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Make your great escape

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Mornings managed!

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Celebrating black history

From a round-up of apps that honor and explore black history and civil rights to a curated list of local events where you can find community and culture, we have your family guide to Black History Month: parentmap.com/holidays.

A dad's love

Read dad blogger Jonathan Shipley's bittersweet reflection on being a dad to a girl who is growing up fast and finding new loves of her own (read: boys!). parentmap.com/adadslove

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dear reader

Forget the college fund and fall in love, again!

I strongly suggest you grab your iPhone and download an app that permits you to kick-start a travel fund, perhaps in lieu of a college fund. Consider this sage advice from a slightly insane, nearly 60-year-old elder who is rebounding from the most magical family experience — a family safari to Tanzania.

Our family of six, ranging from “baby” Maya (14) to birthday dad Bobby (60) spent two screen-free weeks in the wild, learning, observing and falling in love with the magical Serengeti. We were mesmerized daily by circle-of-life sightings of cheetah, lion, rhino, elephant and thousands of migrating wildebeest and zebra. Christmas was labeled “baby day” with recurrent “oohs” and “aahs” while



Arielle, Maya, Bobby, Adam and Eli with Masai family

observing precious newborn hippos and baboons riding on their mothers' backs.

Yet, these dreamlike images pale in comparison to what our little pride experienced. We fell in love with each other again and in a new way. Some of our family members' general lack of outdoors enthusiasm

could have wreaked havoc on the trip's happiness factor. To the contrary, our kids' immeasurable wonder, incessant upbeat banter and laughter was the greatest 60th birthday gift for my husband. And yes, I think we had to go to Africa for this.

Our journey is over, but in many ways, just beginning. Global Family Travel founder Jennifer Spatz's (“Someone You Should Know,” p. 46) powerful purpose is to change the lives of children by building character and empathy while building bridges between people and different cultures. This was our family's experience while touring the famous township of Soweto, caught between old squatter misery and new prosperity, and Cape Town's District Six, where 60,000 inhabitants were forcibly removed during the 1970s by the apartheid regime.

The memory most indelibly etched in our minds is sitting tightly in an unimaginably tiny, smoke-filled Masai mud hut built by a young mother, one of seven wives, who was no older than Maya, our 14-year-old. The exchange we had there, translated by our beloved guides, Moisanga and Rabin, along with the other powerful lessons acquired on our journey, could not have been taught any other way.

Here at home, we delude ourselves that this economically strong bastion of supposed social justice is free of the racism so many sadly experience worldwide. The onslaught of violence and “unending stream of racially charged incidents” locally and worldwide inspired this month's feature, investigating how our community is combating racism (p. 16). Our kids don't simply learn math, reading, coding or smartphone limits by osmosis. So how would they learn racial and social justice that way? We need to challenge ourselves and institutions and ask, “Are we propagating or disrupting racial stereotypes?” We have a moral obligation to ensure we model the behavior we expect and aspire for our kids.

Big love to you and yours!

Olga



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PARENT FUEL

family news, snack-sized

Class act

Local child advocates are hailing the recent passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which essentially leaves behind the outdated No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The new law includes language that emphasizes and supports the social and emotional competencies of students. “We are deeply gratified to see such improvements in federal education policy,” says Joan Cole Duffell, executive director of the Committee for Children. “We know that focusing on children’s social and emotional development actually raises their academic scores. For years, education policy has ignored this research-proven fact.” Among other things, the new law will allow school districts to target federal resources to support evidence-based programs and strategies that further students’ collaboration, communication and critical-thinking skills.

Crumb-y news

Disturbing news for cookie monsters: New research finds that salmonella can survive for at least six months in the cream fillings of cookies and crackers typically found in grocery stores and vending machines. Researchers at the University of Georgia tested four types of fillings: chocolate and vanilla in cookies, and cheese and peanut butter in crackers. Scientists say they’re surprised that salmonella can thrive for so long in a relatively dry environment. Salmonella sickens an estimated 1 million people a year in the U.S. and kills about 380.



Snuggle bennies

Scientists to brand-new moms: Take a cue from a ’roo! A new study suggests that skin-to-skin contact directly after birth between mother and newborn (known as “kangaroo mother care,” or KMC) may reduce death risks for infants with a low birth weight. Researchers think the contact helps regulate the newborn’s temperature and breathing rate — and also reduces maternal stress and leads to longer duration of breastfeeding. The Harvard-led study found that very low-weight babies (less than 4.4 pounds) who survived and received KMC were 36 percent less likely to die. This is particularly promising in developing countries, where incubators and other critical equipment are scarce, and where the vast majority of neonatal deaths occur.

Swipers in diapers

Toddlers + touch screens = trouble . . . right? Researchers in Ireland did a double click on touch-screen usage by kids between ages 12 and 36 months. They found that 87 percent of parents who own a touch-screen device allow their tot to use it for an average of 15 minutes per day. An impressive 91 percent of the kids studied were able to swipe the screen; 65 percent actively searched for features, and 50 percent were able to unlock the screen. Is all this savvy bad for bitties? Maybe not; researchers say that since touch-screen apps encourage engagement, they’re a bit more like traditional play than passive screen time — so, not as bad as TV. Except for YouTube, which just is.



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Candy crush

Candy-themed online games make you eat more candy! Dutch researcher Frans Folkvord found that shortly after playing a game with an embedded food advertisement, children ate 55 percent more of the candy offered to them than children who had played a game with an embedded toy advertisement. Folkvord discovered that children don’t recognize the ads — even when brand names are clearly visible.



Fire starter

Here’s an idea for rekindling your romance, just in time for Valentine’s Day: Download one of the Gottman Institute’s free “love apps” on your smartphone, then follow the prompts to guide you to some enlightening date-night conversation. Whether you want to know your partner better (“Have any of your friends drifted away?”), share hopes and dreams (“What adventures would you like to have before you die?”), explore new terrain in the sack (bold and explicit!) or just have more fun together (“If you could change into any animal for 24 hours . . .”), there’s an app for that at gottman.com/couples/apps. ■

— Kristen Russell

More than Band-Aids

Demand for school nurses increases, but funding doesn't follow

By Kim Eckart

From the time of the first bell, Kari Asadorian is on the move.

A registered nurse assigned to Seattle's Cascadia Elementary School, Asadorian is responsible for 775 students, handling everything from playground spills to daily medication. Because Cascadia is labeled as one of Seattle's 18 "medically fragile" schools — one that serves students with severe health conditions, where a full-time nurse is required — Asadorian also assists students in wheelchairs with basic needs.

Asadorian, who wrote health care plans for 80 students this past fall, considers herself luckier than many school nurses. She works full time at Cascadia and has regular help from a licensed practical nurse, who accompanies special needs students on the bus each day and can take care of, for example, a recess injury if Asadorian is with another student.

"There's always something to do," she says, pausing periodically to meet with students as they enter the health room.

But at some schools, nurses aren't always available. Largely because of funding, nurses in some districts must divide their time between buildings, while licensed practical nurses, substitutes and trained assistants fill in the gaps. In many schools, teachers and office staff dole out Band-Aids on days when there is no nurse staffing. And in many districts, increasing nurse caseloads and limited resources mean outside funders — mostly PTAs — step in to cover some services.

Now, pending a long-awaited increase in funding for schools following the 2012 Washington State Supreme Court's *McCleary* decision, school nurses from around the state are banding together to develop new guidelines for staffing. Recommendations could come in March.

So, how does your child's school compare to other schools in the state, and will its nurse staffing change soon?

The bottom line: There is "no one size fits all" for nurse-to-student ratios, says Robin Fleming, director of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) Health Services department. Demographics and health needs should play a role



The demands for plans and medication have skyrocketed, while the process for assigning nurses to buildings has remained unchanged.

when determining how nurses are assigned.

Need on the rise

The National Association of School Nurses and the American Academy of Pediatrics have recommended one nurse per 750 students, but here in Washington, the state nurses association suggests that ratio doesn't take into account the very issues Fleming mentioned. In other words, such an assignment might work in some areas, but not in others.

Every school nurse is expected to handle a laundry list of duties: administering first aid and care for sudden illnesses, annual vision and hearing screenings, dispensing medication, and developing care plans for students with severe and life-threatening conditions.

But in recent years, the demands for those latter services — plans and medication — have skyrocketed, while the process for assigning nurses to buildings has remained unchanged. More students suffer from food allergies, diabetes, seizure disorders and mental health conditions, all of which can require daily services.

According to data maintained by OSPI, student health conditions have risen 75 percent since the 2005–2006 school year. During that same period, the number of registered-nurse hours in school buildings decreased 40 percent. "How sick kids are and how in need they are — that

has definitely gone up, and that increases the workload," says Terri Helm-Remund, president of the School Nurse Organization of Washington and a registered nurse who cares for approximately 450 students at West Seattle Elementary. "Every student that comes to school has a right to be here and access their education. Their health shouldn't get in the way of that, and we need to know how to react if they need help."

Who should pay?

In 2011, a Pierce County jury found the Bethel School District negligent in the 2008 death of a fifth-grader who suffered a fatal allergic reaction; the school nurse wasn't present when the girl died, and care plans weren't followed. The tragedy represents the worst-case scenario of insufficient nurse staffing and resources.

Most parents assume their child's health needs, emergency and otherwise, will be met at school, and they often don't know that a school nurse may have to split her time between more than one building, says Eden Mack, legislative chair of the Seattle Council PTSA and parent of three children in Seattle schools.

Mack's twins, enrolled in kindergarten at Lawton Elementary, suffer from severe asthma and food allergies and have health care plans on file. The school nurse works at Lawton on Mondays and half-days on Fridays, so the school secretary is available

to help administer the children's inhalers during the rest of the week.

"It's a safety issue, and it's pushing responsibilities onto people who aren't trained medically. The secretary shouldn't be in the position of doing the nurse's job, because she has so much work just doing the day-to-day work of the school," Mack says. "It's scary, as a parent, to be in this situation."

The Lawton PTA helps pay for extracurricular activities, but not hours for the nurse. Mack says she is considering asking the PTA to set aside funds, but, she adds, PTAs shouldn't be put in that position.

"We're getting exhausted of having to fund the basics of education," Mack says of PTSAs and PTAs in general. "People feel like it's something they can do, so they step in and do it. But the expectation is ballooning."

"Our top issue is fully funding education so that local PTAs, parents and teachers do not pay for something that is the State of Washington's paramount duty," says Kathryn Hobbs, executive director of the Washington State PTA. "The Washington State PTA does not support, endorse or encourage local PTAs to pay for nurses or staff."

Filling the gap

As it stands now, Washington school districts decide how to utilize their nurses in much the same way they determine how many teachers they need — by enrollment and budget. That often means a school nurse might work in more than one building, with a trained staff or volunteer available for certain duties when the nurse is out.

But it is only the school nurse who is permitted, for instance, to write a

school-based care plan for a student with a life-threatening condition. School nurses must be certified, have a bachelor's degree in nursing and maintain continuing education requirements. Often, secretaries can be trained to perform basic duties in a nurse's absence, while a "parent-designated adult" can help diabetic students check blood sugar and administer medication. For the past decade, Seattle Children's Hospital has offered a class for such volunteers; attendance over the past year has doubled.

