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to help kids find their passion?



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DECEMBER 2014

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annual health issue

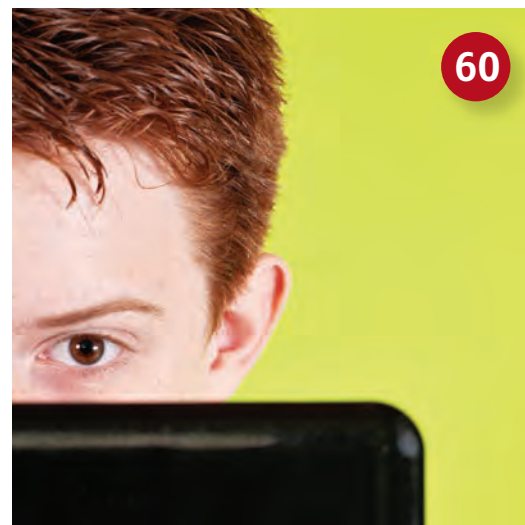
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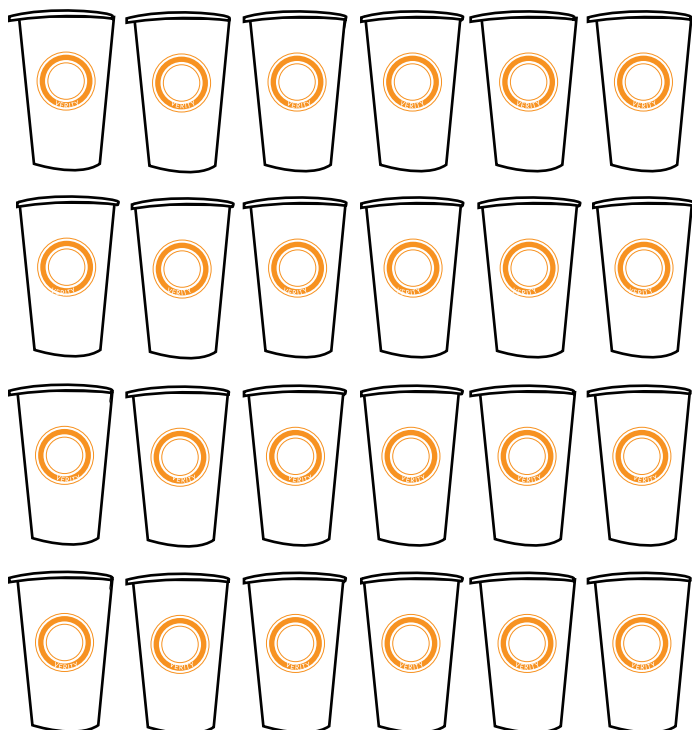


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dear reader

Celebrate passion and family

This issue holds many gifts, far beyond “Lights, action, carols” (p. 34), which offers you 70-plus performing arts adventures to amp up your family’s holiday. “Retro toys rock” (p. 14) has me whistling happy holiday tunes. If your kids are still small, you’ll be planning your shopping list; if they are older, you can reminisce about little munchkins pulling walk-a-long snail toys, cuddling a Corolle baby doll or building with Lincoln Logs.

I can’t wait for winter break to see my adult children! Our family seems extra eager this year to celebrate the holiday season together. I’m not sure if our emotions are more intense than usual, or if it’s because, for the first time in years, we’ve been living on opposite coasts. On Sept. 11, our biggest three departed for New York City, having each landed an exciting professional opportunity and — a parent’s dream — a good paycheck! The distance, though, has left us all yearning for a little more face time.

I think of the bumpy journey each child traversed to find their passion. Their success and happiness is a direct result of the fact that they followed their bliss (“Follow bliss,” p. 27). I could not have predicted when my children were young that today they would be joyfully doing the work each has chosen.

I believe, reflecting back, that I was not looking or listening closely enough in the early years of parenting. I had my

own expectations that might have muffled my kids’ interests a little bit. Born a fashionista, my daughter Arielle was passionate about style from the moment her grandpa began spoiling her with extravagant baby outfits. At 8 years old, she had boxes filled with cut-out Oscar de la Renta dress ads and shots of Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. Our first girl radiated her own true passion when she dreamed up outrageous ensembles for a preschool friend’s soiree, despite being burdened with parents who both prefer flannel shirts, flip-flops and worn jeans.

Putting self-propelled passions aside, we still have ambitions for our children and will always lean in as parents: The 21st century is here, and my dance-fanatic youngest will (hesitantly) join the world of girls who code, like it or not! Inspired by my chat with Lori Forte Harnick, a leader in Microsoft’s YouthSpark initiative (a global effort to create opportunities for 300 million youths in 100 countries), I could no longer allow my daughter to turn away from essential knowledge required in today’s world. So along with the world of arts, I’ll be pushing technology learning, too.

Wishing you, yours and our world peace this holiday season!



Alayne and Lori Forte Harnick

Alayne

Healthy Kids Cook



**watch
the video**

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code below

Potatoes are healthier than you think when they haven't been turned into French fries! Watch PCC Chef Jackie Freeman make baked taquitos with her happy helpers 5-year-old Sunshine and 7-year-old Apollo.



PCC Kids Cook

Getting children involved in the kitchen at an early age creates a basis for healthy habits and provides practical life skill development and an appreciation for the fun of food preparation. Our PCC Cooks catalog offers classes for kids age 2 to 15 that are hands-on and designed to get them engaged and excited to taste and prepare new foods. The new catalog opens for registration on December 2, with classes beginning in early January. Welcome the new year with entertaining, educational kitchen activities! Find the complete class schedule at PccCooks.com

'Tater Taquitos

MAKES ABOUT 12 TAQUITOS

Cooking oil spray

1 pound Yukon Gold or other small potatoes, scrubbed and cubed

3 tablespoons sour cream

½ cup shredded Mexican blend or Monterey Jack cheese

⅓ teaspoon ground cumin

Salt and pepper, to taste

¼ cup chopped green onions

12 (6-inch) corn tortillas

Toothpicks

Guacamole and salsa, for serving (optional)

Preheat oven to 375° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and spray with cooking oil.

Place potatoes in a saucepot with salted water to cover. Bring to a boil and cook until tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Drain.

Combine potatoes, sour cream, cheese, cumin, salt and pepper. Thoroughly mash; fold in green onions.

Wrap tortillas with a damp towel and warm until pliable, in the oven for 3 minutes or a microwave for 30 seconds.

Place about 2 tablespoons potato mixture in the center of a tortilla, forming a thin line down the center. Roll up and place seam-side down on the prepared baking sheet; secure with toothpicks. Repeat with remaining tortillas and filling.

Spray with cooking oil and bake until crisp and golden, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool slightly before serving with guacamole and salsa.

RECIPE BY JACKIE FREEMAN, PCC CHEF

EACH TAQUITO: 130 cal, 3g fat (1g sat), 5mg chol, 95mg sodium, 21g carb, 2g fiber, 0g sugars, 3g protein



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parentmap.com/rain-parks



Comfort food

'Tis the season for warm, one-pot meals and indulgent celebrations. parentmap.com/food is your stop this month for allergy-friendly holiday desserts, crockpot creations, a new stock of soup and stew recipes, lunchbox brilliance, Christmas morning breakfasts and so much more.

Skating, skiing and snowshoeing 101

Just in time for plummeting temps and first white dump of the season, we have your family's guides to the piles of winter sports and activities you can explore with your kids, from tips on how to get started downhill skiing or snowboarding to ice skating rink locations and secret snowshoe trails.

parentmap.com/skating;

parentmap.com/snowshoeing;

parentmap.com/skiing



One point for the elf

Want to play that silly, fun holiday trickster game, Elf on the Shelf, but not quite sure how to pull the wool over your savvy kiddos' eyes? Dial up our impish holiday exclusive for 20 spots to stash your elf and keep that Christmas magic alive. parentmap.com/elfontheshelf

Say aaahhhh!

Is that Pacific Northwest winter chill already rattling your bones? We have the antidote: A geo-thermal-powered roundup of cozy, mineral-rich hot springs within splashing distance. Read our recs, then pack up the Subaru and head out for your family soak!

parentmap.com/hotsprings



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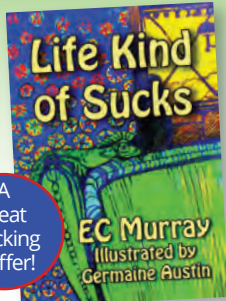
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Photo by Mark Kibuka

Real life with boys

'Recsposition' is my new favorite word

By Stephanie Olson



I live in a house with all males. Well, scratch that. We got a female hamster in August, and she is a lovely little thing, but she doesn't exactly stay up late with me chatting about our problems. So, for all intents and purposes, I live in a house with all males.

It has come to my attention over the last 14 years of living with one or more of these creatures that men and women are sometimes different. There is nothing about this that should shock me. Of course we're different! I should, at this point, also make clear that I am sometimes slow. Subtleties are often lost on me. So I was very proud of the fact that I was (with help) able to understand a new boy thing recently.

My parents have a storied history of taking me out to a restaurant for lunch or dinner when big things were to be discussed. Worried about

'Recsposition': the scene of exposition in a romantic comedy in which the male lead discusses the status of his relationship while playing sports.

my lean toward new punk-rock friends in high school? Dinner date with mom at Country Kitchen! Dad concerned about my boyfriend in college? A sudden invitation to lunch at Wendy's! I believe that it was a way to open me up in a new setting. My mom and dad have mentioned a few times that placing me in public was a way to keep a lid on my fiery temper and propensity toward

yelling. Tomato, tomahto. Either way, I have come to conflate problems and talking about your feelings with eating one on one in a restaurant.

Fast forward. As our older son gets bigger and has more of the typical preteen feelings and issues, I have been encouraging my husband to take him out to dinner. "Why don't you guys go out for pizza together and talk?" I ask. "Maybe" was his usual response. But nothing ever happened. It was becoming a source of frustration for me.

First of all, I couldn't fathom not wanting to go out to eat. If someone even hinted to me that I should take someone out for dinner, the sound of my purse flying and the door slamming would be the only response as I headed out. That is one subtlety I would pick up on. Second, I didn't understand why he didn't want to talk to our son. I'd mutter something about men being noncommunicative cavemen as I shuffled off. To blog. About my feelings.

But one day my husband, perhaps finally hearing my grunts of frustration, stopped to "mansplain" it to me. "I'd rather take Emmett out biking or go play ball with him. That's when we really talk. That's when we open up." *Oh!* A visual montage of all the times they ran out the door to play or bike or hike together started playing through my mind. *OK, then. I get it now,* I thought.

So I decided to try it myself. Last spring, Emmett and I began to walk to school together whenever the weather was bearable. And I'll be damned if that man of mine is not a genius! Most of what Emmett talked about was football. OK, fine. No real breakthroughs there. But, he also sprinkled in real feelings, thoughts and concerns. On his own!

Without me even mentioning it!
Brilliant.

Recently, I saw a video on Slate that defines this behavior and gives a fantastic (and pretty hilarious) history of it in American romantic comedies. They have dubbed it “recsposition”: the scene of exposition in a romantic comedy in which the male lead discusses the status of his relationship while playing sports. (slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2014/09/23/recsposition_supercut_the_romantic_comedy_trope_where_men_express_their.html)

For me, it was one of those rare moments when we find something that puts a stamp on a belief we held but hadn't realized was universal, something we didn't have a word to describe. So, now I have a word for it. My husband and I can use shorthand in the future. “Honey, I'm out for a little recsposition with the boy,” he could say. I will nod and understand. I will not grunt or mutter about cavemen.

Boys are different. Thank goodness I slowly catch on. ■

Stephanie Olson is a mother of two young boys. She lives and writes in Seattle, dreams of Paris and firmly believes there is nothing in life that a little Tater Tot hot dish couldn't fix. Read more of Olson's work at her blog, Ma Swell Vie (maswellvie.com).



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Teens and suicide

Facts and myths: Why starting the conversation is critical

By Nancy Schatz Alton

Suicide ideation — thoughts about or a pre-occupation with suicide — isn't just a term to me; I believed my life was worthless at age 17. It took me hours to fall asleep, and I saw no reason to leave the warmth of my bed and attend school. My parents brought me to a counselor, whom I easily fooled into believing I was fine. The next counselor managed to diagnose clinical depression. With therapy and medication, the thoughts of suicide abated, and I began building a mental health toolbox that I continue to use every single day.

As a parent now, my quest to be well versed in youth suicide prevention stems from the knowledge that mental health fluctuates for people all the time. Staying alert to distress signals from our children and other teens we know is vital work. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for people ages 10–24, and there are more than 5,400 suicide attempts by students in grades 7–12 every single day in the United States.

Unfortunately, in Washington state, the suicide rate is 14 percent higher than our country's national average. A recent survey of our state's middle and high schools reports that 1 in 10 students "had made a suicide attempt" in the last year while 1 in 5 students "had seriously thought about it."

Focus on prevention

Parents can learn the warning signs, how to talk about mental health and about the suicide prevention resources within our community. "It is vital to remember: Most suicides are preventable," writes Jennifer Stuber, Ph.D., cofounder and faculty director at Forefront: Innovations in Suicide Prevention at the University of Washington, in a recent *Seattle Times* editorial.

While risk factors include issues around relationships, academic pressure, anxiety and family survival issues, being different is also a significant factor, says Sue Eastgard, MSW, cofounder and director of training at Forefront (intheforefront.org). This includes teens who have physical health issues and teens who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Some minority groups such as Native



There are more than 5,400 suicide attempts by students in grades 7–12 every single day in the United States.

Americans are high-risk, but suicide ideation cuts across all populations. Upper-middle-class tweens and teens are under lots of pressure and are at risk, too, says Vicki Wagner, executive director of the Youth Suicide Prevention Program (yspp.org).

"Warning signs are often really subtle: a mood change, a young person who really excelled and now their grades are slipping. Isolation is a real warning sign; someone who is outgoing with family and now doesn't want to interact. Multiple signs coupled together elevates the risk," says Wagner. Something seemingly innocuous, like taking a favorite baseball shirt and giving it away, could raise parental alarm bells when paired with other signs, she warns.

Eastgard notes that although teens are notorious for moodiness, erring on the side of caution and investigating is a good idea. Gather information, starting at school and including venues your teenager frequents, from a faith community to a sports environment. If others who interact with your child are seeing worrisome behavior, too, Eastgard recommends seeking counseling for your child.

Start the conversation

Two of the biggest misconceptions regarding suicide are that talking about depression increases depression, and that saying the word "suicide" out loud plants the idea of suicide in a person's brain. "Sit down with your child. It's starting up a conversation where you are not confronting them, instead talking in an open, kind way. As you get into the conversation, ask, 'Are you thinking about suicide?' Suicide is a response to just not knowing how to deal with something going on in their life. You're trying to confront that head on," Wagner says.

She notes that a struggling child feels relief once he says it out loud, and once someone says they care. "With depression and suicide ideation, you

Teens and suicide

continued from page 11

shut yourself off from lots of people, so it's a relief to get some help."

