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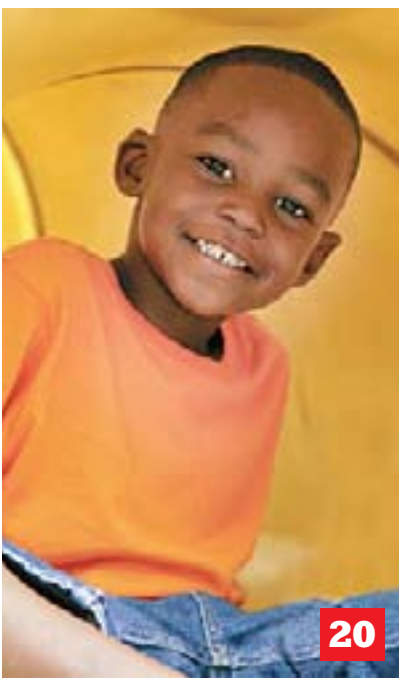
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Family June 2012



10



20



24

FEATURES

8 TTYL, Mom!

When should your kid get a cellphone?

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

10 Planning a perfect play date

Follow these rules to make sure you and your little one have a great time

BY ALEXANDRA ESPINALL

12 Learning on the job

One mom's helpful tips for teens seeking summer employment

BY ALLISON PLITT

14 Unraveling the mystery of colic

Researchers find link to migraine-suffering moms

BY KIKI BOCHI

18 Heads up

What you should know about brain injuries and concussions

BY KIKI BOCHI

20 A time of transitions

Helping your special-needs child prepare for the end of school

BY REBECCA MCKEE

22 Summer's golden opportunity

How camps can support the social development of kids with special needs

BY BRIAN FAUGHNAN

24 Brand new dad

Surviving the first weeks of parenthood

BY TIM PERRINS

27 Staten Island's brightest

Enter annual scholarship pageant

BY JOANNA DELBUONO

30 Getting pregnant

One woman's five-year-long struggle to conceive

BY SANDRA GORDON

33 Delicious mission

Every bite nourishes Staten Island at Commons Cafe

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

34 Going Places

Take the family out and find out what's going on in your town



18



38

COLUMNS

6 Mommy 101

BY ANGELICA SERADOVA

16 Healthy Living

BY DANIELLE SULLIVAN

26 Family Health

BY DR. RICHARD SIDLOW

28 The Book Worm

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

32 Good Sense Eating

BY CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

38 New & Noteworthy

The hottest new products

SPECIAL SECTIONS

21 Special Needs Directory

Letter from the publisher

CONGRATS TO OUR GRADS!

I know that during this month many of you will have the honor of attending the graduation of perhaps your preschooler, your high school student, or maybe even your university daughter or son. I know what you will



be feeling. I have been there myself many times, and each time, although I think I am prepared emotionally, I am overwhelmed with waves of tearful joy and amazement.

I am amazed at how quickly the time has passed and joyous at the juncture and at the achievement of my child. Proudly we watch as they graduate to yet another plateau, another level in their development and journey in this life experience. Sadly

and with nostalgia, we often conjure the vision of that baby we had, that little toddler, that youngster who first bawled, then crawled, then stood on its own two feet and took off, away from us and towards the independence

we knew was coming and had trained it for.

There is truly nothing like it, nothing at all that can match that feeling of pride and of completion, that in spite of obstacles, the work has been done and your child has matriculated and is moving up. In this day of overwhelming competition and vocational uncertainty, there is little doubt that graduations are necessary; that continuing to be educated

is paramount and that our children need to "aim high."

We must be there along the way, to encourage, assist, tutor, and advise. There is little doubt that our job is ongoing, and that education begins at home, in the womb, in the nursery, in the house, and that we are the first and foremost teachers of our children. We set the tone, we create the priorities. We either give them confidence and direction or we don't and they flounder. It is not someone else's job. It is ours. Our children will only succeed if they are encouraged from the beginning by us, their parents, and informed from the start that success in every way is their destiny.

Congratulations to all of you who in these weeks will sit and watch your children collect their diplomas,

their proof that they have completed another level on the steps to adulthood and its inherent responsibilities. Snap your photos as we all do, but also take the time to really look at the ritual, to really look at your child and at all his friends, also moving up, who you also have watched grow to this point. Then, congratulate yourself as you congratulate them. It is your achievement as well as theirs. It's a huge job to be a good parent. I know.

Have a great month. Thanks for reading.

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MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SERADOVA

The social network

Mom seeks balance between friends and family

Something crazy happens after you have a child. Well, actually, a lot of craziness happens, but I'm talking about what happens to your relationships. You remember, your friends?

When I was pre-baby, I had a somewhat active social life; dinner after work with friends, happy hour on Fridays with co-workers, and date night with my husband, which usually included meeting up with other couples. I got invited to places and events. I got to pick and choose where I wanted to go, how I wanted to spend my time, and with whom. There was a healthy balance between me-time, friend-time, and family-time.

It's understood that once you become a parent, your priorities change. Yes, I get that. But even after I've pureed my daughter's baby food, done her laundry, played with her, chatted with my husband, made dinner (occasionally), I still want to make time for my friends. It's because of my new priorities that my rare friend time is even more special.

Let me tell you, I am the first one to respond to any invite these days. Girls night? I'm in. Brunch? See you there. Recently, my husband and I attended a wedding. We had a babysitter (thanks, Mom!) for the night and planned on staying out all night long (read: after midnight). I visited the open bar often, and we

were that obnoxious couple at the wedding asking everyone where the after-party was.

Don't judge me. Before I had my daughter, I never understood why some of our friends always wanted to stay out so late. What's wrong with them? Don't they know when to go home?! I now realize that they, too, had children, and they were enjoying their big night out.

I'm not eager to get away, because I'm a stressed-out mom or because I'm looking to escape my motherly duties, but because I want to hold onto my identity as much as possible. Going from child-free to new mom is a lot to take in. I understand that a lot of mothers (myself included) feel overwhelmed when they take a step back and see how everything has changed dramatically after having a baby. Happy moms make for happy babies, right? It's because I've managed to hold onto a piece of my pre-baby self that I am, for the most part, a sane mother.

It's this same attitude that has made my transition back to work a lot easier than I expected. I had mentally prepared myself for the separation anxiety (mine, not hers) that would surely come once Olivia started daycare. But, rather ashamedly, I haven't felt any guilt yet. When I'm at work, I'm engaged, and I look forward to going home to my baby. When I'm home, it's all about her.

Nowadays, the party invites aren't coming in like they used to, although Olivia has some to attend soon. But, maybe my friends are busier with their priorities, too. That's life. On the occasion that I am spending time with friends, I treasure that quality time, because the truth is, these moments are few and far between. I can't get up and go anymore, and I have to think about somebody else before I accept an invitation to do anything. I'm struggling to hold onto my friendships so hard. Will it get worse if I decide to have more children? Will my children be my new BFFs? That wouldn't be so terrible, of course. But it would be terrible if I didn't even make time for my friends.



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TTYL, Mom!

When should your kid get a cellphone?

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

At what age should a child get a cellphone? Experts say that because children mature at varying rates and handle responsibility differently, there shouldn't be a set age. Yet it is surprising there are some second and third graders getting Smartphones, and, although it is not yet the norm, there is a definite trend of parents equipping their wee counterparts with the latest of everything. Child-rearing gurus we spoke with say that there are important steps a parent can take to make sure their child is ready to handle the responsibility of having a cellphone of their own.

The trend

"Parents are providing kids with more and more privileges and possessions at younger and younger ages," says clinical psychologist Dr. Michael Osit. Most kids who are now in their late 20s received their cellphones when they started



driving or went to college; my 21 year old got his at the end of eighth grade, and my 18-year-old daughter had one in sixth. A local PTA president tells me that now, "the last holdouts receive their phones by sixth grade."

Osit calls it "social and acquisition acceleration" and tells me "many kids are not ready for the privilege." He is concerned that a child who receives a privilege too early will be making increasingly grandiose demands as he gets older.

Early acquiescence to inappropriate demands can set the tone for future entitlement issues. In his

book, "Generation Text — Raising Well Adjusted Kids In An Age of Instant Everything," Osit addresses concerns over immediate gratification, which results in a failure to develop necessary coping mechanisms in adulthood.

Several parents I spoke with were apprehensive that their children would feel left out without a cellphone. Osit agrees with this concern over social marginalization — within limits. He explains, "If you don't provide your 15 year old with a texting plan, he will be out of the loop when it comes to maintaining peer relationships and making plans to get together."

Family cellphone contracts

Here are some possible provisions for your children if you choose to make a family cellphone contract:

- Compliance with school rules or school-wide ban
- Usage limited to specific hours (cellphone curfew)
- Required prompt responsive-

ness to parent contact

- No downloading from the web, dialing toll-free numbers, or posting photos or videos without parental permission
- Not sending hurtful, harassing, or threatening texts
- Requirement to pay charges exceeding the monthly fee

When are they ready?

Is there a need?

Lori Hiller, a school social worker in Brooklyn, believes that kids should get cellphones when they start to travel alone, which can be as young as fourth grade, but that children who are constantly chaperoned do not need them. She cautions that younger children do not need BlackBerries or iPhones, but that parents might want their children to have texting ability, since texts can often be easier to receive than calls.

Cellphones are also a convenience for the parents, so they can call kids to come outside for pick-up, stay connected with their tweens elsewhere in the mall, or text kids behind closed doors about dinner. (Yes, I do that.)

Lenore Skenazy, a Queens mom and syndicated columnist, explained to me that her kids wanted cellphones to arrange meetings with their friends in the park. Landlines are insufficient for most kids, because they keep their friends' contact numbers in their cellphones.

Most parents seem to feel that a cellphone is helpful, so they can keep tabs on their children or be reached in an emergency. Others consider a cellphone a safety device, because they know their children can deter a possible abductor by taking a photo.

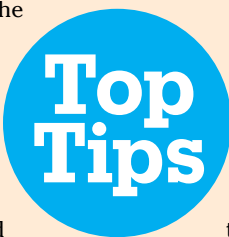
Still, "[kids] want it for the games," one mother told me. And, cellphone society beckons to them constantly.

"Cellphones are so embedded in our culture that they are like a third appendage for kids. It is the only world they know," says Osit.

Well before they get their own phones, young children can recite texting acronyms, mimicking their favorite TV characters.

Kids notice that adults are "cell addicted," as Skenazy says, and they want to be part of the conversation, literally and figuratively. Moreover, most of us have witnessed parents handing their own cellphones to their infants and toddlers in public, to distract them

According to the clinical psychologist Dr. Michael Osit, author of "Generation Text — Raising Well Adjusted Kids in an Age of Instant Everything," parents should ask themselves the following questions to determine the best age at which to get their kids a cellphone:



- How responsible is your child?
- How mature is he?
- Does he follow the rules, particularly with other electronics (computer, Internet, video games)?
- How adept is your child at social decision making?
- Is your child easily influenced by peer pressure?

with games and videos. Is it no wonder that kids want their own?

Too close for comfort?

Despite her acceptance of cellphones for kids, as "a normal part of adolescence," Skenazy, author of "Free Range Kids," has concerns, too.



"Cellphones are so embedded in our culture that they are like a third appendage for kids. It is the only world they know."

"If they lose them, they only have so

much earning power to pay you back," she says.

More importantly, Skenazy warns that a cellphone can become "the world's longest umbilical cord," impeding a child's growth toward independence. Kids with cellphones often call parents to help them make basic decisions, which they should be making on their own.