Of the 71 certificated nurses who work for Seattle Public Schools, 31 are assigned to their buildings full time; that includes all comprehensive high schools, and several middle and elementary schools where the "medically fragile" designation require them. The city's Families and Education Levy helps fund services such as school-based health centers and additional nurses to, for instance, accompany special needs children on a field trip. And at some schools PTA money is available.

Although not every school is likely to get a full-time nurse, adds Katie Johnson, Seattle Public Schools manager of Student Health Services and former interim Health Services director for OSPI, the district demonstrates a "strong commitment to student health," whether in its services to medically fragile schools or through the support and resources available to nursing staff.

Rural districts, though, tend to lack such services. In 1999, the state established the School Nurse Corps, setting aside about \$5 million every biennium to pay for nursing services in small school districts. The money is administered through each of the nine


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More than Band-Aids

continued from page 13

educational service districts, financing, for example, one nurse to serve some 1,200 students spread across six school districts in Mason County. In some areas, the school nurse may be the closest health care provider.

"In many of the districts we serve, it's not unusual at all for parents to wait until they know the nurse is at school, and send their child in to have their child looked at," says Lynn Nelson, Nurse Corps administrator for a five-county region in southwest Washington. "Some of it has to do with a lack of [health care] providers in the community, and some of it is about poverty and lack of transportation for parents."

Nurses hope the efforts of the statewide staffing work group, along with potential funding from Initiative 1351 and enforcement of the McCleary decision, will trickle down to student health services. Maybe, says Lorali Gray, School Nurse Corps administrator for counties in northwest Washington, there can be support for other wraparound services, such as family advocates and counselors.

The effort to come up with nurse staffing guidelines also aims to identify duties that registered nurses must do, and what can be handled by a licensed practical nurse or health assistant. It comes at the same time that health reform is under way; OSPI is working with the state Health Care Authority to find ways in which the federal government might help fund nursing services, Fleming says. Nearly half the students in the state are eligible for Medicaid.

More than Band-Aids

Of Washington's 295 districts, only Shoreline has committed to assigning one full-time nurse to each of its schools, according to OSPI. The district categorizes nurses as classified

employees, the same category as instructional assistants, cafeteria workers and bus drivers, and they are subject to a different pay scale than teachers and librarians, who are considered certificated employees. (Some districts consider nurses certificated employees.)

Shoreline district spokesman Curtis Campbell says the district set aside \$781,000 this year for nurses at all 14 of its school buildings — a staffing ratio it has maintained for at least 20 years.

"It's always been a high community priority that there be nurses in the schools during the school day," he says.

Shorewood High School nurse Paula Williams has worked at the elementary, middle and high school level in Shoreline since 1999.

In her eight years at Shorewood, she's seen student health needs increase, along with her responsibilities.

"It's not just the numbers that we see; it's that the kids are getting more complicated," Williams explains. "They have more issues at home, maybe family or financial issues. Each kid we see doesn't necessarily need a Band-Aid, but you might have to do things like help them find a dentist."

Williams recorded about 1,500 student visits to the health room in the 2009–2010 school year; five years later, there were more than 2,000.

Despite the increased demands on her time, Williams enjoys her job. She feels fortunate to work in her building full time.

"If I were going from building to building, I wouldn't have this level of patient and student contact," Williams says. "It's the whole kid that we want to look at. Our goal is to keep them in school and make sure they're successful." ■

Kim Eckart is a Seattle-area writer, editor and mother.

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RACIS

Families push for racial justice

BY KALI SAKAI



M

In 2013, a small parent support group dedicated to multicultural families and families of color launched in South Seattle. Through the group, parents of babies and young children connected, arranged playdates and found resources.

But Families of Color Seattle wasn't destined to stop there. There were so many urgent needs; families of color wanted more.

Since its inception, the nonprofit has created a play space and a cultural arts program that includes a new series of unprecedented community dialogues about race and families. Families of Color Seattle (FOCS; focseattle.com) serves more than 350 families and is growing quickly with its mission to "build a strong community for families of color with parenting programs, resource sharing and fostering meaningful connections."

This mandate could not be any timelier, given the seemingly unending stream of racially charged incidents that have erupted nationally and locally in recent years. From police brutality toward people of color to patterns of increased suspensions and harsher punishment for schoolchildren of color, local families are navigating racial bias all around them.

The impact of bias can invade community and family spaces, from the hospital birthing room to the private dinner table.

"Parents need to talk about race with their kids," says Columbia City Church of Hope pastor Darla DeFrance. "We don't leave our kids to figure out math or reading or swimming on their own. Race is just as important, and we need to lead and guide them, even if we're not that good at it ourselves."

But while racism in the past was unmistakable, modern racism isn't as easy to pin down. "Today's children are inundated with the colorblind message of 'skin color doesn't matter.' [But] the impact of racism doesn't change over time — racial exclusion, othering, discrimination [were and still are] hurtful," says Onnie Rogers, Ph.D., and professor at the University of Washington's College of Education and Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences (I-LABS). >>



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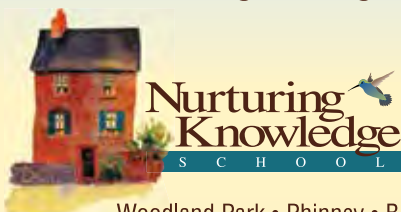
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RACISM

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Enter FOCS, one of the few organizations solely dedicated to addressing how children and families of color are affected by racism in Seattle. As it has grown, FOCS has increasingly moved toward a focus on advocacy for racial justice on a community-wide scale. After winning a City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods grant, FOCS introduced a special series of five community dialogues about race and family in late 2015.

Each event tackles a different theme, featuring keynote speakers, spoken-word poetry readings, parent testimonials, updates on community efforts and opportunities to talk about experiences in a safe, shared space. Food and child care are also provided. (See sidebar for details on how to register for and attend the final event in the series.) The core message of the dialogues is that racism hurts families, so families need tools to become resilient and thrive. FOCS organizers hope the series creates effective allies against racism, inspires ideas about dismantling racism and bridges gaps in understanding for the public at large.

STARTING A DIALOGUE

On a rainy Saturday last October, I attended the first dialogue, “Talking Race, Identity and Racism,” at Seattle Girls School in South Seattle. What I witnessed, and the personal introspection it inspired, surprised me. Kicking off the program, 16-year-old Carlynn Newhouse of Youth Speaks Seattle riveted a full-capacity crowd with an electrifying original poem, followed by an informative presentation about efforts to fight for social justice by Youth Undoing Institutional Racism (YUIR). Then, author and activist Sharon H. Chang delivered an insightful and deeply relatable keynote talk about how society tends to put people in race boxes. These preconceptions, she said, shape what we expect people to be like and what we believe they should do.

“By the late 18th century, there were

approximately five racial categories of people — white, Asian, Latino/a, Pacific Islander, native, black — and they are arranged in a hierarchy, with whites at the top, blacks at the bottom, and everyone else vying for middling positions between. There is no space for mixedness in this ideology,” Chang told the crowd. She noted that mixed-race people are usually either shoved into preexisting categories or ignored altogether.

With identity as the main focus, the event brought up some things for me. As a mixed-race Asian myself, I understand that sense of not fitting into any one “box.” After years of self-examination, I have made peace with who I am. But it’s often been a lonely experience, one that resulted in me deciding what my identity would be, rather than people telling me what it was.

A recent column in *The New York Times* by Bonnie Tsui captures this reframing of racial identity discussions. Being of mixed race can often feel like its own unique “category” or race. It’s a conflicting exercise to transcend categorization while having the burden of explaining all my parts if asked, “What are you?”

But for me, straddling multiple, distinct groups of people deeply internalized the concept of coexistence. Seeing my Italian grandmother, Russian Jewish grandfather and Japanese grandparents at one table for Christmas Eve dinner as a child galvanized the ideas that everyone could be together and no one was lesser or greater.

Even with all of this in my background, an eye-opening takeaway of the FOCS event was that I needed to honestly examine what personal snap judgments and assumptions I make about others and whether I’m doing my best to approach all people with an open mind and heart. Every single person — whites, people of color or mixed-race people — can play a role in either propagating racial assumptions or actively overcoming them.

The FOCS community event concluded with some heartfelt testimonies of local parents, which revealed a deep indignation about the treatment of nonwhite people and the issues they face. One of those parent testimonies was from Teddy McGlynn-Wright, who wrote for

FAMILY OF COLOR SEATTLE EVENTS

FOCS RACE SERIES

Dialogue 5: “Transracial Adoption Experiences”: Saturday, Feb. 27, 10:30 a.m.–1 p.m., The Meridian School

Note: Events have limited space and will fill up. Sign up in advance for complimentary child care.

Registration and RSVP: focseattle.com/?tribe_events=dialogue-5-transracial-adoption-experiences

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Times: 10:30 a.m.–11:15 a.m., newborn–3 years old;
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Both classes take place at FOCSArts (formerly Cornerstone Café) at Hoa Mai Vietnamese Bilingual Preschool, hoamaipreschool.org, 2915 Rainier Avenue S. in Seattle.

Registration and more information: focseattle.com/?page_id=113.

Cost: \$15 per session or \$110 for eight-week series. New participant registration fee: \$20.



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RACISM

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this magazine about what it's like to be a modern dad in a piece called "Redefining Fatherhood" (parentmap.com/redefiningfatherhood). As an activist and organizational manager for Seattle's Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, McGlynn-Wright says, "I've seen families left out of important conversations like this before. But there's a different depth, sharpness and level of commitment from the parent demographic" engaging in conversations like the FOCS dialogues. A Leschi resident, McGlynn-Wright is a black dad of two young kids who believes the urgency to make the world better for our children is what is currently motivating parents to break through uncomfortable insecurities and talk about racism in a real way.

Other parents at the first dialogue echoed this sentiment. Kay Dumlao Doherty of Magnolia, a Filipina mom of two, felt the event brought together people who want a better world for their kids, particularly around issues of race, diversity and equity.

"I wasn't able to be as involved as I had once been in community activism," Doherty says. "[But] the event gave me an opportunity to connect once again with grassroots organizing and the community. I came away from the event very inspired to keep fighting for what I knew was right."

Stephanie Jones Peguero, a black Korean mom of two living in Central Seattle, recognized a commonality with other parents of color at the event. "I was able to connect with the stories that the presenters shared that were similar to my own story of race, identity and racism, as well as thinking through how I want to raise my children in this world," she says.

These opinions reflect a move by many families, organizations and communities to change the narrative about race. "The dialogue events have had a great impact in the community for parents to gather, learn and engage on some issues most affecting children of color in Seattle," says Amy HyunAh Pak, FOCS executive director. In the past few months, new PTA groups have emerged because of the dialogues. Parents are now advocating and mobilizing to engage their school administrations for equity

THE IMPACT OF BIAS CAN INVADE COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SPACES, FROM THE HOSPITAL BIRTHING ROOM TO THE PRIVATE DINNER TABLE.

and antibias programs. FOCS has been asked to provide trainings and consultations for some public and private schools around the Puget Sound region.