Invite your child to counseling in a fairly forceful way, Eastgard says. "Say, 'We will go as a family. It's the family having the problem; it's not your problem. We are all having trouble figuring out how to get through these years and this family needs some help learning how to communicate better. You are going to see this counselor three times, and if you don't like it after that, we will try another counselor three times,'" she says.

When your teenager is in a hard place, it helps to find a therapist willing to converse with the parents about what's going on (which means a signed release from the patient). "The parents' tool kit comes not from a checklist on a website, but from a conversation between the parents, the therapist and the child sitting in same room. Ask what would be most supportive for your child right now," Eastgard says.

Along with counseling, try to make school a supportive place. Think about who needs to know about your child's situation and whether there can be leeway around schoolwork and tests for a period of time. Although Seattle Public Schools has middle school wellness centers and teen health centers in high schools, not all schools have staff members trained in the intricacies of dealing with depressed tweens and teens. Often at the high school level, the counselors are focused on academic counseling as opposed to mental health issues. This means parents need to advocate for their child at school.

It's important to note that impulsivity plays a huge role in teens' lives. "One study showed that [while adults] think for three days about suicide, a

young adult thinks for a full day, and the average teen thinks less than eight hours before a suicide attempt. We know that a 15-year-old's brain development means they have a harder time stepping back from challenges and visualizing safe paths and solutions with a long-range view," says Mick Storck, M.D., associate professor, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Washington School of Medicine/Seattle Children's Hospital.

Make a safe environment

Teens' increased impulsivity is why it's vital to think about access to guns and medications. More than one in three households in the U.S. have guns, and medicine cabinets often contain stockpiles of unused medicines. In Washington state, 78 percent of firearm deaths are suicides. "If we could think about reducing lethal means around medications and guns, we would be doing something about suicide prevention. We have control over these things: Lock up guns and medicine," Eastgard says.

When parents are dealing with a depressed or anxious teen, it's helpful to know that your role as their overall case manager and cheerleader matters. "It can feel overwhelming, but the biggest thing parents can do is really expect their child is going to get better and to help their child persist in treatment and ask for more if they are not. If kids can persist in treatment, kids do get better," says Laura Richardson, M.D., MPH, an adolescent medicine specialist at Seattle Children's.

From my own history as a teen with clinical depression, I know my parents' persistence was the first critical step to getting better, and their daily support mattered immensely. I know how to ask for

help from others when I need it now, and for that I thank my parents. ■

When not navigating parenthood, Nancy Schatz Alton uses her brainpower to write, edit and fact-check articles for websites and magazines. Find her blog at WithinTheWords.com.

warning signs

Forefront (intheforefront.org), a suicide-prevention nonprofit, lists the following warning signs of suicide on its website. If you observe any of the following signs, call Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).

Your child:

- Talks about wanting to die or kill themselves
- Searches online for ways to kill themselves or buy a gun
- Talks about feeling trapped, in unbearable pain or about being a burden to others
- Begins using alcohol or drugs
- Acts anxious or agitated; behaves recklessly
- Sleeps too little or too much
- Withdraws or isolates themselves
- Shows rage or seeks revenge
- Displays extreme mood swings

"Put the hotline number in your cell phone; if you are not worried about your own child, you can be sure you have a friend who has a child (or a partner) they are worried about," says Jennifer Stuber, faculty director at Forefront.

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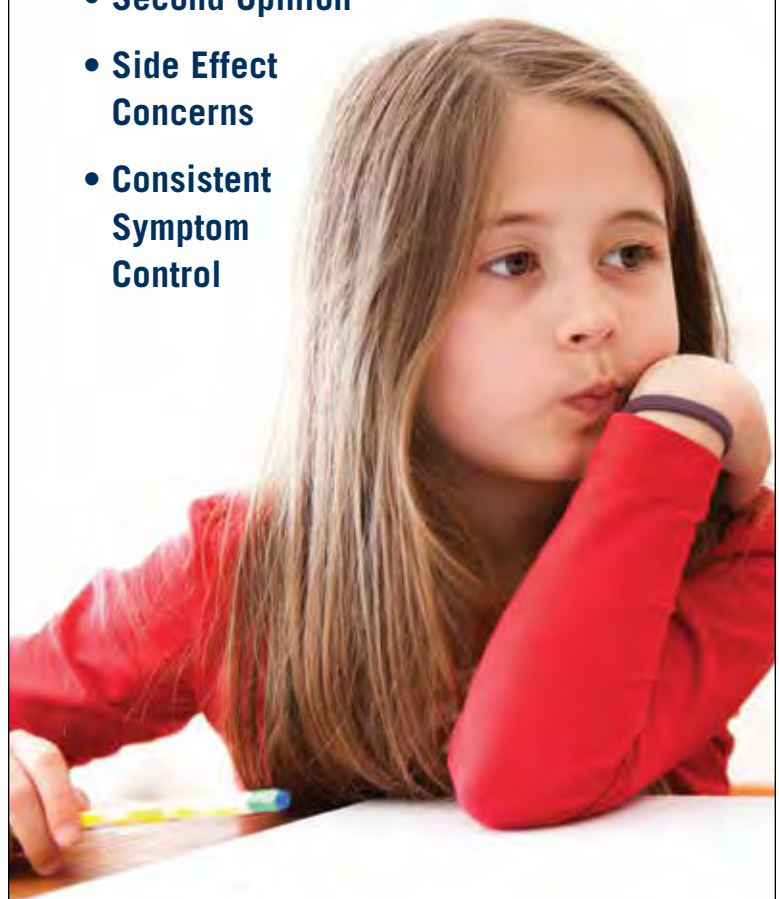


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Retro toys rock

2014 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

BY MALIA JACOBSON

Retro toys and games are all the rage, and with good reason: Decidedly un-tech and built to last (often out of natural materials), retro-inspired toys evoke a simpler time, free of screens and Snapchat. More importantly, old-fashioned playthings connect kids to the unplugged here and now while building vital motor skills, spatial reasoning, executive functions and even physical fitness.

"I'm a big believer that kids need to exist in the physical world, not on an iPad," says Sarah Furstenberg, owner of Ballard's 10-year-old toy store Clover Toys.

"All of the things we do as humans — pushing, pulling, sorting — we do for a reason. When kids don't get enough of those activities, it affects learning later on." Read on for the best retro-inspired playthings for every age.

You might be tempted to scoop up a few for yourself, for old times' sake.



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For tots [AGES 0-2]

Hape Walk-A-Long Snail Toy, \$30

There's something distinctly retro — and completely adorable — about a tot pulling a toy on a string. This one from Hape (pronounced hah-pay) features a shape sorter, a spinning shell and bright nontoxic colors. Made from maple, birch and rubberwood from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)–managed

forests, this sturdy plaything will entertain generations of crawlers, new walkers and confident toddlers. Hape toys are known for quality and are a safe bet when parents want a timeless toy that lasts, says Nancy Chamberlain, assistant manager at Learning Sprout Toys in downtown Tacoma's historic district.



Corolle baby doll, \$42

Classic dolls that may remind you of the babies you once cradled, Corolle dolls are safe for 18 months and older, and feature a soft cloth body and a sweet “baby” scent. The limbs can be posed like a real baby, and the 12-inch size makes it easy to find doll clothes (made by Corolle and other brands). This doll is built to last — little mamas and papas might be able to hand this plaything down to a real baby of their own someday.



Radio Flyer Soft Rock and Bounce Pony, \$140; stick horse, \$20

Horse toys are as big a hit now as they were back when you rode off into the proverbial sunset on a rocking horse. The Radio Flyer Soft Rock and Bounce Pony is like the bouncing ponies of the past, but better: Scaled down to a toddler-friendly size and free of potentially pinchy springs, this toy has a washable cloth body, easy-to-grip handles and a rubber suspension for a quieter ride. If simple is more your style, check out Radio Flyer's classic stick pony.



Classic Fisher-Price Radio, \$20

Part of Fisher-Price's line of re-released classic toys, including the Classic Two-Tune Television and the Classic Record Player, the Classic 1959 Radio gets Clover owner Sarah Furstenberg's vote for best of the bunch. All of the reproductions are cute, Furstenberg says, but the radio is easiest for little fingers to manipulate. “Toddlers can easily turn it on, and kids want to be able to actually work a toy.”

Parents — and grandparents! — will get a kick out of seeing Junior bopping along to a toy they knew and loved. >>



G I F T

A graphic with a dark background, stylized trees, and a white silhouette of a reindeer jumping over a herd of white reindeer.

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gift guide

Retro toys rock

continued from page 15

For preschoolers [AGES 3-5]



Fastrack board game, \$21.99

The Fastrack board game is a wooden tabletop version of air hockey; though the manufacturer recommends it for ages 5 and older, kids as young as 2 could use it with parental supervision, says Clover Toys owner Sarah Furstenberg. "It's very simplified and fun, and great for fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination."

Hopscotch mats, \$25-\$50

Hopscotch mats bring a timeless physical game of jumping from square to square on a small numbered course indoors, and are ideal for the cool Pacific Northwest winter. "We carry interlocking foam puzzle pieces that form a hopscotch mat, as well as a mat. They're great for rainy days," says Learning Sprout's Nancy Chamberlain.





Gymnic/Rody 18-inch Hop Ball, \$35

The Gymnic/Rody hop ball offers timeless fun reminiscent of the old-fashioned bouncy horse parents grew up with — but this one is mobile. A scaled-down version of the big-kid hop ball, the Rody ball features a pony head with ears that serve as handles for little hands. These bouncy balls of fun let stir-crazy little ones burn off winter energy while building balance and motor skills; get more than one, and kids can race/hop across the house (giggles ahead).

Lincoln Logs Classic Edition Tin, \$44

Preschool is an ideal time to introduce children to the timeless fun of Lincoln Logs, since they're recommended for ages 3 and older. Whether building a log cabin or something more creative, little ones learn how to solve problems and polish fine motor skills. Perfect for family playtime (parents love them, too!), these classic building blocks are made of high-quality wood, and the retro tin has huge nostalgic appeal. >>



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gift guide

Retro toys rock

continued from page 17

For schoolkids [AGES 6–10]

Yo-yo, \$5–\$15

Perennially popular with kids and adults alike, the yo-yo invites sustained concentration and builds hand-eye coordination as kids learn to master tricks from basic to advanced (visit yoyoexpert.com/learn for a list of tricks and instructions). But beware cheap versions, says Furstenberg of Clover Toys — they won't unspool smoothly and may break, frustrating would-be yo-yo gurus. "I like yo-yos from Yomega and Duncan. Plan to invest about \$12–\$15 in a good yo-yo, and look for one with a ball bearing inside."



Original Spirograph, \$15

Remember the tool you used to create page after page of spellbinding circles? Introduced in 1965, the Spirograph combines art and geometry and builds mathematical awareness (the technical names for those curved shapes are epitrochoids and hypotrochoids) along with hand-eye coordination and focus. Kids can create beautifully intricate patterns with the classic Spirograph tool in a slightly revamped set; this one includes new Spiro-Putty to hold the tools in place during use.



Marbles, \$1–\$10

Simple and timeless, marbles are once again a must-have for the school-age crowd. "There is not a day that passes in my store that I don't sell marbles. Kids are getting rule books to play and collect them," Furstenberg says. No blacktop available for marble play? No problem, "We sell a marble mat by Channel Craft that's great for indoor use."



Stilts, \$50

Another retro toy with fresh appeal, stilts strengthen core muscles and build gross motor skills — and they're just plain fun. Stilts offer age-appropriate challenge for kids ages 5 and older, and stilt extensions can keep the fun going once veteran stilt walkers are ready for more. Gripping stilt handles can be tiring for small hands, so look for stilts with round handles (instead of square), padded grips and shoulder supports. Because the appeal of stilts never fades, look for adjustable legs to this toy.



For tweens and teens [AGES 10 AND OLDER]

Classic Simon, \$25

Remember Classic Simon, the circular toy with primary-color-hued lights? This game-night staple is back and a great game for both teens and adults. The deceptively simple concept — copying Simon's light sequences — provides a mental workout. With one and two player modes, this is a game kids can play when they've got a few minutes to kill, but it's even more fun with a roomful of friends.



Pogo stick, \$60

Pogo sticks have enduring appeal, even for too-cool teens out-growing "toys." A good way to stay active during the cool winter months, the sticks also pack a core workout and heart-pumping fun that never goes out of style; this isn't something that will end up in the junk heap next year. National Sporting Goods and Flybar produce heavy-duty versions appropriate for kids in elementary, middle and high school; be sure to check weight and height limits before you buy.



Cribbage, backgammon and bridge sets, \$30

Classic games such as cribbage, backgammon and bridge score high marks for play value along with major retro appeal: Cribbage was invented in the 1600s. Teaching your teen to play one of these timeless games has multiple perks: You can enjoy the game as a family, teens and grandparents can play together, and later, your teen can take it to college and teach roommates. You may even spark a lifelong interest.

For families

Crosley Nomad Turntable, \$89–\$399

Got a vinyl aficionado in the family? Or maybe an attic full of vintage records just waiting for a spin? The three-speed portable Crosley Nomad Turntable (one of a line of modern turntables with retro appeal) brings vinyl into the digital age with built-in stereo speakers, RCA outputs, a head-phone-jack and a USB port to convert vinyl albums to digital files using



included software. The sleek retro design and an easy-to-tote briefcase style make it easy for on-the-go teens to take their music anywhere, but the Nomad is equally at home in a busy family room, spinning Grandpa's favorite record for the whole brood. >>

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gift guide

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continued from page 19



Monopoly, \$20

Been a while since you sat down to a game of Monopoly? You might be surprised by how little the classic version has changed. Of course, if you're looking for a twist, revamped versions such as Electronic Banking, Monopoly Empire and Monopoly Millionaire keep the fun going. Known for games that stretch on for hours, Monopoly is a great way to tear kids away from cell phones for an evening. Bonus: The game builds focus and attention span, and might even offer a financial lesson or two. ■

Malia Jacobson is an award-winning health and parenting journalist and mom of three. Her latest book is Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades.

STEM toys

Decidedly not retro, these modern toys, kits and apps strive to inspire a love of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in kids as young as 3 years old. Tip: Buy early. Find details and more STEM toys at parentmap.com/stem.

GoldieBlox and the Movie Machine:

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Robot Turtles: Originally funded by a Kickstarter campaign, this board game was designed by a Seattle dad to teach the fundamentals of programming to kids as young as age 3.

Roominate: Roominate's brightly hued dollhouse building kits are designed to appeal to girls, but boys like them, too. After building, kids can wire them with connectors.

Sick! Science Fast

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— Kelly Knox



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How well do you know your after-school program?

By Hilary Benson

When 7-year-old Oscar Lopez dressed up as Wolverine for the Halloween Hoopla at the Wallingford branch of the King County Boys and Girls Club, he was doing more than showing off his costume. He was showing off to his mom the place where he plays, learns and develops friendships after school.

For Emma Lopez, who is finishing up her bachelor's degree at the University of Washington, seeing the parents of her son's friends made the Halloween event a social time for her as well. "I'm so busy being a mother and a student, I don't have time to make plans, so it was nice to have people here we could meet up with."

After-school programs are often regarded as holding places or stand-ins — the place where kids spend time when mom or dad is not available.

