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## Letter from the publisher

**S**ummer is just about over and the kids are going back to school. How quickly it all goes. Everyone I talk with feels that the film of our lives has been put on a fast-speed cycle. Did time used to move more slowly



or was it only our imagination? Now the rush is on to buy supplies and clothes and to begin another year of juggling school, and after-school for most parents. This issue presents a special section to help you see many of the possibilities that are available in your communities. Dance, sports, music, martial arts, and supplementary learning programs or tutoring are just some of the offerings. Make sure you sign your kids up for something, because the benefits are priceless. Whether it's learning to operate on a team or an individual discipline, they are sure to build self-esteem and to expand in ways that will enhance their overall development.

This issue is loaded with helpful columns and articles, and we are proud of our contributing writers and their fine efforts. In particular this month, we focus on the serious and tragic reality of driveway deaths in our suburbs and in our city communities where driveways are prevalent. This is both a local and national issue and deserves the involvement of every caring person to see that laws are changed and that cars are equipped with the necessary hardware to make these accidents come to an end. You, too, can get involved, and organizations are mentioned that could use your input and assistance.

September is usually quite a glorious month. We typically have what they still call "Indian Summer" days, and it's a terrific time to use weekends to see surrounding scenery, or to visit our parks, preserves, beaches, playgrounds, or to be a sideline parent watching your kids on the soccer fields, ball fields, or swimming laps. Have fun with your kids and have a great month. We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did while putting it together.

Thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher



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# First Person

**Hey moms and dads!** We are looking for essays from local parents. Write to us at [family@cnglocal.com](mailto:family@cnglocal.com) or call (718) 260-2587 and let us know if you'd like to contribute something about your community, history or family life in the borough of Staten Island.

## The Island and me

### How a Brooklyn girl went from harried to happy

BY JOANNA DEL BUONO

I'm a city girl, born and bred Brooklyn. So before my husband and I took the leap of faith and drove over the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge to our new home, moving to Staten Island most definitely was out of the question. After all, my only impression of the kidney-shaped rock was formed way back when in 1972, when all there was to Richmond County was woods, woods and more woods — with an occasional house dotting the landscape.

At the tender age of 14 I visited the Isle of Staten for a two-week stay at Cousin Marla and Phil's house. Pioneers that they were — they moved here when the bridge went up — they lived in a lovely semi-attached house in the middle of bucolic wilderness on a road that had just been paved. After helping with household chores all day, I would sit on the stoop at night and watch as the wasps fluttered across the path. The ubiquitous mosquitoes were the biggest I'd ever seen, some so large they filed a flight plan. And, of course, there was the wildlife. Living in Brooklyn did not prepare me for the raccoons, opossums and ducks that inhabited the forest behind their homestead. At the end of the two-week confinement I swore I would never go back.

But you never know what tomorrow holds and, in 2002, kicking and screaming came I. I clutched the "Brooklyn" sign at the entrance ramp to that blasted bridge. But in the end, I made it over the Big V, paid the toll, and started our new suburban life.

That first year was the hardest. I missed my old home, I didn't know my new neighbors and I regularly craved a bagel from my favorite corner store.

But I realized things had started to turn in my favor. By the time I moved there, Staten Island was no longer the frontier it had been. Twenty years of development had seen to that. There are more cars, more houses, more stores, and, less wildlife. Native islanders argue that the island is so overcrowded, the wildlife have left town.

Although not completely.

In our first year here we had a family of raccoons under our deck, an opossum found it's way into our garbage pail and brown spider



(Above) The author's daughter Bri and her cousin Emily cool off in the summer heat. (At left) The house at Halloween.

webs littered our backyard. While the mammals and marsupials have moved on, we still have a pair of ducks visit us each year, taking a swim in our pool every fall and spring.

After eight years, I finally did adjust. Where once the sound of trains and buses filled my mornings, now there is the chirp of birds, the rubbing legs of crickets and the ever-present

hum of lawn mowers.

In the end, the move was the best thing we ever did. Our daughter Bri flourished in our suburban environment. She met great kids, she took skating lessons at The Pavilion, gymnastic lessons at Neshos and Victory Gymnastics, dance lessons at New Horizons, and our summers are filled with laughter and fun in the backyard pool.

I got to know my neighbors, my new home is now my old home, and life has settled into a peaceful routine. (Well, not exactly peaceful. After all, our Bri is now a teenager, but it's relatively peaceful, nevertheless).

As the song says, "Our house is a very, very fine house. With two cats in the yard. Life used to be so hard..."

By the way, it took some time, but I managed to find a great place for bagels, too.



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## NEWBIE DAD

BRIAN KANTZ

# Strange bedfellows

## Two boys in the same bedroom equals mayhem

**W**e own a three-bedroom house. Therefore, simple mathematics (and believe me, that's all the math I can handle) dictates that our two boys should have their own rooms. Lucky dudes, I know. And that's the way it was — until recently. We just couldn't leave well enough alone.

You see, one day, some friends began extolling the virtues of having younger children share a bedroom. Their kids loved the set up, they said. Sharing a bedroom allowed

his cell — whoops, I mean bedroom — and one of us take the 3-year-old to his. Once they were each in bed, that was it. Nighty-night, sleep-tight, don't let the bedbugs bite, and my wife and I had the rest of the night off.

But was this routine denying our boys essential bonding time? Were they missing out on vital life lessons? Would it be our fault if our two boys grew up as perfect strangers?

How could we be so cruel, forcing them to have their own bedrooms!

We also began thinking of the space benefits that such a move would provide. We could use the third bedroom as a nice guest room. Or outfit it as a home office. It could be a very utilitarian space.

So, after mulling the idea around a bit — and envisioning our boys bonding blissfully over their shared estate — my wife and I decided that we should give it a try. They would share a bedroom.

"Boys, your mom and I think it would be a great idea if you..." I couldn't even get the sentence out of my mouth before pandemonium erupted.

The kids began jumping up and down and, get this, hugging. They absolutely loved the idea. Little did I realize at that moment what was to come. I should have seen it in their scheming eyes.

The next day, we moved the older boy's bed into the younger one's room. Despite our strict, no jumping on the bed — except in a hotel — rule, Thing 1 and Thing 2 immediately hopped onto their respective mattresses, bounced straight up and down a few times, and then started jumping from bed to bed. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth... and back and forth.

Next, the pair sprinted into the momentarily spare bedroom and quickly put dibs on the space as their new playroom. They started hauling their stuff in like a couple of squatters. Pretty soon, an infrastructure had

been established (toy train tracks ran from one end of the room to the other) and a full-court Fisher Price basketball court was seeing some furious "little boys can't jump" action.

The brothers' teamwork didn't stop there. Their first night together — and pretty much every night since — they collaborated on some world-class bedtime stall tactics. Gotta read one more story. Gotta go to the bathroom again. Gotta get a drink of water. Then the other one starts — he's gotta read one more story, go to the bathroom again and get a drink of water.

Once the lights go out and my wife and I go downstairs, the late-night comedy routine begins. I must admit, it's better than Conan. Knock-knock jokes are a favorite, even though 99 percent of them make no sense whatsoever. Knock-knock. Who's there? Pillow. Pillow who? Pillow who drinks orange juice. (Wild laughter ensues.) Knock-knock. Who's there? Blanket. Blanket who? Blanket who drinks orange juice. (More laughter.)

Once the boys finally do fall asleep, even stranger things happen. When we check on them in the middle of the night, we'll find that they've switched beds, or one is in bed and the other is on the floor, or they are in bed together stacked up like firewood, or they are in bed together with one sleeping with his head on the pillow and the other one turned around with his dirty feet on the same pillow. When I see this, I just shake my head and go back to bed.

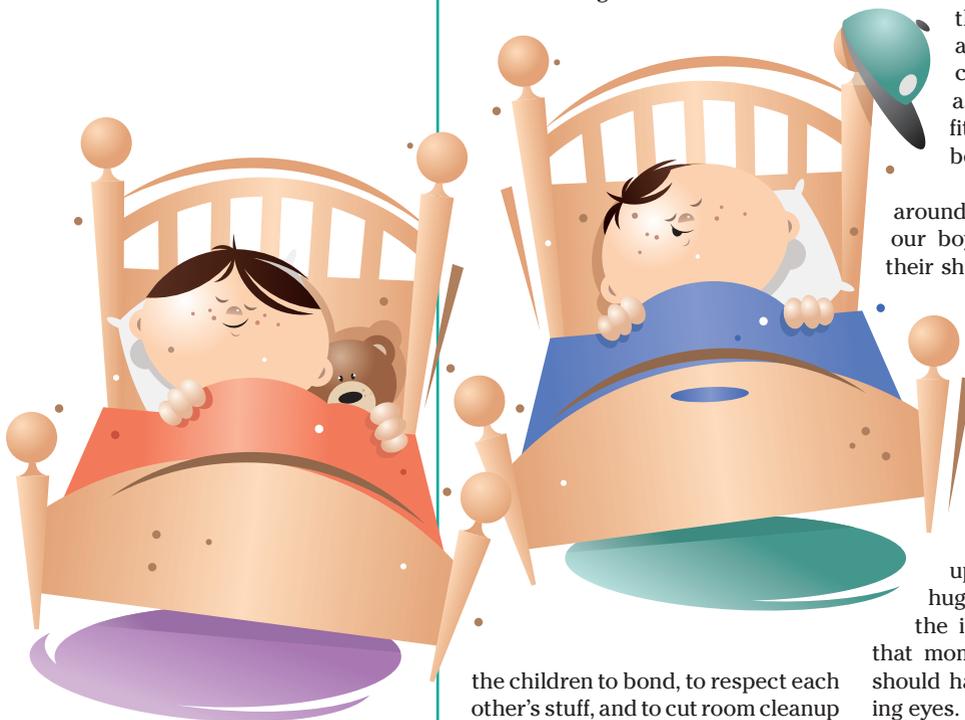
My dad used to have a saying about me and my three brothers:

"You're good boys when you're sleeping, but when you're awake, you're rascals."

Well, I suppose I need to revise that one for my own kids:

"You're good boys when you're awake, but when you're sleeping, you're rascals."

*Brian Kantz has to admit it: using a spare bedroom for full-court mini-basketball is way better than using it for a home office. Visit Brian online at [www.briankantz.com](http://www.briankantz.com) or drop him a note at [theneubiedad@yahoo.com](mailto:theneubiedad@yahoo.com).*



the children to bond, to respect each other's stuff, and to cut room cleanup time in half. The arrangement had wonderful benefits for the parents, too, our friends claimed. In sharing a bedroom, the kids practically put themselves to sleep each night and the siblings comforted each other — instead of automatically hightailing it into mom and dad's bedroom when they heard a bump in the night.

Although our "state penitentiary" approach to the bedtime routine had been working like a charm, my wife and I let a tiny little shadow of parental doubt creep in. We had successfully negated any opportunity for nighttime mischief by having one of us take our 5-year-old boy directly to



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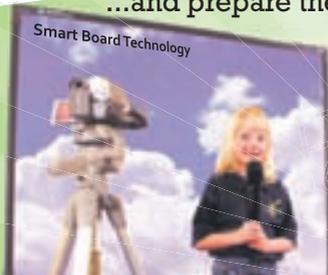


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## GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

# Panic at the table

## Food allergies less common than thought

**T**he alarm over food allergies has changed day care and schools enormously. “No peanut zones” are commonplace in the lunchroom, while snack ingredient lists are subject to scrutiny by wary parents and teachers.