Local families' needs and experiences are fueling the growth of such programs, and other organizations in the region are partnering to further the conversation and build strength in numbers. The FOCS race dialogues, which include topics such as "Anti-Bias Education and Schools" (last December), "Antiracist Birthing & Reproductive Justice" (January 2016) and "Transracial Adoption Experiences" (Feb. 27), have been made possible partially through a fellowship grant from Rainier Valley

Corps, which enabled FOCS to hire staff to manage programming and operations. With the team expanding, FOCS moved administrative offices to the Mt. Baker Lofts in the Mount Baker light rail station and formed a partnership with Washington state's first Vietnamese bilingual

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RACISM

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preschool, Hoa Mai Vietnamese Bilingual Preschool. Hoa Mai will be the new site for FOCSArts, formerly known as Cornerstone Café. Starting in early 2016, families can look forward to West African dance and music as the first offering in the new Hoa Mai space (see box for details). Also, West African drumming, Hawaiian ukulele and Spanish music classes are planned for later in 2016.

Families can also find parent support groups for waddlers, newborns and moms of two or more children as well as monthly pop-up playdates in North and South Seattle parks. This year, FOCS plans to add new groups for black moms and QFOCS (a LGBT group).

ANOTHER ALLY TO FIGHT RACISM

Many advocates of opening the dialogue about race and racism say there's an urgency to engage in understanding and change with this new generation.

"Unfortunately, pessimism about the future of race relations in the United States abounds," explains Lee M. Miringoff, Ph.D., director of the Marist Institute for Public Opinion. "A majority of nonwhite residents, 54 percent, believes there will always be a lot of racial discrimination in [this] nation, and that figure has changed little in decades."

Another family-focused antiracism effort working toward opening the dialogue and creating change is being championed by the

Columbia City Church of Hope in South Seattle and led by its pastor, DeFrance. The church recently hosted two workshops focused on kids and race called "Beyond Colorblindness."

DeFrance and her team want all parents and educators to look closely at how bias infiltrates our everyday lives and experiences. They hope to give parents practical ideas about ways to recognize and disrupt narratives that privilege whiteness. "Superheroes, princess stories — even train and animal stories — often presume that whiteness is good and anything else is 'other,'" DeFrance says.

To be sure, talking with kids about a topic as complex as racism can feel daunting and nebulous. But that makes it even more important. Parents can approach it by starting to examine their own experiences with racism, and then consider the values of fairness and social justice.

"A lot of white parents are reluctant to say *anything* about race, which leaves a culture that minimizes the impact of race even as it continues to teach kids that whiteness is the norm. Remaining silent is one of the worst things we can do," DeFrance says.

The unique challenges for families of color remind us that we all have to actively acknowledge and talk about the problems of racism. By recognizing this struggle and getting to the root of the parts we each play, there's hope for a less racialized, more harmonious future for our kids. ■

Kali Sakai is a Seattle-based freelance writer and mother of two children.



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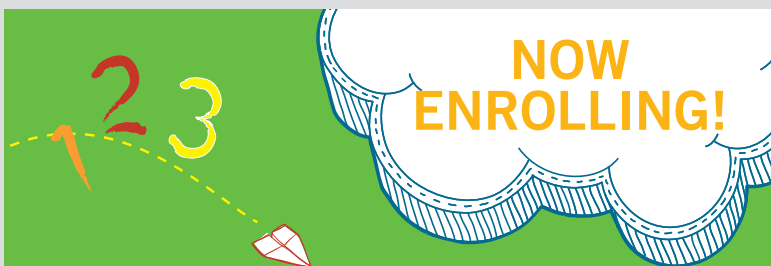
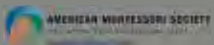


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7

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Winter Stories and Crafts. Learn about the watershed and make a craft. Select weekends through March 20, 1:30-3:30 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. All ages. Cedar River Watershed Education Center, North Bend. seattle.gov/util/crwec

14

Kids 'n' Critters. Bring your crew to visit Northwest Trek's resident animals and partake in a roster of special activities; up to four children (ages 12 and under) admitted free per paying adult. Saturday-Monday, Feb. 13-15. Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Eatonville. nwtrek.org

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21

CD Release Dance Party with The Not-Its! The fave local indie band invites all to a free, rockin' dance party in celebration of its new album, *Are You Listening?*. 11 a.m. **FREE**; preregister. All ages. The Vera Project, Seattle. wearthenot-its.com

Introduction to Breakdancing. Member of local group Massive Monkees and breakdancing champion shows kids some cool moves. 1-2 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 5-8. King County Library System, Bothell Branch. kcls.org

28

Roald Dahl's The Big Friendly Giant. A 15-foot-tall vegetarian giant teams up with a little girl in this wacky Dahl tale. 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. (sensory-friendly performance). \$15. Grades 2-6 with families. Everett Civic Auditorium. villageoftheatre.org

The Lightning Thief. This family-oriented play, based on the book by Rick Riordan, follows Percy Jackson's adventures wrangling with Zeus and other gods. 3 p.m. \$12-\$29. Ages 8 and up. Pantages Theater, Tacoma. broadwaycenter.org

MONDAY

1

Let's Play: Aladdin. Giggles are guaranteed at these fun, short shows designed for the preschool crowd. Feb. 1, 5 and 6; 10:30 a.m. \$5. Ages 0-5 with caregiver. Olympia Family Theater. olyft.org

Toddler Time at the Aquarium. Last dates this season for fishy fun and marine-themed activities for little kids. Feb. 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9; 9:30 a.m.-noon. Included with admission. Ages 0-5 with caregiver. Seattle Aquarium. seattleaquarium.org

8

Meet-up Monday. Meet up with friends for indoor play and receive \$3 off admission. Mondays, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. \$7 with discount; adults and under age 1 free. WiggleWorks Kids, Bellevue. wiggleworkskids.com

ONGOING EVENT
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15

Presidents' Day at NAAM. Dress as your favorite president, make a presidential finger puppet and enjoy storytelling by Eva Abram. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Northwest African American Museum, Seattle. naamnw.org

Great Backyard Bird Count. Participate in important citizen science! Tally the birds you see in at least one 15-minute time span from anywhere in the world during Friday-Monday, Feb. 12-15. **FREE**; register online. gbbc.birdcount.org

22

Luke's Kids Drop-in Play Time. Preschoolers and grown-ups are invited to play and meet other families at this Ballard church. Mondays, 10 a.m.-noon. \$5 suggested donation. Ages 0-5 with caregiver. St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Seattle. stlukesseattle.org **ONGOING EVENT**

Maker Mondays. Here's your chance to try out 3D modeling and printing. Mondays, 3-8 p.m. \$5; printing extra; preregister. Ages 11-18, under 15 with adult. Future of Flight Aviation Center, Mukilteo. futureofflight.org **ONGOING EVENT**

29

Leapin' Lemurs. Hang out with ring-tailed lemurs as they enjoy special treats on Leap Day. Sunday-Monday, Feb. 28-29, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Included with admission. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. pdza.org

Shoreline Indoor Playground. Let the kiddos loose at this huge gym with balls, hoops, toys and slides. Monday-Friday, 9:30-11:30 a.m. \$3. Ages 1-5 with caregiver. Spartan Recreation Center, Shoreline. shorelinewa.gov **ONGOING EVENT**

TUESDAY

2

Groundhog Day. Kids engage in activities around shadows, weather and Punxsutawney Phil, the groundhog with a very important job. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Included with admission. Ages 1-10 with caregiver. The Children's Museum, Seattle. thechildrensmuseum.org
Art Rocks. Stop by Imagine Children's Museum's art studio for a groundhog project today, in honor of our favorite furry forecaster. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Included with admission. Ages 1-10 with caregiver. Everett. imaginecm.org

9

Preschool Playtime. Drop off your little ones for play and social time. Tuesdays, Thursdays; 9-11 a.m. or noon-2 p.m. \$10; call to reserve spot. Ages 3-6. Lynnwood Recreation Center. ci.lynnwood.wa.us
Classical Tuesdays in Old Town. Last Tuesday of the season to hear musicians play for the enjoyment of the community. 7 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Slavonian Hall, Tacoma. classicaltuesdays.blogspot.com

16

Math Moves! It's full-body "muscle math" exploration with interactive stations that bring math concepts such as ratios and proportion to life. Daily through May 1. Included with admission. Pacific Science Center, Seattle. pacificsciencecenter.org
The Legacy of Seattle Hip-Hop. Rock and pop at this interactive exhibit on local hip-hop culture and its connection to the global hip-hop movement. Daily through May 1. Included with admission. Museum of History & Industry. mohai.org

23

Arena Sports FunZone. Let the kids bounce around like wild animals. Tuesday-Friday, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.; additional times and locations offered. \$9; caregivers free. Ages 1½-12. Arena Sports, Redmond. arenasports.net

Shadow Lake Bog Self-guided Walking Tour. Enter a wonderland of green on a boardwalk hike that's the perfect length for little legs. Daily during daylight hours. **FREE**. Shadow Lake Nature Preserve, Renton. shadowhabitat.org

Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb. 12-15



WEDNESDAY

3

Toddler Tales & Trails. Kids and caregivers enjoy story time and a tot-size nature hike. 10–11 a.m. \$2. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Seward Park Audubon Center, Seattle. sewardpark.audubon.org

Low Sensory Evening. KidsQuest invites families with sensory needs to visit the museum under controlled sensory conditions. 5:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 1–10 with families. KidsQuest Children's Museum, Bellevue. kidsquestmuseum.org

10

Story Hour at the Conservatory. Warm up with a cozy story time in the tropical air of the conservatory. 11 a.m. \$3 suggested donation. Ages 3–8 with families. W.W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory, Tacoma. seymourconservatory.org

Story Time for Kids. Settle in for new and classic kids' books, plus activities and snacks. Wednesdays, 11 a.m. **FREE**. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. University Bookstore, Mill Creek. bookstore.washington.edu

ONGOING EVENT

17

Northwest Flower and Garden Show. Peruse the amazing displays and garden-related wares while the kids do a treasure hunt. Wednesday–Sunday, Feb. 17–21. \$17 and up/adult; \$5 ages 13–17; ages 12 and under free. Washington State Convention Center, Seattle. gardenshow.com

Pre-K Open Jump. Little ones jump and play among the inflatables. Tuesday–Thursday, 10 a.m.–noon. \$6–\$8. Ages 3–5 with caregiver. Pump It Up, Kirkland. pumpitup-party.com/kirkland-wa

ONGOING EVENT

24

Side by Side Concert with Seattle Symphony and West Seattle Community Orchestra. Musicians from these groups and two young violinists play a free concert for families. 7 p.m. **FREE**. Chief Sealth High School, Seattle. seattlesymphony.org

OmTots Play Gym. Tots can bounce around, swing and generally act like monkeys. Monday–Friday, 9:30–noon. \$10; discounts available. Ages 1–5 with caregiver. OmCulture, Seattle. omculture.com

ONGOING EVENT

THURSDAY

4

Nordic Stories. Hear stories by Scandinavian authors, then make a related craft project, the first Thursday of the month. 10 a.m. **FREE**. Ages 3–6. Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle. nordicmuseum.org

Axis Family Fun Dance Jam. Join this extraordinary dance company of performers with and without disabilities, for a workshop focused on positive body awareness, creative expression and contact improvisation. 6:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE**; pre-register. Francis Anderson Center, Edmonds. axisdance.org