But studies show that when families connect with their child's after-school program, the child's academics and social and emotional health improve. The organizations benefit, too, which then lifts local communities and schools. Creating a home-program connection can be challenging, but some local programs are doing it.

Building what 'better' looks like

Each day, more than 150 students, from kindergartners to high school seniors, rely on the Wallingford program for their after-school care. After families pay the \$36 annual membership fee to belong to the club, after-school participation is on a drop-in basis and free between 2 and 7 p.m. Children are separated by age and are bused in from 12 different Seattle schools.

For years, the club has offered programs that aim to engage families, such as a Halloween party for 500, quarterly family dinners, parents' nights out and late-night teen programs. But now, for the second year, the King County Boys and Girls Club organization — the third-largest Boys and

Girls Club in the nation — is making its family engagement even more effective with help from a set of voluntary standards to improve the quality of local after-school programs. In partnership with School's Out Washington, nearly 100 organizations of all sizes are taking part in youth program quality assessments.

Senior program manager Adam Monda, who has been with the Wallingford branch of the King County Boys and Girls Club for about 20 years, says the quality assessments are all about growth.

"Everything we already do, the YPQ [youth program quality] tool makes it better," he says. "It's good to see things evolve; otherwise, it would be too easy to stay the same, and no one wants to be static."

Washington's after-school program standards, while voluntary, are being heralded by national experts in the child development field as cutting edge. Program staff are assessed both internally and externally in nine different categories, ranging from "family, school and community connections" to cultural responsiveness, and safety and wellness. After identifying areas for improvement, there is support and coaching for programs over a three-year period.

How well do you know your program?

At School's Out Washington's 2014 Bridge Conference in October, national expert Sally Wade spoke at the University of Washington about what effective family engagement looks like. "Those newsletters, the open houses — they're all well-intentioned, but they are only one-way communication," says Wade, a director at the Manhattan Strategy Group. "When it's one way, then you're just talking at parents. [Instead], try dividing them into groups and asking them what their hopes and dreams are for their children — get them talking!"



Getting parents involved in after-school programs can be inherently challenging: If you are a parent, you might be thinking, *That's why I have after-school care: because I'm busy.* If you are a program director, it might seem impossible to get parents to engage.

But experts say the benefits are worth it. Research, including a 2012 report by Anne Henderson of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, has found that the improved morale, supportive climate and better reputation in the community that an after-school program can gain from inviting families in translates into kids showing improved grades, better school attendance, homework completion and higher levels of postsecondary enrollment.

After-school programs vary widely. So, too, can the activities and events that draw in families. But a common denominator of many successful events: food. Because really, who doesn't love to eat? Chiloe Barrera-Cloyd of The Service Board in West Seattle, which offers young people unique mentorships combining life skills, job readiness and snowboarding (hence "board"), says that potlucks and Mother's Day events are annual favorites. Deanne Wahle of Afterschool Safe Place in Ellensburg says culturally themed "Heritage Night" dinners bring parents together in a unique way over food and shared stories.

What to look for

Parents shopping around for after-school programs for their children should seek out those that are welcoming rather than intimidating. Signs of a program with strong family connections include:

- When you arrive, someone greets you; when you leave, there is acknowledgement, not just a sign-out sheet.
- Staff is responsive to parent questions and has policies in place to promote engagement.
- Organization hosts open houses, dinners and other events that offer families the opportunity to connect with each other.

In addition to strong family engagement, a high-quality program will have strong ties with the surrounding community and schools. This might

SCHOOLS + PRESCHOOLS

look like blocking out homework time during the program, engaging with school staff, and making referrals as needed to other community resources and support services.

"We view ourselves not as an outside group, but as part of the school's family engagement strategy," says Liesl Santkuyl from Stand for Children's University for Parents program in Tacoma, which assists students and families with college readiness.

"We don't go into schools with an ego, we go in with a hand," says King County Boys and Girls Club executive director Calvin Lyons.

Because children's experiences are what form them, that helping hand for schools circles back to benefit students like Oscar Lopez, whose caregivers — like so many parents — often feel like they are doing a juggling act. ■

Hilary Benson is a veteran award-winning journalist and mother of three active children. She and her family live in the Seattle area.

Editor's note: In this series, we explore how new voluntary standards developed in Washington state are impacting the quality of after-school programs that serve about 134,000 youths. We explain what parents should seek in a program, look at research on the impact of quality care on kids' development and academics, and visit with programs and kids. After-School Special's independently reported content is funded by a journalism grant in partnership with the Raikes Foundation and School's Out Washington.

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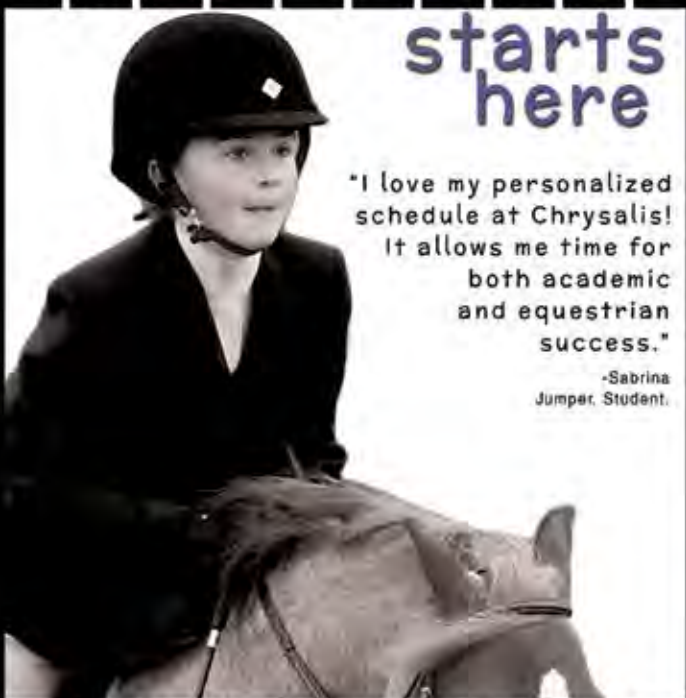
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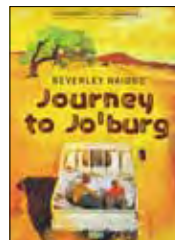
Benno and the Night of Broken Glass



By Meg Wivioitt (ages 6 and up)

Benno, a ginger cat, belongs to everyone and yet to no one. He is a street cat who leads a routine cat life following the daughters of the Adler and Schmidt families to school, getting scraps from Moshe the local butcher and enjoying gentle ear rubs from Frau Gerber. One night Benno hears glass shattering and people screaming; in the morning he realizes that everything has changed. Benno's observation of *Kristallnacht* (the Night of Broken Glass) helps open a discussion with children.

APARTHEID:



Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story

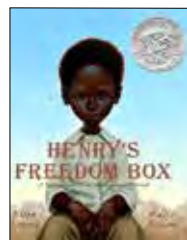
By Beverley Naidoo (ages: 8 to 12)

When their baby sister Dineo falls sick, siblings Naledi and Tiro decide to go find their mother, who works far away from their village in Johannesburg. Their journey to awakens them to the wider realities of apartheid and raises a lot of questions in the kids' minds, especially for Naledi, who wants to know more about why her family is being treated the way it is.

SLAVERY AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN AMERICA:

Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad

By Ellen Levine (ages: 6 to 8)



As a child, Henry wonders about his birthday and is frustrated that he does not know how old he is. If only he were free; if only he were allowed to celebrate his birthday. Life goes on: Henry grows up, marries and has children. But soon his family is taken away and sold. Heartbroken, Henry yearns to escape. Based on the true story of Henry "Box" Brown, the book keeps readers engaged and wishing for Henry's well-being.

— Padmaja Ganeshan-Singh

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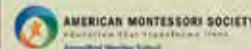
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FOLLOW Gliss

Should we step in or stand back
to help kids find their passion?

BY KRISTEN A. RUSSELL

My son is

having a terrible day. At 6, he's a wide-eyed wallflower, a watchful observer. It's his first day at basketball camp. We enter the gym, an echoing hellscape of thwacking balls and shrieking players, siblings and moms. My son takes one tremulous look and buries his face in my legs. No amount of cajoling, explaining or insisting will convince him to join in. Irritated, I give in and we leave.

Nine years later, I still think about that moment, and I wish I could send Younger Me a memo from the future: *Look at the boy!*

Really look at him! I knew full well he did not like ball sports — he had proven that season after season, on rainy soccer pitches and dusty T-ball fields all over Seattle.

Like many parents, I was on a well-meaning mission to help my son find his One Special Thing — the trigger for a passion that would propel him to a lifetime of fitness and competitive excellence. OK, maybe not that last thing, but I worried that he wasn't well-rounded; I thought he was too solitary, too into his Game Boy.

What I was — and am still — seeking for my son is what all parents want, ultimately:

the chance to live up to his enormous potential, to live a happy and successful life. It's an impossibly tall order, so we all get started early, guiding and cajoling our kids from a very young age to discover a passion, a spark of brilliance or talent for something at which they're good, or — dare we dream it? — even great.

We do this out of love, certainly, but out of real worry, too: If I don't sign my daughter up for science camp, will she ever love STEM? If my son never plays ball sports, will he know how to compete? If I don't drop a fortune on the hottest new electronics this holiday, will a nascent glimmer of coding



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FOLLOW

bliss continued from page 27

genius go undiscovered? If my child doesn't find a special passion, how will she stand out, get ahead, get into college, succeed in life? The stakes seem astronomically high. But are they really?

The grit issue

You can't fault a parent for feeling pressure, even panic. In the past few years, widely publicized and often sensational studies have hammered away at the incredible potential payoffs of maximizing your child's special talent. In 2007, University of Pennsylvania researcher Angela L. Duckworth set off a seismic shift in parenting when she published her study *Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals* (and followed it up with popular TED talks). In the study, she and her co-authors assert that people who pursue their passions with grit — strenuously and relentlessly, despite adversity — are overwhelmingly more likely to be wildly successful: "As educators and parents, we should encourage children to work not only with intensity, but also with stamina," she writes.

It's hard to argue with stamina. Most parents want their kids to be persistent, to hang in there when the chips are down. But intensity?

A few years later, along comes Malcolm Gladwell, as he so often does, with a new zeitgeist theory: the 10,000 Hour Rule (gladwell.com/outliers/the-10000-hour-rule). That's how many hours of practice Gladwell says it takes to achieve mastery, a predictor of all kinds of prodigious success. It's another nail in the coffin of the casual hobbyist, of the dabbler and the dreamer: Practice makes perfect,

and practice you must. Pick a thing and perfect it. The idea of 10,000 hours caught on so hard and so fast that Macklemore wrote a song about it with the same name (and then won a Grammy for it, natch).

For my money, the real issue is that these studies lead parents to believe true genius lies dormant in every child — if they'd only show enough grit or practice enough hours to bring it out. Never mind that, statistically, genius is incredibly rare. How could a good parent expect any less?

Competitive parenting

"It's no coincidence that when a mother is pregnant, we say she's expecting — we put such expectations onto our children's shoulders," says Betsy Brown Braun, child development and behavior specialist and best-selling author. According to Braun, those expectations aren't always about what's best for the child: "This whole issue of passion and expertise is part of the new sport of competitive parenting, and of pushing our children to attain *our* dreams." Braun and others fear that many parents see their children's successes as their own, which can have an unexpected downside: "There's so much danger in having a plan for your child — including the danger of them having to bear your disappointment if it doesn't pan out."

Braun cites another widely acknowledged danger of the pursuit of passion: overwhelmed children and exhausted families. "I have clients who get up every day at 4 in the

morning for their daughter's ice skating and drive 20 miles for practice ... then go back after school. She does her homework in the car; there is no family dinner. Talk about ruining family life!"

Whose passion is it?

That's an extreme example, surely, but even at moderate levels, parental pressure — or even overly keen interest — can squash burgeoning passion in kids. A 2010 study led by University of Montreal professor Geneviève Mageau found that children are more likely to be successful in music, sports or other pastimes *when they nurture their passion themselves*. "We found that controlling adults can foster obsessive passion in their children by teaching them that social approval can only be obtained through excellence," says Mageau, and by "obsessive" she means "not good": The child then does the activity for "self-protective reasons that don't necessarily correspond with a child's true desires."

Journalist and best-selling author (and Lakeside School alum) Po Bronson writes extensively about this issue in his 2002 book *What Should I Do with My Life?*, which he calls "a portrait of a generation that had spent the first two decades of life ignoring their intrinsic motivations." Writing on *The Daily Beast*, Bronson observed that kids "were bright and talented, but had spent so many years doing what was expected of them ... that they were no longer in touch with their natural desires. ... Learning to recognize their own passions was incredibly difficult and stunted."

Maybe you have no intention of pushing your child, but are you reserving the right to guide them to an "appropriate" passion? You're in good company. "When it comes to kids, we often bring moralistic bias to their interests," Bronson writes. "There's a pervasive tendency in our society to label things as either good for children or bad for children. Cultivating children's natural intrinsic motivation requires abandoning all judgment of good and bad content."

Easier said than done. I can't tell you how many times I took that Game Boy away from my son, only to realize years later that even that was a

"This whole issue of passion and expertise is part of the new sport of competitive parenting, and of pushing our children to attain our dreams."

legitimate passion. Last month, at 14, he built his own gaming computer from about 27 boxes of parts that he ordered online with birthday money. Independent of my meddling, he has also discovered a passion for Ultimate Frisbee.

The science of passion

If you need further convincing to leave your kids to it, consider what goes on inside a child's brain when she is pursuing a passion of her own choosing: A chemical called dopamine is released, giving her a feeling of pleasure. According to Jennifer Larson, Ph.D., an outreach specialist at The Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences (I-LABS) at University of Washington, that feeling leads to motivation for more of the same, which leads to more practice. "If you are motivated to work hard and practice so that you can win more games, the act of practicing can cause this dopamine release," Larson says. "This creates a cycle of self-perpetuating reward."

A child who is pursuing her own passion will want to keep pursuing it; a child who is doing it because it's "good for her" will not feel that dopamine release — and may, in fact, feel something else, Larson says. "If the child is overwhelmed, either by too many activities or not enjoying the activities that they do, pressure from parents can overwhelm them and cause a negative stress response."

What you can do

All of this doesn't mean that parents shouldn't work to expose kids to a variety of activities — quite the opposite, says Laura Kastner, Ph.D. — but maybe not for the reasons you think. Kastner, a clinical psychologist, noted child expert and the author of *Getting to Calm: Cool-headed Strategies for Parenting Tweens and Teens*, says that from about middle school onward, a good rule of thumb for most kids is to participate in one sport and one extracurricular of their choosing at all times. "Rotate through everything from science to art to basket weaving," she says. Kastner, whose new book on elementary-age kids comes out in the spring, says that by doing so, kids are learning pro-social skills in adult-supervised situations — without being glued to a screen. "Maybe they'll find a passion; fine, but that's not our motive. Our motive is pro-social development. Everything that we do as parents should not have an end game."