Yet, the number of children with food allergies may not be as large as we think.

According to a federally commissioned study published in the May 10 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the true incidence of food allergies is only about eight percent in children. It’s even less in adults — less than five percent. Yet, about 30 percent of people believe they have food allergies.

Researchers from VA Palo Alto Healthcare System and Stanford University pored over more than 12,000 allergy research studies, published between January 1988 and September 2009. Surprisingly, they concluded that only 72 studies were properly conducted to yield accurate conclusions.

Other findings in the study:

- Despite popular belief, breast-fed infants do not suffer fewer allergies.
- Using probiotics along with breast milk, hypoallergenic formula, or both, may help prevent food allergies. But their effects on their own are not clear.
- Withholding eggs during the first year of life is not necessary.
- Food challenges, skin prick testing and blood tests for IgE antibodies all have a role to play in making



**Q: Just how many kids are affected by peanut allergies?**

**A:** The percentage of children with peanut allergies more than tripled — from 0.4 percent to 1.4 percent — since 1997, according to a new survey of 5,300 households published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

allergic reactions. Luckily, many children outgrow allergies to milk and eggs. But severe allergies to foods like peanuts, some fish, and shrimp can last all their lives.

Please note that I am not stating that parents are making up the symptoms and severity of their children’s food allergies. I

am simply reporting on a surprising peer-reviewed study published in a respected medical journal.

Raising a child with food allergies adds even more expense and effort to your role as parents. Very soon, an expert panel of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases will provide guidelines defining food allergies and giving criteria for diagnosis and management.

Hopefully, this will make your life just a little easier.

The information provided in this article is not intended to substitute for the advice of a medical doctor.

### Helpful websites

**Kids with Food Allergies:** [kidswithfoodallergies.org](http://kidswithfoodallergies.org)

**Food Allergy Initiative:** [faiusa.org](http://faiusa.org)

**Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network:** [foodallergy.org](http://foodallergy.org)

*Christine M. Palumbo is a registered dietitian in suburban Chicago. She is a mother of three, only one of whom suffers from food allergies. Send your questions and column ideas to her at [Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com](mailto:Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com) or call (630) 369-8495.*

## Watermelon-Blueberry Ice Pops

Makes about 10 three ounce pops.

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 ¾ cups chopped seedless watermelon
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1-2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup fresh blueberries

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Puree watermelon, lime juice and sugar in a food processor or blender until smooth. Divide

blueberries among small paper cups or freezer-pop molds. Top with the watermelon mixture. Insert sticks and freeze until completely firm, about 6 hours. Dip the molds briefly in hot water before unmolding.

**NUTRITION FACTS:** 30 calories, 0 grams fat and cholesterol, 8 grams carbohydrate, 0 grams protein, 1 gram fiber, 1 milligram sodium

Recipe from [eatingwell.com](http://eatingwell.com)

a diagnosis. But no one test is sensitive or specific enough to be recommended over the other tests.

• While elimination diets are the mainstay of treatment, researchers could only find one randomized controlled trial — one of the most reliable study types — of an elimination diet. Part of the problem is that a randomized, controlled trial for serious life-threatening food allergy reactions is not only unnecessary, but unethical.

• It’s not clear whether or not food allergies are increasing.

Why is there so much confusion?

Food allergy and food intolerance often get mixed up. Only allergies involve the immune system. Food intolerance is more common than food allergy and occurs when the digestive tract cannot properly break down food. For example, the inability to digest the milk sugar, lactose, is an intolerance.

The most common food allergies are to proteins in cow’s milk, eggs, peanuts, wheat, soy, fish, shellfish and tree nuts. Peanuts and tree nuts are the leading cause of severe food

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1984-2010

# Heading back!

Get smarter  
about back  
to school  
this year

BY CAROLINE A. SHEARER

**T**he first day of school brings with it big changes from the carefree times of summer. Days that were filled with swimsuits, picnics in the park and cartoons now will be stacked with classroom routines, after-school activities, and homework. With all the upcoming energy and excitement that are sure to be part of a brand new school year, we've laid out a few tips to help kids and parents prepare.

## Day in, day out

Transition kids to the new school year by starting a new bedtime at least two weeks before school. It also can be helpful to practice the morning routine, particularly if kids will have trouble eating a healthy breakfast.

"A lot of children don't feel like having breakfast in the morning because they are not used to getting

up that early," explains kindergarten teacher Cathy Kietlinski, who knows a few things about the first day of school — she has brought in a new school year for her students 26 times.

On the first day of school, it's very important that parents notify their children's new teachers how they will be getting home the first day and all subsequent days.

"As long as we know where they are supposed to be, we will get them to the right place," says Kietlinski.

For home preparation, she says it is beneficial for parents to create a space strictly for children's school items — like backpacks and lunch boxes — so kids can get everything ready to go the night before, including the next day's clothing.

"It will save a lot of stress on the parents if they have everything prepared."

Having a set location for school items helps you in the long run.

"Have one spot where your child puts their papers for you to see or their agenda for you to sign, and then you'll always know to look for it. Little things like that can really help out," says Patricia Detrich, an 11-year teaching veteran.

The third grade teacher says parents need to help kids learn organization skills.

"Students need a lot of help at the beginning of the year to stay on top of this. Once school starts, kids have materials and folders and books and papers that need to be signed. The kids who are the most successful with that have parents who check their backpack every day or ask them for papers that need to be signed," she explains.

In addition to organizational concerns, Detrich thinks it is important to prepare kids for some of the social issues they may face.

"One of the most important messages parents can convey is to help your child learn personal responsibility. It is very important for students to learn that they can make decisions for themselves, to do the right thing, to not get involved in certain behaviors they might see, and to not prolong conflicts. I have found that, for some students, it is difficult to take responsibility for their own actions. They want to blame other kids; they try to point fingers."

Another way to keep kids prepared for school through the summer is to ensure they continue to read.

"Reading needs to be all summer long," says Detrich. "Kids who don't read during the summer don't keep up with certain reading skills — they might be starting out the next grade level a little bit behind their peers. Some parents think it's time to take a break from reading in the summer, but research shows that kids who read a lot tend to be the best readers," and, in turn, tend to be the most successful at performance tests. She says kids should read a variety of texts — fiction and non-fiction books and also children's magazines.

## Focusing on safety

**W**hether kids are walking to the bus stop or to school or riding a bicycle, one of the most basic safety rules is never to travel alone. There is strength in numbers, even in small kids. Predators look for the lone sheep, the most vulnerable person. Lots of times they will bypass a group of kids to get to one that is walking alone.

While "Stranger Danger" is often used as a catch phrase, it can be better to teach about situations. Try to show kids to be aware of the situations and actions that are out of the ordinary. Is it normal for an adult to ask a child for help? No, it's not. If kids are approached by someone asking for directions, for example, they should go back the opposite way.

It's also important to teach children to follow their instincts. If

something feels uncomfortable or not right, kids should be taught to distance themselves, even if potential danger doesn't seem physically close. If your child is waiting for the bus and there is a guy waiting on the other side of the street and your child feels uncomfortable, that is enough. That is when the child needs to go home or go somewhere and tell an adult. There is no set distance — the distance is when the child feels uncomfortable. He needs to learn to listen to his inner voice.

Parents, in response, must listen to children's concerns. If they've got a fear about a person, it's usually legitimate. The instinct is to have natural fear or a natural inclination that something is not

right. So many times we don't pay attention to that or downplay it. We need to cultivate that instinct trust in our children.

With children who stay home alone after school, it is important they be taught to lock the door immediately upon arrival and that it is never okay to open the door or window. Children also should be taught how to use 911 and should know to call from a home phone, rather than a mobile phone. This is because home phones are more likely to automatically show a location when 911 is called.

When kids get sick, a parent or a designated adult will need to pick them up from school. Make sure there are several contacts listed for students, and be sure to keep work, home, and mobile phone numbers updated at the school office.

Top  
Tips



## Young ones

Kietlinski says there are certain preparations younger kids — like her kindergarteners — need to make.

“Children should practice dressing themselves so they can learn to manage snaps, buttons and zippers,” she says. “Also, they should be able to take care of all their own toileting needs, including washing their hands with soap after they go to the restroom.”

To make things smoother in the cafeteria, children should practice opening the containers or baggies they plan to use in their school lunches.

And Kietlinski says it is good to prepare kids to leave at home any sentimental items they may be used to carrying.

“They may have a cuddly or stuffed animal they like to carry, but the child needs to learn to leave their special toys or cuddlies at home. That can be a really difficult hurdle for some children.” Kietlinski also suggests parents label personal items that will be brought or worn to school, such as lunch kits, backpacks, jackets, and sweaters.

Parents should let the teacher take care of the child’s needs at this point.

“There will occasionally be a few tears at the beginning of a new school year,” she says of young kids. “Parents should give their child a reassuring hug and a kiss, and then

they need to leave. Otherwise, the parents’ body language is saying they are worried and unsure about leaving the child in the classroom.”

“Any good teacher is going to contact you immediately if there is a major problem.”

## A fresh start

The end of summer is the perfect opportunity for kids to transition themselves to a better year.

“Summer break, I like a clean slate so you can start fresh in the new school year and leave behind the stuff that didn’t really work well for you in the last year. August is always a really cool transition time, when they are gearing up to think about school in a new way and just getting out of the relaxation frame of mind,” says Annie Drake, a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Once kids reach about fourth grade, Drake suggests taking them on an out of town trip in August and asking them, “If there was a rumor about you this year at school, what would you like the rumor to be?”

Keeping in mind rumors can be positive, their answers may range from, “She is really sweet” to “He’s not as geeky as last year” to “She’s so smart or getting such good grades.” Parents then can talk with their kids about how they might achieve this. It can be shedding the glasses, working out a study plan, finding ways to make new friends, or trying a new style of haircut or clothing.

“By taking them out of town, they

are able to dream a little bit more, especially if they’ve had a rough year the year before — with kids picking on them or if they had a rough time with grades. They can overcome those limitations when they get that break. Kids can transition to thinking, ‘I can have a new mindset about me.’” She says many times, kids will live up to their expectations.

## Extracurriculars

A question many parents and kids face with a new school year is how many sports and extracurricular activities to juggle.

Parents should let kids participate in as many as they can handle — to a certain extent.

“You want them to participate in as many different things as possible. That way they can find out what their interests are and what they are good at — you never know until you try,” suggests Middle School Athletic Coordinator Josh Brevard.

Brevard does feel, however, that kids should be involved in only one activity at a time.

“Where I see kids get in to trouble is if they are involved in three different things at a time.” When they have a full day of school, then football from four to six, followed by a bite to eat, and then soccer from seven to nine, that may be too much, he says.

Instead, activities should be at a level “where the kids do not get burned out on sports and so it doesn’t

get too competitive for them.”