"It can create a sense of dependency and undermine a child's self-confidence," says East Hills Elementary School psychologist Christine Flanagan.

Skenazy agrees.

"Kids need some self-determination at some point," she says. "By the time they are 10, for example, kids should know to eat if they are hungry."

She even suggests that parents leave their cellphones home occasionally, so that they cannot be

reached, thereby forcing their children to rely on their own resources to make reasonable age-appropriate decisions, without using their parents as a crutch.

Some parents refuse to do that, but I personally like being out of touch for a bit, as long as my kids know where I am in a true emergency. Not only can the cellphone enable children to become too attached, but one New Jersey

mother confided in me that her kids "have a longer leash with a neurotic mother," as she has a constant need to be sure that they are safe.

Teens have complained that parents who shadow their every step and constantly track them by navigation systems are stalkerish. Parents need to be wary of the fine line between monitoring for safety and demonstrating a total lack of confidence in their children, and slowly permit their children more autonomy.

Set & enforce rules

Osit notes that the pervasiveness of cellphones in our lives can cause adults to reach hasty conclusions, as "parents tend to assume their child knows proper use of it." To the contrary, he has been privy to "horror stories" of unacceptable use by children and teens. Accordingly, he encourages parents to establish rules for phone use.

"The cellphone is a privilege —

not a right," he says. New York City banned cellphones in public schools in 2006.

"Parents need to be specific about what is appropriate and what is not," says Osit. "Cellphones are not needed during homework; they should be in the parents' possession or turned off at that time."

He also tells parents to take away the phone for a few days if the rules are broken, and return it with the proviso that the rules will be adhered to in the future.

In my family, a cellphone had been used for 3 am conversations on school nights, and thereafter spent every night on the kitchen table unused after a set hour.

In an effort to set down rules for their kids, some creative Long Island parents drafted family cellphone contracts based on forms found online. They require the child and the parents to comply with different sets of expectations, many of which limit the child's usage, but some of which require the parent not to unnecessarily invade his child's privacy.

Osit also believes that parents should tell their children that they will occasionally check the child's text messages, mindful of the "trust issue," yet more concerned with safety and inappropriate behavior.

Parents can also purchase "starter phones," or phones designed especially for younger children, which come with navigation systems for tracking and parental controls, so the child cannot text or surf the Internet. In this way, the child can stay connected with the parent, without worrying about inappropriate use or loss of a pricey phone.

Cellphones are inanimate tools. In the hands of responsible tweens and teens, they can be a wonderful means of communication and connection with parents, peers, and the outside world. But, they can be instruments for cyber-bullying, cheating, or any number of dangerous and unsuitable behaviors. Before we invite our children to join us in this fast-paced global electronic world, it is our responsibility to be sure they are prepared, well-mannered, and safe.

Risa C. Doherty is a freelance writer and attorney with a cellphone family plan. Read more at www.risadoherty.com.

Planning a perfect play date

Follow these rules to make sure you and your little one have a great time

BY ALEXANDRA ESPINALL

As my daughter, Ali, and I walked home from school, three weeks into first grade, she said to me, “I made a new friend. Her name is Hannah; she wants to have a play date.”

Play date. I had heard of them before, but since Ali is my oldest child, this was the first time I was actually asked to plan one. In my day, I would just run down the block to my friend’s house, and my mom would whistle from the front porch when it was time to come back. I have planned two-day conferences at work, put together dinner parties and hosted events, so how hard could a play date be?

I called the child’s mom, and we decided to meet at the park (which was a lot better than having to clean my house, so they wouldn’t see the mess).

Believe it or not, there are actually rules to follow to make sure you and your little one have a great play date — and save yourself from being the family that people talk about.

- Try and meet somewhere neutral for the first time. A park, library story time, a walk, or a kid-friendly café are great public places to meet, so you can get to know the other parent before she comes into your home.

- Be on time. I’m sure your child will be counting down the minutes in anticipation, and so will her new friend, so don’t make the children, and the other parent, suffer by being tardy. (It’s also a good time to teach your child how to tell time.)

- Bring a snack. Always make sure to ask the other parent beforehand

if her child has any food allergies. You wouldn’t want to bring some strawberries and have the other child watch as yours finishes them alone. If the play date is at your home, have some coffee or tea for the other parent and vice versa: if you are invited, bring a snack.

- Speak to your child about manners. Good afternoon, please, thank you, etc. Explain to her that she is a guest in her friend’s home, and

she must behave. No running or screaming inside, and when the play date is over, she must help clean up.

- Sharing can sometimes become an issue, especially with little ones, so be prepared. If there are some toys that are very special to your child, or expensive collectables that shouldn’t be played with, put them away. Be aware that you will eventually run into another parent who hasn’t learned to share and doesn’t think her child should, either.

- A play date should not last all

day. You have a life to get back to. One hour for the first date is fine — as you get to know each other, you can slightly increase the time.

Make sure the pick-up time is clear to the other parent. Some think this is a baby-sitting service and will leave you with their kid for hours — so having a phone number is a good idea. If the play date is at their house, make sure that you are on time for the pick-up.

Keep in mind: play dates are not for parents. Unless you are invited to stay, don’t. I once had a mom drop her daughter off then settle into my couch and ask for something to eat. She stayed for three hours, and I had to entertain her the entire time. (I now pretend I’m in a rush when I see her and have never invited her child back to my house again.)

- Kids and cars. I, personally, do not want my child in anyone else’s car. Some people don’t mind. Before you decide to run errands with extra little ones in tow, make sure you have the other parent’s permission, and let her know how you feel about your kids getting in her car. I dropped my younger daughter off one time at her friend’s house and when I picked her up two hours later, I found out she had been all over town, running errands with her friend and her mom — without her booster seat! They even went to Queens to pick up a family member. Needless to say, after speaking to the other parent, I never sent her there again.

The most important thing is that your child learns how to interact positively with other children and play. After a while, you will get the hang of play dates, and then you can start reading articles to prepare yourself for when your little angel begins to go on real dates.

Alexandra Espinal lives in East New York, Brooklyn, where she is a mom to two girls, a dog named Chellita, a cat named Feathers, and a bearded dragon named Sandy.



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Learning on the

JOB

One mom's helpful tips for teens seeking summer employment

BY ALLISON PLITT

The warmer months always remind me of my summers as a teenager — entering into the rite of passage of finding and holding a summer job. My real work history began at age 12 with a steady stream of neighborhood babysitting gigs, but it was my summer jobs in high school that gave me my first exposure to the working world. None of these jobs were exactly what I thought they would be, but each experience taught me an invaluable lesson about how to survive in the workplace.

Don't be afraid to ask

When I was 14, there was a girl in my class who I always looked up to. One day, she told me that she volunteered as a candy striper at the local hospital. When I asked her why she was volunteering, I was expecting an altruistic response. Instead, she told me that the experience would help her get a better job in the future.

Since that sounded like a good enough reason as any, I signed up to work as a candy striper at the hospital. I envisioned that my responsibilities would include walking around and fluffing up patients' pillows and pouring them water.

In reality, I ended up working as a waitress in the hospital's coffee shop. Since I was very shy and often nervous and klutzy around people, I feared every day when I went to work that I would drop a plate on the floor, and the entire restaurant would become silent and stare at me.

During my summer as a candy striper, I overcame my shyness and never dropped a plate, glass, or utensil on the floor. My self-confidence soared. The last week on the job, however, a customer ordered an iced coffee. Since this was the 1980s — before any semblance of a Starbucks had appeared in our neighborhood — I had never heard of an iced coffee before.

Instead of asking a fellow worker how to make the drink, I pulled out a wax-coated paper cup, poured some hot coffee into it, and then gave it to

the customer with some milk and sugar on the side. As I walked away from his table, I noticed there was wax on my hand. Slowly turning around, I saw the customer bring the drink to his lips as the cup fell apart and the coffee dripped down his white shirt.

The man jumped out of his seat and yelled that the scalding hot coffee had burnt his chest and legs. I rushed to give him more napkins and apologized for my cluelessness. Needless to say, he didn't want to hear my excuses, and walked out of the coffee shop and probably to the nearest doctor who could treat him for his burns. Thus, I learned lesson number one: if you don't know how to do something, ask someone.

Never do something you'll later regret

When I turned 15, I got the opportunity to earn my first real paycheck. I played a lot of tennis growing up and was offered a job teaching tennis at a summer day camp. The head of the camp was a tennis pro, and he hired four teachers who were all enrolled in schools nearby. My friend and I, both students at an all-girls school, were the two female teachers, and two boys from the public high school were the male instructors.

At the beginning of the camp session, I had a great time playing tennis, working with the kids, and finally getting a chance to flirt with boys. I had absolutely no clue how to act around boys, since I was leading a monastic life attending an all-girls school. Of course, the summer heat was contributing to the delusion in my head

that one of the male instructors had a crush on me. I knew he was shy, so one evening, when we were about to leave work, I kissed him.

Big mistake. He looked at me with a dumbfounded expression, since he had not anticipated the kiss at all. Not only did I learn the next day that he was not interested in me, but for the rest of the camp session, every time I walked by him and the other male teacher, they would snicker at me. I kept imagining all the horrible, humiliating things they were saying about me, which leads to lesson number two: never do anything in the workplace that you may regret the next day.

Despite the social gaffes and embarrassing experiences, I continued to work at the camp. When the camp session ended, I spent a month taking classes to obtain my lifeguard certification. Once I became certified, I got a job as a lifeguard at local pools during the summer, and worked an evening shift at the neighborhood YMCA in the winter.

If there's a problem, tell your boss

During my evening shift at the Y, there was a swimmer who would never leave the pool at closing time. I would end up waiting 15 minutes for him to finish his laps, which I felt was unfair since I could not put the extra time on the time sheet. Whenever I asked him to leave, he would hold up a finger (which I assumed was a silent attempt to tell me to wait one more minute) and then continue to swim.

One evening I had decided that



enough was enough, and I was going to show this swimmer that his time was up. When the pool was supposed to close, I detached the lane line, passed it over his head, turned off the lights and left the swimmer alone in the pool.

The following week when I came in for my evening shift, my boss was sitting on the bleachers next to the pool. That was not a good sign, since the only time I had ever seen my boss was when he interviewed me for my job.

My boss told me that I had jeopardized the man's safety and created a potential lawsuit for the Y if anything had happened to the swimmer. I apologized and recounted my previous at-

tempts to get the swimmer out of the pool at closing hours. My boss then proceeded to tell me about lesson number three: if you don't know how to handle a situation, tell your boss.

Always double-check your facts

Thanks to all my experience as a lifeguard, I eventually landed a summer job after graduating from high school — working as a pool manager at an apartment complex. I was really excited about this opportunity, because I got to hire two lifeguards and the hours of the pool were from noon to 8 pm.

Two months before graduat-

ing from high school, I asked two friends, Rebecca and Mia, if they wanted to work as lifeguards at the pool. I told them the hours, the good salary, the 40-hour work week, and the classes they had to take to get certified. My friends thought the situation sounded ideal and agreed to take me up on my offer.

Two weeks before the pool opened, I realized that I had made a mistake — one of the lifeguards could only work 20 hours a week. When I told Mia, who had less work experience, that I had to cut her hours, she became infuriated with me, and rightly so. I was essentially saved when she found another part-time job, but not

without enduring a couple of weeks of the silent treatment, which helped me understand lesson number four: always double-check your facts.