11

John Gottman, Ph.D. on Making Love Last and Marriage Work. At this ParentMap lecture, Gottman shares how to nurture intimacy with your spouse and create a loving environment for your family. 7 p.m. \$25–\$30. Adults. Willows Preparatory School, Redmond. parentmap.com/lectures

Oly Old-Time Festival. Celebrate foot-stompin' music, and participate in free workshops. Thursday–Sunday, Feb. 11–14. \$5–\$15; ages 12 and under free; some events free. All ages. Olympia Ballroom. olyoldtime.weebly.com

18

Baby Sing-Along. Caregivers and wee ones gather for songs, lullabies and creative movement. 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. \$17. Ages 2–12 months with caregiver. Seattle Holistic Center. seattleholisticcenter.com

Gage Teen Art Studio at BAM. All teens welcome to explore creative expression and new artistic techniques; no experience needed. Thursdays, 4–7 p.m. through March 31. **FREE**; preregistration recommended. Ages 13–18. Bellevue Arts Museum. bellevuearts.org

ONGOING EVENT

25

Family Nature Class. Explore the natural world with learning stations and a trail walk. Wednesday–Saturday, 9:30–11:30 a.m. (plus Fridays, 1–3 p.m. for ages 4–8). \$18 per adult/child pair; preregister. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Washington Park Arboretum, Seattle. depts.washington.edu/uwb

Board Game Night. Learn and play a plethora of fun games. Thursdays 6:30–9:30 p.m. **FREE**. Ages 5 and up. Card Kingdom, Seattle. cardkingdom.com

ONGOING EVENT

FRIDAY

5

Charlotte's Web. This beloved, poignant tale follows Wilbur and Charlotte, a pig and a spider, on their adventures in friendship and problem-solving. Through Feb. 14. \$13–\$19. All ages. Olympia Family Theater. olyft.org

Hana's Suitcase. Last weekend to see this moving play that tells a true story of discovery and understanding of a painful history. Through Feb. 7. \$27–\$40. Ages 10 and up. Seattle Children's Theatre. sct.org

12

Love is in the Air – Reflections on Ice. This figure skating showcase features national stars and local skaters with a Valentine's Day-appropriate theme. Friday–Sunday, Feb. 12–14. \$12–\$18. All ages. Sprinkler Recreation Center, Tacoma. reflectionsonice.com

CulturalFest International Expo. Students from around the world showcase the music, dance, food and culture of more than 35 countries. 10:30 a.m.–3 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Husky Union Building at U.W., Seattle. fiuts.org

19

Classical Mystery Tour: A Tribute to the Beatles. The ultimate Beatles cover band, led by Jim Owen as John Lennon, performs Beatles faves with the Seattle Symphony. Friday–Sunday, Feb. 19–21. \$30 and up. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. seattlesymphony.org

PJ Library Neighborhood Song and Storytime. Betsy Dischel and her blues guitar lead tots in musical, multicultural fun. Fridays, 9 a.m. **FREE**. Ages 0–5 with caregiver. Jewish Day School, Bellevue. jewishinseattle.org

ONGOING EVENT

26

Family Skate Night. Test out your long-lost roller skating skills and let the kids give it a go. Fridays through March 25, 6:30–8:15 p.m. \$4, includes skate rental. All ages. Bitter Lake Annex, Seattle. seattle.gov/parks

How the Earth Was Made. This exciting documentary film takes the viewer to remote locations to plot the earth's amazing journey; popcorn provided. 5 p.m. **FREE**; RSVP requested. All ages. Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Bellevue. bellevuewa.gov

SATURDAY

6

St. Thomas School CampFair. Get a jump start on summer camp planning by meeting a wide array of camp providers, from soccer to equestrian to overnight adventure and more. 10 a.m.–2 p.m. **FREE**. St. Thomas School, Medina. parentmap.com/campfair

Lunar New Year Fair. Celebrate the Year of the Monkey with a thrilling Lion Dance (11 a.m.), making crafts and seeing *The Monkey King*. 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Free outdoor performance; other activities included with admission. Wing Luke Museum, Seattle. wingluke.org

13

Harlem Globetrotters. The legendary team of super basketball tricksters makes three stops: Friday, Monday, Feb. 12, 15 at ShoWare Center, Kent; Saturday, Feb. 13 at Key Arena, Seattle; Sunday, Feb. 14 at Xfinity Arena. \$23.50 and up; under age 2 free. harlemglobetrotters.com

Mercer Slough Ranger Hike. Join a roughly two-mile jaunt through this fascinating, in-city wetland area. 2 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Bellevue. bellevuewa.gov

20

ParentMap Seattle Camp Fair. Browse oodles of summer camp options and ask questions of camp providers. 10 a.m.–2 p.m. **FREE**; preregister to be eligible to win prizes. Safeco Field First Base Terrace Club (indoors), Seattle. parentmap.com/campfair

Peter and the Wolf. Cascade Symphony Orchestra presents its children's concert featuring Prokofiev's beloved instruments as characters; instrument petting zoo precedes the show. 3 p.m. \$2–\$10. All ages. Edmonds Center for the Arts. cascadesymphony.org

27

Kehinde Wiley Family Day Celebration. Discover the art of modern portrait painter Kehinde Wiley with art-making and live performances. 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Activities **FREE**; exhibition viewing included with admission. All ages. Seattle Art Museum. seattleartmuseum.org

Family Dessert Theater: Mercer Girls. Enjoy this original musical tale of some of the founding mothers of our region; dessert included. 6:30 p.m. \$5–\$10. Ages 5 and up. Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island. sjcc.org



Leapin' Lemurs at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Feb. 28–29

JOHN FROSCHAUER



F5 St. Patrick's Day Dash
Sunday, March 13, 8:30 a.m.
Seattle Center, Seattle

Run, jog, walk, or crawl with the whole family at the 2016 St. Patrick's Day Dash! All are welcome to run the 5K race, and kids 10 and under can participate in the 1K Leprechaun Leap. The event is presented by the Detlef Schrempf Foundation and supported by the Tailgaters Anonymous for Children's Guild. A portion of the proceeds benefit Seattle Children's Autism Center. For more information and to register, please visit www.stpatsdash.com.


For Girls Only (2 part class)
Wednesday, March 9 and
Wednesday, March 16, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Thomas Jefferson Highschool
4248 S. 288th St, Auburn, WA 98001
\$80 per parent/daughter pair;
\$60 per additional daughter

This two-part class is recommended for girls 10 to 12 years old and a parent or trusted adult. The sessions focus on what the child and parent should expect as girls begin adolescence.

SPRING ARTS

Top family shows, concerts and films
to shake up your family's spring


NANCY CHANEY + ELISA MURRAY

A young man with dark hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and dark blue jeans, is captured in a dynamic breakdance pose. He is lying on his back on a light-colored, textured concrete floor, with one leg bent and the other extended upwards. His arms are spread out, and he is looking down towards the ground. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

An Elton John score
and electrifying dance
numbers: *Billy Elliot*
opens at Village Theatre
on May 12



Art on the Fly dances through South Lake Union, May 21

YES, IT'S HARD TO MAKE TIME FOR THE ARTS. There's soccer and school and required reading, and hey, don't the kids go to a play with their class every term? And aren't shows expensive? But check out this list of top performances for families to see this spring: From nearly free Saturday-morning concerts that will rock the world of your tots to worthy splurges, you'll find something in the Puget Sound region's extraordinary family arts scene. Find more shows we love at parentmap.com/springarts. Note: Shows for \$15 and under are marked with .

FEBRUARY

Rhythmic Circus: Feet Don't Fail Me Now!

Pantages Theater, Tacoma, Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m.

Admiral Theatre, Bremerton, March 19, 7:30 p.m.

A troupe of 11 performers combines tap dancing, a big brass funk band and beatboxing. The result is a rhythmic, energetic and joyful expression of music and dance — stomping, shuffling, clanging and tapping. \$15–\$59. All ages. broadwaycenter.org, admiraltheatre.org

The Not-Its! CD Release Party

The Vera Project, Seattle

Feb. 21, 11 a.m.

Back from shows at Legoland and in Delhi (*The Times of India* called the group “kindie rock pioneers”), The Not-Its! celebrates its sixth studio album *Are You Listening?*, with a dance-ready, exuberant concert of fan favorites as well as new songs. Free. All ages. theveraproject.do206.com >>

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SPRING ARTS

continued from page 27

Brooklyn Bridge

Seattle Children's Theatre

Feb. 25–March 20

Penning by Canadian playwright Melissa James Gibson and coproduced with the University of Washington School of Drama, this thought-provoking drama tells the story of a fifth-grader named Sasha who ventures out of her New York City apartment to find help with a report on the Brooklyn Bridge. The everyday heroes who come to her aid are neighbors who teach her about bridges, community and what really matters. \$33–\$40. Ages 9 and older. sct.org

Black Violin

Pantages Theater, Tacoma

February 25, 7:30 p.m.

Violin duo Kev and Wil B. return to Tacoma to perform an inventive blend of classical

symphonic music mixed with hip-hop and other modern genres. They play a wide range of tunes and employ their instruments in different ways to put on a mesmerizing show. \$19–\$39. All ages. broadwaycenter.org

How I Became a Pirate

SecondStory Repertory, Redmond

Feb. 27–March 20

A boy signs on with a band of pirates and discovers that while adventure brings excitement, a different kind of treasure might be the most valuable. The lively score includes songs such as “Talk Like a Pirate,” “Soccer by the Rules” and “Pirates Dot Arrgh.” \$10; \$5 for ages 1–3 for all-ages Sunday shows. Ages 5 and older, except for all-ages shows. secondstoryrep.org



Black Violin
plays Tacoma,
Feb. 25

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-Gustave Courbet

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MARCH

The Rising Star Project: How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying

The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle

March 4–5

Just after the professional production of the hilarious, Pulitzer Prize-winning musical closes at 5th Avenue Theatre, a group of talented teens mounts its own production with help from mentors from the 5th. \$15–\$25. **Rated PG-13; see online parental guidelines.** 5thavenue.org/show/the-rising-star-project

Tacoma Symphony Orchestra's Mini Maestros Series

Schneebeck Hall at the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma

March 6, April 17, May 22

TSO's family series is a monthly musical adventure, ranging from March's seafaring-themed musical voyage with a brass quintet to April's "Around the World in 50 Drums." \$7–\$10; **discounted packages available. Ages 2–8 with families.** tacomasymphony.org

Peter and the Wolf

Benaroya Hall, Seattle

March 12, 11 a.m.