“Be careful about pushing your kid too hard. I see a lot of kids who get pushed too hard in junior high and high school so they can get a scholarship, but by the time senior year comes around, they are burned out and no longer want to play,” he cautions.

And sports do more for kids than just get them physically active.

“It’s always my belief that an active kid gets many benefits academically and socially. They’ve shown that sports actually help stimulate the brain, and the kids who are more active tend to make better grades,” the football, basketball, track and tennis coach says.

“Their social interaction with the other kids is huge. A lot of them get discipline, and they learn responsibility. They also learn teamwork, and they learn leadership. That is the main benefit of sports — we try to get them healthy and fit, but also our goal is to mold them to be young men and women who are beneficial to society. If they are active and involved, then they are being healthy, instead of being somewhere and doing something they shouldn’t be.”

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## Fall Activity

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To collaborate with other cultural and educational organizations in programming that will expand Art Lab's ability to serve the multi-cultural community while maintaining the integrity of its overall objectives.

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Dance Factory @ the JCC provides a warm inspiring atmosphere for dancers age 3 and up. Learning proper dance technique also teaches important values such as self confidence and courtesy to other children. Tap, jazz, and ballet are offered along with the newest hip-hop and funk moves. Contact mkraker@sijcc.com or 718.475.5274 for information.

#### SPORTS & GYMNASTICS

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Sports come in many forms at the JCC – basketball, swim, soccer, volleyball, golf and more. There's Sports Introduction for the younger athletes all the way to intramural basketball or competitive swimming teams – there's a level for everyone. Children and teens are taught the skills they need to be successful in the game as well as the importance of good sportsmanship. There is also a full aquatics program for all ages beginning with infants. For information, contact mreape@sijcc.com or 718.475.5212.

JCC/Richmond Gymnastics Center has been training preschoolers through high school teens in the many levels of gymnastics for the past 30+ years. Whether your child is at the entry level or taking their skills to a higher level, the instructors will help develop the skills and enthusiasm that enhance them in

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# Fall Activity

## DIRECTORY

the sport and in their lives. For information contact mfontana@sijcc.com or 718.485.5275.

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It's easy for families to get healthy together at the Staten Island YMCA. Our Fitness Center, Group Exercise, classes and Child Watch are free with membership, so mom and dad can work out and know that the kids will be safe and well cared for while they do. A popular program called Family Night gathers together families from the local community to participate in fun activities like swimming, games, crafts, and sports – all of which encourage parents and kids to spend time while participating in healthy activities together.

Another popular program designed to bring families together is the YMCA Healthy Family Home, which was developed by the YMCA of the USA and sponsored by Eli Lilly to reduce the rate and prevalence of childhood obesity across the country. The program is based on the principle that families who support each other are more likely to make positive lifestyle behavior changes. The program provides free resources devoted to helping families adopt healthy behaviors through small sustainable changes, and the website is [www.ymcastrongkids.org](http://www.ymcastrongkids.org)

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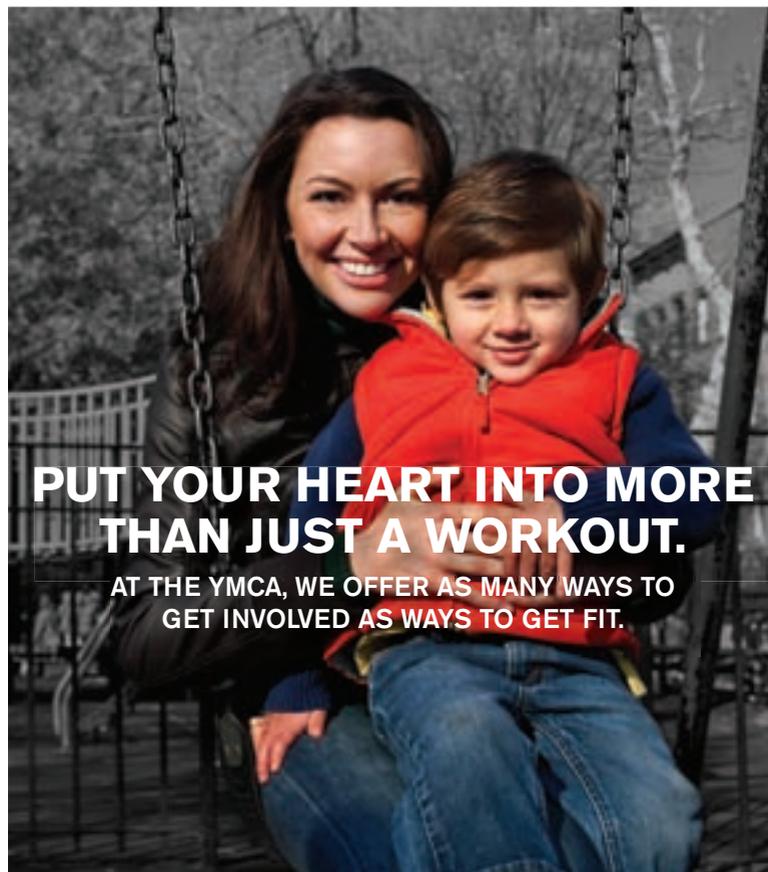
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# When fees go undercover

Getting savvy about hidden charges can save you big

BY CANDY SPARKS

**N**ew York sure is “the city that never sleeps” — thanks to our financial problems.

Whether we’re single or married, a parent or an empty nester, we are all wondering, “Where did my money go?” It doesn’t help that some credit card companies charge “hidden” fees, big-box stores hit us with yearly renewals, and local supermarkets are prone to overcharging us at the register. With all these unwanted (and sometimes unknown) expenses reaching into our pockets, how can we possibly balance our budgets? We can start by paying a little more attention to these budget busters:

## **Busted by the bank**

Since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, we’ve learned that banks are not going to handle our money for free. Banks are receiving bad press for increasing service fees, and to counter this, are advertising free checking or free cell phone application to check on accounts — but someone has to pay for the “freebies.”

Bronx resident Juanita needed to use her money market account for an emergency, and her balance dipped under the minimum required to qualify for free services.

Then she moved, and her monthly statements were not forwarded to her new address. Meanwhile, monthly service fees on her otherwise dormant account were racking up — so much so, she owed the bank money! When Juanita went to get money out of her account, she learned that it was overdrawn. She was forced to

pay more than \$160 in penalties before closing it and, although her account was closed, and the fees were paid off, her credit report shows that the account had gone into collections. This will stay on her credit report for the next seven years. She had no way to prove that she did not get the notices and said it was not worth the time or trouble it was taking her to fight with the bank and the three credit reporting agencies.

Some money market account must maintain a certain balance to qualify for a special interest rate. If the account goes below the minimum balance, the monthly fee could be as much as \$40 just to maintain the account. If your accounts are vulnerable to going into overdraft or insufficient funds, it would be wise to find a bank that charges low bounced-check fees. Unfortunately, no bank will advertise that.

We should all keep in mind that the bank is in business to make money — by using our money to turn a profit.

## **Time is money**

Most of us forget our monthly or yearly membership anniversary at gyms, shopping clubs or websites, but the gyms and shopping clubs don’t — and some automatically renew our contracts and charge our credit cards on, at, or near the anniversary.

Whitestone resident Maria noticed a charge of an additional \$175 on her credit card for her annual shopping club membership, but didn’t know what it could be for — she had not been shopping at the store recently.

Only after she looked into the

charge did she learn that her membership automatically renews and deducts the fee on her membership anniversary.

She wanted to keep the membership but wasn’t ready to make the payment at the time she was charged. She later found out that even if she had the option to delay the renewal, it would cost her the same amount and would extend over the same 12-month period.

“The membership goes from the date you started and runs for 12 months,” a manager told her. “We are only supposed to give you 12 months from your start date when you renew, no matter how much later you renew.”

When she looked into canceling to avoid the renewal fee, she was told she would have had to do it two months in advance.

“I was really frustrated at being forced to pay that amount. But they said it was my own fault because I signed the contract,” she said.

Find out when you have to renew or can cancel any memberships that would cause a financial hardship — especially for health club and gym memberships for which you do not get any of that money back.

“Lost time is lost money,” warned Maria.

## **Avoid getting sandbagged**

Supermarket shopper beware! A year-long city-wide investigation of 1,000 New York supermarkets conducted by the Department of Consumer Affairs indicated that one out of every two had violations.

In low-income communities, 64



percent of the stores failed the city's inspections. The top violations were improper prices on items, improper taxes on non-taxable items, inaccurate checkout scanners, unavailability of scales for customers, improperly weighed food, and leaving off the last date of sale.

The best thing to do now is to check out the prices in circular and what is on your receipt when you checkout. Check food items for freshness and weigh food items that are priced per pound. Otherwise, you could be getting sandbagged without knowing it.

### **Updates and upgrades**

Just as fashions come and go, so does technology. The newest iPod, cellphone, video camera and com-

puter are even designed to become obsolete after a certain amount of years. Or, they require periodic upgrades to continue functioning. Remember just last year when analogue TV became obsolete? Your old TV became useless and you had to buy an adapter or a brand new TV.

"Companies don't make money by making good products," says Ben, a computer specialist from Flushing. "They make money when you have to get an upgrade. They make a profit if you have to replace or fix it." The last time I had to have my computer fixed I, thankfully, had gotten an extended warranty on it.

Keep in mind that a manufacturer's warranty is limited, but extended warranties are available for an extra price. Depending on the terms of the warranty, the service

call may be free, but any necessary replacement parts could bear an additional cost.

To get the most out of your stuff and your money, check your warranties for the expiration date and find out whether any of the warranties can be extended on the stuff you like and want to keep.

• • •

These hidden fees and surprise charges are disappointing, but with an awareness of what could happen, we can proactively stay on top of situations as needed. Be aware of what is going on in your budget, but take care of yourself — after all, it's a balancing act.

*Candi Sparks is the author of the "Can I Have Some Money?" book series. You can follow her on Twitter and Facebook as Candi Sparks (writer).*

Keep in mind that the bank is in business to make money — by using our money to turn a profit.



## FAMILY HEALTH

BY PHILIP ROTH, MD, PHD,  
Chairman, Department of  
Pediatrics, Staten Island  
University Hospital

# Don't disregard the hepatitis B vaccine

**T**he Internet isn't always right — especially when it comes to vaccinations.

For instance, the Web is full of misinformation on inoculations for hepatitis B.

The idea that only intravenous drug users and people that engage in other high-risk behaviors like unsafe sex contract the virus has caused many people to think they are immune. But the facts say differently. Thus, parents must take the necessary steps to make sure their children are vaccinated. In the United States, the hepatitis B vaccine has the potential to prevent thousands of cases of infection each year, many of

which would go on to cause death due to cirrhosis or cancer in infants.

Hepatitis B can cause infection at any age. In order to provide a safety net that would protect against the preventable virus, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have strongly recommended that the first of the three doses of hepatitis B vaccines be administered in the newborn nursery — and not be deferred until one to two months of age. The two additional required doses of the vaccine can then be administered at one to two months of age and between six to 18 months, respectively. Babies treated in this manner are afforded greater than 95 percent protection against the virus.