"We're so obsessed with happiness and success in our adult lives," says Linda Hartzell, longtime artistic director of Seattle Children's Theatre. "I believe in down time, free time and creative play. We all need to take a deep breath and just let kids do that."

Lately, Hartzell says, she's been seeing a trend away from the (recent) old days of overly scheduled kids. "When things got tougher with the economy, it was like 'What's old is new.' Today's parents say, 'We're going to stay home and play a board game together. Go for a hike together.' Parents are taking kids to the theater, spending time with them," as opposed to dropping them off at an activity.

For Seattle mother Tera Schreiber, who lives with her family in the well-groomed Montlake neighborhood, supporting her kids' interests and passions works best when she stays low-key. "Once I start making it too much about me and calling it out as learning and talking about it from my perspective, it puts a big damper on the flames of their interest," she says. Schreiber's 12-year-old daughter discovered a passion for gardening after a family project took off. "When I get too involved — say I plant my own part of the garden — it holds no

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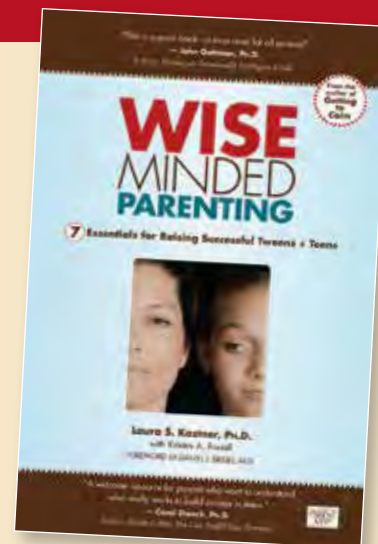
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FOLLOW

bliss

continued from page 29

interest for her. But she starts her own seeds and has her own mason bees and grows wonderful things that are experimental and fascinating to her (popcorn this year!), and if I stay out of the way, she learns more about it than if I were to get involved."

You can create a family climate that's conducive to passion by modeling it yourself. "Passion can be infectious," says Julie Burstein, author of *Spark: How Creativity Works*, who believes parents should let their children see them pursuing their own interests passionately — but not perfectionistically. "It's more about what they feel from you than what you're saying to them. You can't really push creativity or passion," Burstein says. "There are some parents and teachers who bring such joy and authentic passion to their subject that even a child who didn't think they were interested catches it."

Late bloomers

So what about that big, scary question: What if your child doesn't discover a passion? "I get this question in my practice a lot," Braun says. "OK, so he's not interested in anything now; that doesn't mean he's not going to be interested ever."

"Some children are early bloomers, some are late bloomers, some don't bloom in the way you want them to ... and maybe not in an area that brings a college scholarship ... but eventually, they will bloom."

For most kids, that blooming actually doesn't take place until college, anyway, according to Kastner. My own 18-year-old daughter and I recently attended an information session at the University of Washington. The point was made that most kids enter college

with one major in mind, but few actually stick to that major. The best bet is to sample classes from all kinds of disciplines, we were told — you never know where or when inspiration will strike, triggering a lifelong passion (and presumably, a career). One parent, channeling the apparent agony in the room, asked: "What if your kid doesn't happen to hit on that one special thing?" Counseling is readily available, he was assured.

By then, I was immersed in research for this article, and I sat musing about how it never ends, this insecurity about our children's paths to passion. I knew that copious research has shown that pushing kids into a parental script is decidedly *not* in the best interest of the next generation's future happiness.

But where the rubber meets the road — right here on that road to college — I felt again the twinge; the urge to guide, insist, cajole. One of the students on the panel, a former physics major, was describing how happy she is now that she has switched to geography. I heard a similar story from an economics turned film major at Vassar. Will my math genius discover a hitherto unknown passion for art history? And if she does, will I be mother enough to support her as she follows her bliss?

"So much of this has to do with discovery of self," Kastner says. "At the end, it's not about 'I found my passion,' but rather, 'I learned something about myself.'" ■

Kristen A. Russell is a Seattle journalist and the co-author, with Laura Kastner, of Wise-Minded Parenting: Seven Essentials for Raising Successful Tweens and Teens.



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December PICKS



Christmas Lighting Festival

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Dreamliner at Museum of Flight

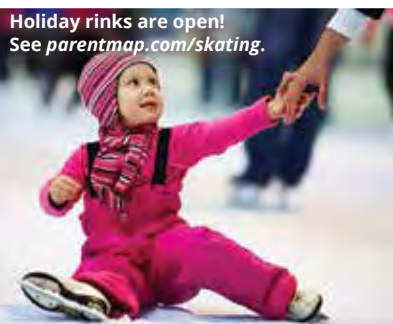
Put this exhibit on your winter-break list. The Boeing Company has donated **Boeing 787 Dreamliner "Number 3"** to The Museum of Flight's outdoor aircraft collection – your kids will love getting up close and personal with this modern flying machine. Included with admission. museumofflight.org



Christmas Ships, Ahoy!

Where to see and hear the **brightly lit Argosy Christmas Ship**? Try **Seward Park** on **Dec. 3**, where you can also take a nocturnal hayride (ship at 8:25 p.m.); **Gene Coulon Park** in Renton on **Dec. 5**, when Ivar's Clam Lights also opens (8 p.m.); two **Kirkland parks** on **Dec. 6**, with the Dickens Carolers (4:20 p.m., 5:30 p.m.); or Tacoma on **Dec. 14 at the Museum of Glass** (5 p.m.). Find all stops at argosycruises.com.

SUNDAY



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See parentmap.com/skating.

7

Santa Train. Combine two kid-tastic things — vintage trains and Santa — and watch the little ones quiver with excitement. Dec. 6–20. \$20; under age 2 free. All ages. Northwest Railway Museum North Bend Depot, North Bend. trainmuseum.org

Children's Christmas in Scandinavia. A Lucia pageant (starting at 1 p.m.), music and dancing led by kids, a visit from Santa and Nordic crafts. 1–3 p.m. Kids' events free, museum admission to see exhibits. Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle. nordicmuseum.org

14

Santa Visits ACM. Santa and Mrs. Claus cruise in for photos in a 1906 Cadillac. Saturday–Sunday, Dec. 13–21, 11 a.m.–3 p.m. (11 a.m.–2:30 p.m. on Dec. 13). Included with admission. LeMay–America's Car Museum, Tacoma. lemaymuseum.org

Mandolin Messiah. Seattle Mandolin Orchestra plays Handel's moving Christmas music. Saturday–Sunday, Dec. 13–14, 7 p.m. \$15–\$20. All ages. Epiphany Parish, Seattle (Dec. 13); Broadway Performance Hall, Seattle (Dec. 14). seattlemandolin.org

21

Hands On Hanukkah. Families of all backgrounds welcome to learn about Hanukkah with dreidel-spinning, cookie-decorating and other activities. 11 a.m.–2 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Northgate Mall, Seattle. sjcc.org

Menorah Lighting Ceremony. Chabad of Seattle invites the community to celebrate Hanukkah with a menorah lighting, music and service. 6 p.m. **FREE**. Seattle Center Armory. seattlecenter.com/winterfest

28

KlezKidz at Winterfest. This 40-piece ensemble with members ages 8 to 80 showcases Jewish music from a range of countries and eras. Don't forget to stop by the holiday train and village, too. 12:30 p.m. **FREE**. Seattle Center Armory, Seattle. seattlecenter.com/winterfest

Kwanzaa Exploration. Oceami, a West African culture group, performs. 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Included with admission. Ages 0–10 with families. The Children's Museum, Seattle. thechildrensmuseum.org

MONDAY

1

Tacoma Resident FREE Day at PDZA. City of Tacoma dwellers enjoy free admission to the zoo and aquarium today. 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m. **FREE** for Tacoma residents with proper I.D. (see website for details). Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. pdza.org

Garden d'Lights. Plant and critter shapes created from over half a million lights sparkle and amaze visitors of all ages. Daily 4:30–9:30 p.m. through Jan. 3. \$5; ages 10 and under free; free admission nights are Dec. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Bellevue Botanical Garden. gardendlights.org

8

Magic Season Ice Arena. Glide on a new larger rink this year; two free Monday admissions for Bank of America cardholders. Daily through Jan. 11. \$9–\$12. Bellevue Downtown Park. bellevuedowntown.com

Cornerstone Café Open Play. Drop by this new community space for **FREE** open play for tots, affordable drop-in child care, and more. Open play, Monday–Wednesday, 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.; Thursday–Friday, 1–3 p.m. Hillman City Collaboratory, Seattle. focseattle.com

ONGOING EVENT

15

Issaquah Reindeer Festival. Meet Santa, try out his sleigh, feed his reindeer and enjoy story time with an elf. Daily Dec. 1–23, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. \$10–\$14; ages 1 and under free. Cougar Mountain Zoo, Issaquah. cougarmountainzoo.org

Winterfest Ice Rink. Take a spin on the ice at this compact indoor rink. Daily through Jan. 5 (closed Dec. 25). \$2–\$7; includes skate rental. All ages. Fisher Pavilion at Seattle Center, Seattle. seattlecenter.com/winterfest

22

Our Gay Apparel. Last day to hear Seattle Men's Chorus perform a varied program of classic carols, festive favorites and lively sing-alongs. Dec. 12–22. \$28–\$78. All ages. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. flyinghouse.org

Zoolights. See a family of polar bears, a shark (new this year) and other shapes of nature built from more than half a million lights. Daily through Jan. 4, 5–9 p.m. (closed Dec. 24). \$7.50–\$9; ages 2 and under free. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. pdza.org/zoolights

29

Holiday Magic. Keep on celebrating with wild inventions, cool toys and wacky magic. 2–2:45 p.m. (Richmond Beach Branch); 4:30–5:15 p.m. (Lake Forest Park Branch); 7–7:45 p.m. (Kenmore Branch). **FREE**. Ages 5 and up. King County Library System. kcls.org

Here & Now: Native Artists Inspired. This exhibit traces the lineage between native artists and the historic works that influenced them. Included with admission. Burke Museum of Natural History & Culture, Seattle. burkemuseum.org

TUESDAY

2

Holiday Carousel. Pick your horse and take a spin on the traditional carousel to help Treehouse help foster kids. Daily through Jan. 1 (closed Dec. 25). \$3 suggested donation. All ages. Westlake Park, Seattle. treehouseforkids.org

This Is Not What I Expected. Drop-in group for families struggling with the transition to parenthood. 7–9 p.m. first and third Tuesdays. **FREE**. EvergreenHealth Medical Center, Kirkland. evergreenhealth.com

ONGOING EVENT

9

Carousel Rides. Give the little ones a break from holiday shopping with a spin on the sparkling seasonal carousel. Daily through Jan. 3 (closed Dec. 25). \$3 suggested donation. Redmond Town Center, Redmond. redmondtowncenter.com

Magic Tree House Book Party. Gather with other fans of the Magic Tree House series for crafts, games and readings of our favorite passages. 3–5 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 5 and up. Pierce County Library, South Hill Branch. piercecountylibrary.org

16

Outdoor Skating Rink. Redmond Town Center gets in on the skating action with a new outdoor rink this season. Daily through Jan. 3 (closed Dec. 25). \$5–\$7; includes skate rental. redmondtowncenter.com

Holiday Village. Every December, the visitor's center at stunning Bloedel Reserve hosts an intricately detailed miniature world of handmade buildings, houses, furniture and train sets. Dec. 13–Jan. 4. Included in admission (\$5–\$15; kids 4 and under free). Bainbridge Island. bloedelreserve.org

23

Christmas Ship Parade Finale. The closing night of Christmas Ship sailings departs Kirkland City Dock (8 p.m.) and travels to Gas Works Park (9:45 p.m.) via Portage Bay. 8–11:05 p.m. **FREE** to watch and listen from shore. Other Christmas Ship parades sail Dec. 3–23. nwboatinfo.com

Fantasy Lights. Load everyone into the car for this 2-mile drive lined with clever light displays. Daily 5:30–9 p.m. through Jan. 1. \$14/car; half-price nights on website. Spanaway Park, Spanaway. co.pierce.wa.us

30

Denim Madness. Get your tweens and teens out of the house and creating new stuff with their old jeans. Kids bring jeans; other supplies provided. 2–4 p.m. **FREE**. Ages 9–18. Seattle Public Library, Northgate Branch. spl.org

BAM Biennial 2104: Knock on Wood. All ages will appreciate the amazing and varied creations in wood of established and emerging Northwest artists. Tuesday–Sunday through March 29. Included with admission. Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue. bellevuearts.org

WEDNESDAY

3

Winter's Eve Community Open House & Hayrides. Join Seward Park Audubon Center for a nocturnal hayride, cookie and craft fun and a luminaria walk to the bonfire to listen to the Christmas Ship. 6–9 p.m.; choir performs at 8:25. Seward Park, Seattle. sewardpark.audubon.org
Gingerbread House Workshop. Supplies provided. 11 a.m., 4 p.m. or 6 p.m. (Workshop offered at other branches Dec. 3–18.) **FREE**; preregister. Pierce County Library System, Buckley Branch. piercedcountylibrary.org

10

Story Hour at the Conservatory. The Little Fir Tree by Margaret Wise Brown is today's theme for reading and crafts with Bonnie Beaudoin. 11 a.m. \$3; ages 11 and under free. Ages 3–8. W.W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory, Tacoma. seymourconservatory.org
Explore Your World – LEGO Robotics. Join Raisbeck Aviation High's Skunk Works robotics team for a LEGO Mindstorms construction challenge. 5–8 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 6 and up. Seattle Public Library, West Seattle Branch. spl.org

17

Pride and Prejudice. Book-It presents its adaptation of Jane Austen's beloved novel of manners and society in 19th century England. Through Dec. 28. \$25–\$50. Ages 10 and up. The Center Theatre, Seattle. book-it.org
Ivar's Clam Lights. Stroll a one-mile path with thousands of lights decorating trees and shrubs in fanciful shapes. Daily 5–9 p.m., Dec. 5–Jan. 1. **FREE**. Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park, Renton. rentonwa.gov

24

Jingle Bell Run. De-stress with family and friends on this fun, festive three-mile run or walk with holiday costume contest. 10:30 a.m. or noon. \$10–\$20. All ages. Wright Park, Tacoma. metroparkstacoma.org
A Christmas Story, The Musical. Based on the beloved film, this musical follows the mis-adventures of Ralphie, his family, and his quest for a Red Ryder BB gun. Through Dec. 30. \$29–\$130. Ages 6 and up. The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle. 5thavenue.org

31

Noon Year's Eve. Welcome the new year at the sensible hour of 12 p.m. rather than 12 a.m., with activities and fun for the short set and their grown-ups. 10 a.m.–3 p.m. \$10/child; \$4/accompanying adult. Hands On Children's Museum, Olympia. hocm.org
Rockin' New Year's Eve Daytime Party. Families celebrate the arrival of 2015 with special activities at a time that's just right for kids. Noon–4 p.m. Included with admission. Imagine Children's Museum, Everett. imaginecm.org