Word is that Prokofiev composed his timeless symphonic tale of boy versus wolf in just a week in 1936. Since that time, the concert has introduced generations of children to the instruments of the orchestra; this Classical KING-FM Family Concert is vaudeville-inspired and promises to thoroughly engage and entertain. \$15–\$20. **Ages 12 and under.** seattlesymphony.org

Tigery and Heavens-to-Betsey Get Lost in the Salad Bar

Seattle Public Theater

March 12, noon

Originally produced as part of last year's sold-out *Saturday Morning Cartoon* series at Greenwood's Pocket Theater, this wacky play about two tigers who get lost in a salad bar is staged in a new, expanded version by Gillian Jorgensen and performed by SPT's youth troupe. **Free. Ages 5 and older.** seattlepublictheater.org



Footloose: Rhythmic Circus performs on Feb. 19 and March 19 in Tacoma and Bremerton

James and the Giant Peach

Tacoma Musical Playhouse

March 12–20

Roald Dahl's tale of adventure and teamwork gets life as a new musical set to imaginative song. In zany Dahl fashion, a boy named James slips his cruel aunties and meets up with some large bugs inside a giant peach. An epic adventure ensues. \$12–\$15. **Ages 4 and older.** tmp.org

My Heart Is the Drum

Village Theatre

March 17–April 24, Issaquah

April 26–May 22, Everett

A new musical about a young woman from a village in Ghana who heads for the big city to pursue her dreams is a celebration of the human spirit, with a pulsing, engaging score inspired by the rhythms of Africa. \$32–\$68. **Ages 12 and older, but check website for guidelines on presentation of mature themes.** villagetheatre.org



Madeline at Bellevue Youth Theatre

Madeline

Bellevue Youth Theatre — Crossroads

March 18–26

The talented kids of Bellevue Youth Theatre produce the beloved story of the little girl, one of 12, who lived in a vine-covered boarding school in Paris. \$8–\$15. **All ages.** bellevuewa.gov

Seattle Men's Chorus — Everything Broadway

Renton Ikea Performing Arts Center, March 19
McCaw Hall, Seattle, April 2–3

The famed community chorus sings a showstopping concert of Broadway songs, one of the last concerts to be conducted by retiring artistic director Dennis Coleman, who led the group to become the world's largest gay chorus (he also directs the Seattle Women's Chorus). **Ages 7 and older.** \$10, Renton; \$15–\$73, Seattle. flyinghouse.org/smc

Little Orphan Annie, The Ballet

The Merlino Art Center, Tacoma

March 19–20

Tacoma City Ballet debuts a one-hour, family-oriented ballet version of the comic-strip-turned Broadway musical about a plucky orphan named Annie who searches for home and family. \$10. **All ages.** tacomacityballet.com >>

SPRING ARTS

continued from page 29



Boys will be paperboys:
Newsies at The Paramount

APRIL

Timber!

Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia, April 14, 7:30 p.m.
Admiral Theatre, Bremerton, April 17, 3 p.m.
Kirkland Performance Center, April 22–24
Hailing from a small town in Quebec, the circus troupe Cirque Alfonse performs a show that is a mash-up of thrilling acrobatics

and other circus stunts, folk music and small-town Québécois farming culture. \$15–\$55. All ages. washingtoncenter.org, admiraltheatre.org, kpcenter.org

Disney's Newsies

The Paramount Theatre, Seattle
April 26–May 1

This Tony Award-winning musical, starring a cast of young actors, a heart-pounding score and mesmerizing dance numbers, tells the ultimate underdog story: In 1899, New York City paperboys — including a young homeless boy — go on strike after publisher Joseph Pulitzer enforces new rules that make it harder for them to make a buck. Check website for prices. Ages 6 and older. stgprepresents.org

NFFTY

Various Seattle venues
April 28–May 1

Cofounded by a graduate of Ballard High School's acclaimed digital filmmaking program, NFFTY (National Film Festival for Talented Youth) is the world's largest film festival for emerging directors ages 24 and younger. Not all films are for all ages, but you'll find plenty of super-creative films to inspire your young creatives. Check website for prices. Recommended ages vary. nffty.org

Le Corsaire: A Pirate's Tale

Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle

March 20–26

PNB's annual production aimed at children is an 80-minute version of the Byron-based ballet about a band of pirates, a pompous pasha and a magical garden that comes to life. The show is staged by PNB's Doug Fullington, with music performed by the awesome Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestra. \$23–\$60. Ages 3 and older. pnb.org

Grupo Corpo

UW World Series, Seattle

March 24–26

The name Grupo Corpo roughly translates to "Group Body," and indeed, this internationally renowned dance company from Brazil is celebrated for its virtuosity and ability to fuse classical ballet with Latin dance rhythms, moving "in rippling, flickering, high-kicking unison" (*The Guardian*). \$35–\$53. Ages 10 and older. uwworldseries.org



Grupo Corpo at
UW World Series



Leapin' jugglers! Mud Bay Jugglers performs May 7

MAY

Mud Bay Jugglers

Edmonds Center for the Arts
May 7, 11 a.m.

Based in Olympia, this troupe started 35 years ago when the three members began to experiment with gravity together. A typical performance is a wild mash-up of theater, dance, physical comedy and juggling. \$10. All ages. edmondscenterforthearts.org

Secret Life of Bugs

Northwest Puppet Center, Seattle
May 7–15

A Woodland Park Zoo entomologist helped developed this science-tastic puppet show that spotlights the miniature world of insects through black light puppetry. Performed by Spyglass Theatre. \$9–\$11. All ages. nwpuppet.org

Billy Elliot

Village Theatre
May 12–July 3, Issaquah
July 8–31, Everett

In a northern England mining town, it's boxing for boys, not ballet. But when a young boy uncovers his talent for dance, he defies both his family and societal expectations to pursue his dream. This musical features a fantastic score by Elton John as well as electrifying dance numbers. Consult website for guidance on presentation of mature themes. \$44–\$72. Ages 12 and older. villagetheatre.org >>

shake, rock and roll – 4 cheap music series

NORTHWEST FOLKLIFE AT CROSSROADS. Every third Saturday of the month, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Bellevue's awesome Crossroads Market Stage hosts shows and dances from around the world. Learn subversive square dancing (Feb. 20), Irish set dancing (March 16), clogging (April 16) and more. nwfolklife.org/programs/crossroads-cultural-arts-series

TOWN HALL SEATTLE FAMILY CONCERTS. These monthly concerts are free for kids (only \$5

for adults) and showcase top-notch acts, from Tacoma family band Pig Snout!! on Feb. 27 to award-winning singer-songwriter Frances England on May 14. townhallseattle.org

SEATTLE SYMPHONY FIRST CONCERT SERIES. Bring youngsters ages 3-6 to Benaroya Hall's music education center, Soundbridge, for short, engaging concerts starring symphony musicians and their instrument of choice, including the violin (March

5), the French horn (April 23) and the flute (May 14). \$10; kids 2 and under free. seattlesymphony.org

KIDS ROCK SERIES. From Port Townsend's dynamic duo The Harmonica Pocket (March 12) to rocker-schoolteachers Recess Monkey (April 26), the beloved series at Seattle's Mount Baker Community Club provides a great reason to roll out of bed and rock out on a Saturday morning. \$5 individual, \$15 family ticket. All ages. kindiependent.com



C A M P S + A C T I V I T I E S

ParentMap

CAMP FAIRS

See pg 47

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SPRING ARTS

continued from page 31



Harriet the Spy

Youth Theatre Northwest, Mercer Island
May 13–29

It's an all-kid production of an adaptation of the beloved novel about young Harriet Welsch, a spy in training who keeps tabs on her classmates in her secret notebook — until it's discovered.

\$13–\$17. Ages 6 and older. youththeatre.org

A Year with Frog and Toad

Olympia Family Theater

May 13–June 5

You've read the timeless tales by Arnold Lobel to your kids over and over, now go see an excellent musical adaptation at Olympia Family Theater. The play, as in the books, spotlights themes of friendship, differences and what matters in life. \$13–\$19. All ages. olyft.org

Sci-fi at the Pops

Benaroya Hall, Seattle

May 20–22

Fans of *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter: The Sorcerer's Stone* (isn't that everyone?) will thrill to this Seattle Symphony concert of movie and TV classics including "Darth Vader's March" by John Williams and "The Batman Theme" by Danny Elfman. \$35 and up. Ages 4 and older. seattlesymphony.org

Art on the Fly

Locations in South Lake Union, Seattle

May 21, check website for hours

This free outdoor event, associated with the Seattle International Dance Festival, takes over South Lake Union for a day with wonderful, roving performances of dancers from around the world, plus food trucks and a family activity area.

All ages. seattleidf.org



JUNE

Skippyjon Jones

Green River College Performing Arts Building, Auburn

June 17–25

The antics of Skippyjon, a Siamese "kitty boy" with outsized ears, are brought to life in song in this Heavier Than Air production based on the popular book series by Judy Schachner. \$8–\$10. Ages 6 and older. heavierthanair.com

museum must-sees



THE ART OF THE BRICK AT PACIFIC SCIENCE CENTER. Bring your brick-crazy kiddos to this mind-boggling display of Lego art, which has been named one of CNN's top 10 "Global Must-See Exhibitions." May 28–Sept. 11. Check website for ticket prices. pacificsciencecenter.org

PAINTED JOURNEYS AT TACOMA

ART MUSEUM. TAM continues its series on Western art with this show of works by John Mix Stanley, a leading 19th-century painter who created a stunning visual record of the American West in the mid-1800s. Jan. 30–May 1. \$12–\$14; ages 5 and younger free, or \$35/family; free on third Thursdays. tacomaartmuseum.org

INSPIRING BEAUTY: 50 YEARS OF EBONY FASHION FAIR AT BELLEVUE ARTS MUSEUM.

Explore the intersection of fashion, culture and race at this exhibit about the Ebony Fashion Fair, which traveled to different cities from 1958 to 2009, showcasing designer fashion for African-American communities. May 20–Aug. 14. \$10–\$12; ages 5 and younger free; \$30/family. bellevuearts.org

WILD NEARBY AT THE BURKE MUSEUM.

During the National Parks Service's centennial, the Burke Museum celebrates North Cascades National Park with an immersive, multisensory exhibit on one of the most intact wildlands in the U.S. June 18–Nov. 27. \$7.50–\$10; ages 4 and younger free; free on first Thursdays. burkemuseum.org