Vaccines that prevent a whole series of illnesses with potentially serious consequences for infants and children are some of the greatest in-



novations in modern medicine. But, despite the success in eradicating or significantly reducing the occurrence of many diseases, immunizations have frequently been under assault on the Internet, which, at times, is a major source of misinformation.

Overall, the hepatitis B vaccine is virtually free of any serious side effects — other than fussiness and soreness, which usually resolve in 48-72 hours. Despite the absence of data that it caused any harm, thimerosal, a mercury-containing preservative, has been removed from the hepatitis B vaccine given to infants for over a decade. Even if present, the risk of thimerosal exposure is nowhere close to that posed by consuming various types of fish.

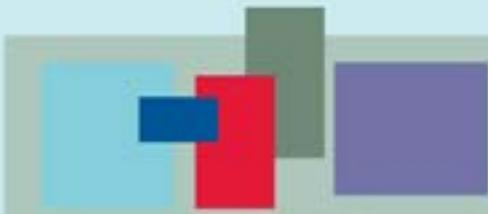
While much attention has been focused on transmission of the virus from mother to infant at the time of birth, two-thirds of cases involve babies born to mothers who are not infected. These infants acquire the

virus from close contact with other household members or caretakers who may be carriers, despite not showing any symptoms.

Numerous test results among pregnant women who do not have hepatitis B have been misreported, or in some cases, the wrong tests were ordered — wrongly diagnosing these women as hepatitis B negative. As a result, their newborn infants did not receive vaccines and subsequently developed infection.

Remember that vaccines only work if they are given. Large studies have shown that infants who receive the birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine are more likely to complete the primary series of childhood immunizations — leading to improved health.

Make sure that your infant begins to benefit from this protection as soon as possible after birth. Why leave your baby vulnerable for one- to two-months? Why gamble with your child's health?



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# Can book bags cause scoliosis?

What to watch for in the new school year

BY DR. DIANA D'ANGELO

**T**hose years of puberty we fondly (or not-so fondly!) recall can have a huge impact on a child's spine, where changes in hormones cause ligaments and tissues to become more relaxed in preparation for growth. Add to this an overweight backpack — like many kids will be strapping on this school year — and the spine can become compressed.

And that could lead to scoliosis.

As school —

and homework — starts, it's important to look for signs of scoliosis in our children, as it's now known that early detection is the key to treating this condition.

Scoliosis is a condition which affects a person's nerves, muscles and skeleton. Symptoms can include lower back pain, neck pain, headaches, fatigue, digestive issues, and much more.

Usually, the first sign of scoliosis is abnormal posture. For a child with normal posture, the ears, shoulders, hips, and knees should be even when looking at the individual from the front. From the side, the ears, shoulders, middle of pelvis, knees and ankles should follow one straight line down. Any deviation from this could indicate scoliosis. Current research shows that the prevalence of scoliosis in our country is anywhere from 4.5 to 15 percent of the population.

These days, children often wear backpacks that weigh up to half of their weight. When this extra weight is placed on the shoulders, the weight's force pulls the child backward. The body will try to compensate for the added pressure — causing the child to bend forward at the hips, arch the bag and jet his neck forward — placing abnormal stress and force on the developing spine. Some children don't even use both straps of the bag, and instead sling one strap over a shoulder. Others wear their bags so low that, as they walk, the bag bounces off of their tailbone with every step they take. Repetitive stress like this can adversely affect the spine. For children who have had previous spinal injuries that have gone unnoticed or untreated, abnormal backpack use and abuse can cause their spinal condition or scoliosis to worsen.

Here are five simple guidelines to

help decrease stress on your child's spine:

- Make sure your child wears both straps of the backpack at all times.

- A backpack should weigh no more than 10 to 15 percent of his body weight. If the child has scoliosis, the bag should weigh no more than five percent of his body weight. For example, if a child weighs 80 pounds and does not have scoliosis, then the bag should weigh between eight and 12 pounds.

- If the child needs to carry a large number of books in the bag, try to limit as many extra items as possible. Have the child carry a book or two underneath his arm. Some children are using new bags with wheels, which are ideal because they place no stress on the spine.

- If the backpack has a strap around the lower half of it, then have the child buckle the strap. This will cause more stability of the bag.

- Teach the child how to bend at the knees so to use her legs for lifting.

Unfortunately, scoliosis cannot be treated by merely avoiding backpack abuse. However, proper use can significantly reduce unnecessary pressure and stress on the spine. Scoliosis is a progressive disease that, without proper detection and treatment, can worsen. Advancements in non-invasive scoliosis treatment performed by specialized chiropractors have had promising results.

Start the school year off right by getting your child checked for scoliosis today!

*Dr. Diana D'Angelo is a chiropractor at Buckley Family Chiropractic in Greenlawn, NY. Buckley Family Chiropractic specializes in advanced scoliosis treatment. You can reach Dr. Diana at (631) 754-4333 or at [info@buckleyfamilychiropractic.com](mailto:info@buckleyfamilychiropractic.com).*



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# Hidden danger in the suburbs

Preventing the tragedy of driveway backovers

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

**E**ach time a child is run over and killed in a driveway, it is a tragedy. Whenever I read about it, like most people, my heart breaks, I cringe, and wonder how the family members of the precious child manage to move on with their lives.

Driveway backovers are all too common in suburban America, and New York is no exception. Yes, it happens here. And it keeps happening here, as well as throughout the country.

Fifty children are backed over each week in the United States, according to KidsandCars.org, a national Kansas-based organization dedicated to preventing injuries and death to children in and around motor vehicles.

“A young child does not possess the cognitive ability to know daddy can’t see him,” says Janette Fennell, the group’s founder and president. “People need to grab onto [the fact] that they literally can’t avoid hitting something [they] can’t see.”

With sport utility vehicles and mini vans seemingly getting bigger and bigger — statistics show that the bigger they are, the larger the blind zone.

With most big cars, the average blind zone is 7- to 8-feet wide and 20- to 30-feet long. Good Morning America tested the span of the blind zone and found that 24 toddlers could be behind a car at the same time, completely undetected. Fennell finds it paradoxical that most people would not buy a car if they could not see 20- or 30-feet in front, but would drive a vehicle with such a large rear blind zone.



## Case studies

In 2002, 2-year-old Cameron Gulbransen was killed when his father accidentally ran him over as he backed out of his driveway in Syosset in Long Island. Dr. Greg Gulbransen, a pediatrician, checked his mirrors and turned to look over his shoulder, but still could not see his son, who Gulbransen thought was

sleeping, but had left the house unbeknownst to his parents.

In 2004, Bill Nelson and Adriann Rashdorf-Nelson, of Dix Hills, Long Island, lost their son, Alex, when he was backed over by a relative.

“It is every parent’s nightmare to see their child die,” says Nelson. When asked how he deals with people who blame the parents and-or the driver for the child’s death, he



A rear camera can help you see anyone who may be in your blind zone.

calmly indicates “it is human nature to place blame on someone because [of the fear] that it will happen to you.” He tries not to second guess the choices that were made that day.

“We are not calling these accidents anymore,” says Rashdorf-Nelson. “Children are impulsive.”

The Nelsons created their own website, [alecsrunli.com](http://alecsrunli.com), and hold an annual run in their son’s memory, which attracts almost one thousand participants and spectators each year. The Nelsons also used money they raised to build the Alec William Nelson Memorial Playground in Huntington Station.

In 2005, Susan Auriemma put her car in reverse and started to back out of her driveway, in Manhasset, Long Island, but stopped when she heard her daughter, Kate, screaming. Kate, who miraculously survived, had gotten out of the house and away from the babysitter and placed herself right in the blind zone in the split second after Auriemma had gotten out of the car just to check that no one was behind her.

Now Auriemma, co-chair of the Coalition for a Safer Manhasset, wants people to know that if it can happen to her, it could happen to anyone.

She believes that redundant layers of safety will keep children safer. She recommends keeping vigilant, utilizing available technology, and educating parents and children alike about the dangers of moving vehicles. She believes people need to understand that it is not just about supervision, but about the issue of rear visibility.

### New legislation

After looking at the list of driveway backovers, I noticed the seemingly higher rate of occurrences on Long Island. Auriemma agreed that

it is a serious problem.

Several significant laws have come out of these tragedies. Alec’s Law, first passed in Suffolk County in 2006 and then in Nassau County shortly thereafter, requires that the county government have a website on which it posts child safety information in relation to SUVs, and requires car dealers to distribute pamphlets with such information.

The Nassau County website is not currently running. According to Legislator Wayne Wink’s office, there have been technical difficulties and he will continue to follow up.

In February of 2008, after a little more than three years of work by dedicated safety advocates, President Bush signed the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act of 2007, which will require safety technology that expands the driver’s field of view be standard in all cars. The Act will also require the Secretary of Transportation to provide the public with information about the danger to children in regards to cars even in a non-crash, non-traffic situation. But, until the Department of Transportation has completed its work in this area, there are no new rearview safety requirements.

### Protect yourself

There are quite a few ways in which you can protect your and other people’s children.

Backup cameras come standard in many high-end model cars. For those who do not already have one, a backup camera, costing less than \$100 or a “rear view safety lens” costing about \$20, are available online. But safety specialists stress that this technology does not take the place of getting out and walking around your vehicle.

Teach your child that a parked car might move and the driver might not be able to see him, to never play near vehicles and keep the toys and sports equipment off of the driveway.

Many people feel so terrible when hearing about the loss of these children, but can do something very simple to help others: they can talk about this with friends and neighbors to raise their awareness. People need reminding. And people like Fennell, the Nelsons, and Auriemma are making great efforts to save lives and by sharing their information with others.

You can join their ranks.

For more information, visit [www.KidsandCars.org](http://www.KidsandCars.org).

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## LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

# Post-grad minefield

## Get a handle on your teen's college search

**M**y son is now a junior in high school. You know what that means — it's time to start thinking about college. I'm overwhelmed, plain and simple. My son even knows what he is going into, and I'm still frazzled. It's a daunting task and one I'd love to find reason to avoid, but my son needs my assistance and support with his search.

I've learned that a good place to start is with other parents and students who have already gone through the process. There is a plethora of information on the Internet, so one can easily get more confused. Find out the sources others deemed most beneficial.

### Put it in perspective

Your teen's search should be an exciting and gratifying experience, so don't put too much pressure on him.

"When parents cannot control their anxiety, the college search process becomes miserable for everyone," says Bruce G. Hammond, coauthor of "Fiske Guide to Getting into the Right College" and "Fiske What to Do When for College" (Sourcebooks, Inc. 2007). "Parents must remember that attending a particular college will not make or break a young person's future. A young person's life trajectory will have much more to do with what happens after they get to college than with which one they attend."

### Narrow it down

Many believe that narrowing down your choices by location is a necessary first step. Does your teen want to be close to home or does he want to experience life someplace else? Will he want to be part of a large school community or a small one? Does he prefer a serene, rural environment or an urban lifestyle? You'd be surprised how much you can narrow your choices just on location alone.

Next, find the right academic fit. Many websites provide you with various search options, such as specific majors. If your teen is unsure of his



course of study, look at schools with a variety of choices in majors, rather than colleges that specialize in a few areas. Don't get stuck in cyberspace, either. Consult a variety of sources — counselors, teachers, alumni, and guides.