Put yourself in someone else's shoes

After the rocky start, my friends and I had a good summer managing the pool. Since my friends and I were punctual and conscientious, none of the tenants who used the pool ever complained.

Halfway through the summer, Rebecca became quiet and withdrawn. When Mia and I asked her what was wrong, she said her parents were separating and that her life at home had become emotionally unbearable. Despite Rebecca's attempts to arrive at work each day looking happy and cheerful, Mia and I could tell she was in a lot of pain.

One of the stipulations in our employment contracts was that if we worked until the end of the summer, we would receive bonuses. We were all looking forward to heading off to college with our bonuses, but the week before the pool was to close for the summer, Rebecca decided she couldn't stand living at home another day and left for college early, thus, losing her chance to get her bonus.

In hindsight, I wished I had been more sympathetic toward Rebecca's situation — perhaps offering her a place to stay at my family's home or hanging out with her in the evenings when we finished work.

But I didn't do that. Instead, I hugged her, told her I was sorry about what was going on with her family, and watched her leave. I still feel some remorse about what had happened that summer, which taught me the most significant lesson of all: always put yourself in someone else's shoes to understand her feelings.

My daughter is only 6 years old, but I know that one day I will recount these anecdotes to her in the hopes that she will make better decisions than the ones that I made. Nevertheless, no matter how much we as parents try to prepare our children for the real world, kids will only learn life's most important lessons from their own mistakes.

Allison Plitt is a contributing writer for New York Parenting Media and a mother living in Queens with a 6-year-old daughter. Share your ideas about topics for articles or resources for families at allisonplitt@hotmail.com.

Unraveling the mystery of colic

Researchers find link to migraine-suffering moms

BY KIKI BOCHI

The conventional wisdom about colic — a baby's endless, inconsolable crying that can drive new parents to the edge of despair — is that it is caused by some kind of gastrointestinal distress. But new research suggests there may be a different cause for all that fussing among otherwise healthy babies — offering new hope and fresh ways for moms and dads to cope with colic.

For generations, distressed parents have been told that colic is most likely connected to tummy trouble. It seemed to make sense, since colicky babies have a tendency to tighten their abdominal muscles and pull up their little legs as they cry, making it certainly appear that they are having digestive difficulties.

But, despite more than 50 years of research, no definitive link has been proven between infant colic and gastrointestinal problems. Studies have shown that babies who are fed solely breast milk are as likely to have colic as those fed formula, and giving colicky babies medication for gas does not help.

For some, it turns out, the problem may not be in the baby's gut, but in an immature or oversensitive neurological system. Researchers are exploring this premise at the University of California, San Francisco, where a recent study showed that mothers who suffer migraine headaches are significantly more likely to have babies with colic than mothers without a history of migraines.

The work prompts the question of



periodic syndromes, believed to be precursors to migraine headaches later in life.

Babies with colic may be more sensitive to stimuli in their environment, just as migraine sufferers. They may have more difficulty coping with the onslaught of experiences after birth as they are thrust from the dark, warm, muffled life inside the womb into a world that is bright, cold, noisy, and filled with touchy hands and bouncy knees, Gelfand theorizes.

Colic is defined as intense, unexplained crying lasting more than three hours a day, more than three days a week, for more than three weeks. It is often at its worst at around the same time each day, in many cases in the early evening. Typically, it appears within the first month of life — when new

parents are already feeling exhausted and overwhelmed — and often disappears rather suddenly by the time the baby is 3 to 4 months old.

If your baby is experiencing colic, take comfort that your mom is right: this, too, shall pass. When your baby is very young, cultivate a peaceful environment, with less background noise (yes, turn off the TV!) and minimal visitors. Seek advice from your doctor. You can try some of the traditional techniques for soothing your baby — turning her over on your lap to rub her back, rocking her, playing soothing background music, or even putting her carrier on top of a running clothes dryer. Just keep in mind that for some babies, the best strategy may be none of these. Some babies may actually need decreased stimulation and may do best swaddled in a darkened room.

whether colic may be an early symptom of migraines, and raises the possibility that reducing stimulation may help, just as reducing light and noise can alleviate migraine pain.

“We’ve known about colic for a really long time,” says Amy Gelfand, MD, a pediatric expert with the school’s Headache Center, who presented the findings at the American Academy of Neurology’s Annual Meeting in April. “But despite this fact, no one really knows why these babies are crying.”

In the study, mothers who suffered migraines were found to be 2.5 times more likely to have colicky babies. Overall, 29 percent of infants whose mothers had migraines had colic, compared to 11 percent of babies whose mothers did not have migraines.

Gelfand and her colleagues believe colic may be an early manifestation of conditions known as childhood



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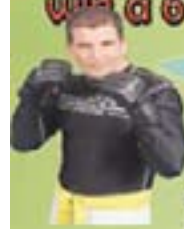


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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Hormones in food and early puberty

According to the journal *Pediatrics*, 15 percent of American girls now enter puberty by age 7. For African-American girls, the percentage is 23 percent. Seven – it's unbelievable, isn't it? Doctors say girls are maturing faster than ever for reasons even they don't completely understand. They are reaching puberty younger than any generation in history. Perhaps we should look at our food supply.

When most of us were growing up, our food didn't have the amount of artificial preservatives and chemicals in it that it does today. Meat, in particular, wasn't pumped with loads of hormones. Back when we were young, meat was expensive and families bought it less than they do today. Now, meat has not only become more affordable, it is everywhere. Typically, the cheaper versions are pumped with hormones, preservatives, and chemicals and are widely found in children's food offerings.

Anyone who has seen Jamie Oliver's "Food Revolution," in which he breaks down exactly how the ground beef is made in school cafeterias, would be alarmed. The meat, which is usually reserved for dog food, is mixed with ammonia and chemically manufactured into what passes for edible ground beef, or in other words, "pink slime."

Carla Hastings, a mother of three from the West Village, says she is very concerned, and ever since



reading up on food and hormones, she will only buy organic meat.

"I can't even believe, knowing what I know now, that I would allow my kids to eat fast-food hamburgers and chicken nuggets, or even that I bought any meat at the supermarket. I'm kind of horrified," she says.

Food in general (and the synthetic material it is often made from) is also behind another theory about early puberty — the idea that girls are more overweight now than ever and it is the extra body fat that stimulates the early puberty. The statistics are startling. Overweight girls are 50 percent more likely to enter pu-

berly early, and those considered obese have an 80 percent chance of developing breasts before their ninth birthday. In this country, nearly one third of children and teens are overweight or obese.

Yes, of course, parents need to monitor their children's diet and health. But what is the accountability of the farmers and corporations that are intentionally creating unhealthy food for the sake of profit? The almighty dollar should never reign supreme over human health.

Some of us are fortunate enough to be able to buy organic milk and meat from cows that have been raised without antibiotics or hormones, but this is an extravagance many families cannot afford. Others are vegetarians who intentionally avoid the hormones and antibiotics found in meat.

While moms and dads ultimately select their child's food and the accountability falls on each individual parent, the Food and Drug Administration and the beef and dairy farmers are also responsible for choosing greed over quality and money over health. At the very least, food that is processed with hormones needs to be studied significantly more, especially in light of the growing number of boys and girls reaching puberty while still young children.

Danielle Sullivan, a Brooklyn-born mom of three, is a parenting and pet writer at Babble.com. Visit her blog, Just Write Mom, or find her on Facebook or Twitter (@DanniSullWriter).

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Heads up

What you should know about brain injuries and concussions

BY KIKI BOCHI

Brooke de Lench was watching one of her sons play in a high school football game, and what she saw worried her. He looked slow. Confused. Uncoordinated.

No one else seemed to notice, but she saw enough to set off alarm bells. It wasn't just that he was having an off day. A visit to the doctor later confirmed her fears — her son was suffering from the residual effects of at least one concussion, and possibly more.

"I was told to never let his head be in a collision again," says De Lench, the founder of MomsTeam.com, a website whose mission is to empower parents of young athletes through information and resources. While her son recovered, De Lench has made a career of spreading the word about the dangers of concussions and other sports injuries.

The spotlight was refocused on concussions just before the Super Bowl, when former professional football players attempted to band together in federal court, claiming the concussions they suffered as players cause dementia, degenerative brain diseases, depression,

and other mental ailments. At least 300 former football players are plaintiffs, claiming that the NFL didn't warn them of the long-term risks of repeated head injuries.

Well, the word is out — and it has been for a while. The question is whether parents and youth coaches are paying attention.

Kids continue to suffer concussions and return to play far sooner than they should on sports fields all across the country. Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Battling pain is often glamorized. But in doing so, young athletes risk their health, their future, and even their lives.

"I think parents really need to understand the ramifications," says De Lench, who is also the author of "Home Team Advantage: The Critical Role of Mothers in Youth Sports."

Concussions can happen in any sport, not just football. They occur in soccer, baseball, lacrosse, basketball, wrestling, hockey, cheerleading and volleyball, among other sports. No activity is immune. With

kids playing harder than ever in today's ultra-competitive world of youth sports, it only makes sense.

Concussions are brain injuries that occur when a blow to the head or body causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Concussions can also be caused by a fall, or a collision between players or with an object, such as a goalpost. Even a mild blow to the head — a ding or getting your bell rung — can have serious consequences.

Recent research has shown that because of the way their brains are growing, adolescents are more sensitive to the effects of a sport-related concussion than adults or children.

"The frontal regions of the brain are more vulnerable to concussions. These areas oversee executive functions responsible for planning, organizing, and managing information. During adolescence, these functions are developing rapidly, which makes them more fragile to stress and trauma," says Dave Ellemberg, a neuropsychologist who oversaw the study published in the journal, *Brain Injury*.

In addition to long-term damage, young athletes who have suffered a concussion are at risk of second impact syndrome, a rare but usually fatal condition. If a child who has not completely recovered from a concussion receives a second blow to the head, it can cause massive swelling in the brain that can lead to sudden death.

Various studies reveal some frightening numbers: Forty-one percent of student athletes returned to play too soon after a concussion, according to guidelines of the American Academy of Neurology. The study found that a shocking 16 percent of high school football players who lost consciousness during a concussion returned to the field the same day. More than 20 percent of concussions in boys' and girls'

Warning signs of a concussion

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, athletes who experience any of the signs and symptoms listed here after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body should be kept out of play until a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion says they are symptom-free and that it's OK to return to play.

Signs observed by coaching staff or parents

- Appears dazed or stunned

- Is confused about assignment or position

- Forgets an instruction

- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent

- Moves clumsily

- Answers questions slowly

- Loses consciousness, even briefly

- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes

- Can't recall events either prior to hit or fall, or after

Top Tips

Symptoms reported by athlete

- Headache or a feeling of pressure in head

- Nausea or vomiting

- Balance problems or dizziness

- Double or blurry vision

- Sensitivity to light

- Sensitivity to noise

- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy

- Concentration or memory problems

- Confusion

- Does not "feel right" or is "feeling down"



soccer and basketball were repeat concussions. In fact, 16.8 percent of high school athletes suffering a concussion had previously suffered a sport-related concussion, either that season or in a previous season.

De Lench, a former athlete herself and strong supporter of youth sports programs, understands the pressure for kids to return to play.

"Kids should not be pulled out of sports. Sports are critical — critical! — for some kids. Pulling them out is not the remedy here," she says. "We

need to empower parents to make sure coaches are trained properly, to make sure kids get the right kind of physical training — such as neck-strengthening — and to make sure kids are taught to self-report symptoms."