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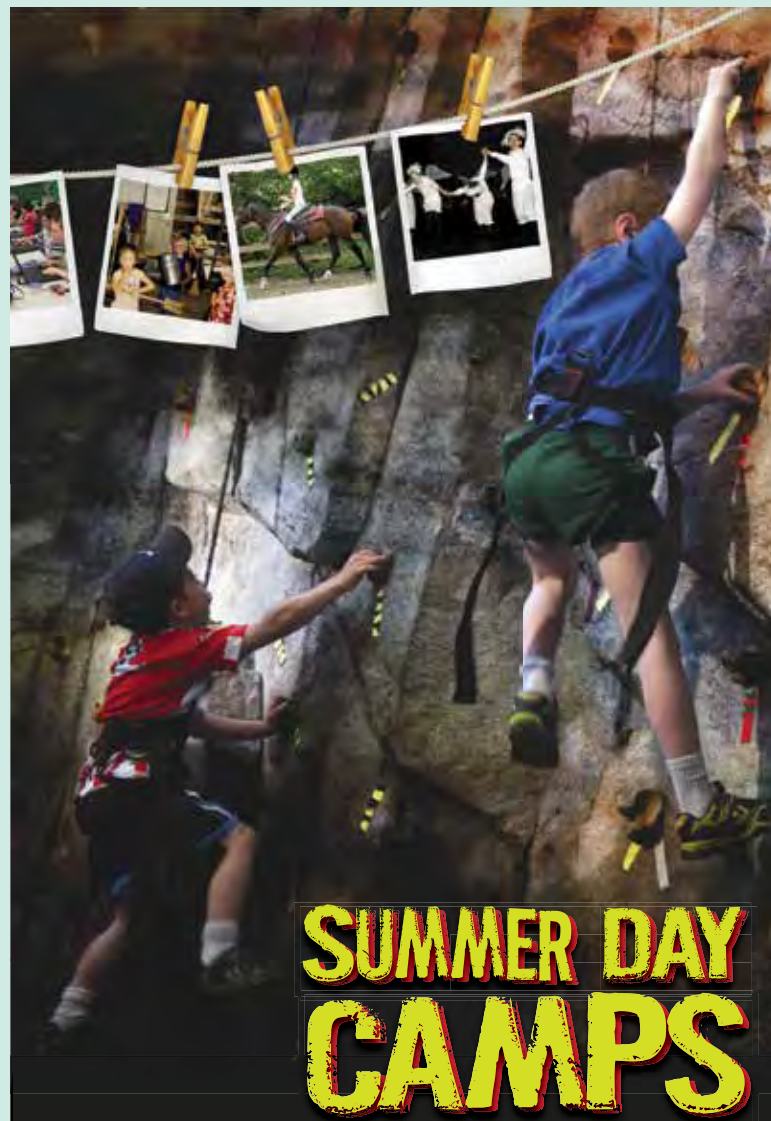
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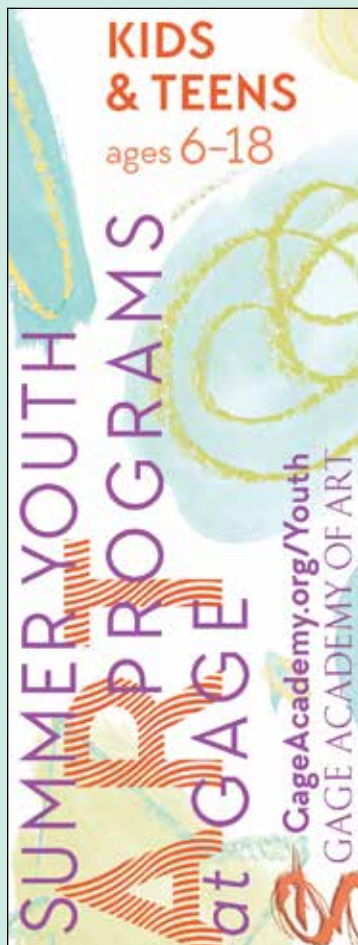
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Nobody has to tell these teens to practice

On the eve of their second album release, the three members of **Bleachbear** juggle music, school and life in a family band

By Michael Berry

"I always wanted to make a band, even when I was in elementary school. I remember I tried to recruit band members on the playground, but nobody really had any musical skills back then, so that was a flop," recalls Tigerlily Cooley, the lead singer and guitarist of Bleachbear.

Bleachbear is an indie-rock trio that was the youngest band to place in last year's Sound Off!, EMP Museum's annual competition for under-21 bands. Band members include 17-year-old Tigerlily, a senior at Ingraham High School; her 16-year-old sister, Annabella Bird, a sophomore at Roosevelt High School; and their 15-year-old cousin Emiko Gantt, a sophomore at Ingraham. The band, which was named Best Underage Band of 2014 by *Seattle Weekly*, placed fourth in Sound Off! and is set to release a much-anticipated second album in March.

The girls' exposure to music started early. "We grew up with my dad showing us old concert videos," Tigerlily remembers. "My mom would always get mad, because we'd be doing our homework and he'd say, 'No — this is more important! Come look at this old concert!'"

"I started taking guitar lessons in middle school," she continues. "I started more seriously writing songs when I learned how to play guitar, and that coincided with my sister taking drum lessons." When Bird's drum teacher suggested they play some of their songs together at the University District Street Fair in 2012, the sisters asked Emiko if she would sing harmony. "We were both really shy and didn't want to go up alone," Tigerlily says. That was Bleachbear's first show.

"After that, we started practicing together and getting serious, and Emiko started learning bass," she says.

The band began playing more shows, which allowed the girls not only to hone their skills, but



The three members of Bleachbear (from left) are Tigerlily Cooley, her sister, Bird, and their cousin Emiko Gantt

also to overcome their stage fright. Tigerlily bought an electric guitar and effects pedals, which brought about a change in the band's sound from acoustic folk to more straight-ahead rock.

Bleachbear released its debut album, *Lost Parade*, in April 2014 to enthusiastic reviews from

bleachbear's tips for aspiring bands

TAKE THE PLUNGE. "I think the hardest thing is getting started. You need to recognize that, whatever's holding you back — whether you're too nervous to go on stage, or that you don't think your songs are good enough — you just have to put that behind you and go for it," says Tigerlily Cooley.

PERFORM, PERFORM, PERFORM. "Just get [your songs] out there, because as long as you're playing, you're going to improve. If you spend all of your time sitting at home and don't actually go to play or try and release something, even if it's bad, then you're never going to progress."

CONNECT. Tigerlily recommends several organizations that help young musicians, including the **Rain City Rock Camp for Girls** (raincityrockcamp.org), which helps girls build self-esteem and foster self-expression through music; **Seattle Teen Music** (seattleteenmusic.com), which

finds performance opportunities for aspiring musicians between the ages of 9 and 25; **Fremont Abbey** (fremontabbey.org); which offers classes, lessons and other opportunities; and **School of Rock**, a national chain that offers music lessons and organizes student bands (schoolofrock.com).

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Aspiring Youth Summer Camp. A traditional day camp in various Seattle and Eastside locations, plus themed camps focusing on video production, theater and building and inventing. Aspiring Youth welcomes all campers who would benefit from small-group settings and social skills support, including those with Asperger's, learning disabilities or similar traits. aspiringyouth.net/summer_camps.php

Apex Summer Camp. Kids with autism spectrum diagnoses can attend camp along with their siblings and peers at this camp, a program of the UW Autism Center. Over the five-week camp session, campers engage in structured activities and recreation, while working to build confidence and social skills. depts.washington.edu/camp2013/Apex_Summer_Camp/Home.html

Camp Korey. Campers with serious medical conditions find carefree fun and games on a huge farm at Camp Korey at Carnation Farm. Medical personnel are on staff to support campers as they focus on activities like boating, horseback riding, arts and crafts and drama. Camp Korey's week-long camps target different types of medical needs. campkorey.org

Seattle Children's Playgarden. The Playgarden offers campers an oasis of nature, right in the city. Kids of all abilities get to dig around in the garden, meet chickens and rabbits, and climb in the tree fort. The founder of the Playgarden sought to create a safe, fun place for kids with special needs to just play. Siblings are welcome at the Playgarden's inclusive programs. childrensplaygarden.org

Outdoors for All. This aptly named nonprofit encourages youth of all abilities to dig into outdoor sports and recreation. Outdoors for All's day camps focus on sports like kayaking, rock climbing, cycling and swimming, plus offer field trips to local destinations. outdoorsforall.org

Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center. At Dunmire Stables in Redmond, Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center works its magic, with the help of four-legged equine friends. Through its therapeutic riding program, Little Bit strives to "improve the bodies, minds and spirits of children and adults with disabilities." Weekly summer day camps welcome all kids, with and without disabilities.

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Nobody has to tell these teens to practice

continued from page 35

publications including *Seattle Weekly*, *Eclectic Arts* and *IndieVerse*. The album's eight tracks juxtapose themes of teen love and heartbreak with a touch of grunge's darkness, all against a glittery folk-pop backdrop.

Tigerlily is head songwriter. She says she was influenced early on by grunge (the "Bleach" in Bleachbear is a nod to Nirvana's first album), and by the music of singer-songwriters such as Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson.

Working together isn't always easy, even though they're family. It "actually kind of makes it harder, because you're so honest with each other," says Tigerlily. "You have to learn how to get along, how to write songs together balancing each other's ideas, making sure no one's feelings get hurt."

A second key turning point for the band was applying — and earning the chance — to compete in last year's Sound Off! (see sidebar "Sound Off! turns 15").

As a result of placing in Sound Off!, Bleachbear has played high-profile gigs including a performance at EMP Museum's birthday party in 2015 and an appearance on KEXP-FM's *Music That Matters* podcast.

The band members continue to maintain other extracurricular commitments, from sports to serving on the board of youth music organizations. Balancing the demands

of a working band with schoolwork and extracurricular activities can be challenging, but having a supportive family helps.

Tigerlily manages the band's social media presence, and she and her mother work together to book shows and manage finances. How does she fit it all in? "I don't really watch Netflix and TV," she says. "If you cut out things like that, it's actually not that hard to manage, because you're not wasting your time. I'll come home and go straight to my homework, and then I'll have time for band practice."

The group doesn't have a fixed practice schedule, but when they have an upcoming show, they practice as much as three hours a day, four days a week.

Bleachbear has taken a break from shows to focus on recording its second album, *Cowboy Movie Star*, which, says Tigerlily, reflects the influence of bands like Radiohead and Best Coast.

Fans can look forward to shows promoting their new album in the near future. Looking ahead to summer, Tigerlily says she'd like to see the band play music festivals as well as shows in other cities in the Pacific Northwest. Check for updates at bleachbear.bandcamp.com. ■

Michael Berry teaches music classes at the University of Washington and is active as a freelance double bassist in the region.

sound off! turns 15

Sound Off!, an annual battle of the bands sponsored by EMP Museum for under-21 bands in the Pacific Northwest, turns 15 this year, a good time to appreciate its role in giving young bands a chance to perform, find an audience and shape their sound. In addition to Bleachbear, notable alumni include rapper **Sol**, **Kithkin** and **The Lonely Forest** (whose songs have appeared on the CW television network's show *The Vampire Diaries*).

Young bands apply to enter Sound Off! by submitting four tracks of original music, which are judged on composition/arrangement, creativity/originality and technical ability/musicianship. Bands that advance to the semifinals play a 30-minute set; finalists play a 40-minute set. (An audience favorite award is also given each year.)

Bring your young rockers to one of the semifinal rounds (held **Feb. 13, 20 and 27**) to see four bands perform in a thrilling head-to-head music competition. The winners advance to the finals, which take place on **March 5**. All performances are open to all ages and take place at EMP's Sky Church. Tickets are \$10-\$14 per show. Listen and watch the bands and buy tickets at empmuseum.org/soundoff.

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2-4

Preschool primer

How to find the perfect preschool for your child

By Kali Sakai and Ashly Moore Sheldon

It may seem like only yesterday that your baby took those first steps and yet, suddenly, it's time to think about preschool. With so many choices and types of preschools, it's easy to become overwhelmed and paralyzed by the pressure to pick the "right" one.

You may worry that your choice will have serious long-term impacts on your child's life. There are many factors to consider, from basic logistics, such as tuition cost and the length of the school day, to overarching concerns, such as your child's personality and which type of education would be the best fit. However, knowing the models of preschools out there and what distinguishes one from another will help simplify the process.

Most preschools are described as either child-directed, meaning that the children lead, and teachers simply guide the learning process; or teacher-directed, meaning the teacher structures the activities and tells the children what to do, explains Myriah Rosengarten, a nationally certified school psychologist.