### Financial restrictions

Don't automatically disregard colleges which you deem "unaffordable" at first glance. For instance, you might consider a community college for the first two years. Successful community college graduates are often offered scholarships for their next two years at some universities.

As you look into financial aid, don't forget to pursue merit scholarships.

"The vast majority of money for college comes via the institution where the student chooses to enroll," Hammond explains. "Colleges use scholarships to offer discounts to students they are particularly in-

terested in. Students should keep in mind their odds of getting a scholarship are best when they are at or near the top of the applicant pool."

### Make the most visits

Try to narrow down the list to about seven to 10 colleges. Be sure to include colleges where acceptance seems certain. Campus visits are the next step. You might find that your teen just doesn't like the vibe at a particular school, but this is what the college visit is all about! Talk to students on campus and ask them what they like most (and least) about the school.

"Students should take a comparative approach to college visits," advises Hammond. "Identify a few important criteria, and look for the same things at each place. Record your impressions soon after you leave."

The college search can be tough, but following these steps can make it a lot easier.

### Tips and tales

"Students should close their eyes and picture an ideal college campus. Is it a large or small campus? Is it near a big city or in a small college town? If they know what they want to study, are there special opportunities offered?"

*Marisa Merlino, Director of Guidance, Hyde Park Central District*

"Search for information on high school websites under 'Guidance' — not just your local school's website! Check out video tours on websites — try [youuniversitytv.com](http://youuniversitytv.com)."

*Patty Johnson, Salt Point, NY*

### Share your ideas

#### Upcoming topic:

What to do if your teen doesn't want to be seen with you in public.

*Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to: [myrnahaskell@gmail.com](mailto:myrnahaskell@gmail.com) or visit: <http://home.roadrunner.com/~haskellfamily/myrna/>*

*Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer and columnist specializing in parenting issues and children's development. She is the mother of two teenagers.*

# It figures

BY CYNTHIA WASHAM

## DIGITAL DATA



**34** Percent of video-game players who are adult women.

**18** Percent who are boys ages 12-17



**8.5** Percent of children believed to be addicted to video games to the degree that it disrupts their ability to function socially, academically and in other ways.



**1,956** Average number of text messages sent or received each month by an American teen

**63** Percent of parents with a gaming console who consider video-game playing a positive activity for their children

## SCHOOL STATS



**26** Percent of U.S. school children who consider physical education their favorite subject.

**3** Percent who feel the same way about a foreign language.

**19** Percent of higher students who've had four or more years of a foreign language score on the reading, writing and math sections of the SAT, compared to students with a half year or less.

**44** Percent of American high-school students who study any foreign language.

**More than 90**  
Percent of European high-school students who study at least one foreign language.



**33** Percent of American children, ages 6-11, who take after-school lessons in such disciplines as dance, art, computers and religion.

**More than 1,200**  
Number of state legislators nationwide who visit classrooms each year to discuss the legislative process with students.



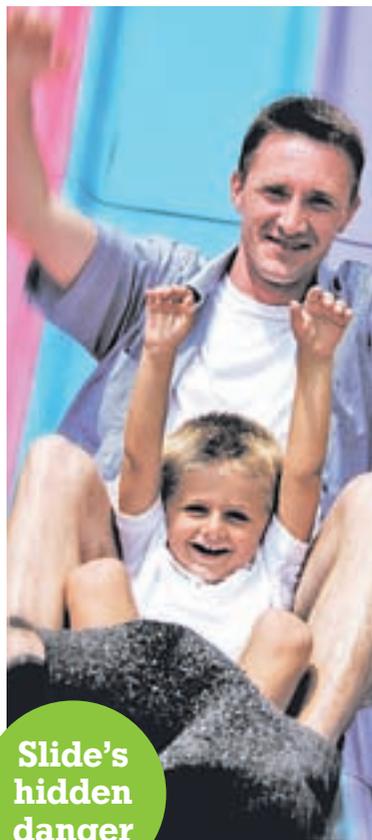
**10** Number of years since they've been doing so under the America's Legislators Back to School Program.



Source: 1UP, Marketingvox.com, The Oregonian, Scholastic, Early-advantage.com, Euractiv.com, Districtadministration.com, Infoplease.com, National Conference of State Legislatures



**Cavities  
and  
body fat**



**Slide's  
hidden  
danger**



**Sixth  
graders'  
obesity**



**Watch  
your  
glucose**

# Surprising health facts

According to a new study, nearly seven percent of sixth-graders across the U.S. are severely obese.

**BY KATHY SENA**

## **Sixth grade obesity**

Severe obesity becoming more common in sixth graders — and many parents don't recognize it.

Nearly seven percent of sixth-graders across the U.S. are severely obese, according to a new study appearing online in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, which tested 6,365 middle-school children during health screenings at 42 middle schools in across the country.

The increasing rate of severe obesity in children requires particular attention “because it is associated with high rates of risk for diabetes and cardiovascular disease as children get older,” says Marsha Marcus, PhD, lead study author and head of the Eating Disorders Program at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Doctors define severe obesity differently in children than they do in

adults. In children, the measurement used is a percentile of body mass index (BMI) for age and sex. For this study, researchers considered children with a BMI in the 99th percentile to be severely obese — and 6.9 percent of students fell into this category.

“The findings of this study are alarming because it shows there are even more children than we realized at medical risk due to excess weight,” says Marlene Schwartz, PhD, deputy director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University.

“In both situations, I have been surprised that some children who are severely obese according to their BMIs do not always look heavy. As a culture, we have become used to seeing heavier children so the visual norm has shifted. Because of this, many children are at risk of not receiving help since their parents do not see them as obese,” adds Schwartz, who

has worked with children in both clinical and research settings.

While no simple answer exists, “Parents need to talk to their children's doctors and seek treatment for children with severe obesity,” Marcus says.

## **Insulin sensitivity and high blood sugar during pregnancy**

Children of mothers whose blood glucose level was high during pregnancy are more likely to have low insulin sensitivity — a risk factor for type-two diabetes — even after taking into consideration the children's body weight, a new study shows. The results were presented recently at the Endocrine Society's 92nd Annual Meeting.

“We know that children born to women with type-two diabetes or gestational diabetes, or who have high blood sugar during pregnancy, are at risk of becoming diabetic

themselves," says study co-author Paula Chandler-Laney, PhD, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "This study suggests that the children's increased risk appears to be due, at least in part, to their prenatal exposure to relatively high maternal blood glucose."

Chandler-Laney and her colleagues studied children ages 5-10 and measured the children's sensitivity to insulin, the hormone that regulates sugar in the blood. They also evaluated the pregnancy medical records of the children's mothers to determine maternal blood-sugar concentration during the oral glucose-tolerance test.

The researchers found that the higher the mother's blood sugar levels during pregnancy, the lower her child's insulin sensitivity. Low insulin sensitivity is a major risk factor for type-two diabetes.

Obesity lowers insulin sensitivity, but the children's reduced insulin sensitivity was independent of their amount of body fat, the authors reported.

None of the children had high blood sugar, but puberty would further lower their insulin sensitivity, she notes.

"High maternal blood glucose during pregnancy may have lasting effects on children's insulin sensitivity and secretion, potentially raising the risk for type-two diabetes," Chandler-Laney says. "Obstetricians, pediatricians and pregnant women should all be aware of the potential far-reaching consequences that elevated blood sugar during pregnancy can have on children's health."

### **Unforeseen playground dangers**

I'm betting most of us have done it: gone down a playground slide with our child on our lap. What's the harm, right?

But according to a new study published in the Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics, 13.8 percent of tibia (shin) fractures in U.S. kids were the result of the child going down a slide on an adult's lap. The injury occurs when the child's leg gets stuck in one place while the adult and child continue to move down the slide.

### **Cavities and body fat**

Preschool children with tooth decay may be more likely to be overweight or obese than the gen-

eral population and, regardless of weight, are more likely to consume too many calories, a new study indicates.

"Poor eating habits may play a role in both tooth decay and obesity in preschoolers," the study's lead author, Kathleen Bethin, MD, PhD, says.

"Dental decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, and obesity in youth is a growing problem. To prevent these problems, the dentist's office may be an important place to educate families about nutrition," says Bethin, a pediatrician at Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo and an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Buffalo in New York.

With funding from the New York State Department of Health, the doctors at the Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo and University of Buffalo studied the relationship between poor dental health and excess weight in 65 children ages 2 to 5 years. All children needed dental work due to decay and had their dental procedure and blood work performed while they were under anesthesia.

Each child's height and weight were measured before the procedure to calculate the BMI. Also, the child's parent or guardian completed a questionnaire about the child's recent average daily food consumption.

Almost 28 percent of the children were overweight or obese, compared with an estimated 21.2 percent in the general U.S. population. Those children, who's BMI was high for their age (at the 85th percentile or above), already had much higher total cholesterol levels than their healthy-weight counterparts, Bethin reports.

The questionnaire showed that both the normal-weight and overweight children consumed more calories per day than recommended for their age (1,440 and 1,570 calories respectively). Seventy-one percent of the children consumed more than 1,200 calories per day, although the daily recommended caloric intake ranges from 1,000 to 1,400 calories depending on age and gender of the child.

*Kathy Sena is a freelance journalist specializing in health and parenting issues and is the mother of a 14-year-old son. Visit her blog at [www.parenttalktoday.com](http://www.parenttalktoday.com).*

## Looking for fun with the kids?

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## TWICE THE ADVICE

JACQUELINE AND  
KERRY DONELLI

# Brat attack!

## What to do when your best friends' kids misbehave

Dear Twins,

My husband and I have been best friends with another couple since high school, and now they have two children and we have three. They quite often invite our entire family over for dinner, and of course, we reciprocate. The difference is that we have taught our children to have table manners, and you'd think their kids were raised in a barn. They scream and yell at the table, fight, reach across other people's plates for food, spit, and even throw food! And their parents barely say a word! We're such close friends with the parents that I don't want to make waves. How do I handle this?

— *Boiling Mad*

**Kerry says:** I would suggest one of three things. Option one: tell your friend that because the kids (it is not necessary to point out it's only hers) get rambunctious, why don't the adults have dinner alone from now on; thus whosever's turn it is to bring the kids, will instead hire a babysitter, and whoever is serving will feed the kids in advance. Option two: go out to dinner; after all, you are adults and can't possibly always want to have adult conversations in front of your children (and I bet the children don't much care for it either). Option three: tell your friend you think it's a better idea for the kids to eat together at a separate table in a different room so you can enjoy each other's company in peace.

**Jacqueline says:** The truth is, there is not much you can do when



your friends raise brats, and maintaining your friendship can often be hindered by them. The "Who raised these kids?" syndrome will invariably continue to the end of time. If you tell your friends that they are not raising their kids properly, it will invariably end up in a fight and could end your friendship. So it's just not worth it. I would take some of Kerry's suggestions, especially the last. Have the food-throwing youngsters sit at another table in another room even. Make general announcements to all the kids like, "OK troop, food stays on the table tonight," to open up the eyes of the kids — and the parents — that it is not OK to have a food fight in your home.