While some school districts around the country are requiring young athletes to undergo cognitive testing prior to participating, so they can have a "baseline" to determine when a player can safely return to play, such information is only useful if students understand the importance of reporting symptoms, and if parents and coaches are vigilant about taking note of possible injuries.

So what are the most important things a parent — and coach — should know about concussions? First, seek professional medical attention if your young athlete shows any sign of injury, such as appearing dazed, stunned, confused, or clumsy, or if he exhibits a loss of memory, mood and behavior changes, or even a brief loss of consciousness. Some symptoms may not show up for hours or days, so parents need to be tuned in.

A young athlete with a diagnosed concussion should not be allowed to return to play on the day of injury, regardless of the medical resources available or his level of athletic performance. All

Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. But in doing so, young athletes risk their health, their future, and even their lives.

concussion management guidelines, old and new, agree that no athlete should be allowed to return to play while exhibiting post-concussion signs or symptoms. Some call for at least one symptom-free week before returning to practice or play. Because activities that require concentration and attention might exacerbate the symptoms and delay recovery, children should limit exertion and school-related activities until symptom-free (e.g. no homework, no text messaging, or videogames, and staying home from school).

For young people ages 15 to 24, sports are second only to motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of brain injury, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But even far younger children have suffered concussions on the field and on playgrounds.

"The more parents know, the more they can make a difference," De Lench says. "I always tell parents to think about the life-cycle of their child. Think about how that child will feel when they are 30 or 40, and they have cognitive issues or pain from injuries. You, as a parent, need to understand that you are the guardian of your child and their future."

Additional information on concussions and youth sports, including an online training course for coaches, can be found on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/index.html. For more, visit www.MomsTeam.com.

KiKi Bochi is the mother of two and an award-winning writer and editor who specializes in family topics.

A time of transitions

Helping your special-needs child prepare for the end of school

BY REBECCA MCKEE

The school year is ending and summer is on its way. For any family, planning transitions from school to camp, home to vacation, vocational site to rec center, or any other form of change is key for accommodating schedules. For families of children with special needs, transitional planning is even more important to ensure that the child will be comfortable with changes in routine.

The definition of transition is the passage or change from one position or state to another. For people with autism spectrum disorder,

or other special personality, these passages may be difficult to cope with. Regardless of how minute or momentous changes are to us, to others, it may be the antecedent to emotional turmoil. While some may say we should try our best to avoid these moments of anguish and anxiety that result from change, the truth is that life is full of variety, passages, and movement.

Here are some ways you can plan for transitions to help prevent the breakdowns brought upon by familiar routines ending and novel events beginning.

Make note of transitions

Work with your child on changes to his schedule by mapping them out on the calendar. Highlight the months of June, July, August, and September (depending on your specific school schedule) as summer months. Mark half-days of school and specify where lunch will be eaten.

Mark the first official week of summer break. Identify when your child's activities — such as camp, pool, free time, and family vacations — begin. Locate major summer holidays and jot down some possibilities of celebratory festivities. Star the end of the summer and first day of the new school year.

Take walk-throughs

If your child is attending camp this summer, you can help alleviate nervous jitters by taking virtual tours on websites, and following up with actual one-on-one tours of the grounds. As the camper tours, have him take photographs. Looking through the pictures prior to the first day of attendance will be most beneficial. You can also physically de-sensitize a camper who is feeling uneasy by washing, drying, and folding the camp T-shirt.

Communicate with school

The sooner you iron out details, the less hectic it is for all. Articulate with the current support team at

school to gain a better grasp of the physical transitional changes that will occur within the classroom. This would include: cleaning out desks, taking home books, removing artwork from walls, and more.

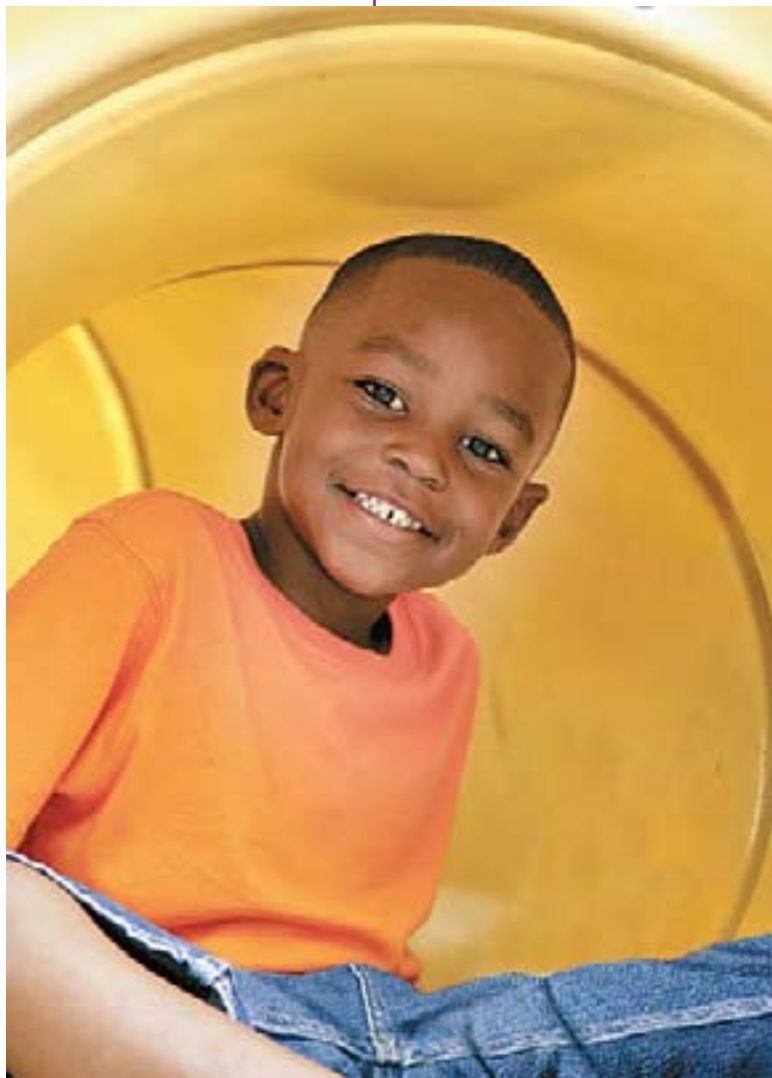
Use this information to make a checklist at home for your special-needs child. Keep it on the refrigerator. As each task is completed, he checks it off and moves on mentally. Ask the school support team to make a copy of the reinforcement system that worked well for your child. Keep this. The new team may have a fresh outlook of ideas that work better for your child after a summer of maturity, but this will provide worthwhile background information.

It is important to respect and consider the rules of each school. However, having knowledge of the future school year is most beneficial. This would involve who the teacher is, the main focus of the curriculum, the exact location of the classroom, and maybe more.

Photographs speak volumes to people with limited preparation skills. With permission, take pictures of the new classroom setting and create a scrapbook titled, "My New School Year." If your child tends to display stressed-out behaviors when the workload in school is difficult, pre-teach some of the trickier curriculum in a fun, hands-on method. For example, if your child struggles with money and that is a major focus in math for the upcoming year, sell lemonade during the summer to raise money for charity.

...

The overall message behind transition planning for a person with special needs is to touch, taste, journey, and experience a future change in small doses before the actual passage takes place. The goal is to have the person move from state to state and setting to setting, smoothly. Planning a transition will not only help with the present passage, but will also help him understand the concept of change.



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Summer's golden OPPORTUNITY

How camps
can support
the social
development
of kids with
special needs

BY BRIAN FAUGHNAN

Too often, out-of-school time presents an underrated opportunity for child development, especially for children with special needs. When thinking about children with exceptionalities, we frequently identify their barriers to success around intellectual difficulties. As a result of this notion and the amount of time they spend in school settings, many of the interventions we provide to those with developmental disabilities are academic in nature. These supports often fail to address underlying social deficits.

Encouraging increased social proficiency among children with disabilities can improve overall outcomes

not limited to social skills, but also improved mental health and career readiness. One of the best times to do this is during school breaks.

Children with a wide variety of special needs are often less able to naturally acquire social concepts as well as their typically developing peers. We can better support these children by providing opportunities to practice and understand pragmatics of language. A foundational component of this skill set would include an understanding of the purpose of language.

For example, some children do not naturally understand that language can be used to introduce oneself to another, or appropriately request a want or a need. Children with a range of exceptionalities can benefit from

graphic organizers depicting the different purposes for using language, as well as key phrases to support those purposes.

Assess functioning and potential

When parents are deciding how to best support their children's social development during the summer months, they should focus on their child's current level of social functioning and underlying potential. There is no substitute for a parent's intuition. Some measures of this are clear — including whether or not the child is willing to play with others — while other dimensions are not directly observable, but are important to understanding

potential. One such idea is that of Theory of Mind, which is the notion that individuals will have different thoughts than our own, and an awareness of these thoughts should inform our interactions with individuals. Obviously, this is a concept not readily articulated by most children, but it is a concept that underlies the ability to be socially successful.

Parents should be comfortable asking their children's teachers for a qualitative assessment of the child's level of socialization. Given the work schedules of many parents today, school teachers often have more of an opportunity to observe the child in social settings than parents.

Your child's special-education teacher should be expected to give specific examples of positive social interactions he has witnessed the child having, as well as examples of interactions that could have been more successful. The teacher should also be comfortable enough to identify social skills that can be developed to improve upon these interactions.

Professionals with more clinical expertise — including your child's speech-and-language pathologist, social worker, or psychologist —

When parents are deciding how to best support their children's social development during the summer months, they should focus on their child's current level of social functioning and underlying potential.

should also be able to identify discreet social tasks that can support the development of these potential social skills.

Appropriate activities to develop social skills during times when children are not in school can include after-school or weekend programs, and enrollment in summer camps supporting the social development of children with special needs. Assessing the appropriateness of each type of activity depends upon your child's level of readiness.

Finding effective programs

Most children with special needs benefit from a combination of both unstructured and structured social learning opportunities. Effective summer recreational programs will have the benefit of both. An eight-hour camp day may include 40 minutes devoted to explicit instruction around predetermined areas of social interaction. Program staff would then attempt to elicit these skills within the activities during the other parts of the day. This not only serves to directly foster children's development of these skills, but also serves to ensure that staff members are watching for and cultivating the utilization of these skills.

When selecting your child's program, you should ask staff to identify the range of developmental disabilities that they are equipped to support, as well as the structures built into their program to support that range of needs. Programs should be able to describe their process for hiring and training direct-care staff, as well as the expected benefits that parents should see from their specific program. It is not enough for programs to be merely provid-

ing respite for a child's caretaker. Staff should be able to articulate how acquired social skills can be generalized throughout their program, rather than taught and exhibited in mere isolation. The summer break months or weeks can be quite formative and should not be seen as less developmentally important than typical school time.

Scholarships and financing

Enrollment in such programming can be expensive and represent a difficult burden for families in these difficult economic times. Parents should not hesitate to raise this issue with program staff and inquire about scholarship opportunities from the providing agency, as well as outside foundations. In addition to financial support from individual programs, some families are able to receive support from charitable foundations and other agencies. Parents should ask what their options are and know that there are many ways of financing what may seem daunting and unaffordable.

Brian Faughnan is the Special Needs Director at the JCC of Staten Island. Faughnan holds an Master of Science degree in Special Education.

