free with admission to the aquarium.

The new exhibit will amaze visitors as they journey through nine galleries breathtakingly eye-to-eye with sharks, rays and hundreds of species of ocean wildlife. As you explore the exhibit, the wondrous world deep below the ocean surface is revealed, whether it is in the Coral Reef Tunnel, The New York Bight or the dark and mysterious Hudson Canyon's Edge with large sand tiger sharks, sandbar sharks, nurse sharks and hundreds of marine species which live off the coast of New York.



## Just take a little bite

### Getting children to try new holiday foods

**“Y**ou don’t want to hurt Grandma’s feelings, do you? She always makes this for us at holiday time.”

Maybe it’s Grandma, or maybe it’s an aunt, uncle, or cousin. Have you found yourself saying this when your child is offered a holiday food item he or she has never seen or tasted before?

Whether you’re celebrating Christmas, Ramadan, Hanukkah, or another winter holiday, not only are you faced with the stresses of the season, you’re also trying to teach your children good manners and exposing them to your family traditions.

Many kids automatically shut down when they’re faced with eating something that is unfamiliar. And it can be embarrassing when you’re aware of how much time and energy the preparer has spent on the dish. This is true especially when the food has been passed down through the generations in your family.

The problem is food neophobia, or a fear of a new food. Of course, it occurs year round and not just during the holidays. But food neophobia usually occurs when you’re alone with your child. Emotions aren’t running so high. And the rejection of a new food isn’t out in the open with

people staring.

Experts agree it’s unwise to pressure your child to sample a food, even if the preparer’s feelings might be hurt. Faye Berger Mitchell, a private practice dietitian and nutritionist in Potomac, Md., gives these tips:

**Share memories about the food.** Tell stories about family and childhood memories of how delicious and special these holiday favorites were. If there is a symbolic meaning to the food, explain the connection to pique your child’s interest. For example, potato latkes, fried potato pancakes, are a traditional Hanukkah food. Foods fried in oil represent the oil that miraculously lasted for eight days.

**Have your kids help make special holiday favorites.** When they are involved in the process and see you cooking with love, they are more likely to want to taste the finished product.

**Serve it alongside foods they love.** Place a small amount on their plate along with several foods you know they enjoy. Make sure there are some familiar foods at the holiday meal along with the holiday favorites.

Remember that it’s important to introduce your child to new foods on a regular basis. This helps him obtain a variety of



## GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

nutrients. It’s also a way for him to discover new tastes and textures.

What if your child absolutely refuses the food?

“Never force, cajole, or bribe. If a child does not want to try it, respect that and do not make a big deal about it,” advises Berger Mitchell. “The more you try, the more they will resist. Sometimes it takes as many as 10 exposures to a food for some kids to try it.”

Eating the right foods is important, but it may be a better idea to encourage the kids to taste your aunt’s ethnic favorites next year or even after the holidays when everyone is calmer and there’s less stress all the way around.

“Your kids may not like the same foods as you, and that is OK. We all have different food preferences and some people are more selective eaters. Continue to make your traditional holiday favorites and enjoy your holidays,” adds Berger Mitchell.

Finally, make sure everyone obtains enough sleep and maybe gets a little extra. This can help mitigate meltdowns and temper tantrums.

Remember to keep the focus on what holiday gatherings are all about: Reconnecting with family and friends and sharing the love you have for one another, even if you only see each other a few times each year.

*Christine Palumbo is a Illinois-registered dietitian nutritionist and Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She is a 2018 recipient of the Medallion Award from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.*



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