Schools can also operate under a guiding philosophy of play-based or academic learning. Play-based programs are guided by the central belief that children learn best through play. Academic programs emphasize reading, math and science, and use structured, teacher-directed activities to promote foundational skills in these areas.

You might be looking for a specific kind of experience for your child or have the sense that your child will respond to certain approaches/environments better than others. Perhaps all the programs sound good. Some preschools offer a blend of styles, and many preschools label themselves more broadly as "play-based" or "academic."

The more questions you ask a school's representatives, the better you will understand how the curriculum works. Here's a guide to the major preschool models. (Also, check out part two of our preschool primer, "10 steps to finding the right preschool," and more preschool content at parentmap.com/preschool.)



Knowing the types of preschools out there and what distinguishes one from another will help simplify the process.

Preschool models and approaches

MONTESSORI

Montessori is a child-directed approach that originated with Italian pediatrician/psychiatrist Maria Montessori and emphasizes the development of the whole child. Classrooms are of mixed ages (usually from 2 and a half or 3 to 6 years old), which helps to foster peer learning. Children are encouraged to learn at their own pace, with the goal of establishing independence, discipline and self-esteem. Teachers carefully prepare the environment with open shelving and specialized educational materials, including many wooden materials, math materials, beads and practical life items that are accessible to the children, such as small brooms and zipper and lacing boards. In Montessori schools, children are given ample time to "work" individually at their own pace, and it's common to see children of all ages intensely focused on their chosen project at a tiny table or mat just for them.

STEM-BASED

STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, is a term often used in reference to science education. Based on research suggesting that it is important for students to be exposed to science at young ages, STEM-focused preschools seek to engage young children in scientific exploration by applying an inquiry-based approach to experiential activities, such as playing with building blocks. Children may be given materials and invited to "experiment." The teacher may introduce relevant challenges, such as building the tallest possible structure. Activities are followed by discussion, during which students are encouraged to share their questions, observations, designs and conclusions. STEM-based programs integrate science exploration into daily activities, such as gardening and outdoor play.

HIGHSCOPE

Highscope is a research-based curriculum that uses "active participatory learning" to help children build language and cognitive skills.

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2–4 Preschool primer

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Interactions between teacher and child are used to share control of the child's learning and support children's play. The classroom is designed for specific types of play and learning, and includes academic areas, such as writing and reading centers. The daily routine includes "play-do-review" (i.e., planning time, work time, recall time), which is a unique feature of the HighScope approach. HighScope also emphasizes monitoring a child's progress.

REGGIO EMILIA

Reggio Emilia is a child-directed approach that views children as active participants in the learning process (as opposed to empty vessels to be filled with facts). Originating in Italy, Reggio facilitates choice, problem solving, communication and relationships. The teacher's role is to be a co-constructor of knowledge by building on a child's ideas to help the child create new knowledge. The environment often emphasizes plant life, kitchens open to view, and photographs and detailed documentation of the children's work. Parents are a vital component of this approach, and principles can also be incorporated at home.

WALDORF

Waldorf education is based on the ideas of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy. Waldorf education emphasizes nurturing the whole child by engaging the five

senses in experiential, hands-on and artistic learning experiences. A teacher usually stays with the same group of children for several years. Free play with natural materials such as wood, leaves, shells, felt dolls and silk scarves is considered critical for fostering children's imagination, and group play is emphasized. Waldorf schools are known for their strong environmental and outdoor emphasis, and children are discouraged from playing with synthetic or electronic toys. Waldorf preschools emphasize creativity and imagination over academics.

OUTDOOR

The concept of outdoor preschool has been growing in popularity since emerging in the 1950s in Sweden and Denmark. There are at least a dozen outdoor preschool options in the Seattle area. These schools are generally child-directed, encouraging children to explore freely, follow their impulses and connect to the natural world. Students in an outdoor learning environment can expect a lot of hands-on, experiential learning. Such an approach is thought to promote imaginative play and creativity, as well as strength, balance and good health. There are a variety of options to consider in this area, from total outdoor immersion to a partial exposure to outdoor environment. To learn more, read about outdoor preschool and specific programs at parentmap.com/outdoorpreschools.

LANGUAGE IMMERSION

As the term indicates, a language-immersion preschool is conducted partly or entirely in a foreign language. Because children are more adept at learning foreign languages at this age, the teacher will speak in the foreign language and rarely translate into English. (But if your child is not ready for full immersion, some programs do expose students to other languages through song, stories and other activities among their regular daily activities.)

CO-OP PRESCHOOLS

Some parents opt to join a parent-run cooperative preschool or start one of their own. In these schools, parents take turns volunteering as teachers and caregivers. All of the members meet, usually monthly, and agree on what activities the children will pursue. Sometimes a professional teacher is hired. If the program is offered through a college, there will be a parent education component. The association with the college makes it possible for the co-op to be insured and for the overall cost to be relatively low. However, such a venture does take a large commitment of time and energy on the parents' part. Co-op preschools might make use of a particular curriculum or be more free-form.

INCLUSIVE

In an inclusive preschool setting, children who are developing typically learn side by side with children who have developmental delays or

C A M P S + A C T I V I T I E S

learning disabilities. Research indicates that children with special needs are capable of greater progress in an inclusive environment, and that typically developing students also benefit. Ilene Schwartz, Ph.D., director of the University of Washington's Experimental Education Unit, says: "Inclusion is a celebration of diversity put into action. All children and adults who

participate in inclusive settings benefit as they work together, play together and develop a diverse community of learners." ■

Kali Sakai is a Seattle-based freelance writer and mother of two children.


Ashly Moore Sheldon is a Seattle-based writer and editor. She lives with her husband and two surly teenage children.

preschool resources

For more information about specific models and approaches, check out:

- **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):** a voluntary accreditation system that has set professional standards for early childhood education programs. The agency accredits day care and preschool programs. naeyc.org
- **American Montessori Society:** amshq.org
- **Association Montessori Internationale:** ami-global.org
- **Montessori Foundation:** montessori.org
- **STEM education in preschools:** washingtonstem.org/Our-Impact/Stem-in-Action/Seattle-Public-Schools#.VowiafkrLBR
- **North American Reggio Emilia Alliance:** reggioalliance.org
- **Association of Waldorf School in North America:** waldorfeducation.org
- **"Into the woods: Outdoor and nature-based preschools in Seattle, the Eastside and Tacoma":** parentmap.com/outdoorpreschools
- **HighScope:** highscope.org
- **Inclusive education at Head Start:** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching>
- **How to Choose the Best Preschool for Your Child:** *The Ultimate Guide for Finding, Getting Into, and Preparing for Nursery School* by Jenifer Wana

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See pg 47



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Far-flung films

How to start a foreign-movie habit with your kids

By Natalie Singer-Velush

Every week, I sit down with my kids for family movie night. The tradition has been going for eight years or so and a long time ago, my husband and I realized we couldn't stomach the kinds of, er, crappy kid programming that our daughters sometimes like to watch when they have control of the remote. Looking for variety, I realized that we could bust right past Disney and Pixar into, quite literally, a whole world of exciting film choices. Our daughters could still barely read when we tried movies with subtitles. They've now watched stories from more than 20 countries — animated films, dramas, documentaries, Bollywood musicals.

Foreign films have so many benefits: They can help us raise globally minded kids, promote a culture of tolerance and openness, and help children realize that trying new things can result in really interesting outcomes.

Some things to know as you explore global flicks: Many will be in a foreign language; some will have subtitles; and some popular films that were originally made in a foreign language have later been remade with English dubbing. Other cultures have different ideas of what's appropriate for different ages; check resources such as Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org) and IMDb (imdb.com) to read up on films first. Most films have trailers that you can find on YouTube — a great way to get reluctant kids hooked. In our house, we have a rule that the parents pick the film for family movie night, so there's not really any bickering or debating. Sometimes it's fun to match dinner to the movie: Eat sushi with anime, for instance — you get the idea.

Here are some of my family's favorite international films for a range of ages.

The Red Balloon (1956, FRANCE) 5 AND OLDER

This classic and imaginative film about a red balloon that befriends a French boy is delightful and will keep you thinking long after the closing credits. The film is told entirely through visuals



with no dialogue. (There is some mild bullying to be aware of.) Younger children will enjoy tracking the shiny balloon. With older children, you can initiate a discussion later about what lessons they think the film holds. *The Red Balloon* is a refreshing departure from the visual overload found in modern movies.

My Neighbor Totoro (1988, JAPAN; ENGLISH LANGUAGE) 5 AND OLDER

If you are just starting to explore the children's movie canon and you aren't already familiar with anime (Japanese animation), you might be asking: Why are people so crazy for Miyazaki movies? It's because they are incredible, and each one is like entering a new and secret world with your children. Filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki, a partner in an anime studio called Studio Ghibli (onlineghibli.com/films.php), is known as the Walt Disney of Japan and enjoys more popularity outside of Japan than any other Japanese director. Miyazaki's films are the best entry point for anime, and *Totoro*, is a great introduction. (Ghibli films target a range of maturity levels, from preschoolers to older tween viewers.) *Totoro* is about two girls (voice in the

English version by Dakota and Elle Fanning) who have adventures with forest spirits who live near their mother's hospital. Tip: If you've seen *Totoro*, try *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *The Secret World of Arrietty*, which is based on *The Borrowers* books by Mary Norton.

Dancing in Jaffa (2013, USA; ENGLISH, ARABIC, HEBREW LANGUAGE) 7 AND OLDER

This documentary by Hilla Medalia follows Pierre Dulaine, a teacher and former champion ballroom dancer whose nonprofit Dancing Classrooms is behind the events of the 2005 documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom*, to Israel, where he tries to help 10- and 11-year-old Jewish and Palestinian Israelis find common ground. The film paves the way not only for kid-size discussions about global politics and multiculturalism, but also for those delicate talks about what makes boys and girls so different (not much at all, as the film gently reveals). Mostly, you'll love watching hesitant schoolkids become brave ballroom artists.

The Cave of the Yellow Dog (2005, GERMANY AND MONGOLIA; SUBTITLES) 7 AND OLDER

This gorgeous film will draw your family in with its cinematography of the Mongolian countryside and insight into a life that is certainly different than the one your kids are living. Nansal, a young Mongolian girl, is in charge of herding her family's sheep by herself in the mountains. When she finds a dog who steals her heart, she must decide whether to obey her father or follow her desires. *The Cave of the Yellow Dog* will make American parents rethink their helicopter tendencies, and your kids will watch wide-eyed as children of their age experience a different level of independence.

Rabbit-proof Fence (2002, AUSTRALIA; ENGLISH AND ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE) 9 AND OLDER

Loosely based on a true story, this movie tells how three mixed-race Aboriginal girls run away from the Moore River Native Settlement, north

of Perth, Western Australia, to return to their aboriginal families, after being placed there by the government in 1931. The girls must walk for nine weeks along 1,500 miles of fence to find their way home while being tracked by officials. There are a couple of hard scenes, including one in which the children are forcibly torn away from their mother. But older kids will learn a lot about internment, racism and the Stolen Generations.