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- Robert Annicharico, Rph






Brand new dad

Surviving the first weeks of parenthood

BY TIM PERRINS

Parenting will always bring challenges, but there's something uniquely difficult about those earliest weeks with your first child. As a newly minted dad who's just survived this grueling period, I may be able to shed some light on it. First of all, to really make sense of things, we need to look back a few trimesters.

When you are a first-time expecting parent, all of your energy becomes consumed with scaling the "mountain of pregnancy." You

can read and prepare all you want, but if you haven't had a baby before, the part about actually having a baby is as much as your excited, anxious brain can handle. During this stage, expect to have only enough mental stamina to focus on two things: preparing for labor, and getting all the stuff.

At long last, and still too soon, you're in the thick of the birth experience. Among other things, this period of time includes all the stages of labor — early labor, active labor, screaming labor — plus whatever combination of a la carte

factors happens to be included in your customized delivery package. Just be aware that the particulars of delivery are like a sandwich from a bad deli — whatever you planned for is not what you're going to get. Still, as long as you have your baby and everyone turns out OK, there's no sense in getting too hung up on the details.

As manic and magical as labor and delivery may be, it's all over before you know it. And only now that you've crested the "summit of pregnancy" can you see that it was just the first in a whole moun-

These first weeks are meant to push you to your limit — they're priming you for the years to come.



tain range of challenges that lay beyond.

Now, unless your name is Beyoncé and you've employed a platoon of nannies to keep your new baby from interfering too much with your life, pretty quickly you're in the trenches of parenting. Here, you find yourself frantically asking questions like: "What does it want?" "How do I make it stop?" "It's getting too big — what comes after onesies? Twosies? WHY DIDN'T WE PUT TWOSIES ON OUR REGISTRY?!"

Even if you are reasonably prepared for this, as the weeks wear on, you find that you're being pushed nearly over the edge. Sleep deprivation and the nerve-shattering scream of a tiny infant are the main causes, but there's another, less tangible one that you may not have allowed yourself to fully consider.

You see, during pregnancy, friends and family shower you with wisdom about how your life will forever change ("but in a good way!"), and about how you will feel love like you have never felt before. This creates a vision of unicorns drinking from a fountain while an enchanting harp plays and celestial light twinkles in the eyes of the cherub staring up at you. But instead, after a few weeks of running yourself ragged attending to your tiny baby's constant needs, you still can't tell if this odd little creature even realizes that you exist.

From the moment your baby was born, you instinctively felt like you would throw yourself in front of an oncoming yellow taxi to protect her, and yet, when you kiss your cherished weeks-

old infant on the cheek, she just flinches and turns her head away like you're a stray dog licking her face. All the while, she stares off into space and moves her little arms and legs according to some arcane ritual, as if she's communicating with the alien mothership. For all you know, you're just the silly earthling who is foolishly providing sustenance to the demanding creature that is engineering the enslavement of your entire world. Silly human! Silly, exhausted, distressed human, to be exact.

It's a little bit funny that you've turned your life completely upside down for a person you know almost nothing about, and who, at some point in the next 16 years, is going to slam a door in your face and scream, "I HATE YOU!" Even your baby's few recognizable traits could disappear. In the coming months, that brown hair may fall out and come back blond, and those blue eyes could turn green, or hazel, or who knows what.

So, in short, becoming a parent includes dealing with the fearful anxiety that your baby is an alien. Worse still, is that this leads to terrible guilt — at a time when you should be nothing but self-sacrificing, you find yourself wondering, "Why did I do this? What's in it for me?"

It's OK to have those thoughts — it just means you're human. (And for the record, your baby is, too.) These first weeks are meant to push you to your limit — they're priming you for the years to come. Parenting will be wonderfully gratifying, but it's essential to understand from the start how desperately your little one relies on you. There can't be any confusion about whose needs come first.

After the better part of two months, when all of that has had time to sink in, your little one will finally reward you with a sly look and a little grin. That, of course, is one of the most beautiful sights in the world, and no matter what else happens in the next 16 years, you'll always keep that with you.

Tim Perrins is a part-time stay-at-home dad who lives with his wife and their brand new tiny human in Park Slope, Brooklyn. More of his thoughts about babies and other things that confuse him can be found at www.RevoltOfTheImbeciles.blogspot.com.

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FAMILY HEALTH

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How to choose the right pediatrician

During medical school, when the rare opportunity presents itself for a trainee to speak to a seasoned physician about how things work in the real world, one of the most common questions asked is, “How does one develop a thriving practice?”

Most often, the answer to this question is the aphorism: “The three A’s: be affable, available, and able.”

As a parent, you can use the same parameters to make an intelligent decision regarding your choice of pediatrician, or any physician for that matter.

Affable: Patients and physicians very often align in terms of personality, and this can be important to both treatment and healing.

It is the job of your pediatrician to monitor the growth, development, and health of your child. In doing this, the pediatric professional you choose needs to be honest and forthright with any and all information regarding your child. Any problems need to be dealt with head on, and need to be communicated to you in a way you fully understand. Sweeping problems under the rug to make parents feel better is not acceptable.

Available: In our 21st-century world of instant communication and online information, we have come to have heightened expectations of what is reasonable.

That being said, it is reasonable to expect that your pediatrician has an answering service, office staff, and an information technology infrastructure that allows you access in a reasonable amount of time.

This must be tempered with the knowledge that different practices are configured differently. Depending on how many doctors and sites the individual or group has, information transfer may be less than optimal.

It is important to take logistics into consideration before choosing a solo practitioner versus a large group practice.



If you desire your child to be seen by one doctor only, which would be an individual practice, check to see if the doctor has a coverage arrangement that will suit you.

Able: When a problem arises with your child, you want answers. Very often, definitive answers are not available, but the best knowledge to date in the form of “evidence-based medicine” is accessible and should be demanded.

Understand, however, that pediatricians are human. While 60 to 70 percent of all problems should be

within the comfort zone of board-certified pediatricians, there always exist areas that individual doctors are less adept at, and will make a referral to a sub-specialist.

If you know that your child has a particular health problem, assess the prospective pediatrician’s comfort level with this issue and satisfy yourself that the pediatrician’s approach to the problem is to your liking. You will avoid misunderstandings in the future and any undermining of trust in your pediatrician when things get difficult.



Last year's Outstanding Teen winner, Alexa Nicole Moley.

Staten Island's brightest stars

Enter annual scholarship pageant

BY JOANNA DELBUONO

Do you have good grades? Are you active in your community? Are you a resident of Staten Island? Are you a girl between the ages of 13 and 24? If so, it's that time again — the Miss Staten Island–Miss Richmond County, and the Staten Island–Richmond County's Outstanding Teen scholarship pageants are looking for contestants.

Competitors for the Miss Staten Island must be between the ages of 17 and 24, and a resident. Those entering the Outstanding Teen competition must be between the ages of 13 and 17, a resident, and must be no higher than a junior in high school by

Aug. 31, 2013. All applications must be filed by Sept. 14, 2012. The pageants will take place in November.

Last year's winners, Miss Staten Island's Stephanie Accardo and Outstanding Teen, Alexa Nicole Moley, shared more than \$15,000 in scholarships and prizes.

Lucky ladies in each category will be eligible to compete in the New York state competitions, which will qualify the state winners to enter the national Miss America competitions. Scholarships and prizes will be given to the winners and finalists at all levels.

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THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Streaking in his birthday suit

Does your child act like he's allergic to pants, shirts, and underwear? A new book about a little boy who likes being naked but loves his father even more might help change your tiny one's tune.

"Birthday Suit," by Olive Senior (Annick Press), tells the story of Johnny, a free-spirited kid who likes to run around au naturel. Johnny enjoys waking up early when the weather is warm and running down to the beach, poking his toes in the salty water, and splashing around in the buff. He's been doing this since he was a little baby and the fish never seem to mind what he does — or does not — wear.

But when Johnny turns 4, his mom tells him that he's now a big boy and needs to start wearing clothes — like some fancy, red swim trunks she has bought him that are just right for a boy like him to wear to the beach. Johnny puts them on, but the

second his mama isn't looking, off come the trunks, and the frisky 4-year-old is back in the ocean wearing nothing but sand and water. Johnny's mother decides to try other types of clothing, like a pair of overalls. But they snap on too tight and make Johnny cry. Even the fish at the beach hate the overalls, so Johnny figures out a way to wiggle out of them.

But then Johnny's dad gets a great idea that makes overalls and swim trunks feel absolutely natural for a growing boy to wear.

Every toddler who's ever peeled off his clothes and raced through the room will love this story. Senior's mischievous main character is lovable, relatable, and like most happy-

go-lucky toddlers, knows the freedom of skipping through warm waves at the beach without his pants.

This book is tasteful, cute, and though it's meant for 3-to-5-year-old streakers, it'll make adults smile, too. If your child needs to hold his britches, "Birthday Suit" will fit them like a tailored suit.

"Birthday Suit," by Olive Senior. [32 pages, 2012, \$8.95].



A smart, fun read about friends

Is your teen upset about moving? A new book about two girls who leave their hometowns and make great friends in a new neighborhood might be just what she needs.

In "Boyfriend Season: Cali Boys," by Kelli London (Dafina Teen), Jacobi Swanson, a teenage girl who loves following the stock market and is looking for creative inspiration when her father gives her an awesome, new video camera, is bummed. She's just moved to the suburbs of Los Angeles and is stuck in a one-bathroom house with two dorky brothers — Hunter, who's a pain, and Diggs, who's even worse.

She wants nothing more than to physically develop a feminine, hourglass figure (she is, after all, a 15-year-old woman!) and move back to her old neighborhood

where she'd left behind her two best friends, Katydid and Scooby. She especially misses Scooby, since she always had a crush on him and now will never know if he liked her the way she liked him.

Jacobi's one silver lining is Alissa, her new next-door neighbor, who's her same age. Alissa has lived in the neighborhood for most of her life and once the two girls meet, they know they're meant to be friends.

Kassidy Maddox is also new to town and hates it as well. The southern California neighborhood she has just moved to is nothing like her old home in New York City — a place where she truly belonged. Back in the Big Apple, Kassidy had a modeling career and boyfriend. But her mother decided to elope with some guy from the City of Angels and now Kassidy is living with a step-daddy-dearest and a nasty, overweight, and overeating stepsister who doesn't know a single thing about fashion.

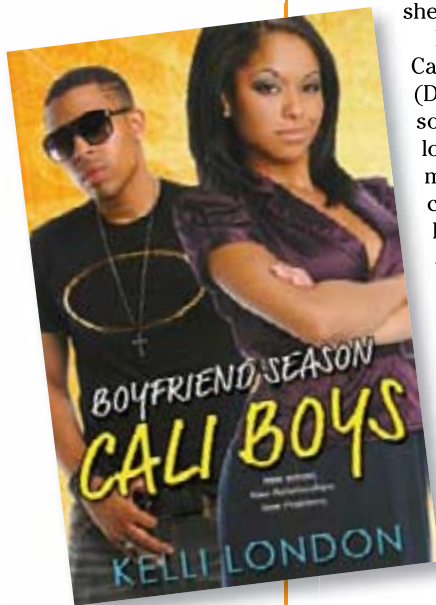
At least Kassidy has a new friend, Faith, who knows how to make a big-city girl like her feel at home by introducing her to the Cali boys — who

are interesting diversions — but not nearly as fine as the guy Kassidy left back in New York.