Dear Twins,

My husband and I invited three couples over for a sit-down dinner

on a Saturday night. We knew two of the couples very well, and the third couple had just moved into our neighborhood, and we wanted to get acquainted. When I called the third couple, I invited the wife and husband, saying it would be a late dinner, and to arrive at 9 pm for cocktails before dinner. Well, everyone arrived at 9, but to my astonishment, the third couple brought their two boys, ages 7 and 9! I didn't know what to say, and I wasn't prepared for children! My OWN children were in bed, and these two go rushing into their bedrooms trying to wake them. It became a madhouse, and the dinner was a fiasco. What should I have done?

— *Angry Neighbor*

**Jacqueline says:** Why people would bring kids to an invite-only dinner is beyond me. Perhaps they assumed that, since you have kids, theirs were welcome. Whatever the case, when they showed up at the door with them, there wasn't much you could do. The polite thing would be to allow the boys to join you after letting the parents know you weren't expecting kids. But making a scene at that point — or asking them to leave — is far worse. Don't be a doormat, either. Let their children know your kids' bedrooms are off limits. Enjoy the evening and go with the flow. What's the point of being uptight? They

may even become good friends if you don't throw them out. However, for the next invite — if there is another — let them know it's adults-only.

**Kerry says:** I agree with Jacqueline. It's petty to still be spewing over the couple that brought their kids over for dinner. Aren't there more serious things to be worried about? Yes, they are complete morons for not realizing that this was not a function for kids and that their children were clearly not invited; nonetheless, couldn't you just go with the flow and order a pizza and let the kids play upstairs? Out of a variety of disasters that would horrify me, this one's at the bottom of the list. If you ever decide to invite this couple again, which I doubt you will, let them know it's a dinner for adults only. Now stop sweating the small stuff.

Jacqueline and Kerry Donelli, twin sisters, are multi-award winning filmmakers. They are currently getting their Masters in Mental Health and have a radio show on WBCR-AM also called, "Twice the Advice" — where one twin gives advice and, often, the other completely disagrees! Please email them at [TwiceTheAdvice2@gmail.com](mailto:TwiceTheAdvice2@gmail.com).

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# Going Places

## LONG-RUNNING

**Family Cruise Nites:** Classic Car Showcase: Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Avenue; (718) 351-1611; [www.historicrichmondtown.org](http://www.historicrichmondtown.org); Wednesdays, 4:30, Now – Wed, Sep. 29; Free.

The Staten Island Region Antique Automobile Club of America rolls onto Center Street of Historic Richmond Town every Wednesday evening from 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM to give our visitors a closer look at classic cars from the golden age of the American automobile.

**Story Museum:** Historic Richmond Town Museum, 441 Clarke Avenue; (718) 351-1611 x 280; Thursdays, 11:30 am–12:30 pm, Thurs, Sep. 2 – Tues, Oct. 26; \$3 (Adults free).

Pre-schoolers, one to five, enjoy stories, crafts, music, dancing and singing.

## THURS, SEP. 2

**Reading Aloud:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd; (718) 351-1444; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Books for children three to 12 years old.

**Picture book time:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Lane; (718) 984-6670; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Picture books - recommended for ages 3 and up.

## FRI, SEP. 3

**Films for children:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd; (718) 351-1444; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3 pm; Free.

For ages 4 and older.

**Board games:** St. George Library Center, 5 Central Ave. (718) 442-8560; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Board games of all types and all skill levels. For ages 5 to 11 years old.

## SAT, SEP. 4

**Canoeing Basics:** Clove Lakes Park, Slosson Avenue, Victory Boulevard, Clove Road; (718) 390-8000; [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/CloveLakesPark](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/CloveLakesPark); 11:00 am.

Explore the tranquility of Marketing Pond while getting to know nature. Let's look for egrets, herons, and turtles while having fun! Equipment provided. First-come, first-served. Ages 8+.



## Colonial time machine

**H**istory comes alive at the Conference House this month.

On Sept. 11, the Peace Conference Celebration reenacts Benjamin Franklin's historic talks with the British that could have stopped the Revolutionary War.

In colonial garb and appropriate wigs, actors will recreate the meeting between the British Admiral Lord Howe and colonial patriots Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge, the latter three coming to the Conference House beach via rowboat from Perth Amboy, NJ — as they did over 200 years ago.

Families can get in on the period fun, too, as the day-long affair will feature Colonial-era music and dancing, crafts booths, outdoor open-fire cooking demonstrations, and children's games and crafts, including calligraphy, quilting, butter churning, candle making, and kite making.

Most history books pass over this day, but the Sept. 11, 1776

peace conference held at the 17th century manor house represents a dramatic point in the course of American history.

The talks are more about what didn't happen than did. In the only diplomatic attempt between the Crown and the colonists to halt the course of the American Revolution, Howe offered to end the conflict peacefully if the colonies would return to British control. But the colonists refused to give up their struggle for independence. No reconciliation was reached, so the Revolution continued, lasting for seven years, until American independence was won.

*Peace Conference Celebration at the Conference House [298 Satterlee St. at Craig Avenue in Tottenville, (718) 984-6046], Sept. 11 from 11 am–4 pm. Rain date Sept. 12. Suggested admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children, college students, and seniors. Children younger than 6 are free. For more info, visit [www.ConferenceHouse.org](http://www.ConferenceHouse.org).*

## Submit a listing

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

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

**Richmond County Fair:** Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Avenue; (718) 351-1611; [www.historicrichmondtown.org](http://www.historicrichmondtown.org); 11:00 am; Free.

See demonstrations of open hearth cooking, blacksmithing, and spinning. Try your hand at quill pen writing and old-fashioned games. Explore furnished interiors of buildings from the 1690's through the 1890's.

## SUN, SEP. 5

**Mysterious Mushrooms and Treacherous Toadstools:** Bloomingdale Park, Richmond Pkwy, Bloomingdale Rd, Lenevar Ave; [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/R106](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/R106); 11:00 am; Free.

We'll trek in search of Witches' Butter, Scaly Tooth, Jack O' Lanterns, Turkey Tails, and the Old Man of the Woods. You're sure to have fun(gi) learning about the magic of mushrooms.

**Richmond County Fair:** 11:00 am. Historic Richmond Town. See Saturday, Sep. 4.

**Gateway To India:** A Potpourri of Indian Dances: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway; (718) 442-3100; [www.statenislandzoo.org](http://www.statenislandzoo.org); 2:00 pm; Free with regular admission.

A unique dance composition set in various styles of Indian Classical and folk dances. Raja Rajeswari and her students will present a cornucopia of dances which have their own unique costumes, original language and lyrics set to instrumental music and are performed with varied choreography that is unique to each state.

## MON, SEP. 6

**Richmond County Fair:** 11:00 am.

# Going Places

Historic Richmond Town. See Saturday, Sep. 4.

## TUES, SEP. 7

**Bagpipe/Drum lessons:** Marine Corps Building, 46 Ontario Avenue; (347) 267-9095; UkiPiper@gmail.com; 8 pm – midnight; Free.

## WED, SEP. 8

**Films for children:** 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Sep. 3.

## THURS, SEP. 9

**Storytime:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Stories and Tales from Around the World features multi-cultural tales and legends filled with action, humor and lots of audience participation. Recommended for children four and older.

**Reading Aloud:** 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

**Picture book time:** 4 pm. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

**Club Thursday:** Richmondtown Library, 200 Clarke Avenue; (718) 668-0413; http://www.hypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Come on in to your local library, make friends and participate in a variety of activities.

**Mickey's Magic Show:** St. George Theater, 35 Hyatt Street; (718) 442-2900; 7 pm; \$20-\$80.

Abracadabra Mickey, Minnie and a host of Disney friends come together with world-class magicians to perform magic from legendary Disney films right before your eyes. For children one and older.

## FRI, SEP. 10

**Board games:** 4 pm. St. George Library Center. See Friday, Sep. 3.

**Mickey's Magic Show:** 7 pm. St. George Theater. See Thursday, Sep. 9.

## SAT, SEP. 11

**History re-enactment:** Conference House, 288 Satterlee Street at Craig Avenue; (718) 984-6046; www.conferencehouse.org; 11 am–4 pm; \$5 (\$3 children, college students, seniors; Children under 6 free).

Celebrate Benjamin Franklin's historic talks with the British. Participants dress in colonial garb.

**Origami workshop:** The Art of Paper Folding: St. George Library Center, 5 Central Ave. (718) 442-8560; www.nypl.org; 2 pm; Free.

Learn basic origami techniques and fun projects. Appropriate for teach-



## Rubin Museum for kids

**E**arly Childhood and Family Learning Programs at the Rubin Museum of Art in Manhattan allow children and parents to experience art together.

Family Days at the museum are held twice a year. This year's International Day of Non-Violence celebrates the birthday of Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of nonviolence.

Word Play and Gallery Exploration, for children 1- to 6-years-old,

are offered throughout the year.

Children must be accompanied by at least one adult at all times.

*Tickets are \$10 per child (\$5 for children of RMA members); Free for accompanying adults, children 1-year and younger, and Cool Culture members. Tickets include gallery admission; Gallery admission is free every Friday from 6-10 pm.*

*Gallery admission is free for seniors (65 and older) on the first Monday of every month.*

*Rubin Museum of Art, 150 West 17 Street, between 6th and 7th avenues; (212) 620-5000 X.344. For more information visit www.rmany.org;*

ers, seniors, families, teens. Younger children should be accompanied by a participating adult. Projects are high beginner to intermediate. Beginners are welcome.

**Damsels and Dragons:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Avenue; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org/parks/blueheronpark; 2:00 pm; Free.

Discover the damselflies and dragonflies that inhabit our ponds. You'll learn to identify each species.

## SUN, SEP. 12

**Art Show:** Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Snug Harbor Road and Kissel Avenue; (718) 483-7106; dpagano@staten-islandmuseum.org; 11 am–5 pm; Free.

The 60th Annual Fence Show.

**Holiday Fair:** Eger Health Care and Rehabilitation Center, 140 Meisner Avenue; (718) 989-3087; 11 am; Free.

All day event featuring handmade

and decorative gift items, many vendors-get a start on your holiday shopping. Food and fun.

**Park to Park:** Heyerdahl Hill: High Rock Ranger Station, Nevada Avenue off Rockland Avenue; 718 667-6042; www.sigreenbelt.org; 1:00 pm; Free.

Explore the haunted hill of Heyerdahl and the ruins that were left behind in the early 1800's. Wear hiking boots and bring a snack and water. Moderate to difficult terrain.

**Knot for Nothing:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Avenue; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org/parks/blueheronpark; 1:00 pm; Free.

Come learn and practice some of the most basic and practical knots. Avoid knotty situations in the future, and you'll thank yourself for knot-knowing.

**Concert:** St. George Theater, 35 Hyatt Street; (718) 442-2900; www.stgeorgetheatre.com; 7 pm; \$75, \$55, \$45,

\$25.

Tony Orlando.

## MON, SEP. 13

**Roald Dahl Day:** Port Richmond Library, 75 Bennett Street; (718) 442-0158; www.nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

Rediscover your favorite Roald Dahl books on his birthday. For ages 7-13.