Canela (2012, MEXICO; SUBTITLES) 9 AND OLDER

After Maria's mom dies, her grandmother becomes very sad and doesn't want to cook with Maria anymore. After a new cook is hired at the grandmother's restaurant, Maria, helped by occasional visits from the spirit of her mother, must convince her grandma to cook once again. The lesson: You have to keep going even when bad things happen.

Foreign Letters (2012, USA; VIETNAMESE AND HEBREW LANGUAGE WITH SUBTITLES) 9 AND OLDER

A girl-power story that focuses on friendship, *Foreign Letters* tells the story of two sixth-grade girls who come together over the immigrant experience. Ellie is a lonely immigrant from Israel who befriends Thuy, a Vietnamese refugee. This film will help your kids see American culture through new eyes and encourage them to befriend people who need it. ■

a few more picks

Kirikou and the Sorceress

5 and older

This sweet French-language folktale (also available dubbed in English) features a heroic African toddler on an epic journey.

Ernest and Celestine

5 and older

A sweet French animated film dubbed in English, this tells the unlikely tale of friendship between a mouse and a bear.

Like Stars on Earth

7 and older

Introduce the kids to the fun of Bollywood with this story about an 8-year-old boy labeled as a troublemaker who just needs to find someone who understands him to turn things around.

The Secret of Kells

9 and older

Intense, artistic and dark, this magical animated Irish folktale is weird, wonderful and haunting enough to spook younger or sensitive kids.

A Cat in Paris

9 and older

This clever French animated drama is a cops-and-robbers film best suited to older elementary kids due to some violence.

The Illusionist (the 2010 animation; there are other films by this name)

10 and older

This nearly wordless film, riddled with magic and mystery, is a French-Scottish drama set in 1959 about a down-on-his-luck illusionist called Tatischeff.

Whale Rider

10 and older

Pai, an 11-year-old girl in one of New Zealand's patriarchal Maori tribes, yearns to take on a leadership role. But her grandfather is bound by tradition to pick a male leader.



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11–14

Period proud

New apps, products and awareness help girls feel good about old 'Aunt Flo'

By Nancy Schatz Alton

Not so long ago, the dreaded arrival of menstruation in a girl's life would have been embarrassing, awkward, even shameful. To this day, I don't don polka-dotted clothes, thanks to 1970s-era pad commercials sprinkled with joyful women wearing polka dot dresses. I'd ask the adults in my realm about those pads and be told we'd "discuss it later."

Thirty-plus years later, I'm the one giving public service announcements on the female body to my daughters during their school commute. A slew of classes for parents and kids, new apps and products, and an ever-evolving culture of girl empowerment have made me wonder:

Are periods finally cool?

I asked sex- and body-education experts for the scoop on just how hip Aunt Flo has become, and how parents can ease their daughters' transitions into body-empowered young women.

Gleaned from my research, here's a primer on tools that are helping tweens and teens better understand their bodies, along with tips on how to help prepare girls for menstruation.

New tech tools

Educators agree that the biggest change for girls and young women today is public knowledge around periods. Still, don't expect girls to be happy about menstruation.

"Women and girls have periods! It's normal and natural. Even though most girls are still uncomfortably shy and embarrassed, the world is much more open," says Amy Lang, M.A., a Seattle-area sexual health educator. Lang offers classes for parents to learn how to talk about health topics, including menstruation. But, she says, "Having your period is still a pain. It's a huge life change, and there's often some sadness around changing from a kid body into a grown-up body. Having to manage a period for the rest of their lives is a taste of adulthood."

My 14-year-old daughter, Caroline, wishes



her period would go away forever, but time has eased her discomfort. "My period is always there, so I had no choice but to get used to it," she says. Her oldest friend, Cyanna, says the latest technology has helped her not to mind her monthly visitor anymore. She started using a period tracker called **Clue** (helloclue.com) after her mom suggested it.

"I was very against it at first, because I didn't like the idea of tracking my period, and it was embarrassing. But it's actually pretty great," Cyanna tells me. "You put in when you get your period and how heavy the flow is, and it maps out when they think you'll get your period. It's usually pretty accurate and informative, and you can be prepared. It tells you when you're going to have PMS; it's cool."

We're past the days of a conspicuously marked wall calendar. Consumers can choose from more than 200 different period-tracking apps, which help girls and adult women understand their bodies and cycles better. **Period Tracker** (by GP International) and **Period Calendar/Tracker** (by

"I was very against it at first, because I didn't like the idea of tracking my period, and it was embarrassing. But it's actually pretty great."

Abishkking) have been downloaded more than 10 million times from the Android store. Ida Tin, the founder of Clue, says the app's design — sleek and not pink or flowery — sets it apart. "I wondered how it could be that we managed to walk on the moon, but that most women still don't know which days they can or can't get pregnant," Tin says. "I was convinced many other women would find an app like Clue not only very useful but also very empowering."

Some educators believe tracking your child's period with an app on your own phone is a brilliant idea. Mind you, you don't need to tell your daughter you're tracking her period, Lang adds. "The teen brain is already in crazy-pants mode, and girls have these hormones going on, too. As a parent, you can know that this is the day you don't criticize their hair, clothes or messy room. And moms who track their [own] period can say, 'This is my magical week,' and everyone knows to stay away." See that? You can practically make it a family affair.

Changing the story

Of course, period trackers are just one innovative tool for a cycle that's been with humans forever. In the greater Seattle area, often the first step in educating your tween daughters is taking **For Girls Only**, recommended for 10- to 12-year-old girls who are accompanied by a parent or trusted adult. This two-evening, two-part class presents the issues most on the minds of preteens as they begin adolescence.

The average age for a girl in the U.S. to have her first period is 12 and a half. In the For Girls Only class, now in its 28th year, girls learn this fact and many, many others while sitting next to a person who wants this experience to go well for them, says Julie Metzger, R.N., M.N., founder of **Great**

Conversations, which offers many classes and presentations to families, teens and professionals on topics surrounding adolescence.

“In any single classroom I teach, there are adult women who feel an enormous amount of shame, and they are there to change the story for themselves and their girls. And there are women who can’t understand why their daughter might hate their periods,” Metzger says. “My goal is to transform viewpoints so everyone sees periods as natural, logistical monthly events that are doable and interesting and just part of being a human being.”

Every parent has a different comfort level around talking about menstruation. Yet if your tween is already plugged into social media, you may have missed the window to teach her. And as with any critical information about health and

growing up, you want to try to get there first. “It’s easier to tolerate an eye roll than having them not be prepared and coming home after using toilet paper as a makeshift first pad,” says Cora Breuner, M.D., MPH, a doctor specializing in adolescent health at Seattle Children’s Hospital.

Part of the discussion is talking about the emotions that result from premenstrual syndrome (PMS). “There’s both truth and myth in PMS. Our hormones can be like a volume dial to our emotions. When you feel that volume get louder, just becoming aware of that makes you more in tune with yourself,” Metzger says. “As educators and parents, we have a responsibility to help girls gain emotional intelligence. Emotional regulation is a task, and we get to facilitate and steward that in our daughters.”

And while talking about that time of the month may never feel easy for some caregivers, the tweens and teens in our life guarantee remarkable conversations. That social-media-savvy girl will give you a critical read of the commercial First Moon Party, which shows a girl who fakes getting her first period because she can’t wait. The teen I’ve babysat since birth showed me poet Dominique Christina reading “The Period Poem.” After one viewing (alert: this might be too racy for your child), I wanted to buy a dress covered in polka dots that reminds me of pads. I’ll wear it while reciting my own Red Roof Inn poem for YouTube. ■

Nancy Schatz Alton is a Seattle-area author. Find her blog at withinthewords.com.

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INQUISITV **OKCTS9**

Jennifer Spatz

By Alayne Sulkin • Photograph by Will Austin

Jennifer Spatz has lived abroad in six countries and traveled the world. As founder of **Global Family Travels**, a tour company with a mission to “learn, serve and immerse,” Spatz is changing the lives of children and adults by creating family travel opportunities that build character while also building bridges between people and different cultures worldwide. globalfamilytravels.com

What was the impetus for you to launch Global Family Travels?

Years ago, I was taking an online photography course when my kids were little and was looking at some of the wonderful trips offered to learn photography while you travel. Unfortunately, none of them offered the option to take your kids with you. I saw this opportunity for families to travel together and do something meaningful and bond as a family in an immersive experience.

Were you influenced by the fact that service learning has become a part of our kids' core curriculum?

We kept meeting parents who were envious of their kids' service experiences and who were saying, “Hey, I want to go on this trip!” Traveling as a family for adventure, service learning and fun strengthens family bonds. Repeatedly, we see how these excursions instill values that are a challenge to teach your child on a day-to-day basis. Having an experience of going to do a home stay or volunteer with a local community in Nicaragua or India opens your hearts together.

Where was your first adventure?

One of first trips was to Ladakh, India, where we brought used digital cameras to the children of the Siddhartha School Project and taught them how to use the cameras. While there, we also filled 30 bags of garbage in their village. Today, we have several photography trips to China and Ecuador, and our Nicaragua Transformative Travel Plus (TTP) has a digital storytelling component to it.

Please give us a glimpse into a personal experience that has been life-changing for a family, or one that inspires you to keep doing what you are doing.

I have had families tell me how these trips have built character and values for their kids that they never imagined. One dad, in particular, went with his children to Nicaragua, and they actually built a soccer field together in the local community. We had a soccer coach lead the trip, thinking that his expertise and his passion for the project would beautifully translate to both his family and the community. It just created a great experience to share mornings and evenings together at quite a different pace and with a very different focus than when they are all at home in the busy rush of their separate lives. Simply being together in remote locations, disconnected [from technology], is an outstanding shared experience. Hearing from a parent that they witnessed



their children learning empathy skills that seem to be so hard to teach in the classroom in the 21st century inspires me.

How do you vet these types of family service and adventure trips in order to best figure out what communities around the world to visit?

We partner with in-country tour operators who focus on sustainable tourism. We are extremely mindful about the partners we select and ensure they are members of the Family Travel Association. Through that, we make connections in different countries that assist with the logistics and the home stay arrangements. That is one of the trickier and more complicated aspects of what we do. Through the NGOs or schools that are located in the communities, we have been really lucky to partner with some nonprofit organizations that are able to vet the home stay arrangements, and it's worked out beautifully. Not every trip has a home stay aspect, so sometimes we just have an immersive experience like picking crops, building or making a meal together.

How does your work intersect with your family life?

In Ladakh, India, in the Himalayas, we work with a school that actually was created to basically preserve the Tibetan culture. As a part of this trip, you can sponsor a child to go to school for \$360 per year. Our family has been sponsoring a boy named Stanson Safall in Ladakh, and I can't wait for my kids to meet him. My son is the same age, and they've been able to communicate by sending letters. I've met him twice, but in a couple of years, we'll go meet him as a family. These kids live in remote villages, and not all of them can go to school beyond an early age. Some of the kids that were at this school are studying now in the U.S. They all want to go back home and give back to their communities with their new learned skills.

We are trying to create more global citizenry. When you travel abroad, you must be mindful of bringing back what you learned and teaching your own community. Sometimes it takes a transformative trip to realize what we have in this world and what others don't. Yet we are all the same, you know, we all want the same thing: to be loved, respected and understood. ■



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