Judging by its title, it's easy to assume that "Boyfriend Season: Cali Boys" is, well, boy-crazy. Yet once you're a few pages in, it becomes evident that this book is so much more. Sure, the main characters have their sights set on romance but Jacobi and Kassidy both have well-rounded lives, interests, and dreams that go beyond crushes and kisses. Like all young adult novels by London, the teens in this book are spunky, smart, and do fun things that attract quality boyfriends in the end. Plus there's a parental bonus — zero profanity! This book is recommended for 12- to 17-year-old girls and is so good they'll want to share it with all of their friends — old and new. Really, what's not to love?

"Boyfriend Season: Cali Boys," by Kelli London [241 pages, 2012, \$9.95].

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





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Getting pregnant

One woman's
five-year-long
struggle to
conceive

BY SANDRA GORDON

The talk of having babies began as early as our wedding day. “Congratulations, Sandy and Ron,” the best man said. “May your lives be long, prosperous, and filled with babies!”

All of our guests raised their glasses and cheered. For the momentous event, Ron had shaved his whitish beard, the only solid evidence of his age.

“I don’t want to look so old,” he had said. He was 43 at the time. I was 31. Having babies — and my comparable youthfulness to pull it off — was very much a part of the deal. For some mysterious, innate reason, we both looked forward to them — or even just one — sooner rather than later. And our guests

had pegged us. “Forget about the wedding — get busy, you guys,” everyone seemed to be saying by their enthusiastic response, suppressed grins, and elbow jabs.

Trying with no luck

A year-and-a-half later, Ron and I felt jinxed. We were trying so hard to get pregnant — going on vacation, timing intercourse with ovulation predictor kits and a stop watch (OK, kidding), trying to relax, pretending we weren’t trying — but it was evident. Like about 10 percent of all couples around the globe, we were infertile (the inability to conceive after one year of trying).

Soon enough, I found myself a regular at the infertility specialist, along with the dozens of others I met along the way, thumbing

through non-parenting magazines in the reception area. We all had a common bond: we were all experts at giving blood. We all knew which was our “good” arm.

The stories I heard: There was Judy, who had been trying for five years and was on her third attempt at in vitro fertilization. Another, Maria, had a similar record, and said she burst into tears any time she saw an infant in a restaurant. I was a newcomer, having just endured one low-tech, assisted reproductive procedure, but I could still relate. The name of the game is hyping up your hormones, then tracking your menstrual cycle like the stock market with blood and ultrasound tests with one goal: to nab the whereabouts of that allusive egg.

For two weeks, I was lubed up with HCG and Clomid, infertility wonder drugs, and though I was glad for the technology, I was resentful.

"I just don't feel right about this," I said to Ron. Deep down, I knew we could do it on our own. But, of course, isn't that what every woman who is trying to get pregnant thinks in the beginning?

Left behind

Meanwhile, our friends were leaving us in the dust. One couple, Anna and Dan, were so perfect that their wedding photo was featured in a local magazine ad.

At a neighborhood party, Anna confided in me that she and Dan were going to start trying.

"What about you?" she asked.

"We've been trying for a year and a half," I revealed.

Then, two months later, when the four of us were out to dinner, Anna announced she was pregnant.

My stomach lurched. After only two months? Suddenly, I couldn't see my salad as — for the first time — I nearly came to tears, because I had been trying to so hard to be optimistic. Luckily, I pulled myself together as the conversation turned to sonograms, baby heart beats, and not being able to drink. Out of spite, I ordered another glass of chardonnay just because I could, since our attempt at intrauterine insemination didn't work. Later, as the guys talked, Anna turned to me.

"It's a relief to know you can," she said, as in, to conceive. I couldn't believe she actually said that — to me.

"It must be," I said, just to be nice.

It's not that I wanted a child so badly that I had to have one, like a drink of water on a scorching day. It was just that being pregnant and raising a child was a life experience that I would rather not pass up. After a while, when you don't get pregnant like you thought you would, you start to get a little crazy. Strollers in shopping malls pop out at you, especially those holding kids who match your or your husband's hair color. You feel like clobbering coworkers who calculate how long you've been married and then say, "So, do you guys want kids?"

Second thoughts

During this time, I had a real-

ization: I'd never had a child, so I didn't really know what I was wishing for.

Would I be patient and selfless like my mother? Or would I be short-tempered and bothered by the minutia of it all, like my father? I couldn't even imagine what our child would look like. Ron is a redhead and I'm blonde. Wouldn't that make our baby ... orange? And after listening to a weary stay-at-home dad of a 6-year-old admit, "Had I known it was going to be this hard, I wouldn't have become a parent," I even had second thoughts.

But every so often, I got a hint of the good stuff.

During the holidays, I picked up my mother and grandmother from a bed-and-breakfast they were staying at while in town, and we all watched the owner's 4-year-old granddaughter open presents. She was showing her new tea set to my grandmother, who was throwing her hands back in exaggerated delight, just like she did for me when I was little.

We were all so mesmerized by this little girl that we forgot we barely knew these people, and tore ourselves away.

Success!

The following September, after nearly three years, Ron and I finally got lucky. Two months after a round of infertility surgery on both of our parts — to fix some "plumbing" issues — Ron and I tried on our own and got two pink lines on the at-home pregnancy test. At the ripe age of 35, I was finally going to be a mom.

Soon, my elastic pants were tight and my boobs were as heavy as grapefruits. Who knew pregnancy could feel this good?

After nine-and-a-half months, my daughter, Rebecca, was born by C-section, weighing in at nearly 9 pounds with a full head of — surprise! — dark hair and long eyelashes.

"She's pretty," Ron said, sniffing while we were in the operating room.

What can you say about finally giving birth after not knowing if pregnancy was even possible? Nothing short of "this is the best day of my life."

Suffice it to say that Rebecca was much more than we had ever bargained for, and was definitely worth the wait.



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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

How to make your baby food at home

After the first feeding decision a new mom makes — mother's milk or formula? — comes another one: homemade baby food or store bought?

Nikolina Gubernat of suburban Chicago decided early on.

"My mom raised my siblings and me on homemade baby food, so I wanted to do it, too," she says. "Also, I decided that it would be healthier for my baby since I knew exactly what I would be putting in the food."

The benefits

"When you make homemade food for your baby, you can decide exactly what does — and doesn't — go into it," explains Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics spokesperson Karen Ansel, MS, RD. "In addition to better nutrition, homemade baby food also tastes better, and you can modify the texture to suit every stage of baby's development."

You can experiment with more interesting ingredients, helping to shape baby's palate, so he will grow to be a more adventurous eater. Store-bought baby food is blander in taste, which will train baby to prefer only bland food.

Often overlooked are the social and emotional benefits to feeding babies the same foods you eat. When all family members eat the same meals, often, the pattern of eating together continues even when the

children are older.

It's environmentally-friendly, too. Making your own can be considered a "green" alternative, with very little packaging to throw into landfills or even to recycle.

"Making baby food from scratch does involve a little advance planning,

but the benefits far outweigh the small time investment. Making food for baby in big batches, and then freezing them in single servings, can be a huge time saver," according to Ansel, a mother of two and author of "The Baby & Toddler Cookbook."

Money saver

"Because you're not paying for packaging or other costs baby food companies may incur, like advertising, making baby food from scratch is far more economical," Ansel says.

Gubernat agrees.

"It came out to be a big money saver not having to buy ready-made baby food."

Easiest way to start?

Gubernat, whose son is 1, uses the batch-cooking method.

"I peeled any skin; chopped up the produce; boiled it until it was soft-

ened; then blended it up in a blender or food processor (with some liquid that it was boiled in); let it cool down; poured into little, two-ounce plastic containers; and froze everything," she says.

•Start with single ingredient foods. Introduce them one at a time to see if baby

has a reaction, such as an allergy or upset stomach.

"We were once told that cereals should be baby's first food, but now we know that babies can also start with sweet fruits like apples or pears or mild vegetables like butternut squash," explains Ansel.

•It's easy to set aside some of the ingredients and mash or puree them for baby.

•Does baby show a fondness for a certain fruit or vegetable? Gradually combine it with other similar foods to create a new flavor favorite. For example, if he enjoys peaches, combine it with mangoes or strawberries.

•Utilize your freezer. Cook and puree fruits and vegetables and freeze portions in ice cube trays. Once they are frozen, transfer them into a quart-sized freezer bag that you label and date. When you're ready to serve, thaw carefully in the microwave or refrigerator. Use within six weeks of freezing.

You can give your baby the best nutrition available and do it in less time than you think. All in all, Gubernat is satisfied with her decision to make her own.

"It really was very easy," she says. "And [it] made me feel good that I did this for my son."

Christine Palumbo is a nutritionist based in Naperville, Ill., who found it deliciously easy to create her own babies' food at home. She can be reached at Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD or on Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition.



Baby's guacamole

Avocados are high in folate and healthy fats, with a neutral flavor and creamy consistency that make them an ideal choice as one of baby's first foods. If you use organic English (hot-house) cucumbers, which are unwaxed and have small seeds, you can skip the step of peeling and seeding them.

Makes about 3/4 cup (6 fl oz) of guacamole.

INGREDIENTS

1 large ripe avocado
1/2 cup (2½ oz) peeled and seeded

cucumber
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin

DIRECTIONS: Cut the avocado in half lengthwise around the pit, and twist the halves to separate. Remove and discard the pit. Using a spoon, scoop the flesh of the avocado halves into a food processor or blender, discarding the skins. Using the large holes of a box grater-shredder, shred the cucumber, then add it to the food processor or blender along with the cumin.



Process to a smooth puree, or, depending on baby's age and chewing ability, you can leave the puree a little coarser. If necessary, add enough water, breast milk, or formula to thin the puree

to a consistency your baby can handle.

STORE IT: Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to one day. (Some discoloration may occur during storage.)

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Delicious mission

Every bite
nourishes
Staten Island
at Commons
Cafe

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

The owners of a new Bloomfield restaurant are making sure your locally grown burger and fries are served with a side of goodwill by donating 100 percent of its profits to charity.

Richard and Lois Nicotra's Commons Cafe — a green-themed, quick-service breakfast and lunch restaurant at the Teleport — is quickly earning points as the go-to spot for eco-obsessed foodies with an appetite for top-notch nosh that rewards the stomach and the spirit at counter-service prices.

It's a jaunty operation.

The glass-paneled, yellow-and-black decor features murals of Parisian and Tuscan cafe scenes and is hip enough to make passersby do a double take, while its health-smart menu lures them inside with choices ranging from salads (starting at \$6.49), to turkey and brie wraps with spicy honey mustard (\$6.99), to sandwiches stuffed with roasted veggies and herb goat cheese (\$5.99). Burgers of the week and shakes of the month keep the menu fresh at this trailblazing eatery, currently seeking musicians for its outdoor performance stage.

Its carbon footprint offers food for thought, too.

Much of the food at Commons is harvested locally; recyclable pack-



aging is used whenever possible; and the building boasts green features.

"Our roof is so green we have to water it!" says Richard Nicotra, a Westerleigh local who was inspired by the benevolence of late Hollywood actor Paul Newman, whose Newman's Own line of food products donates its net profits to charities, while his Hole in the Wall Gang camp provides vacations for needy kids.

Nicotra, who created the Everything Yogurt franchise in the 1970s, is happy to spread his wealth in the borough of his birth.

"Staten Island doesn't have a lot of people who have the ability to do something like this," he said. "I love Staten Island, and I want to have something that lasts and keeps on going."