THURSDAY

4

Nordic Stories. Children's stories from Scandinavian authors, followed by a craft project, the first Thursday of the month. 10 a.m. **FREE**. Ages 3–6. Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle. nordicmuseum.org
Polar Plaza Ice Skating. Take some turns on the ice, then head across the street to Tacoma Art Museum to check out its new "maker" art studio and new galleries. Daily through Jan. 11. \$4–\$8; skate rental \$2. All ages. Tollefson Plaza, Tacoma. polarplaza.com

11

A Year with Frog & Toad. This musical follows beloved Arnold Lobel characters through four seasons of stories and adventures. Dec. 11–21. \$15–\$20. All ages. Lakewood Playhouse, Lakewood. lakewoodplayhouse.org
SAM Lights. Experience the sculpture park alit with hundreds of lights and luminarias on one night only. Make paper lanterns, listen to live folk music and join life-size shadow puppets for a procession. 5:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE**. Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle. seattleartmuseum.org

18

Reindeer Festival. If your kids don't believe in reindeer, come meet real-live Dasher and Blitzen, along with their big buddy Curley the camel. Daily through Dec. 24; Santa photos weekends through Dec. 21. **FREE**. Swanson's Nursery, Seattle. swansonsnursery.com
Dusty Strings Presents Tai Shan. Live music from friends of Dusty Strings acoustic music store while you shop, dance or relax. 6:30–8 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Crossroads Market Stage, Bellevue. crossroadsbellevue.com

25

Fiddler on the Roof Sing Along. "Sunrise, sunset..." Sing your heart out with Tevye and his family during this screening of the beloved 1971 movie. Chinese food buffet included. Noon. \$19–\$20. All ages. SIFF Cinema at Uptown, Seattle. siff.net
Gingerbread Village. "Jingle All the Way" and lines from other popular holiday tunes are the theme for this year's epic gingerbread house display at Sheraton Seattle. Daily through Jan. 5, including Christmas day. **FREE**. Sheraton Hotel, Seattle. gingerbreadvillage.org

FRIDAY

5

Nighttime Low-Tide Beach Walk. Bring your flashlight and explore seaside life at night. 9–10:30 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Constellation Park/South Alki Beach, Seattle. seattleaquarium.org
Free First Friday Night at Hands On Children's Museum. Have a blast indoors on a cold Friday night. 5–9 p.m. **FREE**. Ages 0–10 with families. Hands On Children's Museum, Olympia. hocm.org

12

Wee Ones Weekly. Drop-in play program includes 30 minutes of exclusive museum time. Fridays, 9:30–11 a.m. \$15/family (up to 4 people); \$5 family members. Ages 1–5 with families. Children's Museum of Tacoma. playtacoma.org **ONGOING EVENT**
Oliver! Heavier Than Air Family Theatre presents the musical tale of a wayward orphan adapted from the Charles Dickens novel. Dec. 12–20. \$10–\$12. Ages 6 and up. Green River Community College, Auburn. heavierthanair.com

19

Dick Whittington and His Cat. A boy pursues a better life with the help of a remarkable cat in this adaptation of an English folk tale that includes new, original music. Through Dec. 21. \$29–\$36. All ages. Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle. sct.org
Snowflake Lane. Watch your kids' eyes open wide as live toy soldiers drum and march down the street, along with lights, snow and other winter characters. 7 p.m. daily through Dec. 24. **FREE**. Bellevue Way and N.E. 8th St., Bellevue. magicseason.com

26

Winter Wildland. Northwest Trek's resident animals enjoys special wintertime enrichments. Friday–Sunday, Dec. 26–28, 9:30 a.m.–3 p.m. Included with admission. Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Eatonville. nwtrek.org
WildLights. See Woodland Park Zoo from a whole new perspective with thousands of lights, visiting reindeer and an indoor "snowball" battle. Daily 5:30–8:30 p.m. through Jan. 4 (closed Dec. 24–25). \$6.50–\$9.75; ages 2 and under free. Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle. zoo.org

SATURDAY

6

19th Century Christmas. Get a taste of an old-fashioned, gadget-free holiday with stories, music, crafts, more. 11 a.m.–4 p.m. \$5–\$8; ages 4 and under free. Fort Nisqually Living History Museum, Tacoma. fortnisqually.org
Redmond Lights. Celebrate a diversity of holiday traditions with the lighting of City Hall, a luminary walk to Redmond Town Center, crafts and live entertainment. 4–8 p.m. **FREE**. City Hall and Redmond Town Center. redmondlights.com

13

Green Lake Pathway of Lights. Stroll the path around Green Lake, beautifully lit with luminaria. 4:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE**; food drive donations requested. All ages. Green Lake Park, Seattle. facebook.com/greenlakepathwayoflights
Almost Hanukkah Under the Stars. Crafts, games, Hanukkah trivia, food vendors and live music by Recess Monkey. 5:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE**; donations welcome, food for purchase. All ages. Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island. sjcc.org

20

Santa Express. Bundle up for a charming winter train excursion through the forest to visit Santa in person. Through Dec. 22. \$15–\$31; ages 2 and under free. All ages. Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad and Museum, Elbe. mrsr.com
Polar Bear Birthday Party. Will it be cake that the polar bears munch on to celebrate their big day? Come find out and wish them a happy day. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Included with admission. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. pdza.org

27

New Year's Eve with Recess Monkey. Popular local band invites everyone to welcome 2015 with hand-clapping and toe-tapping kindie rock. 10:30 a.m. \$15/family of four. All ages. Mount Baker Community Club, Seattle. mountbaker.org
Model Train Festival. Take in an eye-popping array of model trains. Dec. 21–Jan. 1 (closed Dec. 24–25), 10 a.m.–5 p.m. \$7–\$9.50; ages 5 and under free. Washington State History Museum, Tacoma. washingtonhistory.org



Seattle Children's
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www.seattlechildrens.org

CPR and First Aid for Babysitters
Saturday, Dec. 6, 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
 Seattle Children's Hospital
 4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle
www.seattlechildrens.org/classes

For youths, ages 11 to 15. Topics include pediatric CPR, treatment for choking, and first-aid skills. Students receive 2-year American Heart Association certification card.

Fee: \$60 per person. Preregistration is required.

Bender's One Big KISS for Seattle Children's Radiothon
Wednesday, Dec. 17, 6:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 Seattle Children's Hospital
 4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle

Join 106.1 KISS FM's morning host Bender for heartwarming and inspiring stories of Seattle Children's patients, families and staff. The Radiothon will broadcast from Seattle Children's. Tune in or pledge at giveto.seattlechildrens.org/radiothon2014. Presented by the John L. Scott Foundation and CenturyLink.

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Seuss story: *How The Grinch Stole Christmas!*
***The Musical* plays the Paramount from Dec. 2-7**

CAROLS

BY NANCY CHANEY

Here's a surefire way to shuck off holiday stress and divert your kids' attention from presents (if only for a couple of hours): Enjoy a holiday show together. Take in a traditional performance such as *The Nutcracker*, or see something different, such as a rollicking British panto, a sing-along film viewing or a show about the science of Santa. There's something for everyone in this wide-ranging list of more than 70 holiday shows.

Note: This list is organized by region, then by the performances' start dates. Some shows appear at different venues in different regions; they're listed under the region where they occur first. If you see no age recommendation, you can assume the show is appropriate for all ages, but you should make your own decision based on your kids' attention spans, show length and time, and other factors. If you're on a budget, look for the **CHEAP** label, which indicates shows that cost \$15 or less a ticket. >>



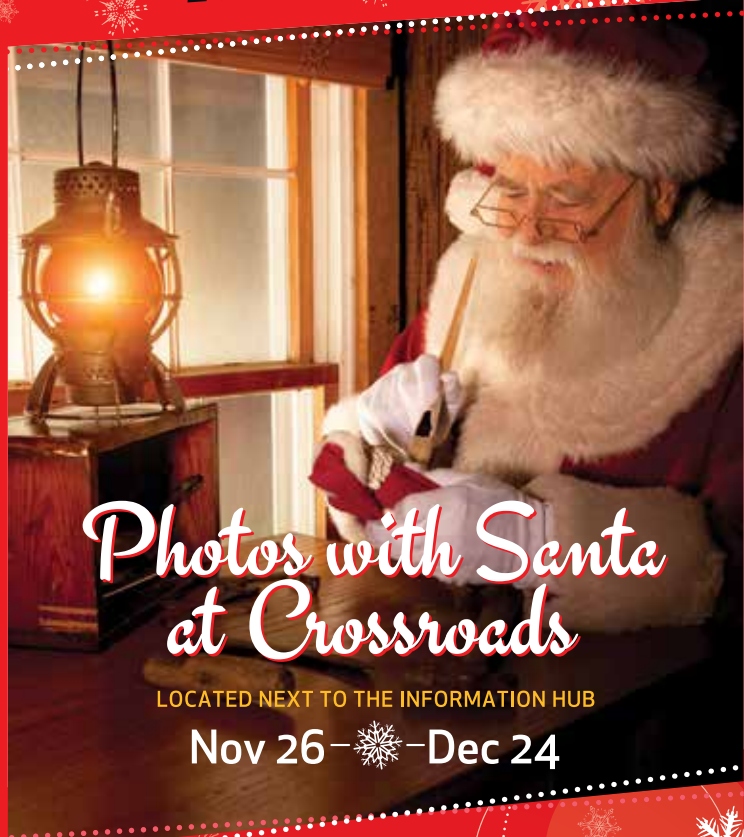
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out + about



HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 35

SEATTLE

Dick Whittington and His Cat

Seattle Children's Theatre's holiday show is a new musical adaptation of an English folktale about a boy who pursues a better life with the help of a remarkable cat. Through Dec. 21. \$29–\$36. sct.org

Appalachian Christmas Homecoming

Three generations of family gather at Christmastime to share love, laughter and music in this show, which is filled with popular Christmas carols and American folk tunes. Through Dec. 27. \$20–\$40. Ages 6 and older. Taproot Theatre, Seattle. taproottheatre.org

A Christmas Story, The Musical

Based on the beloved film, this musical follows the misadventures of Ralphie, his family and his quest for a Red Ryder BB gun. Through Dec. 30. \$29–\$130. Ages 6 and older. The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle. 5thavenue.org

A Christmas Carol

ACT's annual production of Dickens' classic holiday tale traces the Christmastime redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge. Note: Includes scary ghosts and zombie-ish children — consider age and sensitivity of kids. Through Dec. 28. \$32–\$100. Ages 5 and older, no babes in arms. ACT — A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle. acttheatre.org

Nutcracker by Pacific Northwest Ballet

After 31 years, this is the last season to enjoy PNB's dazzling Stowell-and-Sendack *Nutcracker*, starring Maurice Sendak's remarkable sets and Kent Stowell's choreography, plus a truly magical snowfall in every performance. Through Dec. 28. \$35–\$146. McCaw Hall, Seattle. pnb.org

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical

Dr. Seuss' grumpy, cheerless Grinch decides to steal Christmas from holiday-happy Whoville. Dec. 2–7. \$25–\$100. Ages 4 and older. Paramount Theatre, Seattle. stgpresents.org

A Child's Christmas in Wales & The Long Christmas Dinner

Two short holiday plays paired in one performance highlight joyful Christmas memories of children and the power of holiday meals to weave together generations of families. Dec. 5–24. \$20–\$25. Ages 7 and older. Stone Soup Theatre, Seattle. stonesouptheatre.org



ACT's *A Christmas Carol* runs through Dec. 28

CHRIS BENNION



ANGELA STERLING

Snow magical: Last year to see Pacific Northwest Ballet's Stowell-and-Sendak *Nutcracker*

Christmastown: A Holiday Noir

This world premiere from local playwright Wayne Rawley features hard-boiled detective Nick Holiday and promises Christmas chills, cheers and chuckles. Dec. 4–24. \$18–\$32. Ages 12 and older. Bathhouse Theater at Green Lake, Seattle. seattlepublictheater.org

Great Figgy Pudding Street Corner Caroling Competition

Come and have a listen while dozens of caroling teams out-sing each other on downtown Seattle street corners, followed by a sing-off on the Figgy Main Stage. Dec. 5, 6–8:30 p.m. FREE. Westlake Center, Seattle. pikemarketseniorcenter.org **CHEAP**

The Bishop's Wife

Local personality John Curley stars in Seattle Radio Theatre's live radio production of this story about an angel, a cathedral and timely guidance from

the heavens. Dec. 5, 8 p.m. \$5–\$15. Ages 6 and older. Town Hall, Seattle. townhallseattle.org **CHEAP**

Winter Wonder

The advanced choirs of Northwest Girlchoir perform a winter-inspired selection of Northern European tunes, a new work by local composer Karen P. Thomas and more. Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m. \$13–\$25; ages 5 and younger free. Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church, Seattle. northwestgirlchoir.org

Tiny Tots Holiday Hooray!

Let Your Music Shine with Lisa & Linda lead the little ones in Seattle Symphony's snowy, interactive sing-along, featuring snow and holiday songs and a special musical guest. Dec. 5–6. \$12. Ages 0–5 with families. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. seattlesymphony.org **CHEAP** >>

City of Auburn AveKids series presents:

Saturday, December 6
**Doktor Kaboom:
The Science
of Santa**

Auburn Ave Theater | 1 pm

Saturday, December 20
**The Elves &
the Toymaker**

Auburn Ave Theater | 4 pm

Saturday, January 17
Owl & Pussycat

Auburn Ave Theater | 2 pm



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HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 37

Holiday Pops with Cirque Musica

It's a holiday sensory spectacular for the whole family with Cirque Musica's acrobats, jugglers and dancers performing along with the Seattle Symphony. Dec. 5-7. \$30-\$100. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. seattlesymphony.org

Carmina Angelorum: Songs for Harp & Treble Voices

Seattle Girls' Choir's Prime Voci and Cantamus ensembles perform elegant holiday music accompanied by harpist Juliet Stratton. Dec. 6, 14. \$8-\$12. Church of the Ascension (Dec. 6) and Holy Rosary Church (Dec. 14), Seattle. seattlegirlschoir.org **CHEAP**

Beauty and the Beast

The Fremont Players and the Fremont Philharmonic return with their annual panto, full of outrageous characters, silly songs and audience participation, plus a magic horse and other surprises. Dec. 13-Jan. 11. \$7-\$13. Hale's Palladium, Seattle. fremontplayers.com **CHEAP**

Holiday High Notes

Northwest Boychoir Apprentices, ages 7-11, sing joyful accompaniment to vintage holiday film footage, which includes silent Santas and other scenes from bygone holidays. Dec. 7, 1 and 2:30 p.m. \$8-\$12. Northwest Film Forum, Seattle. nwchoirs.org **CHEAP**

LUCO: Holiday Concert

The all-volunteer Lake Union Civic Orchestra ramps up the holiday spirit with a joyful sing-along of classic carols. Dec. 7, 2 p.m. \$13-\$18. Town Hall, Seattle. townhallseattle.org

Nutcracker Sweets

This popular, one-hour Nutcracker by ARC Dance caters to young



Sing out! Don't miss Figgy Pudding on Dec. 5

JEREMY LANGE

audiences and their families. Note: These often sell out, so buy quickly. Dec. 12-14. \$10-\$15. ARC Dance Space, Seattle. arcdance.org **CHEAP**

Festival of Lessons & Carols

A combined choir of Northwest Boychoir and Vocalpoint! Seattle sing, give readings and invite the audience to sing along in a performance patterned after a traditional Christmas Eve service at King's College in Cambridge. Dec. 12-23 (Dec. 23 performance with Northwest Sinfonia at Benaroya Hall). \$10-\$80. Various Seattle-area venues. nwchoirs.org

A Gift of Song — Seattle Girls' Choir Holiday Concert

All five levels of choirs from Seattle Girls' Choir come together to delight audiences with joyous holiday songs, both old favorites and new selections. Dec. 13, 1:30 p.m. \$15-\$20. Town Hall, Seattle. townhallseattle.org

A Spirit for the Holidays Family Concert

Three playful holiday spirits disagree about their concert in this interactive show with Magic Circle Mime and Seattle Symphony. Dec. 13, 11

a.m. \$15-\$20. Ages 6-11 with families. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. seattlesymphony.org

Magical Strings — A Celtic Yuletide

Three generations of the Boulding family and guests gather for festive Celtic music, dancing, storytelling and processional. Dec. 12, 13, 15. \$12-\$28. Urban Grace Church, Tacoma; Town Hall, Seattle; Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue. magicalstrings.org

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

The wacky Herdman family brings new perspective to their church's annual pageant, a holiday tradition from Seattle Public Theater. Dec. 13-24. \$18-\$32; \$5 ages 11 and younger. Bathhouse Theater at Green Lake, Seattle. seattlepublictheater.org

Cool Yule!