## TUES, SEP. 14

**Baby and Me:** Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Lane; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Persons with disabilities children newborn to 18 months. Pre-registration recommended.

**Teen Lounge:** Tottenville Library, 7430 Amboy Road; (718) 984-0945; www.nypl.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Hang out with your friends in a cool, casual environment. Bring snacks to enjoy while you listen to the radio & chat with your friends. Use laptops to do your homework, watch videos, play games. Ages 12-18.

**Arts and crafts:** Port Richmond Library, 75 Bennett Street; (718) 442-0158; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children eight to 15 create a sun catcher. Registration required.

**Fall Craft:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Road; 718 351-1444; www.nypl.org/locations/dongan-hills; 4:00 pm; Free.

Children make Fall related arts and crafts. Ages 5 and up. \*\*Pre-registration is required\*\*.

**Fall Craft:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Road; 718 351-1444; www.nypl.org/locations/dongan-hills; 4:00 pm; Free.

Children make Fall related arts and crafts. Ages 5 and up. \*\*Pre-registration is required\*\*.

**Bagpipe/Drum lessons:** 8 pm – midnight. Marine Corps Building. See Tuesday, Sep. 7.

## THURS, SEP. 16

**Wii and other games:** Tottenville Library, 7430 Amboy Road; (718) 984-0945; www.nypl.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Show off your skills –Challenge your friends. Ages 13-18 years old.

**Teen Tech Time:** South Beach Library, 21-25 Robin Road; (718) 816-5834; www.nypl.org; 4–6 pm; Free.

Unlimited laptop time for teens.

**Reading Aloud:** 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

**Picture book time:** 4 pm. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

*Continued on page 28*

# Going Places

Continued from page 27

**Club Thursday:** 4 pm. Richmond-town Library. See Thursday, Sep. 9.

## FRI, SEP. 17

**Board games:** 4 pm. St. George Library Center. See Friday, Sep. 3.

## SAT, SEP. 18

**Junior Science Club:** Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place; (718) 483-7105; 10 am–12 pm; \$5 (\$8 non-members).

Clay Wollney teaches budding scientists about microscopes. For children 8–13, parents may observe.

**Butterfly Safari:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Avenue; (718) 967-3542; [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/blueheronpark](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/blueheronpark); 11:00 am; Free.

We'll teach you how to safely capture, study, and release some of nature's most colorful flying insects. We'll provide the nets and field guides; bring a camera and a snake, if you'd like.

**Staten Island's History Now:** William T. Davis: The Conference House, 298 Satterlee Street; (718) 984-6046; [www.conferencehouse.org/index.html](http://www.conferencehouse.org/index.html); 2:00 pm; Free.



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'60s, while visiting Staten Island's oldest settlement. It's great family entertainment and it's free too!

*Historic Richmond Town, [441 Clarke Ave. at Richmond Hill Road in Richmondtown, (718) 351-1611]. For more information visit [WWW.HistoricRichmondTown.Org](http://WWW.HistoricRichmondTown.Org)*

Joseph Smith presents a living-history portrayal of William T. Smith, a leader in 19th century conservation awareness, a founder of the Staten Island Museum, and author of "Conference or Billopp House, Staten Island," published in 1926.

## SUN, SEP. 19

**Concert:** St. Alban's, 76 St. Alban's Place; (718) 984-7756; [www.Musicat-SaintAlbans.org](http://www.Musicat-SaintAlbans.org); Call for time; \$25 (\$20 seniors and students).

Quintet of the Americas performs "Aires Tropicales.

**Early Birding:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Avenue; (718) 967-3542; [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/blueheronpark](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/blueheronpark); 9:00 am; Free.

**Insect Insanity:** Wolfe's Pond Park, Comfort station, west of Cornelia Ave. (718) 967-3542; [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/wolfespondpark](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/wolfespondpark); 11:00 am; Free. Explore the world of insects.

## MON, SEP. 20

**Teen movie time:** South Beach Library, 21-25 Robin Road; (718) 816-5834; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 3:30 pm; Free.

Age appropriate movies for teens 13-18 years old.

## TUES, SEP. 21

**Teen Lounge:** 2:30 pm. Tottenville Library. See Tuesday, Sep. 14.

**Bagpipe/Drum lessons:** 8 pm – midnight. Marine Corps Building. See Tuesday, Sep. 7.

## WED, SEP. 22

**Story time:** Todt Hill-Westerleigh Library, 2550 Victory Boulevard; (718) 494-1642; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

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# Going Places

Jaws, Paws and Claws: Animal Wisdom Tales from Around the World features stories about Crocodiles, Tigers & Bears and more. Recommended for ages four and older.

## THURS, SEP. 23

**Wii and other games:** 2:30 pm. Tottenville Library. See Thursday, Sep. 16.

**Reading Aloud:** 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

**Picture book time:** 4 pm. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

**Club Thursday:** 4 pm. Richmond-town Library. See Thursday, Sep. 9.

**Family Movie Night:** "Black Beauty": Huguenot Park Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; 5 pm; Free.

Parents bring your children for a relaxing night out at the library. Free popcorn, snacks, beverages.

## FRI, SEP. 24

**Nursery Romp:** Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Road; 718 351-1444; www.nypl.org/locations/dongan-hills; 11:00 am; Free.

For Ages 2-5. Pre-Registration required. \*\*Pre-Register starts 9/17\*\*.

**Board games:** 4 pm. St. George Library Center. See Friday, Sep. 3.

## SAT, SEP. 25

**Village Flea Market:** Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Avenue; 10 am-5 pm; \$2.

Rain date Oct. 2.

**Habitrekking:** Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway; (718)442-3100; www.statenislandzoo.org; 10:00 am; \$50; \$35 (members).

Go "wild" exploring the ecology of different habitats (bay, pond, temperate forest, tropical forest, savannah, ocean, etc.) at the Zoo and during a trip to Wolf's Pond. Experience how field biologist collect data. Have fun designing and participating in a "Jeopardy" game (using the knowledge gained during your exploration weeks) to be played at "Spooktacular", the Zoo's most popular special event. Pre-registration required, open to 6th, 7th and 8th graders.

**Nuts about Squirrels:** Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Avenue; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org/parks/blueheronpark; 11:00 am; Free.

Do squirrels find all of the nuts they bury? How do they climb down trees headfirst? Learn these answers and more in a trek through the park.

## SUN, SEP. 26

**Breakfast with the Beasts:** Staten

Island Zoo, 614 Broadway; (718)442-3100; www.statenislandzoo.org; 8:30 am; Non-members: \$13, (\$10 Members).

Tour animal kitchen, help prepare food for critters and watch them eat. Meet some animals close up and have a breakfast snack while there.

**Mysterious Mushrooms and Treacherous Toadstools:** 11:00 am. Bloomingdale Park. See Sunday, Sep. 5.

**Hawk Walk:** High Rock Ranger Station, Nevada Avenue off Rockland Avenue; 718 667-6042; www.sigreenbelt.org; 2:00 pm; Free.

Autumn means the beginning of bird migration. We'll hike to Moses Mountain in search of raptors and other migrating bird species. Bring binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, and a snack.

## TUES, SEP. 28

**Farmer's Market:** Hill Garden Inn, 1100 South Avenue; (718) 477-1400; 8 am-5 pm; Free.

Fresh produce.

**Blood drive:** Hilton Garden Inn, 1100 South Avenue; (800) 688-0900; (718) 477-1400 X12; paulac@siedc.net; 11 am-5 pm; Free.

Donors must be between 15 and 75 years of age at least 100 pounds and be in good health.

**Baby and Me:** 11 am. Great Kills Library. See Tuesday, Sep. 14.

**Teen Lounge:** 2:30 pm. Tottenville Library. See Tuesday, Sep. 14.

**Bagpipe/Drum lessons:** 8 pm - midnight. Marine Corps Building. See Tuesday, Sep. 7.

## WED, SEP. 29

**Teen Art:** New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

For ages 12 to 18.

## THURS, SEP. 30

**Wii and other games:** 2:30 pm. Tottenville Library. See Thursday, Sep. 16.

**Reading Aloud:** 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

**Picture book time:** 4 pm. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Sep. 2.

**Club Thursday:** 4 pm. Richmond-town Library. See Thursday, Sep. 9.

## SAT, OCT. 2

**October Fest:** The Conference House, 298 Satterlee St. (718)984-6046; www.conferencehouse.org/index.html; 12:00 pm; Free.

Food, music, greenmarket, hayrides, demonstrations.

**Concert:** St. George Theater, 35 Hyatt Street; (718) 442-2900; www.stgeorgetheatre.com; 5-7 pm and 8 pm; \$105 (includes dinner).

David Johansen.

## FRI, OCT. 8

**Concert:** St. George Theater, 35 Hyatt Street; (718) 442-2900; www.stgeorgetheatre.com; 5-7 pm and 8 pm; \$105 (includes dinner).

101 Years of Broadway.

## SAT, OCT. 9

**Concert:** St. George Theater, 35 Hyatt Street; (718) 442-2900; www.stgeorgetheatre.com; 5-7 pm and 8 pm; \$165 (includes dinner).

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## OUR RELATIONSHIPS

JOAN EMERSON

# Baby makes stress

## How does a child affect you and your spouse?

**A** new baby plus a new marriage equals major stress for both partners — and yet there's no guide available for first-time parents to help deal with this joyous and difficult time.

Until now.

From watching and hearing about these situations with family, friends, and clients — while remembering my own experience — I have seen that, along with the love, joy and wonder of watching a new life begin, stresses on the relationships between new mom and new dad are typical.

Yet, I also get the sense that it takes everyone by surprise.

It will be the goal of this column to discuss the conflicts that typically emerge during this time, and provide some of the tools needed to keep couples' connection intact and help new parents:

- Create a safe, loving place to reveal themselves and learn about their partner.
- Build a solid, reliable, loving relationship.
- Maturely work through the throes of the inevitable periods of disappointment and anger.

The July 12 edition of New York Magazine cover story "I Love My Children. I Hate My Life," described study upon study showing the stress of raising kids and the effect those children have on the relationships of the married individuals. Indeed, studies show that children reduce marital satisfaction and adversely affect relationships, with the hardest period being the baby-toddler stage. A walk to a nearby Barnes and Noble helped explain why that is the case.

In the "Relationships" section, there are shelves of books by theorists whose names we all know about how to work on creating suc-

cessful marriages. But there is nothing dedicated to the difficulties of new parenthood.

In the "Raising Your Children" section, there are the "What to Expect..." books along with topics like "how to talk to your child," and "advice to dad to let mom sleep and learn how to change diapers." But there is nothing directed at safeguarding a marriage after a child is born.

We all know that along with the warmth and pleasure associated with the new baby, there's a 'hold on for dear life' experience for at least the first six months: a period plagued with worry, lack of sleep, total unpredictability of the baby's behaviors and needs, insecurities, postpartum emotionality, differences in parenting approach, changes in roles, surprises and sometimes disappointments with the other parent's coping style.

It isn't until the child reaches the 6- to 12-year-old stage that marriages begin to bounce back to mom and dad remembering that they are also husband and wife.