The big-hearted power couple also owns a string of commercial holdings within the 415-acre wildlife preserve that houses the cafe, including the Hampton Inn and Suites, Lorenzo's Restaurant, Bar and Cabaret, several office buildings, and the Hilton Garden Inn.

Now the Nicotras have cooked up a business venture that makes philanthropy its main course by connecting Commons Cafe to the community it serves — an enter-

prise that feeds their stomachs and their spirits, and comes with its own motto.

"Eat good. Do good," says Lois Nicotra, explaining that every morsel sold at the Commons Cafe benefits Islanders, whether through their Bloomfield Conservancy, or their Lois and Richard Nicotra Foundation.

The conservancy promotes the protection of the borough's environment, wetlands, and endangered trees, and the foundation gave away more than \$40,000 to nearly 50 non-profit organizations and scholarship recipients in 2011. This year's beneficiaries include the American Cancer Society (\$500), Camp Good Grief of Staten Island (\$750), Richmond Engine Company 1 (\$1,000), and John W. Lavelle Preparatory Charter School (\$1,500).

The money sends students to school, plants flowers, cleans streets, and helps non-profits on Staten Island help others, according to Lois Nicotra.

"No catches. You spend it, they get it," she says. "Kind of makes the burger taste even better, right?"

Commons Cafe [2 Teleport Dr. off South Avenue in Bloomfield, (347) 466-4207, www.commonscafesi.com]. Open weekdays, 7 am–7pm, and Saturday, 7 am–3 pm.



Going Places

LONG-RUNNING

Tree tots and peppers: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; Wednesdays, 11–11:30 am, Now–Wed, June 6; \$4 (\$6 non-members) per event.

For children 2-4 years old. Hands on activities, finger plays, games and stories. Registration required.

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

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

“Little Miss Muffet’s Monster-Sitting Service”: The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, Central Park, West Drive at 79th Street Transverse in Manhattan; (212) 988-9093; cityparks-foundation.org/swedish_cottage.html; Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30 am and noon, Wednesdays, 10:30 am, noon and 2:30 pm, Now – Sun, Aug. 26; \$8 (\$5 children under 12).

Based on the nursery rhyme, “Little Miss Muffet”, this version tells the story of Molly Muffet, the descendent of the original Miss Muffet. Running time is approximately 50 minutes and is suitable for children ages 3-9.

Yak Packers: Rubin Museum of Art, 150 West 17th St., between 6th and 7th avenues in Manhattan; (212) 620-5000 X 344; www.rmanyc.org; Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10:30–11:30 am, \$10 (\$5 seniors and students; Free for children under 12 and members).

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

After-school club: Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Gilbert Street; (718) 351-1611 X 281; reservations@historicrichmondtown.org; www.nycgovparks.org; Wednesdays, 3:30 pm, Now – Wed, June 27; Free (cost of book additional).

Students, in grades four – seven, read and discuss selected books.



Photo by Paul Martinka

Rangers lure ‘em in

Summertime and the fishing is easy — especially with help from the Urban Park Rangers on June 2 and June 10, from 11 am to 1 pm.

Budding anglers, 8 years and older, get a lesson on the ups and downs of fishing, the ecology of the waterways, and the best way to catch that big one before it gets away. All fishing programs are catch-and-release only and most are first-come, first served. Seining programs, which use nets, are great for children of all ages and are close to shore.

Story museum: Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351-1611; www.historicrichmond-town.org; Thursdays, 11:30 am–12:30 pm and 2:30–3:30 pm, Now – Thurs, June 28; \$3 (Adults free).

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

Storytime: Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; www.barnesandnoble.com; Tuesday, May 29, 10:30 am; Saturday, June 2, 10:30 am; Tuesday, June 5, 10:30 am; Saturday, June 9, 10:30 am; Tuesday, June 12, 10:30 am; Saturday, June 16, 10:30 am; Tuesday, June 19, 10:30 am; Saturday, June 23, 10:30 am; Tuesday, June 26, 10:30 am; Saturday, June 30,

Participants must take a mandatory safety review led by a trained ranger. All equipment is provided.

Freshwater fishing is offered at Willowbrook Park on June 2, from 11 am to 1 pm, and at Clove Lakes Park on June 10, from 11 am to 1 pm. Admission to both is free.

Willowbrook Park [Eton Place and Richmond Avenue, proceed to the lake parking lot, (718) 967-3542, www.nycgovparks.org].

Clove Lakes Park (Clove Road and Park Drive, proceed to lake area; same phone and website).

10:30 am; Tuesday, July 3, 10:30 am; Saturday, July 7, 10:30 am; Tuesday, July 10, 10:30 am; Saturday, July 14, 10:30 am; Tuesday, July 17, 10:30 am; Saturday, July 21, 10:30 am; Free.

Children listen to a different story each week.

Up4Art: Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; www.statenislandkids.org; Saturday, June 2, 1 pm; Sunday, June 3, 1 pm; Saturday, June 9, 1 pm; Sunday, June 10, 1 pm; Saturday, June 16, 1 pm; Sunday, June 17, 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children create mosaics using glass tiles.

Homework help: New Dorp Library,

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 — 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!

309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nycl.org; Saturdays, 2–4 pm, Now – Fri, June 22; Free.

Volunteers from Stuyvesant High School help students in Pre-K through third grade with math and English studies.

“The Amazing Max and the Box of Interesting Things”: The MMAC Theater, 248 W. 60th St. between Amsterdam and West End avenues in Manhattan; (212) 239-6200; www.telecharge.com; Saturdays, 4:30 pm, Now – Sat, June 30; \$29.50 (\$49.50 VIP seating).

The magic show with a mind of its own. Magician Max Darwin makes objects appear out of thin air.

Stars of tomorrow: Hudson River Park Pier 45, Christopher Street and the Hudson River in Manhattan; (212) 627-2121; www.hudsonriverpark.org; Tuesdays, 6:30–8:30 pm, June 5 – Aug. 21; Free.

Talented students from the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music and Mannes College The New School for Music perform everything from Bach to Bebop. (No performance July 3.)

“The Adoration of the Magi”: Museum of Biblical Art, 1865 Broadway between West 61st and West 62nd streets in Manhattan; (212) 408-1500; www.mobia.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Fri, June 8 – Sun, Sept. 9; Free.

The beautiful early Italian Renaissance alterpiece by Bartolo di Fredi (1330-1410), will be displayed in its entirety. (Closed July 4.)

WED, MAY 30

Math tutoring: Great Kills Library, 56

Going Places

Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30 – 6 pm; Free.

For children in Pre-K through eighth grade.

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

For children, ages 3 and up. Finger play, action rhymes and coloring.

FRI, JUNE 1

Rock 'n' Roll with Squeaky

Clean: Enrichment Through the Arts, 11 Borman Ave. at Rockland Avenue; (718) 982-5678; 10 and 11:30 am; \$8.

The group takes children on a musical history tour with songs from the '50s, '60s and '70s.

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

For children, ages 13–30 months, and a caregiver, this event includes an interactive program of simple books, songs and gentle movement. Pre-registration required.

Kidz Cook: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; www.statenislandkids.org; 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm; Free with museum admission (\$6, Free for members).

BBQ bananas!

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

Children, ages 3 and up, hear stories, sing songs, and do a fun craft.

SAT, JUNE 2

Kinder Kritters: Central Park Zoo, 830 Fifth Ave. at East 65th Street in Manhattan; (212) 439-6583; www.centralparkzoo.com/programs; 10–11 am; \$25 (\$30 non-members).

Incredible insects - for 4- and 5-year-old children. Instructors lead the children through songs, dances and games, as well as creative animal-themed crafts.

"Morgan's Big Biology Test":

Hatch Auditorium-Guggenheim Pavilion, 1468 Madison Ave. at 100th Street; www.mimplay.eventbrite.com; 10 am–noon; \$35 (\$25 students).

Interactive play that teaches young people about healthy living and careers in the biomedical sciences.

Animal Tales Extravaganza: Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road in the Bronx; (718) 220-5103; www.bronxzoo.com; 11 am–4 pm; \$29.95 (\$19.95 children, ages 3-12; \$24.96 seniors).

Arts and crafts presented by Bright



Discover the Magi

The Magi comes to New York with The Museum of Biblical Art's exhibition of the famed Renaissance altarpiece "The Adoration of the Magi" by Bartolo di Fredi from June 8 to Sept. 9.

This beautiful work of art painted during the golden age of Sieneese painting is now visiting the United States for the first time in almost 200 years, and to only two locations: the Museum of Biblical Art and the University of Virginia. To celebrate the occasion, the museum is offering free admission to the general public.

Families can visit the museum's extensive collection of religious objects de art, as well as view a fantastic exhibit of scrip-

tures in their original bindings to demonstrate the innovation and creativity of Gutenberg, the art of book-making, and the printing press. The museum offers many family-friendly walk-in workshops that coincide with the exhibits and are appropriate for children of all ages.

"The Adoration of the Magi" at the Museum of Biblical Art [1855 Broadway, between W. 61st and W. 62nd streets in Central Park West, (212) 408-1500, www.mobia.org]. June 8 through Sept. 9. Museum hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm, and Thursday, 10 am to 8 pm. \$7 for adults, \$4 seniors, students, and active military personnel. Free children 12 and under, and members. Sunday free for everyone.

Horizons, Animal tales by Plum Organics, Ferdinand the Bull, Nat And Alex Wolf with the Music Unites Youth Choir (Sat. only), Maisy Mouse, Kristi Yamaguchi reading "It's a Big World," Little Pig, and the Rainforest Parade. It's all family fun

all weekend long.

Fishing: Willowbrook Park, Eton Place at Richmond Avenue; (718) 967-3542; 11 am; Free.

Polls and bait provided for freshwater fishing.

Meet the artist: David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center, Broadway between West 62nd Street and West 63rd streets in Manhattan; (347) 703-5207; www.milstrills.com; 11 am – noon; Free.

Mil's Trills debuts her "Million Trillion" Brass Marching Band which will play N'Awlins-style tunes. Kids can join a hands-on instrument building workshop — "Perform 'n' Create Date," co-hosted by the Children's Museum of Manhattan and led by Museum staff — to create instruments to be use during the program.

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

Children, ages 5-7, learn about nature, hear stories, play indoor games, and then make a cool craft.

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

Children, ages 4-10 accompanied by a caregiver, explore the center and make a craft. Pre-registration is requested.

SUN, JUNE 3

Gone fishing: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 11 am–1 pm; Free with paid admission.

Angle a lesson on the ups and downs of fishing. Suitable for children 6 and older, must be accompanied by an adult.

MON, JUNE 4

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

For ages 12 to 18.

TUES, JUNE 5

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

Teens need extra computer time.

Divorce seminar: Rehearsal Studios, 853 Seventh Ave. between 54th and 55th streets; www.lc-mediate.com; 7–9 pm; \$25.

Parents learn helpful hints from Cheryl Lazarus, divorce and relationship coach, and Lee Chabin, mediator and collaborative lawyer. RSVP requested.

WED, JUNE 6

Dinosaur Follies: Enrichment Through the Arts, 11 Borman Ave. at Rockland Avenue; (718) 982-5678; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$8.

Explore the wonders of evolution.

Math tutoring: Great Kills Library, 56

Continued on page 36

Going Places

Continued from page 35

Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30 – 6 pm; Free.

For children in Pre-K through eighth grades.

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

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

THURS, JUNE 7

Summer reading: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Lane at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 10 am–4 pm; Free.

It's that time again - pre-schoolers through 12-year-olds register for the popular program.