The entire Northwest Girlchoir roster lends its pleasing voices to exalt the cold, snowy season and invites the audience to sing along to well-known carols. Dec. 14, 3 p.m. \$10-\$22. Meany Hall for the Performing Arts, Seattle. northwestgirlchoir.org

Northwest Boychoir Holiday Recital

Northwest Boychoir Apprentices and Preparatory Choirs present their annual holiday program for families. Dec. 14, 3:30 p.m. \$10-\$12. St. Alphonsus Church, Seattle. nwchoirs.org **CHEAP**

Handel's Messiah

The Seattle Symphony, chorus and soloists present this beautiful choral work, including the moving Hallelujah Chorus. Dec. 19-21. \$23-\$88. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. seattlesymphony.org

The Nutcracker by The Cornish Preparatory Dance Company

Cornish dancers present their version of the fanciful holiday ballet. Dec. 19-21. \$16-\$20. Cornish Playhouse at Seattle Center, Seattle. cornish.edu

Ellington's Sacred Music

Earshot Jazz presents its annual holiday tribute to jazz legend Duke Ellington with Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra, Northwest Chamber Chorus, guest vocalists and featured tap dancer Alex Dugdale. Dec. 20, 7:30 p.m. \$14-\$36. Town Hall, Seattle. townhallseattle.org

The Nutcracker by ARC Dance

ARC Dance debuts a full-length production of the beloved holiday ballet to complement its popular, family-friendly one-hour show. Dec. 20-21. \$15-\$25. ARC Dance Space, Seattle. arcdance.org

New Year's Eve with Recess Monkey

Kindie favorite rocks in the new year at a time and place that's perfect for the short set and their grown-ups. Dec. 27, 10:30 a.m. \$15/family. Mount Baker Community Club, Seattle. mountbaker.org **CHEAP** >>

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photo by Ian Coble



HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 39



Emerald Ballet Theatre's sweet Nutcracker performs in December

HENNINGER PHOTOGRAPH

EASTSIDE

'Twas the Night...

This Eastside holiday tradition — a hilarious, fun-filled family show — takes the classic Christmas Eve poem into overdrive. A few surprises keep repeat attendees enthralled year after year. Through Dec. 21. \$15. Ages 4 and older. Studio East Mainstage Theater, Kirkland. studio-east.org **CHEAP**

Gingerbread Boy

Using Japanese bunraku-style puppetry, Thistle Theatre presents the story of a gingerbread boy who goes on a sweet holiday adventure. Through Dec. 21. \$10. Ages 3 and older. Bellevue Youth Theatre, Bellevue; Sunset Hill Community Club, Seattle; and Magnuson Park Theatre, Seattle. thistletheatre.org **CHEAP**



Catch the Thistle Theatre's Gingerbread Boy through Dec. 21

A Christmas Carol

An original adaptation of the classic holiday story of Scrooge on Second-Story Repertory's Mainstage. Dec. 5–20. \$22–\$27. Redmond. secondstoryrep.org

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Youth Theatre Northwest presents the hilarious story of kids who become unlikely cast members in their church's annual Christmas show. Dec. 5–21. \$13–\$15. Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Mercer Island. youththeatre.org **CHEAP**

The Nutcracker by International Ballet Theatre

The beloved ballet performed in traditional Russian style with principal dancers from Russia, and elaborate sets and costumes from Ukraine. Dec. 5–7, 12–23. \$25–\$50. Kirkland Performance Center; Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue. www.ibtbl Bellevue.org

The Nutcracker Sweetened with a Twist by Eastside Youth Dance Theatre

Jazz, hip-hop and tap blended into a family-friendly Nutcracker with creative choreography and surprises. Dec. 5–7. \$10–\$30. Bellevue High School Performing Arts Center. issaquahdance.com >>



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A Contemporary Theatre

out + about



HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 41



REX TRANTOR

International Ballet Theatre's
 Russian-style *Nutcracker*

A Winter's Tail

Bellevue Girlchoir performs a sing-along concert highlighting the lives of animals in winter. Dec. 6, 3 and 7 p.m. \$13–\$20. Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue. bellevuegirlchoir.com

Christmas in the Northwest

Master Chorus Eastside sings a lively selection of new and traditional carols. Dec. 6, 14. \$15–\$20; ages 9 and younger free. Pine Lake Covenant Church, Sammamish. masterchoruseastside.org

Magic of Mistletoe

Bellevue Youth Symphony, Philharmonia, Flute Orchestra and Flute Choir present their annual holiday concert. Other BYSO ensembles perform earlier the same day. Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m. \$12–\$15. Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue. byso.org **CHEAP**

The Snow Queen

Love conquers evil in this musical adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, in which a girl rescues a boy held captive by the Snow Queen. Dec. 12–21. \$5–\$12. Bellevue Youth Theatre. ci.bellevue.wa.us/BYT-productions.htm **CHEAP**

The Elves & the Toymaker

StoryBook Theater presents a holiday show this year, the tale of some thoughtful elves who help out a desperate toymaker and his wife. Dec. 13–14, 20. \$8–\$15 Ages 3–10 with families. Kirkland Performance Center; Auburn Avenue Theater. storybook-theater.org, auburnwa.gov **CHEAP**

The Nutcracker by Evergreen City Ballet

Evergreen City Ballet delivers a period production of the classic ballet with swirling, dancing snowflakes and mice escaping into the audience. Select one-hour shows for young

children in Kirkland (buy tickets early). Dec. 13–14, 20–21. \$14–\$32. Lake Washington Performing Arts Center, Kirkland; Renton Ikea Performing Arts Center. evergreencityballet.org

A Christmas Carol Jr.

In this 50-minute adaptation, Mrs. Claus tells the tale of Scrooge to her zany elves, who pretend to be the ghosts, neutralizing the scare factor. Dec. 13–21. \$5–\$10. Ages 5 and older; all-ages shows on Sundays. SecondStory Repertory, Redmond. secondstoryrep.org **CHEAP**

KPC's Holiday Sing Along with Groove for Thought

Innovative jazz vocalists Groove for Thought lead the audience in an upbeat holiday sing-along. Dec. 20, 8 p.m. \$25. Kirkland Performance Center. kpcenter.org

KPC's Olde Time Holiday Show

This super variety show features singing, circus performers, illusionists, a clown, Roberto the Magnificent and plenty more holiday fun. (Tip: Santa appears at matinees.) Dec. 20–21. Kirkland Performance Center. kpcenter.org. >>



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HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 43

SOUTH OF SEATTLE

How the Slug Stole Solstice

Enjoy the whacky wintertime adventures of a banana slug named Sally and her sidekicks. Through Dec. 21. \$13–\$19. Ages 5 and older. Olympia Family Theater. olyft.org

A Christmas Carol — The Broadway Musical

The story of Scrooge and his Christmastime change of heart is set to music, with a score by an award-winning Broadway team. Through Dec. 20. \$11–\$20. Ages 8 and older. Sumner Performing Arts Center. manestagetheatre.com

Jack and the Beanstalk

Centerstage carries on its holiday tradition of presenting an English-style panto production full of fabulous songs, corny jokes, and a surprise gag. Through Dec. 21. \$10–\$28. Ages 5 and older. Centerstage Theatre, Federal Way. centerstagetheatre.com

An Irish Christmas

This variety show celebrates Christmas joy with familiar carols, dancing over brooms and around butter churns, and more. Dec. 3, 7:30 p.m. \$16–\$42. Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia. washingtoncenter.org

Seattle Men's Chorus: Our Gay Apparel

Seattle Men's Chorus presents a varied program of classic carols, festive favorites and lively sing-alongs. Dec. 4, 8 p.m. \$19–\$69. Pantages Theater, Tacoma. broadwaycenter.org

Des Moines Messiah

The Breath of Aire Choir and soloists join Federal Way Symphony Singers and the orchestra in performing Handel's beloved Christmastime work. Dec. 5, 8 p.m. \$15–\$25; ages 18 and younger free. Des Moines Beach Park Events Center. federalwaysymphony.org

Scrooge the Musical

Miserly Scrooge changes his tune after visits from telling ghosts in this musical adaptation of the Dickens classic. Dec. 5–28. \$15–\$25. Ages 8 and older. Tacoma Little Theatre, Tacoma. tacomalittletheatre.com

Doktor Kaboom — The Science of Santa

Doktor Kaboom, aka David Epley, dissects all of Santa's pretty slick tricks using physics to figure them out. Dec. 6, 1 p.m. \$8. Auburn Avenue Theater. auburnwa.gov **CHEAP**



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Songs of Christmas

Masterworks Choral Ensemble invites families of all ages for a program of well-loved holiday songs accompanied by four hands on one piano. Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m. \$10-\$22. Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia. washingtoncenter.org

Red, White and Blue Holiday Concert

The 56th Army Band plays an annual concert for the community, featuring patriotic and holiday selections. Dec. 7, 7 p.m. FREE; tickets required. Green River Community College, Auburn. auburnwa.gov **CHEAP**

Sounds of the Season

This year, Tacoma Symphony's holiday show features guest choral group Signatures plus the Tacoma Symphony Chorus. Dec. 7, 2:30 p.m. \$19-\$79. Pantages Theater, Tacoma. tacomasymphony.org

The Nutcracker by Studio West Dance Theatre

Studio West puts a fresh spin on the classic ballet, combining traditional dance with some delightful surprises. Dec. 11-14. \$16-\$25. South Puget Sound Community College, Olympia. studiowestdanceacademy.com

The Nutcracker by Ballet Northwest

This Olympia dance company continues its holiday *Nutcracker* tradition with more than 200 local and guest dancers featured in the production. Dec. 12-21. \$14-\$33. Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia. balletnorthwest.org

An Inspirational Christmas with Elvis

Danny Vernon channels the likeness and sound of the King, delivering Elvis hits along with holiday favorites. Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m. \$18-\$20. Auburn Avenue Theatre. auburnwa.gov

The Nutcracker by Dance Theatre Northwest

Dancers from this Pierce County ballet school present their fanciful version of the classic holiday ballet. Dec. 13-14. \$11-\$26. Mt. Tahoma Auditorium, Tacoma. dancetheatre-northwest.org

The Christmas Revels

Puget Sound Revels present a holiday variety show of song, dance, processions, humor and surprise, all set in the age of the Italian Renaissance. Dec. 13-17. \$17-\$32. Rialto Theater, Tacoma. broadwaycenter.org

The Nutcracker & The Tale of the Hard Nut

Tacoma City Ballet's production includes a rarely told *Nutcracker* backstory — the important role of the Krakatuk Nut. Accompanied by Tacoma Symphony Orchestra. Dec. 13-23. \$19-\$69. Pantages Theater, Tacoma. tacamacityballet.com

Messiah

The Tacoma Symphony Orchestra and Chorus together perform this beloved, exultant work by Handel. Dec. 18-19. \$25-\$45. Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church, Gig Harbor; and St. Charles Borromeo Church, Tacoma. tacomasymphony.org

Ted Vigil Christmas Show

John Denver tribute artist Vigil salutes the beloved singer-songwriter, performing well-known songs and some holiday tunes. Dec. 19, 7:30 p.m. \$18-\$20. Auburn Avenue Theatre. auburnwa.gov >>

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HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 45

A Charlie Brown Christmas

Charlie Brown gets over his holiday blues and remembers the true meaning of Christmas in this play based on the popular 1965 television special. Dec. 20–24. \$10. Tacoma Musical Playhouse. tmp.org **CHEAP**

NORTH OF SEATTLE

A Charlie Brown Christmas with David Benoit

Acclaimed jazz pianist Benoit is joined by a youth chorus to showcase the delightful and familiar music of original *Peanuts* composer Vince Guaraldi. Dec. 1, 7:30 p.m. \$15–\$39. Edmonds Center for the Arts, Edmonds. edmondscenterforthearts.org

The Nutcracker by Emerald Ballet Theatre

Emerald Ballet Theatre presents a full-length performance of the Christmastime ballet accompanied live by the Rainier Symphony Ballet Orchestra. Dec. 6–7, 13–14. \$20–\$35. Northshore Performing Arts Center, Bothell. emeraldballet.org

The Gift of Dance

Kaleidoscope Dance Company presents its family-friendly holiday performance featuring dancers ages 7–16 who helped choreograph this show of imaginative modern dance. Dec. 7, 3 p.m. \$6–\$10. Shorewood Performing Arts Center, Shoreline. creativdance.org **CHEAP**

Christmas with the Gothard Sisters

These three Northwest-native sisters perform Celtic fiddle tunes and display their dancing talents to entertain families at the holidays. Dec. 11, 14. \$18–\$20. Edmonds



By kids and for kids:
The Gift of Dance, Dec. 7

COURTESY OF KALEIDOSCOPE DANCE COMPANY

Center for the Arts; Auburn Avenue Theatre. edmondscenterforthearts.org, auburnwa.gov

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Sno-King Community Chorale performs its annual concert of beloved holiday carols and records a CD with an audience sing-along. Dec. 13, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. \$17–\$20. Edmonds Center for the Arts. edmondscenterforthearts.org

The Nutcracker by Washington School of Dance

This Bothell dance academy's Nutcracker is narrated, one hour in length and features more than 70 dancers ages 4–18; a perfect introduction to the ballet for young children. Dec. 13–14. \$13. Glacier Peak Performing Arts Center, Snohomish. washingtonschoolofdance.com **CHEAP**

The Steadfast Tin Soldier — A Story Ballet

Dance Fremont presents this charming narrated ballet performed by dance students and special guest, former PNB dancer Josh Spell.