So what can we do about the mar-

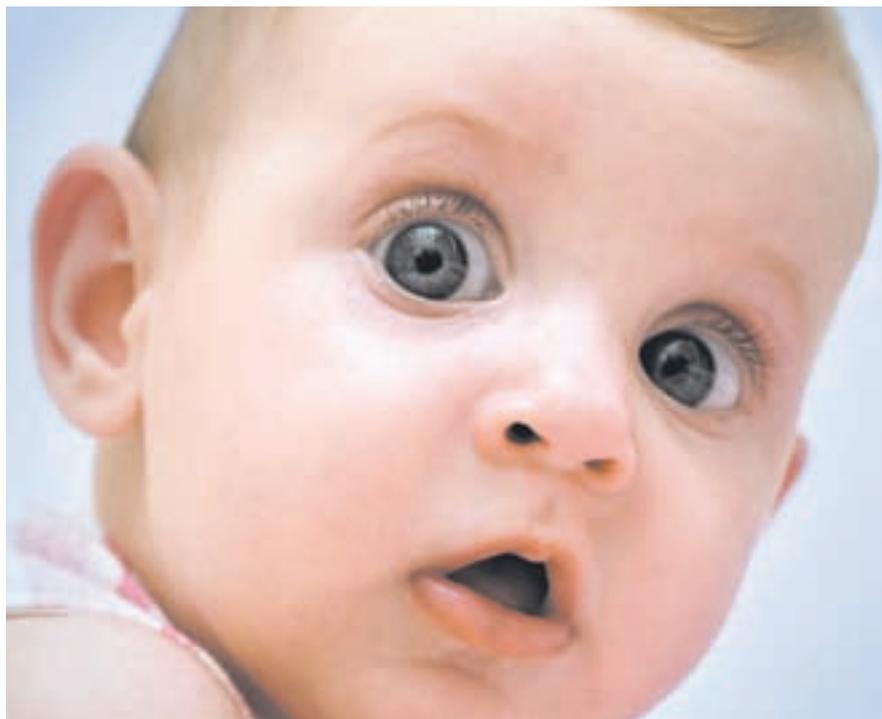
riage in the meanwhile?

One of the upsides that can evolve during this young-family phase of marriage is that partners will, for better and worse, really get to know new each other, as that time of euphoria during which we saw each other through the rosiest of colored glasses has passed. Instead, we can use this time to create a safe environment in which to reveal our hopes, fears, difficulties, secrets, disappointments, and wishes.

Sharing these most private vulnerabilities with each other and receiving empathy and reassurance are the building blocks of a strong bond between partners and lead into a stage of mature, safe and dependable love.

Next time we'll discuss one of the most basic rules for successful communication: being effective in expressing one's feelings, while giving your partner the feeling that they've really been heard and understood.

*Joan Emerson is a New York psychologist who specializes in couples therapy. You can learn more about her by visiting her Web site at [www.JoanEmerson.com](http://www.JoanEmerson.com)*



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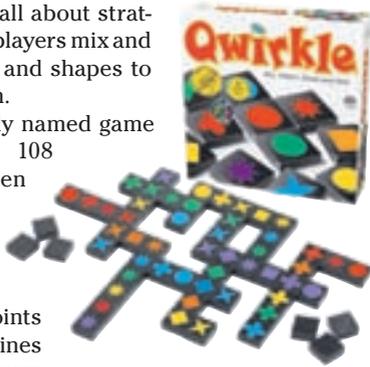
# New & Noteworthy

## For your next game night

Keep this one in mind for the next family game night.

Qwirkle is all about strategy, wherein players mix and match colors and shapes to score and win.

The quirkily named game consists of 108 thick wooden blocks with six shapes in six colors. Players score points by building lines that share a common attribute — either a color or a shape. The player with the highest score after all of the tiles are placed wins the game, and bragging rights



for the next week's game night.

Although the game is quickly learned, it soon becomes apparent that strategic thinking is crucial to scoring high. The challenge of Qwirkle is logical and clear enough to engage kids, but complex enough to keep adults in the game. And since the simple play requires no reading, the whole gang can play.

*Qwirkle is for two-four players, ages 6 and up. For info, visit [www.readerscatalog.com](http://www.readerscatalog.com).*

## Building their ABCs

This toy is perfect for blockheads.

With the ABC Flyer, your little one can build while learning the letters of the alphabet.

The toys are not just great fun, but a great way to develop language, arithmetic, fine motor

skills and more. Keep them all together on the pull-toy wagon, which provides tidy storage

for all the pieces.

Each multicolored letter block is handcrafted and include a different animal picture. They're made from Michigan basswood and brightly colored with child-safe inks, and are the perfect size for small hands.

The sets come in eight different languages, including English, Russian, Hebrew, Greek, Italian, French, Spanish and Chinese, so no matter the language, you can likely find your alphabet.

*For information on the ABC flyer, visit [www.readerscatalog.com](http://www.readerscatalog.com).*



## Art that sticks

Sometimes a wall just needs to be dressed up a bit, and LTL Prints have the perfect art for the job.

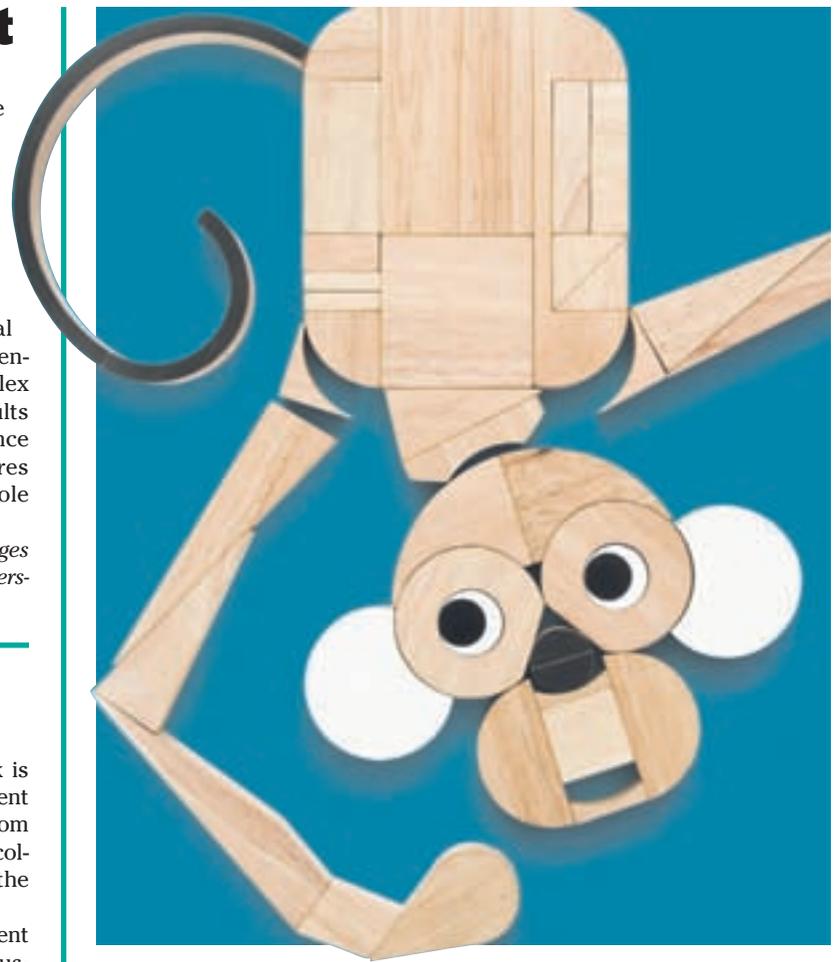
Yiyang Lu, whom Twitter fans may recognize as the illustrator of the site's famous "Fail Whale" icon, has crafted colorful, fanciful wall art that can be stuck to walls, windows and even ceilings.

The cartoon-ish designs range from whales spouting birds into a heart-shape formations to round elephants with jester-like prings to even a giant light bulb — a constant encouragement for your child to think big.



The sets are self-adhesive and can be removed and rehanging many times without damaging walls, so don't worry if your little one keeps changing his mind where to hang it.

*For more information on Yiyang Lu's wall art, visit [www.ltlprints.com/yiyang](http://www.ltlprints.com/yiyang).*



## Things are shaping up

If your child can think it, he can probably make it with PlayShapes.

The geometric wooden shapes can be arranged or stacked to produce hundreds of 3D creations.

The simplicity of the product — made from rubberwood — and clarity of design enables children and adults alike to fully engage in the joy of the creative process. And, if you make a mistake,

you can easily start over again.

For those who need a little inspiration, each set of 74 blocks comes with a sheet of copying pre-made designs, from clowns to monkeys to genies. Whatever floats your boat (you can make that, too).

*For more information on PlayShapes, e-mail [info@neo-utility.com](mailto:info@neo-utility.com) or visit [www.millergoodman.com](http://www.millergoodman.com).*

## Chalk fun

Waiting for dinner has never been more fun.

With Chalk It To Me's chalkboard placemats, your child can doodle away as you prepare his meals. And they can be used every meal — just draw, wipe off and draw again. You too can get in on the fun by playing tic-tac-toe, or leaving message for



in the morning wishing good luck on a test or a happy birthday.

The items come in a set of four, perfect for parties or playdates, and come with 12 pieces of chalk and a sponge eraser.

*For more information, visit [www.uncommongoods.com](http://www.uncommongoods.com).*



# thursday's child

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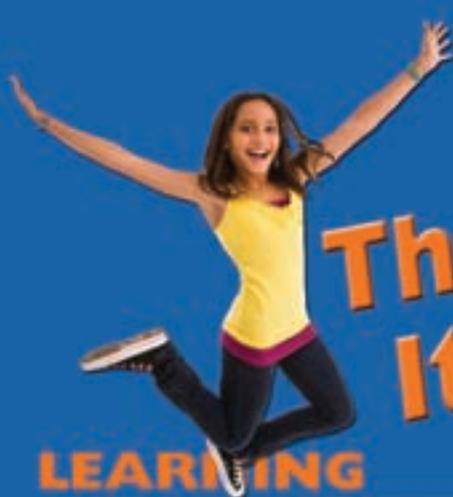


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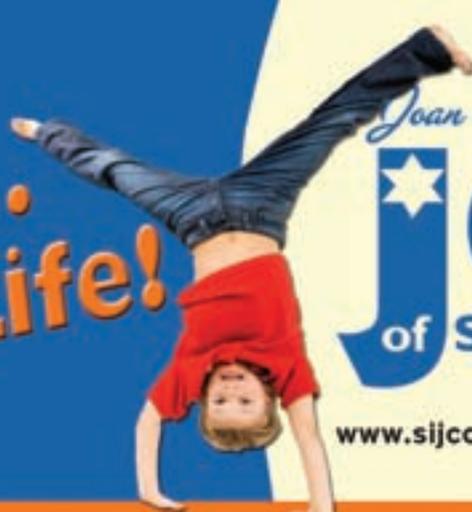


All services must be arranged by a NYC Early Intervention official and are based upon the unique needs of the individual family after eligibility is determined by a NY State approved evaluator.  
All services are provided at no out-of-pocket cost to parents, though health insurance may be accessed for reimbursement  
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