Summer reading: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Lane at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Children, ages 5 and older, sign up for the challenge.

Summer reading: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Come to the kick-off event for all ages.

FRI, JUNE 8

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

Kathleen Hagen helps little ones kick off the weekend with song, music, and storytelling. For children, ages 18 months–four years. Pre-registration required.

Kidz Cook: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; www.statenislandkids.org; 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm; Free with museum admission (\$6, Free for members).

Make a refreshing lemonade drink.

Fun Fridays: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, June 1.

Youth Ballet show: Manhattan Movement & Arts Center, 248 W. 60th St. between Amsterdam and West End avenues; www.manhattanmovement.com; 7 pm; \$25 (\$15 students).

Presented by the Manhattan Movement and Arts Center, performers dance to excerpts from Balanchine's "Divertimento No. 15" and Robbins "Interplay."

SAT, JUNE 9

Fama Jama Sing Song: YMCA Grosvenor House, 176 W. 105th St. in

Gala of musical fun

The Richmond County Orchestra presents "Song and Dance Primavera 2012" on June 9 at 7:30 pm at St. John's University.

For this year's gala event, the orchestra teams up with the New American Youth Ballet, Irish step dancers, and the Riverside Opera Company. The program includes highlights from Pyotr Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty" ballet, Giacomo Puccini's "Un bel

di" ("One Fine Day"), and a cast of 80 costumed dancers and musicians.

The event is free for students and children and \$15 for adults at the door.

"Song and Dance Primavera 2012" at St. John's University [300 Howard Ave. between Claire Court and Greta Place in Grymes Hill, (212) 729-4792, www.brownpapertickets.com/event/249357]. June 9 at 7:30 pm.

Manhattan; (212) 749-8500; www.ymcany.org/grosvenor; 2–3 pm; Free.

Children's concert performed by Feldiken and Friends.

Youth Ballet show: 7 pm. Manhattan Movement & Arts Center. See Friday, June 8.

Song and Dance Primavera 2012: St. John's University, 300 Howard Ave.; www.brownpapertickets.com/event; 7:30 pm; \$12 (\$15 at the door).

The Richmond County Orchestra will perform highlights from Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty" featuring the New American Youth Ballet as well as opera selections with the Riverside Opera Company singers.

SUN, JUNE 10

Fishing: Clove Lake Park, Park Drive and Clove Rd. (718) 967-3542; 11 am; Free.

Polls and bait provided - freshwater.

Nature Hike: Bloomingdale Park, Ramona Ave. and Lenevar Avenue; (718) 967-3542; 11 am; Free.

For children and family.

Gone fishing: 11 am–1 pm. Staten Island Zoo. See Sunday, June 3.

Farm day: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; Noon–3 pm; Free with paid admission.

Demonstrations, crafts and meet the barn-yard denizens.

Natural science club: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 2–3:30 pm; Free.

Children 8-12 learn about science from Naturalist Clay Wollney. Pre-registration requested.

MON, JUNE 11

Baby and me: Great Kills Library, 56

Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Infants from birth through one and one-half with their caregivers.

Teen lounge: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, June 4.

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

Children of all ages enjoy playing electronic games.

TUES, JUNE 12

Tech time: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, June 5.

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

For children 3 to 12.

Keigwin & Company: The Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Ave. at W. 19th Street; (212) 242-0800; www.joyce.org; 7:30 pm; \$10-\$49.

Pop culture fuses with high art with contemporary dance performances.

WED, JUNE 13

Math tutoring: 3:30–6 pm. Great Kills Library. See Wednesday, June 6.

Picture-book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, June 6.

Keigwin & Company: 7:30 pm. The Joyce Theater. See Tuesday, June 12.

"Kung Fu Panda 2": Hudson River Park Pier 46, Christopher St. and the Hudson River; (212) 627-2121; www.hudsonriverpark.org; 8:30 pm; Free.

Rated PG, children enjoy the voice of Jack Black in this sequel.

THURS, JUNE 14

Toddler story time: Great Kills Li-

brary, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Children one and 1 1/2 to 3 years old with caregivers hear a story with finger play and activities. Pre-registration required.

Keigwin & Company: 8 pm. The Joyce Theater. See Tuesday, June 12.

FRI, JUNE 15

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

For pre-schoolers ages three to five with caregivers. Pre-registration required.

Nursery time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Ave. (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 1 pm; Free.

Children 3-5 play games and listen to stories. Registration required.

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

Kathleen Hagen helps little ones kick off the weekend with song, music and storytelling. For children 18 months to four years. Pre-registration required. Session 2.

Fun Fridays: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, June 1.

Fun night: Party Jungle, 630 Sharrotts Rd. (718) 816—1422 X106; info@eden2.org; 5:30–8:30 pm; \$20 (\$15 adults).

Fund-raiser for the whole family; face painting; children's tattoos, party games and more. Benefitting Eden II programs.

Keigwin & Company: 8 pm. The Joyce Theater. See Tuesday, June 12.

SAT, JUNE 16

Canoeing: Willowbrook Park, Eton Pl. at Richmond Avenue; (718) 967-3542; 11 am–2 pm; Free.

Rangers offer basic instructions, for adults and children 8 and older. Life jackets provided.

Keigwin & Company: 8 pm. The Joyce Theater. See Tuesday, June 12.

SUN, JUNE 17

Farm day: 10 am–4:45 pm. Staten Island Zoo. See Sunday, June 10.

Keigwin & Company: 2 and 7:30 pm. The Joyce Theater. See Tuesday, June 12.

MON, JUNE 18

Tween club: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Ave. (718)

Going Places

351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children make a lanyard keychain or bracelet. All materials provided.

Teen lounge: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, June 4.

Anti-bully support group: AME Zion Church, 584 Bloomingdale Rd. 4:30–6:30 pm; Free.

Join with other parents and children in a safe environment to discuss bullying problems, free refreshments.

TUES, JUNE 19

Tech time: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, June 5.

Read aloud: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, June 12.

WED, JUNE 20

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

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

Math tutoring: 3:30–6 pm. Great

Kills Library. See Wednesday, June 6.

Picture-book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, June 6.

THURS, JUNE 21

Coffee talk: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 11:30 am; Free.

For adults.

Pajama night: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 5 pm; Free. Stories, rhymes and more.

FRI, JUNE 22

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

For children 5-12. Pre-registration required.

Fun Fridays: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, June 1.

SAT, JUNE 23

Enrichment day: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue;

(718) 422-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 10:30 am–3:30 pm; Free with paid admission.

Learn all about the zoo and watch your favorite animal get their favorite toy.

MON, JUNE 25

Baby and me: 11 am. Great Kills Library. See Monday, June 11.

Teen lounge: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, June 4.

Wii gaming: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Monday, June 11.

TUES, JUNE 26

"Puss in Boots": Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Featuring the voices of Antonio Banderas and Salma Hayek.

Tech time: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, June 5.

Read aloud: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, June 12.

WED, JUNE 27

Picture-book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, June 6.

THURS, JUNE 28

Toddler story time: 11 am. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, June 14.

FRI, JUNE 29

Story time: 11 am. Great Kills Library. See Friday, June 15.

Fun Fridays: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Friday, June 1.

SAT, JUNE 30

Family camping: Wolfe's Pond Park, Hylan Blvd and Cornelia St. (718) 967-3542; <https://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers/register>; 6 pm; Free.

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

MON, JULY 2

Teen lounge: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free. For ages 12 to 18.

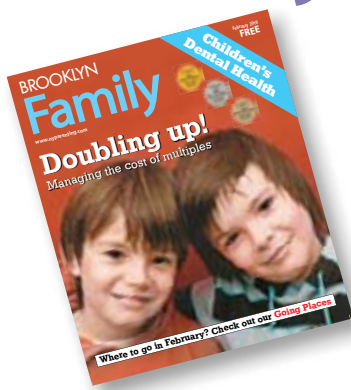
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New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

Creature comforts

Your little girl will keep her shoes on her feet this summer — if she has a pair of these magical seahorse sandals by Lemon Loves Lime. And they are easy to put on with their Velcro closures. (The buckles are decorative.) These pretty pink-and-silver sandals feature lined, cork footbeds and non-slip rubber soles and they are embellished with just enough beads and sequins to catch the eye of the most discriminating mermaid.

Seahorse sandals by Lemon Loves Lime, \$44. www.chasing-fireflies.com.



Say cheese!

Artist Alicia Schultze has dedicated her Etsy Shop, Creative Cuteness, to crafting the perfect accessory for your infant: moustache pacifiers! Here, Schultze has bedecked a turquoise and lime-green orthodontic NUK with a dark brown mustache that Burt Reynolds himself would be proud to sport.

This latex pacifier is for babies

ages six months and up. Important note: Schultze advises that this pacifier only be used while child is under adult supervision — in case the child manages to pull the stash off and tries to eat it. But of course he's going to be under adult supervision! Your whole family is going to be standing right there, taking a million pictures of your future Magnum, P.I.!

Mustache Pacifier, \$9. Creative Cuteness shop on www.etsy.com.

Mooning over 'Girl'

A stunning combination of artistry and prose, "Red Knit Cap Girl," the first picture book by Red Hook, Brooklyn author-illustrator Naoko Stoop, is certain to become an instant classic.

Red Knit Cap Girl yearns to talk with the moon, and enlists the help of several equally adorable forest friends in pursuit of her dream. Ultimately the girl — and the 5-year-olds the book will most appeal to — reaps the reward by taking a moment to turn off the lights and noise, so that she



can enjoy the natural world around her.

Stoop uses plywood as her canvas for the adventures of the child and her friend, White Bunny; the unexpected wood grain adds depth and whimsy to the illustrations. And we're not the only ones to have been charmed — this book is the first of a series; we can't wait to find out what the Red Knit Cap Girl will do next.

"Red Knit Cap Girl" by Naoko Stoop (Little Brown and Company), \$15.99. www.lb-kids.com.

'Wilder' wall designs

Your kid will be saying "Domo arigato, Mr. Robot-o" when he sees Aimee Wilder's new Big Robots wallpaper in his room, and he won't think twice before bidding a grateful "sayonara" to his old nursery decor. Each robot measures about 9-and-a-half-inches tall by about 5-inches wide.

The print is solid color, and it's available in a choice of three: Tin (gray), Robin (blue) or Sphinx (me-



talic gold). The pattern is hand silk-screened onto clay-coated paper, which can be gently wiped clean with a damp cloth. Wilder isn't just a talented artist, she's green, too! Her papers are manufactured with responsibly sourced fiber.

Big Robots Wallpaper by Aimee Wilder, \$150 per roll. <http://aimeewilder.bigcartel.com/product/robots-multi>.

Carnival of sound

Kindie rock band Recess Monkey has stuffed its latest album, "In Tents," with songs inspired by the circus. The CD is recommended for kids ages 3-8, but the whole family will enjoy these songs, some of which are reminiscent of the great ringmasters of the pop arena (Elvis Costello, Squeeze, The Beatles, Bee Gees) and all are about perennial childhood delights, like "Bouncy House," "Human Cannonball," and "Lemonade."



It includes a 32-page booklet that tells a tale about a band tricked into joining the circus.

This is Recess Monkey's eighth studio album, so it's no surprise that the band — Jack Forman, Daron Henry, and Drew Holloway, joined on this CD by Dean Jones — have perfected the art of clowning around.

"In Tents" CD by Recess Monkey (Monkey Mama), \$14.99. Release date: June 19, 2012. www.recessmonkey.com.

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