Dec. 13–14. \$15–\$20. Shorecrest Performing Arts Center, Shoreline. dancefremont.com

The Nutcracker by Olympic Ballet Theatre

Olympic Ballet Theatre's annual, full-length performance of the holiday favorite features exciting elements such as the growing Christmas tree, booming cannon and, of course, the Sugar Plum Fairy. Dec. 13–14, 19–21. \$22.50–\$35. Everett Performing Arts Center; Edmonds Center for the Arts. olympicballet.com ■

Nancy Chaney, ParentMap's calendar editor, lives in Seattle with her husband and 5-year-old son.

holiday magic on the cheap

You don't have to splurge to get some holiday magic. Here's a roundup of our favorite festive outings for families on a budget. Find more cheap thrills at parentmap.com/holiday-magic.

1 WINTERFEST Stop by Seattle Center's Winterfest festival in December and enjoy free performances in the Armory, where you'll also find an expansive winter train village. Look also for ice sculpting, skating at the Winterfest holiday ice rink and more festive fun. seattlecenter.com

2 PACIFIC PLACE In addition to nightly "snow" flurries every evening at 6 p.m. (Nov. 28–Dec. 31), the downtown Seattle shopping center hosts free holiday concerts, on select

days in late November and December at noon and 5 p.m. pacificplaceseattle.com

3 GARDEN D'LIGHTS Bellevue Botanical Garden dresses up for the holidays in hundreds of thousands of colored lights twisted into fanciful flower and garden shapes. Visit nightly from Nov. 29 to Jan. 3; cost is only \$5, ages 10 and younger free; reserve tickets online and look for free-admission nights. gardendlights.org

4 REDMOND TOWN CENTER Starting on Nov. 28, glide on a new skating rink, take a spin on the Eastside's only holiday carousel, ride the holiday express "train" and enjoy special events, such as the Redmond Lights fest at City Hall and Town Center on Dec. 6. redmondtowncenter.com/events

Pacific Place



COURTESY OF PACIFIC PLACE

5 SNOWFLAKE LANE The lavish music and light show — complete with live toy soldiers and other characters — takes place nightly on Bellevue Way (Nov. 28–Dec. 24). On Dec. 26, the show becomes "Celebration Lane USA," with new costumes and performances (through Dec. 31). bellevuecollection.com/SnowflakeLane

6 FANTASY LIGHTS This two-mile display along Spanaway Lake is the largest drive-through light show in the Northwest. Take a full car for extra fun and to get the most of the \$14-per-vehicle charge. co.pierce.wa.us



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Faith-based education

Is it right for your child?

By Nancy Schatz Alton

Some parents ponder sending their children to faith-based schools because of their own religious practices, while other parents research these schools in an effort to explore every option available. Often this second group is surprised to find faith-based schools at the top of their choice list for education. “I was kind of dead-set against it, as I felt excluded as a non-practicing student back when I attended Catholic grade school and high school. But at the open house for the Catholic K–8 school some of my children now attend, the principal said that they wanted to encompass everybody,” says Briget Spear, whose three sons attend St. John Catholic School and Bishop Blanchet High School, although their family is not currently part of a faith community.

The parents who send their children to faith-based school do so for many reasons, says Seattle education consultant Anoo Padte:

- They seek a spiritual grounding for their children alongside the academic.
- They want academics to be informed by the religious or spiritual beliefs of a school.
- They want a more-affordable private education: A faith-based school can cost 25–50 percent less than other independent schools.
- They seek community with other families who share their faith, coming together for celebrations, rituals and ceremonies.

Whether or not you envision yourself on this list, examining why other families enroll in religious

elementary, middle and high schools can help you make the best choice for your own child. Every faith-based school — whether it follows the doctrines of Catholicism, Christianity, Judaism or Islam — is unique, says Padte, founder of Art of Education. “That said, most faith-based schools are structured and organized and follow a strong set of rules around behavior, curriculum delivery and student-teacher relationships. Students who need or respond well to a structured, rule-based learning environment where what is expected and what is required is clear and laid out tend to thrive in faith-based schools.”

Devorah Signer Hill wasn’t motivated to look at faith-based school until she needed a smaller class size for her oldest son. Her non-religious husband suggested the Seattle Jewish Community School (SJCS) in North Seattle. “What drew us was the fact that SJCS gives such an overall good education. It offers a top-notch private school education,” says Signer Hill, who considers herself more culturally Jewish and doesn’t practice at an area synagogue.

Of course, all faith-based schools teach from a religious point of view, and parents sign on for this upon enrollment. Although Signer Hill used to be apprehensive of this aspect, her children’s blossoming religious identities connects her to what she learned as a kid. “When you are a minority religion — even if you are a really secular person — the more you can know how that identity suits you, this knowledge inoculates you if you are the only Jew in a room. And

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Faith-based education

Continued from page 49

you have the foundation to go out into the world and be proud of this identity.”

While growing up in Latvia, then part of the former Soviet Union, Katya Turnbow believed being Jewish was an ethnicity, because her family wasn’t allowed to practice religion. “To me, Judaism is more than just a faith. It’s thousands of years of rich cultural traditions, history and wisdom. So much of that knowledge was taken away from generations in our family; I wanted to give that back to my children and continue the education that skipped several generations. We wanted a school where Jewish values and identity would be an integral part of education and everyday activities. We also wanted a school that viewed education with the “whole-child” approach — focusing not only on the academic accomplishments but developing emotional intelligence, leadership and good citizenship, in other words, raising a mensch (Yiddish expression for a good person),” says Turnbow, whose family is also an SJCS one.

Even parents who don’t find affinity within any religious group often want their children to obtain an education steeped in spiritual grounding and religion lessons. This part of Briget Spear’s sons’ education enriches their family discussions.

She and her husband wanted their sons to learn about religion, grow spiritually, and question faith from that vantage point. “It gives you an avenue to talk to your kids about a very complex thing that often they won’t be really questioning until they are older,” says Spear. “Especially in somewhat agnostic Seattle, this was

an avenue to explore these issues. We have to learn about different religions in order to learn the politics of the world.”

This idea that religion is a clear window to understand the broader world is yet another reason parents choose religious education. “When there is a religious connection, there is an existing framework for discussions and grounding in a common set of values that helps this exploration,” says Mike Downs, who was interim head of the Jewish Day School in Bellevue until June 2014 (he is currently a director at a school in Israel).

Schools with faith-based school curriculums and philosophy also help fill a gap in an era where character education and morals and ethics modeling is so important. “Morals, ethics, and character development inform some of the fundamental beliefs and values of a faith-based school,” says Padte, who helps parents find their just-right school. “This is not to say that there are not other independent schools and public schools that are also strongly focused on character development. Still, it is almost guaranteed that a faith-based school will have beliefs related to character development.”

Whether or not your family practices the religion taught at the school, parents at faith-based schools recommend that people pondering this choice look intently at their values while making a decision. “Examine how the school’s environment and values fit their family and their children. Both parents have to be on the same page about the values that kids are learning and be comfortable with it,” Turnbow says. ■



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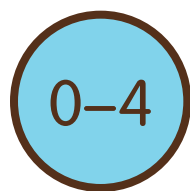
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Operation baby

What to expect when your little one needs surgery

By Malia Jacobson

Surgery is the last thing most new parents expect to encounter during their baby's first year. Yet many do: Anthony and Kimberly Pope's 7-year-old son, Braylon, of Renton, had surgery for pyloric stenosis (blockage between the stomach and small intestine) when he was 4 days old. Lakewood couple Robert and Jessica Cordova took their now 4-year-old son, Wesley, in for hernia surgery at 7 weeks old (3–10 percent of babies are born with hernias, and most require surgery). And Tacoma parents Colin Smith and Emma Lantz's son Arlo, now 3, had fundoplication surgery for reflux at 5 months of age, along with seven other surgical procedures during his first year of life.

Other reasons an infant could need surgery include intestinal malrotation, or incorrectly positioned intestines (experienced by around 1 in 500 babies); volvulus, a rare bowel blockage caused by intestinal twisting; and other abnormalities in the esophagus, diaphragm, abdominal wall or lung.

Elective outpatient procedures such as circumcision, currently performed on just over half of American male babies, and frenectomy (removing an overly thick band of tissue under the tongue or upper lip or other fold of tissue from another part of the body) are considered surgery, too, says Seattle Mama Doc blogger Wendy Sue Swanson, M.D., executive director of digital health for Seattle Children's Hospital, adding that these come with similar risks and potential for complications, such as bleeding and risk for infection.

Although each surgical scenario is unique, they share a common theme: New parents don't know what to expect. "The hardest parts [of son Arlo's first surgery] were the little, seemingly insignificant unknowns," Emma Lantz says. "I couldn't picture the incision. Would there be gauze covering it? Right or left side? Why didn't I ask? I felt so lost."

Workup: Getting ready for surgery

Anesthesia, overnight hospital stays, pain management, breastfeeding and postsurgical care crowd the list of worries, while groggy new moms and dads are still making the transition to life-changing parenthood and to the small new person in their care.

So when the doctor says "surgery," what's a new



parent's first step? "Always ask if there are alternatives to surgery, and whether watchful waiting is possible," Swanson says. In some cases, a physician may recommend postponing surgery until a baby's lungs are more mature, after 6 months of age.

But waiting isn't possible or preferable in all situations; some conditions, such as pyloric stenosis, require swift medical intervention, and some elective procedures, such as frenectomy, may go more smoothly with a younger infant. Bottom line: Before setting a date for surgery, make sure you understand the urgency and timeline associated with your child's diagnosis.

Now is the time to ask about pain management: Will a pediatric anesthesiologist handle the surgery? How will baby's pain be managed after the surgery? Will pain control begin in the operating room, or will baby receive medication prior to surgery?

"For a baby, it's a good idea to have a plan in place for pain control at the very beginning," Swanson says. While you're at it, ask if you'll be able to bring comfort items, such as a pacifier, special toy or blanket, to the hospital.

Finally, before the big day arrives, make sure you understand the instructions for presurgery prep. In the 24 hours leading up to surgery, you may be asked to bathe your little one and to refrain from feeding him (including milk by breast or bottle) after a certain time. Although these instructions may

seem trivial (will a tiny nip of milk hurt?), they're anything but. For example, food or drink too close to surgery can pose a choking risk and may necessitate a rescheduled surgery: back to square one.

Getting through the big day

For a hospital procedure, it's likely that you'll meet your child's surgical team for the first time on the day of surgery — overwhelming, to say the least. Here's where your notebook comes in handy.

In most cases, parents get just a few minutes to speak with a child's surgeon and anesthesiologist before the procedure. Jotting down questions and responses helps keep your head clear and vital information handy.

At the hospital, ask about any support you think you may need, or even support you think you won't need. Braylon Pope's sudden surgery at 4 days old meant mom Kimberly Pope's breastfeeding got off to a rocky start: "I had to quickly learn to pump without instructions in the ER. The back of the pump box doesn't tell you much!" Kimberly says. "Ask for hospital resources. Lactation support, hospital tour, follow-up home visit. You may need them and not know it."

Some parents are surprised to learn that they can't accompany their baby—the tiny bundle they've been cradling since birth—into the operating room. A 1989 study found positive results (including, notably, decreased parental anxiety) when parents of pediatric patients were allowed in the operating room during anesthesia induction. But in nearly all cases, parents won't be bedside for the actual procedure.

"An operating room is a highly controlled environment, with a surgeon or two, an anesthesiologist or two, a tech and a scrub nurse," Swanson says. Squeezing another person into the room could disrupt carefully designed systems in place to protect the tiny patient. And a parent's presence could distract a surgeon precisely when extreme focus is needed, Swanson says.

Post-op: Recovery done right

If your child's surgery will be followed by an overnight stay or several days of hospitalization,

ask the nurses to help coordinate your child's sleep schedule. "I asked the nurses to coordinate with me regarding [son Arlo's] sleeping schedule. They tried to do the last check before his typical bedtime. We tried to maintain his routine as much as possible," Emma Lantz says.

Before leaving the hospital, you'll likely chat with your child's surgeon for a post-op debriefing. Ask if everything went as anticipated, or if anything unexpected cropped up. Be sure to gather a list of needed prescriptions (ask the nurse to fax the prescription to your pharmacy, so you can grab it on your way home), home care instructions and follow-up appointments before departing.

After surgery, parents need clear instructions about dos and don'ts, says Tamar Mirensky, M.D., pediatric surgeon at the Kravis Children's Hospital at

Mount Sinai in New York. When is it safe for a child to return to day care or be submerged in the bathtub? When is it safe to use a stroller or baby carrier?

The good news: Pediatric surgery is getting better all the time. "Like much of medicine, pediatric surgery is a progressive field with a strong interest in minimally invasive approaches, reduced hospitalizations and faster time to recovery," Mirensky says. And ultimately, parents and surgeons share the same top concern: the safety and well-being of an utterly irreplaceable child. ■

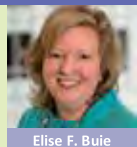
Malia Jacobson is an award-winning health and parenting journalist and mom of three. Her latest book is Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades.

what to pack

- Baby's blankets, pacifier and special toy (if permitted)
- Baby food, bottle and other feeding supplies (for after surgery)
- Socks (for baby and parents)
- Snacks and change for vending machine
- Books, magazines, knitting (keep your mind busy!)
- Pillow from home (if parents are staying overnight)
- Comfortable clothes for layering in chilly hospital rooms



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Merry melodies

Trendy and unexpected instruments kids are tuning into

By Tiffany Doerr Guerzon

Do you have a kid who is musical but wants to play something other than the usual piano, guitar or violin? Does your kid love folk music or rock 'n' roll? Or maybe they've watched their favorite cover song played on the ukulele on YouTube, and their fingers are wiggling to try it. The Seattle area offers a plethora of musical lessons in unusual instruments, geared toward even the smallest musicians. From the Celtic harp to the electric bass guitar, we have the class for you!

Ukulele (ages 8 and older)

This Hawaiian stringed instrument has gained enormous popularity in recent years due in no small part to YouTube. A video of musician Jake Shimabukuro playing "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" on the ukulele was one of the first YouTube videos to go viral. The standard uke, a soprano, has a figure-eight-shaped wooden body — much like a small acoustic guitar. Four strings are standard, but ukuleles can have different body shapes and as many as eight strings.

"People who have never played an instrument can pick up a uke and play quickly," ukulele teacher Susan Howell says. "It's easy to get from nowhere to playing with others. It's very social. There are groups all over the country that get together to strum and sing. Uke people are a friendly bunch!"

Ukulele classes are ongoing at the Dusty Strings Music School in Fremont (dustystrings.com). Dusty Strings also offers lessons in flute, whistle, banjo, guitar, mandolin, harp, Appalachian dulcimer, fiddle and harmonica. Check out its quick-start classes as well as the free jams and workshops.

Penny whistle (ages 8 and older)

Also called a tin whistle, this basic Irish woodwind is often heard in combination with other Celtic music mainstays, such as the fiddle. Attractive in part because of its price, penny whistles can be purchased for less than \$10. The metal tube with eight holes and a plastic mouthpiece looks similar to a recorder, but the sound is very different.

A penny whistle is diatonic, meaning it only



produces eight notes (do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do), and the most common whistle is in D, which is the key of most folk/Celtic music. Both Irish jigs and haunting melodies can be produced on this fun, inexpensive whistle.

Check out Dusty Strings (dustystrings.com) in Seattle.

Folk harp (ages 6 and older)

Most of us are familiar with the tall classical harp seen in orchestras. But many haven't heard of a smaller version, called the folk (or Celtic or lap) harp. At about 3 feet tall and weighing only 5–7 pounds, this is a great learning instrument for all ages. The harp doesn't have sharps or flats, so kids don't have to remember too many notes.

"The Celtic harp is perfect for young children, because they can sit in a small chair and place the harp upright on the floor in front of them," says Philip Boulding, owner of the School of Magical

Strings, which has a main studio in Olalla but also offers classes in Seattle. "The harp is very accessible and easy to grasp. The strings are color coded, so they can find the notes easily and pick out a melody."

The School of Magical Strings (magicalstrings.com) teaches both harp and hammered dulcimer.

Fiddle (ages 4 and older)

The fiddle is exactly the same instrument as the violin, but it is played in a completely different way. Pete Martin, who teaches fiddle lessons in the Seattle area, explains that in contrast to the violin, fiddle is usually played in small ensembles instead of in orchestras. Fiddlers usually play by improvising, rather than from written music. Because scaled-down sizes of fiddles are available, even very young children can begin learning on these instruments.

"These music styles are very social. Kids have fun playing old-time and bluegrass music," Martin says. "There are many places in our area that have active, regular jam sessions for all ages."

Check Petimar Press (petimarpres.com) for private or group lessons in Seattle and Issaquah, or Skype lessons from anywhere. Martin also teaches at the Dusty Strings Music School in Seattle.

Mandolin (ages 6 and older)

A member of the lute family, this stringed instrument is most often heard in bluegrass music in America. Crafted from wood, the mandolin looks somewhat similar to a small guitar, but is a higher-pitched instrument with shorter strings, Seattle-area mandolin teacher Pete Martin explains. Martin teaches mandolin lessons to kids as young as 6 or 7.

"The age to begin learning depends on the physical size of the child," Martin says. "They have to be big enough and strong enough to depress the double strings on the instrument. I teach kids to play the same way they learn to talk — by ear."

Check Jazz-Mandolin.com for private, group or Skype lessons on mandolin. Martin also teaches at Dusty Strings in Seattle. >>



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MEXICO: FAROLITOS In Mexico, families celebrate Christmas by creating farolitos, or lanterns made from brown paper bags and lit with candles, to decorate outside their homes. Let kids decorate brown or white paper bags and add a battery-operated tea light.



FRANCE: WINTER SOLSTICE In medieval times, people celebrated the Winter Solstice by burning "yule logs," logs decorated in holly, pine cones and other greenery. This tradition evolved into a dessert called a Bûche de Noël, or yule log cake. Find a recipe online and bake with kids!




SWEDEN: ST. LUCIA DAY In Sweden, and many other countries in Scandinavia, Dec. 13 is Santa Lucia Day. This celebration honors a Catholic martyr, Saint Lucy. Celebrate this fun tradition by making St. Lucy Buns — the traditional St. Lucia Day breakfast — to eat.




DENMARK, CUT-AND-PASTE DAY Danes enjoy a fun family tradition during the holiday season called "cut and paste day." On this day, the whole family sits down together and creates Christmas crafts. One is the Danish woven heart basket, heart-shaped paper baskets with handles for tree hanging.

— Tiffany Doerr Guerzon



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5–12 Merry melodies

continued from page 56

Appalachian mountain dulcimer (ages 8 and older)

This three-stringed instrument, which looks rather like an elongated violin, is not often seen in the Pacific Northwest, but it is common in the southern United States. The Appalachian mountain dulcimer can be shaped like a teardrop- or an hourglass and is usually played with the instrument lying flat on the lap of the musician. Susan Howell teaches the mountain dulcimer at the Dusty Strings Music School in Seattle.

“The mountain dulcimer is laid out like the white keys on the piano,” Howell says. “This makes it hard to hit a bad note. So, it’s very easy for all ages to play a tune right away. The metal strings make a nice droning sound; that’s what pleases people.” Check out Seattle Dulcimer (seattledulcimer.com) and dustystrings.com.

Hammered dulcimer (ages 6 and older)

This trapezoidal-shaped stringed instrument is only like the mountain dulcimer in name. You might have heard a hammered dulcimer while listening to folk or Celtic music, or at a Renaissance fair. The strings are made of steel, and instead of plucking or strumming, this instrument is played by striking the strings with a mallet. At the School of Magical Strings in Olalla, the hammered dulcimer is taught to kids as young as 6.

“Kids are fascinated, they love to hold a hammer and bang on the strings,” school owner Philip



Boulding says. “It produces a very bright and dance-like sound.”

And here’s a bonus — this instrument is played while standing, making it a great choice for wiggly kids who can’t sit still!

Information about hammered dulcimer lessons can be found at the Magical Strings website (magicalstrings.com/SchoolIndex.html)

Electric bass guitar (ages 5 and older)

The electric bass guitar is different from an acoustic guitar in that it has four, thicker strings that produce a deeper sound. While the acoustic guitar usually plays chords, the bass plays one note at a time, forming the foundation and holding down the rhythm of a song. Tim Ashe teaches electric bass guitar to kids ages 5 and older at Seattle’s Meter Music School.

“Bass guitar is one of the only instruments that

can transfer from jazz band to orchestra fairly easily,” Ashe says. “The upright bass and the bass guitar are similar. A lot of kids are attracted to the bass line in songs like ‘Billy Jean’ by Michael Jackson or ‘Money’ by Pink Floyd. They hear these songs on YouTube and want to play them.” Other kids want to learn to pop and slap on the bass like the bass player in the band The Red Hot Chili Peppers. “I tell them that once they learn the fundamentals, they can learn fun, flashy moves like that,” Ashe says.

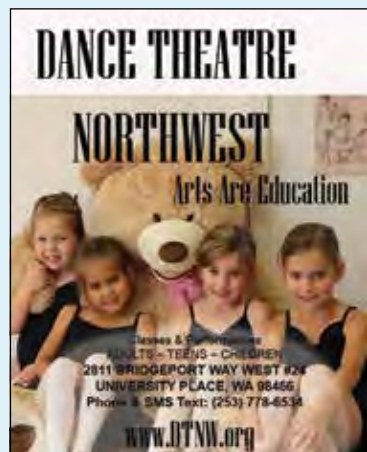
Check out electric bass guitar lessons at metermusicschool.com. Meter Music School also teaches piano, drums, guitar, ukulele, violin, viola, cello, double bass, saxophone, clarinet, flute, trumpet and trombone. The school offers free community classes: MiniMeter weekends, BUG groups (band of ukuleles and guitars) and Easy Jam Classes.

These schools and teachers are only a small sampling of the vast array of music lessons available in the Seattle area, and many offer a free trial lesson. In addition, free YouTube tutorials exist for many of the instruments listed above. As almost every music teacher I spoke with said, a child is much more likely to excel when they are allowed to play the instrument they are most drawn to. ■

Tiffany Doerr Guerzon is a freelance writer and the mother of three children, including a teen.

Read more of her writing at TDGuerzon.com.

A R T S + A C T I V I T I E S





The world is watching

Teens and online privacy

By Deanna Duff

Generations of teenagers have used cutting-edge tech to communicate. *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* would not have been Ferris Bueller without the vital bedroom phones; *Saved by the Bell* aired in the era of oversize cell phones. Today's teens interact via social media. Conversations about homework and relationships remain the same, but now the whole world can potentially eavesdrop on kids as they grow up online.

In recent years, parents have been grappling with how to teach digital literacy — how to talk to our kids about privacy and sharing. Now, experts are reminding us that listening to how kids themselves think about their social-media-driven world is critical, too.

"I don't like sharing too much, but I'm kind of forced to use social media because all my friends do," says college student Katy Yu, who joined Facebook at 16. Twitter and Snapchat followed. "There is constant pressure to post about fun things. If you don't, it means you have no friends and no life."

A study published this fall in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that adolescent attitudes about online privacy are changing. Two groups of older female adolescents were interviewed in 2009 and 2012. Both groups agreed that sharing info such as home addresses is dangerous. However, priorities had shifted by 2012.

"It was more passé to talk about security in 2012. The more important topic became reputation management and how to handle your personal brand," says Megan Moreno, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington, member of Seattle Children's Hospital's Adolescent Medicine program and the study's lead author.

The study concluded that many teens inherently distrust privacy settings and instead rely on self-discretion. The shift in awareness could indicate a need for new ways of discussing privacy concerns with adolescents.



Protecting your image

Yu, 21, recently deleted all her precollege Facebook posts. The purge was inspired by a friend who was dogged by negative comments about an outdated, unflattering — albeit benign — personal photo. Yu is increasingly alert about protecting both her personal privacy and professional prospects.

"Privacy settings are complicated and hard to track, even for a digital native [those who grew up using social media] like me," Yu says. "I don't worry much about things like stalkers, but do worry about what impression I give people, especially future employers. So, I personally control what I put on social media."

The study's findings echo Yu's sentiments. In 2009, adolescents reported believing that

"My general rule of thumb is, would I be OK with my 93-year-old grandmother reading my post? If I hesitate, then I don't post it."

universities and employers could circumvent security settings. Many researchers, including Moreno, initially considered such opinions to be urban myths.

"That's what makes the 2012 data so compelling. It's been revealed in the past year (NSA surveillance) that there really isn't such a thing as privacy in social media," Moreno says. "It's interesting that the teens were right."

For some young people, like Yu, surveillance reinforces the need for personal discretion. However, experts caution that general distrust can also backfire.

"There is a flip side. If teens continually hear the message that businesses and institutions can access social networking sites no matter what, they can end up thinking there's no point in even trying [to protect privacy]," says Yolanda Evans, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at Seattle Children's.

Having 'the talk'

Facebook was incredibly popular when 17-year-old Tanner Simon was in middle school. He lobbied his parents for months to join, but they deferred until he was 13.

They talked a lot about what they expected. I shouldn't post anything I wouldn't want a future college or job seeing," Simon says. "They repeated it so much that it was really in my head before I ever got a Facebook account."

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Simon has moved on to Twitter and Instagram, but the same lessons apply.

Reinforcing basic security with kids is always valuable — don't post addresses, phone numbers or revealing photos. However, since many teens already grasp those concepts, it may be time to broaden the privacy discussion.

"The larger part of the conversation is just having the conversation itself," says Mike Donlin, program supervisor for the School Safety Center, a division of the State of Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. "There are at least 20–25 social media sites, and what's popular is always changing. Focus on the philosophy behind using these sites so it applies to all of them."

tips for parents

Set guidelines in advance:

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests creating a family media use plan. Recommendations are available at Healthy Children (healthychildren.org).

For both younger and older kids, Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org) offers information on everything from handling social media to reviews and descriptions of the latest sites and apps.

Seattle Children's Social Media & Adolescent Health Research Team (SMAHRT; smahrtresearch.com), provides up-to-date information, studies and resources covering online topics such as privacy.

In 2013, Moreno cowrote a study about Internet safety education that found that half of adolescents reported learning about online safety from peers.

"Adolescents are a technologically adept population, but they're not necessarily experts in safety," Moreno says. "Adults have more expertise and experience to help teens understand why privacy is important and how the online and offline worlds overlap."

That often requires a working knowledge of the sites themselves. Moreno advises enlisting teens to be guides. Parents can ask technical questions, solicit their children's opinions and open a dialogue. In an often overlooked but critical lesson, adults need to also be role models for positive online decision-making.

"We hear from teens that they're often embarrassed by how their parents use social media. The adults are posting photos of themselves drinking or talking about high school exes," Moreno says. "Parents shouldn't be acting like teens themselves."

Evans offers perhaps one of the best and simplest pieces of advice for navigating online privacy:

"My general rule of thumb is, would I be OK with my 93-year-old grandmother reading my post? If I hesitate, then I don't post it." ■

Deanna Duff is a Seattle-based freelance writer who contributes to a variety of regional and national publications. She is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists and the Washington Press Association, which has awarded her writing.

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Someone you should know

By Alayne Sulkin • Photograph by Lisi Wolf

LORI FORTE HARNICK is General Manager for Citizenship & Public Affairs at Microsoft. In this role, she leads Microsoft's global work on corporate social responsibility. In the most recent fiscal year, Microsoft's total annual giving surpassed \$1 billion for the first time, with cash donations of \$119 million and in-kind donations worth \$948.6 million. The Microsoft YouthSpark Initiative is on track to surpass its goal of creating opportunities for 300 million youth over three years, having created opportunities for 227 million youth to date.

I've heard yours called one of the most interesting and rewarding jobs at Microsoft. Why is that?

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In recent years, Microsoft has focused its philanthropic and policy work on youth. What motivates that?

One of the big motivators is the fact that the world economy has changed, and young people are disproportionately impacted. Despite pockets of recovery in the global economy, worldwide unemployment continues to rise, particularly among youth between the ages of 15 and 24. This is one of the reasons why we created the Microsoft YouthSpark initiative. Microsoft is made up of over 100,000 people with a passion for tackling big problems. Youth unemployment is one of those problems.

What is Microsoft YouthSpark?

Microsoft YouthSpark is our global, company-wide initiative that aims to create opportunities for 300 million youth around the world by 2015 through partnerships with governments, nonprofit organizations and businesses. The goal of the initiative is to address the opportunity divide facing youth around the world — a gap between those who have the access, skills and opportunities to be successful and those who do not.

Microsoft YouthSpark brings together Microsoft's technology, training and resources to help youth build the future they want by connecting them with greater opportunities for education, employment and entrepreneurship. All programs and resources can be found on the YouthSpark Hub, an online space for youth of all ages to get involved with YouthSpark.



How does YouthSpark help youths in Washington state?

We're really proud of YouthSpark's impact in our home state of Washington. One of our YouthSpark programs is called Technology Education And Literacy in Schools (TEALS), in which we connect technology professionals — many of them Microsoft employees — with teachers in high schools in order to teach computer science. Through TEALS, we're now teaching computer science in 46 Washington state schools. TEALS, by the way, accepts volunteers from more than just Microsoft. We have lots of volunteers from companies such as Amazon, Nintendo, Tableau and more.

We also have a special program just for Washington state called the Washington Opportunity Scholarship. Under this program, Microsoft and Boeing each committed \$25 million for scholarships for those studying science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and health care. The state chipped in another \$30 million. This scholarship now supports more than 2,300 low- and middle-income students every year studying subjects critically important to our economy.

What is your advice for parents who are worried that their kids aren't getting the skills they need to be successful?

My advice is to help children understand that they can be makers — not just users — of technology. Help kids understand that someone just like them made that app on their phone and that game on their Xbox. You don't have to be a genius — and you don't even have to be a math whiz — to learn how to program a computer or a mobile device. It's just as much about creativity as it is about science. You take one step at a time, taking part in the Hour of Code (microsoft.com/hourofcode), for example. You can create games. You can create software that saves people time and money. And you can create apps to help people solve big problems. For example, I recently met some college kids who made an app to help diagnose anemia in the developing world. Parents should help their kids understand that the possibilities are endless and just about any young person has the intelligence and creativity to take those first steps. ■



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